Dr. Jody Allen: They built communities, and in many ways they lived parallel lives to those of the white community. They did not depend on the guidance of whites.

Sarah McConnell: That's Dr. Jody Allen, professor of history at the College of William and Mary. She knows legal segregation in Virginia was a brutal and unjust practice. Her own family lived through it. But she's also dedicated to telling the story of how African Americans managed to find dignity and self determination in the midst of Jim Crow.

Dr. Jody Allen: They built homes, they built schools, they educated their children. So they thrived.

Sarah McConnell: From Virginia Humanities, this is With Good Reason. I'm Sarah McConnell. Today we're bringing you stories of what Professor Allen calls roses in December, the lives that bloomed even under the harsh conditions of the segregated south. Later in the show, pioneering African American opera singer, Camilla Williams, who went from segregated Danville, Virginia to the New York stage.

Sarah McConnell: But first, the story of how deep conversations with black leaders transformed one white Virginian from apathetic to activist. Historian Jennifer Ritterhouse of George Mason University shares the story of how Patty Boyle in the 1950s joined the fight against segregation.

Sarah McConnell: What was her childhood like? I understand she grew up on a former plantation?

Jennifer R.: She did, she grew up on a farm outside of Charlottesville. She was born in 1906, and there are African Americans who are both working on the farm and working as servants in the household, and her experiences to romp and play on the farm, have friendly relations with these people who she sees as beloved adults until she hits age 12 and her parents, particularly her mother, very rigidly say, "Okay, you're a big girl now, you can't be overly familiar with black people. You have to act the role of an adult white woman and maintain social distance." So she's having to then maintain social distance with people who have been her caregivers and very important emotional mainstays in her childhood.

Sarah McConnell: Does she describe that she herself felt pretty oblivious to African Americans or superior?

Jennifer R.: She did feel superior. She thought that she actually understood what they thought, and that they understood her. She describes it as if she and good Negroes would be a term she might have used, were all sort of part of the same club where they know that they have to abide by these rules of segregation, but really in their hearts they're all good friends, and everybody's getting along, and because she did believe in an inherent superiority and inferiority along race lines, she thought that black people accepted all of this and were happy that nice white people were nice to them.

Jennifer R.: And I think it just ... it does end up helping us to understand how people can be so blind.

Sarah McConnell: What was the turning point for her? When did she start to question her own beliefs?

Jennifer R.: She was reaching a point in her life in her late 40s in 1950 when her husband, who was a professor at the University of Virginia, comes home and tells her that the first black student is about to be admitted to the university. So her first response was to ask around among her white friends, "Well, how do you feel about this?" Apparently she says it was his [inaudible 00:03:54] mission was the topic of all private conversation, and a studiously avoided subject for all public gatherings. But she's asking around hearing that, you know, a lot of the people she knows think it's a good thing. And so she writes to Gregory Swanson and says, "I just want to reach out to you to let you know that there are a lot of us white people here at the University of Virginia who are welcoming to you." And he's very moved by this letter, and it opens a correspondence and then a face to face communication between them once he arrives in Charlottesville. But then that communication very quickly goes sour when he says, "Oh, looking forward to being friends," she says, "Well, I didn't really mean that we were going to have social equality between us."

Sarah McConnell: So he's absolutely offended by her at this point?

Jennifer R.: Oh, totally offended. And she just doesn't understand what she's done wrong.

Sarah McConnell: She reached out to the editor of the black newspaper in Charlottesville.

Jennifer R.: Somebody she didn't even know. So when she first found out that Gregory Swanson was going to be living in Charlottesville, she's thinking, "Well, I'm a person of goodwill, maybe I can help him find a place to live," she finds out that he's already found a place to live through this man named T.J. Sellers, who's the editor of the black newspaper, the Charlottesville Tribune. And she actually says this is the first time in her life that she has ever addressed a black man as mister in conversation, when she calls him on the phone. So she calls Mr. Sellers, maybe he'd be willing to look over this draft article she's written that she's calling We Want a Negro at the UVA. So she asks Sellers to read it over, give a brutally frank critique, and so he does.

Sarah McConnell: Was it brutal?

