

Bill Greene - Students at Gilman

Greene: When I said it was difficult for me, just making the adjustment teaching here was an adjustment-only taught two classes.

Gilpin: Math.

Greene: Yeah. I'll never forget the first day. I'm standing in the hall, the kids came in, they were all seated. I looked and I said, "Hmmm. Where are the rest of my kids?" And so then I came into the classroom and the guys stood up, which I didn't understand either. And I said, "Where are the rest of the students?" They said, "This is it." I think I have twelve students in that class. I just came from an environment where I had thirty-five to forty kids each period. So, I had to learn to adjust the material I was teaching. I had to teach much more because I had fewer kids to deal with and I had a different caliber kid, by them being hand-selected, to deal with. So, it took me a while to get used to that and even gear my lessons to the point where I made sure I presented enough material. [Laughter] First couple days, I was finished. I was finished on my presentation. But the kids were wonderful. I didn't have any trouble with kids. I guess maybe-and parents either. I'm surmising-I think maybe they picked the kids in my class. No one ever said that. I think parents who may have been against the diversity may have asked not to have kids in my class. I don't know that. I don't know if they did it the way they always do it or not, but the kids I had were tremendous individuals, and I heard that private schools were spoiled brats. My kids were wonderful. From day one, the kids were the most respectful youngsters you could ever want to have.

Gilpin: Right. Do you feel that the kids accepted you-

Greene: To my face they did. I don't know what they said later, but they were tremendous. They gave me the utmost respect. You know, I didn't have any major trouble with any kid in my class, no more than you would have in any other class-kids talking when they shouldn't, but no major types of problems.

Gilpin: Were there other African-American teachers here?

Greene: No, I was the first African-American teacher here.

Gilpin: You were.

Greene: Yeah.

Gilpin: And then others came while you were here, because you've been here

Greene: Yeah. Then the first one I saw come in was part time. He was teaching religion: Reverend Phillips. And then slowly more started coming.