

## **TRANSCRIPT—ROSETTA JOSEPH ROBERTSON**

Interviewee: ROSETTA JOSEPH ROBERTSON

Interviewer: Dwana Waugh

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Length: One CD, approximately 108 minutes

### **START OF CD**

DW: This is Saturday, July 8, 2006, and I am with Mrs. Roberta Robinson. We're doing an interview about the Belmont community. How are you doing?

RR: I'm blessed and favored just like you again. I just want to make one quick correction. My name is Rosetta.

DW: Rosetta. I'm sorry. OK, Rosetta Robinson—Robertson. OK, just--.

RR: I know, those r's, those r-r's is a tongue twister. [Laughter]

DW: All right--. Well, I think first if you could just tell me a little bit about your experiences when you were growing up and what led you to Charlotte initially.

RR: All right then. Well, originally I was born in Rock Hill, South Carolina. That's in York County. As a child, I stayed there until I was five years old, which would have put me at school age. All my grammar school, middle school, and high school, and some college was attended in New Jersey. I started out in Newark, New Jersey, and when it was all said and done, the last place that I lived in New Jersey was Irvington, New Jersey. I have some college here in Charlotte. I also went to a trade school in my hometown, which is Rock Hill, South Carolina, and that college was York Technical College. What led me here is, you

never really forget where you came from, but the weather up north in New Jersey just doesn't agree with my nature or with myself. So it led me back to originally where I came from.

DW: Well, could you tell me a little bit about what led you to move into the Belmont Community when you were looking for housing?

RR: I had came, once I had gotten grown, from New Jersey, like I said, from where I came from. I stayed maybe ten years in my hometown, which is Rock Hill, South Carolina. We go through life and through our experiences, our trials and tribulations. I fell by the wayside with some wrong choices, and then pretty much tucked tail and said I'll go back to where I came from. But once I got back up to the northern area, the quality of life wasn't as good as I had experienced in the Carolinas, which, like I said, where I matured, in Rock Hill, South Carolina. While I was in Rock Hill, South Carolina, I knew a little bit about Charlotte. I used to come here to hang out, to party, to eat, and have fun. I noticed that it was a little faster pace here in Charlotte than in my hometown of Rock Hill.

Well, in the meantime, I met some people from New York, and we got affiliated and acquainted. They gave me more insight of Charlotte. Some other things came about, like me getting pregnant, and I just want to note that I really did want my children to be born where I was born, which was the Carolinas. So my oldest son—he's twenty-three; his name is Sam Cherry—he was born in my actual hometown of Rock Hill. My youngest son—his name is James—he was actually born here in Charlotte. So that was a blessing, and I thank God for that. So I went back again, through some bad decisions, back to New Jersey. I tried it a second time. I'm like OK, well, it's just not working for me. I'm not going to be able to stay. So I remember all the good experiences I had in Charlotte, with the shopping and having fun, and that it wasn't a bigger city, being that my background and stuff was from a

big inner city, not as such a fast pace as the northern cities, but I felt like it was comfortable for me. I can do, I can do Charlotte.

So I came back to Charlotte, and I was staying with my friends from New York, and again with bad decisions, not being fed by the spirit and by God, which I wasn't. He still showed me favor and sent guardian angels my way. Me and my children, we became almost homeless. I was doing the best I could to provide for them, that I wouldn't have to go in that type of a setting. But to God be the glory, He always shows up and shows how. And He sent a guardian angel my way. I was just working on this temp job, and this young lady, out of nowhere, out of this town called Eden, North Carolina, she came through on the temp assignment also. I was telling her some of my background and history, and she says to me, "I know somebody that's going to help you get your own house." I was looking at her like, OK, here we go again with some more flukes and lies of the world. But when it was all said and done, this girl and these people helped me purchase this home where me and Dwana is sitting on this interview right now, on the temp job, no money down, *and* I got seven thousand dollars to do renovations of the house.

As the house looked now, it wasn't nothing like this originally, the original house that was built in 1959 that I live in right now. In that process, I had two house fires. One was electrical fire; the second one, I'm just going to call it the burning bed experience, because it was set, somewhat arson. I really couldn't prove it, but it didn't matter because the Lord—. Again, God showed up and showed how. I guess I say that to say my family and my family history, I understand that my great-grandfather, he was some sort of a minister. So I'm just going to charge that again to the spirit of God, to say that my family and my family history

has to be something spiritual. I done been in a lot of stuff, should have already been dead. But God didn't see it that way, for it to happen like that.

DW: Yeah.

RR: So I'm saying I'm just accrediting everything to God. My family didn't do anything so right, but evidently, they was a spiritual-fed family. That's what I just credit it to, is to God's favor and His grace and mercy that I'm even here to even provide this interview today.

DW: OK. Well, I just want to back up just for a second, make sure I have this correctly. So you lived in New Jersey, and then you came back. Once you became an adult, you came back to Rock Hill, South Carolina, and stayed there for a few years and then moved to Charlotte—.

RR: OK, I left New Jersey when I was twenty years old, and I matured down here in the Carolinas. So I stayed ten years. I was like thirty, in my thirties, something like that. I tried to go back to live again in New Jersey, and I couldn't do it. In the process of me living in New Jersey, I became pregnant with my youngest son. I wanted him to be born in the Carolinas, so I came again for him to be born in the Carolinas as me and his older sibling. I made some bad decisions, so I had to go back to New Jersey once more, once my youngest son was born. I just couldn't get with the program in New Jersey, so that's when I chose to come to Charlotte, North Carolina.

DW: OK. OK. So you moved to Charlotte—. When you talk about moving to the Carolinas, you were living in Rock Hill before, and the last place you've lived is Charlotte.

RR: Right. Um-hmm.

DW: OK. And you were talking about the difference in the quality of life in the North versus in the South. Can you speak a little bit more about those differences, what they are?

RR: Well, the mentality is so diverse. I love the diversity, the different types of nationalities. I learned Spanish from Portuguese people, from people from Africa, from people from just about any walks of this world. The diversity is good, but it's almost like the northern life is so crowded and is so competitive. You really have to really roll up your sleeve in order to deal with some of the going-ons of their way of living. The quality meaning that I guess that people make things kind of difficult to where they drive their prices up on things like apartment living, like a one-bedroom up there, like maybe in a private house would cost twelve hundred dollars, but it's not even worth the twelve hundred dollars with rodents and rats. It all depends on the person that owns the property. They have a lot of absentee landlords, and when you're talking about living in some of the buildings with multi-families, it gets even worse for the type of money you have to pay out to live. It's just kind of expensive to live up there. You don't get the same quality for the money that you pay.

DW: OK. And you're saying this lady from Eden, North Carolina, came and helped. What process did you end up going to, to find this house, and why Belmont over other communities?

