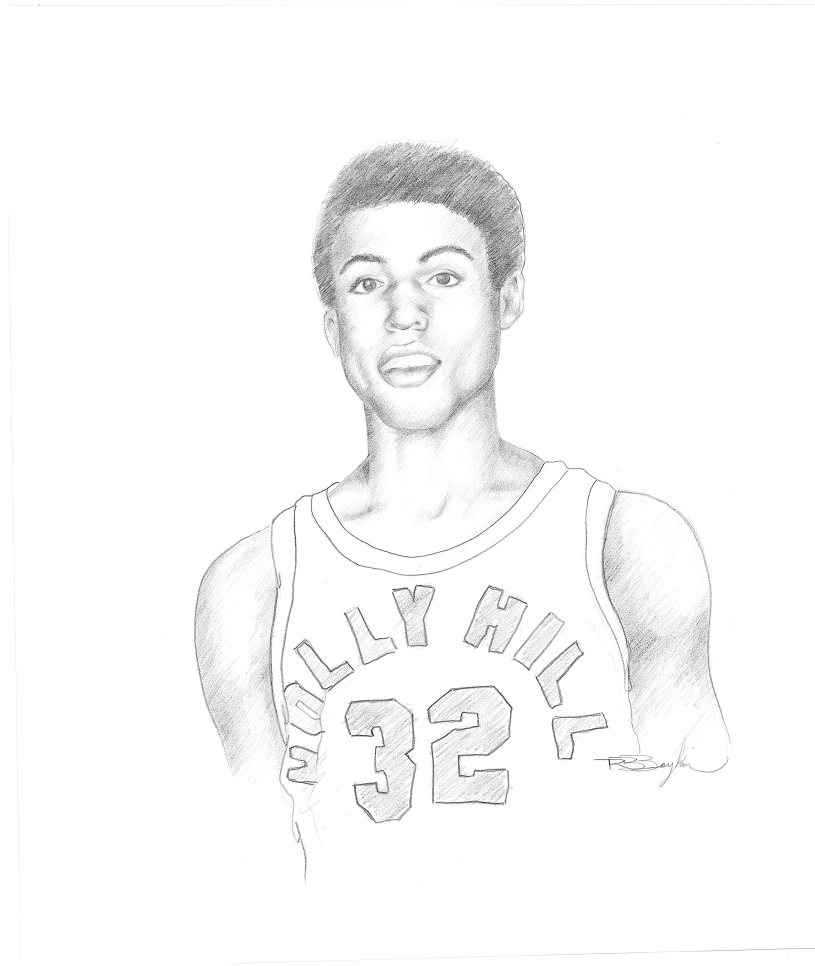


Transcript



WILLIAM SETTLE ORAL HISTORY

Prepared for: The South Carolina State Department of Education

Prepared by: The Auntie Karen Foundation

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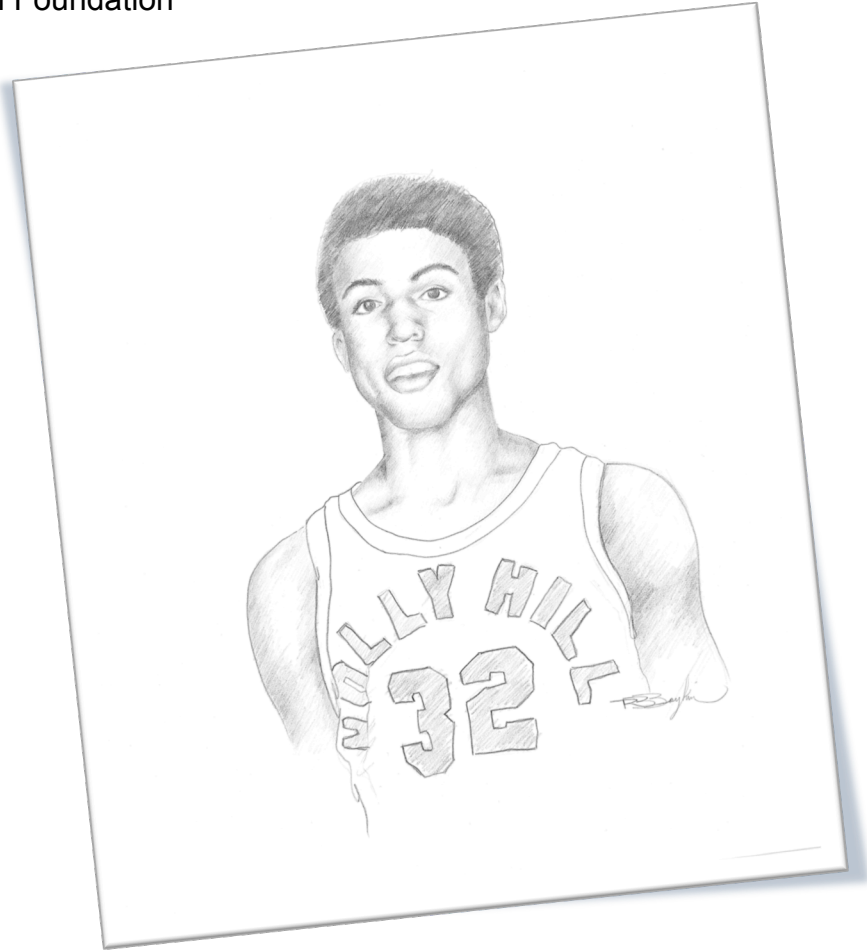
Project: Documenting South Carolina Civil Rights Oral History from 1950 – 1979

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Dedicated the memory of SC House of Representative

