

Excerpt from Oral History Interview with Yvonne Brathwaite Burke

Yvonne Brathwaite Burke was interviewed by Keith Rice in 2013 as part of the Politics focus in the Bradley Center's African-American Life in Los Angeles oral history project. Burke was the first African-American woman to serve as an elected representative on the west coast of the United States. In this clip, she discusses a childhood memory in which a teacher she was close to lied about a class field trip, leaving Yvonne behind.

Transcript:

YBB: Yeah. So they--But we were all friends. I had one bad experience, though.

KR: When is this?

YBB: The Honor Society.

KR: In high school?

YBB: Uh huh, Was going to Pop's Willow Lake which is up Sepulveda Dam, it was a for a Saturday, for a big recreation.

KR: OK.

YBB: So, we were all going on a bus. We were to meet at the school at Saturday morning. I got there and there was another Black girl who was in Honors in [inaudible], the Women's Honor Society--

KR: OK.

YBB: --as well. So, we got there and there was no one there but me and the other Black girl. And we sat and sat and so finally she--she lived close to school. So we went to her house and her mother said, "I'm going to call out there to Pop's Willow Lake and see if they allow Blacks." And they said, "No I'm sorry, we don't allow Blacks here."

[Pause]

YBB: Umm

KR: And this is 1940?

YBB: This is 1949.

KR: So, what happened with the other kids, the bus--

YBB: They went early. The teachers--The principal changed the time.

KR: And didn't tell you guys.

YBB: Didn't tell us.

KR: How did you feel?

YBB: Horrible. I was mad. So the--And 'cause this was a principal, vice-principal who did this who used to take me to the Philharmonic 'cause she went to the concerts every night and my folks would

drive me over to her house in View Park. And she would take me to the Philharmonic during the week sometimes, even during school days, school nights.

KR: Wow.

YBB: So, that you know, I would go to the concerts with her. And, you know, I mean, so I was really upset with her. So I was sitting there when she got to work.

KR: And what happened?

YBB: And she said, "Well Yvonne, I just didn't want to embarrass you." I said, "Embarrass me? You humiliated me." Anyway we had it out.

KR: You and her had it out?

YBB: Yes, we had it out 'cause she's, "I just didn't want to hurt you. I didn't want to hurt you." I said, "You humiliated me. How could you do this to me? You have me sitting out there on a Saturday morning and everybody's gone and I sitting there by myself."

KR: I can only imagine how you would feel. How--What did your parents--What did--How did they--

YBB: They were really upset.