RR: The guardian angel to me really was her, that she up there even took interest to even hear my story. Her and her husband, they was into real estate, and they just came across another individual. He was born down here, but he really grew up in New York, too. Once they introduced me to this individual—I won't give their names; you understand what I'm saying—but this is the process, and this is how it went down. Once they introduced him

to me, and they seen how much money I was working with, I looked at some other places like over in Hidden Valley or Sugar Creek, Albemarle Road, and even further in Waxhaw. I never had been to Waxhaw before, but that was my favorite. [Interruption, phone call. To someone else: "They're going to have to call me back."] That was my favorite, Waxhaw, that's Waxhaw, North Carolina. It was a nice brick home. It was really small, but enough for me and my children. They was going to make sure that I had transportation in order to make it to work in order to maintain the mortgage once I closed on the house.

But come to find out, the realtors that took me there, it was the wrong setting; it was the wrong house. According to the money that I was going to be getting, they didn't know that I was going to get hired on permanently with the company that I was working for at the time. They showed me this house, and this is what they said to me. They know that the spirit of God was upon me, and that He was going to do great things for me here at 1400 Kennon Street. Now I tell you the truth. The condition that this house was originally in, I wouldn't have offered it to my worst enemy. It was in foreclosure, so the property was really run down, rat and roach infested. But being that I didn't have anything for me and my children, and like I said, as many times as we almost came close to being homeless and had to go live in a homeless shelter and go through the system and wait for the system to put us in our project thing, I'm just—. Sometimes I can get a little over-anxious about things, and I can make some quick decisions. But when I made this quick decision, evidently the Lord knew best, because it did turn out to be good.

DW: Oh, good. Good. Well, can you tell me a little bit about when you first moved into the house? You had mentioned that you were provided with some money for renovations. What was your impression of the neighborhood when you moved in?

RR: Oh, it was—oh, my God. I didn't know if I was going to be able to sustain, but comparing to the streets and the ghettos, which they kind of like labeled this neighborhood as the ghetto, but it's really not—. It might have its issues as far as being threatened or fragile. Nothing compared to the streets of the inner cities in some of the larger cities. So once I got some of my thoughts in order and prayed to God, He just told me to wait and be still, to wait it out and be still. Some nights when I first rode up, drug deals on every corner, flagging cars down whether you wanted the drugs or not, drive-by shootings. I had holes in my walls. I had my kids in the front bedroom, my two sons in the front bedroom. I had to change it up and put them in the back bedroom, and then put myself in the line of fire and things like that.

But then they formed the Crime Watch. Something had happened years before I had gotten on the Belmont Neighborhood Strategy Force, which is the neighborhood help, I would say. Over the years they had some issues, but once I got involved and understood how to make my tax dollars work for me by calling nine-one-one and you don't have to have the police come to your door, I started to see changes. And trying to help equip other residents, whether they be homeowners or renters, to do the same, to have a better quality of living here in Belmont.

DW: How did you come to get involved with the Crime Watch? Was that program already in place when you moved here?

RR: No. Diane English, which is the president of the Belmont Strategy Force for the community, started sending out petitions to be signed. Of course I wanted better living for myself and for my children. And not only just for my family, but everyone that lived here. We deserve that heritage, because it's not from men; it's from God. God always the best for His children.

DW: OK. What exactly led you to participate in the Belmont Strategy Task Force for the neighborhood?

RR: Once I had decided what direction my life was going, which to say, like I said, that my family background had to be spiritually led. I was raised in the church, and once I found my sense of direction somewhat, which is joining one of the churches, one of the largest churches in the Belmont community, which is Saint Paul's Missionary Baptist Church, 1401 Allen Street, the head pastor Dr. Gregory K. Moss. Once hearing from what thus says the Lord, I knew it was the right thing to do, to help equip, share, care for one another.

DW: OK. Was it easy to get others to get involved in the neighborhood?

RR: No ma'am. It seemed like it was a losing battle, and I used to get so frustrated, like why people won't come out and join? Why don't they want a better neighborhood? Everybody just don't want the same thing, or they let their circumstances and situations oppress them so bad to where they just get drained. With the individuals like me telling them—. I don't know what it takes, but they want to take what you used to do or how you are and use it against you to say, like, you're trying to get something from them. And I was just only trying to help, you understand? Not to get anything from them, you understand what I'm saying? It's still happening as I speak right now. They won't attend the monthly meetings to see how maybe the city or the county or the government or the United States and who can help to provide better living for themselves, for their children, for their grandchildren. Now it's at a stage to where like the transition or the infrastructure and the revitalization that took place in First Ward, where they moved out and bought another culture of people in.



DW: Using First Ward as an example, do you think that it's what's going to happen in Belmont?

RR: Yes ma'am. It is coming. And as a homeowner, I'm just trying to hold on, trying to do everything that God allows me to do so I can see the change. I know it's a change coming. Well, really, I don't really care to move to one of the quote-unquote established housing developments or communities with the homeowners association dues and all of that, because my last son is—. I'm equipping him and preparing him for his future, and it's just going to be me and my husband. So I'm not going to even be at home. The only thing I can is to throw the burglar alarm off, and whatever happens, it happens. Pay my taxes, pay my insurance. I'll be around the world somewhere. [Laughter.] So the house'll pretty much empty, you know, until I get back from time to time.

DW: Right. That's nice. [Laughter]

RR: So I'm going to try to be here for the duration, but a change is coming. And it's coming quick, fast, and in a hurry. So my thing is, by 2015, it will be a new Belmont community. That's why my discerning spirit tells me.

DW: Well, I wanted to just kind of go back and ask you this question. Do you consider yourself to be an activist?

RR: Absolutely.

DW: OK. And what do you feel motivates people to attend or to participate in these mass meetings?

RR: Well, let me go back and reiterate. My thing as an activist, my definition for an activist, to me, is a servant. As far as the people coming out for participation, and some of the activities that we had going on, when you're giving something away, they come out in

full numbers. That's what I seen. If you got something to give. It's just that I'm not sure if they have been so oppressed all of their lives, or they just don't care. But my thing is, I've been oppressed, too, and if the spirit of God is upon me, He's upon them. So the only other thought that I can say is that—. It's really sad to say, and I really don't want to say it, but they just lost all hope for themselves. Individuals and situations like that, that's where I go stand in the gap at our prayer ministry on Monday, for God to intervene on our behalf to make things better.

DW: OK. Do you think that there's something that could be done, maybe aside from just giving away free things and prayer, that could help get people—.

RR: Nothing is better than prayer. Nothing, not nothing, in my forty-seven years I ever knew that was better than prayer. If others join in prayer, it'll be fixed. He'll intervene. God will intervene on prayer.

