

Oral History of the Reverend Claude Black
Respected Leader in the San Antonio African American Community
and
Pastor of Mt. Zion Baptist Church

Interview conducted by Syreeta Sweeney
Undergraduate Participant in the
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Rev. Claude Black Interview Transcription:

Syreeta Sweeney: Today is April 11, 2006. I'm Syreeta Sweeney and I am speaking today with Reverend Claude Black, retired pastor at Mt. Zion Baptist Church, civil rights activist and community leader of San Antonio, Texas.

Thank you for sitting with me today. If we could start with your childhood, where you're from, parents, siblings...

Rev. Claude Black: I am Claude Black and I was born here in San Antonio, 1413 East Crockett Street. That's the home I was born in. It's still there and is being rented now. My parents are all dead. My mother and father married at nineteen and they came from Travis County and from Midway, Texas and moved here to San Antonio - and they were nineteen years old when they married.

My father got a job as a Pullman Porter where he worked for over fifty years where he retired as a Pullman Porter. My mother was always a housewife. She was the keeper of the house. She was a person that really was responsible for disciplining my sister and myself, because my father was always on the road. I grew up in a home that is right across the street from the cemeteries. I use that illustration of my home primarily to remind individuals that this was an area that was - where property sold to many of the Black people, primarily, because I think, it was near the cemetery. And, therefore, the property was cheap, it was not...very expensive, and Black people could buy and build homes. But that is where I began my life in San Antonio.

While growing up, there was a playground at the bottom of the hill from my home. It is now called by the name of one of the outstanding youth leaders of our community: Mrs. Fairchild. Mrs. Fairchild was responsible for the work that was held at the Myra **[Davis]** Hemmings **[Resource]** Center now. It was the YWCA at that time, the time Mrs. Fairchild was the director. Now it is owned by the Delta's [historical Black female sorority] and is run by them as the resource center for the Delta's sorority and is named after one of our teachers in the public school system, Mrs. Myra Hemmings. I went to that YWCA at a very early age. As a matter of fact, that was the only center that had a daycare center and my mother used to walk from my house at 1413 to the corner of Crockett and Pine and take me to that kindergarten. So, I grew up in that community of learning, began my learning process there. Also, the

swimming pool was in the playground that is now named after Mrs. Fairchild and I learned to swim at that swimming pool. As a matter of fact, most of the community events occurred in that playground. The gymnasium was there, that is where the high school had their basketball games, so it was the center of a lot of activity. It was a center where many people gathered to celebrate the nineteenth of June [**Juneteenth**]. You must be made aware that you didn't have a lot of places you could go because you did not have public access... you didn't have access to many of the public places –

SS: As a Black person?

CB: As a Black person. Blacks did not have access to many of the places, therefore it was rather limited. You...you could go to Brackenridge Park in some areas, but in some areas you could *not* go, although it was a city park. And then there were other parks in the community that you were never allowed except maybe on the nineteenth of June. They would open them up for Black people. A special day.

But that was the nature of segregation at that time: a restriction on places. There were places that we knew we could not go, there were places we knew we could go. But, generally the public facilities were not open at all times to Black people. I suppose that is the manner in which I grew up to understand we had to make some changes. So, the issue of civil rights was not something I had to adopt. It was something I had to get rid of, because I had to live with it. Live with the restrictions and when you have to live with restrictions, you're constantly thinking about when you are going to get rid of them. How you are going to overcome. How you are going to be able to make choices that you want to make and can't make because society has put restrictions and some limitations on your movement, on where you can go and what you can do. I think about the fact that you [interviewer] are bringing this information to me...or seeking this information *from* me and yet it has not been long in my own memory when we could not even go to the University of Texas. Texas was not open to us. As a matter of fact, Texas Southern [**University**] was built as a compromise in an effort to keep Black students out of Texas University. I'm sure that many of the establishment will not admit that that's why they built it, but they built it trying to keep Black people out of the University of Texas...and they built Texas Southern University. In addition to that, the beginning of my concern for civil rights was born in the restrictions that I had to face as a young person. They were based on the color of my skin. I did not have to *join* a civil rights organization. A desire for change came with my experiences, and therefore any

organization that could be talking about changing things was an organization I was going to work with. So it was not like, all of sudden you decide you'll join a civil rights organization. No, your environment taught you that you had to do something about changing the opportunities or restrictions that you were experiencing.

SS: Do you remember the first time, other than... I know you mentioned that certain things weren't available to Black-Americans at that time, but do you remember the very first time you encountered something racist, and was that directed towards you or maybe somebody else?

CB: Well, number one, you grew up knowing... your parents taught you the racism, taught you for survival how to deal with racism. Very early in your life you knew that there were certain fountains you didn't drink from. Even when you couldn't read "Colored" on them, your parents taught you "don't drink from that fountain, drink from this fountain" because they were marked. Fountains. And then you knew there were certain restrooms that you could not go into. In the major stores in town, you had to go into that restroom it was marked for "Colored". There were certain areas in a railroad station that you could not sit in because the sitting area for "Colored" was marked for "Colored" and you couldn't go into the major gathering area of White people who were waiting for the train. There were theaters whose front door you could not enter. You had to go into a back door, a side door. Majestic Theater **[downtown San Antonio theater]** for an example. My early experience, I could not go into the front door of the Majestic Theater. I had to go in the back door of the Majestic Theater. I had to go in a side door to the Empire Theater. I could not even go to the Texas Theater, that was another theater in town. These restrictions were massive. There was not a single restaurant in the downtown area that you could go into and sit down and have a meal. There were workers downtown that needed to eat and their lunch hour were permitted to maybe go in the back door of some restaurants and eat in the kitchen - they'd have a special table for them in the kitchen. But no Black person was going into the regular dining room. Now all these are but reminders that when you got on a bus, you knew there were certain areas; you had to sit in the back. So there were constant reminders that you were different. You were separated from the opportunities of the White community... and there grew up in you a kind of resentment to what was being forced on you. Neighborhoods were segregated; there were neighborhoods if you were found walking in [them] the police would pick you up. We all knew that. And we knew as young Blacks that we had to find some defense, some way of

defending ourselves in the light of those conditions. For example, you learned skills like...if during those times I saw a group of White boys coming down the sidewalk and I was going towards them on that same sidewalk, I learned quickly in my life that it might be best for me to go to the other side of the street, because I could easily confront those White boys and find myself in all kinds of conflict because they wouldn't even want to share the sidewalk with me – they wanted me to get off the sidewalk. And when I resented that, then I had myself in some real trouble. So rather than face that kind of thing, you just walked over and got on the other side of the sidewalk.

