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Rev. Freddie Dixon Oral History

- [Stephanie] All right, so to begin,

will you please tell me your  
name and where you were born?

- Well, my name is Freddy Dixon Senior,

and I am a native Texan

and proud to say that I was  
born in San Antonio, Texas.

- [Stephanie] And when  
did you move to Austin?

- I moved to Austin in 1973

after living in a place  
called Beeville Texas.

Many people are familiar with  
Beeville but some aren't.

Beeville is a community between

San Antonio and Corpus Christi.

It once had the distinction

of having a Naval base,  
training base, there called

"Chase Field,"

which is no longer there now,

but that was

a very strategic site

because it trained a lot of Navy pilots.

And as you know,

you need to train pilots to be able

to land on the ships, et cetera.

So it was enough inland

to have these airplanes

to move out to the ocean  
where the ships were,

where they could practice  
landing and takeoffs.

- [Stephanie] Very interesting, okay.

So when you came to Austin,

did you live in different parts?

- No, I specifically lived in east Austin.

I have always lived in east Austin.

And

as things might happen,

I'm planning on

continuing until such  
time as I'm, you know,

not able, gone to the great beyond.

- [Stephanie] So not  
including the addresses,

but will you tell some  
of the street names?

- Okay, some of the street names,

I lived on San on Hackberry street,

which is a side street to the main street

that intersects with San Bernard avenue.

So for about seven years of my ministry

at Wesley United Methodist church,

I lived absolutely in the community.

I lived just before the demolition

of Charlie's Playhouse,

right down the street  
from The Deluxe Hotel.

Right again, down the street

from the Victory Grill.

All of the places that  
no longer in existence,

they were in existence. They,

those places were in their  
last stage of existence

before most of them were  
either sold or demolished.

- [Stephanie] Would you explain to folks

what those businesses  
were, where they were?

- The Deluxe hotel, number one, was a

quite a famous hotel.

Why was it famous?

Is because in the

late forties, fifties, and sixties,

and right at the tip of the seventies,

for example, The Deluxe Hotel

was a place where a person stayed,

who were traveling.

And many African Americans remember

the movie here of late  
called 'The Green Book.'

Well, certainly The Deluxe Hotel

was one of the hotels  
listed in 'The Green Book.'

This was a place, a destination place  
for African Americans traveling.

Also, this was a destination place  
for Ike and Tina Turner,  
Bobby Blue Bland.

Although, he had some  
relatives and some friends  
where he exclusively stayed  
while performing here in Austin.

But when I began to talk  
about Ike and Tina Turner  
and the rest of the persons,  
as they called it on the chitlin circuit,  
they would stay at The Lux Hotel,  
which was on the corner of  
Hackberry and 11th street.

It was right at the wide,  
the famous wide that  
we have now where the,  
to the left you,  
it goes to Rosewood avenue  
and to the right,  
it is 11th street,

which is

one of the streets by  
Houston Tillotson College.

So it's on the backside of  
Houston Tillotson College.

Also, there was a hillside pharmacy,  
which is still in existence today.

It is not a pharmacy anymore,

but Dr. Hill

had an African American  
pharmacy building there,

and it was a pharmacy for  
many African Americans

on the east side who went to him.

It is now,

I'm proud to say,

still in existence,

but it is a leased building  
now by a restaurant.

But the actual building itself

is still in the hands of  
Dr. Hill's grandchildren.

- [Stephanie] Okay.

And you mentioned this,

the fact that when you came,

you could already sense

this kind of decline

of the culture?

I guess the emphasis...

- Indeed.

The decline had already  
set place, Ms. Stephanie.

The

demographic people

in Austin

were already aware

that the city of Austin would grow.

On 1929, 28,

we located African Americans  
in this particular place.

And one of the things

that we must note

is that African Americans who lived

in this six square mile area

lived there because they  
were provided services.

And that was a part of the reason why

they were forced into this area,

but the taxes were always kept low.

And why was that?

Is because many persons

on the west side of Austin own property.

And so if you own property,

you want that property to  
be able to make a profit

for you, produce secondary  
income for you, et cetera.

So you don't necessarily want two  
tremendous mortgages that  
you have to pay here.

One of them you want to be  
able to derive something from,

and so many African  
Americans prior to 1973,

you would try to get loans,

would try to do things for  
improvement on their homes,

but they would be redlined

by the banks downtown,

which intentionally did not want

these improvements to take place.

