

My name is Michael Stringer.
00:02
I'm from Cleveland, North Carolina.
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My mom and dad migrated from North Carolina to Detroit 'cause my daddy said he's tired
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of workin' for nothin'.
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So, they had jobs up there that paid, you know, so they moved to the North.
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They didn't move away from segregation.
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It's more segregated in the North than it is here.
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And my community, we been livin' around white farmers for a hundred years.
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So, they just couldn't go to school together or go to the movies together but if somebody
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had a baby, or somebody was sick, or somebody's cow was out, or he was sick and had to farm
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together, they did it.
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So, that part.
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But when we moved to Detroit (pfft) I probably guess I went to college before I really was
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around a lot of white people.
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As far as us going to school together you know.
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That song by Eminem about 8 mile.
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That's true.
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You step on, you go North of 8 mile you in Royal Michigan, Royal Oaks, all white.
00:59
You go south of 8 mile, you in Detroit.
01:02
That's just how I grew up.
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Here in a rural area like where I live at, you see, for 400 years they farmed together.
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They loaned each other tractors, or let me go help you get in your crops.
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So, black or white, it didn't matter.
01:16
Ms. Norene had cakes put away in her freezer and if somebody in your family got sick or
01:21
died or whatever, you were going to get a cake that day and more food later on.
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So they just supported one another like that.
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Gus Davidson had about 140 acres of land in that corner of Rowan County and he gave my
01:36
grandfather 20 acres of it.
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And so my grandfather was farming and built a house.
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He had moved back down from Cleveland, Ohio.
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He was farmin' that and then when he came back down with his children and found how
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far away it was really for them to go to school, he traded farms.
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He traded to another, to a guy, so he could move closer to it.
01:57
My mom..
01:58
They didn't have any land.
02:00
They were sharecroppers they entire life.
02:02
They didn't never own land.

02:04

So that's how we wound up with the property here.

02:08

I'm reading a story now, Poor Whites in the Antebellum South, and they picked, um,

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in the Central Piedmont, they mentioned Rowan County.

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How important Rowan County was to the Slave Trade, to agriculture, to all those things.

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How just important this place was.

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It's a reason why you know, the railroads, kinda, trails and everything, kinda funnel

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through here.

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I'm reading another book, Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism.

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Slave caravans, as they moved slaves from the Chesapeake into what, in 1810 they considered

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SouthWestern United States, you know.

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So, it was just this, to me, rich interesting story about how these people, people, not

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these people, were moved around.

03:02

Is that supposed to be the picture we have of slavery.

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And I'm not gonna sugar coat that in any type of way.

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The increases in cotton production was driven exponentially by torture.

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It was driven exponentially by ripping families apart.

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I think that's why I try to tie my children back more and more to, we had a family.

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You do belong.

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Um, we did contribute to the wealth of this country.

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We are contributing to the wealth of this country.

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My grandchildren, I would like for them to have a sense of place.

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Black people are torn away from their countries.

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We are..

03:48

What is my culture?

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My culture is what American culture is.

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If there is such thing as a true American, it has to be me.

03:56

You know that sense of building wealth now is.

04:01

How to you keep expanding and building wealth?

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Wealth is mostly located in property, in education, and so..

04:08

In family stability.

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My family's been here a long time.

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I love this place.

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I came here every summer from the time I was probably six, to when I left for the Airforce.

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And, the thing I liked about coming here for the summer -- you can see starts from treetop

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to treetop.

04:27

Even to this day, on a really clear, crisp night you can look up at my house to see the

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Milky Way.

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And I just felt – and being a city boy who moved – to come here in the open spaces and

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to hear birds and trees and this sense of.

04:43

This is my grandfather's farm.

04:45

This is where my dad lived.

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You know this is where my dad was born.

04:49

I can go to where my, where my mom was born.

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I can go and find those places and look at 'em and see 'em.

04:59

And so that just always gave me an anchor point.

05:03

A sense of place.

05:05

And I wanted my boys to have that.

05:08

This sense of place.

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You can't navigate the world until you get a sense of place.

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One of the things you find out in the Air Force is, every one of those planes goes to

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the end of the runway and they go and find Geodesic North.

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And from that, they can navigate anywhere in the world.

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So I wanted that for my boys.

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To say, hey, this is home.

05:38

From Salisbury, North Carolina, from Scotch Irish community, from Needmore and Foster

05:43

Rd, I can navigate anywhere in the world.

05:47

'Cause this is home.