There were stores that you went in and if you tried on a hat on your head as a Black person, you bought it. You could not try on hats and not buy them. You put it on, you bought it. That was your hat. I do not think...I think sometimes when I talk with some of our young people that they have no idea of the kind of restrictions and limitations that impacted the life of those of us that grew up in a time of segregation....And that's why we were so dedicated and committed to open up the schools, to open up public accommodations, to bring about some change in justice – in the justice system, to deal with those things we were dealing with all the time in our day- to-day life.

Very early in my experiences as a student in public schools, I always knew that the book I was going to be using had the name of some White student that had it before I got it. We were not getting new books – we were getting used books. You can imagine the kind of resentment that built up in you when you knew you did not merit that kind of treatment. You were not a criminal, you were a thoughtful, well-dressed, orderly individual and yet people treated you like you were sub-human. And therefore, you grew up with a desire that “whatever I do – whatever area I'm in, I'm going to be doing something to bring about change.” It was not just your being a preacher, it was not just your being a doctor, it was not just your being any professional person – whatever you got into, you felt it was your responsibility to use whatever influence you might have in whatever way it came to bring a change in the life of your people. And that's the kind of thing that stayed on the mind of the young Blacks in my generation.

SS: Are there any other members of your family – were your parents politically active, were they involved in the struggle?

CB: My dad was a Pullman Porter, was active with the Pullman Porters Union at a time when if it had been know that he was active with them, he could have lost his job.

SS: That was here in San Antonio?

CB: Right, here in San Antonio. And...he was a great admirer of A. Philip Randolph and A. Phillip Randolph was the source of my early experience as a dynamic, effective, and uncompromising leader. So I ...got my early experiences of what a civil rights leader ought to be from the conversations I used to hear my dad mention about A. Philip Randolph. And I owe a lot of inspiration because it was not just because A. Philip Randolph was a civil rights leader. The thing that was important – he was a leader of the union that my father was a part of (coughs) - To be a part of the union meant – and I could understand this as a youngster listening to his father – that he was giving my family security. For example, in those days, if a conductor was not pleased with the way a porter carried out his duties - and sometimes those duties meant giving him [the conductor] personal service by shining his shoes – he could get that porter grounded – they called it “grounded” meaning that he [the porter] would not have his trips out, he’d be fired. So, as I listened to my father talk about the union, he was saying that a porter could not be fired unless a grievance committee made the decision for his being fired and they would negotiate that with the company. That had to be a part of the contract that they would sign with the company. So, I knew that if they had to have grievances, that meant grievance security for my family because if a conductor just didn’t like my father, he couldn’t fire him. He had to carry him before some grievance board. So, I learned to appreciate unions as well appreciate A. Philip Randolph as head of the union. ..And I guess I’ve always felt a kind of warm friendship for organized labor because nothing is better on a job than to know you have security on that job. Particularly if you have a family, you want to know that “I’m not going to be fired today because I did something that the boss didn’t like. Now if I did something that was in violation of the company, I could understand that”, but it could become a very personal thing. Where racism exists, getting along with the person around you was extremely important. So, that meant that many Black people took significant abuse, just to get along with the people that were over them because to not get along, is to be fired – is to lose your job. And you got a family, you got five children –you’re going to do everything you can to get along with that boss. Now I’m saying that because sometimes, young people think about Black people and think they were scared, or kind of “Uncle Toms,” and they were all these bad things – and some of them were – but

many of them held on to those jobs to take care of their families and took a lot of stuff that they resented. And how they were able to come home and receive the ovation of that family, the appreciation of their father who'd just come home from a job where the man [boss] was calling him "boy", treating him in a way that was...demeaning – there's a great story to be told about Black men, really. Because you know, you have to recognize that Black women have always had the job of rearing their families and they've done a mighty fine job of it. But, Black women, just as World War II - did they really go to work out in the open market. That was where they began to get jobs at... in military fields and areas where they – where at the time, we had declared war. But before that time, most women – if they did domestic, they could do some domestic work, and that was at a very low level of pay. Because, I know women in this community would get \$6 a week – not an hour, *a week!* - for that domestic work. And...their husbands were making \$15.00 a week on much harder jobs and they took those \$15.00 – I wish our young people knew this: they took those \$15.00 a week jobs and those \$6.00 a week jobs of their wives and educated their children. Sent them to college. And they did it because they bought one suit and one pair of shoes, and one working pair of shoes. That's the way they did it. And walked – no car! They paid a tremendous price to see their children were educated and did not have to take the sort of thing that *they* had to take.

And that was the spirit of the civil rights movement. We will overcome. That means we will not have to take what our parents had to take. That's what "overcome" means. We will not take what our parents had to take. And we understand why they took it. We understand why they took it.

I'm so afraid – one of the things I appreciate about this oral history [project] – that young people of this generation need to hear that story, primarily because they have no idea the kind of pressure, tension. For example, I have a bed upstairs that I was born in, because the doctor couldn't come to the hospital for my mother – had to come to the home. And I was born in that bed, the bed that I have upstairs...no Black doctor went to the hospital, could go to the hospital – not because they were not as well trained – that was not the reason. What they did was, you had to be a member of the Bexar County Medical Society, which was an all-White group if you went to the hospital. So, the hospital didn't keep you [the Black doctors] out. Bexar Medical Society kept you out...and you couldn't go. This is not only true of the hospitals and those kind of things, but it was true also of the churches. Your churches were also segregated. Segregated not because of they...they felt that they were neighborhoods and

nothing but Whites were in that neighborhood. They were segregated not by neighborhoods. They were segregated by their will to be segregated. That was their program to be segregated. They theologically believed that they should be segregated. They [Whites] felt themselves superior to Blacks. Knew themselves as superior persons to Blacks.

The Catholic Church was segregated, the Episcopal Church was segregated, all of the Baptist Church was segregated, the Methodist church was segregated – all of them were segregated. As a matter of fact, when I came here [back]* in 1949 to be the pastor of Mt. Zion Baptist Church, they did not have a chaplain out at Kelly Field. And they had a number of Black soldiers out there, Black soldiers were segregated. And so they asked me if I would go out there once a week and hold a service for the men that were out there. And I did that. I would eat with the men, and have a service with the men, and uh, talk with them. And then they started sending me the candidates for baptism. During that period, men were going overseas, many of them had not joined the church and when they went overseas they wanted to go overseas as a Christian. They didn't know whether they'd get back or not. So, what they did at uh...the Field was to send me all the Black soldiers to be baptized and sent all the White soldiers to be baptized at First Baptist Church downtown. So I did it once or twice and then I began to think about it: something's wrong with this. I am endorsing a non-Christian act while I'm doing what is supposed to be Christian. So I called up the man and told him, I said," I will baptize all of them or none of them I'll baptize all of 'em if you send them – I'm not gonna baptize any of them segregated. 'Cause I think it's wrong and I'm not gonna do it." *(Pause)* That was one incident of my experience in dealing with segregation.

