

**Voices from the Grassroots Oral History Project**

Detroit Equity Action Lab

Damon J. Keith Center for Civil Rights

Wayne State University Law School

Detroit, MI

**Barry Randolph**

Interviewed by

PETER BLACKMER

April 26, 2019

Detroit, Michigan

## Narrator

Pastor Barry Randolph grew up in the neighborhood of West Village, Detroit, Michigan. He moved to the neighborhood of Islandview in 1997 and became pastor at the Church of the Messiah in 2002. He is also a Board Member of the BLVD [Building Leaders for Village Development] Harambee and a member of the Church of the Messiah Housing Corporations Board and Jefferson East Board.

## Interviewer

Peter Blackmer is a Research Fellow at the Detroit Equity Action Lab, an initiative of the Damon J. Keith Center for Civil Rights at Wayne State University Law School.

## Abstract

Pastor Barry Randolph talks about his childhood in the Detroit neighborhood of West Village, why he moved to Islandview in the 1990s, the influences on his worldview, why he became a pastor, his issues with churches and pastors in Detroit and why he thinks they should be more focused on social justice, and how the Church of the Messiah has changed since he became pastor there. He discusses how the church tries to promote community empowerment through affordable housing and promoting local entrepreneurs, and he tells many anecdotes about the people that they've helped. Another major topic is how the church works with other organizations in the community and how their Five Alive community meetings and the Detroit Islandview Village Alliance work. He speaks at length about how Islandview's community benefits agreement (CBA) works and how CBAs can force companies and people to actually help the community that they are located in. He gives advice for other communities looking to create their own CBA. He also describes what equitable development would look like, what he hopes his legacy is, and how the Church of the Messiah is influenced by the history of preachers in Detroit, the Civil Rights movement, the Black Power movement, and Black Nationalism.

### Keywords

Black Power; Black Nationalism; Christianity; Church of the Messiah; Civil Rights movement; Community benefits agreement; Detroit Islandview Village Alliance (DIVA); Detroit, Michigan; Emergency management; Equitable development; Five Alive; Gentrification; Housing; Islandview; West Village

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Transcript of interview conducted April 26, 2019 with:

Barry Randolph [BR]

Detroit, MI

By: Peter Blackmer [PB]

**BR:** My name is Barry Randolph, and I'm the Pastor of Church of the Messiah at 231 East Grand Boulevard on the corner at Lafayette [Street]. I've been the Pastor for 17 years. I'm also a Board Member of the BLVD Harambee, which was created by the church. Boulevard--BLVD, Building Leaders for Village Development. Harambee is Swahili for "gathering everybody." I'm also a member of the Church of the Messiah Housing Corporations Board and Jefferson East Board.

[0:00:36]

**PB:** So, could you describe for us your neighborhood and the city when you were growing up?

**BR:** Yes. So, I grew up in West Village. So, my family lived in that neighborhood for 40 years, and when we grew up--when I grew up in West Village, it was an...interesting experience. So, my family moved there in 1968. The neighborhood was mixed race then, and everything we needed we were able to walk to. So, it was a wonderful experience for me. I was used to being raised in a diverse neighborhood. My family was poor. I didn't know it until I was 17 when I was about to attend Wayne State [University], and I had to put down the income of how much my family made, and I told my mother there was a mistake. And, she said, "No, that's it," and I thought to myself, "Wait a minute, we're poor?" and she

said, “Yes.” I’m like, “What’re we doing living in the West Village?” And then, she explained that to me. So, I didn’t know there were poor people. I just thought I was the shit when I was growing up because everybody else in my neighborhood lived in the hood except us. But, it was an equitable neighborhood, and it was a wonderful experience.

I came to Islandview in 1997. I moved in this community neighborhood. That was totally intentional. I wanted to be a part of what was happening in this neighborhood and community. So, I am now a resident of Islandview.

[0:02:04]

**PB:** So, what was it that was happening here that made you want to be a part of the Islandview community?

**BR:** Well, it helps to be a block away from the river. That is one of the greatest things. And then, of course, Belle Isle is a selling point. I used to manage at Harbortown Market. So, it was a quarter of a mile from [laughs] the Church [of the Messiah]. I was attending the church. I was not the pastor then. I didn’t become the pastor until 2002. And, I lived in the Mustard Tree Co-op, which is the opposite side of East Grand Boulevard on Lafayette [Street]. So, it was a good place to live, a good place to worship, and a good place to work. So, that’s why I moved to Islandview. And, the water was close, so that kind of helped.

