

Unfinished Conversations – Liverpool

Interviewee: Dorothy Zak Williams and Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

Interviewer: Maxine Brown

Director of Photography: Darren Brady

Date of interview: Friday 23rd May 2025

Location of interview: Alfred (Tundi) and Dorothy's Home, Greenhill Road, Mossley Hill, L18 6JJ

Total length of recording: 53 minutes 54 seconds

00:00:00 Maxine Brown

Okay, so can... can you tell me your name? Tell me your name please.

00:00:08 Dorothy Zak Williams

My name is Dorothy Zak Williams.

00:00:10 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

Oh, my name is Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams.

00:00:15 Maxine Brown

Okay, and where do you live?

00:00:18 Dorothy Zak Williams

You want me to?

00:00:19 Maxine Brown

Yes.

00:00:20 Dorothy Zak Williams.

Oh, we live in Liverpool in Mossley Hill.

00:00:25 Maxine Brown

Okay, okay. So, Dorothy, can you tell me a bit about yourself and a bit about your life?

00:00:33 Dorothy Zak Williams

Well, I'm originally from America, New York City, and I came here in January 1970 to start my nursing training, which I did do, and I decided to go home after three years, but no, I did not go home. I decided to stay on and do further training. And I'm trained as midlife, and after midwifery that's when I met Tunde. So, that's history. I stayed on and did various courses, and we got married then, and I settled here in Liverpool.

00:01:05 Maxine Brown

And Tundi, can you tell us a little bit about yourself and your life as well?

00:01:09 Alfred (Tundi) Zack Williams

Yeah, well, I'm from Sierra Leone originally. My mum came over, and when I finished school, I came over and went to university in Britain. In Liverpool, and Sheffield, and Salford universities. And after that, I decided it was time to work, and I became a university lecturer after I finished my PhD.

00:01:45 Maxine Brown

Tundi, I'll start with you again. So, can you just tell us a bit about your family's background and your family history, a little bit?

00:01:55 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

Well, both my mum and dad were Sierra Leoneans, and they came from Freetown, and my mum came over to Britain, and later on, I joined her, and my dad, of course, was in Sierra Leone at the time.

00:02:19 Maxine Brown

And Dorothy, can you tell us a bit about your family background?

00:02:23 Dorothy Zak Williams

My family background is, as I said, Brooklyn, New York. My parents originally came from North Carolina. I had three sisters, oh, sorry, three sisters, something. I have two sisters who never left Brooklyn, I split it that way, stayed in New York. One lives in Delaware, another lives in Virginia. And my parents moved up to Brooklyn, when my mother was 18, I think father was 20, who'd made a life in New York, and they've been there ever since, and they've died since that time, and I've stayed here.

00:02:57 Maxine Brown

So, can you tell me a little bit more about what it was like growing up in New York, your childhood years, and maybe a school?

00:03:06 Dorothy Zak Williams

Yeah, I mean, I enjoyed living in Brooklyn. Brooklyn was a place to live, you know, at the time. It's going back the way it used to be, many, many years ago, because I must admit, we were one of the black families only living in the area that we were living in. So, the schools were very, very good, you know, excelled in school, you know, both school, we went to a high school, and it was great, you know, being there, really, you know.

Only because I wanted to come here to see the Beatles, that I encouraged my parents to allow me to come, you know, really. So, that's why I came here. But my father didn't want me to come at all. He cherished his daughters, you know, and being a middle child as well, you know, I said, where do I have a role here, being a middle child? I said, no, I want to come myself, I want to be independent.

So, I came here, and I said, making the ever since, I enjoyed being here, yeah. It's allowed my parents to come as well, for our wedding, of course, I got here, married here, my parents all came by the time, with my other relatives as well. So, it's been great, you know, having members of my family coming along here to see us, and vice versa, going to see them. But now, as I get older, that's my aunt, with, we have a son who's getting married very soon, she wants to come, but she's too old now to come.

00:04:22 Maxine Brown

What was your childhood like, being in New York, just like being a child?

00:04:26 Dorothy Zak Williams

Oh, being a child was very good. My father had his own business, you know, we're very privileged to be where we lived at the time. So, yes, it was an enjoyable childhood, we didn't want for anything, I must admit really, we were very happy living there.

