

## Transcript: Faustine Wilson (McDonald)

Interviewee: FW Faustine Wilson

Interviewer: TR Tristan Reid

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Time: 52:13

### START OF INTERVIEW

Tristan Reid: Do you consent to being recorded?

Faustine Wilson: Yes, I consent to being recorded. And my name is Faustine Clarinda Wilson McDonald and I consent to being recorded.

TR: Got you, okay... can you talk a little bit about your childhood and maybe mention your first job and if you think it led you into your current career?

FW: Okay, absolutely... My childhood was very very surrounded with history, sports, and community. That's what my childhood always was... you know some people's childhood as they grow, changes as their family changes. Nothing changed, we were community basis of always with the community, so when I was kid most kids on a Saturday morning are probably sleeping in, I'm not. We're either going to go to check out my aunts on my days when we weren't at the Sylva library doing research for my mom, because my mom was Victoria Casey McDonald and the days that we weren't doing research for different her books, research black history and those things, I was playing sports and the

mornings I wasn't we were having fun going antiquing and so there was always an activity, there was never a day of just chill. We were a moving family, a very active family. We all were inclusive everything wound together.

I can remember mornings and days after ball practice we would go to the library and research different peoples birth certificates and trying to track everybody's dads, mothers, fathers down... whose grandpa, seeing how far we could get with people's names in Jackson County and then what county we need to go to find the rest of those records to be able to sort their way and who we needed to talk to just for our family members in general and those purposes. It was always a very fun task and just in general doing different research on families and what they've done for the communities in general. So that's what my childhood was... was doing that, playing basketball, and being in the community and church and doing those community events. It was lovely, it was an awesome childhood and also because I have sickle cell anemia I was in the hospital, but it was amazing, it was still, I had to become very independent very quickly because my mother was still a single parent mom, teaching. So, she's working from 5:30 in the morning and doesn't get done until seven or eight because she also coaches. So, ninety percent of sports at that middle school - she did basketball, soccer, that's two and there's only three seasons - two out of two of those seasons were covered. So with me getting out sick with my health I had to mature quickly but also being in the hospital made me see my surroundings and also have another family and outlet with the nurses in the field. So that's what my child - as in immediate childhood was - and when I became a more pre-teen to you say adult during my first job... Most kids don't get their

jobs until sixteen when you could drive, I had my working permit at thirteen and a half. I was working at the pool and riding my bike and I rode everywhere and this is in Sylva. All the parks that you see... Mark Watson park, park on Chipper Curve road behind McDonalds, I rode to those parks and played ball every day. So, I rode to the pool on my bike every day and I worked there... that's what I did. I worked there and then right beside the pool, if you look down from the pool, there's a basketball court, so I'd work the pool and then I would go play ball in the evenings all summer and that was actually my first job. I was very independent, mom had her things, she also did softball and things of that sort. So, while she was doing that, I was riding my bike, you know, you would hear that bike going back and forth to go play pool, to the pool, did the concession stand and then after I did that I actually till I was eighteen then did two jobs. I did that, and I worked at the grocery store but I was always helping... I knew a lot of small businesses, so I was always in and out of small businesses in downtown... computer companies, just different businesses that were here and so I was always seeing the back end of that.

TR: Do you think working at the pool and then at the grocery store, impacted your career choice today or the way you work today? Do you think it had any impact on what you do today?

FW: Working at the pool (inaudible) I think it gave me a sense of having accountability, of counting. There was no register and kid saying hey... It telling you how much to give back and things like that. Nine times out of ten if I gave a kid twenty-five dollars and if it was twenty-five and it was eleven dollars they would be like wait wait what am I doing...

what's going on? You know, those sorts of things. They wouldn't know how to calculate the difference to be able to (laughs)... They wouldn't get it unfortunately. Working at the pool, it was just a great job, it was easy and I could do things with it. It showed me organization skills and on time skills. The grocery store was just the grocery store. You can memorize food products now... that about it. You memorize food products pretty quick but technically my first job was helping do research with history with my mom since I was about six. Yeah, since I can remember five or six. My other first real job was actually being was actually being water girl and assistant basketball coach with her on the team. (Laughter) Those were my real first jobs and those showed me a lot of different levels of things and dynamics that had to be done to move.

TR: And so what got you interested in the clothing business or not the clothing business but retail?

