

Interviewee- Geoi K. Williams

Interviewer- Jenny McDonald

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Home of Geoi "GK" Williams, [REDACTED] Valdosta, GA

Transcript by Alden W. Force

Jenny McDonald: Can you spell your name for me?

Geoi Williams: Yes it's G-E-O-I K Williams, and that's pronounced "Joy", but I usually go by "GK".

JM: What's the address here?

GW: [REDACTED]

JM: Where were you born?

GW: Albany, Georgia

JM: And your birthday?

GW: December 5th – you want the year?

JM: Yes

GW: 1979.

JM: How many people are in your family?

GW: My immediate family?

JM: Yes.

GW: Now it's just my mom and my sister and brother

JM: How old is your sister and what's her name?

GW: My sister is 28 and her name is Katrina

JM: *unintelligible* and your brother?

GW: His name is Jamal, he's 10.

JM: Do you know your ethnic heritage?

GW: My father is German *unintelligible*

JM: And what kind of musical background do you have?

GW: Gospel.

JM: Gospel?

GW: Mhmm

JM: What church?

GW: I go to the House of God church

JM: What got you into singing?

GW: My mom. I have been singing since I was three years old, my mom, they have a gospel group *unintelligible*.

JM: Since you were three?

GW: Yes

JM: Wow - do you play any instruments or anything?

GW: No, I can't play anything, I'd love to play the drums.

JM: I always thought that would be fun too. How often do you perform?

GW: I perform every Sunday, but I don't know if that counts, that's at church, that's with the ensemble at our church. The program varies. We had a program with the college at Tifton, at ABAC, Friday night. It just varies. During the summer, I'm more active in the summer *unintelligible* mostly during the summertime and around the holidays.

JM: Who all performs with you?

GW: Sometimes I perform solo but my cousin, her name is Penny, we perform together.

JM: So – you said you've been doing this since you were three; what keeps you interested in this?

GW: I just love it – I love the stage, I don't have stage fright at all *unintelligible*

JM: How much do you know about the background of gospel music?

GW: A lot.

JM: Do you?

GW: Yes, since my mom grew up singing gospel and her grandmother grew up singing gospel it's just been -

JM: Passed down?

GW: Yes – been passed down.

JM: *unintelligible* What's your most memorable experience?

GW: I remember, in 4-H, I used to do 4-H, we had to put together a scrapbook of practices, and pictures, everything had to be in the scrapbook, and competition, I thought I did so – I thought I

did so well – I know I did well – but obviously the judges, I wasn't what the judges were looking for. I know I did good but the judges. *unintelligible* And friends are friends forever, and I'm not mad, I'm not too bright I'm not too soft. The judges, they were white judges and you know they wanted to hear the opera type thing, which I can do opera, I do that as well but it's not what I was *unintelligible*.

JM: You can sing opera too, though?

GW: Yeah.

JM: I have no musical talent whatsoever. (laughs)

GW: I really like it but, you know, I'm not feeling it. Like, gospel, or if I, if I didn't do gospel *unintelligible* then I would do opera.

JM: How do you feel when you sing gospel? Besides the adrenaline rush?

GW: I know, it's like I can't really explain it's just like it's *unintelligible* it's like whenever I sing anything, it's like, I don't know, I really can't explain. I'm sorry, that's not a good answer.

JM: That's okay, that's alright.

GW: That might take a minute. I don't know I can't really tell you.

JM: I know how the feeling goes. What do you plan on doing with it, do you have any future plans for it?

GW: I've been on *unintelligible* a couple of times. Like choir. Like the Georgia best choir. I missed out on the opportunity, and I don't know if you have heard "The Preacher's Wife" the movie, with Denzel Washington? I was in it at the time, but I couldn't get out of school to go *unintelligible* I don't remember *unintelligible* I missed the premiere, I missed everything, the soundtrack. I made it to practices because practices are on Fridays and Saturdays. But I was in school, and my mom's like 'I know you want to go' but it was – you know - the end of the semester. But that was something really big that I missed but I do plan on recording a CD. I have done a demo and *unintelligible* this summer.