00:04:41 Maxine Brown

And Tundi, what was your like, childhood like, and growing up in Nigeria?

00:04:48 Alfred (Tunde) Zack Williams

No, Sierra Leone.

00:04:49 Maxine Brown

Sorry, why did I say Nigeria? Yes, in Sierra Leone, how was that?

00:04:55 Alfred (Tundi) Zack Williams

Well, it was good, Sierra Leone.

00:04:59 Maxine Brown

No, I'm just saying about where you're going to start, about the same, can you say where I'm growing up?

00:05:05 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

Oh, right, yes, well, I was born in Freetown, and I grew up in Freetown until my teens when I came over to join my mother.

Life in Sierra Leone at that time for children was okay, but also, in some circumstances, very difficult, especially with regards to how adults relate to children, because people were very strict, you know, and to some extent, very oppressive to be the way, and coming to Britain was different for me. And I was able to do things that I couldn't do in Sierra Leone. For example, go to the library, go to the library to do reading or go visit friends on my own.

00:06:08 Maxine Brown

So, you say that your mum was already here, so you came to journey home. So, could you tell us about a bit about your family connection to Liverpool?

00:06:16 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

Yeah, well, at that time, this was in the 60s, there are lots of people who, from Sierra Leone, who were traveling. I had an uncle here, the father of Lespin, who, for example, was a seafarer, and we had lots of discussion about Liverpool. And so, when I came, I was well informed of Liverpool. And there were other families, because it was the time when migrants were coming to Britain. So, I wasn't kind of lonely, lacking in friends. But when I came, I was determined, I wanted to study, I wanted to end up with some qualifications. And I had encouragement, particularly from my mother.

00:07:20 Maxine Brown

And what was life like in Liverpool, and how were you accepted when you arrived in Liverpool? Not just by family, but just by the people you were talking about.

00:07:33 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

Yes, I mean, it was mixed. I mean, I met some really nice people in Liverpool, some I never knew before. But I also met people who could not understand what I was doing in Liverpool, or why I was in Liverpool. Because people often say to you, "Well, you left that good climate in Africa, and you are in a cold climate." But of course, being cold was not 24 weeks in a year. What is it? 24 weeks in a year. There were times when the weather is good.

And also, I met some nice, interesting people. But there were also horrible people. But that was my idea to ignore such people, to get on with what I have to do. But with my mother, I stayed with my mother I was able to concentrate on things she wanted me to not least education. Because I'm the only child. And she said to me, "Well, you know, you could make your life good or bad, but I'm here to help you."

00:08:57 Maxine Brown

And what was it like for you in the Dorothy when you arrived in England, how was it?

00:09:01 Dorothy Zak Williams

Well, good and bad, actually. I was picked up from London, because I came into London at that time. But I'm going to give you a little scenario, really, with my parents. Because when I wanted to come, my father said to me, "Well, okay, you want to go to the United Kingdom?" He said, "You

can go, really, but you pay for your own ticket. Cos I'm not paying for it." I said, "Okay, then, I'll pay for my own ticket." And so I paid my ticket to get here. So I thought, "I might as well go first class." Mother said, "Okay, then, I'll take you to the airport." My father said, "Well, I'm not taking you. Your mother can take you to the airport." And I said, "Okay." So I, of course, got to London, anyway. I think it was British, not British, but Pan Am, I think it was, at the time.

So, I got to London. Actually, it was Walton hospital, I was going to anyway. And I had contacted them before I arrived here. And they said, "Well, someone will meet me in London to bring me up to Liverpool. And someone will meet me in Liverpool, of course, and take me to the Walton hospital." But when I got here, I was shocked. Because I thought, "So where's all this fog coming from?" Because it was in January that I came. I thought, "Well, it's a lot of fog."

But obviously, I got to the nurses' home, which they were, and they were okay, really. But they had their own prejudice about us, a few of us that were actually, because I know that time, there Sydney nurses, me, the only American, of course, nurses from Africa, they were there. So, my training was a bit of a mixed bag, because to be accepted on the ward was one thing, really. I was called a brown nurse. And then, in my second week of being in the hospital, I was punched in the stomach by one of the patients. Oh, yeah, one of the patients. I was off for about two or three weeks. But I know my parents always kept an eye out. Every two weeks they'd be ringing up to see how I was. And they'd go down to the office to speak to my parents, make sure that I was all right.

