

## Overview of the oral history recording of “Reflections on a Decade of Reparative Collaboration in Southtown after the Bombing of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church”

View the oral history interview at this link: <https://youtu.be/OgMFghoAJCA>.

*Oral history interview with “Mama” Marna B. Williams (age 96) by her son “Robert” Robert G. Williams (age 74) and her daughter “Little Marna” Marna B. Williams. (Conducted on January 25, 2023, on behalf of Kids in Birmingham 1963. Unedited interview, 1hour 17 minutes)*

Interview begins with a flashback to September 15, 1963, when Marna B. Williams (age 37) was driving her four children, Little Marna, Robert, a son, and a daughter home from Independent Presbyterian Church (IPC).

In the interview, Robert describes to his mother the radical shift he saw in her face when she looked at him in the back seat after turning on the car radio to hear that a bomb exploded at the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church. The interview covers:

- How did this event shake her world and propel her on a new mission?
- Where did she go the next day?
- What led her and a few like-minded white friends from IPC to reach out to people in Southtown Public Housing, an African-American community less than a mile from IPC?

Their mother’s community involvement in Southtown lasted more than a decade, but her work in Southtown was rarely discussed at home, prompting Little Marna and Robert later in life to inquire about her partnership with people in Southtown.

- Who were the support people who joined her from IPC?
- Who else in Birmingham gave her advice and encouragement?
- How did she gain the trust of Southtown residents?
- How did Southtown residents communicate their priorities and needs?
- How did they organize new programs and lead them?
- How did Black program leaders team up with white resource partners to reach out to public authorities, churches and businesses for resources and support?
- How did they work together to make best use of the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, and other hard-won legal rights?
- What were community responses in 1974 when the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development spotlighted Southtown as a model for community-led development in the US?
- What are her thoughts about the demolition of Southtown underway in 2023 to clear space for a planned commercial real estate complex with offices, apartments, restaurants, and retail stores?

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*For more on the Mustard Seed Program, and for stories by Marna B. Williams and her son Robert G. Williams, visit the [Kids in Birmingham 1963](http://KidsinBirmingham1963) website or see <https://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/category/robert-g-williams/>.*