

Shared Stories: African Americans in North Mecklenburg

Interview with Brenda Tapia, January 5, 2017

Conducted by Clarence Fox

Transcript edited by Andrés Paz '21

Summary: In this interview Reverend Brenda Tapia, a daughter of Dovie and James Howard, speaks amply on aspects of her childhood, youth, and adult life in Davidson. She gives a detailed account of living with many adults in the same house and being one of the only Black families not residing in Davidson's "Brady Alley". She recalls early playmates, reflecting on the time she spent playing with her white counterparts. Reverend Tapia discusses a couple major violent altercations involving Ku Klux Klan activity in the area, notably the burning of a cross in her front yard as a response to her uncle's involvement in the town. She discusses much of the social life in Davidson as a teenager, remembering people such as Leslie Brown, who was one of the first Black Americans to enroll in Davidson College. Besides talking about the professional environment at the college since she began working there in 1985, Reverend Tapia also comments on newly integrated schools and her experience attending North Mecklenburg High School. Towards the latter part of the interview, she discusses the development of the town of Davidson throughout the years, offering valuable insights about racial relations in Davidson, and about community initiatives and her involvement with them as well.

Interviewer: Okay, this is Clarence Fox, it's January 5th, 2017, thank the good Lord. And I'm here with Brenda Tapia and we're going to do an oral history today and talk about Brenda's life. And just give me your full name for the record.

Brenda Tapia: Okay, my full name is Brenda Lavell Howard Tapia. I was born August 27, 1949, and had the honor of being one of the first Black babies born at Lawrence Hospital in Mooresville. Had I been born three months earlier I would have been delivered by midwife as everybody else around me prior to that time. Even though a lot of babies were born that day, I ended up in a nursery all by myself shortly after birth because of the color of my skin. I was the

only black baby born. And so, I feel like that was an introduction to the world that I was coming into but didn't understand or know.

Born at Lawrence Hospital in Mooresville, but my parents, James and Dovie Howard, lived here in Davidson. They had purchased their own house on Potts Street, little four room house up against the railroad track that's a Sprint station now over on the lower end of Potts Street. And my mother said that my temperature would shoot up to 103, 104, I'd be screaming my head off. She'd take that walk up the street down Catawba to my grandparents. As soon as she got there my temperature - they'd take my temperature, it would be normal, I'd be cooing, and she started feeling like she was a fool, a crazy, because as long as we were there I was fine, take me back around the corner back home and temperature and the crying would start again.

My grandparents who—my grandfather built the house that they were in and added onto it every time a child was born. My grandfather was Logan Houston. My maternal grandmother was Alice Torrence Houston. And Big Daddy, as we call Logan, his mother, Granny - whose name was Alice also - in fact, I think she was Alice Torrence Houston, too, but different Torrences because there are a lot of Torrences around here or off the Torrence plantation. But, she lived with them as well. And four of my six uncles were still living at home, and two aunts, and then my mom, Dad, and me. So, I grew up in a house, basically, with 13 adults, the youngest being my Aunt Nanny Houston Potts, who was mayor of Cornelius for a short period of time and many years on the town council of Cornelius.

Interviewer: Yeah, I knew Nanny.

Brenda Tapia: Yeah, she was the youngest in the house and she was 11 years older than me. So, basically, it was a house full of adults.

Interviewer: Is Nanny still alive?

Brenda Tapia: She's at Autumn Care and her body is still here but her mind is long gone.

Interviewer: Yeah, she was a sweetie.

Brenda Tapia: And people thought a good cook. We always laughed because she was the worst cook in the house. And we like, people really don't know what good food is. But anyway, I grew

up in this large extended family. My aunts and uncles were my first playmates because the street that we lived on, there was only one other black family on it at the time and they lived to the right of my grandparents. Esther and Walter Johnson. Esther was a librarian at the Torrence-Lytle High School. Walter and his brother, Harry, both worked at Davidson College in the laundry and over their lifetime, together, accumulated, I think, 150 years of employment because they started very young working at the college, because the college was the source of employment for many, almost all, of the black people in this area at some point in time if not their whole working life.

But there were no children on Catawba. Catawba was basically - my grandfather's house was the first house outside the city limit sign, Davidson. So, he had acquired the land from Mable Griffin's husband who he worked with. The Griffins had a dairy farm and had had 12 children themselves, six boys and six girls. Her husband died fairly early in life, and so the boys, and she, and my grandfather and uncles ran the dairy farm. But then, it ended up, I think second World War, that five of her six sons went off to various branches of the military leaving only the youngest one at home.

So, my grandfather and my uncles helped Ms. Mable run the dairy. They had been share cropping on some land, I think it was Griffin land. So, after the war, they acquired the land. They also had acquired six cows. From somewhere he had gotten 200 pigs. And so, growing up there were always - it was like growing up on a farm, six cows, 200 hogs, my grandmother raised chickens and guinea sometimes, but always chickens. We had two very large gardens, so really the only thing that we went to the grocery store for was toilet paper. Because until I was five years old we had an outdoor toilet and plumbing, but when I turned five we got one of the first indoor bathrooms.

And I can remember friends of mine coming over that lived up here in what we called the Alley, coming out to play sometime and having to tell them to stop flushing the toilet because that was just fascinating to them to go in there and just flush and flush and flush. But the rest of the street was all white. Most of them were older white people, working class. And so, their grandkids would come to play periodically, and those would be my playmates. Now, Kenneth Brotherton,

who became a historian in his later life, he and his wife and children lived on the street. And his oldest daughter, Lynn, who was a year older than I was, was my most constant playmate.

That was until I started school. Prior to my starting 1st grade, Lynn was at my house almost every day. We would take naps together. It never crossed my mind why I didn't go - I think I thought her mother, like my mother, worked and wasn't at home. And because I was kept by my grandmother and great grandmother - because my mom has worked all of my life, and as I grew older she went from one, one and a half jobs, to three at once. And so, one of my saddest memories, I think, growing up was seeing her go off to work, because a two year old doesn't understand what work is. Even though you see people working always around you, they didn't call it work, those were their daily chores. Everybody had something to do, and they would even try to find something for me to do to keep me from deciding I was going to do something, like make a cake on the stairs.

But anyway, didn't have a lot of playmates. My first playmates were white. And when I started school I remember coming home the first day and waiting for Lynn to come play. And when she didn't show up I asked my mother when she got home, Lynn didn't come, why didn't she come to play. And she said, well, Brenda, school has started and Lynn probably has homework. Well, why didn't I have homework. And in retrospect, thinking back, the more appropriate question would have been, well, why do we not go to the same school. That's one of the things that has perplexed me the most of my adult life, I didn't question the separation.

Because in the early 1950s, things in Davidson were separate. Sometimes somewhat equal, but most times not, but definitely separate. We also had one of the first televisions. So, watching TV 24/7 - well, almost 24/7 because back then I think the TV went off at 10:00 or 11:00.

Interviewer: Yeah, you got the pattern.

Brenda Tapia: You got the test pattern, and the national anthem being sung before the test pattern comes on. I remember hearing about some black person being beaten or hung, and it so upset me and nobody could console me. And I remember I was barely five, if five - I don't think I was five because Granny was still alive and she definitely died when I was five, five and a half. I remember going outside and shaking my fist at the sky and saying, come and get me, I don't want to be here, come and get me.