Joseph “Joe” H. Neal

August 31, 1950 – February 14, 2017



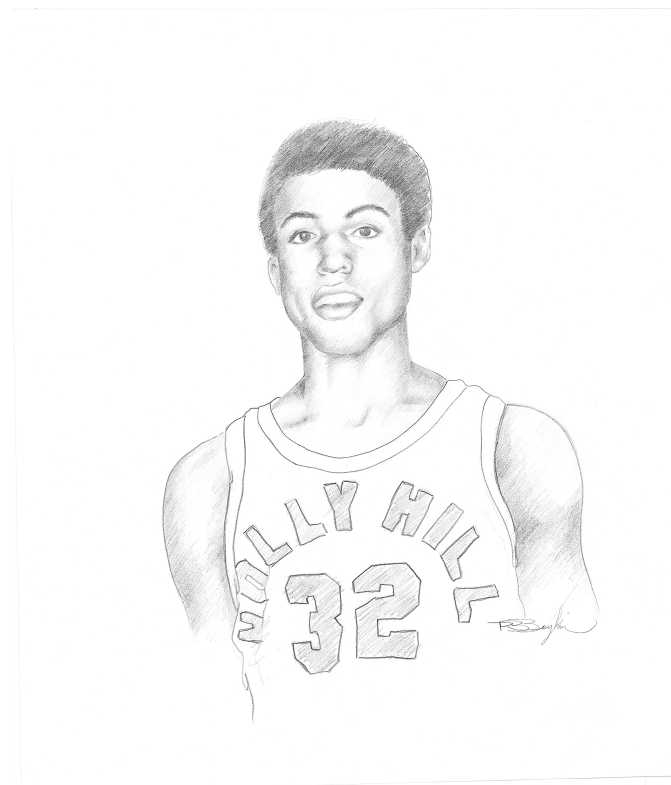
Civil Rights Oral History Interview with William Settle

Interviewee:	William Settle
Interviewer (s):	Tre Tailor Karen Alexander Ricky Taylor Tony Kenion
Location:	Jon-Ric Spa at 200 Peachtree Street Atlanta, Georgia
Interview Length:	1:06:06
Supplemental Material:	Includes transcript, interview release form, select photos, video, art rendering by Rodgers Boykin, music by Byron Counts

Abstract

William Settle was born in in the Georgetown County Memorial Hospital on the colored wing. As the son of an AME Preacher, he and his family lived all over the state of South Carolina and the Low Country. He grew up in Andrews, which was his original hometown. Later, the family moved to Charleston, South Carolina where his father William Settle Sr. was the pastor of Greater St. Luke AME Church. William attended Charleston High School but later became one of the first to integrate Holly Hill Schools.

In the interview, William describes his childhood memories of attending school and playing sports in the segregate South. He recalls visiting segregated beaches and witnessing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and a team of ministers in pre-march strategy meetings.



Transcript

Tre Tailor: Today is Sunday, March 12, 2017. I'm Tre Tailor. I'm here with William Settle and we'll be talking to him about the time period of 1950 through 1979, and his family's experiences during that time. Please tell me your name.

William Settle: William Settle.

Tre Tailor: When and where did you grow up?

William Settle: All over the state of South Carolina and the low country. Born in Georgetown, in the Georgetown County Memorial Hospital on the colored wing. Later, grew up in Andrews, which was my original home town. Then Charleston, South Carolina.

Tre Tailor: Tell me about your growing up.

William Settle: Interesting, very interesting. Being a child of an AME minister, school principal, and superintendent, they made sure that education was in the forefront of our upbringing. The church was also in the forefront of our upbringing, but quite interesting in the fact that we moved like military families. You serve at the leisure of the church, and in many cases the bishop makes a determination in AME church in terms of where you reside and where your home church will be. It can be quite interesting.

Tre Tailor: So you grew up in the '60s as PK in the south?

William Settle: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Tre Tailor: Tell me about that experience.

William Settle: Challenging nonetheless. I wanted to be like all of the other kids, but of course when you have the spotlight on you, a lot of times all eyes are on you and you try to be normal. In most cases, it's not the case. For example, one of my jobs was to help my father pick people up to go to church, especially some of the elderly parishioners that we had

in our immediate neighborhood. For some of them, it was quite an adjustment. When I was learning how to drive, I would drive them and playing the radio sometimes, and they would want me to turn the radio off. I would have to make sure I was on my best behavior at all times.

Tre Tailor: As a preacher's kid, did you see any direct discrimination?

William Settle: Oh absolutely. I became aware of discrimination in the, I want to say first or second grade. I remember one day riding, and we were living in Andrews, South Carolina at the time and I remember riding on the yellow school buses. I noticed all the other kids on this other school bus, they were all white, but we were going in opposite directions. I just happen to look out the window one day and I noticed that there was another school, but none of the people looked like me at that school. When I arrived at my school, it started my wheels to turning, wondering what's going on.

I always had questions for mommy afterwards. I said, "I'll hit mommy with that question." I asked her, "Why do all the kids at my school look like me, and the others don't?" She said, "One of these days you won't have to worry about that, but this is not one of those times. Hopefully things will change. That was the beginning of my awareness that there are people out there that don't look like you, that there are issues, there problems that are being dealt with. And that was my introduction to the Civil Rights movement, that was 1960.

Tre Tailor: William, you said that your mom told you it won't be like that always.

William Settle: She did.

Tre Tailor: What do you think, did you have in your elementary, junior high school mind, what that meant? How it will change?

William Settle: I had no idea. I had no idea. There were little things, as I look back on it now. Little things that took place during my upbringing. When you're a child, you're pretty much oblivious to what's going on around you. I wasn't. I was pretty perceptive, but you still don't quite understand. For example, one of my earliest memories of going to the beach, Myrtle

Beach was probably around age four. I had a beach ball, the wind blew the ball down the beach. Well, the problem with that is the beaches were segregated at the time. There was a big wooden pole in the sand, and it had on one side it said, "Whites only," and on the other side it said, "Colored only."

And that area's is now called, North Myrtle Beach, but during the '50s and '60s it was called, Atlantic Beach. My ball blew over on the White side, so as a child I'm running after my ball and I ended up crossing that line. The only thing that I remember of that was, my father chasing me, running me down and he had me by the back of my pants, and lifted me up. And fortunately there was no incident, because someone else grabbed the beach ball and handed it to him. He had me under his arm like this, and we just calmly went back to the other side.

I had no idea what that was all about, until there was discussion later on. And everybody was thankful that nothing happened, but those are the kind of things as you're growing up, you reflect back on and you say, "Well there's a separation of the races, and for kids to understand why, you just never understand it."

