

Pay raise

COMMENTARY AND SIDEBAR NOTES BY KRISTIN POST

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Later on, Mrs. Clark was certified as a nurse's aide, and went to work for UNC hospitals. As has been mentioned, the university was a major employer of African Americans throughout Mrs. Clark's life. Even though Mrs. Clark has already mentioned that African Americans and white people were respectful to one another, that doesn't mean that she did not stand up for herself. In this next excerpt, Mrs. Clark explains how she and her co-workers were overlooked for pay raises when she worked for the hospital, and what she did about this.

Preliminary questions

1. In a hospital, what jobs do the orderlies and nurse's aides perform?
2. What is a merit raise?

The recording

This media is available in the web edition only.

Transcript

But right there on that job, you would get an increment raise once a year. You would get a state raise. But after you're there so long, if you haven't had any problems, your work has been good, they didn't have to call you in for anything, you're supposed to have a merit raise. So I had talked to the orderlies, the aides, and asked them, "Have you all had a raise like that?" They said, "No, I don't think so." I said, "Tell me the truth, because I'm going to get busy." So, "No, I haven't had a raise." I went on to tell them, their merit raise, they hadn't had one. The onliest thing we had had was two or three state raises, that's all we could get. They never gave us that four-five percent.

So we had this new director and I felt comfortable talking with her. So I went to her and told her, “Nobody said anything to me about my work. I’ve been up to par. They haven’t called me in to anything.” And she always called me “Squeaky” because I was always squeaking about something. She called me “Squeaky Clark.” She said, “Clark, you haven’t had a raise?” I said, “No. All I’ve had is a state raise and an increment raise when I came here.” She said, “Well I sent up for all of them to get a raise.” I said, “The orderlies and aides, they said they haven’t had a raise.” She said, “Well you go downstairs and talk to the director. He’s in his office.” Well I knew him well; I considered him being a fine man. I went down and I talked to him and he said, “Well that hasn’t come to me.” He had to sign over. So what had happened, this director had probably given it to the secretary or whatever. They, too, didn’t see the need. But every time you turned around, RNs was getting one. So when I told him, apparently he called her back and in a few months, in our checks, we had a raise.

Follow-up questions

1. Describe the steps Mrs. Clark took in order to ask for a raise.
2. How common do you think it was for a woman like Mrs. Clark to talk to her superiors about these things?
3. From what you know about Mrs. Clark, why is “Squeaky” an appropriate nickname?

On the web

Race in her lifetime

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/race-docsouth/>

In this lesson, students will use oral histories to trace the life of Rebecca Clark, an African American who was born in rural Orange County just before the Depression and witnessed the changes in civil rights over the years.

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About the author

KRISTIN POST

Kristin traveled around the world by herself from 2000-2001. She traveled west from California through New Zealand, Australia, Southeast Asia, China, India, Nepal, and East Africa. She brought along a mini disc recorder, and captured her experiences in sound as well as on film and on paper. Whenever she listens to this audio, she is transported into the moment with an immediacy her pictures and journal cannot imitate. She hopes that teachers, students and the general public will enjoy traveling the world through the sounds she captured in that year of her life.