And I was very adamant about it because in my earlier years God was my playmate, because especially during the - the summer, the aunts and uncles were around more, but during the school year everybody was off to school. Because they didn't have a cafeteria and they lived so close, they would come home for, we called 12:00 dinner, and 6:00 was supper. Breakfast, dinner, and supper. But everybody would just be at home that was living there. And Uncle Ollie, Ollie Houston, who was married and had a house here in town - because he, too, worked at the saw mill. Most of my uncles worked at Hoke Lumber Company and my grandfather fired the boiler for them at night.

So, but Ollie would be there at the 12:00 dinner. Now, Big Daddy put a lot of emphasis on education. I remember him telling me very early in life, shortly after he told me about the little baby born in Bethlehem, that there were two things in life that were important, a sound education and a strong relationship with God. If you had those two things, the sky was the limit. He said that a lot and he also kept saying, to whom much is given, much is expected. I think if he quoted anything more, I don't know what it was other than, to whom much is given, much is expected.

He was forced to stop his formal education in grade five to help support his family. And so, but he was a lifelong learner. So, that 12:00 dinner became his classroom. And everybody had to teach him something every day that they had learned. And if you didn't learn something you better go find a book - which they didn't have a lot of books back then, I think that's why books are important to me and to my Aunt Francis Houston Beale, who taught me how to read when I was about three, four years old, and then bought me my first set of books which were fairytales. But I think that's why books were so important to us, was that they didn't have a lot growing up. And magazines.

All the women were maids except for my grandmother. My grandmother would take care of people's children in her home, do their laundry, bake for them. Also, people bought a lot of buttermilk and butter from her. I was almost like everybody in the family had a hustle, something that they did to help add to the family income. Because Big Daddy ran a very strong, patriarchal home. Everybody's paycheck went in the bowl when they got it. I mean, well, their money, not checks. And then, everything that was needed in the household or by members of the household was taken care of, and then the money was redistributed back.

So, you may have put \$30 in there and only got \$10 back, but everything that you needed for that time period - food, clothing, shelter - was taken care of. Besides doing the farm and working at Hoke Lumber Company, they would get scrap wood from Hoke. So, they sold wood. Almost everybody in town had wood burning, coal burning stores. Many black people and poor whites couldn't afford coal, so they got wood. And they collected garbage for their pigs. Because unlike most pig farmers at that time, they cooked their pigs garbage and fed it to them. So, there was this big trough down the hill where they would dump the garbage and cook it and then feed the hogs with it.

But very self-sufficient. And an abundance of stuff such that everybody in the community would find some excuse to come out during the week or especially on Sunday just as you're getting ready to eat. So, Big Momma always cooked a lot of food. It was like the family that I came out of, food was a way of showing love. You didn't have people saying, I love you, Clarence, or hugging, but here's your favorite cake, Clarence. Yeah. And old Clarence, we got pork chops tonight, we know you love pork chops. And that was different, too. I soon discovered that other black people here in Davidson didn't eat like that. Even there was a couple of families that didn't even have dishes, they ate on newspaper. And I couldn't believe it. I can remember going in homes in that alley where there were about 80 people and with seven families in there, seven, eight families -

Interviewer: This Brady's?

Brenda Tapia: Brady's Alley, yeah. Now, Mr. Clint Torrence and Ms. Janney contributed a large number of those people because they had 20 children. And naturally all of them didn't end up staying at home at the same time - it was like almost two separate families that they had, they had so many children. I think everybody else in the alley had at least four or five, nobody had less than three or four except for Ms. Maggie, she had the one son. But the whole town functioned around the church and the school. Like Ada Jenkins, my grandfather did a lot to help build that school and to pay for it, housing teachers at times when they would get teachers that were not from this area.

Same thing with pastors. Davidson Presbyterian Church was a much more viable church during the years that I was growing up, because I was here from 1949 until 1967 when I left in

September, late August going to college. But during that time that I was growing up here, like I said, everything as separate and not always equal. The one thing I remember from my adolescence of fighting for was the teen canteen because there's never really been anything here for children, black or white. The white children had had what was here to do that their recreation at their teen canteen, but they also had parents that could take them to Mooresville, nine miles north, to see a movie.

We got to go once in a while, and when we did, you went up these narrow, dark stairs, you couldn't see your hand in front of your face, and you sat in the balcony. And sometimes we'd throw popcorn and chips of ice down at the white people below. But the movie theater was segregated.

Interviewer: Now, that was the one over by where the old gas station as around the corner?

Brenda Tapia: No, no, that's in Davidson. I don't—the only time—

Interviewer: Oh, you didn't go to the one here, you went to the one in Mooresville.

Brenda Tapia: Yeah. Only time I remember going to the one in Davidson was the night - no, I wasn't at the theater, I was at the college. Louis Armstrong was appearing at the college the night that theater burned.

Interviewer: Burnt down.

Brenda Tapia: Yeah, the one by the gas station. But no, we went to one in downtown Mooresville. I think it was somewhere near Belk. The Belk department store at that time was still on Main Street and sort of in the middle of it. But going to Mooresville was scary to us because Mooresville and Huntersville, during the time I was growing up here, the first 18 years, were considered Klan territory. Klan was very active in this area, much more so than the people in the town of Davidson want to acknowledge. I thought it was so funny watching people that I knew who also knew what I was talking about act with shock and surprise that - because my uncle, when I was still - hadn't started school, so I would have been five - going out to get the newspaper, walking out my grandfather's front door to the end of the walkway.

There was always a receptacle there for the newspaper because I've never known my family not to subscribe to the Charlotte Observer and the Charlotte News. And I would go out in the morning to get the paper. And this particular morning I went out. To the right there was this big wooden cross smoking and smothering on the grass. So, when I came back in with the newspaper, I asked, why is that cross out in the - oh, we were roasting marshmallows. Roasting marshmallows, why didn't you wake me up, I like roasted marshmallows. And it was like, oh no, you were sleeping so well.

And it was a couple of hours later during my favorite pastime, which was eavesdropping on the adults, especially if I thought they were talking about something that was grown up or didn't want me to know - that I found out that it was something called the Ku Klux Klan and that Uncle Fuzzy wasn't at home, that he had been taken somewhere up in the mountains the night before. And what had happened was that he was a host for a church sponsored program at the college that summer, the summer before he had actually gone to Sweden with this same religious group. And when they came here the following summer, he was the only person that lived within a hundred miles of the college where they were meeting.

So, he was welcome on college for the first time, not as a servant, but as a participant in something that was going on. And there were women in this group, and they were blond, white women, blue eyed, and they just thought he was the cutest - I mean, he was their Denzel Washington, Nat King Cole rolled into one. And even though he dealt with it as black men were taught to deal with it - keeping them at a distance and basically being rude and ignoring them for the most part - there was this one woman that was determined to get his attention. And the last day of the conference, one of their members got cut real bad. They had gone to get some ice cream and, I don't know how he got cut, but my uncle and them rushed him over to Dr. Woods' office there on School Street.