Well, I personally, you know, we had a prejudice, a prejudice alarm, because I remember going to a church that was in Walton, going to church with two of the other nurses, and with a vicar, well he was a priest, he was saying, "And we got our foreign friends here." You know, they were up there, and I thought, "Why is he speaking like that to us?" So, they're going on, and Charles said, "Don't speak to us like that, because we're human just like everybody else. We're looking after you, the nurses, you know." And he said, "Well, I do apologize." So, there are different types of differences really. I was determined as well, as Tundi was determined, or Alfred, as we call, I was determined to fight the case and carry on, regardless.

00:11:36 Maxine Brown

Okay, so I'm just going to go into the next section, which is about transatlantic slavery. So, I'll stay with you, Dorothy. How was transatlantic slavery impacted on your family's life history?

00:11:52 Dorothy Zak Williams

Oh, you were slavery you're talking about, you're referring to.

00:11:55 Maxine Brown

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm just saying, how was transatlantic slavery impacted on your family's life or history?

00:12:02 Dorothy

Well, it made a big difference, really, because I know what people have struggled, my ancestors have struggled with, you know, to get to where they are, you know, really. And obviously, you

know, it's learned a lot. And we taught the kids a lot, you know, about it, really, and, you know, so history for them to learn.

But it's impacted my father. It made him stronger. Let's put it this way, you know. And, Father, he was a historian anyway. We talk about what's happened, you know, at the time. But, actually, he was in North Carolina, and everything that went on with his own parents.

So yes, it has a huge impact on our lives. And, you know, it's just keep you strong all the time, and you're ready to fight as long as you can, because everything that goes on. Look, I was saying, the first black president we had, that was a momentum period for us, Obama being the president. We thought it would never happen. But even then, we just, we look at the history all the time, and we want to make it better each time. We sort of, well, we're a bit.

00:12:57 Maxine Brown

And the same with you, Tundi, how was transatlantic slavery impacted your family's life history?

00:13:04 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

Well, again, directly like Dorothy. My... the history of my family is one very much embedded in transatlantic slavery because, in fact, we were freed in Freetown, you know. So, we were taught all that in school.

And when I came to Britain, I kind of knew what was expected, because I also had relations who had traveled to Britain and returned to Sierra Leone. And yes, the way I dealt with that is not to be obsessed with that. Otherwise, it clouds your view, your idea of the place, when there are other things you could do.

So, but there were people who clearly ignorant about how the Atlantic's slavery impacted on other people. So, for example, people from my ethnic group, some were here, you know, well before the end of the slave trade, they had worked here. And where were they freed? in Freetown. Where I come from. So, the encounter was not strange to us. And basically, I was determined that I came as a teenager, that I'm going to study. That's what I'm going to emphasize. Yes. I mean, it didn't mean me not going to social things, you know, I did. But at the same time, my priority was to get to finish o-levels and universities, which I think I did.

00:15:21 Maxine Brown

So, you both already mentioned about that you just learned about slavery when you was young. And if you can just expand a little bit more. So did you learn about, I know Dorothy you said you learned about from your father because you're father's a historian. But Tunde, where did you actually first learn about the transatlantic slave trade? Was it like in school or from a family or?

00:15:49 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

I would say both. Both family and in school. But of course, my education was necessarily we did not have that it wasn't big in the curriculum, because people were pushing, trying to in some cases, being as if it never happened. But of course, the curriculum had to be explained to us for us to realize that was that.

As I said, the Kru was my own ethnic group. They actually were and people who were involved in this, you know, when I say involved, they were not slave traders. But these were people who were actually employed as slaves and were freed in Freetown. So I knew all that and was aware of all that. And to some extent, he prepared me for Britain, because I knew what had happened, how it happened. And when I came to Britain, I did not have that concern other than for my own safety, because I expect someone to try to tell me about what happened a couple of centuries before I got here.

00:17:27 Maxine Brown

And Dorothy, I know you learned from your father. Do you remember learning about the slave trade in school? Or did you learn from TV, continuing education?

