This morning Jen Lawrence and myself drove to Voyage Records in Clarksdale, Mississippi to interview Earl Myles, the president of Voyage Records. Voyage Records is located at 170 Ritch Street in Clarksdale and I was under the impression that it was only open on weekends and weekday evenings since Earl Myles’ main source of income was his job in Memphis.

We arrived at our agreed upon time of 10 am on Saturday May 17th. Our original plan was to interview Earl Myles and then take a lunch break and return in the afternoon to interview Raymond Myles, whom we understood to be a record producer and we were told he didn’t like getting up early on Saturdays. Voyage Records is a cinder block building that appears to be in a residential part of Clarksdale. We were met in the parking lot by a gentleman who introduced himself as Lee Myles. Upon entering the building we were introduced to Lester Myles. Jen joked that it would be a mistake to refer to them as Mr. Myles because they all might answer. We
were then introduced to Earl Myles who was listening to some music while looking at their waveforms on a computer monitor. Also, in the studio was Raymond Myles and his daughter who was probably about 7 years old and a young boy of 9 years old who was Lee’s son.

When you enter Voyage Records you are immediately in the small retail shop that sells CD’s, DVD’s, videos and sheet music. To the left is a cutout in the wall that looks into an office that is occupied by a desk and several chairs. On the desk sits an old style bulky computer monitor. In the corner stands an upright bass that is missing two of its strings. As one proceeds down the hall, to the left is a room with a drum set and several amplifiers and to the right is what appears to be the control room with a computer station, mixing board and monitor speakers. This is where we were introduced to Earl, an African American gentleman of medium build who appeared to be about 45 to 50 years of age. Earl was very friendly and welcoming and asked where we would prefer to interview him. It was then that I realized that there were no doors on the rooms, which I thought was odd for a recording studio. I suggested we go into the office.

Earl sat at his desk and Jen and I sat in chairs facing him. There was also a couch in the room and Raymond Myles and his daughter took a seat there. His daughter would come and go throughout the course of our interviews. She was very affectionate with her Dad sitting on his lap or putting her arms around him. Lee and Lester Myles stood in the doorway for most of the interview and Lee’s son would come and go. I remember hearing him and Raymond’s daughter playing outside at one point during the interviewing. During our interviews other people whom we didn’t know would come and go through the building. It was never really distracting once
we settled in. There was a very friendly, informal and communal atmosphere at Voyage Records.

I was nervous driving to Clarksdale and at the beginning of the interview with Earl I felt very anxious with his family members in the room. I felt somewhat on display, but that feeling was soon dispelled by their involvement in the interview. When Earl had trouble remembering a detail he would refer to Lester or Lee. The dynamic of the interview slowly shifted from an interviewer-interviewee relationship to almost a conversation with all the Myles family members and Jen and I.

We alternated being interviewer and recordist and after Earl, Jen interviewed Raymond and then I interviewed Earl’s cousin Lester. It is hard to tell who is older Lester or Earl. Lester has some grey hair and appears older but Earl seems to be regarded as the patriarch. There was some awkwardness interviewing each Myles one after the other while they were all present in the room. We felt repetitive with our questions. So with Lester I tried to focus on his role in their group as a guitarist. It is perhaps best to look at the four interviews as a whole. They do complement each other and I did avoid asking some questions to Lester because I felt Earl had answered them for me.