DW: Yeah. I want to ask you, since God is coming up a lot in the conversation, what role do you see that the local churches in the community play in Belmont's history and legacy?

RR: Well, my place of worship, they play a significant part, because they provide spiritual uplifting, equipping, and our I guess mission statement is to convince the unconvinced to be convinced and make disciples. I'm a true believer of that. Now am I one hundred and fifty percent there yet? Absolutely not. Because this is a lifelong endeavor. [Laughter] But I do care for others. I just always been that type of person. The same thing that I want myself, I want for the whole world. In realism, I know it's not going to be. Everybody is not going to be there, if you know what I mean. But I do want it for everybody, every soul.

DW: So when you're talking about your church, Saint Paul, other activities that the church does that—.

RR: Absolutely. All the churches, like New Hope Missionary, this church up here on Parkwood, what is the name of that church? Well, it's the church up here—Sherman Memorial. See, the reason why I can call these names and these names are so visual on my mind, because I already done been there. I know the services that they try to provide for like the connecting communities, like Belmont, Villa Heights, which that's where Sherman Memorial sits on, Villa Heights side. It's some other little small ones, too. It was called Fellowship Christian that provided a large, free picnic to try to uplift some spirits of all three communities. Optimist Park—I don't know a church down at Optimist Park. I know it's some there, but I've never been affiliated with any church down there. The church is doing as much, I suppose, as allowable. It's not so much what the church can do; it's like the individual has to want it for themselves.

DW: Well, I think I want to move back a little bit and be a little more broad, and get your impressions of Charlotte as a city and the types of job opportunities and housing opportunities that the city has to offer. What is your impression of the job opportunities in Charlotte?

RR: Well, for the amount of education and the experience that I had—. Well, first of all, I've been working ever since I was fourteen years old. I work in a pie factory, and ain't nobody's money like your own money, you know what I'm saying? If I had to come wash your toilets for twenty-five dollars, I'd do that. But anyway, when I came down, I didn't have any problem, and I thought it was really great. And for even people with education, it all depends on the type of mindset that you come. You can't come too uppity. You have to

be like in a humble spirit, and treating people how you want to be treated. I didn't talk to a lot of different people, coming from up north. Some, like I was saying, come in a humble spirit and nicely. They got the jobs they want. Some, they came from up north, like thinking that they all that just because they got X, Y, and Z. They complained about the South is still country; they prejudiced. No, that's incorrect. You have to apply yourself with—the only word that comes to mind is humbleness.

The housing thing, when I was almost about to be homeless, they're waiting lists because so many people moving into the Carolinas, namely Charlotte. It didn't work as good for me. I was on the Housing Authority list, and I was in transit between staying with some friends and stuff. They took me off the waiting list, when I actually went to check it, for the times I did go check it, I was way at the bottom of the list, because there was so many people that was inquiring about that assistance. When I actually got there, they said they'd send me some notification. But it got crossed up, and it just didn't work well for me. So evidently, it wasn't for me.

DW: Well, what's your impression of the Housing Authority, and working as an activist in Belmont, do you feel that the Housing Authority, the mayor, the city, the state all have the same goals in mind that the Belmont Neighborhood Strategy Force has in mind?

RR: Yes, somewhat. I had the only—. It's getting kind of outrageous now, because people is coming in to Charlotte to what they say according to some things that I heard at record numbers. The waiting list is really outrageous. But I had some friends, just some individuals I brought into my home, and this young lady, she was from the same city that I grew up in. I can't say I was born in the church, but I know she came—. I just had got out of worship, and I was getting ready to fix dinner, but I needed something from the store. I

was trying to do some certain work for some other people that was in distress from our worship service. So it sent me to the store. This young lady was sitting outside in the boiling hot sun. I know it's like ninety-something, but that particular day, it felt like it was a hundred and twenty-something. Her and her baby was sitting outside on the cement, and the spirit of God said, "You need to help this sister, and you need to help her right now."

So you have to be obedient to the spirit. And I'm asking, "Sister, is everything all right?" But she was in amazement that I even asked her is everything all right. I'm like, let me see if I can help you. She was in such a total shock, I'm not sure if it was because of the weather or whatever. She said that they was in a dilemma. I was like, well, it can't be that bad. I'm like, OK, well, first of all, I cannot stand out here in the sun and help you. We're going to have to go someplace where it's cooler. I'm sweating like a hog, you know, whatever. Then come to find out, once we got to talking a bit, it's a whole family, a husband and another child. The husband has stepped away because her oldest child, which was four years old, a little girl, she was hungry and she was crying. So he went to Church's Chicken, which is on Eastway, down at the Eastway Crossing Mall, or something like that. That's where I had met them at when I went in the store at the Food Lion. He was in there trying to get their four-year-old little girl something to eat.

But once I seen—. I'm like, a husband? You got a husband? I'm like, well, Lord, you think I done bit off more than I can chew. [Laughter] But then, once I seen the husband, I'm like now what's really going on here? I just let that thought go on. I just still extended myself to them. I brought them home, and we just dealt one day at a time, and one situation at a time. But I really pretty much knew what the situation was, that they had some issues, you understand what I'm saying? I ain't going to say what kind of issues, but they had

issues. Did I catch some repercussions behind the issues? Yes, I did. But I didn't up there cry about it. I tried to, cuddle it, the best way I could. But I can up there say now, less the husband, the mother and the children are blessed. God is showing much favor with them, and He's working really well with them. So I don't deserve any credit. All the glory and credit goes to our Lord and Savior.

I get monthly phone calls. We're in touch right now. I really wish she could have stayed, but let me tell you about the dilemma why she couldn't stay. Childcare. This individual, she was well-educated, well-equipped, but she couldn't find anybody, and we was trying to work towards trying to get somebody to either keep her kids until she could get to point a to point b. But that was their biggest issues, was childcare. With the waiting lists, and with individuals, and even, it could have even been me. If I needed childcare, my children's that young, and I got this potential and I don't have a whole lot of money to pay a daycare, it's supposed to be some kind of other assistance that can be able to help single parents or either whole families with husbands and wives a little more faster than it is. Those are crucial times to try to set up a household and you don't have anybody to help care for your children. You just can't leave your children anywhere with anyone in this day and time with the Evil One lurking in the camp like he lurks. I'll put it like that. [Laughter]

DW: Would you say, then, that childcare is—. Let me rephrase this question. What are the goals of the committee that you're working on in Belmont? Is childcare one of those goals? [Pause] OK, I think we're back here. I think what I was asking you about was the goals of the Belmont Neighborhood Strategy Force. What are they, and is childcare one of them?