Another incident of my dealing with segregation was going to the Fiesta. San Antonio has years – had Fiesta. I grew up with the Fiesta. That was a great time. We went down – that's when hamburgers really tasted like hamburgers. *(Laughs)*

SS: *(laughs)*

CB: Big Mac has ruined that burger. Hamburgers taste like hamburgers. We had those Fiesta's *(unintelligible)*. You can't have a good hamburger without onions in 'em.

Both: *(laughs)*

* Rev. Black returns to San Antonio after attending college and working in odd jobs around the country

CB: So I enjoyed the hamburgers there. So I'd go to Fiesta and we walked at the parade then we walked all day, all the evening and you know in those days, children - the youngsters – they had to do it now, I would walk to the parade for miles on Crockett street and walk back, walk all over the parade route, over the Fiesta and then walk back home at night. And we would do that in groups, the young groups that would walk...and uh, I took a girl once to the Fiesta. She was my company. I carried her, I was in my early, early teens, I guess. Not my – not the early teens, but late teens, possible about 20-years-old. And I stepped over a man's uh – a White fellows foot – and when I stepped over his foot, he slapped me (*Pause*). There I am with my girlfriend – am I gon' let this man slap me and get off with it (*laughs*). I am compelled by virtue of my manhood to do something about this man's slap. And I looked at him and he looked bigger than ever before (*laughing*).

SS: (*laughs*)

CB: Great big White boy! And while I was thinking about it, uh, a plainclothes police came and grabbed him and took him away. And I was so glad they took him away I didn't know what to do (*laughing*).

SS: (*laughs*)

CB: (*still laughing*) But I made it – I made my girlfriend think if just stood there I was gonna get him. I was scared to death. I was scared for two reasons: one, that he was White and I didn't think I could have a chance of winning no matter what I did. Number two, he was big (*laughs*)! So I had two things I was scared of. He's White and he was big. But uh, those little incidents of that kind were incidents where you felt insecure. For example, you felt that if you had a wreck with a White man, and you called the police, the police was not gonna take your side; he was going to take the White man's side. So you almost rather try to settle it with the man, tell him to “go ‘head, I'll get my car fixed,” because you knew there just wasn't any chance for you. Now...uh....there was some great things about....being uh, segregated. Uh, I don't want to forget that. We had great teachers –

SS: Can I just – the microphone – just yeah. I apologize, I just want to make sure I have everything (*laughs*) -okay, thank you.

Noises as microphone is readjusted.

CB: We had some great teachers in our public school system and the teachers were almost a part of our family...it was not like... teachers were in our neighborhoods, so therefore, it wasn't like a teacher was over here and you were back over here... you, you knew your teacher – your mother didn't have to go to a parents-teacher's meeting to see the teacher. She saw the teacher at the grocery store (*laughing*). She saw the teacher at church. Teacher could come up to your momma and say “well, your son hasn't been acting right –

Interrupted for phone call

CB: It didn't have to be a formal meeting, I mean...so, great teachers could keep you straight and the, the contact they had with your parents. Your momma could come back from church and whip you for being bad in school that week. You didn't have to wait until they had a teacher's meeting – now (*long (Pause)*)...Then teachers could see potential in you, to begin to work with you in terms of your own potential. Uh...I'm afraid we've lost some of that. I don't - I'm not saying that many of the teachers are not interested, but they're not close, they're not as close to the families. And it's hard for them to – and then, you have a number of teachers now – you know there's a great divide between Black professionals and people who are still in the ghetto. There's becoming a great divide...uh...there are kids in the ghetto that being an “A” student is to be White. So he - he brings down his educational comp – opportunities, just to be Black – he thinks that's being Black! My generation had a different kind of attitude: Rise above all that! Get out of this! That's the – that is the debate being carried on now by uh, [Bill] Cosby and others. Cosby sayin' “get out of it!” Others are saying “well you got to understand the context out of which they're coming”. That's true – both of them (*phone rings and he answers “hello”*)

(Pause for phone call)

CB: So uh - here is a – it's being interpreted that there is a split between uh - the Blacks that have made it and the Blacks that have not made it. Now, I don't know any Black that has made it that has not come out of the same kind of environment (*laughs*) that the Blacks that didn't make it are still in. I think the Blacks that made it just made a decision that they were gonna come out of it. Not, not – and they had parents that encouraged them to come out of it. But if they didn't come out of it, they're parents came out of it. They're parents did something about it. They're grandparents did something about it. The context is there – it's not a broken relationship between – now I think that uh, there's a broken decision in the sense

that uh, those of us that rose above the limitations of our environment decided to do so without regard for the handicaps. Now people who want to stay in that environment, they did. That has always been true. People who want to stay where they are stay there (*phone rings*). People who wanted better, they sought better (*answers phone*).

(*Pause for phone call*)

CB: (*unintelligible*)...on education... on Oprah's show.

SS: Oh, okay (*laughs*)

CB: That's what she was calling me about (*laughs*). Now...I don't know if there's anything... what else were we – what else did you want to talk about?

SS: Um, well I just want to ask you what led you to change from medicine – I understand you were studying medicine when you first went to Morehouse [University] before you received the calling to go into the ministry.

CB: Uh, after coming out of Morehouse, I discovered that I could not go to medical school. I did not have the money. So I took a job with an uncle of mine who had a little convenience store and I thought about business for awhile, I thought about how I could develop this grocery store. And then I began to see the – feel the weight of the competition. I discovered that I could go to a chain store, like Handy Andy or Piggly-Wiggly's, those stores, Black-and-White, or not Black-and-White, Red-and-White, I think stores, they were all chain stores. But I could go to those stores and buy stuff off of the shelf cheaper than I could get them from the wholesale house. So I said this ain't the kind of business you go into. (*Laughs*) If your competition can set it cheaper than you can buy it, that's not your business. So I dropped that business and went to Los Angeles [California] in search of adventure. I went to Los Angeles and I thought I was going to be able to stay with a cousin of mine – cousin of my father really – my cousin too, but he was closer to my father, he was of my father's age. And I got there, knocked on his door, he welcomed me in. In those days, people used to come to see you and they didn't even let you know they were coming. So that's exactly what I did. I went to his house – he didn't know I was coming – he welcomed me in. Then as soon as I got in there, he told me, he said "Well now, I'll find you a room tomorrow." I was thinking I was gonna stay with him! I had about \$15 in my pocket. And uh...he was talking about he got to find me a room. But, I was anxious after finishing Morehouse to see if

whether or not I could make it myself. I'd – I'd been able to break all ties, had no job. I'm gonna see if I can make it, really make it. To me, that was the test of my manhood. To see if I could go to a big city and make it and have \$15.00 in my pocket. And I uh...met a group of guys from San Antonio, who were just moving into an apartment and they invited me to come move with them. There were four of us. I'm sure the man didn't rent it – he didn't have it rented for four, but four of us were there. And uh...while I was looking for a job, I was doing the cooking-

(Pause for phone call, but begins talking right before recording resumes)

CB: ...gravy...and uh, as a result of moving there with them, I was doing some of the cooking, cooking as much as I could. But they ate a lot of gravy. A lot of rice...a lot of pork chops... 'cause that was about the biggest thing I could cook. And then, I sat down – I don't want to be doing this cooking all the time – I gotta get me a job, so I started out looking for a job –

Tape 1, side 1 ends; side 2 begins.

