

- Hunter Moore:* I'm sorry, can you repeat that? What was your name?
- Speaker 1:* It's Reverend **Kalinzo Hubbard**.
- Hunter Moore:* Okay, all right and may I ask how old you are?
- Speaker 1:* I'm 56.
- Hunter Moore:* Fifty-six. Did you ever live in the **Claiborne** Homes?
- Speaker 1:* No, I never lived here.
- Stephanie Jones:* But you've been working here with it –
- Speaker 1:* Yeah.
- Stephanie Jones:* - you know, so how long have you been here?
- Speaker 1:* Well at the end of August, it'll be the completion of 22 years.
- Stephanie Jones:* Wow.
- Hunter Moore:* Wow.
- Stephanie Jones:* So you've seen a lot in this neighborhood and –
- Speaker 1:* Yeah.
- Jamie King:* And how did you come to work here? What was your job before and like what led you to coming to _____?
- Speaker 1:* I'm an Episcopal priest and I was working in Alabama, Fairfield, Alabama in a impoverished community and the bishop here, the Episcopal bishop here, had a vision to start this work and he hired me as the first executive director. So I moved here in September of 1989 to start the work here.
- Hunter Moore:* Okay.
- Stephanie Jones:* So had you ever been in Memphis before this or in this area?
- Speaker 1:* Not in this area. The only time that I really visited Memphis was when I played in the Liberty Bowl in 1976 when Alabama played UCLA. I used to play for Alabama.

- Stephanie Jones:* We heard a rumor that that was the case; in fact, one of us maybe wore a little bit of – a T-shirt today –
- Hunter Moore:* Yeah.
- Stephanie Jones:* - to try to get you to tell a few stories from your _____.
- Speaker 1:* I saw an A over there but I didn't know what that A represented.
- Hunter Moore:* It's for the A-day game.
- Speaker 1:* I knew it looked like an Alabama –
- Hunter Moore:* Yeah, I'm a die-hard Alabama fan.
- Speaker 1:* Well, good. The Arkansas A is close –
- Hunter Moore:* It's similar, yeah.
- Speaker 1:* - but it's not the same.
- Hunter Moore:* It's – yeah.
- Speaker 1:* Yeah. So that was my first trip to Memphis, Tennessee in 1976.
- Stephanie Jones:* And where are you from, originally?
- Speaker 1:* I'm from Birmingham, Alabama.
- Jamie King:* So what drew you here, then? Just you heard about this project and you're like wanted to get on board or –
- Speaker 1:* Well yeah, the – I think God had called me to a ministry of providing for people in need and that's the work I was doing in Alabama but when I heard of the bishop's vision of what he wanted to do in terms of evangelism and reaching out to people in this community. I just had a sense of God's calling me to come here and to investigate the possibilities of it and with the confirmation of my wife at the time, which I thought would never leave Alabama, but she decided to come along with me but it was a sense of call, you know? In the ministry, our work is not just simply a vocation, it's a sense of knowing that you're an instrument of God and if there's something that God wants you to do, then there's a sense of call or a sense of drawing one into that work and that's how it was for this place. It was pretty obvious between my wife

and myself that we were supposed to come here and to offer ourselves for whatever work God wanted us to do. So –

[Crosstalk]

Stephanie Jones: Might be a personal question, but I was wondering sort of how you made the transition from being a football player at Alabama to being an Episcopal minister. How did that happen for you?

Speaker 1: Well, my wife was a cradle Episcopalian and so we was college sweethearts and after we finished Alabama – spent about a year in Birmingham. She was from Birmingham as well and then we got married and she was – I knew it was important for us to be in the same church and so I left the Methodist church to join her in the Episcopal church. And about a year after that, I really seriously committed my life to God, you know. I grew up in the church. I was a preacher's kid but I really had this sense that I needed to do something to commit my life to the will of God and to make Jesus Christ the Savior the Lord of my life and from that it just evolved over time. You know, I just – I guess it was a sense of wanting to give my life completely to whatever God had created me to do and to be and as a result of that, it just evolved over time that the ministry and committing myself full-time to the ministry was what I was supposed to do. Didn't know, really, what it was gonna turn out to be, but I just knew that I could spend my time doing that.

Jamie King: Does she work here with you?

Speaker 1: Yes she did.

Jamie King: Oh, okay.

Speaker 1: Yeah, she was an educator. She had a Masters from Alabama in special education and we started here, really in this room right here. These three offices were really one room that was the Chapel and write in that corner; we have just put a six foot table and a telephone. All the people who were members of the church, they moved to Whitehaven to build a new church and they took, really, everything with them and so we just started with the six foot table and a phone right over there and so the beauty of this is that God allowed us to create it and over the years, to set goals and objectives that was consistent with our gifts and our calling.

So my wife, as an educator, so if you would ask me, "Well what are the central focus of the **Emmanuel Center**, I would have to say it's education and evangelism, so education was her calling and her

gifts and her strength and evangelism was mine; the bringing of people into a relationship with Jesus Christ. And so the bishop allowed us to start this work and didn't give us a job description, you know? We asked him, "What do you want us to do?" He said, "Well, that's why I hired you."