Jennifer R.: It was brutal. I mean, if you look at what she wrote, she says in paragraph one, "I had referred to slavery, a tactless habit of white southerners with whom the mere sight of a negro seemed to conjure up nostalgic recollections of those good ole days. I had also pridefully admitted that nobody on earth could accuse me of being a Yankee. Thus revealing I felt no shame for the south's far reaching, continued crimes against her negro citizens." She says that she had

clearly implied that Swanson, perhaps almost as a token, is welcome at the University of Virginia, but other African Americans are not. That she had tried to whitewash the university by depicting the university as open minded, open hearted, it was only Virginia law that kept them from integrating. And then she quotes Sellers, his final statement, he apparently close his letter saying, "There is a new negro in our midst who is insisting that America wake up and recognize the fact that he is a man like other men. He is entirely out of sympathy with the gross paternalism of the master class turned liberal."

Sarah McConnell: What a progressive rebuttal to her.

Jennifer R.: Oh, T.J. Sellers is amazing. He gives her this searing critique, she says she has to sort of stand leaning back against the living room wall to catch her breath even after reading it. She ends up putting herself to bed because she's so upset. But then, really to her credit, Boyle seeks out Sellers again, starts meeting with him regularly, they have these conversations almost weekly in his office that she ends up referring to as the "T.J. Sellers course for backwards southern whites." And a lot of her autobiography is outlining the lessons that T.J. Sellers taught her.

Sarah McConnell: As she was advocating for public desegregation, did she desegregate her own life?

Jennifer R.: She tried. Her relationships with other whites in Charlottesville became strained as she became a very public advocate for integration. So she found herself less comfortable in the white community. Meanwhile, she did develop friendships among African Americans, but those weren't always the easiest relationships to develop either, because they were so unfamiliar and there were so many pitfalls of behavior. So she had to face some real challenges on the interpersonal level herself. She took a stand in a very visible way, so in 1955, as Virginia is starting to figure out what it's going to do in relation to the Brown decision and how are schools ... how and when are schools going to become integrated, she was one of very few white Virginians who very publicly at a set of state hearings said, "We need immediate integration."

Jennifer R.: There is that certain honesty and persistence that she shows, and Martin Luther King recognized that, so in the letter from Birmingham jail in 1963, he criticizes white moderates for being too moderate, too gradualist, not willing to go the distance with the Civil Rights movement. And he gives a few exceptions, and Sarah Patton Boyle is one of those exceptions.

Sarah McConnell: Part of what she explains is just how shaped people were, how hardened in their attitudes people were, attitudes and hearts, by the Jim Crow era.

Jennifer R.: Yeah. So, as I look back on her story now from the point of view of 2019, I'm sort of back to the thing that initially drew me to it, which is in the language of 2019 we all want to be woke, right, and she gives us a story about how somebody

became woke and the work that it took to make that really real. She has wonderful metaphors, one of which I like is she talks about how back in the old days when women wore corsets, their backs would hurt, so if they left of their corsets she says the patterns and the rules of behavior of the Jim Crow south are like those corsets that you can't leave off.

Sarah McConnell: Jennifer Ritterhouse is a professor of history and art history at George Mason University. She edited a new edition of Sarah Patton Boyle's autobiography, The Desegregated Heart, a Virginian Stand in a Time of Transition.

Sarah McConnell: Next, how African American communities maintained dignity and power during segregated Virginia. Dr. Jody Allen is a professor of history at the College of William and Mary. Her book in progress is called Roses in December, Black Life in Hanover County Virginia During the Era of Disenfranchisement.

Sarah McConnell: Jody, were you surprised by how well people could live during those decades of repressive loss?

Dr. Jody Allen: I wasn't really surprised because growing up black in Virginia, being raised by people who had to work very hard, who had worked against Jim Crow all of their lives, I knew what black people were capable of. During slavery, you had whites who suggested that blacks would not be able to survive without having a master and a mistress guide them. And one of the things I learned through this work in Hanover County is that they did indeed thrive. They did very well. They did not need anyone to tell them what to do, and despite the restrictions of segregation, they built homes, they built schools, they educated their children, they worked for pay, they built their own churches, they finally had the opportunity to read the Bible for themselves, not through the interpretation of the master or the mistress.

Dr. Jody Allen: So they thrived, they built communities, and in many ways they lived parallel lives to those of the white community. You know, they did not depend on the guidance of whites.

