

Interviewer: Good morning, sir.

Hank Hogue: Good morning.

Interviewer: On behalf of Crossroads to Freedom, Rhodes College, and the Corners of Highland Heights, I would like to thank you for taking the time to share your story with us today. My name is Dorian Canales.

Interviewer: And my name is Allison Henry.

Interviewer: Today's date is June 17, 2014, and I'm honored to meet you and learn from your inspirational story. Today's interview will be archived online at the Crossroads to Freedom website, and this is located Highland Heights Methodist Church. Let's start with some basic questions. What is your name, sir?

Hank Hogue: My name is Hank Hogue.

Interviewer: What year were you born in?

Hank Hogue: What year? So I was born in 1946.

Interviewer: Where were you born and raised?

Hank Hogue: I was born in Memphis. I've been a native Memphian since I was born.

Interviewer: What is your occupation?

Hank Hogue: My occupation right now is real estate sales management.

Interviewer: Can you tell us a little bit more about that?

Hank Hogue: Well, I'm –

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with Crye-Leike Realtors. I've been with them since 1985. Prior to that, I was in the retail wholesale grocery business.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about your parents?

Hank Hogue: My parents – so grew up, for the most part, in Memphis. My dad was North Memphis. My mom lived out here from childhood – "out here" being Highland Heights and don't know exactly where

they met, but they were married for 12 years, I think, before I was born. I'm a baby boomer, born in 1946, right after World War II was over.

Interviewer: Can you describe your brothers and sisters?

Hank Hogue: I have one sister that's younger than I am, also a graduate of Rhodes College.

Interviewer: Okay. So now, we're gonna transition from growing up, your life as you were growing up. Can you tell us some of your experiences as you were growing up?

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Hank Hogue: I was just thinking about the difference in transportation mode coming over here because there was a time when the interstate system didn't exist, and when I was growing up, Summer Avenue or Highway 70 was the major east-west highway from Memphis to Nashville. I mean this was really a booming area at that time.

I grew up at 878 North Highland which is about 4 blocks north of where the church is, and when I grew up the streets did not have curbs and gutters. There was ditches, and I can remember as a young boy, any time it would be a big rain, we'd go out and play in the storm-water runoff in the ditch. And I think it was in the early – probably about mid-'50s when they actually came in and –

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put curbs and gutters and sidewalks on Highland, so that was a big deal. It was a big improvement. But I graduated from Treadwell High School. I was a student there for 12 years. I lived one block from the high school and walked to school, came home for lunch a lot because I was so close.

Other memories – I remember, in this church, coming to MYF on Sunday night, and I remember, very well, The Beatles had just to come Memphis – or just come to the United States in 1963, I believe, and I would bring a television set that we would set up after MYF so we could catch The Beatles on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. But the MYF group at Highland Heights Methodist was very large, very active. We had a lot of friends from –

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the Baptist church – Highland Heights Baptist and Highland Heights Presbyterian that would come over here for our MYF activities, and so it was really a community when I was growing up.

Interviewer: How strong of a community were you all back then?

Hank Hogue: Excuse me?

Interviewer: How strong of a community?

Hank Hogue: Of a community? It was very strong 'cause everybody – well, I go back to school, to Treadwell, if you were in Treadwell School District, it was up to you to get to school. There wasn't any busing provided. If you lived two miles from school, then you either walked, or you got your parents to bring you. So Treadwell was really the magnet of around which all the other activity was centered.

And, of course, Summer Avenue, again –

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was very busy, and I can remember as a high schooler, back in the days, cruising was a big thing on Friday and Saturday night. You get in your car, and there was a Crystal right down the street. There was a Shoney's and the closest McDonald's was out east of here, and so we would spend a lot of time cruising from Crystal to Shoney's and go out to McDonald's, and you'd drive through that parking lot, and then you'd come back and do the same thing. You just kinda did this continuously on a Friday or Saturday night.

Interviewer: You mentioned Highland Heights Methodist Church.

Hank Hogue: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: How did that impact the community?

Hank Hogue: Well, right here at the corner of Summer and Highland, I mean it couldn't be a much better location than Highland Heights Methodist, and I remember when this fellowship hall was constructed, I think we used to have houses that we met in, but it was a very strong congregation.

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There used to be a grocery store right across the street where the Walgreens exists now, and they weren't open on Sundays. That was a different thing. Grocery stores were not open on Sundays, and that parking lot would be filled on Sunday morning with the Highland Heights Methodist members.

Interviewer: In your childhood, how was your home like?