And so he allowed us to shape and mold it that way and even to this day, 22 years later, those two things are still the strongest factors in terms of what we do. It's the value of evangelism; bringing people into a relationship with Jesus Christ and is about education and so the people said, "Well what is the Emmanuel Center known for?" I mean, if you have to – so there's one thing that most people, apart from the religious part was say, "Is education." It's how the lives of young people have been transformed as a result of being a part of the Emmanuel Center.

Stephanie Jones: We were driving through and talking about the way that this is really _____, I mean, you know, now you can see it so much anymore but I guess when Claiborne Homes was still standing, this was really a building that was situated right in the middle of –

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Stephanie Jones: - the public housing here. Can you talk a little bit about how that affected, sort of, the ministry that you're doing here and what sorts of services you provide?

Speaker 1: Yeah. Not only have we been in the central part of the community but as they build the community back, we'll be right in the center part of it again –

Stephanie Jones: That's right.

Speaker 1: - because this alley right here will be Cynthia Street and it connects the north side of Vance, up here that goes east and west and so they're connected. So this will be Cynthia's place and St. Paul and so this will be the central, I guess the travel spot, you know, in terms of a intersection and the whole community.

And, you know, years ago when – before the public housing projects were built, maybe 60 years, I don't know for sure – they tore down all of the housing that you can see the remnant of some of the old housing as you travel through the community. Big, old houses. It was a residential community and when they brought in public housing, this church was such a central part of the community, the life of the people, that they tore everything up

around them and then they built public housing. So now, 50, 60 years later, it's the same thing.

They realized that this place was such a vibrant part of the community committed to the life of the people and they said, "Okay, well whatever we build, will build around it." And will have to do some sprucing up, you know, outside a bit an inside a bit, because everything'll be new –

Hunter Moore: Right.

Speaker 1: – so we have to kinda put some cosmetics to it and we gotta bring it up to identify with the community. But I know some of the programs and ministries will be different but what we've provided over the last 22 years have been a commitment, primarily to children and to the residents here. They've been educational programs – we started working with adults, with basic adult literacy and that's how Betty got involved with us.

[Ringing]

Basic adult literacy and that he was one of our first participants and that program.

Stephanie Jones: Sheila said that yesterday.

Speaker 1: Yeah, the basic adult literacy. And then we went a step further and realize that some of the women in the community would like to go back and go to college and so we started working with helping some women transition into college and so we started working with Southwest Community College and some of the people that had some known problems where previously they had attempted to go to school but then they stopped and didn't pay off the loan and didn't follow through and so we worked with the Department of Education to get some of those loans, you know, reduced or – I know my wife set up an agreement with them that if they would pay a minimum amount for a six-month period, then they would reactivate the loan and allow them to borrow new money. And so we had a number of people to go to college.

And then there was a program started to the federal government called the IDA program, which is the Individual Development Account program. It was in an effort to encourage people that received governmental assistance to either go to school, buy a car, start a business or own a home. And so what they decided to do was the person could earn the money through the program that we

established and it wouldn't affect their benefits because people living in public housing, any income that they would receive would affect the amount of money they pay so their fixed costs were housing to stay the same but they could develop this account over here in which they could use the money to do that. So some people started businesses. Some people further their educations and some people bought homes. You know that's how Betty got her first home through that program.

Stephanie Jones: Yeah, she told us about that yesterday.

Speaker 1: Yeah, she got a loan through that program and we had one other employee around here that got her first home that way as well. And so – but it became very obvious to us as things began to grow and we began to pray about, you know, what is the place where we could put our energies and our efforts where we can make the greatest impact with the limited resources that we have and it appeared to be with the children, you know. There was a lot of other programs that was already being offered to people in the community for adults – _____ had programs, the literacy council had programs, Martin Luther King Center had GED programs and so there was things in the community and also for the adults, really, everything had – the Southwest Tennessee had a program and so we just realized that really, many of the things that they need it was already in place. It was just a matter of pointing people in the direction that they want to go in and the primary challenge for them was just motivation, you know, just the motivation.

I know one girl became a nurse, you know, it was a struggle but she became a nurse. But we didn't have to establish those things. It was already in place and we would help them. We would even – we even went to the extent of the people who were going to college she didn't have babysitters; we'd raise money and pay the babysitter while they was in class. If they had night classes, we made arrangement with the local taxi to pick them up at night so they wouldn't have to walk home from Southwest. They would pick them up every night, two nights a week, after class and bring them home and they would bill us and we would pay the taxi service, you know? And so at the time, we didn't think we should try to start a school because all those things was already in place. We just had to help get the person to the place and support them, you know, along the way.