FW: Well my brother actually died in 2004, of complications from sickle cell anemia. When he died of complications of sickle cell anemia you have a lot of emotions that go through you and he was fourteen years older than me, so, you're talking, I mean it was a huge gap, we were very very close, very close. And so all of 2004, I was sixteen (hesitates/confused). It's a very different time there and to get my emotions out I always drew. I would always draw in the hospital when I (inaudible)... because you can't be active in the hospital, well I sit there getting blood transfusions and things of that sort. So I would draw and that was always our thing. So to get my emotions out I did a memorial design for him. I wasn't intending for it to be for anybody, it was just something for me to get emotions out. That was all it was for and my other notebooks. .

. And mom found it. She found the design and if you ever knew anything about a true teacher/parent or a parent... an African American black woman, going to know what's in they kid - not to say that she went through things - but they know what's going on with their kids.

TR: And my mom did go through things (laughter)

FW: She going to go through, you know nothing is yours, she bought that

TR: It might be my room but it's still her house

FW: Exactly, so don't play them games. That ain't yours (laughter). But it wasn't anything of that sort, it was just my drawing book and she wanted to look through it and she saw the design. And in 2006, I graduated high school, but she found that design about 2006 (inaudible). And we were moving and shaking and she found it and she loved it. And she said I want you, I want this. She loved the design, and I said okay mama and there was nothing to that. So to surprise her for my brother's birthday, I did the memorial design on the front of a shirt. I got it made and then I did God's compass, which is Survival Pride's logo and that was in another part of the drawing notebook. I put that on the back, not meaning anything, just two shirts. We always went bowling. Bowling was our thing. Me and Craig use to always go shoot pool and mom did bowling and I bowled as well. I learned on a nine-foot table so I didn't play games. He taught me like grown man style real quick, very professional style, at a very young age. And then I did professional bowling with my mother, so that's what we did. I think we used those bowling shirts to go out or whatever. You know it was just shirts that were matching shirts. Well we were always at the local bowling alley then and people saw it and they

were like I love that shirt. And I was like no, no, no, no. And they were like we understand that it's for your brother and nobody else is supposed to have it. We love the sign on the front but we really want that design on the back, which was God's Compass. We had thousands of people asking. Mom finally looked at me and said you need to do this. You need to look at... and I was like no, no, no. And she was like you need to think about this and I said yes ma'am. Your mama tells you to do something, at least think about it. I'll think about it. I said well God if I'm supposed to be doing this, give me a sign or something of this gender. So I did. Well mom told me to clean up this little corner of half heds since like fourth grade stuff, you know you got that hidden corner that needs to be cleaned out. So I was cleaning it out and I found a notebook. And it was a Five Star notebook and it was orange and it had dreams on it. Cursive in the right-hand corner, the top corner. Every letter was a different color in cursive. That's like my ten or eleven-year-old hand writing. How old is this? So I opened it up and what do I find? A business plan made by my ten or eleven-year-old self for a clothing brand. I don't remember doing this ---for a clothing brand and you think at ten or eleven what are you going to have... What kind of business plan are you going have at ten or eleven? You know what I mean. It was three different names and three different logos. Alright cool, so that's probably all you're going to get. It wasn't just that. It was three different names and three different logos. Who I was going to sell it to, who my demographic was going to be and who I wanted the distributor to be. At ten, I said okay Lord. I closed it up and things were of course erratic, your ten and weird and stuff like that but there was my sign. I said okay Lord, and I closed it. And I've always kept it. That's how it all

started. It wasn't something... a tragedy became a triumph. And so that's how Survival Pride actually started.

TR: Yeah, that's a really interesting story. So we talked a little bit about it off tape but for the tape can you talk about your education at Southwestern and what that did for you?

FW: I was educated right after high school and I had very different (inaudible), those offers were not going to be able to be standing, my body would not allow it. My body would just not allow those athletic offers. So I was at a midway point trying to figure out what I wanted to do. And you know, when your eighteen trying to figure out what am I going to do (contemplates). I was like alright so I'm to go to SCC, reevaluate things, bump my grades, do all these things. So I did general education and I didn't know what I was going to do honestly. And the brand came up, was just starting, but I still didn't want to go into graphic design school. I didn't even really know what graphic design was. I was going in as a business major, business administration, do that. I happen to walk in to the graphic design thing and I was just like this is me. You know what I mean (Inaudible) I had to go down there for something in that building. And I was hating, I was hating every bit of business classes because I already knew it. I know a ton of business owners, I helped them run their businesses, successful, very multi, successful businesses and I helped them do back end work. You don't have to tell me how to do that. (laughter) So it was boring to me and I found graphic design and was like I can expand on my love of art and drawing and what I do. And what I wanted for my brand, and like I said it just all came together. So that's what it did for me. SCC gave me the direction of knowing that I didn't know what graphic design was. You know truly, I knew graphics on