Sarah McConnell: So you think whites were surprised in that region when the Civil War ended that African Americans were doing okay on their own?

Dr. Jody Allen: I think they were. When black men had the opportunity to vote for the delegates to the 1868 Constitutional Convention, only three black men voted for the white delegates, and whites were very surprised by that.

Sarah McConnell: Can you give me a window into the lives of some of the black residents of Hanover that you studied that show how they were able to sort of enjoy freedom, family, and work in spite of restrictions like this?

Dr. Jody Allen: They understood what they wanted freedom to look like. They saw education as very important, because they saw that it's a way out, a way around the

restrictions of Jim Crow. The black school year was shorter than the white school year, and if black parents wanted another month or two for their children, they had to raise the money to pay the teachers. But they did. And teachers made the sacrifice sometimes of sleeping in the rooms with the kids, or sleeping in a common room somewhere.

Dr. Jody Allen: So but, again, those were things that they were willing to do to get to where they knew they wanted to be.

Sarah McConnell: Give me examples of some of the black entrepreneurs in Hanover County near the turn of the century.

Dr. Jody Allen: Yeah, very interesting group. There was a man who owned a barbershop, and he catered to white men, but at the same time he also served the black community. He built a hotel for blacks who were traveling, because there weren't a lot of places for people to travel through Hanover and have a safe place to stay.

Dr. Jody Allen: There was another black man who owned his own cleaning and pressing business. He also had white clientele, but he also started a marching band. And there was a section of the white newspaper called Our Colored Friends. Blacks were the people who actually filled this column. They describe these energetic young colored men of our town, and this was a time that they had marched through town at Thanksgiving in what was described as spotless uniforms. The writer indeed said, "The best part of this band is that their uniforms and instruments are all paid for."

Sarah McConnell: You write that the same is true for these African American families through the Civil Rights era that had been true back then, that they were seen as maybe quiet, not participating particularly in the marches, and the sit ins, and the more public protests. But they did carry their strength more quietly.

Dr. Jody Allen: Mm-hmm (affirmative). It doesn't appear from my research that there were a lot of people who were active in the marches, or what have you. Although, I did meet some who had participated in the March on Washington. But their protest was daily, it was active. They accepted the idea that success was the best revenge. They built their own community. And while they did have to interact with whites, quite often they interacted with whites as business people. There was one business in particular, a bakery, and apparently everyone had him do their wedding cakes. And he was deceased by the time I was interviewing these people, but when they talked about Lightfoot's Bakery, black and white, they talk about just how delicious his bakery was. And so they were able to make use of the white community in many ways.

Sarah McConnell: When you decided to look into the lives of these people in Hanover County, you said it was largely because you're living there now.

Dr. Jody Allen: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah McConnell: And you wanted to get to know them, but you also saw in them something familiar in your own family.

Dr. Jody Allen: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I think just the tenacity, the willingness to work hard, the understanding that there were limitations but not allowing those limitations to control your lives. Part of my family, anyway, I come from sharecroppers. My grandfather was illiterate, and he did not understand the importance initially of educating his daughters, he kind of believed that well, they're going to get married and have kids, and so my mom who was the oldest, did not get to go to college. And he apologized to her later in life, because he realized how hard she had to work.

Dr. Jody Allen: Much of what I found in my research in Hanover did not surprise me, because I had grown up with these people who in spite of their circumstances ... I realize now as an adult that there were ladies in my church who every Sunday had on these beautiful outfits and what I call church lady hats, and they were just stunning. And it didn't occur to me at the time, but as an adult looking back, I know that most of these women were domestics. But I also know that most of them, as my own grandmothers refused to wear their uniforms in public. They would go to the house, change into a uniform, but before they got back to the bus stop, they had changed out of their uniforms.

Dr. Jody Allen: And there's a certain dignity in that to me. And I found this to be true in Hanover. People who saw themselves, regardless of how they might've been perceived by white people, who saw themselves as dignified people, and who had leadership roles in their churches, in their fraternal organizations, in the black schools, and they were making sure that the next generation could do better. And I think often about the fact that my grandfather could not read or write, my grandmother had a third grade education, but she had taught herself to read. And I think about the fact that I have a PhD. We were kind of imbued with this notion that you have to work hard and working hard is good, and this is what we want for you. We may not have gotten it, but we want this for you.