Hank Hogue: My home? My home was a delight. I had a stay-at-home mom, and she prepared three meals a day, and my dad was in the grocery business, and he always made it home for lunch, so she cooked full breakfast in the morning, full lunch, and full dinner, but it was – my dad worked very hard, and I think I work hard, but I didn't work as hard as he did. But I grew up in the grocery business.

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I can remember sacking groceries and making 25 cents an hour, and that was a lot of money back then, so I've been in the grocery business up until 1985 from the time I was able to – from probably 10 years old, I was working in the grocery business.

Interviewer: Can you tell us more about your dad and his groceries business?

Hank Hogue: About the grocery business? Sure. He actually started in the grocery business working for a company called Liberty Cash. And there was a Liberty Cash store on Summer Avenue between Highland and National, and this was owned by the Fred Montesi family, and that's where he really got his start in the grocery business. The first store that he opened was in the Hollywood area at Hollywood and Chelsea. And he formed a partnership with John Knott, and Mr. Knott –

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was the accountant and the manager, and Dad was the grocery man.

From that first store, we grew to a chain of about 12 stores in the Memphis area, so we saw the growth, and then we saw the decline of really – our groceries tended to be located in blue-collar neighborhoods, and they did well for a long time. But when the big box stores started moving in, then we decided that was time to get out of the grocery business, and so we did that in 1985.

Interviewer: What would you say that influenced him to start it, the grocery business?

Hank Hogue: I think he wanted to be his own man, be his own boss, and to take advantage of opportunity with very little capital and –

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hard work, and he was able to build something basically from scratch, and he did an outstanding job. My dad never graduated from junior high school, so he was not a book-educated man, but he was a man of the world, and he put the knowledge that he had to use and built that business from it.

Interviewer: At what point did _____ decline into the grocery business?

Hank Hogue: At what point –

Interviewer: What brought decline? So –

Hank Hogue: The decline. The interest rates in the 1980s were very high. I mean we're talking about 14 – 15 percent interest rates, and we were really undercapitalized and were operating on, to the most part, borrowed money for inventory. And the margins were so thin in the grocery business that it just did not support –

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having to borrow capital at a high interest rate and then try to make a profit on it, so that and the decline and the – or regulation of the banking industry really hurt us, and the handwriting was on the wall that it wasn't sustainable.

Interviewer: How was the competition between other supermarkets?

Hank Hogue: Back then, there were a number of supermarkets. There was **Pic-Pac**, Kroger, A&P, Montesi, Liberty Cash, Big Star – a lot more competition back then than exists today. And I recall, when I was growing up, there were mom-and-pop stores just about everywhere. I can think about National and stores there that would service –

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they'd be really small stores, but they would service sundry supplies and some groceries just within their walking distance. Of

course, those have since disappeared, and the supermarkets kinda put the demise to that. And then the big box stores really put the demise to the normal supermarkets. At this point in time, there's very little competition in the grocery business in Memphis, and it just – that's the way it evolved.

Interviewer: Would you say more people was attracted to your store than other stores around the neighborhood?

Hank Hogue: We did very well because we were home owned and home operated, and that was one of the slogans that we used, and I can't tell you how many people that I still run in today that have memories of working for Hogue & Knott in one of the stores. Back then, it was a noble position to have to be a sacker or a cashier –

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in a grocery store, and we had never problems finding somebody that wanted to work, and it was good hard work and fair pay. So we competed very well with the stores at that time.

Interviewer: What type of people did you employ in your business?

Hank Hogue: We had full-time people and a lot of part-time people – a lot of school kids that worked in the evenings and on the weekends, but we had – of course, we had professional meat cutters in the meat market, which I have fond memories of working in there, but it was a blue collar kinda job, and we had people that were with us for a very long period of time. So Dad tried to treat people fairly and pay 'em as much as he could, and it was just a good place to work.

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Interviewer: Can you tell us some of your fond memories?

Hank Hogue: Fond memories of working? I can remember going to what used to be a farmers market down on Tillman – I think it was Tillman, and we used to have a lot of truck farmers in the area, where they'd bring – in the spring and the summer, the crops have come in. They'd put 'em on a truck. They'd go down there, and they'd sell to the local supermarkets, and I can remember going down there in the evening – 10:00 – 11:00 at night and buying truckloads of cantaloupe for a nickel apiece that would be delivered to the stores the next morning.

I also remember Dad, one time, buying too many cantaloupe, and we put 'em in the basement of our store over at Park and Highland in the summer, and I can remember help loading those cantaloupe out of the basement with a shovel because they had rotten and –

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spoiled and put them in the back of a pickup truck. So it was – I remember that.