shirts and things and that specific level that needs to be done with Illustrator or Adobe. The whole nine yards, how you can elevate all of your drawings and things of that sort or draw straight onto that illustration. There's so many different (inaudible) but what it did for was expanded my horizons, even though not being able to finish. I was only able to do my first year but even that little bit, that intake, I was able to expand on and one of my goals is to actually go back still because nobody can take your piece of paper away. It doesn't matter honestly, not saying this in any way, because universities and teaching institutes need to be because there's a direction and there's so much more elevation you can get by doing learning by yourself. But there's so many different ways to learn, it doesn't have to have a piece of paper. But for me having that is a goal, just to finish for the degree purposes. That's what SCC and learning and going through has been. Because I also plan to go back to get my teaching degree as well.

TR: What subject?

FW: I wanted to do sports but I'm probably going to do education. (Inaudible) I'll be the PE teacher, I'll be the PE teacher if anything. (laughter) Maybe honestly, I'll probably do some history. I love it but that was just a general idea. I want to be with the community, with kids, and helping them and mentoring because we do that with Survival Pride. And so bringing that in.

TR: What challenges have you faced during your time as a small business owner? And how do the challenges compare from the beginning to now? And also, when did you start the company?

FW: The company was established in 2008.



TR: Okay, got you.

FW: The company was established in 2008. We were the first actual clothing brand to come out of western North Carolina. Also, first African American owner to have a store in downtown Sylva. I was the first African American and African American woman. Also, the first African American clothing brand ran out of western North Carolina as well.

TR: That's really interesting, so how challenges...

FW: The challenges from the beginning were... marketing is a different aspect. You can have the most amazing thing in the world. Marketing is honestly —I'm very much a person, I'm not a gloat person. I'm not a look at me, see this, hear this, I'm a very set back person. My voice and my interactions when people meet me there like there's no way you're not (Inaudible). . . No but I'm still kick backish. Most people I can walk around, they love the brand, they love what it is but they can't tell you the owner. I would rather be behind the scenes, than in front of it. And one of the challenges for me personally was being in front and thinking that it didn't need a face. I didn't want it to have a face, it needed to be a brand. Survival Pride, and the reason its named Survival Pride is being proud of what you survived, endured, and overcome. Survival and having pride in who you are doesn't matter. What you been, who you are, does not matter.

TR: Yeah, and on your website I just wrote little notes and it says like faith, survival, pride... and then I looked at your God's Compass logo. You said survival was key.

FW: So yeah, that was my biggest challenge and honestly it's still a challenge today. And that move point. . . I've gotten much better at it but I am still very much a person that I don't... but the one thing that I did realize with that challenge and to overcome is that

people want to know who's behind it. Like Nike, let's put it into a different perspective, a different category, different selling you know... But Nike you don't know the owner, you don't even know how it was originally created. Most people do not know, they just know its Nike but you have those faces that are associated with Nike. Do you see what I'm saying? Sponsorships, and that's the original way I wanted to play. I wanted to sign sponsorships that are not my face. So that's the way I played it and it was a wrong play. It was absolutely a wrong play because they needed to see me because of who I am and what I am and what the brand stands for. It couldn't be this person and what they're doing in the community but whose behind here signing all these people. I'm saying you can't have that and we did it in a different way but that was my biggest challenge. My newest challenge is truly the new marketing curve with now being mobile. As we went from brick and mortar – and brick and mortar helped us establish as we're here. People to move inside the store and shipping location, everything for moving parts. Because it grew and I never originally intended to have a store. I was just going to have something and have other stores carry the brand. And that was the intention and that was the goal but as the first challenge I did face was people understanding Survival Pride because it wasn't written correctly. I didn't have it this easy, you see what I'm saying. It was two pages and it was so specific. It wasn't branded and I'm very good at branding but the key wasn't there. I mean literally I was twenty years old with a brand to brand to (inaudible). So that was the biggest challenge there.

TR: Interesting, so the next question from that would be, what is your favorite part about owning a business?