Because if things began to do that,

that would then make the  
taxes rise, et cetera,

which was for their convenience.

So I began to notice,

as pastor of Wesley  
United Methodist church,

as I got involved in the community,

that the city had designs.

And by me being very  
active in the community,

I

got

an opportunity

by the first,

well it was really Carole Keeton Rylander

who was the first woman to be  
mayor of the city of Austin.

And at that time they  
could appoint citizens

to various city commissions.

And,

so I was appointed to  
the planning commission

by Carole Keeton Rylander

and later when she left,

I was continued by Jimmy Snell,

who was the first council member.

And by me having that opportunity to sit

on the planning commission,

which is able to look  
at the future planning,

designation, zonings, et cetera,

of things getting ready to happen.

I began to note that

the city was moving towards east Austin.

They just went through a major

transformation there  
with the urban renewal,

which moved in and wasn't a success,

or I don't like to say success,



but it certainly  
was not perceived well  
because many of the African Americans  
who were  
involved in having to move, et cetera,  
were very unhappy.

Because they were told that  
they could come back  
and that just hasn't happened.

That's still a sore spot,  
even though that's almost  
40 something years ago,  
you can still see the areas  
that were supposed to be developed  
by the urban renewal are  
still kind of vacant.

The opportunity that many  
African Americans thought  
they were going to have in coming back  
and living in some new homes,  
et cetera, that dissipated.

So that's how I began to do that.

That then led me  
to get more involved as the pastor  
of Wesley United Methodist church.

And one of the things  
that I've always had as

my mantra is  
you want to leave things better  
than you found them.  
You want to always improve the conditions  
around you and the conditions for persons,  
for more opportunities.  
And as a pastor,  
I looked at that and I saw that.  
So an opportunity presented itself,  
and that was,  
Austin was in this transition.  
The city was looking  
so  
in 1980,  
I was given an opportunity  
to be involved in doing something,  
which I was excited about,  
in trying to be proactive  
with the Robertson Hill  
area, which it was called.  
And as a member of the Robertson Hill  
task force or committee,  
this came about as a result  
of Mark Rogers and the Guadalupe  
Neighborhood Association.  
What happened was Lady Bird Johnson.

And at that time,  
Congressman J Pickle  
received some money from  
the federal government  
in order to improve the state cemetery,  
which is right there on 11th street.  
As I mentioned before.  
And the neighborhood,  
particularly the Guadalupe neighborhood  
was somewhat in opposition.  
The opposition was, it was saying,  
well, why do we take all of this money  
and apply it to a cemetery  
where persons are not living, existing,  
but certainly the cemetery  
need to be upgraded, et cetera,  
as well.  
But at that point in time they felt that  
the money was much more needed  
for the improvement of housing  
in the Guadalupe area, et cetera.  
And that became a great controversy.  
And so Lady Bird Johnson,  
president Johnson's widow  
and J Pickle didn't want to get involved  
in the controversy of this versus that

as it related to the cemetery.

So what they did was

they released the federal funds,

as that they be released,

and that the city

then decided to do something

with the funds that were there.

So with the funds that were there,

then there were those of us

on the other side of the Guadalupe  
Neighborhood Association,

which happened to be there on 11th street.

We decided that we wanted,

or the city said,

what we'll do is we'll give

a portion of this money to the

Guadalupe Neighborhood Association.

Then we'll give another  
portion of this money

to the African American community,

to the north.

Excuse me.

And so with that in mind,

then we had a committee,

called the Robertson Hill committee.

And we set out,

and luckily I was thinking about you

and I knew you'd probably be asking something about that.

So

what we did

was we

were given

funding, and the city asked us,

what would you really want to do

with this neighborhood

to make improvements?

And so they then said,

well, we need to have some documentation, some idea.

So

back then,

in 1980,

we hired a young architect

from the University of Texas

named Norcell Haywood,

whom you know has distinguished himself

as a graduate in university to study.

And so what we did was

we took all of

the ideas and suggestions

of the existing 11th street.

Then we said, well,

what would you imagine  
Eastwood 11th street

looking like towards the future?

And our main concern was

that we wanted to see the Victory Grill,

that we wanted to see  
the Southern Dinette.

