



## **Interview with James W. Parker Jr.**

**Under the Auspices of the  
Monmouth County Library Headquarters  
125 Symmes Drive, Manalapan, N.J.  
Flora T. Higgins, Project Coordinator**

**Date of Interview: June 23, 2000**

**Name of Interviewer: June West**

**Premises of Interview: 179 Shrewsbury Avenue, Red Bank, NJ**

**Birthdate of Subject: April 20, 1919**

**Ms. West:** Dr. Parker, Jr. is a practicing physician in Red Bank. Hello, Doctor Parker.

**Dr. Parker:** Hello.

**Ms. West:** Would you just give us your name, Doctor, and tell us something about yourself, your family, your mom, your dad, your siblings.

**Dr. Parker:** My name is Dr. James W. Parker, Jr. I was born in Red Bank, New Jersey at my present residence, 175 Shrewsbury Avenue, in Red Bank, in 1919. My parents were Dr. James W. Parker, Sr., and my mother was Marie Parker. They met at Howard University in 1917.

**Ms. West:** Where is Howard University?

**Dr. Parker:** Howard University is in Washington, D.C. My father graduated from Howard University in 1911, received a BA degree, and my mother went to Howard University, actually Howard Normal, because in those days the women went to Normal school, rather than the University. They met and were married in 1918. My father came to Red Bank in 1919. He had worked on the boats that came from New York to Red Bank and thereby became acquainted with the town of Red Bank and he opened his office here in 1919.

**Ms. West:** You say he worked on the boats. Was this during the summertime when he was in college?

**Dr. Parker:** Right. And he came to Red Bank at the time of the flu epidemic, which was the swine flu epidemic, which in those days many people died of. He received his reputation for treating people during that epidemic. I went to grammar school in Red Bank, at the Riverstreet School Grammar School. At that time, when I was a youngster in Red Bank, the West side of Red Bank was a mixed community comprised of Italians, Jewish people, Polish people, and we had a beautiful community at that time. There were very few Blacks in Red Bank, and so all of my playmates were of mixed ethnic backgrounds. I remember that during my school years we had beautiful teachers. All of my teachers, however, were white. I had a sister who was thirteen months younger than I. I can remember that the worst thing that could have happened to me was for me to fail, because in those days if you didn't do your work, you were left back. I finished Riverstreet Grammar School and went to Red Bank High School on Harding Road, which is now the middle school in Red Bank. My fondest memories are of my teachers. One of my most unfortunate memories is the fact that there were few Black students in Red Bank at that time because there were very few Black families at that time. Another most unfortunate memory is the fact that when I would go to the theater I would have to leave my classmates who sat downstairs in that theater and I had to go upstairs and sit in the right hand side of the balcony. I played basketball in high school; in fact I was captain of my high school basketball team for two years. When I graduated from high school I went to Howard University in Washington, D.C. and I did my undergraduate work there.

**Ms. West:** As a youngster did you like to read books?

**Dr. Parker:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. West:** Did you have a favorite author?

**Dr. Parker:** Well, I liked to read history. I liked to read medieval history; I was enthralled with reading medieval history. I also was exposed to what could be considered to be now, Black history. We were not taught Black history in school, so my exposure to Black history came from going to the library and from books that we had around the house to learn about some of our forefathers, mainly Booker T. Washington, Frederick Douglass, Washington Carver. And it's unfortunate that total history wasn't taught to us in school.

**Ms. West:** You mentioned about going to the movies and the movie being segregated. Do you remember the first movie that you ever saw?

**Dr. Parker:** Probably Tom Mix.

**Ms. West:** Who was Tom Mix?

**Dr. Parker:** He was a cowboy. Cowboy movies. I remember, of course, Tarzan movies, with Johnny Weissmuller, and I can remember specifically going to the Strand Theater here in Red Bank, which was also segregated. Blacks were allowed to sit in the last ten rows on the right hand side in the back of the theater. My sister and I took piano lessons from Miss Grace Malchoir, a white music teacher, and she wanted us to see a musical in the theater. My father didn't want my sister and me to go because he didn't want us to be segregated in that theater, but we cried, and finally he allowed us to go the theater. He sat us in the middle row of the middle section of the theater, and threatened anybody who put their hands on us, and that was a miserable movie to look at because we expected to be escorted out of the theater at any time. The Carlton Theater, which I had mentioned previously, is what is now the Count Basie Theater, named after Count Basie, who was born in Red Bank, and who was good friend of my family.