FW: My favorite part about owning a business is honestly the stories and the things that I am able to contribute back to the community and giving back. The messages that I can bring through the clothing to help people. I had a young lady and what our symbol means... it has a cross inside of it, it had a (inaudible), and the lady emailed me saying that she didn't kill herself, she did not commit suicide because of my logo. Because she saw it on one of her shirts that she had and saw the cross inside of it and didn't commit suicide. Those things are what drive me. I'm not here for the money, I'm here to get people to realize that your worth something and that's the message that we want through the clothing. So that is my biggest reward, is getting those emails and getting that love. I don't care. If I didn't make a dollar, I would not care. I'll spend every last dime and some, because it's more than a brand. It's not clothing, it's about a way of life and loving yourself and having faith in who you are and that God's got you. You're worth something and so that's what I get out of it and that's what everyday drives me.

TR: That's really good and so talking a little bit about the workplace. Do you hire, like when you had your storefront store, or even with the mobile store now, do you hire friends and family?

FW: Yeah, it's actually a very family based, community based thing. We have what's the small pride street team. We have kids in the community who love the brand and who want to be a part of it. They get to do photo shoots, they get free clothes every once and while. They get to come to the events. They get to have fun with the events and that's the street team. And they get to hand out decals, they have fun, they get to take pictures, they get to travel to all different states and different events. All of it's free for

them, they don't pay a dime. They just come, they just come along. That's just the crew, they do it. So you have that aspect, you have parts of it that way but then you have...

You have the Survival Pride street team and like I said they go to all the events and they do all of that stuff. The street team like I said hands out decals, they get benefits on the side. Then you have the Survival Pride team and those people that are hired at the store and for the mobile store... their specific goals are to help with shipping. Oh god, shipping... the mobile store organization and things like that. Keeping organization with and knowing what clothes we have and don't have because we only have limited numbers of clothes. We're not a mass branded thing and if you see a shirt that you like, you might want to get it now because we only make fifty to one-hundred of each item.

TR: I got you.

FW: And that's it, so nobody is suppose to look the same and everybody is an individual. So you may see that same design, different color, different print but you will never see the exact same one that you wanted in those colors. So that's the way we always keep it. Some people are like man I can go this Nike shirt, wear out the Nike shirt and go buy the exact same one it was fifteen years ago. They can find it, it's an original, that's not the way its suppose to be. I'm not suppose to walk around and be able to... be like alright, all y'all got the same exact thing on. That's not the way life is suppose to be.

TR: So when you had the storefront and with the mobile store, what kind of work environment have you tried to create?

FW: A team or family environment. We're a family, we're family... end of day and that's a serious note. Anybody that has ever been a part of Survival Pride, and they're now not

a part, they know they could always come to me and be —we're always family. So that's the environment they we create. No one is above anybody. I'm not above them in that sense. You have an idea, let's hear it and let's move. But we're a very, very small team but if you're included in the street team it could get a little bigger because those are some awesome kids from sixteen, fourteen, to twenty-one or twenty-two, college students that we're recruiting as well. It's very much a family feel, nobody is above anybody. Nobody. Talk to me, you think alright cool, that's a cool idea. Alright now, how do you want to do it? Alright cool, well let's do it this way. It's not just something I'm the rule hammer breaker, this is how we. . . We have an organization like if you're a part of the team and you wanted to say man, I really want to do something on —I just heard this saying, I think it something that's a part of the branding and I think it needs to be . . . Like our new "challenge accepted". Her challenge is accepted, I got an idea, let's go with that. Well talk to me, tell me, lets draw it out, let's do it. What campaign you want? So it's not a I feed you only, your ideas aren't sitting dormant. Like you know how you've ever been in a company and you're like man this would be cool but they don't listen to ideas. You feel like your ignored, there is no ignoring, you know none of that. Everybody is together on things and seeing different events... I'm like hey guys do you want to go, oh man hey I think this event would be cool. There's none of that, of oh no this is the only things we do. Don't bring me anything else... that kind of thing.

TR: So how has owning a business affected your life?