00:17:38 Dorothy Zack Williams

Yeah, okay. I think it was a combination of things, TV and small, but if you like, if you're working.

00:17:42 Darren Brady

Sorry, Dorothy, could you say I first learned about the slave trade?

00:17:47 Dorothy Zack Williams

I first learned about the slave trade was in school, maybe about nine or ten. And of course, when we watched television as well, they would show a few of the programs that you see about the slaves and how they were, you know, imprisoned and, you know, the sort of things that we saw.

But mainly, you know, from my dad. Well, that was because they're from North Carolina, you know, North Carolina consists of slaves at the time, but mother used to tell me how they used to pick cotton and stuff like that and work for the, as it called, the white people sort of thing, really. And I heard a lot from them about it. But yes, I've learned from school.

00:18:27 Maxine Brown

What do you think are some of the key legacies from transatlantic slavery? And how have they shaped the world that we live in today?

00:18:38 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

Well, for me, the key one is the impact on Africa, Africans, and, you know, black people generally. But I say Africans, because to this day, the African continent, if you look at some of the problems there, they're not unrelated, they're not disconnected from the slave trade. Yes. The way the slave trade destroyed certain communities, the way people were moved away. People can hardly react to some of the problems. I mean, that created problems for rulers to control their... citizens because there were always this conflict because people have been moved from one area to another during the slave trade period. And that continued through colonial times.

00:20:18 Maxine Brown

And Dorothy, how do you think that the legacies of slave impacted the world that we live in today?

00:20:24 Dorothy Zak Williams

Well, as far as I'm concerned, for what I've seen, I've seen improvement. But slavery still exists in some parts of the world. You're thinking going backwards, we want to go forwards. And I think, you know, things have changed. People have been educated to do various things. People have the opportunity to do various things. But still, slavery is still there. Not to the level, as I was saying before, but it still exists.

00:20:50 Maxine Brown

And do you think that the legacies of slavery impact you personally?

00:20:56 Dorothy Zak Williams

Yes, I think slavery has impacted me personally.

00:21:00 Maxine Brown

You want to tell us a little bit about how?

00:21:05 Dorothy Zak Williams

It's been impacted to see the world, what it is, and how the people in various parts of the world have lived and are living, and what the changes are, and how it can actually improve and make it better. So yes, it made a difference to me to find help as much as one can, obviously. Various parts of the world.

00:21:26 Maxine Brown

And Tunde, how do you think the legacy of the slavery have impacted you personally?

00:21:31 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

Well, I mean, if I go outside and do something wrong, you know, shout, you know, the way I will be treated will be different from the way most white people will be treated. So, to me, I see those connections as relics of the dastardly trade called the slave trade.

Yeah. And for many communities in Britain and other places, even in Africa, people tend to draw connection from the slave trade in delaying the progress of those who were victims of the slave trade to the point where people are requesting that, what's the word, for people to compensate the descendant of slaves who lost property, lost even their home. And many were people who did not have much hope at the other time of being resuscitated from the economic problems that they faced as a consequence of the slave trade.

00:23:29 Maxine Brown

OK, so I'm going to ask the question to both of you again. I'll start with you, Dorothy. What did I just ask that last question.

00:23:29 Alexander Scott

So, we are asking about the legacies and how they shaped the world around.

00:23:44 Maxine Brown

How are you? How and when have you learned about Liverpool's historical connections to transatlantic slavery?

00:23:54 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

Well, I learned about that before I came to Liverpool, and I knew about Liverpool's connection. And yes, and you... I don't know if you look the way... when I came, the position black people found themselves reminded me of the fact that a members of this community of the community, black members of the community, are directly or indirectly the product of Atlantic slave trade, particularly the way society reacted to members of that group. And some of the language people use, you know, and the way some black people, if not all, were treated was reminiscent of people who were excluded because of the color of the skin rather than the nature of what they were meant to do.

00:25:18 Maxine Brown

And how did you learn about Liverpool's connection to slave trade?

00:25:23 Dorothy Zak Williams

I learnt it when I came here, because in America you only have American history anyway. And I learned through it for what I observed. And I learned through some of the black people who actually here that we actually started to mix with particularly Liverpool. And I thought it was very interesting. That's what I got involved in trying to learn a bit more about what was happening here in Liverpool.

