



## **Margaret Locklear Meiklejohn History Interview**

Ashley Minner Jones

October 28, 2024

Dundalk, Maryland

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## Field Notes

**Interviewee:** Margaret Locklear Meiklejohn

**Age:** 72

**Sex:** Female

**Occupation:** Retired Clerical Worker, United States Naval Academy; Pet-sitter

**Residence:** Baltimore, Maryland

**Tribal Affiliation:** Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina

**Interviewer:** Ashley Minner Jones AMJ

**Location of Interview:** Dundalk, Maryland

**Date of Interview:** October 28, 2024

**Time of Interview:** 2:00 PM ET

**Transcriber:** Ashley Minner Jones

### Key Words

Lumbee, East Baltimore, South Baltimore, Ft. McHenry, Key Bridge, Dundalk, Glen Burnie, Brooklyn Park, Federal Hill, Edgewater, Harwood, North Carolina, Lumberton, family, pet-sitting, play, Native American, United States Naval Academy, walking, country, senior citizens, elderly, fashion, nickname, change, prayer, renewal

### Abstract

Margaret Locklear Meiklejohn (Lumbee) is a 72-year-old retired clerical worker for the United States Naval Academy who now works part-time as a pet-sitter. She was born in Hamlet, North Carolina and moved to Baltimore City with her family when she was 4 years old. They lived on the former "reservation" in East Baltimore. Margaret attended School 27. The family moved to Edgewater, Maryland when Margaret was in the 6th grade. Margaret fondly recalls childhood visits to North Carolina and playing with other children there. She describes herself as a country girl living in the city. For fun, Margaret especially enjoys exercise. A current resident of Federal Hill in South Baltimore, she walks Ft. McHenry daily. She also likes to dress up, play Bingo, and visit a local senior center to dance and play games. Margaret enjoys helping elderly people. She

comes from a large Lumbee family and has been family-oriented all her life. She feels the Native American community in Baltimore is fading and wishes there were more programs and offerings for Native people in the city, as there are in North Carolina. Margaret would like everyone to know that it is always possible to change yourself.

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## **Transcript**

Ashley Minner Jones [AMJ]: [00:00:01] Hello, my name is Ashley Minner Jones. It is October 28th [2024] and I have come to interview an amazing person for *Beyond Baltimore Street*, our oral history and photo documentary project that celebrates the vibrant, fascinating every day lives of Baltimore Lumbee elders. [00:00:16] What is your name?

Margaret Locklear Meiklejohn [MLM]: Margaret Meiklejohn

AMJ: And where are you from?

MLM: North Carolina

AMJ: Where in North Carolina?

MLM: Hamlet, North Carolina was where I was born.

AMJ: And when?

MLM: 1952

AMJ: [00:00:31] And how would you explain who you are to someone who doesn't know you?

MLM: Um... I'm vibrant. I love life. I am a family person. I mostly take care of my family—  
[00:00:46] my kids, my grandchildren, my great-grandchildren, I have a lot... a big family.

AMJ: Do you come from a big family, too?

MLM: Yes. I had two brothers, a sister, and a half sister. [00:01:01]

AMJ: And how did you grow up?

MLM: I was in North Carolina till I was about 4 years old. And um... I grew up mostly in  
Baltimore City, and then we moved to Edgewater, Maryland. That's where I graduated [00:01:16]  
high school.

AMJ: What brought y'all to Baltimore when you were 4?

MLM: I think for work, you know, my parents came here for work, and I guess a better life.

AMJ: And what were your parents' names?

MLM: Bonnie Lee Locklear and [00:01:31] Iron Mackfee Locklear

AMJ: And Bonnie was a... Locklear was her maiden name, too, right? She's a double [Locklear]?

MLM: Yes. She's a Locklear, maiden Locklear...

AMJ: Um... Do you remember what Baltimore was like when [00:01:46] you got here at 4 years old?

MLM: Not that much, but I remember we had a lot of family here. And it was nice growing up with family, my grandmother, my aunts, and my cousins.