Tre Tailor: Do you remember what that discussion was like?

William Settle: I remember what the discussion was like. It was more or less, everybody was sort of thankful that nothing happened. I had no idea what that something was, but nothing happened. There were discussions later on. For example, in the Andrews, Georgetown, St. Stevens, Manning area where it was pretty routine back then for Black family members to disappear. And then bodies might be found in the Black river or the Pee Dee River, or wherever they were dumped. Kind of concerning, because even as a child, you understand that something happened to someone, but was anybody doing anything about it? No. No.

When you become a little older, then you realize that there's this thing called the White Citizens council, the Klan, whatever name they chose to use that are pretty active in and around the state of South Carolina. So, I remember my father having several run-ins with Klan members, on a back road between Andrews and Kingstree. My dad liked to take

a lot of short cuts, because he would go back and forth. I remember he and my mother having a big argument once, because we were stopped, and I was asleep in the car, I was five. I woke up and there were shotguns inside the back windows. And I just remember them saying, "These aren't the n****rs we're looking for. You can move on."

That was at age five. Well, that happened again at age seven, and age nine. So that's three times that that happened. So, I'd have to say, I became pretty numb to Klan activity and racist activity. My consciousness was pretty raised at that time.

Tre Tailor: So you said it made you numb toward Klan activity. How did it make you feel toward White people?

William Settle: Let's just say my parents had a lot of work on their hands. They had to work very hard for me not to just hate White people, just because. Fortunately, their influence prevailed because ... It took a lot. It really took a lot, because I had a lot of conversations, particularly with my mother about not wanting to be in stores with certain people, not being around certain people. And I became pretty much self radicalized, if you want to say that.

There was a period of time growing up, especially around 1959, '60, '61, where it was customary for Black folk to cross the street. I wouldn't. Even as a child, I wouldn't. Funnily enough, as a child, you get excused for certain things like that, but the older you get, you weren't. So, just little things like that, I remember.

Tre Tailor: Now, the church became the mainstay, the meeting place. It was so pivotal in the Civil Rights movement, and your father was a pastor of a church that, or tell me what role the church you grew up in, your father's church played in the Civil Rights movement in the low country in that area. What's the name of the church?

William Settle: Greater St. Luke AME Church on Gordon Street right now. Initially it was on St. Philips Street. They moved to a larger facility in '64 I believe. The church was, and still is highly political. My perspective is that the Black church has to be political, because if you're not, lives are at stake. And that's how it was in the '60s. You either ... One of the

ways you learned about what was going on was through the church. You found out what was in your political best interest. You found out what was in your financial best interest. You found out everything, pretty much through the church.

Because you have to understand then, we controlled only two major entities during that time. We controlled our churches and we controlled our schools. As so through those areas, we were able to teach one another what we needed to know. People who ran for political office early on, especially when Blacks were able to run for political office, were introduced through the church. Even Whites who were more on the side of people of color, would come through the Black church in order to be introduced and vetted through the Black church.

That's still pretty prevalent today. You find that a lot of political candidates, you look at them, you see them where? In the Black church. You know they're meeting and greeting Black leaders in the Black church. That was a time when, that was the start of political activity, right in the Black church and it still takes place today.

Tre Tailor: Do you remember any particular movement so to speak, or incidents that happened?

William Settle: I remember, as a matter of fact, Dr. Joseph Lowery, who is I think 94. I tease him now and I told him I met him when I was eight years old. I met him at Emanuel AME church. I met him, Dr. King, Andy Young, and Hosea Williams in Charleston. There was. I was a daddy's boy, so everywhere my daddy went I went. Pretty much I either had a couple of volumes of encyclopedias, that was my internet before the internet. And I would travel whenever he went. The meeting was one, it was a pre-march meeting. There was a march that was being planned in Charleston for the garbage workers.

If you recall, Dr. King was shot in Memphis and it was in support of the garbage worker strike. Black garbage workers made \$1 an hour, White garbage workers in Charleston made \$2 an hour, and the drivers made \$3 an hour. Except the Black drivers couldn't be elevated to drivers, the Black workers couldn't be elevated to drivers. That was only for White garbage workers. So I thought, I said, "Well if you can't even be promoted as a garbage worker, then we've got

some real issues in this country." So hence the march.

There was a march that was being planned quite by coincidence, just several months after Memphis. That march never came to be obviously, because of Dr. King's assassination in '68, but there was one planned for 1968, '69 right around that same time period on behalf of garbage workers. I remember that very clearly. Very, very clearly. That was my I think second time meeting Dr. King. First time I think I was in the third grade. And the thing that I remembered was being a pretty tall kid. I remember I expected a seven foot man to walk through the door, and he was somewhere a little over five feet tall. And I just felt that Dr. King was a tall guy, but he was a relatively short man. That was my earliest memory, that he was almost as tall as I was at eight years old. So but, just an interesting perception from my stand point.

Tre Tailor: What about, tell me about your dad's involvement not only with the Civil Rights movement but how he involved his church, your church with the Civil Rights movement.

William Settle: '63 I remember, march on Washington. I mentioned to Bernice King a few years ago, I remember our church preparing to participate in the march on Washington. 10, 12 buses from Charleston went. They were at Geneva Hayes' beauty shop, down on Cannon Street. Everybody getting their hair done. They stayed open all night long, because so many people was getting their hair done. Then you had another group of people that were making food, sandwiches. Preparing to travel by bus. And then off they went.

I ended up staying with my mom because I think my mom was pregnant at the time with my younger brother. So she didn't get to go. She wanted to, but she didn't get to go. My brother and sister, they didn't travel there but I remember everyone getting prepared to go to the march on Washington, and we watched it on television. Of course we wanted to see where our people, did we see anybody. Of course, TV was so grainy back then you could hardly make out who was there.

But, I also remember meetings and marches that took place in and around Charleston. And my dad quite simply would laugh and joke

about it sometimes. I said, "Well what do you do? What's your role?" He said quite simply, he said, "My job is to make sure we Black up the place. That's my job." I said, "Okay. I can understand that." I said, "We're going to Black the place up." He said, "That's what we need to do. If we need to be here, we need to be there." He said, "I might get a call," and he said, "That's when I make sure ..." He said, "I get the other pastors together and we make sure we're present here or we're present there." That's how we do it.