SS: Okay.

CB: I have a major in Biology and a minor in Chemistry with the idea of going to medical school. So, really, the only other kind of job I could get with that kind of major is to teach – teach somewhere. So I couldn't wait on a teaching job because I had to eat and I was working with these guys, I gotta get a job in a hurry, I can't wait around here to try and get a teacher's job. So I uh...there were two kinds of jobs I could get: I could get one of those jobs working at a filling station, changing tires and seat covers and all that – and that was hard work – or, I could get a job working at a barber's shop, shining shoes. Now you have to have some idea of what this was doing to my dignity as a Morehouse Man (*laughing*). Where I have to take this job shining shoes in a White man's barber' shop! The one advantage I had on this job was that uh...it was on the sixth floor of the building it was in, so I could dress like I was going to a real important job. So, when I ran into anybody – I work in that building (*laughing*) – I work in that building they were there, I wasn't about to tell them "I'm shining shoes in that building up there!" So, I uh...took that job and they didn't give me any salary. They just gave you all the tips you could make if you kept the shop clean. You clean the shop, that's what you did in order to get the tips. So, I was tipping and... and one of the things I discovered in this old system of segregation is if I could laugh real hard and slap my

thighs, those guys would give me a big tip (*laughing*)!. But if I didn't laugh at their jokes, act like I'm half-mad, I wouldn't hardly get a tip! And I'm not – so I'm not making as much money as the guy that was in there before – before me, because he was laughing! He had decided that that was his life's work, so he was laughing – whatever they said, he laughed. And he made a lot of money, but I didn't make as much – that much money because I was half mad all the time. And particularly if this young guy came in there and he wanted to act like he was you know, somebody and all and I was nobody. That made me even worse. So I stayed with that job about a month and I went to Oakland, CA. And when I got to Oakland, I went to another cousin and you know... you don't always *know* your relatives. One day, you ought to start out trying to learn your relatives by going to stay with them. I went to stay with this relative and she started introducing me to friends of hers and they would come by and take me out, take me to clubs in Oakland. And I said "you know, I don't understand. These guys are spending money on me, buying me food and all and they don't seem to be working! They got nice cars, and I don't know when they go to work! I said, "Something's happening here that I don't quite understand! They're not working and yet they can come by every evening and pick me up, carry me on to some party or something." I said, "No, something's wrong." I stayed there a month and I left. I didn't know what those guys were doing. I didn't know what my cousin was doing. I didn't know what they were into, but I figured they were into something that they were gonna gradually work me into and I said, " Nah, I'm going to leave here."

So, I came back to Marshall, TX to get an insurance job with an insurance company – Atlanta Life Insurance Company. I began the most miserable year of my life (*laughing*).

SS: (*laughing*)

CB: Number one is, I'm just being made – becoming aware that I'm going nowhere. I have finished Morehouse and I'm on my way nowhere. I don't know where I'm going, I don't like – I don't like the insurance business. I'm in it, but I don't like it. And I said, "Something is wrong." And I was miserable that year. I didn't – even the people that I knew and they were very nice to me, I was very un-thoughtful. I was really sort of depressed in a sense – in a real sense as I looked back, but uh...but I didn't care much about anything because I knew I didn't like what was going on. My girlfriends, I know, if they have any memory of me, it's an awful memory, because I was not too thoughtful, not too concerned with how they felt or

anything. And they were not responsible for that. I was the one – I was the one in trouble. And you know it would be good if girls could remember that. Sometimes, they may think they are responsible. Uh-uh. They were not responsible for any of that. I was upset because I wasn't getting anywhere; I wasn't going where I wanted to go. I didn't see any – I didn't see much future for me. I know where the future was and I started working, talking to insurance people and as I talked to them about what they were doing, here's a man I'd walked in (*unintelligible*) and talked to him, I'd say "how much do you make?" "Oh, I make \$15 a week." "What does your wife do?" She's not doing anything – she just has the children." "How many children do you got?" "Four." "How much insurance do you cover?" "Oh, I need a little sick and accident, a little burial." "Okay." I'd go there to the house and it'd look like everybody so happy! I said, "I can't understand that." I'm miserable (*laughing*)! I'm a graduate from Morehouse, I'm miserable. These people are happy! Why are they so happy and I'm so miserable? I kept trying to figure that out. And, I – every Sunday, I noticed that he'd get up and put on his one suit, shine his shoes. Wife would put on little gown – little dress that she had made. Go to church. All them children, bright faced – Vaseline (*laughing*) over there, making them look shiny! Hair is combed, everybody going to church. And I said "I'm miserable – and these people are happy! Happy! Why are they so happy?" And that's when I recognized, I said "you know, I think I have not found the thing that makes life happy. I don't think I found God. I think I've gone to church, but I don't think I've found a purpose for living. There must be something – there's something in this God thing that I haven't found." And you know, I decided to go to seminary. Now I did not decide to go to seminary in order to preach. I decided to go to seminary in order to find myself. Where am I in life? Where do I want to go? Where do I want to be? And I felt that all of that troubling spirit I had was God at work in me though. I felt that was happening, but I was resenting that. I didn't want that. I said, "No, I ain't – no, I'm not going this way,"

I went to seminary with a friend of mine. I told him and he decided to go to seminary with me. We both went to seminary together. We're lifelong friends. We went to Morehouse together, we went to seminary together. We got up there; the man wasn't even expecting us. The man kept saying, "you sure you don't want this (*unintelligible*)? You sure this is the place ya'll wanna be?" (*laughing*). "Oh yes!" And they finally found a room where we could be together. He didn't – they hadn't even made any arrangements for us and I had – he is – he was partially blind. So I had to do all of the reading for him. We were classmates, so it was necessary for us to be together for me to do the reading for him. We had a bed in the

same room. Me on one side, he had the bed on the other side. And uh...while we were – while we were there, um, the second year I was there I heard a man preaching on the radio who began to say that if you're going to find yourself, if you want purpose you got to be willing to give up those things that divert you, that take you away from your purpose. You got to take along with you things that you don't like as well as the things that you like to find purpose. You cannot find purpose completely separated from things that you don't like! You can't just make – life ain't all cake. Life is cabbage and greens, that you may not like and you got to be willing to carry those things along. And that's when I made up my mind that I'm prepared to carry whatever my ministry's necessary. Because I had eliminated the ministry because of things – I didn't like – I didn't like that...the fact that ministers have very little privacy and I'm basically a very private person. But you can't have privacy as a minister...you know... they know by the license on your car the kind of car you're driving, what kind of clothes you wore Sunday, what you said, repeating what you said and all that. I didn't like that. But I decided to accept that as one of the responsibilities I'd have if I was going to be a pastor – if I was going to be a preacher. And so, I accepted that.