[0:02:45]

**PB:** Mhm. Could you kind of maybe paint in broad strokes--could you describe how the city or how the neighborhood has changed since you were growing up?

**BR:** Yeah. So when I was growing up, the thing that I liked about my neighborhood, everything was in walking distance. Everything--the supermarket, the bank, the post office, the laundromat, anything you need, school--everything

was right there when I was a kid. And so, I was used to having a neighborhood where you didn't have to walk too far from anything it is that you needed. As I look at Detroit now, you basically gotta kind of get in your car and drive away from your own neighborhood in order to get the things that you need.

By the time I came to Islandview, part of my commitment to this community and neighborhood was to make it that walkable community to whereas you can actually get all the different things that you needed for your community. Now, it did help to come to Church of the Messiah because it is a community-oriented church that believes in empowerment. And so and therefore, it helped for me to have the mentality that I did to come to Church of the Messiah and help make that happen. The unique thing about Islandview, though, is Islandview is today very well organized, but a lot of communities and neighborhoods in Detroit is not.

The issues that we have to deal with in Detroit are a little bit outrageous. It's kind of crazy as I watch--I mean, you look at the news and hear murder is common, poverty is common, blight is common, and you stop, and you think, "What is it going to take for us to be able to get out of these circumstances and situations? It's going to take the people." But, the true way to be able to do it is to do it from the bottom up, not from the top down. A lot of people don't believe that, but they keep making the same mistake over and over again and keep finding out it don't work. But, it won't stop them from doing it. It's called insanity. But, we're here to prove the other way is the best way to do it, work with the people who are boots on the ground.

[0:04:51]

**PB:** So, could you talk a little bit about how you came to that analysis of the grassroots-based, the ground-up organizing? Who--what were your influences or who were your influences in developing that kind of analysis?

**BR:** Well, it don't help to say that to a preacher. So, of course, I gotta go with [laughs] Jesus Christ. I'm sorry. I mean, my whole life is based on the belief that a virgin had a baby. So, I believe in the impossible anyway. So, it's kind of crazy to

believe that, but I believe that, and I believe that if a virgin can have a baby, we can eradicate poverty, and we can bring people out of homelessness, and we can educate our people, and we can create businesses and jobs, which is exactly what the church do.

But, my heroes are the people who stood up. So when you come to my office, I got a giant picture of Dr. Martin Luther King on the wall. It's the biggest picture in the room. And then, next to that picture is that former pastor of Church of the Messiah when I got here, Reverend Ron Spann. And, those two ministers, to me, were the epitome of what it took to make a change. To them, being a minister was not a job, it was a call. So, Dr. King believed in service--and I don't know if you want to put this in the documentary, but I have a problem with preachers in Detroit. I just think they're full of it. There's 4,000 churches in Detroit. This should be the holiest place on earth, and yet still we got all this violence and all of this poverty, but we got all of these churches, and it makes you wonder what in the world--we don't need all these churches. There's 26 churches within one square mile of Church of the Messiah, which is ludicrous. It's crazy to have that many churches. And yet, we still...we can't get together and do anything about homelessness or poverty or illiteracy. I'm not taking away from the ones where the churches are out there actually doing that, but I think we need to read the book a little bit more and stop having church just on Sunday and be church the rest of the week and eradicate these problems that are happening in the community and neighborhoods. So, let me get off my soapbox with that.

But, Dr. King is one of my biggest heroes because he sacrificed his life for it. If you're not willing to sacrifice your life, boots on the ground, if you're not willing to be a target, then you might as well just hang it up and go do something else, go work at Walmart or something, I don't know. But, you should be willing to sacrifice, and it's gotta be about the people. Now, somebody's got to stand up for the people who feel as though they have no voice. So Dr. King is one of the people that I believe in strongly. The former pastor of this church, who actually was kind of my mentor because I never planned on being a preacher. It was not on my radar, never planned on doing that. But, he was kind of my example, and I appreciate that.

**PB:** So, how did you first--I'm going to ask you for your origin story about how you get involved in struggles for racial equity and social justice.

**BR:** Say that again?

**PB:** So, what's your origin--if we're thinking about, like, comic books, what's your origin story for how you got involved with struggles for racial equity?