Tre Tailor: So his role in Blackening up the place-

William Settle: Blacking up the place, yup.

Tre Tailor: Would be to call the other pastors in the community?

William Settle: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Tre Tailor: Then say what to them?

William Settle: Well he would either say, "Bring your members to this point. Bring your members out for that cause." That was the beginning of me understanding that there was some structure to the movement, because it wasn't just one person in Charleston making a call or one person here making a call. They were in touch with people here in Atlanta. They were in touch with people in Birmingham and Montgomery, and all over the southeast. So the pastors knew who to be in touch with. They knew key people or they knew who they could pretty much count on. Sounds odd today, but they knew.

There was communication structure as well. If they called on St. Luke AME church to be there, thousand plus people going to be there. If they called on Emanuel, another 500 or thousand people were going to be there. You can well imagine that if you're coming from the Atlanta area, and you're organizing from here, and you have people participating all over the place ... Atlanta was a central nervous system. I didn't find that out until moving here years later, but Atlanta was the hub of activity. People like Reverend James Orange did march training for people. And you had Hosea Williams taking an

active part in meeting locally, because Dr. King would send his lieutenants out to meet with pastors in other cities. That's how I was able to meet so many people at different points in times in my life.

Because these were other preachers for the most part and leaders for the most part that you were able to meet with. If by just hanging around, I kind of picked up what the structure was and how they communicated. They communicated quite effectively. They had no internet, no email, no cell phone, no text message, none of that. They communicated either through phone lines they had in the churches, in their homes, and their work places.

Tre Tailor: William, why do you think your dad was chosen to rally the troops, Blacken up the place as you-

William Settle: Blacken up the place?

Tre Tailor: Yeah.

William Settle: My father was a peace maker, but he was not afraid of too much. He was a leader in every sense of the word. And he really handed that down to me. He said, "You can be a leader. Particularly if you're on the side of right. Being a leader is a natural thing to be." That always stuck with me. That always stuck with me. You didn't have to be in a fist fight in order to get your point across. You pretty much had to make sure that you were, if you were fighting for something, that cause had to be for right and it also had to be ... You had to be in a situation where you can impact others. And he always made sure that he was.

Tre Tailor: Now four members of your church played a huge role in desegregating Charleston County schools. Tell me about those four people. Who are they?

William Settle: Oh, they're Karen's, well Karen Alexander's family members that go way back. I remember her uncle Mink in particular, because he was like a big brother to me. A big brother in a sense that we all looked up to him. And he was the superstar athlete in the community, and taught

me how to play basketball. Taught me how to really just be responsible in a lot of ways, because I'm the eldest of three. I was kind of out there for a minute being whatever I was trying to be, but he helped, broke me in. They were the ones to help integrate the Charleston area, integrate Charleston area schools.

So, that was a lesson as well, because someone takes the hits anytime you're a first. Whatever hits there are, or whatever blows that have to be absorbed, that person is usually the one that takes them for everybody. And I remember watching them take the blows. That would've been in the mid-early to mid '60s. Ironically, there were other areas of the state that had not integrated. So some people think that most of the states just integrated at one point in one time. That was not the case. There were several other counties that integrated much later. Some integrated much sooner.

But again, the church was intertwined with the family members, Alexander family members. Our family, and so many others, were intertwined. And watching everyone go through, for example when they made the interstate cut through with I-26 in Charleston, my school district changed immediately. I was able to go to Charleston High school, whereas my friends went to Burke high school. So by making that change, some of my friends who went to Burke high school only knew friends on that side of the highway. But because of the church, I had friends all over the city. It wasn't a huge transition for me, because wherever I would've gone to school I would've had friends. It didn't really matter. But by being Black and being at Charleston high, and coming in after segregation was very key. There were some before me that took the blows.

Tre Tailor: You talked about Mink Clarence and Eddie Alexander, who desegregated Charleston high school.

William Settle: Yes indeed.

Tre Tailor: And then Cassandra and Gerald Alexander just desegregated Memminger elementary school. All of them went to Greater St. Luke AME church. Was there ever any conversation at the church about them desegregating and maybe them sharing not only their experiences, but advice?

William Settle: Yes and no. As kids, we would talk about, "Well how do you like this? How do you like it where you are?" And pretty much, we all said the same thing, "It's okay." You adjust, you adapt, you make it work for you. It's okay. The thing that I remember most because I think the person I talked to most was Cassandra. We would talk just about every other day. And we talked about making the adjustment completely. I always took with me that it wasn't enough to just go to school. You had to do other things at the school. And she was very active in her school.

Gerald and I were the same age, so we were out running around the parks playing basketball, and running around playing football, and doing the things that little boys do, guys do. And so we had a totally different kind of ... We had that boy relationship where, I'm going to out-do you. We would always compete against each other. Little did we know, we'd be competing against each other later on. But...We had conversations but not in vivid detail, because we pretty much knew what we were all going through. We pretty much knew.

Tre Tailor: Did you have any challenges when went into your first integrated school?

William Settle: Mm-hmm (affirmative). My first integrated school was in Holly Hill, South Carolina, Holly Hill High School. Ninth grade, 1969, I have to give you a little background on that one because my dad was a school principal in Orangeburg County, as well as preacher. So in Orangeburg County, he was promoted to assistant superintendent. It was a forced promotion by the state superintendent. My dad protested it because as an elementary school principal, he wanted to retire, and he'd already put in like 22 or 23 years. He said, "I want to retire in the community. I know everyone." The state superintendent said, "This is not a request. This is an order. You have to move up. We need you and your leadership to make this thing work."