**Ms. West:** Who was Count Basie?

**Dr. Parker:** Count Basie was the bandleader who left Red Bank and went to Kansas City and had one of the most famous bands in the land. He was born here on Mechanic Street in Red Bank. His aunt was my babysitter when I was a youngster. My father was born in Aiken, South Carolina in 1888. His father, Stafford Parker, was born in slavery. He married an ex-slave named Josephine James and they moved to Jacksonville, Florida. My father had two brothers. One became a dentist in Englewood, New Jersey and the other became a pharmacist in Hampton, Virginia. My uncle in Hampton, Virginia was a track star; he graduated from Columbia University in New York. He taught track at Hampton University and opened up his pharmacy in Hampton for many years. So actually I'm proud of the fact that three boys born of slave parents were able to finish school and become professionals. Each brother had two children. My sister finished Howard University a year after I did and married a music professor who went to Howard, and he became the music director at Union University in Richmond, Virginia, and my sister was the music director of choirs in Richmond, Virginia until she died. She has a daughter, who is my niece; she teaches at Virginia State in communications at the present time.



**(left to right) Dr. James Parker, Sr., Count Basie, and Ed Jones**

**Ms. West:** Is that a college or a university?

**Dr. Parker:** Virginia State University. When I was in high school, I had the advantage over most youngsters my age because my father was a doctor. I can remember the Depression of 1929. I was ten years old in 1929, and I can remember grown men standing in line to receive food from food kettles. I can

remember walking along the railroad track in Red Bank to pick up coal to put in the furnace. My first job was with an auto repair person who was a patient of my father. My father got me the job, and I would simonize two cars a day for the salary of five dollars a week. And I can remember that. I used to pick apples as a youngster on the farms around Red Bank, particularly in Middletown, and compete with the older men when I would climb the ladder. I picked the apples for a penny and a half a bushel.

**Ms. West:** Was it mostly farm area around here?

**Dr. Parker:** When I was a youngster, yes, it was farmland all around Red Bank. My father and mother built a house and they called it out in the country, which was on Sycamore Avenue in Tinton Falls, and now it is a built up community. But in those days that was considered out in the country.

**Ms. West:** Were there any people in Monmouth County who had any particular influence in your life?

**Dr. Parker:** My father had the most influence in my life. And there were quite a few people, too, older people in Red Bank who influenced me.

**Ms. West:** And how?

**Dr. Parker:** There was a dentist by the name of Dr. Dabney who was the first Black dentist I think probably in Monmouth County. My godfather was Dr. E.A. Robinson who was a physician in Asbury Park. In fact, when I was a youngster, we did not have access to the hospitals in Red Bank. I was born on Bank Street here in Red Bank, and my father delivered me. My sister was born in my house on Shrewsbury Avenue and Dr. Robinson delivered her. And my father delivered most of his patients at home. It wasn't until I came back from the Korean War in 1953 that I was able to deliver patients in Monmouth Medical Center.

**Ms. West:** Were you able to admit patients to Monmouth Medical Center?

**Dr. Parker:** Not at that time, not before - there was not a Black doctor on the staff of Monmouth Medical Center or Riverview Hospital. At that time Riverview Hospital was a little house. And I can remember there was a doctor by the name of Dr. Hazard who had a small hospital on Washington Street in Long Branch and that's where Black women had their babies.

**Ms. West:** Well, if a Black person had an illness that warranted hospitalization, where did he go?

**Dr. Parker:** You treated them mostly at home. If they went to a hospital, you had to refer them to a white doctor.

**Ms. West:** So was this something that was going on throughout the county?

**Dr. Parker:** As far as I know, because there were not Black doctors on the staff at Fitkin Hospital, which is known now as Jersey Shore Medical Center, and there were none on the staff at Monmouth Medical Center - in fact, the only Black doctor in Long Branch was Dr. McKelvie. The Black doctors in Asbury Park at that time were Dr. Joe Carter, Dr. E.A. Robinson. Dr. Parks preceded all of them at that time, and my father here in Red Bank; they were the only Black doctors in Monmouth County. And none of them were on the staff at any hospital.