But school was a major deal in our family and, which is major it to me, it's not just something to do, you can't just make it on your talents, but I have to have something to fall back on.

JM: What did you major in, in school?

GW: Pharmacy.

JM: Really? That's really cool.

GW: Yeah

JM: That's hard

GW: Yeah I wanted psychology really bad *unintelligible* then I wanted speech.

JM: Who are your biggest influences, and role models?

GW: You know, I can say my mom, that she taught me everything. Growing up when I watched her, do what she did, I learned from her and my family, because I lived in the same house as them, and they are a family gospel group, so I learned from them and her.

Then I also, I like Aretha Franklin, she's so cool, she's like old now but she's still so cool to me. And Tina Turner, even though she's like the raw kind of thing, I like her. It's just like, I take a little bit from everybody. Like I love the Dixie Chicks, I love the Dixie Chicks. Gosh! They are so cool to me, I love the Dixie Chicks.

Aretha Franklin, my mom, Tina Turner, there's a gospel lady and her name is Harriet Clark. She's from a legendary family in the gospel industry, and the Park sisters. Just some of those.

JM: Where do you feel most comfortable?

GW: Anywhere on stage, anywhere if it's just like one person and I can sing and they can enjoy it, or, *unintelligible* you know like, it really doesn't matter because when I get on stage it's just like, I have the microphone and that's it. I feel most comfortable with my cousin being with me. We think alike. We live together, we were always in the same house, and we kind of think alike.

She kind of knows whether I'm going to go this way or that way with the song.

We can't even practice something and she'll know like, "Oh goodness, Geoi's fixing to do something that we didn't practice." but we sort of think alike so I'm most comfortable with her.

JM: Do you sing differently than *unintelligible* like your mom's generation?

GW: Oh yeah, they sing sort of, like traditional kind of gospel. Now, gospel has really changed. It used to be, a Sam Cooke kind of way, kind of, for mature older adults. But now, I mean, of course everybody doesn't agree with what - I'm kind of like the rapping type so I'm screaming, I don't know I love everything, I love the loud music, the - they mostly sing traditional and I'm like contemporary gospel.

JM: Do you think most others agree with your kind of music or is it mostly the younger generation?

GW: It just depends, the older people are set in their ways, set in their mind frame, they don't really care. It's their way or nothing at all. But it's probably like the young people who most get with my music, who agree with what I'm saying because I know and I can speak for us, I can't speak for older people. I don't know.

JM: Have your parents told you any stories about music, passed them down or anything?

GW: Music that they've passed down?

JM: Well, both, stories they've passed down about the music?

GW: Last summer, *unintelligible* the House of Blues, in Orlando, that was really cool, I didn't get a chance to go. I don't know how I didn't get to go because I usually go with them

everywhere they go, and they're on a tour up in the area and the last stop was, in Orlando, was the House of Blues and they were saying, "Yeah, yeah yeah" and my Uncle *unintelligible* told me they pulled this white man up on stage and had him sing, to have him sing *unintelligible* and the white dude said "Yeah buddy!" *unintelligible* I guess you just had to be there, but the way they told it was really crazy. But I can see an old white dude saying "Yeah buddy!"

And they've had a lot of crazy things to happen to them. *unintelligible* They're just telling me to be careful with places that you go and people you deal with and those types of things, mostly just, tips,

JM: It's just kind of a hobby for you right now, or do you put other things off to do this?

GW: Sometimes I will, sometimes. But recently I haven't really put anything off, to sing, because I can deal with it most of the time. But lately, it's been about a month since I performed except on Friday when we went to ABAC.

Like I said, I don't know. When I really think about it. I've never really just sat down and thought about, just thought about it. It's just what I've been around and what I know, it's been basically my whole life. *unintelligible*

JM: I have no – I have no musical background at all. I've never played an instrument in my life and no one in my family sings or anything so that's pretty cool that *unintelligible*.

I think all my questions are pretty much done, it didn't take very long.

GW: *unintelligible*

JM: You did.

END