RR: Hmm. I know equality of living, affordable housing, safety. No, I'm going to say no, we haven't addressed that issue. Not on the executive board now. Now as far as the community goes, I guess a lot of the meetings that—. I don't be there every monthly meeting, but the only form of childcare I ever heard was just they had a program down at the Belmont Regional Center that provided it, and they made it affordable childcare. But I think that program been cut out altogether. [Paused to answer a phone call. Recorder cut off]

DW: When you talk about the—or gave the example of the family that didn't have childcare, where should the responsibility lie for childcare?

RR: County services and city services.

DW: Why do you think that they should take responsibility?

RR: Well, because when a family is in ruins, no matter what county or city it be, I think it's the responsibility where the individual is at that moment for the county and city to make sure each individual get the best possible treatment that the city and county has to offer. But I know that's not on the real, because the scale is tilted. Again, we know why the scale is tilted, because the evil one is always lurking. You understand what I'm saying? The devil is always busy, you know what I'm saying? To rob people of their joy and they realism, for them not to have a good life. That's my thought in a nutshell.

DW: So do you see the city as being a positive force in community affairs, neighborhood affairs?

RR: I'm not going to give them a real high rating, just an OK rating, because I been attending a lot of things that they have put on for equipping and educating oneself, but oneself has to be their own self-worthiness.

DW: Can you explain?

RR: OK, their own self-worthiness mean they really have to want it for themselves. The city only provides, equipping you with stuff that makes you self-sufficient. As far as them up there providing the needs and the resources, no, uh-uhn. They feel like the tax dollars is supposed to go to the arenas and to the football stadiums and things like that, that's only cultivated for people that makes the type of money to even attend things like that. But as far as providing education, oh, they're on the up as far as that, but as to the resources, no. They need to be a little more on the resources also. Or more resources. Not saying that they ain't providing anything, but they need to provide some more.

DW: Would you say that the housing patterns in Charlotte are equitable?

RR: When I first came down, I felt they were the best. But I guess over the years—. I don't know how to put my finger on the word to use, beside they kind of like done got outrageous. Even in the properties here, the places is run down, and they want a lot of money, like seven and eight hundred dollars for a rental over in this community. And it's not even worth the property. The actual homeowner is the absentee landlord. They not even up there trying to put nothing back into the community. My thing is, OK, even if you the absentee landlord, please up there. I know people don't take care of things like they do, but that's why they have insurance. They have American Home Shield when the hot water tank busts. What? I mean, you don't live there no more, and you own the property there. Come on, make your property look nice for the community. If nothing else, for the community's sake.

DW: And would you say there's a lot of the absentee landlord—.

RR: Ooh, yes, because there's more rental property our ways, three times the homeowners. From the last report that I heard—. It could have changed. I see a lot of new



owners moving in, slowly but surely. That's how I know the change is going to come, and the statistic that I gave you about the 2015, when urban revitalization and gentrification take place, then everything will be much nicer over here in Belmont. Now, when I went to—. [To someone else: "I'm busy right now. Yeah, just knock on the door."] I went to like a city college for the neighborhood; it was for neighborhood development, and I asked a question about the revitalization and gentrification. I understand that of the whole plan, they wouldn't give me what percentage of the revitalization and gentrification that would actually take place, but it's not the whole hundred percent. That was so disappointing to me.

DW: Oh.

RR: Because once you put a plan together, I think the whole thing should be completed. And especially if you talk about a community that was threatened or fractured.

DW: And you're talking about—. When you say that they wouldn't give the whole hundred percent, so homeowners in the community wouldn't be able to get back all that they put into the homes once it was—.

RR: We talking about the community as a whole, and it doesn't have anything to do with just per se homeowners.

DW: OK.

RR: It's like you hear about the speed lights, the sidewalks, sewage, plumbing. But the tax dollars and things, it's still going higher and higher. Taxes is still going higher and higher.

DW: Is housing equitable along racial lines or economic lines in Charlotte?

RR: Yeah, yeah. I would say yes to that.

DW: OK. [Brief pause. Stopped the recorder.]

RR: They do a little bit more screening. When I first came down, it was easy to get a place if you had the money or a job to pay for one. It was real, real easy. I remember in one of the transitions, my friend from New York, she had a little bit of money. She wanted to come stay up here. I just came and applied for an apartment, just—even got it. But now you have to go through credit checks and all that, and it wasn't that in-depth. That was like from '85 to '90.

DW: When it was easier.

RR: Yeah, when it was easier. Now after the nineties, whoo, it got kind of crazy.

DW: Hey, I was reading an article in *Creative Loafing* about—. I think it was a 2002 article that talked about the new checks that the Housing Authority was going to do with credit.

RR: Um-hmm.

DW: Do you see that as a positive thing to have those credit checks and different stipulations? Like one of the things that the article said was if someone was caught doing drugs in the house that whoever owns the house—it could be a grandparent that owns the house that may not know everything that's going on—will be evicted.

RR: I don't think that's totally fair. I know some people might be covering up, but still, they might not know. Everybody's not on the same level, you understand what I'm saying? And then people do do a lot of things, shiesty or hidden, you understand what I'm saying? But the individual that was actually caught with whatever situation, circumstances, that's the one that's going to be held accountable. Now for the individual not to live on the property or something like that, that's more acceptable than saying the homeowner or the

person that actually has to go. I think that policy will cause homelessness faster than anything.

DW: OK. I want to kind of go back to talking about Belmont. So you're saying that the goals of the Strategy Force is affordable hous—. Affordable childcare isn't necessarily included by having equality living, and affordable housing and safety are included. How did this group come to arrive at these three different things for the goals?

RR: Well, a good bit of it came from the residents. Some of the things that they would like to see, and some surveys that was conducted by the city of Charlotte for a zoning and stuff like that. I was one of the surveyors that went out door to door. And from reading and asking the questions, it didn't seem like it was a big issue for the residents. But I'm talking about like individuals that's coming in, or maybe wanting to relocate or is homeless in another state. Those people was kind of like homeless in South Carolina. They went down to stay with some family, but things change.

DW: Could you talk a little bit about a typical day of what you did or what you do, what you did as an organizer, either as a surveyor, and/or as going to the monthly meetings for the Strategy Force. What kinds of things did you do day to day?

RR: [Phone rings] Hold on.

DW: OK. OK. I think where we left off, I was just asking if you could tell me a bit about your day to day or a typical day of you working in the community.

RR: Well, I'm trying to remember. I didn't go to last month's meeting. I think the last meeting I went to was in—let me see, this is July—the last meeting I went to was either May. At that point, school is almost out, and I know it was a high interest for those—what the kids is going to do when they get out of school. So Miss English—. I do know, it's a lot

of emphasis that's been being put on Belmont, like that they're threatened and fragile, from one status to another. One is more severe than another. I just can't remember which one it is, whether fragile is the worst. I think fragile is the worst, and then it's threatened. But you can up there do some more research and find out which one is the worse off one. But anyway, they are providing Belmont with a lot of assistance. But in order to get this assistance and equipping, you have to come out and participate. Like they had the dentist-mobile, like a dentist on wheels, and this is a private-owned thing, where dentists come on their mobile, give your kids—. Instead of you got to take a bus way across town to this dentist or this dentist, they provided that for this community.

