

Interviewee: **Noah Waters**

Interviewers: **Ernest Demby, Ward Bucher, Ryan Craun**

Date of Interview: **(to follow)**

Location of Interview: **(to follow)**

List of Acronyms: **NW= Noah Waters, ED=Ernest Demby, WB=Ward Bucher, RC=Ryan Craun**

[Begin Transcript: 00:21]

ED: What's your name?

NW: Noah Waters

ED: Are you from this area?

NW: I am from Southern Maryland. Yes, I have family from the area.

ED: Really. So did you grow up in this area or visit?

NW: I did. My dad used to bring us here to go swimming. Yes. When I was a kid.

ED: Is your dad from around here?

NW: My dad is from the Eastern Shore of Maryland. My mom is from here.

ED: What do you remember most about this area from when you were a kid?

NW: This area was my grandparents area. I understand my grandparents lived.. I understand working with the initiator of the grant Ms. Linda Garoute, that Summerville Plantation was the first plantation of Prince George's county, and my grandparents lived on the road which was Aquasco Farm Road and Summerville was at the end of that.

ED: How long were they here?

NW: They were sharecroppers and I don't know the length of time they were here in the area, but I think my grandfather was from Washington D.C..

ED: Did they have work around here?

NW: They were sharecroppers. They worked a land.

ED: Do you know any cousins or any other relatives from around here?

NW: Yes. It's interesting. This area wasn't planned this way. It's like finding out that some of the history that has occurred in this area involves my family. My first cousin, I believe is great grandfather was Samuel Gray who was a trustee, who was partially involved in the first black episcopal churches in Prince George's County.

ED: Ok. Yeah, I think the last time we were here we took out to visit out to his house. I believe that was it.

NW: Yes.

ED: Did you ever visit is there when you were younger?

NW: No.

ED: Or get taken by there?

NW: No. I didn't know. It's was just a place. I had no idea that there was a family relevance.

ED: Right. There's actually a house around here called the "*Delilah Waters' House*".

NW: Ok.

ED: Remember that name?

NW: I don't know there was any relationship because the Waters name comes from the Eastern Shore of Maryland. So I don't know.

WB: So where did you actually grow up?

NW: Actually, I grew up in Charles County. I went to Charles County Schools. I was born in Prince George's County, but my father was a Pastor and he was a Pastor of a church in Charles County. So, when I was a kid to start school my experience was elementary school and Charles County and middle school in Charles County.

ED: Did your father did a lot of movement around a Pastor?

NW: Not a whole lot. He was quite active but it was mostly Charles County and Washington D.C..

ED: Never in town around here or anything like that?

NW: Yes, the churches that are around here. He visited these churches. He was a Chaplin in Cheltenham Facility. I remember on Sundays he would probably go to about 3 different services, officiated about 3.

ED: Remember those churches? The names of those churches?

NW: Well. The home church was Shiloh United Methodist Church in Charles County. I believe he was a Chaplin at the Cheltenham. I think there's like a detention facility. And I think Saint Matthews United Methodist Church in Charles County, I think in the Laplata area.

ED: When did he come to this area?

NW: I am not totally sure when my dad came to this area. There's a lot of us. I had a big family. So, I was like the next to the last so I am not sure.

ED: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

NW: Yes. I have, I had, it was nine of us. So, I had 3 sisters and 5 brothers.

ED: Are you the youngest? Oldest?

NW: I'm next to the youngest.

ED: Your family is a "religious" family?

NW: Pretty religious. They call us "PK's". Preacher's kids.

ED: Same here.

NW: You're a PK?

ED: Yes.

NW: Wow.

ED: My father is a Methodist preacher. Are you a minister?

NW: No. I do not have what they call "The Calling". It's not in me. Maybe I'll pass it on to someone else. But I respect what they do and people who have that.

ED: It's a calling for sure.

NW: Yes, it is.

ED: What are your hopes for the future for this area?