FW: Owning a business it's definitely affected my life in several different ways. You have to, unfortunately - and owning a business is so amazing - but things come at you from so

many directions. People see business and they see dollars. There's nothing wrong with that, you have to be very systematic and I love giving to everything. So that's my problem, my accountant even told me she was like Tina, the Pope don't give this much (laughter). But owning a business from a business owners —what you're showing face and remembering who you are. Even before that I was always you're student athlete, you're a student first and your representing that school. Then as athlete you're representing that school. I'm representing my family, myself, and, you know, myself importantly. My morals of myself, at the end of the day when I lay my head down on the pillow —am I good? The only thing that that has affected that would come about in a business is now voicing my opinion, especially in today, it has be very calculated. That's the only thing that I can say has been different, and honestly I still haven't done it any differently. Everybody knows that I'll tell you straight how it is and this is what it is and this is my opinion on it. I'm open to those opinions. That's the only thing that I can say that has affected any business...

TR: Most definitely, I can relate to that because that's why I don't post anything on social media really. I'm always thinking about jobs that are going to be looking at it and even what I share I try to make sure that it doesn't have cursing or anything like that in it. So I get that, I want to be calculated about the way I use social media because it can be used to your advantage or to your detriment in some situations.

FW: Exactly, but here's the thing and this is what I will tell you. Don't lose your character, don't lose who you are worrying about what people are going to say either. I'm serious. Because you will lose yourself in that so worried about what somebody else

is going to say about you. Don't worry about what other people are going to say. This world is a melting pot of many several different opinions and people are going to stand in different ones. It doesn't mean we can't all agree to disagree. So don't be afraid to state your opinion either, as long as it's... when I say calculated, I mean say it an educated manner. As an African American woman living in the mountains of North Carolina, let's be real about this. I mean in 2011 I opened the store and I'm the first African American business in downtown. Let's be real about this segment right there, 2011? That's ridiculous in a sense. So I've had people come to me and say things are too black in the store. What's too black? Because I had black history artwork.

TR: Wow

FW: So...

TR: What was your response to that?

FW: How is it too black? I said would it be different if it were all Caucasian's on the (Inaudible)? His face just went what? So how is it too black? There are so many different cultures on this board right now. I said you have three black pictures and me standing here (laughter). So you have that dynamic here and I think that's a challenge and people floating through in that melting pot.

TR: I got you... so how do think people usually envision your job? And is your perspective similar or different from how they view it?

FW: Most people vision of my job depends on if you've ever seen me move and shake or not. You can follow Survival Pride and then of course you can see we're kind of everywhere. So people know were moving but as in my job, most people I think envision

it as me —I think people know how hands on I am, so they know that I am looking at accounting records, looking at the new designs, talking to the shop, they know I'm doing those multi-tasking figures. Some people see people and they're like yeah you know your just chillin' here doing this. I think people see the multi-tasking of it but I don't know how much they see. I think they do see that. Some people don't but I think they do see me as a very motivated, and when it comes to my personal job, that I have a lot of hats.

TR: Have you owned any other businesses in other regions of North Carolina?

FW: No, I have not. That's going to be a different story maybe in a year. But Survival Pride's expanding as far as that's concerned but other businesses . . . I do have a graphic design business that I do but I didn't do it at first because people... because I'm very, very, very much of a perfectionist when it comes to my designs and certain things because when it has my name stamped on it - and that's one of my very much, also my imperfections - because that design could be a good six designs ago, twenty-four hours of work ago, literally twenty-four hours of work on the computer ago and six versions ago. And I would show the group and they would be like Tina that was the first one in the beginning. You know, you go through enough and they're like we still like the first ones. I've always done branding, so I do a ton of branding and stuff for people but I don't do it, I'm very selective on who I choose and what businesses I help and move. But I do graphic design branding for businesses and logos.

TR: That's really interesting, so if people were discussing your business what would you want them to say? And what do you want the legacy of this business to be?



FW: I want the legacy of Survival Pride to be that we were a brand that's not just a brand, a lifestyle. It's how you live. Always feel blessed, always love yourself, always have faith, and be a fighter. This world ain't going to be easy but fight for what you want. Fight for what you want and fight for what you believe in and have faith in yourself. And that's what I want people to know the legacy at the end of the day was, I want people to know that despite anything that they've ever seen, despite everything, no matter what a company evolves to, that it started from not me but as an African American, as in a person trying to make sure that people fight for what they love. Fight for yourself, fight for your survival, and being proud and having pride in who you are. That's all I want for everybody. My name never has to be mentioned but if it has to be mentioned, have it be said that I was a woman that never gave up. Never gave up no matter the challenges, never gave up and didn't let anything beat her. Didn't let her sickle cell beat her, despite this challenge it was overcome for others to see that things can be... you can overcome anything. When they see Survival Pride, I want them to see that that business was started by somebody that wasn't even supposed to live until eighteen. That despite those things, she can still do things. That's what it needs to stand for!

