

it's like saying the slave experience was all in vain, like it wasn't important. We need to look at the slave experience not with malice. One of the most important things that happened as a result during Reconstruction [of the South, following the Civil War] was education. These people wanted to learn. They were denied education and had a thirst for it. They were literally putting their lives on the line and dying to learn. Now we have a generation of complacent kids in regard to education.

I grew up in southern California, and my interest in [Nicodemus] happened when I was very young in Pasadena. Two weeks every summer, I spent in Nicodemus. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that home was where Nicodemus was. I had a perspective of the world and my place as it relates to Nicodemus, that Nicodemus was a very special place. During the Sixties' riots in Los Angeles, I never had an identity problem. I'm sure I was accused of that because I always said we had Nicodemus.

We had the family, the extended family and the town. We had Nicodemus in common. We had a sense of who we are. It was truly our own town.

I come from black settlers who settled in the frontier. In the last 20 years, I got a really good perspective of what Nicodemus was all about. It's always been there. Nicodemus was named after the first African slave who purchased his freedom