There was a place right down the street,  
called the Chuck Wagon.

We wanted to see all of this area improved  
made possible

so that the business owners  
who were on that street

could continue to thrive in a better area.

And we would be in step  
with the future.

And so here is a document  
that was designed by us,  
presented to the city  
council for its approval.

But first it had to go to  
the planning commission,

persons who made up

the steering committee for the  
Robertson Hill development.

A lot of them are no longer with us,  
but I'll just read some of the names.

I was the chairman.

MJ Anderson was an outstanding  
realtor here in the city,

as you know, and his wife, Ada Anderson.

They were all connected  
with Samuel Houston,

Houston Tillotson.

Mrs. Anderson recently gave  
a nice gift of \$3 million

to the University of Houston.

Then there was a Philip Baker

who was involved in the mortuary business.

O.H Elliot,

a long time

professor,

distinguished citizen of Austin

and the father of, Aura Houston.

Also, we had James Hamilton.

James Hamilton is significant here.

If you know anything about  
the James Hamilton name.

The James Hamilton name

is very significant  
because he is a descendant

of the Dietrich family.

And the Dietrich family, as you know,

owned, or were the person's,  
first African Americans

to own property in east Austin.

And the little yellow  
house that is now standing  
is the original house  
that the Dietrich family lived in.

And also

it was also a place where  
James Hamilton and his sons  
would go because James Hamilton  
lived in a house next door  
to the yellow house,  
which is no longer standing.

To make people understand  
where this is right now.

If they know anything  
about Franklin's Barbecue,

but before it was ever  
Franklin's Barbecue,

that was Ben's.

And Ben just now leased  
that out to Franklin,  
but this was a significance.

Let me move.

David Hill was a distinguished Barber.

There was Lee Lewis Jones.

Lee Lewis Jones was the  
owner of the Chuck Wagon.

You know, where the Wells  
Fargo building is now

on east 11th street?



Well, that was the building  
owned by Lee Lewis Jones and his family.  
And he was a barbecuer.  
There was Margaret Mana.  
There was Ms. Della Phillips.  
Della Phillips has interest  
on one of the owners,  
of Phillips Upshaw  
at Richard's Funeral Home on 12th street.  
Robert Shaw who was  
a musician and teacher  
in the public schools.  
Ada Simond who was a teacher, et cetera,  
in the public schools  
and distinguished writer  
historian here in the city of Austin.  
And Oliver Street,  
who also owned his own business.  
He was a contractor here  
and built many homes.  
So what I'm just showing you is  
this was the original draft  
of what it looked like, what we had,  
as you can see,  
as I turn the pages,  
you see the map here.  
As I began to,

I want to get to some of the suggestions.

As you can see here,

this is the original 11th street  
back then in the seventies.

And we took pictures of that  
to show what it looked like then.

Hold on just a minute.

And then,

I wanted to show you the projections.

These were  
ideas, designs.

These were some of the  
residential homes there

on San Bernard street,

which was one of the first  
paved streets in east Austin

that we know of.

We talked about the economic  
conditions in east Austin.

This was a beautiful plan.

As you can see,

these were some of the  
street rehabilitation,

as it said here,

street facade rehabilitation,

as you can see the old,

and this is what the new looked like.

So if you can imagine  
11th street back then  
and imagine 11th street  
now, this is still much of what  
has already taken place.  
Meaning that we, this was before our time.  
And I guess, you know, sometime  
as my father often says,  
you can be so far ahead in the future  
that people can mistaken  
you for the enemy.  
But right now,  
these were some of the ideas  
that we had back in the 1980,  
which are being actualized now.  
And the thing that I  
hate the most about that  
is that we work so tirelessly hard  
for blacks to have  
businesses and ownership  
till as we sit here in 2020,  
they are far and in between  
with blacks owning businesses,  
et cetera, on east 11th street.  
About the only real thing is  
a house owned by a family  
next door to the Blue Deleon.

Then the Victory Grill,  
which is still owned

by the family,

the black family.

Those

are basically, and the

Hillside pharmacy,

as I mentioned earlier,

is still owned

by an African American family.

But those that resident and  
those places that I'm naming

are the only places now that exist

that have any ownership.

But what we were really trying to do

was to make it possible

for African American residents  
and business persons,

to be able to take these improvements

that we had here and made  
for a better east Austin,

but this was not to be

desired by the east Austin community.