And when he went in, he sat on the right against the stairs where wooden chairs for black people. All these nice couches in the rest of the room that white people would sit in. Well, all of the group except this woman went over to the white side. She decided to sit on Calvin's lap. And if that wasn't enough, she licked his ice cream cone. Well, Blanche Parker was Dr. Woods' receptionist at this time, so when that happened she made a call. And they treated - you know,

the guy was treated, they all left. That night they were having an end of the program party out at the lake. College had the lake property at that time. And while they were out there my grandmother had gone to bed and she dreamed everything that happened out there that night except - she always had prophetic dreams, the thing was she might dream about you and we would know that, oh, nothing's going to happen to Clarence, but something's going to happen to one of the other brothers.

And so, she dreamed - her dream was about her oldest son, James, who lived in Greensboro at the time, didn't even live here - but it was happening with Calvin. Such that when Calvin came in the house bleeding, she had already put some clothes together for him and had two of my uncles with the car heating to take him out of Davidson right then. Because the Klan had shot, and the bullet just glazed - luckily the person was not a crack shot - just grazed the side of his face. So, they took him out to somewhere up in the mountains and then sometime during the night Klan came and they burned a cross in our front yard, they burned one on the football field over at the college, and they burned one outside of the Dean of Student's office.

And, evidently, the Dean of Students entered the building in such a way he didn't see it. As soon as he got to the desk, he said that his phone rang and an Alumni from Pennsylvania told him, look out your window, there's something you need to see, and hung up. And he got up and looked out the window and that's when he saw his cross. And somebody came in--because people for some reason thought Calvin was a student, but Davidson College has never had summer school as they do it now. They probably had independent studies as they do now, but they never had summer classes. And a lot of people here thought Calvin was the first black student at Davidson, but he really wasn't. He was their first member of the Board of Visitors. He was being prepped to be a member of the Board of Trustees, but he died before he was appointed.

But, Klan activity when I was growing up was not unusual. I'll never forget, Sadler Square used to be just a big yard of red mud, and that's where black people played softball - adults and young folks. And one Saturday, for nothing that we knew of had happened, the Klan would just drive by and shoot into the crowd or throw stones hollering nigger and stuff like that. But there was one time where there's a place we call the wisdom tree, which was on the corner of Depot and

Jackson right across the street from the Depot itself. There was a large tree there with big roots. And black men who weren't working or were looking for work would sit there and a farmer might come by and say, hey, hey boy, boy, I need some extra hands to get the potatoes in, or, I need somebody to help me with the hay - and folks would go get day work from there. But otherwise, they sat there and chewed the fat and, I assume, drank. But -

Interviewer: That's about where the insurance building is now?

Brenda Tapia: Nuh-uh, across the street from there. That was -

Interviewer: Okay, on the mill side.

Brenda Tapia: On the other side, on the mill side, yeah. There was a du—not a duplex—there was an apartment building that had four apartments, two in the front, two on the side, and that extended in the back. People who lived in those probably had - because I remember going in two of them. Dora DuBose's family lived there. I remember going in her house, and then we had cousins that lived there. My grandfather's brother, Randolph, his widow and his three kids and her mother lived in the front. And they would have a living room, a kitchen, I'm assuming they had indoor plumbing but I really don't remember. I think they did. Maybe not initially, but eventually.

But at any rate, this particular day there was a young boy who was a year younger than I am, Larry Patterson - not Larry - well, I can't - his nickname is Boochie. Everybody called him Boochie Patterson, and he's a year younger than I was. And he was just standing there. You know, quite often there might be little kids standing around, running around. These two white teens came by in a rickety old truck and they were drinking in the truck and driving. And one time they came around and they stopped and they told Boochie to come here. And they asked him something or told him something and then they called him nigger and they took off.

Well, Boochie ran home and told his big brother, Steve, who's probably 10 or 11 years older than him, that this had happened. Steve came up there with a gun. Truck came back around and they stopped. And he walked over to the driver and he said, are you the one that called my brother over there, nigger. And the guy said, yeah, what's it to you? Bang, and just calmly walked back home. He killed a guy. But within a half an hour, 45 minutes, Klan came up in their

cars up Griffith Street and there were people out there playing softball - there was softball going on, man selling snow balls out of the trunk of his car, and they shot into the crowd. Again, luckily they didn't hit anybody.

But that was probably the biggest and the scariest for me. Because it just seemed like the Klan would pop out of the woodwork. And, like I said, we were all afraid, youth and adults. When we went into Mooresville or Huntersville we really tried - over tried - to obey the law. I can remember one night after I had - the summer after my first year in college I worked on Davidson's campus for a program similar to the one that I created where they worked with high school students from Charlotte. But unlike the college students I hired to work with my students, the counselors worked from 2:00 in the afternoon to 10:00 at night, and then we were free.

Well, Gail Nichols - Pete and Scotty Nichols' oldest daughter - and I were the female counselors. And there were Davidson college students who were the male counselors. And so, when we would get off at 10:00 at night, I mean, what is there to do in Davidson? Sometimes we'd go swimming - well, they would, I'd just climb up there with them because I don't swim. The water tower, they'd go swimming in the water tower, and then when everybody had swam as much as they wanted they'd piss in it. Sometimes we would go to the pool over there on Lorimer that you had to be a member of -

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Brenda Tapia: Yeah, well, we swam in there at night and pissed in it. That was the time when people didn't lock their doors in Davidson. So, if we knew that you and Jan were at a dinner party or something and we were hungry, and one of us in the group was, like, your child or your nephew or niece, we'd go in y'all's house and eat, clean up our mess, and leave. So, you were subject to come home and was like, hey, Jan, where's my bologna. Gone. But one night we decided to go to a diner, and it was somewhere - we had to go to almost - went into Mooresville and then you turn off. It was, like, a truck stop.

And we decided just for fun—I was dating Leslie Brown who was doing an independent study. He had completed everything but one course, and he actually completed that course, but the professor told him the day he walked in, you will not pass this course. Well, he passed it but he gave him a grade of D so he had to take it again. So, he was there doing that class as independent

study and had been handed a blank diploma at graduation pending the real diploma pending on him finishing that summer course, which he did.

But we were driving to this diner that night and we decided to switch up. And so, I got in the front seat with Dan, white guy, Gail got in the backseat with Lesley. So, we looked like two integrated couples pulling up to this gas station. And we ended up getting run—being chased all the way back to Davidson because of that.

Interviewer: And that's about what year then? Were you in high school? 60s?

Brenda Tapia: That was the summer of my first year in college, so that would have been the summer of '68.

Interviewer: '68, okay.

Brenda Tapia: One of the most volatile years in American history up to that point in my mind. Everything happened that year. But I'm trying to think. Most of the black adults, like I said, worked for the college. The women worked as maids. We went to Ada Jenkins to the 8th grade and then Torrence-Lytle 9th to 12th grade. We would ride busses to get there. We eventually had two teen canteens. They opened up—they helped us to open a canteen in the fellowship hall of Davidson Presbyterian my junior year in college, but we had been fighting for a couple of years to get one. And that gave us a place to go to—we had an old jukebox that had been renovated and the music on there was often old as dirt. We had all these old magazines, majority of which were National Geographic. To some of the kids they were interesting because they didn't get magazines in their home. Shuffle board on the floor. The tile—the room was tiled in one area with shuffle board. We had a ping pong table. Games, a lot of the games were old.