I can also remember my time in the meat market. We would buy beef from a local packing company that would come in a refrigerated truck, and it would be in quarters, and so it'd be hanging in the truck. And so our job was to unload that truck, and we'd put a quarter of beef on our shoulder and walk from that truck into the meat market. Of course, they don't do anything like that now, but that was the way the meat was processed. We bought a quarter, and then we cut it up into the various cuts of meat right there within the store. So it took skilled people to be able to do that, and nobody was more skilled than my dad. He taught me how to do that.

And I also remember **traying** chickens, we would –

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Chickens would come to us in a crate filled with ice, and we would take 'em out of the crate. They would be whole chickens, and we'd cut 'em up, and, one day, I was traying chickens and looked down on the saw, and there was blood everywhere. And the butcher stopped the saw, and he looked at my finger and realized that I had cut myself on the saw blade. And so anyway, he took me, wrapped it in a apron, and we walked across the street to the doctor, and I still have the scar today. But when my mother found out about, that turned out to be my last day to be employed in the meat market.

Interviewer: Great. Well, now I'm going to ask you about your educational experiences.

Hank Hogue: Education, okay.

Interviewer: Where did you go to elementary school?

Hank Hogue: Where did I go to school?

Interviewer: Yes, sir.

Hank Hogue: Treadwell High School.

Interviewer: Okay. Can you tell about your life in high school?

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Hank Hogue: High school life was wonderful. It was a big school. We had 286 people in our graduating class. There were a lot of us that went to Treadwell for 12 years, from first – there was no kindergarten back there. You started at first grade, but it was very active, very large school. I was very active in the high school band program. We had a very active ROTC program back then, and the best experience that I had in high school was related to band and the travels that we took as a band.

So I just finished my 50th high school reunion and got to see a lot of people that I hadn't seen in 50 years, and they looked a lot older than I did, but –

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high school was great. No problems in the classroom. We were there to learn, and we actually had shop back then, which that wouldn't be possible in a high school today, I don't think. But we had wood shop and metal shop, where we would actually use saws and make things to try to learn a trade and get us interested in those things. And we didn't – never had any accidents, but I don't think they offer those kinda classes in high school anymore.

Interviewer: You mentioned being in band and traveling around. Where were the places that you traveled to?

Hank Hogue: Our band director was Dr. Harlow McCall, and he actually had a doctorate in music, but we excelled at a very high level. We marched in New York City. We marched in –

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Mason City, Iowa for the Music Man Festival. We went to the Orange Bowl to march in the Orange Bowl Parade. We actually were the first band from Tennessee to march in the Rose Bowl Parade in Pasadena, and that trip, we took four buses, and it took us four days to get to California and four days to get back. So it

was quite an experience being on the road, and we'd stop in hotels – or motels all along the way, but I got to see a lot of things that I had never seen before. But we had an outstanding band because of Dr. McCall.

Interviewer: What instrument do you play?

Hank Hogue: I play trombone.

Interviewer: Trombone.

Hank Hogue: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Great. And you enjoyed playing it.

Hank Hogue: I did. I still have it, but I don't play it anymore. In fact, I'm in the process of donating my trombone to the high school so that somebody can get some use out of it. I had hopes –

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that my grandchildren would take it up, but they don't have any interest in it.

Interviewer: What did you do after you left high school?

Hank Hogue: I went to Rhodes College. We had five people from Treadwell that were accepted at Rhodes College, which was a high number, and I'm proud to say that all five of us graduated on time from Rhodes College. I was under prepared for Rhodes academically, and my college experience was one of struggle because I was under prepared, but the degree that I have doesn't say, "By the hair of his chinny-chin-chin." It just says, "Bachelor of Arts at Southwestern in Memphis," 'cause that was the name of the school, then.

Interviewer: What year did you graduate from –?

Hank Hogue: 1968.

Interviewer: When you graduated, was your graduating class diverse?

Hank Hogue: Not really.

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We had two African Americans in my graduating class, and that was the extent of our diversity.

Interviewer: Did you interacted with those two African Americans?

Hank Hogue: We had classes together, but I didn't interact with very many students at all because I was studying all the time. One thing about Rhodes at that point in time, we had a class schedule for Monday, Wednesday, Friday classes, and then we had a class schedule for Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday. So we went to class six days a week when I was going to school over there. So Friday nights were like a school night because I had classes on Saturday morning.

Interviewer: How did integration or segregation impact your educational experiences?