And from my observation, that's what we call it, that's what we were saying, you know, obviously, just talking to people about the differences, the names that people be called and that sort of thing really. Because I've never heard those names before until actually coming here. So that was an education for me to learn all those things really.

00:26:13 Maxine Brown

And in what way do you think that transatlantic slavery has shaped Liverpool itself? Not just the world but the city.

00:26:22 Dorothy Zak Williams

I'm not sure. I think it may.

00:26:26 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

Well, I mean, if you, the impact and the history of the, you know, you would not have a situation where for a good period of human's life, people who have been sold and taken away from their home. And even when they are involved in another group, they are treated less favorably. There is no way those same people would not be impacted in terms of their own progress. So, it's not surprising that once this even after the slave trade, people of African descent continue to suffer discrimination and and and so on. And which impacted on their ability to make progress compared to other groups.

00:27:48 Maxine Brown

How do you think that transatlantic slavery shaped Liverpool directly?

00:27:53 Dorothy Zak Williams

Well, I mean, obviously, you still got the segregation here occurring really, but you're getting more and more arts that are mixing, which I think is a good thing.

Let's put it that way, in Liverpool, because... because I saw the long history of the slavery that's been here and they're much better than what they were, I think. You know, people are realizing that we have a history here. So, we're here to have them make the best of what we can while we're in Liverpool. So what I've seen really, but I must admit, really I was taken back really what things are still going on, hearing them who when it comes to certain careers and also the things that people are actually in, particularly black nurses, you know. They get to a certain level, you get some that will reach to the ti...ti... to the top of their career and others will not. And that's because the color of the skin.

So, if you talk about this, about transatlantic, how it had an impact on Liverpool, I think Liverpool so backwards compared to other places. If you take Manchester, Birmingham, London, so different. And, you know, it was only impacted the slavery of today as well. But people are more accepted and consideration has been given to those who are achievers, given that opportunity to move on, irrespective of the color of the skin.

00:29:24 Maxine Brown

So how does it make you feel living in a city? How does it make you feel like feelings and emotions living in a city that's been shaped by slavery?

00:29:37 Dorothy Zak Williams

Well, let's put it this way. Where we were living before, you know, there's only a few of us. If you live in the community where there's quite a few of you, you feel quite confident, etc. But living in an area where you're quite vulnerable, you know, you feel as though you feel threatened. Let's put it that way really.

I mean, we came here, it wasn't too bad when we came here, but you did have some negativity. Some of the neighbors when we came in this area because the kids grew up here and they're black, you know, sort of thing really. But it's funny, really, they just have this suspicion about us, about this myth about black people. They do this, they do that, and they do the other, really. But, funny enough, when they come to terms with the fact that they're not so bad at all, they really, you know, they're not one of us, but you know, they're individuals and that sort of thing. And that's what I did particularly like. We want to be who we are and they can be who they are, you know, sort of things.

Yes, I think in this particular city, it took a very long time, and I think it's still taking time for people to come to change with who you are, who we are, and you know, being the color of our skin. That's one thing, that's what I feel.

00:30:48 Maxine Brown

And what feelings and emotions did you get from living in this city, you know, with the history of it Tunde?

00:30:55 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

Oh, yes, I mean, you, if you lived a significant time in Liverpool, you can tell that Liverpool differs, particularly when you, it differs in the way non-white people operate, in particular in terms of work and promotion. So, I often ask myself, you know, well, for example, are we the black male? I'm not quite sure. Are we?

00:30:40 Dorothy Zak Williams

No.

00:30:40 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

No. Then the other positions, you go even in schools, you know, the black people who are working in schools are usually at lower echelon of activities. Yes. And this is true of our city in several ways. And again, ordinary Liverpudlians, you see, when you look, you see their counterpart, or shall I say, our counterpart in ordinary London, ordinary someone from Sheffield, you hear they've got a award, they've been given award, you know, but in Liverpool, you don't, you don't hear that in the context of the significant number of black people who live in this city, who are working in the city, who have done so much, contributed so much to this, to this city.