**Ms. West:** How do you see medicine today as opposed to back then?

**Dr. Parker:** Oh, it's much improved. I can remember, of course I remember medicine before antibiotics. I graduated from medical school at Howard University in 1944. I did my internship at Freeman's Hospital and I can remember when penicillin, the first true antibiotic came out in the early 1940s. When I started practicing medicine in Red Bank, about 1947, I can remember having a patient with meningitis who I treated at home.

**Ms. West:** Not in a hospital.

**Dr. Parker:** Not in a hospital. My father never delivered a baby in the hospital and he practiced from 1919 until he died in 1973. He practiced almost until the day he died.

**Ms. West:** Here in the town of Red Bank.

**Dr. Parker:** Here in the town of Red Bank.

**Ms. West:** So then it really hasn't been that long, when you think in terms of time, that the Black physicians could use the services of the hospitals here in the county.

**Dr. Parker:** That's true. I can remember when I was invited to join the staff, I remember like it was yesterday. I'd come back from Korea, I'd been practicing about five years and I had my last year in medical school under the ASTP program -

**Ms. West:** What does that stand for?

**Dr. Parker:** I don't really know, but I was in the Army, I graduated, and they needed doctors during World War II, and I was in medical school during World War II, and they were all drafted in the Army as medical students. I received my last year of medical school as a private first class in the Army.

**Ms. West:** Private first class.

**Dr. Parker:** Yes. And when I graduated from medical school, I graduated as a second lieutenant. And when I was finished and doing my residency, the war came to an end. I did my residency in a community hospital in Norfolk, Virginia. And when the armistice was declared, I resigned my commission at the completion of the war, came back to Red Bank and started practicing. The Korean Conflict broke out -

**Ms. West:** What year was that, do you recall?

**Dr. Parker:** In 1950. Because I had received my education, my last year of medical school in the Army, I was subject to draft in the military. I either had to volunteer or be drafted, so I volunteered and was sent to Brook Army Hospital in San Antonio, Texas and received my army training and within two months I was in Korea. And I stayed there for two years, and then rotated to Japan, where I was in hospitals in Tokyo, Yokohama, and Osaka. And when I returned home, after getting out of the Army, I had had quite a lot of experience overseas. I was in a battalion aide station. I gave a lecture at the hospital here in Red Bank, Riverview, and I was invited to join the staff.

**Ms. West:** What year was that?

**Dr. Parker:** 1953 or 1954.

**Ms. West:** Were there any Black physicians on the staff, or were you the first one?

**Dr. Parker:** No. I was the first Black physician.

**Ms. West:** On the staff of Riverview Hospital -

**Dr. Parker:** And Monmouth Medical Center.

**Ms. West:** And Monmouth Medical. Riverview now is a part of Meridian Systems, which is a conglomerate of many hospitals.

**Dr. Parker:** I and Dr. Wiley, who was a practicing physician in Red Bank at that time, both joined the staff at Monmouth Medical Center about the same time.

**Ms. West:** How were you all accepted at the hospital with the staff itself?

**Dr. Parker:** All right. No problem. My father's practice was mainly white. Because they said in those days the community would revert to Black. And when I graduated from Red Bank High School, there were only about six Blacks in my class who graduated.

**Ms. West:** Is there any location here in Monmouth County that has any personal significance to you?

**Dr. Parker:** In what way?

**Ms. West:** Any way. Something that has meaning to you.

**Dr. Parker:** I can remember things that I would rather forget about Monmouth County, if that's what you want to hear.

**Ms. West:** Anything that you'd like to say.

**Dr. Parker:** When I was a student in grammar school in Red Bank, I can remember that students in Fair Haven, which is only a mile or two from Red Bank, were going to a one room segregated school in Fair Haven from the kindergarten to the eighth grade and were taught by two teachers. One teacher's name was Nancy Fields, the other teacher's name was Mr. Horace Booker. And I hold them in high regard.

**Ms. West:** Why is that?

**Dr. Parker:** Because they taught those youngsters in Fair Haven as well as any student could be taught, and prepared them to come to Red Bank High School when they graduated from the ninth grade in Fair Haven. I have fond memories of a Mrs. Fields' sister, Mahala Fields, who did the same thing in Reevytown; she taught all the youngsters who lived in Reevytown and Pine Brook, you know one school -

**Ms. West:** What is Reevytown, or where is it?

**Dr. Parker:** It's a country town right out between Eatontown and Asbury Park, west of Asbury Park and west of Eatontown, out in the country. You might not know this, but Pine Brook was an underground railroad station. Pine Brook was founded by escaped slaves who intermingled with the Sand Hill Indians, and with the families that I grew up with and descendents of whom I still treat. Those are the people Mahala taught. Mahala Fields subsequently married a Reverend Atchison, and there is a beautiful school on Sycamore Avenue in Tinton Falls named after Mahala Atchison.