All right. I got an application for my twelve-year-old. A whole week of camp for free. And this camp, when I looked at the prices, that camp started at four hundred something dollars for that *week*. But if you didn't come to the monthly meeting, you would have missed that, you understand what I'm saying? But see, I might not come to every meeting, but if Miss English rings my doorbell or send me a note: "I need your participation, or can you help do this—." See, my worthiness is incredible, so I got my son an application. [Laughter] See, that's what worthiness means that I care. And yes, I will roll up my sleeves and get out here and pick up trash on anybody's street for the community. But see, if you don't have that worthiness and that caring and that hope, then you won't get anything in return.

DW: OK. And all of these things the Belmont Neighborhood Strategy Force provides, the dental services, the summer camp—.

RR: That's what they received *this* summer. And it's by the president networking, you understand what I'm saying, for the community as the activist that she is.

ROSETTA ROBERTSON

DW: OK. Let me backup--. What is your position on the Task Force?

RR: Assistant secretary.

DW: OK.

RR: And kind of like PR, too, public relations.

DW: OK. And so, how exactly does the task force work? Is it just the board members or anyone from the community?

RR: Yes. It's really supposed to be they be recommended and voted in by the executive board member. They can be a renter or a homeowner. They are looking for individuals to serve, but people just not coming out to try to help out in the community. From past experience, like the sister like you might interview, she said she already had enough. I tried to get her to join. She know when the monthly meetings is, but it's some other conflict of interests that taking place. African-American people, to me--. Somebody has to be the Indian. Everybody cannot be the chief. Why we just all can't get along? We are the most broken culture. I'm talking about for my forty-seven years, I never had a problem being a follower. It all depends on the situation for me. Let me just say, for Mrs. Rosetta Joseph Robinson, [laughter] I can be a leader or a follower. You know I can do—I'm a jack-of-all-trades, I'll put it like that. [Laughter]

DW: That's a good way to be. [Laughter] Yeah.

RR: You understand?

DW: Um-hmm.

RR: As long as you get the job done. As long as things is working good. And it's going to make it better for everyone. But everybody is not like Rosetta Joseph Robertson. [Laughter] But as my pastor say, it's a poor frog that won't support its own pond. And he

also says everyone is on different levels, and you have to meet people where they are. Seem like when I quote what the man of clothe says, it works. [Laughter] Not to be quoting, but it really works. And when you absolutely put it into practice, it works, you understand? It's been working for me for the last five years. To God be the glory. Not to my pastor, and you know, I love him whole-heartedly and genuinely. But really all—he is fed by the same spirit that I'm fed by. That's my elder-ly brother, that's through the spirit of Jesus Christ, the holy trinity. So, there it is.

DW: So when we were talking before about any challenges to organizing a community, you had mentioned that people just seemed not to care, and they might have their own issues that they're going through, or they might just not care. And it's only when things are offered free when people come. Would you consider this also, this need-to-be-a-leader mentality is another obstacle to getting people to be involved in the community?

RR: What do you mean? That maybe we should vote for another or try to go for another person to be in charge?

DW: Well, if you want to answer that, but what I was—.

RR: It's open anyway. We have—. The people that's affiliated, I only know one individual that don't work. She's retired already. The rest of us work. This is for-free work we doing. And besides, that's why I don't make the monthly meetings. I got a part-time job, and I got behind in some of my bills. Well, they ain't paying! [Laughter] So, well look, I gotta go to work, you know what I'm saying. [Laughs]. And you don't up here see me on the news, an update copy of the agenda or the minutes, well, then, I will not be there. Come on now. But it's open, you know what I'm saying? Just come up there saying, look, this

individual here—. We talking about people's time. It's open. You just have to keep on trying different things to try to get—.

See, that's what I learned in the city college. Don't just give up. We know it's a struggle, and we know it's a long haul. We just have to keep at it, keep at it, keep at it. And somewhere along the line, it will open up. I done seen it before, when it was full. They had the other stuff from somewhere. Then they shut down; then they started back up. They shut down. But like I said, prayer fix everything. And even though everybody, like I say, is not at the same level, maybe everybody don't feel like they have to do this as far as their spirituality. He only needs to hear genuinely and wholeheartedly from one good spirit, and He will intervene. You understand?

DW: Yeah.

RR: That's what I believe, sugar, and that's what I'm trusting in and have hope in, that He don't hear nobody, He'll hear me. [Laughter] Because I live here, I play here, I worship here, I work here. Hear me! When He going to hear you, everything has to be in order. Without a shadow of a doubt, I already know he's going to hear. He done did it before. I'm here. I didn't ask to be here, but I'm here and He put me here for a reason.

DW: Right.

RR: So it's just a matter of time. Prayer's not answered overnight, and then sometime it is, you know what I'm saying?

DW: Um-hm.

RR: It all depends on His will. So.

DW: Well, I think what I was getting at, though now I have some other questions—. [Laughter]. But I was just curious if you think that one of the obstacles doing community

organizing, that people who do community organizing face—. For example, in Belmont, which is predominantly an African-American community, is the idea that I-need-to-be-a-leader kind of mentality, and I-don't-want-to-be-a-follower mentality, one of those obstacles?

RR: No. The stigma and hold-back from what I seen--. The African-Americans that is educated, they have their dreams and goals set on something else. They don't look where they actually are. You understand what I'm saying? Did you understand, comprehend what I just said?

DW: I think so—.

RR: For the individuals that are leadership material, that's educated, their hopes and dreams is pretty much outside of actually where they live. I know some individuals that's over here that would be good potential leadership, but it's not here in Belmont. And why, I don't know. But they could do it, unless they just don't want to. But it's here, but it don't seem like it's for Belmont. But other than that, no, because they not educated, they don't come out enough, they don't participate or nothing. You understand what I'm saying? But what I really do see, if they don't hurry up and step up to the plate, another culture is going to come in, and the Belmont Strategy Force, I'm not sure if it's going to be that name, but they're going to require that all of those records be passed down. That's what's going to happen. But will I be a part? Yes, because I live here. I'm always going to be a part, as long as I'm here. Will I roll up my sleeve and work? Yes, because that's what I'm supposed to do. I'm a servant of God. As I'm a servant for God, I'm also a servant for my brothers and sisters. So.