Sarah McConnell: Dr. Jody Allen is a professor of history at the College of William and Mary. Her book in progress is Roses in December, Black Life in Hanover County Virginia During the Era of Disenfranchisement.

Sarah McConnell: We close the show in Danville, Virginia. Danville was the site of a bloody riot in the late 1800s. Sparked by whites who feared black voting power. But despite the repression, Danville's African American community remained strong.

Sarah McConnell: Camilla Williams was born in Danville in 1919. She was the first African American to receive a regular contract with a major American opera company. In 1954, Camilla Williams became the first black artist to sing a major role with the Virginia State Opera. And she traveled the world as a recitalist.

Dr. Haughton: Camilla Williams is a good example of the process of how a diamond is created. You have this piece of coal, and under pressure comes this brilliant diamond.

Sarah McConnell: Dr. Ethel Haughton is an associate professor of music at Virginia State University. That's where Camilla Williams graduated in 1941 with a degree in music. Dr. Haughton says Williams went on to take part in the Civil Rights movement back home, particularly in Danville. And her voice became part of civil rights history in 1963, when she was asked to sing at a massive protest for civil and economic rights of African Americans.

Dr. Haughton: She was scheduled to sing for the March on Washington in 1963. She was supposed to sing Over the Beautiful City, but at the last minute she was called on to sing the National Anthem. Marion Anderson was scheduled to sing that, but she was stuck in traffic. And Camilla Williams said she heard her name called three times to sing the National Anthem and she ran up to the top of the stage, caught her breath, and sang.

Announcer: Permit me to present to you to sing the National Anthem, Miss Camilla Williams.

Sarah McConnell: Camilla Williams died in 2012. Producer Kelly Libby brings us the story made from archival audio recordings of Williams and her performances.

Camilla W.: My story is a life story.

Camilla W.: My father worked for Dr. Robinson, he was Jewish doctor. And he was a wonderful doctor. And you know, all my life I have known beautiful china, beautiful silver, because when I would go to see them, I would see everything they had. And you know, that in itself is another culture. So I grew up seeing beautiful things.

Camilla W.: And I was a member of Calvary Baptist Church. And Reverend [Gould 00:23:01] was a great preacher. And I joined church when I was nine years old, so I could sing in the junior choir. And one Sunday morning in Sunday School, I shall never forget this as long as I live, I sang Come Unto Him, and Miss [Cowen 00:23:26] played for me. And after I finished singing, Reverend [Gould 00:23:33] got up and said, "Today we heard a voice that will be heard around the world." I will never forget that as long as I live. And it came to pass.

Camilla W.: I tell you, I went to [inaudible 00:23:59] College with the high school to sing. And let me tell you, Miss [Leah Lowe 00:24:08] was there, conductor of the choir. And there had been a big lynching and when we sang City Called Heaven, she put that picture in the front of the whole choir. So that was some good people, you know what I mean? People with hearts of gold that saw you. I didn't know what really prejudice was in Danville. Because I was sort of a gifted child that the people took to. And those that didn't accept me as I was, mama made me love folks just the same. You understand?

Camilla W.: Now let me tell you about Madam Butterfly. I had to learn that opera in two months. I'd only seen one opera. And when I stepped on stage, I don't know anything that happened. I cannot tell you. It was as though I was not there. And I have traveled on every continent, I didn't get to Russia and India, but I can tell you there's no other country in the world like America. It, to me, is the best country that you can live in.

Camilla W.: But one lady my mama used to help, I was ... had done Madam Butterfly and God was blessing me. And this lady said to mama, "Well Fannie, you know Camilla always knew her place." And mama said, "Well what was it?"

Camilla W.: I had all kinds of things thrown at me. But, it did not disturb my thinking of what my mama taught me. I grew up knowing that people can be real human beings, no matter what your color is. And so I grew up with love. It hasn't been an easy life, to withstand some of the blocks that been put in your path, because I've overcome them. And when you get your mind set right, you can endure everything that people throw at you. If you have faith in God, and faith in yourself, you can survive.

Camilla W.: My life is a miracle.

Sarah McConnell: Special thanks to the friends of Camilla Williams in Danville, Virginia who provided our producer with the oral history recording you just heard. And to Chad Martin of History United.