What I didn't realize until the year before, was that Orangeburg County had the Orangeburg massacre in '68. Where I think four South Carolina State University students were killed. They delayed integration to '69. It was supposed to have happened in '67 or '68, but because of the tensions, they delayed it. While Charleston had

already done it, I think Greenville and Columbia may have already done it. Orangeburg County had not. So, my dad was given the task of creating the plan and making it happen. The town was Holly Hill, an all White high school of about 700 students. And he said he knew that the semester before, so I'm in the eighth grade now and I'm at Charleston High. And he took me out of school for four weeks.

And he enrolled me, he had special permission from the state, enrolled me in his old junior high school, Sam Rittenhouse Junior High School in Norristown, Pennsylvania for a month. He grew up in Pennsylvania, right outside of about 20 miles outside of Philly. Ironically, he grew up in an integrated setting in the north in Philadelphia and his children are in a segregated situation in the south, in South Carolina. So, I asked the question, I said, "Why are we doing this?" He said, "You need to see something different." And what I discovered was that in that four week period of time, I ended up making friends with Jews, Italians, Puerto Ricans, Asians, every group of people that was in that community. It was a working class community, right outside Philadelphia.

And so, when I came back, I had a lot to tell my friends. And I said, "There's something that we need to look forward to. There's something else that's going on. The south is just a little behind, but we're getting there, we're getting there." So for me to see that, he accomplished what he wanted and he wanted me to be able to take the lead in whatever situation it was. When I got there, I was prepared to do whatever, but I promised him I would be, would not engage in any physical activity, if.. as long as no one put their hands on me. He said, "If that's the best promise I can get, I'll take it." That was pretty much the best promise he was going to get out of me.

But when you're 13, 14 and you know you're a guy, that's the mentality. I went in with all peaceful intentions until I was being pushed in the school, and just called all sorts of names. I think I must've been called n****r about 15 times that day, and I was surprised I didn't react. I didn't react to it. I just said keep calm, but when pushed and slammed up against lockers, that's when I fought back. And then sent a couple guys to the hospital, made a big scene. I was unharmed, but the fight itself of course made the big news of the city. So, there were a lot of people that said, "See, we told you it wouldn't work. It didn't work."

I was just sent home for two days to calm down. Once I came back from my two day, calm down, calming down period, not a suspension or an expulsion, it was just a calming down period according to the principal. But, they had recruited me to be on the football team and again, I remember what my dad said and what Cassandra and I used to talk about. You have to do more than just go to class. You have to participate in everything that the school has in order to fully integrate, in order to make a real difference. So, that was the beginning of me participating in athletics. Later on that semester, I got involved with student government. I even sang in the choir. I wanted to play in the band, but I was on the football team so that didn't work.

I would've preferred the band I believe, but you know football was it. And I ended up being quite good at it. And then playing football and basketball was another whole dynamic of adjusting to racism and the culture of the south, because I learned very quickly that you can be hated one day and be loved the next day. It just depends on how many touchdowns you score, or how many baskets you make. You know, you can be hated or you can be loved. I had this love hate relationship with sports. I loved to play, it was natural, but I didn't care if I played. I don't know if that makes sense to you, but I would just watch the dynamic. And I would look at the recruiting dynamic of how, and that's when I realized, I said, "People are being used in this process. They're being used to play football, and they're used to be playing basketball." And I said, "I won't get caught up in that." I made a determination at 14 that was not going to happen.

So, even to the point of becoming an all American in football and basketball, I was not going to be a two sport star. I was going to go to college, that was academically challenging. I was going to graduate, and if I played, I played. If I didn't, I didn't. And I took that, I took that as my philosophy going forward, because too many people were coming out without an education back then. They still are. Not much has changed. I'm not a big fan of division one football, basketball, baseball or anything because I think it's a rack. I think it's still too many people are being pimped in that system, to please me. And so...I now work with some athletes, retired athletes that struggle. They struggle post playing days, because most don't have a degree. They're 30 years old, they don't know what they're going to do with their lives and we have to help them adjust to that. So, I think it was quite insightful as a 14 year old, don't you?

Tre Tailor: Absolutely. I was nowhere near there at 14.

William Settle: That was 14.

Tre Tailor: William let me ask you, how many kids or how many African American kids were in this school? Were you the first one?

William Settle: I was, there were eight of us. There were eight of us that went in the first year, in high school. And keep in mind, I was coming from Charleston, so I didn't know the eight. I didn't know the other seven kids, but after the first couple of days I remember asking my dad I said, "Who are these kids?" Because I wanted to know who they were. Oddly enough, part of the plan, which was one of the plans that a lot of people used ... Keep in mind, desegregation of schools connected to the churches, the kids that were there were preachers' kids or teachers' kids. Every last one of us.

Judy Jones, Gwen Jones, their father was a preacher. Greg and Ronald Cummings, Melinda Cummings, Reverend J.P. Cummings in Holly Hill, their father was a preacher. The Sweepers out of Eutawville, Reverend Sweeper, baptist preacher. Everyone that was there was either both a preacher's kid or teacher's kid. That was a strategy that was being used to integrate schools throughout the south. The church was tied in the school desegregation, clearly. Clearly was tied in.

Tre Tailor: Did the eight of you form some type of alliance?

William Settle: No. Not initially. Not initially. I was an outsider. Keep in mind, I was coming from Charleston, 45 miles away. They grew up in the area, in the Orangeburg, Holly Hill area. The day I got into a fight, they kept clear of me. They stayed clear of me. I didn't too much blame them, but we eventually made friends. And they realized that I had a little fire to me. They could see that I wasn't really as bad as they thought I was. And we eventually, by Christmas I think we were pretty good friends, because we were pretty much alone.

I remember one thing that took place, was I would use the situation for entertainment, because a lot of White kids would not sit with me. We had a few incidents where they wouldn't want to sit next to me in class. Some of the teachers would either put guys out or young women out, and I would take the dining hall as an opportunity to just entertain myself because I would take up an entire table. And I would look around to see who would sit with me, and I would watch some of the young White kids stand up against the window and eat standing up instead of sitting down with me. I would use it as entertainment. Sometimes I might even say to them, "Come on, sit down." They wouldn't do it.