In fact, almost everything we had was old. You could tell it had been donated and that people's kids had played a lot with the board games that we had. But for us, it was somewhere to go on Saturday night from 7:00 to 10:00, and on Friday nights, 12 and under would go to 9:00. But on Saturday night, 13 to 18 would come. And that was really—other than going to each other's house and listening to music or having a house party—that was it. All of the black people except us lived first in that alley. And then when the alley caught fire and they helped them build homes here, this was all black. Coming into Davidson was all black on both sides of Griffith Street. In

fact, where that algae pond is, I think there were two apartment buildings there that were something left over from the prefab, left over from the war or something. But -

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. I think there's a story, is that there was a barracks that they had gotten from somewhere and put there. Yeah.

Brenda Tapia: Yeah, and people lived there. Like I said, mainly entertainment was walking around town and walking each other home. You know, it's like, I walk halfway home with you and then you walk back halfway home with me and we may be doing that for hours before we finally go home. That was really about it.

We had, I remember, a big event that we would look forward to would be the Torrence-Lytle homecoming.

End of Recording, Part 1.

Start of Recording, Part 2.

Interviewer: Here we go.

Brenda Tapia: Torrence-Lytle homecoming parade was a big event because we would play the homecoming game in Davidson stadium where we had just had maybe one set of bleachers at Torrence-Lytle and the opposing team people and the home people had to sit in the same benches. But that was a big event. And the parade would start at Ada Jenkins and we would go down the hill and up Depot Street, you know, and then across the street to the college to the stadium. That was fun. That was the only parade that we had.

I can't remember if white people were having parades in Davidson. When I think of white parades, the only thing I can remember is the Carousel parade in Charlotte that we would all go to. But there was very little mingling of the races at that time except in employer/employee roles. A lot of black boys talk about feeling comfortable to go on the Davidson College's campus, but I was always told if I went on campus, if I was going to a concert in the Fine Arts building, I was taken straight there, you were there in the back for the concert, and then you leave.

And I found when I came there as an employee in 1985, for six months that I was there I would never leave my office unless I had a reason. It's like, if I had to take something over to payroll in

Chambers that I would leave my office, I'd go straight there, and I'd come straight back. But Garfield [Carr] and other boys that I've heard talk act like, you know, they were on campus playing just like the white kids in Davidson. But that was not my experience, I never felt welcome.

In fact, it was painful for me to go on campus because my dad was a janitor in the chemistry building, but they used him as a graduate assistant. Because at that time, Pop's mind was such that if he watched you do something one time, then he could repeat it. And so, when professors wanted to go play golf on Wednesday, they would schedule a test, give him the—he would become a monitor. If they had labs, they would give him the information, he would set up and conduct the lab. Because I thought it was interesting, he was the stock room clerk, and when I came back in '85 and started a learning program in '87, the woman that was running the stock room—because my kids had chemistry classes—was working on her PhD. And I'm thinking, here you got a high school graduate doing this, you know, years ago, and you hire a person with almost a PhD to do it now.

But a lot of Davidson alums who didn't end up Presbyterian ministers, that became chemists and doctors, have him to thank for it because it was nothing for us to hear our doorbell ring at 2:00 AM in the morning and it would be some Davidson College student wanting to go in the lab and work on something. It seemed like organic chemistry was the determiner whether you'd be a doctor or a Presbyterian minister. And as you know, they had a lot of Presbyterian ministers come out of there. But those favors that he did for students while they were there, to me, they paid off in the long run.

My baby sister was honored with the presence of the Governor of North Carolina at her wedding because my daddy helped him when he was a student. We were able to purchase our house, which only cost them \$2,000 when they bought that building in 1960, which had been built in 1949. He went to the college, just like Mr. Deese, got some financial help for his children to go to college. He went to try to get help for me, couldn't get it. Went to try and get money to buy the house, but it was when he approached the parents of students that he had helped, that he was able to get certain things.

Just like finding out that each of the eight times he had taken the United States Postal test to work as a postal clerk, he had passed but was told he had failed. Like, my Uncle Harold was - Harold Beecher Houston - was hired and working in an administrative position at the post office before Pop was ever hired. And he was the one that clued Pop into the fact that, no, you're not dumb, you passed the test every time, but everywhere I see your name I see a black dot before, it, and he said, that's a code for this is a black. And it seemed to be whoever was postmaster in Davidson, they kept making sure he was told that he didn't make it. Because, if he had been hired during that time he would have been here in Davidson.

Interviewer: So, did he end up working in the post office system?

Brenda Tapia: When I was a sophomore at Howard, which was 1968 - '69, he finally left the college after having been there 20 years coming in '49 and went to the post office. Yeah, at the airport.

Interviewer: Down at the airport, okay.

Brenda Tapia: Yeah, so he ended up having to drive 60 miles or more roundtrip because a lot of that was before I-77, was nothing but 21 and 15. That's a lot of wear and tear on your car and on you. But the college, in that way, helped out a lot. And I would assume and feel pretty certain that was why when black students said that they were declaring Davidson an unhealthy environment for African-Americans or black students and demanded certain things, one of which was the hiring of a minister whose religious experience was more in line with theirs, is how I got the job. Because, when I was hired in December of '85, Davidson needed a Chaplain about as much as I need three more holes in my ear, you know. They didn't need one. But my hiring was to meet that criteria, which to me was a joke because they said a minister that reflected their history and culture. Well, Presbyterianism isn't a part of our history and culture. Now, if I had been Baptist it made a lot of sense, but Presbyterian, no. But anyway, I was hired. And supposedly working toward increasing the number of faculty and students of color at Davidson.

I remember my mother getting a lot of flak—well, not so much my mother as her employers. She worked not only at Reeves Brothers Mill in Cornelius, she was a maid for George and—can't remember Ms. Crawford's first name—George Crawford and his wife. She worked for them for years and was the highest paid maid in Davidson. And I think being the highest paid maid meant

she worked 40 hours a week for \$35. And a lot of people complained to the Crawfords, but the Crawfords were—well, they weren't really Yankees, I mean, they were from Virginia, but they had a sense of equality that not many whites here at that time had. So, they believed in paying, you know, a fair wage for a fair day's work. But she worked at the mill, for the Crawfords, and then they started—I think it was Mrs. Sailstad—started a preschool in her basement for white kids. And Dovey worked with her. And then they got moved to Davidson College Presbyterian Church and then eventually they were moved to the daycare center over here on Gamble Street. But Dovey wasn't working for them when they went there. But that was the type of work. Trying to think.

As far as businesses, the only black business I saw before I went to college were the two Norton - the barber shops, and Ralph's was on the corner where the college bookstore is now, and Hood's was further down in the middle of the street. Oh, and the shoe repairman, Mr. McKissock, who I think became a minister eventually. He ran a shoe shop, shoe repair that was right, maybe one door or two doors down from the soda shop. Those were the only black faces you saw on Main Street prior to 5:00. At 5:00 you saw black faces for the first time going in buildings to clean, but prior to that you didn't see black people.

In fact, the only time you might see black people on Main Street was on Sunday when teenagers especially were, like, just walking. It was you walk up town, you walk back. Because any of the stores we went into, we were not very warmly treated, hurry up and get them out of here, watch them real close. And some where you could get food, in the back, or - somebody tried to tell me, but I don't remember this - it was somewhere here, you stuck your hand in a hole in the wall.