So you asked the question, what happened?

What happened was that there was

a big fight that broke out

within the African American community

and the Guadalupe Neighborhood Association

that made this not possible, what was that?

The African American community was divided about this project.

There were those who opposed it.

And as you know,

if you are in the political arena

and there's any divisiveness opposing this, that's there.

The other thing was that there was some dissension between the

Guadalupe Neighborhood Association

and the Robertson Hill Neighborhood Association

in that the Guadalupe Neighborhood Association

basically wanted to have a say so

about what went on here,

but at the same time,

they didn't want to have

anybody to have a say so about what went on

in the Guadalupe area as well.

So that bit of controversy,

the divisiveness within the African American community,

and certainly the conflict

with the Guadalupe Neighborhood  
Association, et cetera,

meant that the politicians,  
that is the elected officials,  
city officials and departments,  
we kind of didn't want to touch that.

And so

those of us who were part  
of the original community

kind of just faded away.

And Mr. Raydale Galloway stayed in  
and he created

further the Robertson Hill  
project.

Which then

worked with constructing  
and building homes

in the Robert Robertson Hill area.

So that's where you now get

the Robertson Hill  
Neighborhood Association,

the Robertson Hill Neighborhood projects.

That was Raydale Galloway, who  
was a barber on 12th street,

who kept things alive after that.

And he began with the  
original money that we had,

which was 700 and  
something thousand dollars.

And the Guadalupe Neighborhood Association  
received something like 600,000.

So each neighborhood

had

beginning

seed money to do something.

And so Raydale

after all of this controversy  
kind went into that,

kept things alive

and that's how you now have

the developed area where there are houses,

where there is the existence

of the Roberts Hill.

And I'm so happy to say,  
even with that controversy,

there was something good

that came of that.

And the good that came of that was

new homes were built.

People were still able to

live in the Robertson Hill area

and it still exists today.

But we still have that problem

of race here in Austin.

I hate to say that, but it is, you know,

it's there

and there is still the  
controversy going on

here in Austin right now

with the issue of gentrification.

And certainly what has  
happened to our neighborhoods

because of the growth and the expansion.

And

that doesn't sit well.

But let me also say, with this one,

there were some other things

that some of us did

that were not in worth.

And when

this failed,

there were those of us, in  
the community that failed,

we still could do something

about the area.

So

a group of us

called

the Austin Village

Association,

which composed to Van Johnson,



who is deceased now,  
Richard Mathias, et cetera,  
decided that we  
would do something  
with trying to make it possible  
for development  
to occur  
in east Austin.

Even though this project  
was no longer there.

And what we said was  
we wanted to find some zoning  
that would make it  
possible for development,  
for new homes, et cetera.

And so we  
came up with the neighborhood conservation  
combining district,  
and that it was called the NCCD.

The significance of the NCCD  
in 19, we did this about in 1991,  
which  
was voted by the city councilor,  
made it possible  
for what has happened now  
on east 11th street.

And what that means is  
that if you looking at  
street Jones building,  
if you are looking at  
the Southern Dinette,  
if you are looking at all of those places  
of historic note,  
Victory Grill,  
this allows for those buildings to exist.  
But it also allows  
for height in area, you know,  
if you look at the street Jones Building,  
I think one of them is  
four stories to the extent.

So  
that zoning  
was a broad zoning.  
So it meant that if you wanted to build  
a two or three story building,  
you didn't have to keep going back  
for every piece of property  
to get it zoned or looked at  
by the planning commission, et cetera.  
You were already guaranteed this  
within this  
combining district.

Meaning that this district  
allowed for height in area,  
it allowed for historic zoning.  
It allowed for single families, et cetera.  
And we were proud of this  
because  
this gave business owners  
an opportunity to do something  
without having to kind of  
keep going back and forth.  
To our dismay, however,  
the African community didn't,  
hasn't had the opportunity to realize  
the benefits from this  
because of where we are right  
now with gentrification.  
So this zoning  
really was a good zoning,  
but we weren't able as African  
Americans to capitalize  
as much as we possibly could  
because  
we were still denied,  
funding, possibilities  
for doing this, okay.  
That means that, you know,  
a lot of the properties  
and a lot of the people were redlined

and they know that.