But then we just began to focus most of our attention on the children and we started an after school program and that program

exists to this day. We started off – Deborah, my wife, and I were doing all the work within we had to have some employees, so we began to train some of the mothers of the children that we was working with. They became our first employees. And then, as things began – we started off with five boys Saturday morning, started a Bible club. Well I really went out and did the one thing I knew something about, that was so I just took a football, went out and started playing with the kids and after about three weeks I invited them to a Bible club and they was all elementary school kids and our hope was just to stay with those elementary school kids and grow the ministry as they grew older.

So when the elementary school kids, you know, went to middle school we created the middle school program and then went on to high school, we created a high school program. You know we just stayed with them and even to this day, now everything here starts at age five with many of the people here have been here from age five or six through high school. Probably about half of the staff that we have are young people who grew up in the ministry here; who are now working here.

So in addition to the after school program, which has a spiritual component with Bible study and Chapel but it has an education component and now we offer math, reading and science and computer instructions. We're fortunate now to be able to hire certified teachers to teach many of those courses for the children so in our afterschool program, you'll see a math teacher in here teaching kids, because she's a certified math teacher in the Memphis City Schools, as well as the science and reading. Most of the reading is conducted by college students who are tutors here. They come in here after _____.

And so the idea is really to offer something to the young people on a year-round basis. So apart from their school and their home, their life literally evolve around what goes on at the Emmanuel Center. So during the school year, there's a four day after school program Monday to Thursday. In addition to that, we have organized sports. We Are Partners with the Memphis Red Birds and in late spring and summer we have baseball, softball and T-ball. We have a relationship with a ministry called Memphis Athletic Ministries and through them we have basketball, soccer, golf, flag football and we've also participated in tennis with the Memphis Tennis Association. And so on a year-round basis, kids go from sport to sport to sport to sport so it's a year-round sports program.

So you have the after school component to the educational focus and spiritual focus and then in the summer we still have those same sports going on throughout the summer but also we have a six week summer day camp that we just finished out about a week ago where we take one of the spiritual discipliners of math, reading science and throughout the six weeks it's more intensified then. It's not so much like schoolwork but it's activities that the young people are involved with. And those same teachers are with us during the summer, you know? This past summer, the emphasis was on science and it was like, I think it was SCI, you know, like the TV program and so the various activities that the teachers had the kids involved with had something to do with solving crimes and how is math and science involved with solving crimes, you know? What is the importance of a fingerprinting, you know, and that type of thing. And so that was at the summer.

In addition to those activities, we have a commitment to work with the local public schools. Vance Middle School is one block that way, plus Georgia is one block that way and BTW is one block that way. And we're actively involved in going into the schools and volunteering and the after school programs and the summer camp programs are basically for young people ages five through middle school. But then we have something that we call prime time, in which we reach out to high school students and they come in the evening time. Not during the summertime, they work during the day and they will have activities in the evening time. We have sports activities on the weekend that most of them wanna work during the summer so we don't have, really, any day activities going on with them.

But it's a commitment just to stay with them on a year-round basis but high school students we talk about going to college, you know, middle school kids we talk about going to college. In the spring we have a college tour where were taking young people to various college campuses to give them an orientation on what it means to go to college. We have relationships with a number of private schools in the city of Memphis and some of the most elite schools that we've had kids either they're attending there now but they've completed those schools. But we have kids that have completed St. George's Memphis now that are at St. George's in _____.

We had young people finish PDS, St. Mary's, Grace St. Luke's Episcopal. We have our first young man – no, he's the second – will be going down to MUS. Yeah, we're excited about him. And so we've had these relationships where the private schools are now actively recruiting some of our kids.

Hunter Moore: That's great.

Speaker 1: We have our fourth recipient of a scholarship at St. Andrews Sewanee Boarding School, you know, the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. Right next to it is a boarding school and we've had our fourth recipient graduate this year from boarding school and she was the top boarding school student. She received that award this year. The one before her left there and she was the president of the graduating class and went on to Wellesley and she went on to Wall Street and worked for five years and now she's at the business – the MBA program – at Dartmouth, you know. So –

Jamie King: That's fantastic.

Speaker 1: Huh?

Jamie King: I said that's fantastic.

Speaker 1: Oh yeah. Yeah. And so the kids are hitting pretty high marks. I guess one of the things we do to motivate young people to do well in school is that we reward them. We reward them with trips and we just came back from Dallas, Texas last week on our angles scholarship tour trip and this is for young people that are ages ten and above and if they can make all A's and B's and no more than one C twice out of the four marking periods during the school year, we take them on a weeklong trip.

Hunter Moore: That's great.

Speaker 1: And while we was in Texas, you know, we went to the Sixth Floor Museum and of course, that's the place where they said the shot came from the building that killed President Kennedy. As always, we have to have the educational part and then a fun part. We went to the new Dallas Cowboys football stadium, you know, in Arlington. That was quite an adventure and then we went to Six Flags as well, you know, and so we had a great time there. But young people, you know, to start off with age ten and some have went on every scholarship tour until they finish high school. So they travel all over the United States. We went to Disney World last year, Orlando, Florida. The year before that, we was in Washington, DC, you know, on the day that we went to, I guess, went to the White House _____ we saw the President that day, you know. And the year before that we went to New York City, you know, and went to a play on Broadway, you know, went to all

the historical sites there, the Statue of Liberty and all the other places.