**Ms. West:** How did Reevytown get its name?

**Dr. Parker:** From a family of Reevys.

**Ms. West:** Was the family connected with the underground railroad?

**Dr. Parker:** Part of it. They settled out there and the large family of Reevys are scattered all over Monmouth County at the present time. There are Reevys in Fair Haven, Reeveys in Eatontown. The Richardsons, the McGuires, the Dalhamous, the Berrys, and all of these people were descendents of escaped slaves. The church in Reevytown was started by the people who lived out there, and it was first called, in fact Reevytown. I mean, Pine Brook was called originally Macedonia, and Macedonia AME Zion Church was established. But interestingly, before it was established they used to have preachers come by horseback on Sundays to preach to the residents out there. And I had the original log of that church. It was given to me by a man by the name of Peter Rock. Now the Rocks were settled about in that area. Mr. Rock was the first Black printer in Monmouth County. He was the son of old man Peter Rock, who was the son of a slave, and he was the first printer right up here on West Bergen Place here in Red Bank.

**Ms. West:** The first printer?

**Dr. Parker:** The first Black printer.

**Ms. West:** The first Black printer.

**Dr. Parker:** The first Black printer here in Monmouth County. And his son was the one who gave me this log. I can't remember who I gave it to, but I haven't gotten it back. It's very interesting; it had all the names of all the parishioners of this church and it's interesting to me because it gives origins of the families who I've treated for over fifty years. And I can show them where their lineage is. That was interesting. Now you asked me some of the interesting things that I did when I was a kid.

**Ms. West:** I was also going to ask you about the physical changes that have taken place in the county.

**Dr. Parker:** Terrific physical changes. I can remember a street car that went right by this house. And it stopped right here at Newman Springs Road -

**Ms. West:** Now you're speaking of a streetcar?

**Dr. Parker:** A trolley car -

**Ms. West:** Okay, I was going to ask if it ran on a track. Okay. A trolley car.

**Dr. Parker:** I can remember that. I can remember the bus was called the Belt Line. And the driver of the bus was named Mr. Fred Matthews. It would start up here at Newman Springs Road. I can remember when Shrewsbury Avenue went as far as Newman Springs Road and then it was a country road. And I can remember the only way you could get to Asbury Park from Red Bank was to go

through West Long Branch. I can remember before there was such a thing as Highway 35.

**Ms. West:** Do you recall about what year it was when the trolley cars were running?

**Dr. Parker:** It had to be about 1924, 1925, 1926, somewhere in there.

**Ms. West:** And the trolley car ran from Newman Springs Road to where?

**Dr. Parker:** All the way to Fair Haven.

**Ms. West:** To Fair Haven.

**Dr. Parker:** That was your means of transportation. I can remember when they had the pumping station where the trains would get water by the station down here, where they'd have to pump water into the train -

**Ms. West:** Were these are trains traveling interstate?

**Dr. Parker:** No. Not interstate. It was just between here and Long Branch and Asbury and Perth Amboy.

**Ms. West:** Oh, you're talking about the railroad chain -

**Dr. Parker:** There was no such thing as electric trains, you know that.

**Ms. West:** Oh, yes, yes.

**Dr. Parker:** So the trains used to have a turntable right down here where the train would stop here, and then the engineer would turn the train around. You'd take the engine off and then turn the engine around. We used to go out there and turn the engines around -

**Ms. West:** Oh, something like the cable cars in San Francisco?

**Dr. Parker:** Yes, yes. Then they come on the other end of the train. And then the train used to have to stop at Perth Amboy because that's when it would become electric, the electric only came about as far as Perth Amboy. It was a coal train from here all the way down to the seashore. I can remember when the ice on the river used to get two feet thick.