I had been promising God that I was going to do social work. I was doing what you're [interviewer] doing. I kept telling Him "I'm going to take this religion and I'm going into social work. I'm going to do social work." 'Cause I was still committed to civil rights effort, but I wanted to do social work. And uh...I was interested in hearing you say that you were going to do social work and I just wonder where that's going to lead there (*laughing*). I know where it led me – I just wonder where it's going to lead you!

SS: (*laughing*)

CB: Anyway – it might lead you to be a preacher (*still laughing*) – you might end up (*unintelligible*) – that might be what happens – what's going to happen to you!

SS: (*still laughing*) I'll follow your footsteps.

CB: (*laughing*) Anyway, uh...I – I stayed there until I finished my work there and then I came back to San Antonio...coming back to San Antonio I still had a tremendous struggle. I had been out of Morehouse three years, went to seminary, spent three years. Came back home – came back – this is home – we moved into my parents' house and we're staying there and I couldn't get an invitation nowhere. I wanted to pastor a church. I didn't want to teach. I wanted to pastor. And uh...couldn't get an invitation nowhere. So I started preaching on

Cameo Theater – the Cameo Theater on Commerce Street. Begin to work down there, go back into those alleys...that's where they had all the clubs, gambling, and prostitution. All of that was up and down there. So I met all those people down in that area. We're all down in there and got to be known in terms of that area – that I'd hold service from 9:00 – 10:00 in that old Cameo Theater.

(Pause for visitor)

CB: So, I uh...where were we?

SS: Preaching at the Cameo Theater.

CB: Yeah. So I was there for a year and a half and the church then (*unintelligible*) – they heard about me. But the worst thing I did – I'd been going with my wife for three years and I came out of a generation the men that – the women there – in my generation, if you didn't have enough money to take care of her, you didn't want to marry her. I was going with my wife and I had been going with her for about three years and I said, "I know my wife is wondering why I haven't asked her to marry me, going with her this long." But I didn't – I didn't have a church. I was making a little money out of the Cameo, you know? They'd take up a little offering, but I had spent most of that advertising. I was teaching a group of ministers in the church where I am now and by teaching them they paid me about \$100.00 a month.

But I walked into my wife's office one day. She was USO Director – Director of USO.

SS: Is this Zernona Black?

CB: Zernona, yeah. I walked into her office one day and I said, "I wanna marry you." She said, "When?" I said, "Now!" "Now?" "Yeah, let's get in the car and we'll go to Seguin. I'll get the license. We'll marry then and there." "No, I'm not gonna do that. I'll marry you, but I'm not gonna do that."

So she arranged – she was from Oklahoma. She arranged with an aunt – she had an aunt that lived in Austin. And we set aside a Sunday and we went to Austin. We had my family – my mother and father, my sister, and her husband – no, just my sister, because her husband was in the military. Went to Austin and then...there I got married. Uh...I kept – the wedding picture's on my – is the main picture on my computer. I uh - I look at that every day, my

wedding picture. Anyway, I uh, I went to – I came back – oh yeah, I came back here and we were doing fairly well. I was still trying to get more engaged, preach here and there. Finally, a man - that was like in February - and by June a man invited me to come to Corpus Christi and my wife tells me that while they were interviewing me to be the pastor, she was asking God to give us that house (*laughs and coughs*). ‘Cause we – she wanted a job in Austin (???) as well, so we got the (*unintelligible*) and I moved there, and I became the pastor of that church for two and a half years and then I was called here. And we were here at this church for 49 years. And she just died last January. So...um...that’s the end of that story.

SS: Um...would you mind talking about the burning of Mt. Zion and the rebuilding? How it was – um – I couldn’t find how it was burned or caught on fire, but that seems like a pretty important event. Burning and rebuilding it – what did you do during the time it was being rebuilt?

CB: Well, what happened...um...somebody had set Zion Star on Wildvine (???) and practically burned it down about a month before our church was burned. And then somebody set out and burned Friendship Baptist Church. So next thing I know, they were burning up Mt. Zion. Now we have never been able to find out who did all that, but, all of it looked like arson. Like somebody had deliberately set it afire. Tensions were burning great because you had a lot of churches being burned during some of that period in the south and uh...civil rights and all. I have never believed that that was all together a civil rights activity. I think that represented more... I don’t know; maybe it was a civil rights, I don’t know. I had people to believe – there were people, members of Mt. Zion, who believed that my political activity was responsible for that. But these other ministers weren’t in political activities and yet, their churches were burned too. I think that was just a church hatred thing. So, it was more of a resentment of the church than it was anything else. And I think there are people who just resent the church – what it stands for. They resent it. They feel the tensions of the church, the moral expectations are greater than they feel that it should be and uh...they are troubled by that. Uh...when the church was set on fire - I was living here – I stepped out on that porch and I could see the smoke rising from the church and I knew, I said, “ Oh yeah, that’s the church.” Somebody called me – that’s right – somebody called me and said, “Reverend – the church is on fire.” I stepped out on the porch, looked across the houses and I could see the smoke coming. I said, “That church is on fire alright.” I got in my car. We had just spent what was quite a bit of money then, about \$35,000 getting the church redecorated. I had

bought a new organ. When I watched the firemen shooting that water through the windows of that church, I said, “Oh God. They’re shooting it right on the organ.” (*Laughs*) “They’re going to hit my organ!”