AMJ: Were they mostly all on your mom's [00:02:01] side?

MLM: Yes, mostly all my mom's side of the family.

AMJ: Where did you live when you first got here?

MLM: I know it was East Baltimore.

AMJ: And you told me a story a little while ago about when you would go back to [00:02:16] North Carolina. You liked it so much. What happened?

MLM: Well, when I was younger, my dad's sister lived in North Carolina, and I would go down there and stay mostly the summer times. And [00:02:31] my dad would always come to get me to take me back to Baltimore, and I would cry. So he would leave me there for a couple days, and then he would come back and he would say, "I'm going to take you to store and get some candy," and I would be so [00:02:46] happy. I would be so excited. So I would get in the car with him and then I would fall asleep and wake up back in Baltimore.

AMJ: Would you cry then?

MLM: Yes, I would cry. I loved the country.

AMJ: What was it like in the country?

MLM: [00:03:01] Well, we played outside. You know, we play games outside, mostly outdoors. And I love the outdoors and I love the country. I love nature. I'm basically a nature person.

AMJ: Yeah, you said you're a country girl.

MLM: I'm a country girl livin' in the city.

AMJ: [00:03:16] What did it look like there at your aunt's house in North Carolina?

MLM: The dirt roads, trees, um... neighbors, kids to play with, and we all played outdoor games—hide and seek, jump rope [00:03:32], um... checkers, different little kid games that people don't play these days.

AMJ: Was it all Indian people there?

MLM: Some. I played with other kids too, but a lot of Natives.

AMJ: And in [00:03:47] Baltimore did you grow up around a lot of Natives?

MLM: Baltimore? No, just my family I knew as Natives and the rest were mostly white people.

AMJ: So you know you were in East Baltimore as a small child. And then you said, you graduated [00:04:02] where?

MLM: I graduated in 1971, in Harwood, Maryland.

AMJ: And what was it like there?

MLM: It was ok. I'm mostly a loner... a lone person. [00:04:17] So I really didn't hang around with a lot of people and I didn't join like their little groups. They had the greasers, the hooblums... um... There was different groups and I just never was involved with any of them. I was a loner.

AMJ: Do you people know you were Native [00:04:32] American?

MLM: I don't know if they knew, I never really told them.

AMJ: And in North Carolina, did everybody know you were Native American?

MLM: Yes, everybody there knew I was Native American, yes.

AMJ: You fit right in? [00:04:47]

MLM: Yes. [laughter]

AMJ: Do you remember anything about when you were 4 years old in East Baltimore?

MLM: Not much. I remember, you know, hurtin' myself jumpin' on a bed and cuttin' my finger and my [00:05:02] dad was that the pool hall there on Baltimore Street and he had to take me to the hospital. That was it. And I got a couple of stitches. And playin' with the kids, we played in the backyard and we play hide-and-seek and it was fun. It was just fun, a bunch of kids.

AMJ: [00:05:17] More Native kids?

MLM: No, they were mostly white kids.

AMJ: Did you start school in East Baltimore?

MLM: Yes, I did. I went to school... 27?

AMJ: Uh huh.

MLM: I went to School 27 and that... till sixth grade. [00:05:32] And then we moved to Edgewater, Maryland.

AMJ: Did you have um... That was before Indian Education, so nobody came to check on you? A Native American person never came?

MLM: No, nobody ever came to check on me.

AMJ: So you were on your own. [00:05:47]

MLM: Yes.

AMJ: Was your mom and your dad pretty present?

MLM: Yes, they were. My mom worked and my dad worked.

AMJ: Do you remember any big reaction you had when you saw Baltimore for the first time?  
[00:06:02]

MLM: Yes, how tall the buildings were and everybody was so close together and it was crowded, overcrowded.

AMJ: Sounds like maybe it was intimidating?

MLM: Yes, kind of, kind of. Too many people. But I'm mostly stuck [00:06:17] with my family. We had a big family and we stuck together.

AMJ: Where do you live now?

MLM: I live in Baltimore City.

AMJ: What part?

MLM: Federal Hill.