**Ms. West:** Two feet thick?

**Dr. Parker:** Yes. Two feet thick. The airplanes would land on the river.

**Ms. West:** Airplanes coming from where?

**Dr. Parker:** Casey's field here just above Newman Springs Road where Shrewsbury Avenue keeps on going now-

**Ms. West:** Is that part of Red Bank?

**Dr. Parker:** No, it's Tinton Falls.

**Ms. West:** Oh, that's Tinton Falls, okay.

**Dr. Parker:** There'd be an airplane field there where Casey had a one winged airplane and he used to fly all over.

**Ms. West:** Who was Casey?

**Dr. Parker:** He was a pilot. We used to call it Casey's Field. And Casey would take you up if you wanted to pay him and he'd fly around to look over Red Bank and such - and often times he would land in people's houses because he couldn't make the field, and he'd land on the ice, too. Red Bank was the ice boating capital of Monmouth County at that time. And we used to skate, and every kid, even during the Depression, had a pair of ice skates and a Flexible Flyer.

**Ms. West:** Can I ask you what is a Flexible Flyer?

**Dr. Parker:** It's a sled.

**Ms. West:** Oh, okay.

**Dr. Parker:** And we used to take the skates and take a kite and start up there at Newman Springs Road on the river and sail down the river on your ice skates and your sled. We'd go down to where Marine Park is where Riverview Hospital is now. All the way down almost to Fair Haven. And sometimes there were cars out on the ice when it was so thick.

**Ms. West:** Really?

**Dr. Parker:** I'm telling you. Now winters in the past provided more ice on the river than in recent years. One winter, in my youth, we had thirty inches of ice on the river.

**Ms. West:** That's two and a half feet!

**Dr. Parker:** That's right. That's right. They would rough shod a horse and they'd carry coal from Red Bank to Fair Haven on the river.

**Ms. West:** Because the ice was so thick.

**Dr. Parker:** That ice was so thick. And they used to have iceboat regatta on Red Bank's ice - on Shrewsbury River. We called it Navesink river. I can remember my neighbor who lived right up the street here. Once when she was down there skating on the ice, Casey came with that airplane and landed on the ice and the propeller killed her. Ran right into this woman. Her name was Hannihan, Grace Hannihan. Her brother tried to save her, and he lost his arm. He died a few years ago. The propeller hit her and killed her. Her husband is the one who built this house.

**Ms. West:** That's a nice piece of history.

**Dr. Parker:** So we don't see the ice on the river anymore. The youngsters used to do what the youngsters don't do now; that is they had fun. Out in the open, on the ice, and in the river. We used to crab, get a rowboat, go out on the river and crab. We'd spend all day out there, having fun. When winter came, you'd get on the ice and skate on the river and you'd have fun. You didn't have to go inside to have fun and do the things that happen when you come inside. I didn't smoke my first cigarette until I went away to college, and I didn't know anybody in high school who smoked. I didn't smoke until I thought I was grown, when I went away to college.

**Ms. West:** Well, tell me, speaking of your youth, did you have any favorite radio programs that you liked to listen to?

**Dr. Parker:** I listened to Amos and Andy and all those kind of people.

**Ms. West:** What kind of music did you like?

**Dr. Parker:** I love music; I'm a music enthusiast. I play the piano.

**Ms. West:** Yes, you mentioned that you and your sister took piano lessons.

**Dr. Parker:** I just love music.

**Ms. West:** All kinds of music?

**Dr. Parker:** Not this new jazz; I don't like that. I like music I can hum to and that has some words to it that have some meaning. I don't like this loud rock and I don't like what this is supposed to be, new jazz. I don't like that. I like the old band music. And songs that you can hum and with some meaning to it.

**Ms. West:** I know what you're talking about. What's the first newspaper headline that you can remember. Something that has stood out in your mind?

**Dr. Parker:** When Lindbergh landed in Paris.

**Ms. West:** Who was Lindbergh?

**Dr. Parker:** You don't know who Charles Lindbergh was?

**Ms. West:** I know who Charles Lindbergh was, but maybe somebody listening to this, or reading this someday may not know.

**Dr. Parker:** Oh, I see. He was the first solo plane to go from United States to Europe. He flew solo from right outside of New York, Long Island somewhere, and landed in Paris. Everybody knew he had taken off and everybody was holding their breath to see if he'd make it to Paris. And I can remember exactly where I was when I heard it. Right out there playing kick the can out on Leonard Street there, and the word came out that Lindbergh had landed in Paris.