Anyway, we uh...we were able to get through that. We were able to – oh! During that period, there was a lady by the name of Louise Miller who pressed a \$100 bill into my hand and said, “Reverend, we gonna have to rebuild.” That – that was a Saturday night that the church was on fire. That Sunday morning, we got an opportunity – we uh...we were able to move into Douglass School auditorium for our service. And going into Douglass auditorium, I took up the first offering for the reestablishment – that next Sunday morning – for the redevelopment of our church. And I laid that lady’s \$100 and gave my own \$100 and other members came up with their \$100 to begin rebuilding their church – right then and there! So we didn’t waste any time. I was still on the City Council and one of the members of the City Council made this statement:

“We want to tell Rev. Black that he has our deepest sympathy. That we have just heard and recognize the publish – in the paper that the church he pastors has been burned down. And I have a statement that I made following that I had put in the minutes of that meeting. And I told them then “No, I want to correct the man’s statement. The church *building* burned down. But this church is still alive and carrying on in wonderful fashion. Not the burning of the church – but the building.” And uh... we began moving right then and there. The community gave us – this community – gave us around \$25,000 to rebuild the church. They sent it – the bank – The Chase National Bank – Chase Bank now – it was Highland back then, further allocated \$5,000 to a fund and from then on people began to give money to that fund until it was over \$25,000 from the public. Restoring that building must have cost us \$400,000.

SS: Ah, we’ll move on. The Rev. Claude and Zernona Black Scholarship Fund – what made you start that – I think I can probably guess why – but also starting the city’s first Black credit union. I understand you were in –

CB: Yes, the credit union - let me tell you the story of the credit union. I uh... went to the hospital to visit a sick member of Mt. Zion who had a son who was about sixteen years old and she was not married. And anyway, she needed an operation. And she told me, she said,

“I have to have surgery and I sent my son to try to borrow \$250.00. And as I listened to her and thought about it, I said, “you know, here is one of these rare people church n our church, and I wish we could get \$250.00 so she can go on with her operation, and don’t have to have her son out trying to borrow two hundred and fifty dollars.” *(Pause)* Because at that point out local church was only raising three hundred dollars a Sunday, so that two hundred and fifty dollars was a lot of money. *(Pause)* “-maintain the church and being able to do it for other members same thing, ‘cause you had other members would figure “if you did it for them, ought to do it for us to’. “We didn’t have the resources for that. So then I begin to say ‘now, if she could borrow that money, and *we* had someway of lending her that money, she’d pay it back. We wouldn’t have any problem with her paying it back.” *(Pause)*. So I said “let me see how I can do that.” So I talked with, uh, a man who worked for the telephone company here, and they have a credit union with the telephone company. So I had them to have the man that organized that credit union to come out and talk with my board. *(Pause)* My trustee board. He came and talked with them. *(Pause)* They listened to him, and they never said another word. *(Pause)* I got no response from them at all.

CB: Everyone was, as I look back over it, they had, had no real experience with a credit union. *(Pause)* There was a time in our life, and this was something ought to be talked about also, in terms of, uh, integration. There was a time when Black people didn’t have much to do with Blacks. They didn’t have enough to put in the bank. So they didn’t deal with banks. They didn’t borrow anything from banks...the borrowed from *loan sharks*. *(Pause)*. So, uh ...I worked on trying to see what I would do now that they’re (the board) not interested in the credit union. So I went to a Savings and Loan Association. I showed them, I said, ‘you know what I’d like to do? I’d like for you to give me a letter of cooperation and participation. *(Pause)* All I want is a letter from you and I will formulate a credit committee in my church *(Pause)* and they will work with people who need credit from your bank and they will get our recommendation. If you would give us that letter of accommodation that we are working with you.’ *(Pause)* I got that from the fact that when I was growing up in school, we used to bring our nickels and dimes and they would be deposited in the San Antonio Savings and Loan *(Pause)* That’s where our little school funds went. And, uh, so I said this is what ought to be done with banks. Banks ought to uh... the church ought to be able to do that. *(Pause)* I talked with the President of that bank, of that Savings and Loan and he said, “You know, that might be a good idea, but, uh, I wouldn’t like it even if I had nothing but policeman coming in here. If I had a group of policemen coming in here, I

wouldn't like it". Well, I'm *not* talking about policemen. *(Pause)* I know he was giving me a message. He didn't want that many Black people coming in there. He didn't want those Black people coming in there. *(Pause)*. So I gave that up. Then I had to wait until I got people on the board who *understood* better what it meant, who could handle that. You see, the other loan officers rejected that because we were taking them out of their experience. They hadn't any experience with a credit union, they didn't. And - and this Preacher bringing in something, he going to get rid of me. It's going to be something I can't handle and he's going to get rid of me. So they saw it as a threat and I think we have to understand that. *(Pause)* I'm constantly speaking to them, speaking to many preachers, "you cannot keep your church down to your level of operation." *(Pause)* 'Don't be threatened by the fact that you're not ready for them, because *you* don't know.' You've got to learn! What you don't know, *learn*. Because otherwise, you're going to bring the church down to your level of understanding. *(Pause)*. AS a result of this, I kept working at it, working at it, and finally, I got a board that was ready to do it. And we, that credit union how has been going over thirty years. We have assets in excess of one million dollars... and it has only been out of the field of activity, simply being the church itself. We don't have any more outside of that that are participants in the credit union. Now the reason I say that is because I had no ideas that they had a million dollars in it *(both laugh)*. But not only that, they had a lot more that that because Black people ain't going to put their major accounts in your credit union. You get that little, that little - *(Both laugh)* - you ain't going to get that major account. That major account is going downtown. *(Pause)*. But, uh, we were very blessed we feel that we got this kind of resources.

SS: And, um, is that tied in with the scholarship-

CB: Huh?

SS: That is, the credit union, is that tied in with the scholarship-

CB: Well, now, no. The scholarship is another thing. The Zernona and Claude Black Scholarship is being sponsored by community of churches under Rev. Walker's leadership-

SS: And-

CB: He asked me, he said he wanted to organize a scholarship. It's an ecumenical group. It's made up of many churches in the city. Not just his church, but Baptist churches all over the city. And they have been able to partnership with an investor's group and they raised almost two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, um, for that scholarship. Now, in , in my name, so I'm delighted over that because what they're trying to do is get to the point where they can give a person a four year scholarship you know, because we've been giving just, you know , getting people stated. We want to be able to say to a person, you got a scholarship, you stay. Stay in school the rest of you time. You've got a scholarship. And uh, they are working on that.