And so young people then, the history books then come alive, you know. And someone asked **Tolisa** – the girl who's at Dartmouth now – they said, "How did you get from Claiborne Homes, the poorest public housing projects in the whole nation, to boarding school, to Wellesley and all this – how did that happen?" She said, "Well Father and Mrs. Hubbard started taking me on these trips when I was a little girl," you know and she would go every year 'cause she was so smart. "Then I began to see the possibilities of what I can become by being a good student and I applied myself."

You know how some young people are how an athlete would just strive to be the best that they can be so they can get to the NBA or the NFL, you know, the discipline that it takes to do that. Well she's motivated that way, academically, you know, as other – the academic avenue. That's the only, I guess, one of the best examples. She just – I mean at Wellesley, she wasn't satisfied with a B. Now Wellesley, I didn't know anything about Wellesley until they said, "Well, that's the same place where Hillary Clinton graduated from," and I said, "Oh, okay. I understand."

Jamie King: Yep.

Speaker 1: So when they built Harvard for the men, they built Wellesley for the women and she, because she turned down a commission to the Air Force Academy to go there, but we worked real hard to get that –

Jamie King: Yeah.

Speaker 1: - when she turned it down, I was just like, "What are you doing?"

[Laughter]

But it turned out pretty good in that regard.

Stephanie Jones: Yeah.

Speaker 1: So those are the kind of program – as it relates to the residents, we still provide programs for adults and they're primarily mostly social service type programs. We have a community breakfast here twice a week. We have a food distribution – we would've had food distribution today but the food bank, you know, because of the limited amount of food that they're getting now, they're not

delivering food like they used to. But we used to serve probably 100, 150 people when they was getting a lot of food. But then all the people have gone, you know, from Claiborne Homes. But now we're reaching out more to **Foot Homes** and the **LE Brown** community. This residential community.

And when everyone moved out back in December, when that January came around, we was about 50 percent down in terms of program participants, especially among the young people. But we worked pretty hard in building these new relationships. And so the last six months we've really grown in terms of new participants. Our summer day camp was larger than it's ever been, you know.? And so we just – 'cause people'll say, "Well, what are you gonna do? What are you gonna do?" You know, "All the people in Claiborne Homes," 'cause most of the people that came here lived in Claiborne Homes but so, you know, within this zip code and within a half-mile radius, there's thousands of people and what we've had to do, we had to – our gas costs went up significantly because many of the children who come back to the community to go to the local schools, we've said to the parents, "If you can get them here, we'll get them home." So we've had to take young people home. So our gas bill, sometimes, has been as much as \$1,500.00 to \$2,000.00 a month for gas.

Stephanie Jones: Wow. What it used to be before that?

Speaker 1: Well, you know, before the gas prices went up. They've gone down a little bit but when it was close to \$4.00 a gallon, it used to but prior to that it would take about \$60.00 to fill up a 15 passenger van. It doubled. It went up to about \$120.00.

Stephanie Jones: Wow.

Speaker 1: Yeah, so.

Stephanie Jones: So what age groups do you have programs for like – I know up through adults but what's the youngest that you serve?

Speaker 1: Five.

Stephanie Jones: Five?

Speaker 1: Yeah, and we was really serving four-year-olds but the Department of Human Services came in and said, "Look, you cannot offer services to a child younger than five years of age without being a

licensed organization with the Department of Human Services," and so we had to drop the four-year-olds.

Stephanie Jones: Yeah.

Speaker 1: But we are in the process of starting a preschool.

Stephanie Jones: Oh, wow.

Speaker 1: Yeah. And we will be certified and licensed by the Department of Human Services and the Children's Services to offer these programs. Will be having our three-year-old and eventually four-year-olds.

Hunter Moore: Since you've been in the area for so long, how would you say that the Claiborne Homes kinda changed over time, like since you've been here?

Stephanie Jones: Maybe even the neighborhood, too.

Hunter Moore: Yeah.

Stephanie Jones: You can talk about –

Speaker 1: Well yes, in – I guess because I would have to talk about the people because there really haven't been any change, physically, the neighborhood. I guess the changes in the neighborhood maybe has something to do with the programs and ministries that are being offered to young people. That's probably been the biggest change because Street Ministries, you know, down the Street's built that beautiful facility that they have and became a ____ and you know, it started without a building, you know, ____ with his van picking kids up and now they have that beautiful facility. The Boys' And Girls' Club has acquired the Memphis Housing Authority facility and it used to be run by the Memphis Housing Authority but, you know, they didn't have very – because of funding, they really didn't have many activities at all and now you've got a Girls' and Boys' Club up here that serves hundreds of children.

Then you have the Emmanuel Center here that serves hundreds of children as well. So the biggest change has been the services that have been provided and the programs that have been built and the facilities that have been put up to serve young people. That's probably the biggest change I've seen in the community since I've been here. But as it relates to the physical structure and how

people live and all that, that really hasn't changed that much until this Hope Six.