And as I said,

Austin has a long history that  
we really have to overcome.

And here we sit now

with the same kind of problem before us

in that

African Americans now can't afford

to live in this particular area

because of the rising taxes, et cetera.

And I'm speaking of persons

who originally owned property here,

prior to 2017 or 2014,

because people have come  
in and bought up property,

et cetera.

So, you know, we don't have  
the capital, nor the money.

And where we are now is

the only thing that we have is memories.

And trying to keep those memories alive

in the history that we have.

But these were documents

that I don't want to have it said,

that the African American community

was not at the forefront

of the fight to redevelop its area.

There were a number of things that happened,

both within the African American community

and outside of the African American community,

that were prohibitive in not making these dreams come true.

I wish they could have been better,

but I don't want to have it noted

in the historical journals of history

that there were not opportunities

that blacks

were very progressive in their ideas,

but the political process at the time,

the community at that time,

it was very difficult.

And sometimes you can be, as I said,

and I'm being repetitive,

too far out front,

that you are mistaken for the enemy.

And this particular incident here

they were those progressive in the black community

who really wanted to do something,

wanted to make a change

and were change agents,

but because of the processes  
and the conditions and the  
situations at that time,  
we didn't reach the feel fruition  
of fulfilling some of our dreams.

- [Stephanie] But it's  
clearly set a blueprint?

- Yes, ma'am right.  
- Right.

- Yes.  
- Thank you.

- So when we get ready  
to say that, you know,

we look now  
at east 11th street, et cetera,  
we cannot say  
that, hold on just a minute.

We cannot say that there was not something  
done by African Americans  
for their own community.

And here is the documentation  
that all can see  
that there was very much evidence  
that we were  
on the case.

Trying to make our neighborhoods better,  
et cetera.

- [Stephanie] Well, thank

you so much for sharing that.  
To echo what you're saying,  
it's so important,  
'cause what happens a lot of times  
is that narrative gets left out.  
You know, folks speak as if  
we're these passive participants, right.  
In our own displacement.  
So as we've shared a lot of history,  
we've learned from a lot of folks  
kind of talking about the  
history of the community,  
but it's so important for  
what you have shared about,  
you know,  
those that have worked to  
kind of create this framework.  
To keep it moving and to  
preserve what we have.  
- And certainly  
we were not passive during that time.  
Certainly we were very progressive,  
but you know,  
like in any family,  
the squabbling, disagreements, et cetera,  
it was just too bad that we  
couldn't overcome the politics  
and the disagreements of that day.

But in spite of that,  
we do have a history  
of a progressiveness of a people  
who were not  
passive,  
who were not participants  
and still being change agents  
in our community.

And I want to bear  
proof

and witness to the actual  
evidence that there was.

- [Stephanie] Thank you very much.

- Thank you.  
- So important.

So taking a step

back,

some in thinking about Robertson Hill,

would you speak a little  
to your understanding

of the history of Robertson Hill

and even how you're  
defining the boundaries?

Because I know that that  
changes depending on who's,

you know, speaking about it

and then as well,



we will get into the history  
of Wesley United Methodist church.

– The Robertson Hill,  
as I previously mentioned  
was basically the area  
around east 11th street.

And I would dare say  
it started there with I35.

It  
was an area between 11th and 12th street,  
which ran all the way up  
to San Bernard or to Comal street.

Which was bounded to the  
north by 12th street,

bounded to

the

south by

seventh street

because we included Houston, you know,

Tillotson in that area

and we go all the way up,

I would dare say to

Comal and then to Chacon.

And that was kind of  
the Robertson Hill area.

– [Stephanie] Okay.

So now speaking about the history  
of Wesley United Methodist church  
and your tenure as the pastor there.

- Well, my tenure there at Wesley,

I was there for what about 20  
some odd years, 22 plus years.

And one of the things

Wesley was a very historic church.

It was created in the

1860s

by a white pastoring  
district superintendent,

By the name of Welch

who originally

started Wesley Methodist churches

as a mainland denomination, et cetera.

And quite, has a bureaucracy, et cetera.

And the district  
superintendent was in charge of

a number of ministers for his area.

There's the Bishop.

And then there are the Bishop's assistants

who are called district superintendents

for specific areas.