**Ms. West:** You mentioned the game kick the can! Out of all the people I have interviewed, everybody speaks of hide and go seek and what have you, and in fact this past Monday I did ask a man I was talking with in West Long Branch, "Did you ever hear of a game called kick the can?" And of course he said, "Yes." But of all the people, nobody ever mentioned it, and this is one of the games that we used to play all the time. You're the first person who has ever mentioned it. If you could describe your life as a road map, how would you describe it?

**Dr. Parker:** I've been lucky. A pretty straight road. I've had a good life. I married my first wife the day after I graduated from medical school. Her name was Alice Williams; she was from St. Louis, and we went together all the time I was in college. I married her the day after I graduated from medical school. We had two sons; she died two years ago. I was married to her fifty-four years.

**Ms. West:** Do you have any grandchildren?

**Dr. Parker:** Yes, six grandchildren.

**Ms. West:** Are your sons living in New Jersey?

**Dr. Parker:** Yes. One's right here with me now, and the other is in Orlando, Florida. He's in security. I've had my ups and downs, but I've had it easy, and I've had it enjoyable.

**Ms. West:** Oh, that's good. If you could choose a symbol to depict your life, what symbol would you choose?

**Dr. Parker:** They tell me I'm a Taurus and I act like one. They tell me I'm tough. I don't think I am. After people get to know me, they know I'm not. But from what they tell me my outward appearance is that I'm too Taurus.

**Ms. West:** So you say your appearance is what you believe really. What would you say was your greatest achievement in life?

**Dr. Parker:** I've been on a lot of boards, you know. I was Chairman on the Board of Social Services in Monmouth County for about sixteen years. And I enjoyed that; I think I did a lot of good there. I've been rewarded for what I've done. I've tried to be a good doctor, and I have sympathy for my patients. I feel their pain, a lot. One of the reasons I feel their pain is I've had so much of what they've had, and been able to deal with it. And I'm still maintaining, unless you feel somebody's pain, you don't know what pain is. You don't know what they're complaining about.

**Ms. West:** Is your life different today than what you thought it might have been as a child?

**Dr. Parker:** I think I've been on the road map ever since I was a child. As I told you, my grandfather was a doctor, my mother's father was a doctor in Winchester, Kentucky. He was a grand old man. I remember him. So when I was in grammar school, I was preparing to be a doctor.

**Ms. West:** And you boys wanted to be physicians?

**Dr. Parker:** That's right.

**Ms. West:** Was there anything that you would have liked to accomplish that you haven't?

**Dr. Parker:** Not in particular. I wish I could have been able to play more musical instruments beside the piano, but I broke my arm as a youngster and there's certain things that I can't do with my left arm.

**Ms. West:** Do you do much playing of the piano today?

**Dr. Parker:** I play a lot. For my own enjoyment.

**Ms. West:** So what would you say would be your legacy to your family?

**Dr. Parker:** That they complete that health center up there. I think that would be one - they have great plans for that health center. And it's for people who can't afford medical care.

**Ms. West:** Is this a building that they are erecting or is this a building that they are converting?

**Dr. Parker:** They've started in a trailer up there, but they plan to purchase a building.

**Ms. West:** And what street is that on?

**Dr. Parker:** It's on Shrewsbury Avenue.

**Ms. West:** Shrewsbury and what?

**Dr. Parker:** It's on Shrewsbury, right between Catherine Street and River Street on Shrewsbury Avenue.

**Ms. West:** What would you say is your greatest strength?

**Dr. Parker:** I don't know that I'm that strong. I like to deal with people. I think I would have been a good teacher, and I try to teach as I practice medicine. And my patients will tell you that. And I like to encourage youngsters to learn. I like to encourage youngsters to prepare themselves for what they do not know that is ahead of them, and to give them some idea that if they are not prepared to take opportunities that present themselves to them, that they are going to have a tough road. Of course a lot of the youngsters think I talk too much, and I chastise them too much, but I think somebody has to do it.

**Ms. West:** Does the state of the world today bother you?

**Dr. Parker:** Yes, it bothers me.

**Ms. West:** How is that?

**Dr. Parker:** Because I think that too many people live for the day and don't think about tomorrow. It also bothers me when I look at my immediate surroundings and see how man is unwittingly greedy. Man is destroying this universe, not this universe, but this earth. And if we're not careful, it's going to be barren. We can't do some of the things that we do to ourselves and to our environment if we plan to preserve it. I'm concerned about that.