DW: OK. Well, that's a lot of information you're just saying. [Laughter] But just to go back just a second, where you're talking about people, I think I know what you're saying.



But could you just talk a little bit more about what you mean about people's expectations, maybe that's the word, or outside of Belmont?

RR: Their expectations. OK. Well, I was only talking about the individuals that I know that's equipped and educated, and have the stigma and the know-how from leadership. They're like anywhere from ten to fifteen years younger than me, and being that the Belmont community has went through such turmoil, they not really seeing the big picture and that it can be some positiveness come back out of Belmont. They don't really see that, you understand?

DW: OK.

RR: So that's why I said what I said.

DW: OK. OK. They're not staying with it enough to see the changes.

RR: No. They in for this moment, but as soon as they can get out—. It's a few that they're homeowners. They own Habitat homes, but soon as they can get ready to sell that home, they're going to sell that home and they out. You understand what I'm saying?

DW: Um-hmm.

RR: OK, so that's why. I know these individuals. Like I said, I won't call any names, but again, their age, too, give them options and choices to do that.

DW: Right.

RR: They're not no old fogey-stogeys like me. I don't have a whole lot of more drive, like I'm saying. No, I am not going to up there—. They offer me whatever. No, you can't drive me out of nowhere. Do I want—. No, because this is a prime area to live, right here in Belmont. It's accessible to everything. Ten minutes in your car, maybe twenty-five minutes on the bus, thirty-five minutes to walk to downtown, everything downtown. Why

would I want—? I'm not going anywhere. I only have one more sibling to get ready, prepare for college or for the military or whatever he decides. I don't want no big old mansion, no big old house. I ain't going to have time to clean it up. I'm going to be traveling. [Laughter]

DW: I wanted to go back to when you were talking about elections for the task force. So how exactly does that work with—?

RR: Every few years, somebody drops off. One of the positions turns over. I can't remember the breakdown off the top of my head. I'll have to go up in my attic and try to find the by-laws to see when all that—. But they have by-laws, they have a mission statement, they have committees and everything. It's structured.

DW: How many members would you say probably or people on average will attend meetings?

RR: Let's say two dozen or less, and more or less be less. It might be like-- Well, really, let me rephrase that. Make that a dozen or less, like twelve or less. And then with all the affiliates and guests, it might be the twenty-four. Like with the city of Charlotte, the Belmont CDC. It'll be different forms of the city of Charlotte, like the trash people. They be a part. Some of the stuff that's going on with the revitalization and gentrification, they'll send a rep for that. Like your greenway and things like that. There may be reps from Housing Authority.

DW: With this organization, you were talking about how Miss English will go out and try to get support from different agencies to provide some services for the community. Do other members also do that, or is that just for Miss English that she does, or other businesses that try to come into the community—?

RR: Yeah, for tax write-off purposes, yes, they do.

DW: OK. What would you consider to be some success or progress that you feel you've made as an activist in the community?

RR: Oh, most definitely with the Crime Watch. That's number one. As you came up the streets, you didn't see our adolescents, and we're going to say adolescents from fourteen to twenty-five, you didn't see them standing on the corner or soliciting us when we come up the street for drugs and paraphernalias or whatever. The second is, it's looking a little bit more nice around here, a little more cleaner. So I'll credit that to the city of Charlotte, trash collection and pickup scheduling, when to pick up other items other than trash, because that used to be way crazy. People just sit stuff out like today, and they know the pickup is not until Thursday or Friday. Did you see how bad that makes the street look? OK, and safety. I'm going to give the city of Charlotte police force a little hoopla.

DW: You talked about the fragile status or the perceived fragile status of Belmont. Could you tell me a little bit more of the crime that has changed over time since you've moved into the community?

RR: Well, like I said, when I first came, it was on every corner. Then it went through selective corners, and now it's like only if you in that status, in that home, or in that rental property that it's there. So I say that to say if you're affiliated with any criminal activity, that property or home, they the one who houses inappropriateness at their property or the place that they rent.

DW: OK. OK.

RR: You follow what I'm saying?

DW: I think so. Yeah.

RR: That's what I see now.

DW: OK.

RR: If you use weed, or if you use crack cocaine in that property or house, then that opens up for people that sell to come to your house, and you will see a lot of traffic coming from that house. They don't be on the corner anymore, but you would see a traffic flow to this individual house. That's somebody's in that house on that level. I know that because I done been there and done that. You understand what I'm saying? Didn't last that long, but I been there and done that. I know the pros and cons. So.

DW: Well, how exactly does this Crime Watch work? What do residents do?

RR: Well, it's supposed to—. If you see a flow of traffic that you know that's not the norm, we have specialty officers and numbers that we call.

DW: And was it easy to get the police involved in the community?

RR: Yes. They was more than willing and acceptable to help.

DW: I talked with someone else about the role of the police in the community, and they felt a little indifferent. Well, they saw the positive parts of having the police in the community, but they also saw some of the negative effects of having the police in the community.

RR: Like what?

DW: Well, this person was talking about how the police were harassing—.

RR: I figured it was about harassment. When I hear that, like I told you, those individuals on a different level. Somebody in their household—you understand what I'm saying?—is affiliated or associated. OK. I'm going to give you a case in point. I have a twenty-three-year-old. All right. Him and a bunch of his acquaintances and associates is

thieving around. All right then, if the police rolls up, if you're not doing anything appropriate, that's their job, to make sure to protect and keep individuals safe. You can collaborate or whatever in the front of a private residence, but if he decides he want to check—. I understand probable cause, but he smell marijuana, come on. He needs to check that out. You understand what I'm saying?

DW: Um-hmm.

RR: So I don't consider that harassment. Even on private property, I don't consider that harassment.

DW: Yeah. OK.

RR: I knew that—I knew that would've been said about Belmont. [Laughter] I done heard some of the same. In the surveys, it asks how well was the city of Charlotte police doing over here, and that's the same response that I got. But I'm sitting up in here, and I know these people where I'm sitting, and I know what they do. Of course, they're going to say that. So.

DW: Yeah. Well, it's good to get different perspectives, though. Well, I wanted to ask you about the difference between renters and homeowners as you see it in the community. Are there any differences?

RR: Yeah. Yeah, because it's not their property, and they really don't care. So my thing is, for the rental properties, they need a better screening process. Just because they know their property is paid for and they're going to get paid through Section Eight, again the scale is tilted. What I mean by the scale is pretty much greed, because their property pretty much is already paid for. They know that money's going to come when it's coming through Housing Authority, Section Eight, and that's where everybody's trying to get. But they got

to get their property up to code first in order to get that, because under Section Eight, they got to be in this certain status before they can even get that. So.

DW: Yeah. Well, if you were in charge of renting properties, what would you have as the screening agents, ideally, to determine who can live in the homes or not?