**BR:** A couple things. So when I grew up in West Village, I grew up in an equitable neighborhood. It was back then--and it's so funny. I grew up in West Village. I cannot afford to live there now. Ain't that something? Can't afford to live in the neighborhood I grew up in because now, in my opinion, it's out of my price range totally because the church don't pay me nothing, [laughs] but that's my agreement. I don't want to get paid by the church. But, I can't afford to live there.

But, the experiences I had growing up with people from all over was amazing. That was an amazing experience. And then also, too, to know that the place where you did your banking or where you did your grocery shopping or where you went to the post office, all of those people lived in a community and neighborhood, too. So, it really was an incredible experience to live next door to a person who was an entrepreneur or live across the street from the school teacher, to live down the street from the man who was the garbage man. Everybody lived in the neighborhood, and I thought that was wonderful.

So, I was used to that, and then to see other parts of Detroit and notice that didn't exist, that was kind of... I felt like that was unfair. What was so special that I was raised in this neighborhood where I saw a degree of equality, a degree of people being the best that they can possibly be, not even knowing I was poor, but I was right there. I had experiences that a lot of my friends did not have because they weren't raised in that community neighborhood and never saw that. So, it was totally different for me.



And also too, by being a minister, the whole book is about social justice. Jesus Christ was a revolutionary. I mean, we talk about him being a prophet. They didn't kill him because he was nice, they killed him because of the fact that he shook up the status quo, and I always wonder why we won't do that more [laughs] as believers. But, you can't sit back and allow injustice to take place and do nothing. I remember watching the PBS [Public Broadcasting Service] documentary about the Freedom Riders, and I'll never forget these young people were literally signing their wills before they got on the bus. And, the reporters said, "You know you could die. Why would you go down here knowing that you may be going to your death?" And, the young lady stopped and said, "Doing nothing is worse than death." And boy, that struck with me, and I think to myself, "Absolutely. Doing nothing, to see injustice and do nothing, really is worse than death." So, you do it--it's the right thing to do, it's the right thing to do.

And, I think too, church-wise--so I gotta take one more pot shot at my church people--to be able to stop and say, if we're going to say God is good, we have to prove it. We have to prove that he's good, and we have to prove that we're the change agent and that God didn't create racism, he didn't create injustice, he didn't create poverty. All of that is man-made. We did that, so it's our job to get it right. So, we need to stop asking him to do the job we should be doing. We need to get up off our assets, and then we need to be able to get up and do the work that we are supposed to do. We can eradicate it. We just choose not to do it.

[0:11:01]

**PB:** So when you're reflecting on the reasons why believers aren't getting out there and shaking up the status quo, as you put it, what are some of the reasons that are coming into your mind?

**BR:** Well, we're lazy. I hate to say we always say this thing about God to do it. But, God uses people. If you are a Christian or even if you're Muslim or Jewish, he's always used people. So he used Mohammad, he used Jesus, he used Moses, he used different people to bring about the justice of the world, and I think that was his hint to us in saying, "You know, I'm going to use people to straighten this out."

So, it's up to us to go out and straighten it out, and I think, too, that we think that we need to be extraordinary in order to do it. But, I keep telling people, you know, Moses was a murderer. So, he was a convicted felon that got called to be the deliverer. Noah was a drunk, but he used him to do the ark. David slept with another man's wife. He was an adulterer. And yet still, God made him a king. That regardless of our circumstances and situations and our shortcomings, we can be used. And then, you stop and you look at the disciples, they were all jacked up. One doubted him, denied him, betrayed him, but he used him anyway. So, they were used towards greatness. My thing is stop praying, get up off your knees, and hustle.

[0:12:21]

**PB:** So, if I was just to ask you point-blank, what does racism look like in Detroit today?

**BR:** Detroit is--I'm not trying to be funny. I've traveled all over this country, and I feel more racism in Detroit than I do when I go to the South. It's amazing. Folks stop, and they always talk about the differences in the South. I mean, if I met racism, at least they're friendly. I mean, you know, it's the crazy [laughs] to go down there, and everybody seems to be really, really nice and polite. I knew it exist, but here it is a little bit blatant. Anytime you have a city that's over 80 percent Black and the surrounding areas the percentage of white people are higher, that's saying we've got a problem, and Detroit has systemic, long-term racism that we've never gotten out of. We've never got out of. Even when you look at things like we can't get our regional transportation system going because of the fact that we've got these racists and stopping and saying, you know, these buses are going to be carrying Black and brown people, and we don't want them in our communities and neighborhoods, and some people say, "Well, that's not racism. They're concerned about their communities." That what? Black and brown people gonna bring what? So, it's those type of things.