Sarah McConnell: This is With Good Reason, we'll be right back.

Sarah McConnell: Welcome back to With Good Reason, from Virginia Humanities. I'm Sarah McConnell. During the period of legal segregation in the United States, African Americans struggled to acquire their own property. One surprising place where they could find land for sale, the oceanfront. Andrew Kahrl is a professor of history at the University of Virginia, who's written two books about race, property, and the United States coastline.

Sarah McConnell: Andrew, 100 years ago African Americans owned a lot more beachfront property in the south than they do today. How did they come to acquire it? Were these former people who'd been enslaved who are now living and owning the properties that had once been plantations?

Andrew Kahrl: In some instances, yes. Up and down the South Carolina sea islands and Georgia sea islands, these were lands that were abandoned by planters following the Union invasion during the Civil War. Some of those properties were sold off to freed men and women. In other areas of the coastal south in the decades that followed, after Americans began to slowly acquire hundreds and hundreds of acres, they were not really conducive to large scale agricultural production, they were very remote. And so an African American who was seeking to sort of gain

of measure of autonomy and freedom in this sort of Jim Crow south, would seek out this type of area to become an independent land owner.

Sarah McConnell: So after World War II, we see an explosion of beach and oceanfront resorts by both white property owners and black property owners.

Andrew Kahrl: Yeah, I mean, we're still ... keep in mind, this is still a time where segregation was the law of the land. African Americans who themselves were excluded from beaches, parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, are seeking to develop their own spaces where families can retreat to during the summer.

Sarah McConnell: As it mostly those poor farming families that turned their own properties into resorts enjoyed by black families? Or was it black entrepreneurs that tended to come buy that property up and create the resort?

Andrew Kahrl: It was both. And sometimes farming families became entrepreneurs. In some instances it was black capitalists who sought to acquire lands that were unused or available, and began to build up beach resorts. In some instances, you had white capitalists who were seeking to build up resorts that catered to an African American public.

Sarah McConnell: Are you mostly talking about a 20 year stretch between the end of World War II and the beginning of the Civil Rights movement?

Andrew Kahrl: Yeah, I mean, it's really following the 1964 Civil Rights Act that desegregated public accommodations throughout the south. Many of these black beach resorts struggled in the face of declining revenue. For many African American families who could now sort of vacation wherever their dollars would allow. They really ... these places really struggled to continue to sort of remain viable. And in some instances, many questioned whether they should remain viable. Whether or not it was appropriate to continue to have sort of black beaches at a time where the goal was to sort of desegregate shorelines period.

Sarah McConnell: So after the heyday of these African American resorts in the south, how did people start to lose their lands to white buyers?

Andrew Kahrl: Oh, there was a variety of different ways in which you saw these very valuable properties slip out of the hands of African American owners. So many speculators would sort of prey on African Americans who fell delinquent on their taxes, and buy up acres at tax sales.

Sarah McConnell: So what happened to these former resort areas that were exclusively for black families and individuals? Were they destroyed? Were they left to languish?

Andrew Kahrl: Yeah, I mean, that's where I sort of begin and end the book, is with the stories of places that were once owned by African Americans that today are gated communities, places that are now golf courses, where you would see no

evidence if you were just sort of looking at it from afar that these were once places that had large numbers of African Americans who would flock there each season, and would really ... had a really important place in black life under segregation. But today, perhaps most tragically, are the instances where you see the descendants of the former landowners who are now working these lands, either as groundskeepers, or as waiters in restaurants, working in service of other people's profits.

Sarah McConnell: Any big, high end beach resorts whose names we'd recognize that were once something else?

Andrew Kahrl: Yeah, I mean, I think the most sort of telling example is that of Hilton Head Island in South Carolina. This was an area that was almost entirely populated by African Americans, where African American families who lived on Hilton Head Island could go an entire lifetime without ever seeing a white face. And today, this is sort of home to a small and dwindling African American population.

Sarah McConnell: It's so interesting, your newest book looks at this same sort of beach exclusivity, let alone racism, in the north. And you say in the south whereas people might've had the color line, and places where people could and could not go, in the north it wasn't as explicit.

Andrew Kahrl: Yeah, so in the north you had privatized shorelines, where you had private beach communities that were themselves oftentimes discriminatory in who could become members, but then had beaches that were then for members only. Or you had all white communities that restricted access to their public beaches to residents only.