But after being there for about, I'd have to say we started in August, September. Around the end of September, there was this one White student that sat down with me. And we are great friends to this day. Her name was Carolina Colbertson. Giving her a shout out. But she sat down and I didn't know her, and I just looked at her being pretty blunt and I said, "Little White girl, you need to leave." I said, "Your friends are not going to like you." She said, "Well, if they don't like what I'm doing now, then they're not my friends." I said, "Well, welcome to the table." And so, she was my lunch mate for, I'd have to say the whole year. She did lose some friends, and she didn't care.

And slowly but surely, that had to have been the beginning of what we considered to be the integration of the school. Because nothing else was happening other than me playing football. And..so..The socialization started with the two of us having a sit down at lunch, and having conversations every single day. We ended up looking forward to just having that conversation. Her father was a local doctor, and believe it or not, he lost a lot of business as a result of her friendship with me having lunch everyday. And the power of the church comes in because she mentioned it one day we were having lunch. She said, "My dad's lost a lot of his patients, because of what I'm doing." And she was in tears. I just looked at her and I said, "Just because you having lunch with me?" I said, "That's messed up." I said, "That's about as messed up as it gets."

And she said, "But it's okay, my dad told me to stick to my guns, and I didn't need to change a thing." I mention it to my father, and my father said, "Really?" He says, "Well, we're going to do something about that." My father, even though his church is in Charleston, came to Holly Hill, spoke at several of the churches and said, "There's a good

man in this town." Because there was no Black doctor in the town. He said, "There's a good man in this town named Dr. Colbertson. You all don't need to go all the way into Orangeburg. You can go to him right here." So, needless to say, within a month, he had more patients than he ever had in his entire practice. His business picked up because he had a whole group of new patients. So, again, that was the Black church making an impact in the community in terms of desegregating and business relationships between Black and White.

Tre Tailor: Great. Couple questions William. When you and Carolina Colbertson were talking, was it just kid conversation, or were guys talking about the difference in the races? Were you guys really talking about what's going on and why is there a problem? Because she was obviously having some challenges because of it.

William Settle: Oh we talked about everything. Particularly the race problem. We saw it as everybody else's problem. She was surprised that I didn't have an issue, but I told her I said, "The reason why I didn't, it was directly related to my parents." I told her, I said, "At one point, I hated White people. I couldn't stand them." I said, "But I understand now that it's not about just hating White people because of who they are." I said, "I could see why White people wouldn't like Black people either." I said, "It's under exposure ..." Keep in mind, we're ninth graders and we're having grown folks conversation.

And...It was quite enlightening for the two of us because we imagined ourselves in each others' shoes. And at the end of the day we realized, this doesn't make any sense. All of this, the issue called race does not make any sense. I made it a mission of mine to make sure that I studied as hard as I could this whole issue surrounding race and what to do about it. It didn't really come full circle until I ended up going to Fisk University and then my teachers there, John Hope Franklin and Dr. C. Eric Lincoln are both giants in their field. John Hope was a rockstar. And I remember him saying, "We have to challenge authority." Especially when authority is wrong. We have to challenge it, and we have to make it our business to challenge it intellectually. Not physically, but intellectually.

He said, "Sometimes that takes us, both races, to an uncomfortable point, but we have to get there in order to make change." My academic advisor, C. Eric Lincoln was right along the same vein. He

wanted us to be leaders and not just be satisfied with being the first this, or the first that. We had to take a step further and open doors for others right behind us. And so that's why when I was being recruited as an athlete, I could care less about being recruited as an athlete. I cared more about being recruited for what my mind brought to the table, as opposed to what my athletic skills brought to the table.

So, I learned that I was in the absolute right place when I left South Carolina and when to Nashville, Tennessee. That was I think probably the definitive moment for me in my development. I felt more like I was home. I needed to be there. Because everything that I had gone through in the Civil Rights movement had culminated in me being there, with leaders, with male leaders that said, "Oh you did the right thing. You know..We understand where you were coming from. We applaud you for what you did, right now. We're going to prepare you to move on." I thank them for that. I really appreciated being there, because not everyone had that kind of leadership in college, and I thank them for that.

But, I remember Dr. LM Collins teaching me English. He would tear up papers that we would write, and he would look at me and he would say, "Friend, don't do this. Don't write like this." He says, "You need to write like you're writing for, your letters are going to kings and queens. You never know where your writing may reach." And..He would always be very critical of us. One day I sent him a letter because I had to write the White House. And I was communicating with Bill Clinton and there was a rally that was coming when I was a Dean at Morris Brown. We were inviting them to do a rally. They ended up sending Al Gore. And I ended up writing Al Gore as well.

I briefly thought about it, and I said, "Let me send a copy of this letter to Dr. Collins." And I said to him, "I hope I was prepared, because my letter reached the White House. My response was, I received this." And I said, "You always said write as if we are writing is going to be read by kings and queens." I said, "I never forgot that." And he wrote me back a letter, and it was one sentence. He said, "Well done friend. Well done." That made me feel really good because these are people that I looked up to.

Tre Tailor: William, you said you were a Dean at Morris Brown. Your experience growing up, how did that affect your interaction with those students?

William Settle: It was interesting to say the least. The church dynamic, Morris Brown was an AME supported school. And I ended up there quite by accident. I happened to be visiting my sister who's working at Spelman at the time. I was working at Western Carolina University, where I finished grad school, but there was some job openings. And we had spring break in North Carolina on a different timeframe from here, and I just happened to ... Someone said, "There's some job openings." And I'm looking to move to the Atlanta area, and I just went over. Keep in mind, this was '80s, mid '80s, so there's no online to apply, so I just went over. Put my suit on and walked to the campus. No, I drove over that day.

The Director of HR was there, and I said, "I'd like to apply for some position." She handed me the book that had all the positions in, and the forms. And I looked through and I said okay, I can do this, this, this, about eight positions. I said, "I'm going to apply for all eight." She said, "Really?" I said, "Yes ma'am." And she said, "Let me see your resume." She literally took my resume, read it, and I said, "Do I keep filling out?" She said, "Go right ahead," and I kept filling everything out. I had no idea the small community that the school was.