This community is extremely racist, and until we come to grips with that, we're going to be in trouble. I once had a reporter here who came, and we're in a documentary called the United States of Detroit, and it was playing at the Fisher

Theatre two years ago, and he was doing a story on the [19]67 rebellion. And, he just asked me, he said, "So, I was just doing that story. What do you think about that?" I said, "The ingredients are right for [19]67 to happen again." We have the exact same ingredients that we had in 1967, only some levels it's worse. Some levels it's better, but on some levels it's worse. You have more people in poverty in Detroit than there were in 1966. Are you serious? We have more people in poverty today. We have a higher percentage of poverty. And, the racism, it's still here. And then, we have people who are coming back to Detroit and people who are moving to Detroit, but the average person in these communities and neighborhoods when the...some of the development come in, they can't afford to live there.

And, to me, that's evil. That's actually evil. So, we've gotta find ways to be able to do that, and one of the ways--it's not necessarily just building affordable housing. One of the things is eradicating poverty, the mindset of poverty, the creation of poverty, but part of poverty is created by racism. We don't want to acknowledge that, but that's part of the reason. When you remove the tax base, then you remove the money from the schools. When you remove the businesses and then stop and say, "Oh, pull yourself up by the bootstraps," and all you see is poor people all around you. How do you do that?

So, it's a ludicrous concept, but we're still making the same mistake we made in 1967. Same mistake. Same environment is here for this to happen all over again. Again, we don't get it right. We're redeveloping Downtown, Midtown--nothing against all of that--and we've ignored the poorest people and the neighborhoods that need it the most. They're trying to figure it out themselves. It's crazy. It's crazy, and government bears a responsibility on that. We keep making the same mistakes. We won't start at the bottom. Nobody said, "Let's redevelop Bewick [Street] and Mack [Avenue]." Nobody says that. Our Church of the Messiah would say that, but you gotta start where the people need it most.

[0:15:49]

**PB:** So, could you talk a little bit about how you became pastor of Church of the Messiah?

**BR:** Okay, that is really interesting. First, never wanted to be a preacher, did not like preachers--as you can tell [laughs]--and did not particularly care for church either, did not particularly care for the two. I really had a burning bush experience just like Moses. I literally had a burning bush experience where God literally had me face down on the floor of my apartment telling me that he was going to do great things at Church of the Messiah, and he was going to use me. And, I literally had this conversation with God and became a priest in 2002. Started the process in 1998, but became a priest in 2002. Kind of did a little shortcut version of it. [laughs]

Messiah had no money, no members, and the church was literally going to close. I mean, there were 40 people here...there were 40 people here on average, average age was about 65. There were no young people. And today, there's about at least 200 people. It's mixed race. It's 60 percent Black male under 30, and the average age is under 30, and that totally blows everybody's mind. And, I always tell people because they were like--and it's mostly preachers--"Pastor, how did you get young people to come to church?" They don't reject God, they reject church. The problem is church, they don't have a problem with God. The process and system and tradition of church is the problem. So, what we did was we just kind of made it user-friendly towards young people, and young people, a lot of times, they want to use their warrior spirit. You've got to remember during the Civil Rights movement, a lot of those folks were young people. They were going down. They were getting on the buses. They were at the lunch counters. And our young people, they want to know their purpose. So, Church of the Messiah help to give them their purpose. From that, the church totally changed.

So, the building, that was too big. No ministry, no money, no members. The church is full, we are debt free, and the building is too small. So from that, we created a tea beverage company, a clothing line, a video production company, another craft company, candle company, bowtie company. We are the Internet providers for the community of Islandview. We have an 84-member marching band. We've got over 300 kids in college. We have 1,300 square foot bike shop. We have 213 units of housing, and we are the employment office, and we are the business incubator.