NW: This area is phenomenal. I came here, I was a police officer in Prince George's County and I was living further up the road, and things happening what they called a "Rent Deal". I remember one time coming home and it was like over the radio there was a car-jacking and my wife she would forget things and we were in an apartment and she left the keys in the door and the car-jacking occurred right outside of the door and if the people had come upstairs.. You know. So it was time to go. It was too much happening and this area is like really nice. I mean, it's quiet. And, a lot of people don't believe it's part of Prince George's County. I mean, you can hear at night, you can hear dogs barking in the other county which is about mile away across the river, and the dogs sound like they are in the backyard, so it's really nice. And we don't have much crime as the Mayor mentioned.

ED: How long ago were you an officer?

NW: That was officer on the Eastern Shore for a while. Then I was an officer at Prince George's County from 2005 to 2014.

ED: Did you go to school in this area?

NW: Yes, I attended Gwynn Park High School.

ED: Remember your story of your elementary school?

NW: That was middle school. I was talking about the principal. I was like a science, techy kind of guy. I loved Math, and I was in the most advance Math class. My father I believe he was the first "Black" on the Board of

Education of Charles County, appointed then by the Governor. It was a different time. I don't think the principal appreciated a black student being in the class. There was I guess an advance placement class for Math. So, he actually took me out of the class even though I was, you know, getting great grades in the class. No challenge. And, I didn't know because I was a kid to tell my dad. So it was just a type of racism and that was the practice then. It was like an engineering to predict the future, to take away an opportunity.

ED: Do you see that still happening in current?

NW: I think some things are pretty obvious. I have to be kind of careful of what I say, because I don't know what type of job opportunities that will have available in the future. But, I think people don't have to look far to see what is obvious today. They can make their own determination.

ED: What have you learned about this area?

NW: This area is enigmatic to me. It's very unusual. Because we know as of today, the origin of the United States, as we know of it today, came off of the Chesapeake. And this area is a tributary of the Chesapeake. So it's just full of history. The history that helped to form a lot of the country.

I had a great grandfather who was stationed next town over which was a predominantly black town. It was Fort Stanton in Benedict and he served under the Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Armstrong, I believe. Who was like pretty much involved in Hampton University eventually, and he was part of the colored troops. As I said, my grandparents lived where the first plantation of Prince George's County was, and then I'm learning through bonified historians that the first plantation of Prince George's County was Summerville Plantation which was on Eagle Harbor, I mean which was on Aquasco Farm Road where my grandparents lived. There's this on and on and on. As I mentioned my cousin involved as a trustee. But this area as far as living in Eagle Harbor, it's incredible. I really don't probably want to share that the people will come in and try and take advantage. It is quiet, it's a great place to be. It's relaxing, people get along, it's beautiful. What do you they call it "Pantheism", God and Nature? It's something. Millionaires can't buy this. It's naturally beautiful.

ED: Do you remember any stories from your grandparents?

NW: I think we talked about this. I think what happened, I don't know people going back talking about the movie *Harriet*. There where scenes about the guy putting on the blindfold so he couldn't see, so he wouldn't know, so he wouldn't have culpability to express, you know, if the slayed-master asked "Did you have knowledge of this?" ,then, because the more they knew the more they could be held responsible. So I think that tradition has passed down. And I think a lot of people are shy. And they still practice that type of tradition of not wanting to know history but I think that it pretty much had the inversed effect of what they probably want, because they think it probably strengthens whatever they are trying to protect. But, the history is not that, the history is a proud history, and it's important to know history. It's like flying in an aircraft, when you fly above you can see the landscape and you can see how everything is connect and connecting the dots so you can better plan your route. And in life you can better plan a route if you pretty much know where it leads. So, it is so important to know history, and that practice of believing that there are somethings you leave alone. I believe we need to know because if you don't know, people who know can control you.

ED: Do you think, like you were saying, people that they want to be blind to it? Do you think that they know it but it's not that they're blind, it's just that they know it and they want to keep it a secret?

NW: I think they know it, and I think that if it's a right forum, say maybe like a town hall type of forum and they're sitting down and conversing among each other and they don't feel on the spot. Because it maybe kind

of hard to people to come on camera because it's something new. That type of thing and they feel that maybe people can see down their souls or whatever it may have happened. But I think it will become cathartic in a way. The people once you turn that on and people start to express, and they start to let some of this out and I think that will be the hardest to turn that off. I think people have a lot to express.