**Ms. West:** If a youngster, say one of your grandchildren, came to you asking for advice, what would you tell him or her?

**Dr. Parker:** First thing I'd tell them is to read everything that they can. Prepare yourself. Educate yourself. Because without education, you're lost.

**Ms. West:** Are your grandchildren aware of their family history?

**Dr. Parker:** They're aware of it. I don't know whether they appreciate it or not. I don't think youngsters realize, particularly our youngsters, and when I talk about our youngsters I mean Black youngsters, realize from whence they have come. And I didn't until I was grown. I wasn't a stupid kid, but I wasn't aware of a lot that I should have been aware of had I only been taught. My greatest awakening was

when I went to Charleston, South Carolina. My former wife had a class reunion; she attended college in Alabama, at Talladega before she went to Howard, and some of the students that went to school with her in Talladega had a reunion in Charleston, South Carolina, and I grudgingly went to this reunion. One of the things that we did when we were in South Carolina was to go to the meeting place center; it's a theater in South Carolina, where they showed the history of Charleston. As you know, Charleston was one of the slave markets. And there were about maybe twenty of us Blacks in that theater, filled with whites, and they gave the documentary of Charleston. And they gave credit to the Black slaves who did all that architectural work in Charleston. All that iron work that survives today, all the stained glass windows that are in those churches in Charleston, that withstood the Hugo hurricane, were built by Blacks. The program gave credit to the Blacks for teaching farmers how to plant rice, which is a staple in South Carolina. As far as I knew, and I told you I was good in history, the staple in South Carolina was cotton, and I came to find out it was rice. They gave credit to a Black slave for inventing the indigo dye industry in Charleston. They gave all that. I walked out of there with my chest high.

**Ms. West:** I know you did.

**Dr. Parker:** I didn't know those things, and none of our kids know them. A lot of our youngsters are down on Black churches right now. And a lot of them don't go to church because they think it's beneath them, that there's just a lot of singing and whooping and hollering. They don't know that if it weren't for the churches, the slaves could not have made it. And I still say that a lot of the reason that Blacks have a different high blood pressure than whites is because of suppressed hostility. And it's almost about to be proved that that is true. We have discovered that there is a hormone produced in the kidneys that's sensitive to Blacks that doesn't necessarily apply to whites. The angio tension converting enzyme Ace, and that's why Ace inhibitors are better for Blacks with hypertension than whites with hypertension. They don't realize what Blacks have had to go through to reach where we are today. And they will never know unless they study and learn. Unless someone tells them. Because they start from here, not realizing what it took to get them to this place. Now they have advantages that their fore parents never even thought possible. And they're not taking advantage of it.

**Ms. West:** That's the sad part of it all, not taking advantage.

**Dr. Parker:** It is. And I give youngsters the devil, particularly young Blacks. They wouldn't any more want a white person, white boy to beat them playing basketball than the man on the moon. They just assume, they know they're better. Basketball players. It's evident by what you see on TV. They practice; they fight like mad to be better.

**Ms. West:** But there's academics.

**Dr. Parker:** Those same youngsters don't care whether they're better in the classroom.

**Ms. West:** That's because they're not taught. That stems from the home; their parents should be teaching them.

**Dr. Parker:** Of course. But you see, the advantages are out there, but you can only take advantage of something if you're prepared to accept it, or receive it.

**Ms. West:** Oh, yes, and only what they're exposed to. People need encouragement. They should be getting it.

**Dr. Parker:** When you ask me about some of the things I'm concerned about, it's also the money that they're making. And not doing anything with it. Now we have that club right there, Monmouth County Men's Club. We went to Trump Castle and stayed overnight. It's the first time I've ever been to Trump Castle; we stayed at the Taj Mahal. Glamour. Doors made of marble, chandeliers big as this room. Now we went there to spend our money. You got Blacks making millions of dollars now, and they don't own anything. Very little do we own that we can attract our money. This is what I'm concerned about. And it disturbs me that they're making all that money and not spending it wisely.

**Ms. West:** It bothers me also.

**Dr. Parker:** You know I volunteer at the same church I was christened in eighty-one years ago. I still go to the same church and I believe do unto others as you'd have them do unto you.

**Ms. West:** Dr. Parker, with that note we will conclude our interview, and I want to thank you very much.