A virgin had a baby. That was my concept. If a virgin can have a baby, I believe in the impossible. Not only did a virgin have a baby, he grew up, he was the Son of God, died, and came back. So, I believe in the impossible. So why not make the impossible happen? But, all credit goes to him. It was about making the impossible happen. That's why I get mad at other churches. We're just one. Now if we take the other 4,000 and actually started doing this, we could eradicate poverty, we can end homelessness, we can end illiteracy, we can do it if we would just stop talking and do what the book says. Actually do it. That would help. Stop preaching so much. And then, don't take 5 hours to do church on Sunday. Here's an hour and 15 minutes, sorry. [laughs] And, don't take all day. [laughs]

[0:19:15]

**PB:** So, that warrior spirit that you described in young people, that can manifest or that can be channeled into so many different ways.

**RB:** My God, my God.

**PB:** So, how are you in your capacity--as pastor or as a community member--how are you trying to channel that or guide that warrior spirit of young people here in a way that promotes community empowerment, personal development?

**BR:** I always tell people this, and I don't make no--I know some people don't like when I say this, but I've never cared what people thought. But, this is the church for Ray-Rays and Pookies. It really is. This is the church for the dope boys, for the gang bangers, for the people who ordinarily don't like church. What we do is we take that warrior spirit that's on the inside of them. Our young people are geniuses. The only thing they lack is opportunity to showcase it. The church became the opportunity for them to showcase and bring out their genius. Because we are a church, we believe in reconciliation, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth chances to be able to help you get it right.

So, the church became the business incubator. When I first became the pastor of the church, when the young people came, they were--they told me, "Pastor Barry, I need a job. Pastor Barry, I need somewhere to live. Pastor Barry, I need to get back in school," and I'm like, "Wait a minute. This is...no. We've gotta find another way to do this. Tell me who you are." So, we literally sit down with every single person. So, I need you to tell me that you are the writer. I need you to tell me that you are the musician, that you are the builder. That you are the whatever it is, whatever God put on the inside of you, let's get to that. So, we've created some very strange things by people coming and saying, "Okay, Pastor Barry, this is who I am."

We had one woman [Monique "Nikki" Sasser] come who said she had a recipe and an idea. And from that, we created Nikki's Ginger Tea. Now, she's in all the Whole Foods, all the Zingerman Bakehouses, all the Avalon Bakeries. She's in 82 stores across the state of Michigan, in talks with--what's the big one--Starbucks about possibly carrying that product. And, it's created in our basement.

Young man [Vincent McWilliams] came in, had an attitude problem, but he knew how to make clothes. So, we got a screen press. We started making clothes. We got sewing machines. He created a clothing line called Kill the Hate. He's... Now, he has his own store in the Fisher Building. He also provides clothes for Nara Clothes, Detroit 313. It's created in a basement.

Our video production came from four guys who said, "Pastor Barry, we've got a camera and an idea." And I'm like, "What's the idea?" "We want a video production company, and we want to call it I AM [Media] Productions, and we want to bring out the best in people." Mmmm, okay. Very good. And so, what do you have? A camera. Do you know how to do a video production company? Nope. And then, they asked me did I know. Nope. I'm like, let's get started. So, we started the video production company, [laughs] and it was started by one young man who was a car thief, one was homeless, one was an abused child, the other one was schizophrenic. And, they have I Am Productions, and they're making documentaries and films, and they worked for PBS when they came to Detroit to work on a national project.

So, only at Church of the Messiah. So, it's taken the Ray-rays and Pookies. We had a former Black Panther, Blair Anderson, came, and it's like, "Blair, it's kind of hard to find you a job after being in prison for 26 years." But, he did new work leather, and he brought his leather craft and taught it to the kids. There's room for everybody. And, I always tell people all the time, if Jesus can take 12 men with attention deficit disorder, not the brightest, not the best, and bring the best out of them, that's what the church is supposed to do. So, bring us your Ray-rays and Pookies, and I guarantee you somewhere in there is an entrepreneur or a CEO or somebody who has a gift or talent. There's an artist. There's a writer. There's somebody in there. That's what we need to get to.

And, that's a lot of times what we're not concentrating on in Detroit as we talk about what's going to be the future. You have all of these talented young people in poverty with no opportunities. We're building prisons to imprison people with all these gifts and talent. We're putting them in prison because they have no way to bring that out. And then, we're going to stop and say, "Oh, there's opportunity for everybody." There is not. That's why you start at the bottom. Imagine if you put a billion dollars in the hood, the return you'd get out of it if you put a billion dollars in the hood. Mmmm. Don't want to do that. That's not feasible. That's not good sense according to business standards. But, we ain't talking about that. A virgin had a baby, so, you know, God gonna do it opposite. So, a little bit different.