Sarah McConnell: Had they done this to limit access to African Americans, or just to say, "We pay for these beaches, we keep the upkeep, we want to make sure that it's pretty much towns folks."

Andrew Kahrl: Well, that's what they said. They certainly said that the race had nothing to do with it. But it's undeniable that these exclusionary measures really proliferated during the very same years where African American populations in cities in the north also grew.

Sarah McConnell: And it was frustrating to a lot of African Americans who wanted to use these beaches. You write about the experience of Anne Petrie, she was the Harlem Renaissance novelist who said her most humiliating Jim Crow experience took place in Connecticut where she'd grown up.

Andrew Kahrl: Yeah. Yes, she grew up in Old Saybrook, Connecticut, and she as a young child accompanied a group of white children on a picnic, a Sunday School picnic. The Sunday School group that had gone there on numerous occasions without any incident, when this young African American girl, Anne Petrie, accompanied them, suddenly that local ordinance was enforced. And the security guard who

worked the beach told them if they didn't leave they would all be arrested. And so they were forced to go back and have their picnic on the church lawn. And as she said, "We ate in clammy silence."

Sarah McConnell: This book, Free the Beaches, stars a crusade by a white man who lived in Hartford, Connecticut, to open these New England beaches to African Americans. Tell me about him.

Andrew Kahrl: Yeah, Ned Cole was a young, white Irish Catholic college graduate who in 1964 quit his job in the insurance industry and founded a domestic peach corps, as he called it, it was called Revitalization Corps. His cause initially, and really throughout his life, was to sort of get middle class white families, those people who were living in privilege, more involved in solving the problems in cities that many of them had left behind when they had moved to suburbs. He really sort of saw that these exclusionary measures that suburbs and wealthy white communities used stood in the way of a more integrated, equal, and caring society.

Sarah McConnell: He would go to the inner city, he would go to Harlem and he would get groups of children to bus them to these private Connecticut and other beaches, and sort of dare officials to keep them out.

Andrew Kahrl: Yeah. The idea was, it's like let's help find ways to get children who are living in these ghettoized, segregated neighborhoods out of the city during the summer. But when they first came down to the shoreline of Connecticut seeking to find a place where children could go and enjoy a day at the beach, they came to realize that there was nowhere they could go.

Sarah McConnell: So what did he do?

Andrew Kahrl: He got angry. This really sort of rubbed him the wrong way. He kind of realized on an instinctual level that there was something very wrong about this. You know, for many Americans we kind of see that the air, the water, and the beaches belong to us. And yet these communities were sort of trying to keep the public away, or rather a certain segment of the public, away from something that was really kind of our common heritage.

Sarah McConnell: He would take groups of these children to the beaches, and they would have what amounted really to a lunchroom sit in, a lunch counter sit in.

Andrew Kahrl: Yeah, or you could call them a wade in, if you will. He would do very inventive strategies, such as leading what could be called amphibious invasions of shorelines, because he would bring a sort of flotilla ashore with children and they would sort of spend the afternoon playing on the wet sand portion of these private country clubs and other exclusive beaches, calling attention to what he saw as the sort of racist motives behind these exclusionary ordinances.

Sarah McConnell: Was he able to change any of these laws? Was he able to open the beaches at all?

Andrew Kahrl: Well, he wasn't directly able to. But, a young law student in the mid 1990s who filed a lawsuit against the town of Greenidge over their resident only beach ordinance, was able to. In 2001 the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled that these sort of resident only beach ordinances were unconstitutional. That decision would not have been possible were it not for the activism that Ned Cole and others were waging in the 1970s.

Sarah McConnell: But I have been to beaches in Cape Cod or New England that seem to require a lot of money, and a pass, and gated access.

Andrew Kahrl: Well, yes, and that's why the progress here has been ... it's been very qualified in the sense that even though you can't have, say, beaches that are open to residents only, many cities and towns have found other ways to make their shorelines exclusive, whether it be through having beach passes that are more expensive for nonresidents versus residents, removing parking spaces so that they're sort of really only practically accessible to people who live near the shore. Many places have found other ways to get around these types of rulings.