RR: It depends on the status of the home. I got a two-bedroom, one bath. I will only put one child here. I'll be looking for one child, a single couple, mature, like that. Criminal background check and references. And I would even go more so on reference, because some people might have some stuff on their record, but they done changed. So you have to allow for that. I would go on what the references say, and that's who I would hold accountable would be the referencees. You know what I'm saying?

DW: Um-hmm.

RR: That's the way I would do it. I'm thinking about opening up a business in Belmont, and it's really to target felonies. I was trying to target only male, because on my way going to worship or something, I see like some of my son's associates and acquaintances. "Hi, Miss Rosetta. " "Hi. Y'all want to go get some food for your soul." "Oh, where are you going to get that?" "At Saint Paul's. " OK, then I don't hear anything. When are y'all going to stop standing on this corner. Well, Miss Rosetta, we up there trying to get—but I got a felony. They already been in, did their time. How long are you going to keep on punishing these people for old circumstances and situations? So whatever business I decide that I can get over here—. I was thinking about another soul food restaurant and a car rental place. But I was looking at to only hire felonies to run the things. The only requirement—I wasn't even going to do no background, no criminal check—is for them to have a paper every week for me—I don't care whether they a ten-year felony, a five-year

felony, or a current felony—on what Bible study they went to that week. If trying to falsify that, that was going to be my pet peeve, to call every church secretary to have somebody verify that they was in that study. You understand?

DW: Um-hmm.

RR: Because it's not to glorify me, it's to glorify God and His people, to uplift them. Only God knows if His will is going to be done. So that's my hope and dream for Belmont.

DW: OK. Yeah. Well, I just had a few more questions.

RR: OK.

DW: I guess I'm curious what you, and I think you're kind of hitting at it with the last comment you made, but what would you consider to be your ideal neighbors, especially considering the change that may or may not occur after the gentrification of Belmont. Let me rephrase that. I'm sorry. What do you see as the end result by 2015 of Belmont? What do you think Belmont will look like?

RR: Affordable living, beautification, and God-fearing individuals. Not so much worldly individuals. Too much worldly, too much brokenness, too much oppressed that can't move on. That's my idea. Like going back in the day, like I can leave these doors open and just go in and out of the house, go down the street to the store, which even in 2015 probably you ain't going to never see that again. You always got to have some sense of security and some sense of protection as far as like your insurances, your mortgage protection plan, your homeowners insurance, stuff like that.

DW: Well, would you say there's a sense of community pride?

RR: I'm going to say—. It's really low because I'm a part of that pride. But it's low. It's not where it should be at, but it's coming.

DW: What do you account for the rise of or the coming part of the community pride?

RR: Well, people like to see stuff in action. Talk, talk, talk, we all know that's cheap. Actions speak louder than words. So whatever percentage of the revitalization plan gets completed, then that would rise the percentage.

DW: Do you know much about the Piedmont Courts community and being involved with the Belmont community—?

RR: Yeah, yeah. Because the biggest concern—. OK, like that housing development was really like drug-infested, prostitution, just all kinds of stuff. They felt like that all of that stuff was going to come to the single family rentals here. I didn't really see it like that. I seen some, but it wasn't like what I thought, because of the property that's still open and stuff like that. I have seen some like everything that came down there, people selling drugs out of their houses and things like that. But these are not like potential homeowners. And with the Belmont CDC through the city of Charlotte program, where people can get them a house built from the ground up, brand new. Just to think if I even worked at McDonald's, I would be so interested in owning my own home. It's more feasible and accessible for you to own than rent. Renting is like—you know what it's like. I don't have to make that comment. Everybody knows what renting is like. Throwing your money away, I'll just put it like that. [Laughter]. As soon as you possibly can, it's just best to buy. Trust me, I came here with nothing, and really enjoyed owning a home. Let me make this statement for the record. [Laughter] Thirty thousand dollars, I didn't have to enjoy. And I didn't have nothing to even buy it, you understand? That's real. That's real.

DW: Yeah. Yeah. Hmm. Well, do you feel that people in the community are becoming more aware of the benefits of owning a home versus renting?



RR: Oh, most definitely. They know, but I don't understand why they're not taking—. It is so mind-boggling to me, and it's really disappointing why they not taking advantage of what's out there for them to enjoy. It's really a blessing from God, especially when you know in other countries—or not even other countries, even right here—it's somebody else worse off than you are, always. You understand? I know I'm right about it.

DW: Yeah. Well, do you think that it's people perceive it's because—and there's a lot that has been written about Charlotte and the overcrowded nature of Charlotte, and people who are coming flooding into Charlotte—that there's a lack of housing? Do you think that that has anything to do with people not trying to own homes, or do you see that there are other reasons why people are not—?

RR: Well, OK, let me see. When I was in Boston, it was some comments made by two individuals. OK, when I look back at the individuals, they do have money. Oh, they thought Charlotte had it going on, you understand? But like I said, that's because of the quality like—. All right. Three bedrooms, two baths, anywhere from New Jersey to Massachusetts is three hundred, five hundred thousand dollars. You know you can get into a three-bedroom, two baths, and some more, and a little bit of yard, for about a hundred and nine, a hundred and fifty thousand and do good. But, all right. But you're talking about for people that don't have much. Is that what we're talking about here?

DW: Um-hmm. Or people in Belmont who may or may not—.

RR: I hate to keep on going back to this same issue about people being met in their situations, and circumstances keep them at a level that-- but I don't know anything else to say, unless they all have lost hope. I don't know nothing else to say. The only thing I can say is God for us all. That's all I can say. If I got all this information, all you have to do is

just give up a little of your time to find out how you can live better or even enjoy better. And it all belongs to God. He's in control of everything. Everything is already predestined. So what does that tell you? There's a large amount of individuals that's living out of the will of God. That's what that's telling me. So when you live out of the will of God and not trying to do his purpose and not trying to even up there give him any of your time, things like this happens. You understand? I'm not feeling it, because I'm trying to live in the will. But if you're not trying to live in the will, you're going to be oppressed. Don't get me wrong. I got issues, circumstances, situations, but I don't let it rob everything that I got. I don't let it rob my joy, and I try to learn from it. And I keep it moving. I don't let it beat me up. And I get beat up. I'm only human, too. I sin and fall short of the glory, too. You understand what I'm saying?