Interviewer: Yeah, I haven't heard that one. Yeah.

Brenda Tapia: Yeah, and I don't remember that, but I do remember getting carry outs. And today, because I prefer to eat in front of the television, the computer I should say, I quite often get carry outs. Not because I can't go into the restaurant and sit down and eat, but nobody - I don't - can't always treat somebody else, and so, you know, you're really not in there that often. But it was interesting growing up here. I think it would have been more desolate if it hadn't been for the college because what cultural, educational opportunities, really more of them came from

the college. Because Charlotte was 25 miles south and you just didn't waste gas or have gas to go there.

The bus was not any better, too much than it is now. I can remember my uncle taking me to Charlotte when I was little on the bus. We'd get a greyhound bus up there in front of the drug store, which is now Kindred, and go to Charlotte. And then, it's like, you would leave maybe 6:00 or 7:00 in the morning, you don't get back until - yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. Well, when you were going to Ada Jenkins, what kind of stuff did you have other than class? Did you have any kind of extracurricular activities, or clubs?

Brenda Tapia: Oh yeah, we used to - we had 4H clubs, we had - we had 4H club, we had glee club, choir, drama. Drama was a big thing. Every spring we put on a play, every Halloween the church and the school would come together and they'd have a Halloween festival. I can remember bobbing for apples. I remember one Halloween my grandfather made this roulette wheel and it wasn't really gambling as much as they got people to donate gifts and things and they would put them on the numbers on this board and then they would spin it, and if your number came up you got to get that prize. Pin the tail on the donkey, lots of dancing. We loved to dance.

And we had sock hops almost every Friday at Ada Jenkins. We had sock hops. They would take us away to things. I can remember playing with the Charlotte Symphony because of the band. And the fact that I had gotten a xylophone, a little small xylophone as a child, I remember playing the larger xylophones with the Charlotte Symphony orchestra during the Nutcracker Suite. I also remember band competitions. We had band and every year there was state competitions. Now, in elementary school you didn't go to state competitions. But one year the required piece that - like, there would always be the school would choose a piece, but the judges would choose a piece for everybody to play.

When I was in the 8th grade, the song they chose was Mozart's *Così fan tutte* which has a bassoon solo. And Mr. Ledbetter, who was the band director at Ada Jenkins and Torrence-Lytle, couldn't get any of the high school kids to even look at a bassoon. And so, because I played clarinet and it's not that much of a switch, he asked me would I be willing to try. And I was like, well, my parents can't afford a bassoon, they're still paying for my clarinet - because I was the

only one in the band that was actually purchasing, the rest of them were renting their instruments. He said, well, I will rent you a bassoon if you will learn to play.

I had six weeks to learn to play the bassoon and that solo part. My dad, because of, again, chemistry students needing extra help, had a chemistry student who was a bassoon player. So, I went to the college and got tutored on the bassoon and we won state competitions because of that solo. But that gave me an opportunity to visit North Carolina State in Durham and I fell in love with the campus in the 8th grade. And that was what got me through North. North was very difficult for me because Ada Jenkins was like going to school with your family.

That was one thing I carried into Love of Learning, that was the most crucial element that helped our program be successful. Black teachers not only lived in your neighborhood because of segregation, but they developed relationships with you, they became surrogate parents. You did your homework, you tried to excel in every class not because you had sense enough or maturity enough to know that education is really important, but to please Mr. Fox. Mr. Fox such a wonderful man, you know, there's no way I'm not going to do his homework. Now, Mr. so and so, maybe I might goof on his, but not Mr. Fox, he's really good.

Also, we saw our teachers not just in the classroom, but in our community. My mother fixed most of my teachers' hair. Like I said, those who were fortunate to live in the black community - the principal lived in Charlotte, but the first principal at Ada Jenkins lived in Davidson. But the majority of our teachers, or many of them, lived here in Davidson, the rest lived in Charlotte. And it really made a difference. They were concerned - if they noticed that you seemed to show interest or skill in drawing, they would look for art programs and raise money or use their own money to see that you got to go to some special art program in the summer to enhance your talents.

It was the same thing at Torrence-Lytle. When I went to Torrence-Lytle, they had—compared to Ada Jenkins—they had everything. We didn't have—they had French club, math club, honor society, drama club, there was a band, glee club, home ec., vocational aid, all of that. And I remember student government. I remember by 10th grade, my second year at Torrence-Lytle, I was president of every organization except for the student council, which I was vice president because you had to be a senior to be president of student council. Looking forward to 11th grade

oratorical contest because back then they put a lot of emphasis on memorizing famous people's poetry and work. That was when I got my first taste of black authors.

I remember my 9th grade teacher, Mr.—can't remember his name. I know my math teacher was Ms. Dozier, and she even took me to, like, Otis Redding concerts. She was really hip. She was a young woman. She and Mr. whatever his name is—I'm blanking on it right now—they had just graduated from Johnson C Smith in Charlotte. I forgot where he was from. She was originally from South Carolina. But that's how I got to see Benny King, all the—she dated a local WGIV disc jockey, so she had free tickets to the concerts and the parties afterward. And she even invited to me in the 9th grade to one of the after parties, but I was too country and scared to go, so I just stayed in her apartment.

But I remember the English teacher turned me on to James Baldwin. And in the 9th grade I started reading everything that James Baldwin wrote. I even started trying to write like James Baldwin. One of the things about his writing was that James Baldwin would start a sentence and it would end a paragraph later with one period. And, naturally, that didn't make my English teachers very happy. But I loved James Baldwin. And it really helped when we got to the SAT, but the main thing was that they fed our self-esteem, they built us up and they made us feel like anything was possible. Even though we were quite aware we were getting second hand books—like, I can remember text books that should have been burned, there was so little left.]

Or, sometimes the white kids got into writing, hiding racist notes. You know, you might turn a page, hey, nigger dummy. You know, and it's like, wow. But it was seldom we got new books. I don't remember new books, really, until my 10th grade year when we were - 10th graders across North Carolina were guinea pigs for a new text book. They were looking at combining biology and chemistry. And so, instead of having straight biology and cutting up a lot of stuff, we had biochemistry. And I'm really grateful we did because when we got to Howard, that was my first day. My biology class at Howard, they were using that text book for the first time. So, for me, it was a repeat, so I got an easy A out of that which was not often at Howard because I didn't have time to study. There was too much going on campus and in Washington DC.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah, yeah. Now, you went to - you also ended up at North, right?

Brenda Tapia: Right.

Interviewer: What grade did you go over there?

Brenda Tapia: I chose to go my junior year. Like, when I was a junior, Ruby Diane Houston, my first cousin, was 10th grade. She and Garfield Carr didn't have a choice. The first year of integration in Mecklenburg County - and I thought this happened all over the county, but found out almost 30 years later we were the only ones that integrated like this. They closed out the 2nd and the 10th grade in the all black schools and forced those kids to integrate the white schools. Juniors and seniors were given the option to transfer.