AMJ: Oh, South Baltimore?

MLM: Yes.

AMJ: When did you move to where you live now?

MLM: [00:06:32] I moved there in 2012... 2012.

AMJ: So not too terribly long ago. What brought you to that part of the world?

MLM: Well, I was livin' with my daughter and then the house got sold... [00:06:47] so I moved in with my mother, in South Baltimore. And that's where I stayed until I... Well, I'm still there, but um... I retired from my work in 20...14. [00:07:02] I retired from the Naval Academy in Annapolis and... I was there for 32 years and I retired and... And now I just do dog-sittin'. I love the pets. I don't have any pets, but I love to dog-sit [00:07:17]... cat-sit, bird-sit, and that's my part-time job that I do now.

AMJ: What did you do for the Naval Academy for so many years?

MLM: I worked in Admissions. I did scannin' for the Naval Academy [00:07:33] and it's um... I opened the—the mail from kids graduatin' from high school from all over the country, their medical records, their um... congressional referrals, all kinds of stuff about them.

AMJ: Wow, did [00:07:48] you see a lot of Native Americans come through?

MLM: No, I did not see a lot of Native Americans come through, but I made a lot of friends.

AMJ: Did you love your job?

MLM: Yes, I did like it until the end.

AMJ: And then not so much and you got [00:08:03] out of there?

MLM: Yes, and then I— not toward the end, I had to hurry up and retire. Plus, they were givin' out a um... incentive to... for you to retire. So, I jumped on that. [laughter]

AMJ: Good job. How was it [00:08:18] different living in Baltimore than when you lived in North Carolina? What do you remember about that as a kid?

MLM: Well, North Carolina was more country. And I'm basically a country girl, livin' in the city.

AMJ: And [00:08:33] here, it—it was just more city, like congested, urban...?

MLM: Yes, here it's like, it's too fast-paced. I like the slow country life.

AMJ: Do you still keep in touch with other Lumbee folks in North Carolina? [00:08:49]

MLM: Yes, I have a cousin on my dad's side, and she lives in Clinton, North Carolina, and we became very, very close.

AMJ: And do you keep in touch with other Lumbee folks in Baltimore?

MLM: Yes, just my family.

AMJ: Which is still... it's just bigger.

MLM: Yes, it's bigger.

AMJ: Yeah, um... How do you keep in touch with the folks here?

MLM: Well, my daughter made a family page, and we keep in touch, and everybody knows about [00:09:19] what everybody's doing and how we plan what we're—our family get-togethers. And we go on vacation together.

AMJ: Is this on Facebook?

MLM: Yes.

AMJ: And then I notice you hang out with your Aunt Tie [Mattie Fields] at [00:09:34] Bingo, right?

MLM: Yes, I take my dad to Senior Day on Thursdays and he's 98 years old. And then I hang out with my Aunt Tie and we go have lunch or go to Bingo.

AMJ: That's cool. [00:09:49] And then today we're at your Aunt Teet's house, which is Aunt Jeanette [Jeanette Walker Jones]?

MLM: Yes, I'm at my aunt's house now and I hang out with her too, but not as much as I do with my other aunt.

AMJ: Why is that?

MLM: [00:10:04] I think because my aunt Tie lives so close and Aunt Teet lives in Dundalk and my aunt [Tie] lives in Glen Burnie, so...

AMJ: Yeah, and there was a recent event that happened that made it really hard to get from Dundalk to [00:10:19] Glen Burnie...

MLM: Oh. yes, um... Well, when the Key Bridge went down from the ship...

AMJ: The Dali?

MLM: The Dali. When the Dali crashed into the Key Bridge, it made it difficult to come visit my Aunt Teet as much [00:10:35], but I walk Fort McHenry almost every day and I can see where the bridge was and I took a picture of me, you know, with the gone bridge behind me, and I—I like walking there. It's just so peaceful.

AMJ: [00:10:50] That is a really pretty place. Do you ever run into other Native people there? Like, ever once?