Sarah McConnell: There are states in the nation that have very explicit policies that say all shorelines are open. Oregon is one of them, Hawaii beaches are by law and ancient Hawaiian tradition open to the public.

Andrew Kahrl: Yeah, and in California the entire California coastline is open to the public to ensure that billionaires who own property along the California coast can't sort of keep this beachfront to themselves.

Sarah McConnell: Andrew Kahrl teaches history and African American studies at the University of Virginia.

Sarah McConnell: A beach vacation wasn't the only option for black leisure seekers during segregation. Many all black sports leagues and teams were formed during that period. And many of the nation's best athletes played for them. But with the onset of integration, many African American sports leagues began to disappear. David Wiggins, a professor history at George Mason University, is co-editor of the book Separate Games, African American Sport Behind the Walls of Segregation.

Sarah McConnell: Dave, you write in your book that the hardening of racial lines during the first half of the 20th century eliminated almost all of the African Americans who'd played on white teams before then.

Dave Wiggins: You know, in the latter stages of the 19th century, we had a select number of African American athletes who gained national and sometimes international

reputations for their athletic exploits 20, 25 years following the Civil War, a number of very, very talented and highly skilled African American athletes.

Sarah McConnell: Like who?

Dave Wiggins: Isaac Murphy from Lexington, Kentucky. One of the great jockeys of all time, captured three Kentucky Derbies. The first jockey ever to win back to back Kentucky Derbies. Marshall Major Taylor, probably the greatest bicyclist of the latter stages of the 19th century. Moses Fleetwood Walker, who played Major League baseball. In fact, one of the great myths of sport history is that Jackie Robinson was the first African American to play Major League baseball, that's not true. Moses Fleetwood Walker played with the Toledo Mud Hens in 1884, which was in the international league, and at that time had Major League status.

Sarah McConnell: Was he a household name in white households?

Dave Wiggins: No. No, he wasn't. But yes, he was the first African American to play Major League baseball. Jackie Robinson was really the first African American to play modern Major League baseball when he signed with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1945.

Sarah McConnell: So was there a period where we had integration in sports, then segregation, then integration again?

Dave Wiggins: Yeah, that's in essence what happens around the turn of the century. What happens is the select number of African American athletes are in most cases eliminated from predominantly white organized sport with three major exceptions. African American athletes would always be able to continue to, in a select degree, play in predominantly white college sport. They would always continue to be an integrated sport in the sport of boxing. And, typically allowed to play and participate in Olympic competition.

Dave Wiggins: So those are three, kind of three major exceptions at the turn of the century.

Sarah McConnell: So what year and when did African Americans start forming their own all black organizations?

Dave Wiggins: Well, it's important to note that even when a select number of African American athletes were realizing national and international attention in the latter stage of the 19th century, there were certainly still all black teams and all black leagues, even at that stage, latter stage of the 19th century.

Dave Wiggins: Baseball is the classic example. You had clubs in New Orleans, and Savannah, Georgia, Charleston, South Carolina. The Cuban Giants are the most famous. Some people consider them the first all black baseball team. Traveling in the south was difficult for them. They had difficulties oftentimes finding housing.

They oftentimes would say with black families who would feed them and put them up for a night or two. And oftentimes played against white teams.

Sarah McConnell: So you're saying there are other sports that also organized into all black leagues.

Dave Wiggins: Absolutely. In virtually every sport. But baseball is the one that's been most written about. And I would contend that has to do with the fact that for a long, long period of time, baseball was our national pastime. Baseball had always been seen as the great leveler in society. The rhetoric had always been that baseball allowed everyone to participate regardless of race, creed, or color. And people, historians, have said if you want to know something about American culture, you'll gain a greater understanding of baseball.

Sarah McConnell: What period of history is this?

Dave Wiggins: Many of these all black parallel sports teams came out of the decade of the 1920s. Sport historians refer to the decade of the 1920s as the Golden Age of American sport. You had, what, Babe Ruth playing for the New York Yankees, and-

Sarah McConnell: Newt Rockne.

Dave Wiggins: Newt Rockne, the great coach at Notre Dame. Red Grange, the galloping ghost from the University of Illinois. Jack Dempsey in boxing, Gene Tunney in boxing. Historically black colleges and universities, many of them established athletic programs with highly skilled athletes, and just phenomenal organizations really.