And I think we should ask ourselves, you know, why are these people not stepping forward to be recognised? And why those who are responsible for creating or dishing out these awards, why is it they do not, they do not bring black people into it in significant numbers? I mean, some of us have opened our mouth spoken about this, but I don't think those in top position are ready for that change.

00:33:30 Dorothy Zak Williams

And this Maxine here, like you, for instance, have you been recognised recently? I mean, you know, the awards, you know, I put Maxine, I'm quite happy to put you forward. I just feel that some of us are so threatened by our own selves, our own friends, that we don't bring ourselves forward. And then you get friends or whatever, who gets there, they don't think about the others because I made it, but nobody else, I don't want anyone else to follow me because I'm up there already. I think it's very wrong.

You don't have... it doesn't happen to other groups, because, you know, for the fact that I hate saying other groups don't like that, support each other, you know, they get, I mean, we went to function tonight once that was in Preston. Preston is really going forward. And that's the Asian community. We're watching on TV now, we've seen so many Asian communities, so many Asians, if you like, excelling themselves. What's happening to the black people? What's happening to people, or races, particularly us? What's happening? You know, they're trying to push people along really, but they think, well, no, I won't go there because I'm not going to be appointed for anything. And that's very wrong. The confidence is not there. And you question why, and that takes you back historically, why it's not happening.

00:34:42 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

I've heard of other situations when you're in the class, as a black lecturer, they think you are the student. They ask you, 'oh, well, if you wait when you're... when you're tutor...when your lecturer comes', yes. I mean, I don't feel insulted because I think it's just ignorance. Yeah. But if you have that kind of mind, that kind of prejudice, it impacts on other people, particularly young people who are trying to move up to do something for themselves, who all what they hear is the negativity.

00:35:41 Maxine Brown

So, Dorothy, are there any stories, memories, traditions related to slavery that have been passed down by your family? I know you mentioned about something about your grandmother was talking about cotton picking or any of the stories that were passed down that you'd like to share with us.

00:35:59 Dorothy Zak Williams

Well, my parents being from North Carolina. They were young and lived in a very remote area, but they used to go and pick cotton for the white people, **as I said**, white people you know sort of thing. They get so much money, you know, going to their parents, really. But I remember mother was saying, but it will, she did pick cotton, which is fine. I've had a straw hat to put in the bags and all that. She said, but well, those snakes were too much worth, really. Cause you used to run and see the snakes and that sort of thing, really. And yes, they used to help to grow watermelons as well. They was like there snakes in there and they looked like the color of the watermelon. So, they weren't dangerous snakes. They weren't poisonous, but you wouldn't want them wrapping around your leg now, would you? Those sort of things.

So those are the things that you tell us about really. And father sent about swamps and seeing crocodiles and swamp and those sort of things. So, listen to them, how they grew up. They

enjoyed it, you know, with the word, but it was hard at the time. And that's why my parents decided to come up, get married in New York and stay in New York. My mother, she never wanted to go back to North Carolina, did she? Because it's so remote where they lived, you know, we went to see them. It's our family home. It is very remote. It's more built up now than it used to be. Cause they used to live back onto a graveyard and that was very frightening, you know, for them. But, you know, they stayed in New York. And that's where I said before, I'm not repeating myself. So that's where they died.

So, the things that we cherish, you know, hearing all the stories, you know, left and gone, hopefully up there, rather than down there.

00:37:37 Maxine Brown

The same for you, Tunde. Are there any stories or any stories or traditions or legacies that have been brought down from that generation before from slavery, that have been told to you?

37:56 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

Well, for me, the simple one is the importance of education. Yeah. Because since I was a child, it's been made clear to me that's the only way you go forward is by studying, working hard. And that's what I've done all my life. And so, I'm afraid I've passed this into my two boys. Yes. You know, there's nothing you get free. You have to work hard. You have to study, you know.

And, in fact, that bit about studying was what compelled me in the two schools that my children went to, to become active in the governing body. Because I realized that the kind of perspective was needed in those schools, you know, that children could play together. Yes. Teachers, some teachers were not well informed about what's happening with black children. Yes. And in fact, there's some white children too who weren't noticed that if we do not direct teachers to them and say, well, look, you know, this guy or this young woman has such and such a problem, then they could easily be ignored, you know, pushed to one side. And for me, I think that determination, particularly, it came from my parents, but especially my mother who always said to me, look, if you don't study, that's the end of you at this point. And I think she was right.