MLM: No, I run into a lot of people there at Fort McHenry, but it's... they're mostly white and there's a lot of fathers [00:11:05] that push their babies around, [laughter] so I see them and I talk to a lot of people, you know. I always say hi. Some respond, some don't.

AMJ: Do you notice that there's anything...? I mean, you lived most of your [00:11:20] life in Baltimore, but do you notice anything in particular about you that you associate with Baltimore, as a Lumbee person? Things that you wouldn't be doin' if you hadn't lived here most of your life? Maybe things you [00:11:35] eat or drink or how you dress or how you talk?

MLM: Yes. I—I still have that country voice and I talk sometimes where people are like, "What'd you just say?" And—and the way I dress, I [00:11:50] try to dress more modern now, you know,

where before I was like a old-fashioned. But now I dress more modern and to fit into society today. It's different.

AMJ: Yeah, do you think people from North Carolina dress [00:12:05] in a more... um... older fashion?

MLM: Yes, I do think some of the older Native Americans do dress old-fashioned. But I'm... I'm old, but I dress young.

AMJ: [00:12:20] You don't seem old at all. If you ever go "home" to—Do you consider North Carolina "home?" Do you ever call it "home?"

MLM: Um... sometimes. I think, when I go home, mostly it's Clinton, North [00:12:35] Carolina and we'll drive to Lumberton, you know, and it's—it's—it's different. It still looks like it's back in time, to me.

AMJ: Do people in North Carolina notice that you're not from there?

MLM: Um... sometimes, [00:12:50] but not really, you know. Cause I... When we go there, I just um... am around family, and some of them don't look like they're Native American, but most of 'em are.

AMJ: [00:13:05] When you say they don't look like they're Native American, what do you... What things do you think of? What characteristics?

MLM: Their hair, their hair may be silky and long... but that's part of Native American, too. But I'm just not used to it.

AMJ: [00:13:20] Right, what are you used to?

MLM: [sigh] Real curly hair? My hair used to be curly, but now that I grow it out, it's long and straight.

AMJ: In North Carolina, can you look around [00:13:35] and see anything and say this is because people were living in Baltimore that this is this way, like any influence from Baltimore in North Carolina that you notice?

MLM: I think it's basically the way they dress. You know, they dress [00:13:50] like we do now, you know. But some of the older people dress the way they used to always dress, you know, old-fashioned, but the younger generation they dress modern, very modern.

AMJ: Can you give me an example of an old-fashioned [00:14:05] outfit? Like, if you wanted to dress old-fashioned, like an older Lumbee person would, what would you wear?

MLM: I would wear a long dress, long skirts, high heels, not too high, though. And your hair would not be like, [00:14:20] fashionable, or really dressed up, really nice.

AMJ: So classy, but...

MLM: Yeah, classy, no makeup. [laughter]

AMJ: Classy and plain. When would you go to North Carolina as a kid? Like what kind of occasion would you [00:14:35] go for?

MLM: We would go just to go. My dad always wanted to drive down there, and we'd go for long weekends and as a kid, you know, I didn't mind... but I couldn't take drivin' as good as they could, 'cause when we came back home, I'd have [00:14:50] to sleep for 2 days. [laughter]

AMJ: To try to get over it? Sounds like they give you a hard time about that?

MLM: No, not really unless it was a school day because sometime I would sleep through that too.

AMJ: Oh my gosh. [00:15:05] Would um... your cousins be so excited to see you when you got there?

MLM: Oh, yes. We had so much fun. I had a cousin that... It was in Lumberton, North Carolina, and she—she drove, but I don't think she even have a license, but... she would go get [00:15:20] a quarter's worth of gas and we would ride around all through Lumberton, and it was so much fun on the dirt roads.

AMJ: Would they be really excited about anything you brought or anything you—you were doin' or interested in? [00:15:36]

MLM: Um... no, not really. I mean, we would just hang out in the livin' room and we would put on music and I was always a laugher and my hair was kind of like red—I had red highlights? And they nicknamed me...um... I look... [00:15:51] They thought of me as *I Love Lucy*.