Sarah McConnell: So if the 30s represented the heyday, what led to the disillusion of these teams eventually?

Dave Wiggins: Integration. Once Jackie Robinson came up with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947, it wouldn't be too long that negro league baseball died out. Black fans certainly began to flock to Major League ballparks to watch those black athletes, those black players that had been signed by various clubs. And negro league baseball did not survive too long after the integration of that sport.

Sarah McConnell: What again had necessitated having these separate leagues before integration came along?

Dave Wiggins: Well they ... African American athletes were just finding it very, very difficult to engage in integrated athletic contest.

Sarah McConnell: But it wasn't social, they were not allowed.

Dave Wiggins: Yeah, in some cases, just not allowed. You know, Major League Baseball's the classic example. After Moses Fleetwood Walker had played for the Toledo Mud

Hens, there were no other African Americans to play in Major League Baseball until Jackie Robinson was signed in 1945 and ultimately came up and played with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. And professional football serves as an interesting example of this, too. African Americans, a select number of African Americans, were allowed to play in the NFL up until 1933. And then starting in 1933 until 1946, there were no African Americans in the National Football League.

Sarah McConnell: Because of rules that were passed?

Dave Wiggins: No, it wasn't because of rules necessarily that were passed. There was one man in particular that seemed to play a leading role in the segregation of the National Football League, and that was George Preston Marshall, the southern born owner of the Washington Redskins, had led this segregationist approach to the National Football League. And not surprisingly, the Washington Redskins would be the last NFL team to ever integrate. This was a gentleman's agreement among the owners that no more African Americans would be allowed in the sport.

Sarah McConnell: And again, it wasn't rules, but at that point it was competition.

Dave Wiggins: Yeah. People realized that if they wanted to compete that they were going to have to try as best they could to recruit and sign the best athletes that they could, irrespective of race. I mean, it was gradually ... it wasn't something that happened overnight, obviously. It took many years for this to take place. It's almost like two steps forward and one step back. Not every team would have an African American on their roster until 1959. And that's when the Boston Red Sox signed an outfielder by the name of Pumpsie Green. And so that gives you an idea of just how long that process of integration was. It just took ... seemingly took forever.

Sarah McConnell: And would you say the longer a team had held out from that, the more likely the culture of that team had been of we don't want to cross the racial barrier, it was deliberate.

Dave Wiggins: Right, right. And that's certainly what happened with the Redskins and George Preston Marshall. The team didn't really integrate, and he was in essence forced to. He certainly didn't want to integrate, and he held out for a long period of time.

Dave Wiggins: These first African Americans that found their way into predominantly white organized professional sport were typically quite good. This initial wave of African Americans into Major League Baseball, many of them went on to members of the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. Including Willie Mays, and Hank Aaron, and athletes of that ilk. So these initial players were extraordinarily gifted and talented.

Sarah McConnell: Can you see from your vantage point of being steeped in this vestiges of earlier America when our teams were segregated?

Dave Wiggins: I think there's been a rise and fall of kind of racial and ethnic succession in sport. For example, the first great boxers in this country in the mid to latter stage of the 19th century, they were of Irish descent. John L. Sullivan, John Heenan, John Morrissey, these kinds of folks. Gentleman Jim Corbett. And boxing is interesting to me because at certain times in our history, it seemingly ... there's been over representation of certain racial and ethnic groups in the sport. In the early part of the 20th century, boxing was dominated at one point by Italian Americans, then African Americans, and then Latinos.

Sarah McConnell: It's a kind of striving, it's a kind of arch of we've arrived, we're struggling, we move up, we move over.

Dave Wiggins: Well interestingly enough, one of my good friends at Purdue, his name is Randy Roberts, he's written ... he's a prolific author, he's written a lot about boxing. And one of the things he always says, "You know Dave, if you want to find out who the heavyweight champion of the world is, find out who is on the lowest rung of the socioeconomic ladder." Because I think you're exactly right, it is this striving. It's trying to make a better life for oneself.

Sarah McConnell: Well, Dave Wiggins, thank you for sharing your insight with me today on With Good Reason.

Dave Wiggins: Thank you. It's been nice being here.

Sarah McConnell: David Wiggins is co-editor of Separate Games, African American Sport Behind the Walls of Segregation. David is a professor of sport history at George Mason University.

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