And Welch,

this was right after the reconstruction,

happened to be one of the white ministers

who was charged with  
starting African American churches  
in the state of Texas.  
And in particular  
in this section  
of the state,  
which was the middle section, et cetera.  
And Wesley was built as you know,  
we're a part of first United  
Methodist church downtown.  
Then Wesley had the distinction  
of building its own building  
down around \_\_\_\_\_ ninth street, downtown.  
Where the old post office,  
across the street from where  
the old post office did.  
So all of a sudden  
they were downtown.  
We were part of first church.  
They built and then they  
left out of first church  
and built their first building.  
But the reason why I said all of a sudden,  
here comes 1928,  
1929.  
The white community of  
the city of Austin said,

you remember, we had Kincheonville,  
we had Clarksville, Blackland.  
I could go on and on  
with these various communities  
that were in south Austin,  
now, north Austin, et cetera,  
where African Americans lived.  
But the city of Austin  
decided that, "Hey, we don't want this."  
And so  
the city of Austin through its ordinances  
and decree said, "Hey,  
if you want to live here in Austin,  
African Americans,  
"Then what you have to do now  
is we are creating a place east for you."  
And they called  
the east avenue,  
that was the main street that  
ran right through Austin.  
And that was one of the worst things  
that could have happened was the divide.  
'cause later we came and put I35  
and I35 really then was the  
death nail for the coffin  
because it absolutely said,  
you know, this is a separation between

the African American community  
and the white community.  
And with this big cement road there,  
you could see that that's what it was.

But anyway, at that  
time it was east avenue,  
as was called.

And the city said that  
most African Americans  
had to live in this area  
if you wanted to be provided  
civics city services, et cetera.

So the African-American  
had no choice,  
but to live in this area,  
which was so designated.  
And so as a result of that,  
Wesley then moved to its present location.

And at that time,  
the Wesley was the only church  
that had a pipe organ,  
was the only brick edifice.

And  
you would've never thought  
that African Americans could pay over 20,  
30, 40 thousand dollars

for the facility, and  
the original facility

at that time was around \$50,000.

And if you imagine 50,000 then,  
and you imagine where we are right now,  
the equivalency of what 50 was,  
is million dollars,  
million plus dollars now.

But just think about this for a moment,  
people right out of  
slavery  
into reconstruction,  
had the vision  
to build an edifice  
of such  
that is now Wesley  
United Methodist church.

But not having any education.

Only working in domestic situations  
as maids, butlers, et cetera,  
got into that much debt.

Can you, you know,  
now days those of us  
who are so sophisticated,  
we getting ready to do something.

We want to know what is my liability.

I don't want to be a part of that.

I can't dream that.

You know, I don't see us paying.

but here you had

a people of faith who said, "Hey,

we're going to do this,

and we're going to get in this debt,

and we going to pay for it.

And this is going to be our church."

And those people

had the vision and had the faith

and that church has been paid off

and paid for for years now,

but it was the will

and the determination

and far most the faith of these persons

to really dare to go ahead and do that.

And that was amazing

for persons to do.

Back in that day and time,

to build this kind of edifice  
in this segregated area

and to thrive, you know,

it kind of blows your mind.

Now with us with so much sophistication

and without edification

as I like to call it,  
you know,  
there's, where is that risk taking,  
where is that spirit of  
coming together, et cetera?

And nowadays, you know,  
it's with all of the knowledge  
and the education and  
the wearables we have,  
there's still for me,  
a lacking of persons  
to have that kind of vision  
and that kind of spirit  
to want to launch out  
with that kind of dept.

But Wesley has always been a church  
that has been  
a participant in the marketplace,  
that is  
speaking out for the rights,  
et cetera, of persons.

Dr. Everett H. Givens,  
who was a distinguished dentist,  
belonged to that church.

As you know, out 12th street,  
we have a Memorial for him,  
which is named,  
Givens Park, after him.



He was one of the members of Wesley.

Charles Akins,

who has a high school named after him.

The significance of him

is that his family and his mother

were prominent members of the

Wesley United Methodist church.

And he grew up in that church.

You had Dr. Yerwood Connor,

where we have the historic  
pink and green house

there on 12th street.

She was very instrumental.

And she was one of the first  
African American women to work

for the state health association

and be a bureau chief,

that is over a wide  
area of specialization.

So, you know Wesley

has been that kind of a church

where it has always  
been a people of faith,

by the people who have  
always been involved

in doing things in the community

and making life better.