AMJ: [laughter] And they'd call you Lucy? Yeah, I grew up knowing you by a different name. What's your other nickname?

MLM: Well, my nickname is called "Nudie," and that was [00:16:06] from my great grandmother named me that because she thought Margaret was too old a name for me, so she nicknamed me Nudie. It's not because I went around nude. It was just because Margaret was too old.

AMJ: Seems [00:16:21] like you were destined to be hip. [laughter] Do you remember her?

MLM: No, I don't because I think she died not too long after I was born.

AMJ: Yeah Valerie [Margaret's daughter, Valerie Fox] asked your dad [Iron Mackfee Locklear] a question when I was interviewing him. She said, [00:16:36] "Did you ever see your mom again?" after he left for the Navy and he said, "yeah," he saw his mom. Sounded like not too much, though. He was out living.

MLM: Yeah, he was out livin' in the Navy. And he went in the [00:16:51] Navy very young and... He wasn't around me growing up as much as most males are...are fathers to their children. He was gone all weekends and it was just us and [00:17:06] my mother.

AMJ: What was your mom like?

MLM: My mother was a angel. She was the monarch [matriarch] of our family. She prayed a lot. She didn't drink. She didn't smoke. [00:17:21] She was basically... the motherly type. She worked to provide for the kids and take care of the kids.

AMJ: And how many siblings did you say you have?

MLM: I have two brothers and a sister, which my sister passed [00:17:36] away and my brother passed away and my... I have one brother left.

AMJ: Yeah, where's your brother?

MLM: He lives in Bowie.

AMJ: So not too far.

MLM: Not too far from us. He lives in Bowie and he comes and visits [00:17:51] my dad once in a while.

AMJ: What do you like to do for fun these days?

MLM: Oh...My fun thing is dressin', goin' to the gym, and I do a lot of dog sittin' and cat-sittin'. That's [00:18:06] my thing I do now. I like to dance, and I like to go to Bingo, and I like to go to the senior citizen place and do dancin', or playin' dominoes and playin' cards with the elderly. [00:18:21] I love elderly people.

AMJ: Have you always loved elderly people?

MLM: Yes! Yes, I've always liked elderly people. I used to be a—a... an aid to elderly people. I used to go to their houses and stay all weekend and, [00:18:36] you know, take care of them.

AMJ: Did you love elderly people as a kid?

MLM: When I was a kid? No, I did not like elderly people when I was a kid. I didn't even like kids when I was a kid! [laughter]

AMJ: You just liked stayin' to yourself?

MLM: Yes, [00:18:51] I—I'm basically a loner.

AMJ: Why, do you suppose?

MLM: I don't know. I think I'm a loner because I've always been that way. I'm ver—I used to be very shy, and I was a loner, but I'm [00:19:06] still a little shy, but not as much as I used to be. I'm a talker. I talk to everybody. And I bring up conversations and... I don't know, that's how I meet people now. And I'm... at the senior citizen place, I have a lot of friends because [00:19:21] I love older people. And if they're handicapped and everything, I love 'em more. I have a passion for it, you know. I—I feel for 'em. You know, I was driving one day in Brooklyn Park, in Baltimore, [00:19:37] and I saw two people, and I wanted to cry just from seeing their condition. I wanted to cry.

AMJ: What was wrong?

MLM: They were hunched over and walkin' with walkers and they were so hunched over, it looked like they were almost [00:19:53] bending over to pick something up. That's how bad condition they were in. And I know it's probably from drugs, but I—I don't know. I just have a passion for 'em and it makes me wanna cry to see if the condition that some of these people are in. [00:20:08]

AMJ: I bet your dad's really happy you hang out with him.

MLM: Oh yes. I—I have a hard time gettin' away from my dad. He's like, "When you comin' back? When you comin' back?" You know, he's 98 years old and I guess he depends on me a lot, because I... [00:20:24] I take him to his doctors, I order his medicines, I clean for him, I do his grocery shoppin', I do his bills, I do his bankin'. It's a lot, you know? And it used to stress me out and I guess that's why I [00:20:39] got into walkin' and goin' to the gym and takin' care of myself because it was wearin' me down, but it gets easier. It gets easier.