[0:23:55]

**PB:** So as you're guiding the Church through this period of rebirth and growth and development, what kind of challenges were you facing along the way?

**BR:** Oh my God, the challenges have not stopped. It's a lot of...it's a lot of challenges. So, probably the greatest challenges that we face is really being able to bring hope to people. You really want to be able--people underestimate what it's like to be beaten down for decades. I'm not talking about a few years. Imagine being beat down for decades. You've been through all of the trauma of living in the inner city, living in a big city like Detroit. You've been beat down by the car manufacturers kind of changing the way they do business and a lot of the plants closing. Imagine being beat down that you didn't need much of an education to

come and live in Detroit and be able to make a good living and take care of your family. You're beat down by that. That closed down. The destruction of your neighborhood, the tax base being removed. And then, you got the white flight, but also, too, there's Black flight in Detroit, too, because the Black middle class also left. That's why we became the poorest big city in the United States. Imagine being beaten down by that.

And so then, folks--and you see people getting opportunity everywhere, but your school don't have heat or toilet paper. Your school looks like it's about to fall down, and you don't have computers or you don't have the books. You can't even take the books home. And, you try to grow up, and you live in a neighborhood with burned down houses, and abandoned cars are just normal. I mean, psychologically, that is crazy to ask somebody to be able to do this. And then, you have things like drugs. Then, you have absenteeism of fathers.

You have all of these things, and then you want people to be okay. They're not okay, and until we actually deal with the reality of what people really in the neighborhoods are dealing with, we're not going to get this right. Investment needs to be put into that. And because a lot of times folks aren't willing to be able to put the investment in it, I think--I'm sorry. I'm one of the people. I do not trust big government, and I don't trust big businesses. Time and time again, they've proven their God is money. They prove that they're not in it for the little person. They may go in--just the same way I believe with most preachers--they go in with the right idea. And then somewhere along the line, they sell out. And then, the people suffer. And then, the people lose hope because everybody around them is selling out. The political leaders are selling out. The businesses are selling out.

And, that's why I was concerned about the plant when General Motors closed the Poletown Plant. I mean, it just pissed me off so bad. You destroy a neighborhood. You literally destroy a neighborhood, build a plant. You should not have the right to leave. You should not have the right to disinvest after being able to do that. Who the fuck are you to be able to get up and just leave this community like this? Where is your obligation and responsibility to be able to give back? There should be some accountability that you should not be able to leave a community after you go in, put in this money, bring this hope for all these jobs. And then all of a sudden, you have the right to up and leave. And then, those people, not having



the income and the money to be able to move, what do they do? So, it's kind of crazy.

That's why we believe in community-based businesses and building it in the community and neighborhood. Now, in our community benefits agreement, in the agreement--in the agreement we have with the church folks, too--you can't leave the neighborhood. You can not leave out of here. So, how we build this out is--and, of course, we have a community benefits agreement with the developers, but we've made it with the community. If you start getting 20, 30 dollars an hour working in the skilled trades or your business becomes successful, don't come to me saying, "Pastor Barry, I'm moving out to Clinton Township [Michigan]." No, you're not. You staying right here. This is how we prevent it. But, we have to show them the right way to do equitable development and how to build a community where everybody has an opportunity to have a say in it. Sorry, don't mean to go off on a tangent, but this...I get...I start getting passionate and angry a little bit.

[0:28:15]

**PB:** No, I appreciate it, and I'm hoping we can go even deeper into that, too.

**BR:** Mhm.

**PB:** Because the CBA [community benefits agreement] is so important, and a lot can be discussed, a lot can be learned about the model you all are working on here. Before we go there, though, kind of the fulcrum of this series of interviews we've been doing is around emergency management.

**BR:** Mhm.

**PB:** Could you--put us on the sidewalk in Islandview. What was the atmosphere in those days leading up to that imposition of emergency management?