Hank Hogue: I don't think it really impacted mine 'cause we did not have any minority students in my high school. So it was –

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at that point in time, Treadwell was totally segregated and as were all the schools basically at that time. And so it didn't really impact me. I can say that it impacted the education of my sons because shortly after – I think it was 1970 or '71 when court-ordered busing was required of Memphis City Schools, that we made the decision then that we wanted our kids to go to a school where they could go from kindergarten through 12th grade, and so we elected to put them in a private school.

Interviewer: How was the life of your sons as they were like growing up in that time?

Hank Hogue: My sons?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Hank Hogue: It was a lot easier than my – no, I shouldn't say that. No, they had a great high school or educational experience.

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And they still have friends today from high school, and my wife is actually a teacher. She taught in the same school system. She's in English teacher who's now become a librarian, but she's been teaching about 28 years. So they were pretty good students

because their mom and I kind of demanded that they be good students and good examples for the other kids.

Interviewer: Okay. What role did religion play in your life growing up?

Hank Hogue: Religion?

Interviewer: Yes, sir.

Hank Hogue: I've been a Methodist all my life, and I have a strong faith, and I think that as you get older – for me, anyway – your faith grows stronger. Maybe it's because you know you're getting closer to that coming to an end.

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But we were members at Highland Heights Methodist until we transferred to Christ Methodist, and that was in the early '70s, after our children were born, and we moved out east, but both my wife and I have grown up in the Methodist church.

Interviewer: What would you say were the differences between the two churches, now?

Hank Hogue: Differences between the two churches now? Christ Methodist is a very large church, 3000 members. We have four services on the weekend, and I don't wanna say it's booming, but it continues to grow. It has a elementary school that's part of the church that does very well, and Highland Heights Methodist, because of the demographic change, has –

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the membership has fallen. And as a Methodist church goes, it's probably one of the strongest neighborhood Methodist churches around, but it's still a struggle for them to continue to operate, I think.

Interviewer: Did the Methodist evolve into the community, like making it a better place for the community?

Hank Hogue: Yes, as I said, the strong MYF program, we would actually dance in our church at MYF, and that's the reason that a lot of the Baptist kids came over because they couldn't dance at their church. So they would come to MYF and our social functions because we allowed dancing, so it was a strong magnet.

Interviewer: Are there any assets in your community?

Hank Hogue: Assets?

Interviewer: Assets or like valuable things, like the Methodist church?

Hank Hogue: You mean in my present community?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

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Hank Hogue: Well, Highland Heights – I mean Christ Methodist is a tremendous asset. It's been instrumental in working in the Binghampton community to try to help people that live in Binghampton. They have opened up a school over there – Cornerstone Prep. It's a charter school right in the Binghampton community, and so a lot of the resources of Christ Methodist goes into mission work within the city of Memphis, and we've kind of adopted Binghampton as where those resources go.

Interviewer: Was your church community directly impacted by the sanitation strikes here in Memphis?

Hank Hogue: Was this Highland Heights community? Yes, I mean that was a period of turmoil.

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And I do recall, vividly, all of that activity. I can recall with the assassination of Dr. King, and we were put under martial law – curfew at night. At that time, I was living at an apartment over close to Memphis State on Minders, and I was also – I was going to graduate school and working, and I can remember leaving my apartment and being followed by a National Guard jeep from Minders all the way to our store on Summer Avenue because they wanted to know what I was doing out before curfew, and that's hard for people to understand that we were under martial law at that point in time. It was –

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turmoil within the city because of the sanitation strike, because assassination of Dr. King, and racial relations were not good in the early or late '60s.

Interviewer: Did the strike affect the grocery store?

Hank Hogue: No, because we had private-contract carriers for our refuse 'cause we had so much of it that the Public Works wouldn't collect it, so we had private-contract carriers, so I don't think it really affected us. It just affected the atmosphere of the people. Everybody was affected by what was going on.

Interviewer: How was everybody affected?

Hank Hogue: Well, just because of the strike, and it was only thing that was on the news, and it did, for residential customers, nobody was picking up garbage. Everybody was mad. It was hot. Garbage smelled.

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But it was just, until that was resolved, it was "the" topic of conversation anywhere you went.

Interviewer: How did that transition into like the solution? How was the solution? What brought solution into the community?

Hank Hogue: Well, the solution was that I think Mayor Loeb recognized the sanitation workers, and they were able to get their work conditions improved, and their wages improved. And so because of the unionization of the sanitation workers, they were able to bring about change for their workers, and everything kinda went back to normal.

Interviewer: Can you describe any of your role models?