TR: I think that's perfect. So getting into more historic business questions, I really just have one. How has the business climate in the wider U.S. or even just the region, being as specific as Sylva, how has the business climate affected your business? Have you had to adjust to fit...

FW: Adjusting, I think the only thing that I think of is brick and mortar is great for some

businesses and some things. But the way we move and the way its calculated and is done... Business climate changing for retail in general, I think it needs to be mobile. And the thing is, ordering online is cool, but you still like to feel it and you like to see it. At the end of day nobody just wants to be cooped up in their house on the phone... you know that's cute, that's cool, that's alright, you know this or that blah blah blah. You want to feel it, you want to see it, you want to have interactions with people. You need people interaction. I think the mobile market, onlines are always... that's of course going to be a staple and shipping is going to take over because people are going to turn into introverts, into their phones... What social media was suppose to be to connect people, has distanced people. I think there is a problem there to with actually getting out and actually enjoying life, not looking at it.

TR: Yeah, yeah definitely

FW: So I think that's an aspect there.

TR: So do you think the recession or anything like that has played...

FW: I started my business at the start of the recession of 2008. The recession, I think people are more calculated about what they spend but here's the thing. As long as there is quality and purpose and people see those two things, the quality in their purchase, you'll buy it. You won't even think twice, you'll buy it. But if your product isn't known, I think it's just a [inaudible] band of the internet and it's so clouded and congested. You have to find a way to get out of that. I think that's what is really being seen and people want to reserve the money because they don't know what that quality is because they've never seen it.

TR: So if you had the opportunity to start over would you go into the same type of business and would you start a business at all?

FW: Absolutely. The only thing I would change is for us to... I would have done the mobile. I would have still done the brick and mortar to get that feel but it wouldn't have been in Sylva. Sylva's marketing campaign for their town, unfortunately, isn't where it needs to be. I think because we actually have the most gorgeous city layout of the surrounding cities. Waynesville, Bryson - Bryson has the train - but as the layout of the town and the view that you get out as walking the town, you're not going to get better than Sylva. You're just not with the courthouse sitting there. So I think it would have definitely been... I would have focused marketing differently and done a few things. But as whole, with me being in here as a business, as a brand, no absolutely not. This is the purpose of what God (inaudible), it wasn't something that just walked in and I decided to do it because it was going to make some quick money. There's a story behind it. God has only a purpose and the reason I'm here.

TR: So as you grow and as your business grows, how would you like to transition over time? Have you thought about other stores? Have you thought about ever being bought out? Have you thought about passing it in the family? How do you think it's going to grow?

FW: It's going to grow, we're going to definitely have the mobile end of ours is definitely going to be huge into other stores. We have six other stores that carry the brand now. We're across the United States, (inaudible), Australia, and Canada. So as far as when it moves forward from here, we may have another brick and mortar. That will happen. The

brick and mortar did what it needed to do in Sylva and it establishes a brand. Its evolution but I think brick and mortar will, honestly, only be an office... a headquarters where people can go and chill. It's not going to really be a shopping place.

TR: So what advice would you offer other young small business owners?

FW: I would definitely advise them to really think outside the box for one. Think about their market, and who they truly want to connect with and how they're going to connect with them. That is going to be your biggest, it doesn't matter what you do or how you do it, connecting with your market and knowing your market. You can have the most awesome product but if you don't know how to market it too, you're never going to sell it. So knowing your market and the first thing is also branding. Brand very well, do not – and the logoing - that is huge and people don't understand it, people don't get it. They truly don't get branding, brand yourself and logo yourself.

TR: So my last two questions are just is there anything you would like to add or something that you feel I left out? And is there anyone who would be especially helpful with this project?

FW: I don't think you left anything out. I think the only thing I can say like we've already talked about the dynamic of even me being an African American in here. It's a very different dynamic and a special one.

TR: I thought about asking questions specifically like that but I felt like through the questions that I had it would naturally come out

FW: Yeah, exactly as it did.

TR: So yeah, I feel like it did a little bit. If you would like to talk a little bit more about

that. What are (contemplates question aloud) some of the biggest challenges that you have to deal with that involve race and owning a retail business? And are there positives?