So it was in that context,

when I came to Wesley,

that I felt

incumbent that I needed to  
take it on to a another level.

And I could sit here and  
talk about many of the things

that we've done, like the Urban League,

like the National Business  
League, which came out of there,

like the Chelan school,  
which was on the table.

So that would be a whole nother taping.

But that's

the story of Wesley.

- [Stephanie] Thank you,

and my final question for you,

you have really spoken to it  
in different ways already,

but wanted to give you an opportunity

if there is anything else you  
wanted to say or reiterate,

what would you like folks  
to know, meaning newcomers?

So people who kind of are part of this

most recent wave of

gentrification to the east side,

what do you think is  
important for them to know

about the history of this community

and what would you tell them?

- The most important thing  
that I want to say is that

there will no longer be an east side.

So we might as well say  
that that's over with.

Gentrification has taken place.

But what I do want to tell them is to,

as much as you possibly can,

there's an organization called 6 Square,

which I was a founding a  
member of, and a part of,

and still a part of,

that is trying to recapture that history

and that dynamic

and make it real.

So that history doesn't die.

And I want persons to know that

there is a history,  
there is a significance.

African Americans paid a tremendous part

in the making of the history of Austin

and just don't sit there  
and think it's east Austin.

But it was all of Austin  
where we made some history,

'cause we used to have businesses

down on east sixth street.

Right there by 35, where  
persons owned stores,

and owned restaurants.

And Austin has a rich history of blacks.

And so there was not this  
complacency of African Americans

in the city of Austin, no.

And in spite of all of the racism

and the impediments

that went on in Austin,

because I'm relying on that

because that was part of the reason

why African Americans were  
never given they're just due

here in the city of Austin.

Because there were not  
opportunities for them to do that

because the banks and other  
institutions prohibited

the movement and the opportunity.

And I want young people to know

first and foremost that  
there was a progressiveness

on the part of African Americans.

The second thing,

or however you want to say going forward,

is that I think everybody,

African American or non African American,

owes a sense of a  
contribution of yourself.

What have you done

to make better

for our society and for the community?

And a part of my mantra says,

and this is one of the things  
I got from a little story

that some people did a number of years ago

of some 90 year old  
persons and I ask them,

if you had to live life all over again,

what would you do different?

They said three things.

First.

I would have

tried to risk more in doing something

of significance.

And that meant whether it  
failed or it succeeded.

You did risk.

And African Americans in the  
city of Austin did do that.

The next thing was,

they said we would meditate.

What is this about?

Thinking, contemplating  
ways to get around things,

ways to improve things,  
ways to make things happen,  
ways to bring people together  
up for success, et cetera.

Meditate, not only Meditate,  
but that means that there's  
a power higher than we.

The folks said that, you know,  
my belief, and my faith,  
and my stamina  
would do something,  
make it possible for me.

And the next thing that they said was,  
this is important,  
we want to do something  
that will live long  
after we dead and gone.

You see long before there  
was a Martin Luther King,  
there was an east Austin.

Long before Martin Luther King began to  
speak out on issues,  
there was a man who  
was over  
NCCP here in Austin.

His name happened to be,  
Dewell.

Long before that,  
there were others in the city of Austin  
who made things possible.

So Martin, yes,  
he made a major contribution,  
but you see there were  
thousands and thousands  
of Martin Luther King.

Not in the sense that he was,  
but they're thousands of leaders in  
communities throughout Austin,  
throughout the country,  
throughout the state of Texas,  
who risked their lives  
and made things possible for him.

Martin just happened to be  
able to articulate that.

Martin just happened to  
be able to emulate that.

And Martin  
just happened to be a  
spokesperson who was able  
to really paint the picture for the world  
about what the struggle was all about  
and what we could accomplished  
with our faith and with our dreams,  
et cetera.

But you see, we had  
countless little persons  
in our communities were  
not national heroes,  
were not world heroes,  
but they still were heroes.  
Do something young people,  
whatever it is,  
I don't know.  
But I challenge you  
to make your mark.  
Even though  
we don't have a real  
continuous African  
American community anymore,  
there are still ways that  
you can still be creative  
in making a place  
better  
for others  
and leaving something  
that is of help.  
- Thank you very much.  
- You're welcome.