Hank Hogue: Role models. I think Dr. McCall would be a role model for me, from my experience with him in the band. One of the things that –

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he always said to us – and we had 120 people in our band – marching band – and he said, "We're only as good as the lowest performer in the band. Everybody can be on tune, but if you've got one person that's out of tune, that's what you're judged on," and so I try to take that into my management career. And, of course, the biggest role model that I had was my dad just because of his work ethic and seeing him start with nothing and build something. He was a tremendous role model.

Interviewer: What is your career, now?

Hank Hogue: My career is I'm still actively in real estate management. I manage the office in Cordova. I have 25 agents that work under me, but I also list and sell property individually, so it's I'm not nearing retirement age. I think as long as I enjoy what I'm doing, –

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then I'm gonna continue to do it 'cause if I didn't have a place to go and something to do, I'm not sure what I would do.

Interviewer: Are you – were you married?

Hank Hogue: Yes, I am. I have an anniversary coming up in August. It'll be 47 years.

Interviewer: Congratulations. Can you tell us about your spouse and –?

Hank Hogue: My spouse?

Interviewer: Yes.

Hank Hogue: Well, we met in church. She actually went to a different high school. She went to Kingsbury 'cause she lived further east, but she came to church at Highland Heights Methodist. So church is where we met, and one of my best friends kinda got us up on a blind date who was also a church member here, and so we started dating in high school. We married in 1967 between my junior and senior year at Rhodes.

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And the only reason that we really married early, our plans were we're gonna wait till we got out of school, but the likelihood that I was gonna be drafted in 1968 to go to Vietnam was extremely high, and so we just decided that with our parents' blessings that we would marry in '67 so at least we'd have that year to spend together 'cause not only did we have racial strife in Memphis, we had Vietnam going on at the same time. And so it was not a pleasant atmosphere, either, at the local level or the national level.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on the draft?

Hank Hogue: The draft, well, that had always been in place, but they started using it for Vietnam, and because I was a full-time college student, I had a 2-S which meant that I had a deferment –

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as long as I was in school. That's another reason I didn't socialize much at Rhodes 'cause I was determined that I was gonna stay in school. But as soon as – I had to report for Select Service screening two days after my graduation from Rhodes. And so I went through that screening process downtown, and we had students who were being drafted out of school because their draft pool – they were from farm communities – their draft pool had reached to the point where they had to take students to meet their quota.

So we had students that were actually being pulled out of school to go into the military my junior and senior year, so it was something that we knew was coming. And the rest of that story is that I failed my physical –

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when I went through the Selective Service process. So for physical reasons, I wasn't able to serve in the military.

Interviewer: Were you nervous about the draft?

Hank Hogue: Yes. Yes, I was, and everybody was nervous, so I fully expected that I would be drafted and that I would serve, and the casualty rate at that time was really high, and there were a lot of people dying over there so that I could go to school, and so I had mixed emotions. I was glad that I wasn't gonna have to go to Vietnam. I was disappointed that I couldn't serve in the military 'cause my family had a long history of service to the military. My dad was in the Army. I had a uncle in the Navy. I had a uncle in the Air Force in World War II, and so it was –

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something that I supported. I've always supported the military, but it just didn't work out.

Interviewer: Would you say that like, since your uncle and your dad was involved in military or Army, has that impacted your life?

Hank Hogue: Yes. As a baby boomer, we grew up just right after World War II, and that was still fresh on everybody's mind, and so I was a military buff. I built model airplanes. I built model ships, and that was just something that we did, something that all the kids did. ROTC – Reserve Officers' Training Corps – in high school, we had M-1 rifles that we had to maintain. We fired live rounds in the high school, –

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which I don't know whether they do that or not, so there was a lot of military that went on after World War II that continued up through the '60s.

Interviewer: So as a wrap-up question, I would like to ask you, what advice would you give the youth of Memphis?

Hank Hogue: The youth of Memphis – for those who are lucky and have a good education, help those that don't have that opportunity. Memphis continues to struggle. We have one of the highest poverty rates for a city our size in the country, and unless we can bring up the bottom 25 percent, then Memphis is always gonna struggle. It's something that just really concerns me, and I don't know a solution to it. But we've got to bring the bottom up –

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in order to help the middle class and the upper class.

I mean we wanna raise the level of everybody, but the thing that's holding back Memphis right now is our poverty and our educational system. That's just not performing. We're not competitive. In some schools, we are, but before the city gave up their charter, we had these optional school programs within the city of Memphis, and it always irritated me that some kid would have to leave their neighborhood to go to a good school. My belief is that every school should be a good school. People should wanna go to their neighborhood schools, and they ought to be able to get anything that they want at their neighborhood school, and so that's the challenge that Memphis continues to face.

Interviewer: Thank you for participating in the Crossroads –

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