AMJ: Is it like your morning thing to get up and go walk Fort McHenry?

MLM: Yes. [00:20:54] I used to get up at noon and now I get up at 6 o'clock in the morning. And I used to walk Fort McHenry. I would wait until it opens up 7 o'clock in the morning and I was there to walk around Fort McHenry. But now, they're not open till [00:21:09] 9 o'clock, so it's a little harder. So someti—I started going to the gym because I couldn't go there at 7 in the morning. So I go to the gym and sometime, if I work out, I still have a lot of energy, so then I'll come home and I'm like, "Oh, [00:21:24] I got to get this energy out!" And I'll go walk Fort McHenry.

AMJ: That's good.

MLM: It really clears my mind and I—While I'm walkin', I'm prayin', sometime—I would be prayin', you know, and thanking God for giving me the strength to do it.

AMJ: [00:21:39] How did you learn to pray?

MLM: Um... My mother was a prayin' woman. She always prayed for the family, all her life... All remember about my mom is, she was a prayin' woman. And she prayed for everybody, prayed for the family. And [00:21:54] I guess that's where I get it from. I probably have some her in me. That's something that she instilled in me.

AMJ: I think you look like your mom... and your dad, but I think you look like your mom.

MLM: Oh, thank you.

AMJ: Yeah, she was beautiful. [00:22:09]

MLM: I know...

AMJ: I mean, you're beautiful.

MLM: Sometimes I look in the mirror and I see my mom. [laughter]

AMJ: What do you think the Indian Community in Baltimore will be like in 10 years or 20 years?

MLM: I think it's basically fadin' [00:22:24] out because... they don't do things like they used to, and they don't have the programs that they have in North Carolina that they could have here. I don't think they do enough.

AMJ: Did you guys visit after you moved away as a younger [00:22:39] person? Like, when you were living away from the neighborhood, did you still come back for programs and events?

MLM: Yes. They would go to the church on Baltimore Street, where the Native American Center is? Yes, I... not that often, but I do go [00:22:54] there for some of the events for the Native Americans.

AMJ: Still do?

MLM: Yes, still do.

AMJ: What do you hope for the Indian Community of Baltimore?

MLM: [sigh] I hope that they will bring some of the things... [00:23:09] programs that they have in North Carolina for the Native Americans, because here in Baltimore, they don't have that much and you don't get the same things that you could if you were still livin' in North Carolina.

AMJ: Can you think of an example?

MLM: [00:23:25] Um... gettin' your Native American cards, um... the programs for housing um... to buy houses, um... to renovate your house? You know, a lot of people... Native Americans live in Baltimore [00:23:40] and they don't have the money to pay for like renovations on their house. You know, like my house. It's a old house and I don't have the income to renovate the bathroom like I need it now, as I'm a senior citizen.

AMJ: [00:23:56] Good example. Is there anything you'd like the young people of our community to hear from you?

MLM: I don't know. I—I like young people, and I like kids, you know. Even when I moved to Baltimore and, you know, with my mother, [00:24:11] in 2014, I used to get neighborhood kids and bring 'em over to my house and I will cook a meal for 'em and talk to them, you know, about their life and... They had hard lives. And um... I would take [00:24:26] 'em shoppin' if I had the money. I would take 'em shoppin', take 'em to the movies. And they were just neighborhood kids, I love kids.

AMJ: Is there anything you'd like the older people of our community to hear from you?

MLM: No, not really.

AMJ: [00:24:41] Is there anything else you'd like to tell the world? Just anyone at all, in general? What do you want them to hear from Margaret Meiklejohn... Locklear?

MLM: That you can always change. You can always change... Change... I'm renewin' [00:24:56] myself, so I know it can be done. So... Just change, you know?

AMJ: Good quote! You're full of good quotes, Ms. Nudie! Ok, thank you for letting me interview you.

MLM: You're welcome. Thank you, Ashley. You've been wonderful. Love you.

AMJ: Love you!