Teachers at Torrence-Lytle met with us, top of the class, and suggested to us, especially juniors, to go on and transfer to North because they knew that Torrence-Lytle would be closed for the class of '67. That the class of '66 would be Torrence-Lytle's last class, so you might as well go on and get adjusted. And so I took that option with five other people, but those five other people that went with me didn't chose college prep classes. We were really tracked back then. You had college prep, you had regular, you had vocational. And I would ride a bus from Davidson to North every morning with all black kids. Once we went through that door it looked like 5:00 at an integrated business now, where employees come out, black go one way, white go the other.

Well, when we would get off that bus and go into North, black students went that way, I went that way. And so, therefore most of my classes I was the only black. I think the most blacks I had any class was in French and there were maybe five of us in there. But other than that, I was either completely by myself or one other black would be in the class. And that's probably one of the biggest mistakes integration ever made. To give the look of diversity in classes, you might have three black 10th grade and four 10th grade classes. Rather than putting two of them in one and two in the other so you would have some company, you were spread out so it would seem to be more. And that caused me to have severe isolation at North compared to Torrence-Lytle where I knew everybody, and everybody knew me.

And I was late to class not because I'm hanging out, making out with my boyfriend or something, because this teacher wants to talk about some upcoming program and we need you to do this, or we want this to happen. And then you get to North and you're invisible. And you were either invisible or you feel like you're dripping with AIDS because people see you, aaah, and run. And to have gone to high school with some of the people who are in key positions in

Davidson now was really funny. The way they were then and the way they present themselves now, and I look at them. And I try to give them—black people have a way of speaking with their face and their eyes if you know how to understand it, and I have a way of trying to look at them like, you are lying.

You may have been friendly to the athletes - and that's something I learned in later years that I didn't know. I thought that athletes had a very smooth transition during integration because they brought winning scores to school for the first time, but they were harassed as well, just not as obvious, and not as much. It was like they became valued because of their skills. But for the others of us, we were either run from or totally ignored. And I think one of the worst things in the world is to be invisible. It's very upsetting, it's very lonely. Or to raise your hand, be the first to raise your hand and not called on, and if you are called on, everything stops and you got more pressure because it's totally quiet, everybody's looking down your throat, you give your answer, and then they go back as though you didn't say anything.

Some of my teachers were real bad, they were really messing with me psychologically. They would just paraphrase or resay in other words what I just said, but they would do it in such a way that I would be left—what was wrong? —that's what I said, you just said it another way. I didn't realize how that was preparing me—like, there were many times at Davidson I would be sitting in a meeting and we were trying to figure something out or do something and I would say, well, what we need to do is blah, blah, blah, and everybody would stop and they'd go back, and two seconds later you or another white person would parrot what I had just said. Oh, that's such a wonder—yes, that's what we need to do.

And it was all I could do to keep from, like, using my favorite, MF, I just said that, you know, are you deaf, crazy? And it got to be real funny when I would meet that occasional Yankee or hip southerner who would walk out of meeting with me and get me alone and say, did you notice how everybody talked down to you, not across to you, was always down, and did you notice how you would make suggestions or give solutions and they would be ignored and then somebody else would say the—not even change it and they would go off like they just heard it. And I'm like, oh, you noticed that, yeah, well, that's what I live with day in and day out. It's getting tiring.

What else? But, you know, we didn't have businesses. It was nothing to walk into a store or business and you be the first customer there and then a white person comes in and, oh, well hello, Mr. Fox, how are you, can I help you today. And you stand there like, you were waiting on me, or, I'm next, there was nobody in here but me and now you're waiting—he just walked in here. But, you know, you just accepted it. But it really has bothered me over the years why I never questioned the separation of schools when I did. And then, to find out 30 years after I went through the torment of being at North - now, unlike Ruby, my cousin, who said they were spit on, I was never spit on, but I would have preferred that to the psychological damage that they did. Yeah.

Because, to walk into a cafeteria for a teenage who's already sensitive and adolescent which is a period in our life where we have a microscopic pimple and we see Mount Everest on our face, to walk into a cafeteria and have everybody get up and - four tables in a crowded cafeteria are now empty because people are trying to get away from you. Plus, North used to have us as seniors, you practiced for graduation from day one. So, whenever we had assemblies in the gym, we would line up and march in. And to look at the gaps because underclassmen would go in first and we'd have to take the upper bleachers leaving all of the first three bleachers for the senior class - and when they come in, if there were six black people coming then about 10 feet back would come the first white students.

Then there might be black students and 10 feet behind them would be some whites. And then, you could sit down on Star Spangled Banner when it was played, but when Dixie was played you better stand up if you didn't want to be expelled. And people say, are you serious. I say, I'm serious. Dixie was very important. To look at that bigger than life size Confederate soldier every time you went in the gym. I was so happy when I heard—I was at North from '65 through '67—in '73 black students burned that soldier out on the parking lot. I was so happy to hear that.

Interviewer: What was the mascot back then? Were they rebels or -

Brenda Tapia: Yeah, we were the North High Rebels, and the Confederate -

Interviewer: North High Rebels. They became the Vikings afterwards, yeah.

Brenda Tapia: Right, when they burned the soldier.

Interviewer: It probably killed them if they had the name North, didn't it.

Brenda Tapia: You know, that didn't make any sense, especially since we had a South Meck. South Meck should have been the Rebels and the Confederate, but no, here we are the North. And it's funny, even to this day that war is still a point of tension for southerners and Yankees. I have a lot of Yankee friends now and they talk about how people just won't let them forget they're a damn Yankee.

Interviewer: Yeah, I was talking to somebody the other day and I said, you know, it's kind of interesting how if black folks bring up something about, well, you know, got the issues still from slavery and maybe this - something to reparations, and then some white person will say, well, you know, it's time to get over that, you know, that's all been done in the past and we need to get on with life. But boy, you bring up the war, and they're right back in the middle of it.

Brenda Tapia: It's like it's still going on. Yeah. That was a bone of contention for us. But, you know, even with everything that I've experienced, and I think I've experienced a lot racially, I really love the South. I love many of the traditions of the South. It was just the unjust treatment and the fact that it continues to today makes my blood boil. And especially the denial. Because as a psych undergraduate major I know the first step to dealing with the problem is being able to say, I have a problem. You have to say you an alcoholic before you can start any type of recovery or get help. And we won't admit how we are.

There's always been interracial dating. What's funny to me is to look at white people in Davidson now and be able to say, mm-hmm, there's a coon in the woodshed with that one. Because there are white people here that they're black blood, to most southerners black or white. Because a southerner can smell an 1/8 or a 1/4 of black blood. We know what to look for. You know, we're trained almost like that. But the tensions and the inequality and the things that they do - and what bothers me most with living here now is that the thinkers, the cream of the crop, most of them have either dummied down or moved away.

When I got to Howard, I realized just how smart people were here in Davidson. You know, as I sat in classes sometimes and I'm struggling and I thought, Patricia Carr could do this in her sleep. You know, Barbara Stewart could do this with her eyes shut. Marshall Lowery wouldn't even—he'd do it in passing, you know. And the fact that they didn't get the opportunity, that

unequal - and playing field. And the economic gap, I wish everybody in Davidson would read Charles Shower's 1989 senior thesis for Davidson College. He did it on the economic gap between blacks and whites back then.

Interviewer: What year was that?

Brenda Tapia: 1989.

Interviewer: '89, okay.