Hunter Moore: Well, do you ever kind of go out, I guess, in the Claiborne Homes and maybe try to kind recruit people to come – maybe recruit's not the best word but encourage people to come to the Emmanuel Center or do people just come –

Speaker 1: Oh yeah.

Hunter Moore: - because it was in the center?

Speaker 1: No, no. You had to go out and recruit and build relationships with people. See, we had a Episcopal Church here before I came and then we had one member of the community that was all into the church.

Jamie King: Wow.

Speaker 1: And so this place was down –

Stephanie Jones: Isolated.

Speaker 1: Isolated. Nobody participated here; they didn't feel welcome and the group that was here was probably more middle-class, middle upper class people, you know? And so even though many of the people in the congregation once lived in public housing but they kinda just moved up, you know, went off to college and done well, started businesses and so there was a disconnect between the people, culturally and because of that it didn't have much of an impact on the community. So we started by just simply getting to know people and to this day, apart from the grace that God gives us to do what we do, it's the credibility that we have with people.

Stephanie Jones: Yeah.

Speaker 1: People trust the Emmanuel Center, you know, when we used to work with the children, for an example, and the children was on an outing or something and they had to go home, you know, when it was dark, we would just walk kids home. Knock on the door and make sure the kid was safe going home and that just builds credibility with people. So when kids have gone to the Emmanuel Center, they know that from an administrator standpoint how serious we are about the care of children, the way we handle children and so they just allow the children to participate.

- Stephanie Jones:* How do you get funding for all of these programs?
- Speaker 1:* Weathers funding through the Episcopal Church and the various – the Episcopal dioceses and various Episcopal churches, Episcopalians. That amounts to maybe 25 percent of what we have and the rest we have to raise through foundations and individuals and fundraising events.
- Jamie King:* Do you take any public grant money?
- Speaker 1:* Not much.
- Jamie King:* Not much?
- Speaker 1:* Not much because we are intentionally a religious organization, committed to bringing people into a relationship with Jesus Christ and sometimes that prohibits us from getting some government funding but we did, about three or four years ago, create a separate organization called the Emmanuel Center Outreach when we requested the funds from the city and they gave us the grant but they said, "We can't give it to you now because you're a religious organization," so we had to create a public organization that was not religious in order to get those funds. But that's really the challenge for us. We might change some of that in the future, but it does restrict us when it comes to some corporations and foundations and especially government money.
- Jamie King:* Can you talk – you mentioned the culture of Claiborne Homes and sort of how you felt like that was different than what the understanding of culture was in this church prior to your arrival here?
- Speaker 1:* Yeah.
- Jamie King:* Can you talk a little bit about that culture? What does that mean, the culture of Claiborne Homes – what does that look like?
- Speaker 1:* Well you're talking about all African-American people. I mean, your – and sometimes class can separate, just like race.
- Jamie King:* _____
- Speaker 1:* You know, and that was a classism situation. Where you have African-Americans here who were teachers and cancel correct drive and lawyers and people like that and then you had public housing residents who was on governmental assistance. You

know, those two just, you know, from a cultural standpoint just don't work, you know, and they don't associate – they're on a different educational level; they're on a different social level; they live differently, you know, people here who don't have cars – They drive Mercedes Benz and BMWs, you know?

Jamie King: So prior to your arrival here, the congregation here had been more of an affluent congregation than the surrounding area.

Speaker 1: Yeah, even though this congregation had the same influence that we have now that when they tore down all of the houses, they were so committed to the community that they decided to let them stay, so this community's been very instrumental but just over time, things evolved. And then they have transition in leadership, you know, and you might have one pastor who is committed to outreach and the other one is committed more to in reach, you know? And then you could lose that sense – then, as people begin to get older – that was the real transition because when people were younger, they was well and had more energy. They was more committed to the community and reaching out but then this community, though, when it was all a residential community, was pretty affluent community. You know, they tell me that there was both whites and blacks living here, together in this community and you can see from the remnant of some of the houses, just like the house that someone is living in but they're restoring this right across from Vance Middle School – have you seen that house?

Jamie King: No, I haven't.

Speaker 1: It's like a mansion there. I went inside at one time. It's – they're restoring it, but it's a house that you can put on, in Midtown on Central, you know how big the houses are?

Jamie King: Yeah. That's _____

Speaker 1: That house, if it was completely restored to what it looked like originally, you could move that house in there with the bigger, the larger of the houses on Central and it would fit.

Stephanie Jones: Where is this? Across from –

Speaker 1: Right across from Vance Middle School.

Stephanie Jones: Vance Middle School, driving by.

Speaker 1: There's a gate around it. There's a gate around it. Right up here at the corner of Vance and – no at St. Paul and Orleans. They just tore down a big white house. Do you ever see that? About a month ago, they tore it down. Well you can go even up St. Paul and you could see some, on the left-hand side, you can see some bigger houses.

Stephanie Jones: Yeah.