ED: I feel like when we hear you talk about this town and its history, there is a pride you have about it.

NW: Oh yes.

ED: Do you think that they see it that way? Do you think that they're proud of it or do they view it as something else?

NW: I think the people who run in this town, who maintain this town are very proud of this town. And this town has a lot of possibility. I see the town is a small Williamsburg. It has all the trappings. I mean it has the river, it has the history. Maybe the town wasn't as opulent as it is now, but it has the potential. I feel that the inhabitants of the town and the officials of the town have been very responsible in a good way to maintain the town. I feel that steps, careful steps going forward, that we want to probably designate as far as any historical relevance of the town to maintain the identity of the town. So gentrification doesn't happen as such as it has happened in Washington D.C. for example and Benedict, where my great grandfather served. Those towns where predominantly one way and now because people with greater sums of money can come and would want of course to take advantage.

ED: Definitely through some mode of preservation.

NW: Yes.

ED: Is there anything that you wanted to say that you didn't get to?

NW: I think Mayor Crudup's vision for the town is spot on. I think the town has a lot of possibility. I think that we just have to step, you know, take our time and not progress too fast. But as the Mayor said that "sometimes slow growth is good growth". He suggested that and that we just need to be evolved. And we need to be involved, not only individuals in the town but as expertise outside of the town and an interests outside of the town. It's not based on so much as far as people expected to maintain the identity of the town being a specific ethnicity or race or anything like that. It's just that they see what it is, they respect that how it has maintained its history and they respect occurrences that have happened in history to make the town what it is today. And I think the people with good hearts will help to help us achieve the focus.

ED: Do you think that how the richness culturally and historically is what will help this town?

NW: Definitely.

ED: I think that it seems to be what this town can anchor on is definitely that rich culture and history.

NW: Yes. I think we need to have more of our celebrations in the town. I think we need develop as the Mayor suggested to develop business for the town. And I think there's great opportunity to do that and I think there are some ideas that can come about. And I think when politicians are coming to town, you see them and they are like in awe of the beauty of the town. I mean the natural beauty. I just think we are in a good spot if we are careful as the Mayor suggested, to slowly move forward. And I think the project again that Ms. Linda Moore-Garoute initiated. I think that's phenomenal and I think pretty much we're here because of that. I think there's a lot of possibility and I appreciate the expertise of your organization and all involved.

WB: Can you tell us a little bit about town events or celebrations that you have?

NW: Yes. The town event celebrations, usually they don't have them here, so we're hoping we can change that model. Maybe we could have tents that will face the river or something. This is just a suggestion and I hope I'm not speaking outside of my paygrade here as they say. But hopefully we can share the beauty of the town when we have the events. We do have some events here, I believe the *Martin Luther King* celebration occur here. And I think their plans to expand the community center. But I think people who would be involved at the expansion needs to see it because it's so beautiful. And I think the people who have taken to this point, as I said the Mayor has done a tremendous job and we really value their service because they give so much to the town and they dedicate so much of their time.

WB: Do the folks that live here, do they go to church up on Route-5 or where they attend?

NW: The folks that live here, I believe one family is Catholic. There are quite few Protestants in the area. I believe originally, maybe back, I don't know if, I know there was Episcopal Church on Saint Mary's Church road. The Antebellum period if the relationship between blacks, if they came to church, what that experience was. I know that it seems to be a Catholic base that has progressed to a more Methodist following.

ED: That's interesting.

RC: If you don't mind me, I'm kind of curious. What was one of your favorite memories of here?

NW: My favorite memories of here? I'm like an exercise junkie. I love to run. And it's just going out, I just like the beauty, I just like running up hills and just seeing it. A lot of people go to the gym and they get on treadmill like a mouse or a rabbit, and you go out and you move your body, it's incredibly beautiful. And it's quiet. And then again I have to give kudos to the Mayor because he really represents the town. He comes forward and he's like that strong figure that this type of town needs to maintain. But it's safe and I guess the secret will be out, but many people do not think that is part of Prince George's County. They can't believe that is part of Prince George's County. We get a bad, pretty much, you know, sensationalism cells as far as media, and a lot of times that negative is more sensational. But this is the positive and we have some great figures in the town. You have judges, residences, businesses, all types of people who are pretty phenomenal. I believe Mayor Bowser owns property. Her family, maybe not the mayor, but her family has some history in the town.