Brenda Tapia: Charles Showers. What was her name? Grey Timberlake came maybe seven or 10 years later and did something similar, but he predicted and he's been right. The gap has just— what is it when you go eight, 16, 32, 64, like that? —exponentially increased. And how we talk about doing something about it, but we aren't.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Well, I remember - let's see, how long has it been? - it's been in the last six, seven years anyway I know, that we were working on something at church - been less time than that - working on something at church and I got into the local census information to - was trying to learn something about, well, who's in the community and who are we compared to who's in, all that kind of thing. And I got interested in that stuff, that's the kind of stuff I like. So, I remember it dawning on me that the average household income of a white family in, I don't know, five years ago was, I don't know, I'll say it was \$80,000/\$90,000. Something like that. And the average for the average black household was \$14,000. And I - I mean, and this was after I had been making my journey towards enlightenment a while. And, I mean, that just - god damn, that's hard to believe. That it'd be - because then what that tells you, well, you've got people that are - black folks that are making a reasonably decent income, well, how about the ones that they're not. You know, Social Security check about that big.

Brenda Tapia: Yeah, I know about that first hand. Got to stop, I'm having a nicotine fit.

Interviewer: Alright, alright. This might be a good time to take a break anyway.

Brenda Tapia: If you want I can put on some more coffee and not make it quite as strong. Let's see, what else do I have.

Interviewer: We've covered the bases pretty well.

Brenda Tapia: Yeah, you know, it's hard when you're trying to - it's been so much and I've talked about it so much that right now running scared wishing that I had - I had been trying to figure out some way of making extra money. Talking about Social Security, I get \$1,182 a month, and other than the \$6,000 and some TIAA-CREF retirement from the college that I get because going - at the time I was trying to save my house. He set my pay - going to set my payments up such that I pay in January for the whole year rather than get \$300 and some a month, I get a \$6,000 payoff in January and have to make it on that until the next January. And I've invested so much money in my father's house that when he says, well, this is my house, I say, oh no it's not. As much money - did you put in \$11,600 roof on this, are you trying to save now to get your electricity checked. Because I don't think the wiring in that house has been looked at since they first redid it in the '60s.

Interviewer: And you said the house was built, what, '49?

Brenda Tapia: 1949, it's a veteran of foreign war building. And then, during that time, because it was outside the city limits, fraternities at Davidson, that's where they had their frat parties because they didn't have a Patterson Court for it. They wanted to have a drink out like they have anywhere now. They would come out there. My uncles loved it because white folks, when they get drunk, oh man, they're subject to open a liquor bottle, take one swig out of it, close it, throw it down and not get where they throw it. We had plenty of liquor thanks to them guys. And my uncles could drink. In fact, I come from - except for my grandfather and great grandmother, and my mother and my dad, everybody else was a functional alcoholic. You knew better, when—

End of Recording, Part 2.

Start of Recording, Part 3.

Interviewer: So, Brenda, we've had a pretty good interview and I think probably the last thing that I wanted to chat about - we've covered a lot - is we've talked a lot about how you saw life when you were growing up and everything, and I'm just curious as to do you see any changes around in the community since then? Do you see anything that has improved? Do you see anything maybe that's gotten worse? Some things that have not changed at all?

Brenda Tapia: What I see now is probably why I'm still angry. Yes, there has definitely been change, but not that much. I think the thing that concerns me most now is the disappearance of blacks in this community. You ask me have things changed, look at our town council. You see, they hired their first person of color in I don't know when, when they have hired a Hispanic - I think she's town clerk. But prior to that everybody is literally white. You've had one black person on town council for ever and ever, Joe McClain, Patricia Carr [Stinson], then her brother Garfield Carr for a number of years. But in the last 10 years there's been no black representation, though white representation you see - the whites that supposedly are over this area, you see them during elections and you don't see them again. There's nobody speaking for our issues.

And jobs are what really I'm looking at. How hard - if I were to go to Charlotte, if I were willing to deal with 77 and that traffic, yeah, I could have been employed as soon as I left Davidson. But I had been spoiled, I liked being where if I wanted to I could walk to work. I wanted - it's been hard trying to find somewhere to work. Transportation, if you say, well I just can't drive on the expressway - if I were in Atlanta or DC, the public bus system - but we've used the bus system to help us keep this little Davidson a white enclave. We are the richest area in Mecklenburg County outside of South Charlotte, and, yes, there are blacks here now, but they're not from here. We have not been able to form any kind of strong bonds with them, and you keep seeing - like, this particular - where we are now, when I moved to this part of Davidson in 2000, my personal dream fulfilled - I always wanted to live in the alley when the alley existed. I wanted to live here when it first started because even though our house over there on Catawba is not that far from here, we might as well have been in another county, another state in terms of the black community. And now, this is no longer a black enclave.

I didn't realize how segregated we were until Damian shot the policeman - Damian Kerns shot the policeman and the policeman shot Damian, they killed themselves. And I realized then what a ghetto this was. Because they closed this area off that day. You couldn't get in or out of this area. And I think I had really realized how isolated this section of Davidson was. When I first came back here in '85 I remember going to Charlotte for something social with another black employee who had been hired several months before me in the admissions office. Gary lived on Concord Road in the duplex across from Jackson Court. And when he took me to Charlotte, I was living then in my parent's home - and when we came off of 77, instead of him turning on

Jetton to take me home, he shot straight up Griffith Street, turned right on Main Street. So, I thought, oh, okay, we're going to go by his house on Concord Road and have a nightcap and then he's going to take me home. But when he passed Concord Road on Main Street, suddenly the city skills I had developed kicked in and it's like, where are we going? And he said, I'm taking you home. You're taking me home? You could have taken me home when we came off 77. He had been oriented to Davidson by avoiding this area.

And as I talked to Davidson College students, same thing, black and white, they are oriented to this community based on this part of the community not existing. It's only a couple of white students that I've ever met over there. One guy, Ben Kinnerman, that I would admire until the day I die. The first day he came here as a student he walked all over Davidson, oriented himself to this community. And back then in '85 when I returned here and Ben shortly afterwards came as a student, there was a vast difference between the east side of the railroad track and the west side. Houses on the east side were spaced. Over here, if you broke wind, your next door neighbor said, you're excused, or if you sneezed, your next door neighbor said, bless you, because the houses were so close. And now, to see that everywhere in Davidson and more white houses, it's like, really, the black community of Davidson benefited, once people who were not from here that were white, started buying property and homes on this side of the track.

It's been interesting to me as I read minutes from, I think they call themselves Circle at 30. It's a group of basically whites who live on this side of the tracks that complain about things that are happening in Davidson that we've complained about for years, but anytime we complained about anything you always had what I call Uncle Tom black folk - oh, the white folks is so good to us, y'all shouldn't say that, they ain't doing that. And it's like, are you crazy, they are doing it. The same thing with that asbestos hill over there. For them to say that they done land samples and there's none across Sloan Street, it's crazy. Who did you pay to do that, you know. Because as long and as deep and as thick as that stuff is, of course it has contaminated water levels and sewer levels, and it is on the other side of the track - I mean, on the other side of Griffith Street.