Speaker 1: And after you cross Orleans and make a left at the next corner, you can see some bigger houses, you know, there's a few still around.

Stephanie Jones: That's what we've heard that there's a lot of history with mansions in this area.

Speaker 1: And you can go right down here to Lauderdale and make a right and cross Vance and you can see some, what are they called those houses that look like apartment –they're brownstones through to the new brownstones right there that you can see that that's what this community looked like, you know, and so this group of Episcopalians came in here. They have the distinction that the first African-American millionaire in the state was a part of this congregation. It was the church. And so that's the kind of folks that was a part of this and that's what the community was like around here, you know, and then when they tore it down and made it public housing, there was some of the people who assimilated into the congregation but they was the more upward mobile, aggressive types as well that went on to college and got a college degree and when they came back, you know, they was in another social class, you know?

So many of the people –they're an interesting group of people and I'm the pastor of that congregation in Whitehaven. They're now 135 years old.

Stephanie Jones: Wow.

Speaker 1: But you've got people there in the 80s who grew up in the church as children and so they've been around for all of that transition and many of them grew up in Claiborne Homes but see, Claiborne Homes at that time, wasn't just public housing as we know it now. I mean it was kinda like a really nice place to live. I mean, the place was well kept. They was very strict about the care of the facility and so it was really a nice place to live, you know, and then there's – but then over time, you know, it changed into something

else. But many of those – so many people who moved into Claiborne Homes moving up –

Hunter Moore: Right.

Speaker 1: - you know, in status and so that's how it was. Some of those people are still around.

Jamie King: From sort of an outsider's perspective, looking at Claiborne Homes, did it feel like a community to you? Do you see –

Speaker 1: Oh yeah, oh yeah, it was a community.

Jamie King: In what sense? Can you explain?

Speaker 1: Well, a community in that it was a residential place where people live. It had its own culture; it had its own identity. A community is any place where people live as a community. It was a community in that some people lived all of their life in this community. You could meet people who lived here 35, 40 years. I think there might be a person – no, today is Wednesday – she was here yesterday. Did you meet **Velma Blakewell**?

Jamie King: Mm-mm.

Speaker 1: She was one of the older ladies in the wheelchair who works in the kitchen.

Jamie King: Oh I wish I had known that.

Stephanie Jones: I talked with her just for a minute. Yeah.

Speaker 1: Yeah, but she used to be the President of the Resident Association and she lived here –

Jamie King: Wow.

Speaker 1: - probably at least 40 years.

Jamie King: She come here – she cooks how often here? Does she come –

Speaker 1: She comes – I think she comes one day a week.

Jamie King: Okay.

- Speaker 1:* And I think it's Tuesday. I don't know. She might come tomorrow. I don't know. But we could check to see if she's coming tomorrow but she – so it was a community. I mean for them, they didn't know anything else and so it was their place, it was their community and they made a life here. So that's what makes it a community.
- Stephanie Jones:* Was everyone, like, neighborly and friendly or how – did you feel like –
- Speaker 1:* Well, I would think that over time things changed, but oh yeah. Oh yeah, at one point yeah, it was just like any other community and even when it was in the state that it was in before it was torn down – you had a lot of negative factors related to public housing and a lot of that came in from the outside that affected people like the crime, you know, the drugs, you know, the gangs and all of that that came in. There was negative factors and they really influenced much because they intimidated people so I mean, for an example, a person could be shooting dice, doing drugs and drinking – be right on your porch and people were so intimidated by that. They wouldn't call the police or anything. So these guys could do anything they wanted to, you know? So what made it a difficult place to live where those negative factors of drugs and crime in the gangs.
- Jamie King:* When you say that those things came in from the outside, do you mean that they were people who lived elsewhere who were kind of bringing or coming to Claiborne Homes or do you mean that –
- Speaker 1:* Well people like to, you know, in those types of structures, people like to be in control of territory and so if there's a drug person who says, "Well, this is my territory, Claiborne Homes," you know, then the people who have the influence and the money – the big-time people – they don't live in public housing.
- Jamie King:* Right.
- Speaker 1:* They live outside of public housing but they influence public housing and they recruit people in public housing, you know, because the people who are living in public housing, they weren't making the big money, I mean, so they could move out. But these other factors outside of the community that was coming in the community that was controlling the drug trafficking in the drug trafficking and crime go hand-in-hand. Gangs – their primary business become drug trafficking and crime and drugs go hand-in-

hand. So that's why you see that and then they sell influence the community then it becomes a part of the community, you know?

And then about 10, 15 years ago, we had a real problem with gangs from other cities – Chicago and LA and other places – coming into Memphis and that was a scary time –

Jamie King: Yeah.

Speaker 1: - because as they began to establish their positions in Memphis and of course, around public housing where they could, you know, influenced the community with drugs and other things and they had started having these turf wars and drive-by shootings, you know?

Stephanie Jones: Why were they coming?

Speaker 1: Huh?

Stephanie Jones: Why were they coming?