00:39:59 Dorothy Zak Williams

I forgot to mention that tradition that still in the family is jumping the broom when everyone gets married. My mother always said to me, well, I'm telling you now, before I die, she said, I won't see many of my grandchildren get married, but you must remember, I've jumped the broom and I want you all jumped the broom when you get married.

00:40:21 Maxine Brown

Can you tell us a little bit more about what jumping the broom is?

00:40:23 Dorothy Zak Williams

Jumping the broom is bringing two people together, you know, husband and wife together. And it's something like this, they're staying together forever. That's what jumping the broom, it ties, you got different ties and things on it. And you got your names and all that as well. And the color

that you're getting married. So, after the wedding vows are taken, when it's ready to go walk out of the church or anything, it is, you jump the broom. And that's what I've got one upstairs now for the youngest one who gets married. A jumping broom because it just stays in the family. Everyone sort of keep that with them. That's what that means, jumping the broom.

00:41:02 Maxine Brown

So, Dorothy, are there any individuals, any heroes or any communities that you think have been left behind in this, have been forgotten in the history of the slave trade? And if you want to tell us who they are and what we know about them, anything?

00:41:19 Dorothy Zak Williams

Hmm, that's a question. That is the question. Let's see, I'm trying to think now.

00:41:26 Maxine Brown

It could be people you know personally, it could be people that we all know about, it's exactly where it comes from, you know, individuals, it could be communities.

00:41:36 Dorothy Zak Williams

Well, I'm just thinking about nurses, I'm thinking about nurses in particular, one or two of the nurses that I do know personally, I know they could have moved on if they want, if they could. But I know when I was in the health visiting, but even before that, you know, I've been leading on a few of the subjects about black people and what we need to do.

That's why we had a black health network. And we're trying to get some of our colleagues through as a higher level than what they were. So that we really making negotiations with the managers, you know, where could you have a position set up that someone can actually go through and gain a higher level in terms of their status where they are, in terms of, you know, their grading, that's the difficult at times, really. So, then I think about, because some have actually gone to the higher grade and some have actually stayed where they were, only because some are too frightened to do anything, maybe they just need leads, someone take the lead to actually do that. So yes, I think, I think of the nurses, my ex-colleagues, who, some of which I like me and never moved on, and some of us have moved on, you know, and I'd like to put everyone to move on together if they could really. So yeah, I think of it.

00:42:55 Maxine Brown

And Tundi?

Do you want me to repeat the question?

00:42:57 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

Yeah, you repeat it.

00:42:59 Maxine Brown

Are there any individuals, any heroes or communities that you think have been forgotten in the history of the slave trade, who they are and what's their story?

00:43:11 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

Well, for me, I've seen children who have done well simply because of the determination of the parents. You know, I think it's so, it's so important for parents to be encouraged to come to the school to ask questions. Yes. And I say, ask questions, because you'd be surprised. So, I've been surprised because I was Governor, Chair of Governors of two schools. I was surprised that some parents love coming to the school to ask because they felt that they were being, they felt that they were being oppressive, they're being a nuisance. They're being a nuisance to the school. Whereas in fact, if you don't go to school to find out what's happening, that's also part of the marker as someone who is not serious about the children's education.

So, I think the schools need to be, they need to do more to go, to ensure that ordinary, when I say ordinary, I mean people who see the school as being a place that almost like taboo. Yes. Because we see those of us who volunteered in schools that there are some people who are worried because teachers perhaps don't speak properly to them. And we do hear those kinds of complaints. The school should have total open door for parents to have access to not just the teachers, but even the Heads if there are needs for them to express their views, particularly if it's critical views relating to their children.

00:45:40 Dorothy Zak Williams

And Maxine, you said about heroes. I'm not just saying this. I think Tundi's a hero, Alf is a hero because when he had the, he was the police authority. What were you there, police authority? He was at the police authority at the time.

00:45:55 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

Chair.