FW: Oh there are absolutely amazing positives... so many positives. And I was so worried in the beginning about people being worried about race because of where I'm from and where it is. And don't get me wrong, I wasn't worried about it because I didn't care, I didn't see it, I knew everybody, and it didn't matter. It doesn't matter and I didn't see race as a factor into the business, as more political things and aspect things came along that I didn't foresee. I knew I was black, oh believe I know I'm black, I know I'm African American. I know I'm a woman. But some of the people that are just very close minded in general and it wouldn't matter. Are you going to be able to handle this? Are you going to be able to handle this and that? Well I can handle this, this, this... why can't I handle this. The only specific challenge I could say was that being the only African American owner, it was a staple and I felt I was a staple and I didn't need to (inaudible) and that was something I wanted to represent. But it's not just on my shoulders to do so. I felt like it was all on my shoulders to represent African Americans as not just a worker but an entrepreneur. So that's why I kept the store open so long. Because I was the staple and the only African...

TR: I can relate as your saying this I'm thinking about graduate school, even ungrad in our history program there's maybe two to three African Americans who will be in the upper level courses and then in graduate school there's none, beside me. So I completely understand that, not wanting to give up, and wanting to do your best not

only for yourself... you're the only representation that they have...

FW: Exactly, that they'll ever see. So that they get it. So that there not ingrained into somebody. Because the only representation that you're going to see is what's in your face. I wanted to make sure that that representation of an African American. Anything that they ever got from anywhere, no matter where I went. And it's funny...

Did you create the logo? You created the logo? It's funny that it's such a surprising, you can hear the surprise in their voice. And I'm not saying it's because...it just like they think somebody else is always doing the work. That the person who created it is not going to be in front of your face.

TR: For you not only being an African American but being a woman... I feel like some of those preexisting ideas and notions come into as well.

FW: And they think that, alright somebody has to... well does your husband help? No, sure doesn't, he has nothing to... this is my business. This is mine, not to say... but that was my business. It's not a man's, it's not a woman's, no offense to any man or woman. But no, I created this and this is my idea. This is what I've done. So people can see that it doesn't matter what background or whatever... that you can be that and you can do that. So there are examples and I know of black businesses because I've done the research but I had to dig to do that research. I can't just come to mind and think of a black business owner. But if you come in Sylva, NC, you go to Waynesville, NC, you go outside the area, anybody who knows about Survival Pride... they know about me. Now, it's getting better but they know that its owned by an African American woman. There are more articles and more interviews. So the kids see somebody out so they get that

encouragement to do that. But you can also let that pressure either help you or hurt you. So, like I said, there's pressures with anybody no matter what race or creed or whatever you are.

TR: Yeah, I think it's good to be aware of it but not worry about it.

FW: Exactly, but it's been an interesting challenge and that's the only challenge I saw was to find that middle point for people. Especially here for it to not feel too black, I guess.

TR: You don't want to put up too many black paintings. (Laughter)

FW: You know but I never had that before in my life. I've never had someone told me... it was just because you could feel... I was like whoa, I'm confused right now. How is just because I have different ethnic groups on the wall? Because I had black, white, everybody on the wall. And now we're...

TR: There's too many of them (laughter)

FW: There's too many colors on the wall? Alright cool man. (Laughter). We're not going to go there, but its interesting perspectives that you can see and hear. But it's an amazing dynamic feel and some people are so happy to see it and some people are like it's been a long time coming, I'm so glad you're doing this... Or just in general. Cool. They have no opinion on it but at least it's there. But yeah, there's definitely been some challenges with that but it's just been weird. We're just going to ride that out. My store was a lot of culture, it was a lot of different prints and it was very culturized. It wasn't like most stores where you go into where it's the same thing here, very country, you have your wheelbarrow and it's just very systematic, very bland and systematic. So

when you would go into my store, it was a completely different atmosphere, it was so culturized and colors. It wasn't the fact that it was black, white, or indifferent. It wasn't just different from country moving. You know how little country stores look. So that's just the only thing that I've ever seen when I had a brick and mortar.

TR: Well thank so much for taking the time to do this. I really wanted to include you like I said in the Facebook message because you would give the woman's perspective, the African American perspective, and the mobile perspective. You just have so many different things wrapped up into your project. So thank you for taking the time...

FW: If you need anything, I'm going to always take time out to give back to the community and the university and to anything we can do. It's just a part of it.

TR: Well thank you so much!

END OF INTERVIEW