CB: Okay, moving on now (*unintelligible*) have not understood altogether, I don't think, is that my running for city council was a civil rights thing. It was not just a matter of, uh, wanting to be on the city council. It was a matter of, (*Pause*), that city council was a decision making body. And that'd been going to the city council year after year asking for public accommodation to be open. But if I'm going to do anything maybe I better get on it. And, uh, so I announced as a part of civil rights concern, to run for city council. When I announced it, and I ran, I made a fair, a pretty good showing. An *unexpected* showing. But some of the men on the good government leg that was the controlling body in this city seemed to encourage them, next time around to put a Black man on *their* ticket. (*Pause*). So, the next time they run, I announced I was still going to run, run a second time. (*Pause*). I lost that time, ran again, and they put Rev. James on their ticket (*Pause*) and Rev. James is the first Black selected for the City Council. I ran that same time, but I didn't run against Rev. James, I ran, we ran, in places. You had places that you ran against, just like we do now. And I ran against a white candidate, not against Rev. James, but I knew that they were not going to select two Black men on the City Council. (*Pause*). This was a shock to know, that, what's his name, was elected now, that was a shock to me –

SS: Art Hall.

CB: Yeah, Art, yeah. I don't know how many times that is going to happen when ... so I, that time, so I lost twice. I became involved, after that, in the War on Poverty. We created what was called, "Project Free." And Project Free was a uh, an agency that operated out of our church, and sent trucks, trucks around and brought food to the elderly. The elderly in the city. It was all cooked in our basement, the basement of our church, after the fire, we raised

that basement in such a way that we could enlarge it and we were able to do a bigger job of cooking.

My church would smell like a restaurant on Sunday morning. (*Pause*). Because we'd be cooking all the week.

SS: Mmm-hmm.

CB: And uh, (*Pause*), we were sending trucks. The office was in uh - in the building where we have a - the Pastor's office now, and also they're building house next door had offices. And that's where they were sending the trucks all over the community. And then later on, we got a place right across the street from Carver Cultural Center; it is a place there. But we fed the elderly throughout the East Side. All over Bexar County for a while. And uh, that was out task. And they built forty units of elderly housing, Mt. Zion Sheltering Arms, on uh - Martin Luther King. It's ah - housing for the elderly...

SS: And is it still there today?

CB: Huh?

SS: Is it still there today? The-

CB: Yes

SS: Okay

CB: Uh-huh. Yeah, you can go by and take pictures of it. There (birds singing) the four things I've done is credit union, hum, Project Free, Day Care Center, and Sheltering Arms for the elderly. Those were the four projects.

SS: If I could, just go back to ...you meeting Mrs. Black. How did the two of you meet and what was that like? Hum, I guess meeting, becoming a couple, and then, um ding everything that you were doing here as far as de-segregating San Antonio, um doing that kind of thing together.

CB: How did we, how did we do what?

SS: Um, like just coming in to San Antonio and helping to integrate San Antonio. Like the restaurants, etc. Were those things you two did together? So, I guess, how did you meet and what types of civil rights activities did you do together?

CB: Oh, now my wife was very, very instrumental. She, my wife, organized Health Incorporated, which was a day care for the elderly. She worked with that for years and that was one of her major projects. My wife worked with me in terms of helping me get elected. Not only that, during the period that I was really engaged in civil rights I would go to City Hall and whenever we went to City Hall and made a charge of police brutality or the lack of accommodations of housing (*Pause*) lack of public accommodations. My telephone would begin ringing once that article hit the paper. This telephone would begin ringing like, ...and they'd ring all night every hour ...on the hour. And say all kinds of profanity, and uh, one time, someone shot a bullet through and it went into that wall (points?), that wall on the other side. All of that was done and my wife was the one who had to tolerate more than I did because she was the one answer the phone. She was the one hearing all that stuff. She's the one who was absorbing some of the hostility. Even from the Black Community 'cause there were Black people that didn't want you in there. You know there were members of my church that felt like 'he didn't need to be in there. He didn't need to be doing that.' Uh, so she's the one who stabilized things. (*Pause*). She's the one that, uh, uh, (*Pause*). - For example, I had a man call me one night - and he said, "Uh, some white guys, and Reverend, they have jumped on my daughter, I need a preacher. I need a preacher to come out here and talk with my daughter." I said, "Well okay, I'll be out there."

It's night, it's evening, and it's about 7:30. And then after he hung up, I said, "You know, I don't have my car." I thought about that, that my car was in the shop. I say, "I can't go out there." (*Pause*) So I told them, I said ...he called back later and said "I'm looking for you preacher. Where - Where- Where you haven't gotten here." So he told me, he said now, "Preacher, I'm still looking for you". I said, "You know, I forgot to tell you I don't have my car - I can't get out there. Cause I don't have my car." He said, "Well, I'll send a cab. I'll send a cab for you." So he sent a cab out here! And before the cab got here, I turned to my wife and said, "Do you remember any Black people in that neighborhood? I said I don't remember any Black people in that neighborhood he talking about me going to." I said, "Do

you remember any Black People in that neighborhood?" She said, "No, I don't remember any Black People in that neighborhood." I said, 'I don't think I'm going out there.' So the cab guy came, and I said, uh, who, who sent you? He said, "Oh, I don't know, they just told me to come pick you up.' I said 'well uh, you go ahead and drive – I said well, how much did it cost you come here?' He said, 'Oh, you don't owe me nothing. I said "Well you go ahead; I'm not going to take it."

(Pause) Nobody, to this day eve has called me back, never said anything *(Pause)* I believe to this day that was an effort to set me up and get me out there. And I don't know what would have happened to me if I had gone. That's one incident. *(Pause)*

SS: Was this during the sixties or seventies? When did this happen?

CB: what? It's hard for me to put a date on it. It was in the sixties. The sixties. See, I ran for City Council in '63 for the first time and lost...ran again in '65, I lost. And then again in '73 and won.

SS: Okay

CB: I stayed there two terms, ran as an Independent in '75 and '77. Yeah, ran as an Independent in '75.

SS: So the first time did you run as a Democrat or –

CB: Huh?

SS: The first time you ran -

CB: I ran - I ran ...the good government leg that I had ...you might read that. It's in - it's in, uh - one of the books on San Antonio Politics. Hmm, we're given credit for breaking the good government leg. But the good government leg was, was arguing about whether they wanted me on the ticket...because I didn't do what they thought I should have done and by virtue of that I had to run as an independent. But I ran, they came to me and asked me to run on their ticket. I then had to come back to the Black community and ask them because I'd been fighting, I had

been fighting the good government leg so much through the paper and through, uh, criticism. Criticism of what they were doing and I had been fighting them so I was *shocked* they had come for me. But what happened was there were in trouble with the white community and they were trying to make up the balance of their voting strength with the Black Community. By coming to the Black Community, but they didn't ask me anything, they just asked me to vote because I was still very popular with the Black Community. Because I was constantly – I was the President of the Black Minister's Union (BMU). Therefore, I was taking up a lot of issues on behalf of the BMU. And therefore I didn't have to – all I had to was go to the BMU and announce we were going to do certain things and they would help, get some members to march with us. We had a march from Carver Culture Center to Alamo the same time they were marching to Selma. We had a march here.