00:45:55 Dorothy Zak Williams

Yeah, police authority at the time. And things were getting done really. And he recognized it was a magazine that came out and obviously he wanted to part of the magazine should have been in it, to probably know that he got someone working as a black person with the police trying to get things done in the community. And obviously this was a guy, he was black anyway. But yes, even to be a chair of government as well, a lot of things they made, they said, it's all the same, he's a hero.

They want to put that in that context, I think so. He doesn't like to talk about himself, except for really, but he's a lot of working in Liverpool really. And it's not been recognized.

00:46:40 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

I find it difficult talking about myself. You can see, but I'm afraid she's absolutely right what she's saying. And I'll give you one example for what she saying. Yes, I was chair of the police authority.

I'm sure you already knew that. But there was one time when a report came to the committee. I don't know what you're going to do with this, but I'm not telling you lies. And this report came and I read it through. There was not a single...There was pictures of white and white people, white children. There was not a single word about black, any black child, any black adult. So I raised this issue. I said, this shows we're not serious to bring black people in. And of course, I got an apology. But it's only because my own concern was heavily what's happening with black people with the police. That's why I picked that up, because you cannot talk about the police. In a relationship with black people without actually seeing black people in connection with the police. Did I make that clear to you the point I was making.

00:48:47 Maxine Brown

Yeah. So, I'm going to find a bit about freedom and resistance. So, Tundi I ask you first, what does freedom mean to you?

00:48:56 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

Freedom. Freedom for me simply means the ability of an individual to undertake action that would forward his ability to contribute to society. But that freedom should not be used in a very clear and responsible way. So, there's no point to you or someone having freedom. And then that person uses that freedom to oppress another individual or another group. Because that's not that's not what freedom is. So, it's important for people to feel that they can contribute to discussion, they can criticise without retribution.

00:50:15 Maxine Brown

Dorothy, can you tell us what freedom means to you?

00:50:17 Dorothy Zak Williams

In three words.

00:50:18 Maxine Brown

No, just what does freedom mean to you.

00:50:21 Dorothy Zak Williams

Right, okay. Freedom means to be allowed, to do things that you wish to do, obviously with some restrictions. And that restriction may be like freedom to voice some concerns that you may have. Or it could be fact that, in some areas, that freedom, you cannot do the things that you wish to do. Just put it that way.

00:50:55 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

I would say, stemming from what Dorothy said, freedom is the ability to achieve a specific goal. Again, what she said, without trading on other people's goal and ideas. So, no point to say, yes, somebody could do it, but when they go on to this, they say, no, you can't.

00:51:36 Maxine Brown

And how would you describe freedom in three words?

00:51:39 Dorothy Zak Williams

I would describe freedom in three words as being responsible, and having the opportunity, and, of course, the ability.

00:51:52 Maxine Brown

And Dorothy, can I start with you? What does resistance mean to you?

00:51:58 Dorothy Zak Williams

Resistance to me is not being allowed. It's something that if you like blocking or resistance, let me go back and let me retract. Resistance being there's a force, you're not allowed to do certain things. It stops you from doing anything you would like to do, but it's something that holds you back. It starts from there.

00:52:27 Maxine Brown

And what does resistance mean to you, Tunde?

00:52:30 Alfred (Tundi) Zak Williams

Well, I mean, very close to what Dorothy said, the ability to achieve certain goals without oppressing other people.

00:52:41 Maxine Brown

Any examples or stories that you know of resistance in black communities?

00:52:46 Dorothy Zak Williams

Resistance that we've got, if you like, is NHS is not having the money in order to fund some of the opportunities or some of the events that we have to take place at different venues. And that was among people who weren't part of, if you like, the group, or weren't interested in looking at families with sickle cells and children with sickle cells. And these are some of the professionals as well as some professionals. They didn't want to act, they didn't want to be responsive, they didn't want to share, they just didn't want to act at all. That's the distance that we got. It all came down to the funding on these dreams. You know, they didn't feel that we have enough numbers that it would accommodate or would appreciate the fact that it wasn't enough that they needed for us to have that money to do the things we needed to do for the families.

Cut from the video:

00:00 Maxine Brown

What does freedom mean to you?

00:00 ?

Oh, freedom means that. I think it's a very good question. I'll tell you what the point I was making.

END OF TRANSCRIPT