Speaker 1: To further promote drug trafficking and their gangs and there's a direct relationship with drug trafficking. It's about power and influence and money and greed, all of that. And so we – but it comes in the afternoon, sometimes at 2:00 or 3:00 in the afternoon, when all the kids would normally in the summer be out playing, you couldn't find anybody on the streets. Nobody was going anywhere. Be like a deserted place around here because of the drive-by shooting because one of the ways that some of the young people being initiated into the gangs was by shooting people, killing people and if there was ever retaliation of one thing over another one so the Claiborne Homes, you know, will be controlled by one gang, you know, and if that gang, you know, had problems with another gang, then they'll come on their turf and begin to shoot people and stuff, you know. So it was really crazy during that time but God always protected us and we never had an intentional threat against us, little over 22 years we've been here.

Jamie King: That's good. Would you say that sort of thing happened through the 90s, what – about what years would you estimate that that was kind of going on and at its height or –

Speaker 1: Say that again.

Jamie King: What years would you say that ____ where we had the turf wars?

Speaker 1: I don't know. After 20 years, time just –

Jamie King: It all goes together?

Speaker 1: Kinda all goes together.

Jamie King: Yeah.

Speaker 1: You know, I would say it had to be 10, 12 years ago.

Jamie King: Okay.

Speaker 1: Maybe – at least ten years ago.

Stephanie Jones: So would you describe Claiborne – I know you just said all that stuff – as a relatively safe community or what? Were the gangs like kind of in one section and it was safe in other sections or –

Speaker 1: Well I think it was kind of safe because what happened – the police started identifying the leaders in incarcerating the leaders. That was the thing that really helped because it was a very violent place but then I began to realize and look occasionally at the statistics that come out in the paper, annually, that shows what areas the identifying members Memphis, by zip code, and the criminal activity and those areas and in recent years, I guess probably over the last ten years or so, this has been one of the least criminal activity areas in the whole county.

Okay, so what do you attribute that to? That's what I – I think it's the growth and the commitment of organizations and ministries that are working with young people 'cause when look at Streets, Girls' and Boys' Club, the Emmanuel Center, MIFA, the Rise Foundation, there's a lot of positive things going on with thousands of children, you know, and these kids, all of them are being absorbed into these programs and they're very good programs that keep young people active and involved in positive things and I think that's the primary difference. And most all of them have a Christ-centered focus, you know, in terms with children.

And none of these – and with all the, even the negative activity, none of these ministries were touched, you know, it was like it was sacred space and many of the drug dealers and gang members, their children come to our program. Their mothers come here for food, you know, and assistance. And so there's never been an intentional threat, no vandalism or robbery, anything like that.

Stephanie Jones: Was everyone welcome here, like –

Speaker 1: Oh yeah.

Stephanie Jones: - would you have members of these gangs who you knew were involved or leaders come –

Speaker 1: Oh yeah. We know them.

Stephanie Jones: Did you feel like you had a big influence over their lives?

Speaker 1: In some cases, yeah. Yeah. We saw some of them come to Christ – yeah. We see many of the people whose on drugs get delivered from drugs, people whose homes, doing the _____. Yeah. See, sooner or later someone involved and things like that, they gonna come to their wits end where they just gonna come to nothing. And so we always had an embracing posture and programs so people could come, you know, and where they are looking and, you know, when they lose their loved ones and stay loose their friends due to death and other things, then it begins to impact them. And one of the outreaches that we have here is that we have a lot of funerals here. Anyone who's associated with the Emmanuel Center of their grandmother or mother or father – someone dies, we have funerals here. We had one of those funerals Saturday. A kid who grew up here, she's grown up now she's a young adult and – but her father just died so she's gonna have the funeral there. And so a lot of people coming into this place because of funerals, you know, and people say, "You know, yeah, you was kind to us when we was in need and we had a funeral – my mother's or my grandmother so my father's funeral a _____," and so even to the drug guys in the gang members, this is one of the top gang members said, "I didn't know this? Wow." He said, "this is a special, sacred place." And it's for them – they're hands off.

And I didn't know how significant this guy was. I mean he, about three or four years ago, he got shot five times. Went to the _____, they had to resuscitate him three times where he just died; came back. So I was one of the few people they allowed to go to see him and when I went to the man, I said, "My God, why are all these policemen around?" You know, 'cause I knew he was involved with gangs but I didn't know how big he was.

Stephanie Jones: Right.

Speaker 1: But when a gang member like that and you ever go to the _____, you see a lot of policemen around is because it's gang-related. Sometimes because they shoot somebody – they'll come in later, try to kill them if they had access to them. So the police have to actually stand around these people and guard them.

Stephanie Jones: Geeze. Crazy.

Speaker 1: So all of these – hmm?

Stephanie Jones: I said that's crazy.