Or the fact that they would even consider putting a road on Potts Street where a large number of family with small black children who could get hit in the street just to make it easier for commuters to get through Davidson. And the folks that speak out about it, they considered sick

or crazy. Like, nobody listens to Evelyn Carr in Davidson, but they should because she may have a very angry way of presenting it, but she's not lying. And they act like we aren't supposed to speak out. And we don't. To see the black churches in this community so inefficient and not doing anything. The only black church that's viable here is filled with people that aren't even from this community that don't really have the history or care enough to fight with and for us.

My home church was the leading church in this community for as long as I can remember before I left. But now that I'm back, they aren't doing anything. And the fact that they let their land be taken for a parking lot, how they would allow - okay, if you're going to let it be a parking lot, pave it because the majority of the people that attend that church are people older than me. With type 2 diabetes it's hard to walk on loose stones. Why was it not - why did you just put stones out there and 2x4s? You wouldn't have done that on white property. But even more than that, why didn't we speak out about it, why weren't we charging people to park down there long before they made it a parking lot?

As it is now, if they wanted to have a dinner on their lawn as we did many, many times with my growing up, they can't do that now. And they just accept it. The church is about to cave in on them. And why they would put up - what do you call those - a barometer to show you how much money you're raising toward building a church and then not move the thing. If I learned nothing at Davidson College, if you're going to put up a barometer to show how much money, the best way to do it is wait until you have raised 2/3 of what you want, put it out there as maybe only 10%, and then you can increase it. When people see it increasing, people that weren't even going to give want to get in on the bandwagon, and so you get the last little bit you need. But the way they're doing it, it looks like they're not raising any money, and they probably aren't. Because everybody there pretty much is on a fixed income or an inadequate income. And the fact that we won't unify and come together, that we can't talk to each other, that's my greatest pain.

But I must say, change, we didn't—my classmate, Terry Springs, was the first black policeman that we ever had in Davidson. That happened during the 18 years that I was gone. Now, yes, we have more policeman, but just because their skin is black doesn't make them black. And so, I think of the case that I took to them in 2009 that was never resolved. I mean, my sister had a caregiver that ripped her off for \$26,000. I took out a warrant for this girl's arrest, and after two

years, the guy that's now—I think Ingram might be assistant chief or somewhere up there. He said, with all I can see, you and her were in cahoots on this. And I'm like, you really don't know me, do you? You don't know how my mother raised me, and even though she's cold and rotted in her grave, I would not dare do something that's dishonest or wrong. Believe me, if I do something wrong I will tell you before you tell me. But, you must think - why would I steal from my own sister, that's crazy. But no resolution ever came of that. And I'm like, I wonder how many other people have possibly reported crimes and nothing happen, you know.

There's nobody, I feel, looking out for black interest in this community. And the fact that the town never really celebrated Martin Luther King. I started the first celebration of Martin Luther King at the college. And the town uses that as an excuse to say, you know, this is ours. And every year it's become less and less. And I'm like, we need to always remember Dr. King whether we liked him or not. And, I don't know. So, yeah, few things have changed but not much. The biggest change is the disappearance of the black community.

And then, I remember talking with Randy [Kincaid] and being told exactly what I know is going to happen. I asked him-and see, that's the part of the pain in Davidson, that white people can do things that are wrong, wrong as wrong can be, tell you they're going to do it, and there's nothing you can do to stop it. But he told me, I said - because I realized when the poor white mill community that was left on Delburg, when they were run out, I was trying to get black people to organize to protest that. But they wouldn't. And I said, haven't y'all never read that poem where the man said, they came after the Catholics but I wasn't Catholic so I didn't do nothing, they came after the Jews, they came after this, and when they came after me there was nobody to do it. And I said, that's what's happening to us because, yeah, they started the gentrification with Delburg, but now it's gone all over Davidson to the point that this is no longer a black area.

These so-called bungalow's projects - which I don't know why they ever referred to this as a project having lived in Washington DC and Atlanta, that ain't no project, that's an elite area of houses. But they told us when those were being built, they were being built for people like me and my sisters. If we decided to spend most of our adult life somewhere else, our parents' age, we come home to take care of them, we want our own place, we'll be able to afford at least this.

But I see very few people - I mean, I really want somebody to explain to me why Guydell Connor is not living in one of these bungalows, having been the black face on the Davidson Housing Coalition since it started. But again, because I was on it for three months, I know why he ain't. I mean, when I came back here in '85, between '85 and '89 every major group you could think of, Lake Norman, Urban League, Planned Parenthood - god, I don't even remember the others now - I was selected for the board of directors. And my experience in DC and Atlanta, people on the board of directors are usually appointed because they have the money to help the organization who's board they're on.

So, I'm trying to figure out, I ain't got no money, why - and then I realized as I look - oh, I'm here for color. Well, it was the same thing with the Davidson Housing Coalition. I was asked to be on that, I go to the first meeting, I sit there. Nobody says, I'm sure all of you know Reverend Tapia, no type of introduction. I kept asking when is the training session for the board? Oh, well, we've had that this year, we'll let you know when the next one is. But nobody ever explained anything. You were just in there to rubber stamp whatever Margo and Marsha had decided. And that's too many black people's attitudes about anything here in Davidson still. Oh, they don't care what we think.

That's why Common Ground that I helped start in the 90s didn't get off the ground. As I tried to get black people to come to the - oh, well, you know they done had a meeting before the meeting. No, no, no, no, no, this is not about building anything or getting something that we don't have or fixing something that we've got, Common Ground is about us realizing that we're all the same on the inside, different on the outside, just to help us be a real community. Oh, well, you know, white people ain't going to pay - no, I ain't going. And I thought it was interesting, especially when they had their little so-called riot in Charlotte. Common Ground in Charlotte went just the opposite of Davidson. In Charlotte, they couldn't get whites to be involved. They had all these black people.

Here I am in Davidson with 30 White people, one Black person, and my agenda for that night was to discuss white privileges. How do you discuss the article written by a professor at Wellesley with 30 white people and two black people? You can't do anything with that. Every meeting it was like that, and I said, heck with it. Plus, the governing board of Common Ground

at that time, people were beginning to get into, well, you don't do as much for Spinnaker as you do for the McConnell area, you don't do as much for Pages Pond as you do for the Gate. I didn't really care about those people even though maybe I should have, but they didn't care about me so I certainly didn't care about their concern.

So, yeah, some things have changed but not enough to even mention. I see no difference between Davidson in 2017 and Davidson 1957 - if we're going to go with sevens. Not that much difference at all. And I don't have any hope that it will change. I predict that within the next 10 years you'll be able to count black people who are actually like me, born and grew up here in this area.

Interviewer: Well, thank you, Brenda, I know that's a tough subject but sometimes we got to lay that stuff out there and remind us it's going on because we have a bad habit of seeing what we want to see.

Brenda Tapia: Well, maybe because I consider things like dying of cancer and brain tumors tough stuff, no, this isn't. It ain't tough at all, it's just life, unfortunately, the way it is. Because that's beginning to concern me, do we have something in our food and water? I don't know about you, but I have had more people to call and ask for prayer because they're loved ones got cancer. And not just one. At least before now it used to be so and so's got breast cancer, but now they're like my spiritual mentor: breast cancer, ovarian cancer, renal failure, and cancerous mass not attached to any organs in her stomach. Or my beloved mother's caregiver, brain cancer, four stage lung cancer, cancer on the peripheral nerve in his shoulder and cancer somewhere else. And I'm like...

End of Recording, Part 3.