She took my resume, after reading it, and gave it to the assistant to the President. She read it, came out and met me. Went back in, I didn't realize it at the time, she handed it to the President. He came out later on, he said, "Young man, come with me." He said, "Do you know who I am?" I said, "Yes sir." I said, "I see all these brochures with your picture on it, you're the President." He said, "Come in." I went in and he said, "Do you really have these experiences that you say you have?" I said, "Yes," and he talked to me for an hour. I said is he interviewing me?

I literally had an interview on the spot. And at the end of about two hours, he said, "We want you to work here." I said, "Okay." He said, "When can you join us?" I said, "Give me two weeks, I'll be here." And that's how I moved.

Tre Tailor: You've worked in the education system-

William Settle: Education by training, yes.

Tre Tailor: Yeah, so again, your experience with your dad, with desegregation, you and your groundbreaking experience with Caroline, did that enter into your mentoring or interaction with students throughout your education career?

William Settle: Well it always did because the AME church that my dad was a part of, they used to raise money for members and their kids to go to AME supported schools. And I remember we had scholarship fund at St. Luke AME church. He said, "This is for our school." I said, "Well can I apply?" He said, "Sure you can apply." I actually did. He said, "You're a member of the church, you can apply like every other church member," okay. He said, "But where are you going to school?" I said, "Fisk." He said, "It's not one of our schools, so you're not getting any money." I said, "Well why not?" He said, "No, this is for AME church schools."

And so...I always remembered how he would encourage other pastors to create those scholarships, send the kids to the schools that were being supported by the AME church, because all of them were private and all of them were struggling for the most part, and still are. And he said, "We have to support our own schools." I always remembered that, so when I got there, I saw a lot of things that there were issues. Especially with it being under funded and just having repairs that needed to be made. I said, "Oh, this is going to be a challenge, but I like challenges, so let's see what happens."

By accepting the position of Dean of Students, I had roughly a thousand students, and enrollment was way down from where it needed to be. Deferred maintenance was everywhere. Everywhere you turned, something needed to be repaired. And so...I knew I wasn't going to be there a year or two, it was going to be a long time. I ended up staying there 14 years, and at the end of 14, we renovated all the residence halls, the administration building, the student center, and participated in the Olympics at the same time.

Tre Tailor: Were you able to share any of your experiences with the students?

William Settle: Oh absolutely. Things that happened to me through the church, I was able to share with them. I recognized and I learned from my father that Black youth needed discipline and they needed to have the bar raised, but they needed to also be shown as much love as they can handle. And I decided to use that as a three tier strategy as Dean. Some students came out of high school, some were prepared, some were not. If you're not prepared, you use this time to get prepared. A lot of my students said that they were not accepted into any other institution, so I'm pleased now when I see them, some are lawyers, some are doctors, some are college administrators, some are school district administrators, dentists. Many are doing quite well, business owners. They still call me Dean, so I answer when they call. I cherish that title.

But it was handed down through the church. It was handed down through what my parents taught me. What I learned at Fisk, and as a matter of fact, it was John Hope Franklin that said to all of us very clearly, he said, "Pass it on. You have one job and that is to pass it on. Whatever you pick up, whatever you learn, pass it on." So that's what I tried to do.

Tre Tailor: Do you think you will be remembered for those things?

William Settle: I hope so. I hope to be remembered for that and I'm very pleased with my journey. I don't think it could've turned out any better. I joke about how old I am sometimes. It feels like yesterday. You know...Even I could still see the beach ball flying in the air, and it just seems like yesterday, but pleased nonetheless.

Tre Tailor: Your dad told you, this is my final question, your dad told you that you can be a leader. The Alexander kids told you to participate fully. How have you done those things?

William Settle: Well, I hope I've done that through my actions. Through all the things that I've participated in. I've been in a first in so many things, I can't even remember. First to go into high school where I was. Even in grad school, I was the first male I think in my department, first Black male that is, the first Black full time ... I think first or second full time employee at Western Carolina University. Started the second Black fraternity on the campus. There were these first and seconds that took place over a period of time.

I worked with the Upward Bound program in grad school. Three high schools in western North Carolina, I was the first Black person that ever set foot in these schools. And... There were just so many firsts, but always took those words of wisdom with me. Always took the lessons that were taught to me. Things just seemed to magically happen.

Tre Tailor: I'm finished Karen or Ricky, do you guys have any questions?

Karen Alexander: Yes, this is Karen Alexander. I want to take you back just a little bit to high school, when you first got on the football team. Your teammates supportive? Did they embrace you immediately?

William Settle: No. This was not like the movie Remember the Titans. I tell people that all the time. There were no Titans, there were just me. There was just one little old Black boy there, trying to make the team. I didn't think I was going to have a problem making the team because I knew I was the fastest and probably the strongest out there, but that was beside the point. The point was to participate and so by participating, I think they learned a lot. The other guys learned a lot. They learned that I could be an asset to the team and they could win with me or lose without me. That was my take on it.

And fortunately they decided to win with me. That was, I think that was a coup for everybody. They learned because when, for example we played in Manning, that was some of the worst stuff I'd ever heard down in Manning, South Carolina. Sorry Manning, but that's just how it was. You know, I got called n****r from time we got off the bus to the time we left. My teammates rallied around me, because that's why ... It was important because they played Manning before without me, and they didn't experience that. It was just another game. Now, with me, it was a big deal.

Even in Holly Hill, to the point where they had the athletics banquet in '69. The Holly Hill Country Club refused to have the banquet there, because I was on the team and I would be present. They said no, they couldn't allow it. They ended up, every year from that point on, having it at the school. So, there were all sorts of things that took place from

just this one little Black boy being on a football team. Then later on a basketball team. Then running track, and it was just something else that I did. But, I realized that there was some social changes that were taking place in that little community that were reverberating around the larger community. So...It was more than just about playing football.

Karen Alexander: When did you get company on the team? When did another Black athlete join the team?

William Settle: The next year. Yeah, the next year, it's kind of interesting. People just sort of waited to see what happened if I lived then they would come, and if I didn't they would stay away. I don't know if that was the case, but all of a sudden there were other kids that ended up coming to the school, so much so that by the time I think I was a senior we were probably 40%. The school was 40% Black, which was a big difference.