ED: When you say this town is an enigma, I think the diversity speaks to that. It seems, I would say, that racial tensions probably weren't as they were perceived in the outside of the boundaries of this town. I think it's a little bit different around here.

NW: So you hit on something I think we talked about earlier. So talking to my cousin who lived on Saint Mary's Church road where Wood Plantation was, which the town of Woodville, the name sake of that town which eventually which became Aquasco later on. She mentioned to me that the history coming down that there was no history of people being horsewhipped, as she called it. So it suggested to me that maybe there were some time of relationships, friendships and maybe even romantic relationships which developed during that time. Because part of my heritage is, you know, I had a grandfather. I believe that my grandfather was white. So I may be related to some of the young family. Because of that, to think outside of the box and people give us clues and we look at the clues and people pretty much tell you a lot of information. Sometimes when they don't realize when they do tell you a lot of information. I found it interesting that there was no history of being horsewhipped back in the times of slavery or whatever. Not to verify that because we can't verify that. We were not there. But still, because there was no passing on of that information, I found it quite interesting. And then when look at when someone passes away in the town and you go to a funeral and you walk into a funeral, I've gotten to the point that "I don't you, but you are related to me." Because everybody looks, you can see it, I mean you can see the bloodline. It's like something went on, something happened. I don't know if it was all forced and maybe a lot of it was. We have the Me Too Movement going on and that type of things, and we understand that phenomena. But I don't know if any of it also was some type of love relationship or romantic relationship, there was amicable, I don't know.

ED: The location of this area makes it seem like its a private area. I think that privacy allows for more openness. so it's very possible that that could be the case. Especially if you don't have anything to solidify or verify, "Yes. This is how it was back then". Very interesting perspective.

NW: Yes.

WB: So did the Civil Rights Movement change how life was happening here?

NW: I lived not far away. My dad was involved in civil rights as a minister. He actually marched with King. He went down to the Pettus Bridge. I need to go to the archives and actually find his footage with King because I remember him leaving the family and us as little kids we were so concerned about my dad's safety. That's what pastor's did.

RC: And what your father's name?

NW: Reverent James O'connell Waters. He was bigger than life to us. He was like a trailblazer.

ED: Well, he was marching with Martin Luther King.

NW: Yes. He was to give the speech for Kennedy when Kennedy was running for office, because he was attending Howard University. And, who is the guy that did the "Blood Plasma"? You know? Charles Drew. Charles Drew actually operated on my dad because he played football and he had an injury. So when he was supposed to give the speech for Kennedy to visit the college my dad got sick I believe and he didn't give the speech or something happened. But he's very active, very active in civil rights.

ED: Does that make you feel empowered in anyway?

NW: We grew up differently. I mean, we learned that everyone is equal. I never felt diminished. My dad instilled in us that if you want something, sometimes you have to fight for it. And a lot of things weren't a game. That we are all saved by grace. None of us are perfect. There was only one "Perfect One". Sometimes we have to go to that foundation. And I think a lot of times, I don't mean to get away from it but no matter where we are in world, we need to have something that's bigger than our problem.

ED: That's interesting because a lot of times you have to reach back to get that strength to forward.

NW: Yes, you have to reach back to get that strength. Because people who are doing things. They even do things to themselves because they buy into we call "labelling". They have no methodology, you keep putting oppression upon a person, after so long they may decide that's who they are. And a lot of times, I don't want to segway away too much but it's important. In this area, the Mayor when he has events he brings in Gospel groups. And I don't think it no so much about just the Gospel group with the Mayor, I think he pretty much task on the same message of something being bigger than the problem. Because we all in this life we gonna, you know.

ED: I understand.

WB: I thought that was great. So, you moved here when?

NW: In 2006.

WB: So you're a newbie, I guess?