But it's your mindset. You have to have a new mindset. It's really simple, but people want to make it difficult, or they want to blame this. You want to blame that. Be real, people, and accept responsibilities and accountability, and stop pointing your finger, and stop worrying about what the next and next do. Do what you going to do. Is nothing else for me to say to that, you know what I'm saying? The proof is in the pudding. You have not because you ask not. You understand what I'm saying? It's sad, but it's true. I done came from a big inner city, and I didn't even know nothing about no food stamps and welfare. But we was on food stamps and welfare, *and* my mother worked. I didn't even know we was on all that. But I never missed a meal. It might not have been filet mignon, but I never missed a meal. I was thankful, because like I said, there's always somebody else who's worse off than you. But the things that happens to us, you can't blame nobody else but yourself. You have not because you ask not. The things of this world don't belong to man. Everything belongs

to our Father in heaven. But when people up there start thinking it's all about them, all about where you live, what car you drive. Like I said, I have to end this on *you have to get a new mindset*. Not might, you got to!

DW: Yeah. Yeah. Well, I just had two other questions.

RR: OK.

DW: I asked you about do you feel there's a sense of pride in the community. Do you feel there's a sense of unity among Belmont residents?

RR: Absolutely not. Absolutely not. Because you know what I said, that I—. Somebody, this young man, he passed away. Well, I don't know. I just think when you live in a community and you see an individual walk up the street every day, I don't care whether they're good or bad. You know this individual been here for years and years and years. And I'm like, isn't something going to be taken to this family from the community? But for one family, they did. Just one individual I'm talking about just recently passed away. Now he never came over here and said, "You need your grass cut or anything?" But the other individual that passed away that used to do the same thing, but they was both on the same level—. You know what I'm saying? He was just a little bit more optimistic or had a little more adrenaline or whatever, but trust me, they was both on the same level. One just was in his way and his way. The other one was in his way and his way, but he was like a people person. The other one wasn't; I'll put it like that. They showed this individual much more love. They had favorites and picks, like that. But unity, no. Favorites and picks, yes. Is that human, too, with favorites and picks? Is that unity? I just want to make sure I know the difference between the two. [Laughter]

DW: Well, I think where I would like to—. There are other questions I could ask

But I don't want to monopolize your time. [Laughter] But I was interested in what you see as the positives and negatives that might come out of the Hope Six Initiative for Belmont, which I guess goes back to what we were talking about with the 2015. What would you say would be the positives of Hope Six and the negatives, if there are any of either?

RR: Of course it's some. That's the big thing. It's the same, like I said, in First Ward that the same—. When I look down in First Ward, it was so beautiful down there. And I know what it used to look like when it was Earle Village. I even came from South Carolina to play and do some things over there. But when I go down there now, your mouth drop open. I was doing this little part-time independent thing with telecommunications, and that's how I know what I know, because I was down there in First Ward and I talked to some of the homeowners and renters there. And it's beautiful down there. They have unity down there. They have their neighborhood association there.

Now, the negative. Is it affordable? Hell, *no*. You have to work *five* jobs. [Laughter] Let me see, any other negativity? Other than that, really, that's the only negativity. You got to have some loot to live there; that's the only negativity. Other than that, it is so nice. It really is. I just gave you all the positives and then the negatives. I only have one negative, and I really see the same thing here in Belmont, the same duplicate. You know the reason why? Let me just tell you. Because it's so close to downtown. That's what everybody wants. Now you ask that other individual that you talked to, I know you got the same result, that it's so close to that downtown area, which to me would be catering to a certain class of individuals, high dollar, corporate, you understand?

DW: Yeah. So do you think that the makeup of the neighborhoods, then, is going to change with all the revitalization so that people who have lots of money will begin to move in and—.

RR: Not lots, the lots of money will be right down there. But like the outskirts like the NoDa and Belmont and Optimist Park and First Ward, and yes, it's most definitely going to change.

DW: What do you think would happen to the residents, and I'm going to—.

RR: You talking about the renters pretty much.

DW: Yes. And then also the people who own homes.

RR: Well, one time we was trying to get the homeowners that was here now—. They was trying to petition the city to put a cap on property taxes. I don't understand. Like my water bill done tripled, and I'm like well, how? When I first got here, my taxes was low, but it seemed like they doubled. So I had to do some regrouping to make sure all of my—which I'm not finished yet, in order for me to maintain to stay here. Well, first of all, I came here single, but now I'm married. That's one step in a positive—I got some help. That's going to keep me here a little bit longer. [Laughter] I'm just keeping it real. I ain't sugarcoating it. Ain't no need sugarcoating it for history. [Laughter] You have to do things like that. You sit down and iron things out, what's going to work for you, because change is vital.

When I really understood change, it's really vital to success. Some people can't get used to change. They want everything to stay the same. I don't think that's how our God intended for it to be, for everything to stay the same. If that was the case, it wouldn't be no hope, not for me it wouldn't. I changed, but to learn and for better. My change. Now

certainly your change could be something else, but my change is for learning experience.

After I learn, from whether it's bad or good, I'm looking for something else better. It don't seem to go over well with everybody.

DW: Yes. Yes. So do you think that other homeowners will hold their property as long as possible—?

RR: I'm hoping that they are preparing, making preparations to roll along with these changes. For this water bill, like OK, I guess there go my chocolate chip cookies, because I wasn't expecting it. Oh, well, I guess I'm going to have to just drink water. It's more healthier. So you see the learning experience and the betterness? I'm going to have better health; I'm going to be drinking more water. [Laughter]

DW: That's a nice way of putting it. There's a silver lining. [Laughter]

RR: So that's my major point.

DW: OK. And for the renters, do you see—?

RR: The renters for whoever's on their property when those absentee landlords really get their fire put up under their butt and they go in there and fix up their houses, it's going to drive the rent up and they won't be able to afford it. Unless they're getting some help from the government, they won't be able to afford it anyway. So that would force the absentee landlords to sell to the first buyer. Now what those renters could be doing is getting their self equipped with all the free trainings and information that's out there, to hang in there. But they're not doing that. They're narrow, small, and few. That's what they could be doing, but they're not. I can tell from the turnout from all the things that I go to. They be from other communities, but not that many from Belmont. That's what they could be doing, getting

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equipped, but they're not, on how to last and hang in there. And then some people just want to change, they don't want to—. They just want to change.

DW: Well, I'll ask you, is there anything that I didn't ask you or we didn't talk about that you want to mention or say, or anything you feel I left out?

RR: I just want to note that originally, I understand that Belmont was like a residence for a mill, like a mill- type setting. Once they closed the mills around here, I guess it just came up for, I guess, open market, but it used to be for the mill workers, this community. I wanted you to note that. I had just came up upon that information. I didn't want that to be left out. Originally, that's what this community was designed for, for the mill workers.

DW: Do you think that has any significance with today's residents?

RR: No, not at all.

DW: OK. Well, I guess we can conclude our interview unless you have anything else.

RR: That concludes it. It's been a wonderful interview.

DW: Yes. Thank you so much for talking with me. I appreciate it, and let me make sure I'm hitting the right button.

END OF TRANSCRIPT

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