Karen Alexander: And my last question. Do you still keep in touch with Carolina?

William Settle: Yes. We keep in touch through Facebook. She's in North Carolina, and we keep in touch every now and then, a phone call. We keep in touch quite regularly. She's doing quite well. She's retired as a teacher now.

Tre Tailor: I've got a couple of follow up questions to Karen's questions. The team, you said at first they were kinda cold towards you. You said that originally. When did that change?

William Settle: It changed first day of practice. They were a little bewildered. I was a little bit cocky too. When I went out my coaches asked me, "So what position do you want to play?" I said, "Wide receiver because I think I have good hands, I can catch the ball." Assistant coach said, "Okay, go on over there with the running backs." I just looked at him, I said, "Those aren't the wide receivers." He said, "Running backs." I said, "Okay, running backs it is." I'm doing the drills with the running backs and so then he says, "I'm going to teach you how to run three plays. One off left tackle, right tackle, and up the middle." "Okay, not a problem."

So, when it's time to run the play, we get set up, and I'm in this I formation behind the quarter back, and they're all looking. I could see the guys looking back at me. They're supposed to be guys blocking, and they're having conversation among themselves on the line. I said they're not going to block for me. It's not going to happen. I said I'll have to just take matters into my own hands. Well when they handed me the ball, I made this burst, and I just went through the line, passed to the line backers and then cut around the right side and touch down. That was the first time I touched it.

Second time I touched it, I went left and kept going left and went down the field. Touch down. Third time, I went straight up the middle, cut to the left, touch down again. So, now I run three touch downs on three plays, and they couldn't touch me not a single time. Their whole attitude changed. They said, "We can't catch this guy." My attitude was, I knew you couldn't catch me, but you needed to see that. Either you're going to accept me, or you're not. And I pretty much left it up to them.

The beauty of sports is that, like I said earlier, you can be loved one minute, or you can be hated one minute and loved the next. That was a lesson I never ever forgot. Even when I was being recruited, my coach was a little disappointed, my high school coach was a little disappointed because he'd been getting calls from University of South Carolina and Clemson and said, "Can we get this kid to come and visit?" And my coach Arty Knight said, "I'm not sure." He said, "I don't think he's going to come." They said, "Well can you at least get him to come to the campus?" He said, "I don't know if I can." He wanted me to, but he's said, "I'll talk to him."

He did, and he said, "Well William, are you going to go?" I said, "If you want me to, I'll go visit them, but I'm not keen on being the South Carolina Gamecock or a Clemson Tiger, not really." When he asked me the question why, again the stuff that reverted back to having been brought up in the Civil Rights movement, having gone through the marches, having an understanding of the politics of what's going on, the marches, all of that he said, "What do you have against Clemson?" And I said, "The main building, on that campus, is a former South Carolina state governor who was a Klan leader."

At that time, during that time, if you played football and you ran a

touch down, they waved the confederate flag and they played Dixie. I said, "Can you really see me running a touch down for the Clemson Tigers with the confederate flag flying and Dixie being played in the stand? I can't. I can't see that." Same thing at USC, different time, you don't do that anymore but during that time, I can't see that. Now from a basketball stand point, they had Frank McGuire was the great coach and he recruited from New York. He recruited all of his guys were Irish Catholic and I'm not Irish, I'm not Catholic, and I'm not from New York. I'm from Charleston.

So, that wasn't a good fit until Ben Joe called. Ben Joe was assistant coach my senior year, he was at South Carolina State head coach. I was leaning towards playing for Coach Joe, and it's ironic that coach Joe befriended me during my recruitment days because he knew he could get me to come to South Carolina. He thought he could, and he said, "I'm not sure how much longer I'll be here as assistant head coach." He says, "But Coach McGuire and I want you to come to Carolina." I said, "Coach, I'd do it for you, but I don't know." I said, "I'll think about it."

He said, "Well where do you want to go?" I said, "Well I visited this little school in Tennessee called Fisk." And he laughed and he said, "Boy I graduated from there." He said, "Is that really where you want to go?" I said, "That's really where I want to go." Now, I applied through regular admissions. I hadn't heard anything yet. This was March I guess. And so he said, "You haven't heard anything?" He called the athletic director, great friend of his, Buss Thompson. My paperwork was in the mail that day. When I ended up at Fisk, Coach Thompson said, "Well we didn't think we were going to be able to get you to come here." He said, "But Coach Joe said you wanted to be here." I said, "Absolutely." He said, "Welcome to Fisk University." I received my entry over the phone.

He said, "We don't do athletic scholarships, but," he said, "I see you qualify for an academic." He said, "We have a certain number of academic slots for athletes, and you qualified." So that's how I got to Fisk University.

Tre Tailor: This is really going to be my last question. The team members eventually befriended because they saw you play ball?-

William Settle: Oh they befriended me, yeah. But they befriended me because they realized they could win with me. They realized that I didn't have to depend on them for anything. I was going to go out and go out full speed ahead regardless of what they do. And..but...They realized by my, I think by my sophomore year that I was more of a leader than anything else because I could see when they were starting to fail, and I would pick them up and demand more of them.

For example, we would be playing football and I could see where they would get tired. They would start to fade a little bit, and I would just look at them and I'd say, "We need to step this up. We're going to lose this game if we don't step it up." And they wouldn't respond, and I would just say, "Give me the ball, and get out the way." Bam, and I'm gone. And that's how I did most of it, but they pretty much allowed me to lead them and depended on me to lead them. I took the role. I took it willingly. I didn't have a problem with that.

Tre Tailor: So they accepted you on the field-

William Settle: They accepted me on the field.

Tre Tailor: Then they accepted you as far as standing up for you against other teams, but you were still by yourself at the lunch table?

William Settle: That first year yeah, but now by contrast, second year I'm President of student council, 10th grade. No, I was president of the sophomore class. Then by senior year, President of the student council. Again, you have to do more than just go to class. They accepted me as a leader on the court and on the field, but they also accepted me as a leader off the court as well, eventually. It just took a little time, that's all.