SS: Black American Culture. How would you define it, and I guess just not necessarily just in SA, but hum; well I guess let's start with San Antonio. Do you feel the church is important? Or what do you think is like the biggest issue facing Black Americans in SA or South Texas and then as far as in the US period.

CB: I think the biggest issue facing Black America throughout the country has been an economic issue. I think it does not make a great deal of difference if you get certain civil rights if you do not have the economics to go with it.

I can - I am permitted to the finest restaurant in town only if I got the money. Well the great majority of Black people are still impoverished. The major problem of Blacks is their poverty. We identify with the struggle of the world because the major problem of this world *is poverty*. The Global struggle, the global economy must deal with global poverty. Uh...or else it will continue to have the kind of rebellion that we see happening now as we try to close the doors of our borders to hungry people. This is going to be *the* challenge of the West. How do we bring our prosperity, the prosperity of the West of the World of Poverty? That to me.... Because people are not going to stay hungry. Migration. History has been shaped by the migration of hungry people. When there were no natural borders, migration has always followed the food. Migration of the hungry... As a matter of fact economics brought *us* to America. Economics brought us to USA. People who wanted labor wanted wealth without work.

SS: And, since you brought up the immigration struggles that are, uh, the protests and marches that are currently being held here in SA and throughout the US, I shat – how to ask this? Do you see this as something positive for the Black Community as well or do you even think if even affects the Black Community?

CB: I think it is only positive if Blacks will recognize that poverty has no ethnic identity. Poverty is the backside of racism. Racism is produced...by...advantage. Racism always produces an element of advantage. When you can identify with a particular race and certain circumstances, that race that is on top is going to do anything to stay on top. So I don't know. It's always interesting to me the dark people of the world are poor. And the darker they are, the poorer they are. I don't think it has nothing to do with brains or ability. It has to do with the social structures, the way the society is structured. Even after slavery was over, the lighter the Black people ere, the better jobs they were able to get. Now, you know that was unfair because the darker they were, the more they were mistreated. (*Pause*). It's amazing. But, it happened though. To Black people. Have you seen any of the old, old pictures of Black people in color? It's a marked difference. Not just in the poverty around them, but in the faces of them! The people's faces! It's a different - I think we are mixed more than we realize. I don't think – I think there's been more mixture then we really are aware of because you put any group of Black people together now, you'll get the same kind of pictures. That picture is danger.

SS: Well, um, we are about ready to wrap up. But before do is there anything else that you'd like to discuss? Is something –?

CB: I think one of things I'd like to say is that. ...Long (*pause*)... the rights of a just society must always be in process. The rights of a just society is a process. And therefore, we never get through with this job; it's an unfinished job always. New relationships create new problems. New understanding creates new efforts. Young Black People must not feel that they've already arrived. They haven't.... They just got a new beginning, another place to start from. Because there is always the need to make some changes in an unjust society. And my advice would be to urge young people to stay alert. Not only to where they are, but where others are as well. And what their relationship is to those others. Because that' is what life is about. Uh...and I think we've got to work with that in mind. Young people must not get the impression that we are now arrived and there's nothing else here to do.

Heroes of every generation must be those who make life a little better for the generation that's coming on. That's the only kind of message I'd like to leave.

SS: What are you doing now?

CB: I am trying to learn how to work my computer –

SS: *(laughs)*

CB: *(laughs)* No, I'm trying – I'm reading more. That computer amazes me 'cause it gives me access to more – I - it's too much information.

SS: *(laughs)*

CB: *(laughs)* It showers me with opportunity for information. And it's disturbing! Because it tell me more than I want to know! The more it tells me, the more limited I become. And I just see stuff I just need to be read I can't read all that time. I can't spend all my time reading. But it's just so much there. And I've just been thrilled over what this technological Age offers to young people now. You know all of my life as a minister, if I thought about something, I'd say you know – I want to do such and such a thing. I want to research that a little more. That's a good idea, but I don't know the total story of that. I need to - I couldn't run to the library and find that, you know? I can sit right there *(pointing to computer)*, at my computer and ask the question "will an apple a day keep a doctor away?" And you do you know I can – chuckles – probably find it on the computer *(laughs)*

SS: *(Laughs)* More answers than you really want –

CB: *(Laughs)* I find where somebody asks that question...

SS: So in addition to learning how to use your computer –

CB: Yeah, I just keep moving, keep messing with it. You can find anything, any question, you just keep on asking questions, keep on working it down, working it down, to the words, the – works, you eventually run on it.

SS: Are you still active with Mt. Zion? Or any other, anything else in the community

CB: Any what?

SS: Are you still active with Mt. Zion?

CB: Oh yes, I'm right now serving as interim Pastor. I've gone back. They've just called a new minister. They've just called a new minister, so my days are numbered. I'll be on my 2nd retirement (laughs).

(Telephone rings. Pause for telephone call.)

SS: We can wrap up now -

CB: Okay

SS: - unless there is something else you'd like to add. We left off with you being interim pastor at Mt Zion. We'll leave it at that. Let's see....

CB: Some pastors at Mt Zion?

SS: You were saying you were about to retire a second time.

CB: Oh, a second time. Oh, yeah.

SS: Yes *(laughs)*.

CB: Yeah, then I'd really be retired. I tell you what I hate about retiring though. And I will tell you this. You, you got a long ways to come to it, but maybe you'll write it down somewhere. You might remember to look at it.

SS: *(Laughs)*

CB: Uh, the biggest problem of retirement is coming to terms with your purpose. When you've been doing some thing all of you life, then all of a sudden you don't do it anymore, you got to re-define your purpose. Why am I here? What am I doing here? And that's what you go to – do. Why am I here? What reason am I here for? And that means purpose. You find you purpose...If you don't find purpose in life, life is not a thrilling experience. Life has to have a meaningful investment of your energy and time. Life has to have that. If you can't get that – you won't have nothing. You cannot party every night and find it enjoyable. Sooner of later - sooner or later you'll get tired of that. I've had some of all of it and uh – so retirement, you have to revise your purpose. Some people say "I want to do some fishing." Ain't but so much fishing you want to do. How much fishing to do?

SS: *(laughs)*

CB: I want to go the basketball game. Yeah, but how much do you want to that? It has to be something more meaningful. What does your father do -? *(pause in recording)*

SS: Okay we'll stop here. Thank you again very much for spending time with me and –

CB: Well, if you see anything, some of it that you'd like to add to it, and uh, you didn't get it this time –

SS: Uh-huh.

CB: Let me know

SS: Okay.

CB: And I'll be happy to work with you.

SS: Okay, great! Thank you very much. I appreciate it. And we'll stop now.

CB: All right.

END