NW: I'm a newbie. I am not an expert, or content expert here involved in the history. We do have like phenomenal individuals reading some of Ms. Garoute's students from the University of Maryland. They did research involving the area, and one thing I did want to touch upon that if anybody sees this that I would like to know more about a possibility of the Underground Railroad having some type of involvement in the area. Because they did touched upon that, and one surname they gave was Brook's last name, Brook's family's. Because I understand that there are like streams and tributaries and it would only make sense that that type of activity would happen here because you could escape, I guess on a watercraft and getaway. And I don't know if Harriet Tubman would be the prototype or if something would happen independently. When people, the natural quest for freedom that Humans have, it doesn't matter. I don't know if she's involved and maybe she was, but it would be very interesting for people to come forward to share. Because I personally would like to know if that was a part of what happened in the area, because it would seemed natural if it would have happened.

WB: So what route do you think if somebody was leaving here would they be going? Up the Chesapeake and trying to get to Philadelphia, or what do you think it was?

NW: Well, when you talk to Ms. Garoute, I think she's more of an expert on this. But I would think they would have many possibilities. I think that they would have a possibility to go further to the Chesapeake Bay, which may be more dangerous, or they could maybe traverse toward Washington D.C., and maybe, because Maryland was in division as far as the South. I'm not sure on the D.C., but maybe it would have been many opportunities to, I'm not really sure. I guess I would have to consult someone who has more expertise, and I think Ms. Garoute would probably be able to share more.

WB: Great.

NW: I think if I were to have that experience, I just think it would just be a natural. I think it's just natural for people to want to get out of bondage. And I think, probably the only things they would keep them in the area is if they had family, and they would sustain through the hardship of slavery. But if their family is being sold and they're being separated, I don't know what would hold that person in the area.

WB: So I'm curious you talked about Charles County which is just over the river, right?

NW: Well, that's Calvert County. So we have 4 counties. This is Prince George's, that's Calvert and right down the road you have Charles and Saint Mary's. So, you have 4 counties converging right here.

WB: And from talking to some folks, it sounds like there's a lot of interrelationship of people between all these areas.

NW: Aquasco seems to be different in that area because Saint Mary's County didn't seem to share as much in the mixing. It seemed to be something that happened for whatever reason more in Aquasco. And I don't know if Calvert County share as much in the mixing. And I don't know, I think Charles County did probably more, because you had families in Charles County. I think there was more of the mixing in Charles County similar. And even further up in Prince George's County it didn't seem that much more of the mixing. But I think it was something that pretty much definitely occurred in here, in Aquasco.

WB: So anything else that you think would be helpful to share?

NW: I think it's important that we go forward and we talked about Wilmer's Park, and we talked about adjacent areas. And I think Cedar Haven is like the "sister" town here. I believe we are stronger together, just like a moto. That's my thing. I guess if I were running for office, I'd say "we are stronger together". Because the histories are intertwined, and you really can't separate the histories. And if you take one away you weaken the other, but if you strengthen them both, they are strengthened together. So, I just hope in the future there's more working together in the communities. Even though this town is incorporated and it's a great model, and pretty much set the model and it's maintained for years. But because of I believe, as these types of communications get out, talking about the beauty of the town, how quiet it is, how safe it is, people are going to gravitate one like "Hey, maybe I need to come in". And usually who wins in that is the people who have the most money, but that may not always be the best for the town because you want to maintain an identity of the town. So, careful steps have to be taken. I think if any part of that is etched away like Cedar Haven or Eagle Harbor, because I believe developers will come and I believe they've always had the eyes on Eagle Harbor and Cedar Haven. But we need to be careful because we need to work with steak holders, politicians and citizens of the town and just have a very careful progress going forward to try to maintain the history. I want to see the gentrification as I said, which has happened in the Nation's Capital.

ED: I think preserving is what we are doing now by trying to preserve the history is what is going to protect that. It's a historic area but the more places we get and that inventory, the better. We would be able to preserve it.

WB: Ms. Linda did you have any questions. Ms. Julie?

[Female voices conversing]

WB: That's a wrap!

ED: That's a wrap! Thank you, sir. Appreciate it.

[End Transcript: 47:46]