Speaker 1: It is crazy. It's _____ all these police and I'm saying – you would think it'd be like the mayor or the governor or someone –

[Laughter]

- all these policemen, you have to check off and your name have to be checked off and you had to show ID and I went in there and he knew me; I knew him. He grew up – he was a bad little boy in his community. He was always a bad little boy and I knew him personally. God gave him the opportunity to lead him to Christ. He couldn't hear me. He could hear me but he couldn't respond verbally but he would nod. So he said, "Yes, yes." And committed the life to Christ and then I found out later, they said, "Do you know why all that activity was going on?" I said, "No," they said, "He's the governor. He's the head guy for the United States for this particular gang." I said, "What? Really?" You know I didn't know this guy. You know, I knew he spent a lot of time in prison so, you know, he's the guy. And so gang members flew in from all over the nation to Memphis and they was getting ready for a gang war.

Stephanie Jones: Oh geeze.

Speaker 1: And so I pleaded with him. I said, "Please, please don't retaliate. Please don't." And he held them off because it would've been a bloody place. This guy coulda just gave the word and they would've retaliated against the other day and it would have been very, very bloody. Lotta people lives – would've been killed and I didn't know. This little boy, running out here.

Stephanie Jones: Wow.

Jamie King: Yeah.

Speaker 1: And he comes around here. He's ____ from the area and ____ himself as a rapper and he's doing – that's how he makes his living, now but it's interesting because every time I go see him, he got all these people around him, you know, but – and I know many of them but I have access to him. And because I have access to him, then this becomes a safe place and they don't touch this place. And everybody know him and they know this is his area; this is his turf. But the Emmanuel Center is something that they just don't touch.

Stephanie Jones: Did you find that gang members of different gangs who were enemies on the street if they would come here and could be friendly? Would that ever happen?

Speaker 1: No, they not really that friendly to each other.

Stephanie Jones: No?

Speaker 1: Nah, but they all have the same privileges just being a part, of coming here, because their kids are here.

Jamie King: Yeah.

Speaker 1: You know, they're not gonna – and they're gonna – and they know the good that we do here for the children. And so no one wants their kids to trial like that. They don't want their kids to be gangbangers or killing people and selling drugs and on drugs. So they see this as a safe, good place to teach them good values, Christian values.

Stephanie Jones: You mentioned like, some of these gang members that were part of the community but did you also see positive leadership that was coming out of Claiborne Homes? Can you recall people who were maybe leaders in the community who affected positive change? I mean, you mentioned some of the ministries but also individuals.

Speaker 1: Oh yeah, many of them. One young man who just finished college at Tennessee State who was a bad little boy when he was here but he turned around, became a very good student. He finished Melrose High School. He got a scholarship to play baseball with Arizona State, you know, that's big-time college baseball but he decided to get an academic scholarship because he wanted to be a lawyer and a judge, eventually, but he's just graduating and he's moved back to Memphis. While he was in college, he started a program called Gentleman's Academy, I think, in which he worked with the males who have below a 2.0 and form something. It wasn't a fraternity, but it was like a fraternity, in an effort to

motivate those young men become better students and to get better grades and to graduate from college. Had a tremendous effect on many people and now that he finished some moved back to Memphis, he wanna start a similar program and high schools and middle schools and so he would have a tremendous impact on young people, you know, in this community.

I just think that the many staff members that we have who were young people who grew up in the ministry, who are now serving here; they're great role models. See, after age seven, we separate the boys and girls, you know, and the boys have male leaders and the girls have female leaders after age seven. And these are great role models. They understand the community; they're not threatened by the community; they're not intimidated at all because many of them lived in the community. But then they're very positive role model 'cause see in this community, especially with the boys, a kid grow up all their life and never know their father, you know, and not have any positive male role model in the home.

You know, when I first moved here out of the 1,500 household who are Claiborne and Foot Homes, there was less than 50 marriages. So, you almost have a whole community where there's a total absence of male role models – positive. That are role models because now these guys, they come you know, with all this jewelry and all of these fancy cause and all of this bling bling, then that becomes the role model because kids look up and say, "Oh, man. I like to drive a car like that or wear clothes like that or have jewelry like that." You know, and that was the challenge for us that God would help us to raise up something that would be a model to compete against that, you know, because that's what kids was aspiring to do and that's why gangs are attractive because they become, in their, I guess, mind, something that is positive and affirming to young people.

And when you read their literature, then despite gangster stuff. I mean, it's negative stuff. They don't talk about killing and robbing and stuff like that. It's just that drug trafficking, you know, is associated with crime and you have to do illegal things but many of the gangs think they're really doing positive things to save children, you know, and build these strong relationships and have these father figures and things like that _____. So we just build those types of things into our program so you got a group leader and we've got one group leader, **Greta Well**, she' been a group leader here 16 years, working with girls; elementary school girls. And when we have the continu- and so the kids can come here and if they love Greta and they never wanna leave her program or her

group, well, they just go to another Greta in the next group who's equally as caring and as loving. But they still see Greta every day, you know, and so you have that type of thing and so the kids just, in addition to their family and their school, this becomes a place where they're loved by the people; they're affirmed by the people; a very positive place and this becomes like their home.

Stephanie Jones: Well thank you very much for answering all of our questions.

Jamie King: Yeah, that was great.

[End of Audio]