**BR:** Well, first and foremost, I must say the people of Islandview didn't give a lot of attention to the fact that we even had an emergency manager because a lot of them was living their lives in emergency management. You gotta remember poor people are always in emergency mode because they have to make very strategic decisions to move their life forward. A lot of times--I can tell you this much--a lot of the people were a little antsy waiting to see how this was going to come out, watching and thinking about things like, "How was this actually going to affect me?" And, a lot of people were thinking, "Boy, it really can't get any worse." We've been through the worst possible thing. Everything from the [19]67 rebellion, all of the race issues, the closing the plants and manufacturing leaving Detroit, mass exodus of people, and I must admit a lot of people were just kind of numb. Like, yeah. Okay, let's see how this goes, too. And, they kind of live their life as usual.

The only thing that they were concerned about is: was anything going to get worse for them? Not better. Was it going to get worse? And, you have to remember this: a lot of people in this community neighborhood don't trust government anyway. So, it didn't matter to them. Some was like, "We can't keep looking to them. They never can seem to get it right." They can see the handwriting on the wall. Just ignore it. Wait till we get so bad. Now, you have to do something about it. So, they kind of didn't trust the process anyway. But for the most part, the folks in the community and neighborhood were curious but not overly concerned. They just weren't...they just...they just don't trust big government, even if it's down to an emergency manager.

[0:30:39]

**PB:** So, did it get worse in the neighborhood after the emergency manager came in?

**BR:** No, no. It didn't actually get worse, I would say. The only thing that probably was noticeable, it just felt like the people would like another fight. Another fight. We're always fighting. We're always fighting. We can never rest. We can never settle. We can never get comfortable. It's always about a fight. And, they were geared up so if things kind of got worse, what is it that they'd have to do? But, the

difference what Islandview--this is a very well-organized community. This is not a community that just kind of sit back and wait and really kind of see what happens. It's all about reinventing ourselves, which we're pretty good at doing in Islandview.

[0:31:24]

**PB:** So, where are those--you mentioned a couple of times that Islandview is so well organized.

**BR:** Mhm.

**PB:** Outside of Church of the Messiah, where are some of the other bases of community strength and organizing?

**BR:** Yes. Okay. So, I'll say this--because I get in a little bit of trouble for this--but Islandview... According to Church of the Messiah and according to the city, the boundaries of Islandview are not the same. Now, I figure that we were here. We created it. I go by the original boundaries of what Islandview was. Now, the city say it's bigger than that. But for the most part, the organization that's in Islandview that are very well organized, of course, the Church of the Messiah, and then there's an organization Genesis Lutheran Church. There is Mack Avenue [Community] Church and MACC [Mack Avenue Community Church] Development. So, you've got Genesis Lutheran and Genesis Hope, Mack Church and MACC Development. You have Field Street Association. You have Charlevoix Village [Association]. I'm trying to think of... And then, a little bit on the outskirts of us is Mack Alive. And so, there's quite a few organizations that represent a lot of people in this community and neighborhood that's very well organized.

[0:32:47]

**PB:** And is there conversation, cooperation between and amongst these organizations?

**BR:** Yes. We don't all agree on every single thing, but, for the most part, I do believe that everybody has the best interest of the community and neighborhood at heart. For the most part. That's one of the reasons why we created the DIVA plan. DIVA is Detroit Islandview Village Alliance, and it's an alliance. It's not a partnership. And, everybody's like, "Well, Pastor Barry, we need..." But no, it's an alliance. It's a totally different thing. I don't need to be your partner, but we need to be aligned in thought process in order to get our job done. And so, we created an alliance, and that alliance brings together basically those 501 (c)(3)s and community groups and organizations, but it also brings together our political leaders. So, we get good support from Mary Sheffield, who is our city council representative in Detroit. We get good representation from her, but also our city manager [Melia Howard?]. We get good representation from them, the Seventh Precinct of the Detroit Police.

We also have a nice amount of the developers on board. So, there is, of course, the Platform, which is one of the bigger developers that's come to the community and neighborhood. And then, there's [Joe] Ventimiglia, which is a couple blocks down the street, and he's working on a project that we actually helped him get. And, he is the one that we use a lot of times to say that for the people that he needed to hire out of the community. We made an agreement with him that he would hire them directly out of the neighborhood. He hired 26 people, all of them from throughout the neighborhood. He did what we told him to do. He did what we told him. And then, there's a senior in the--I think, the development, and she stayed. So, she stayed. And so, he agreed to that. And then, we have Legacy Development [Foundation], which is run by a 26-year-old young man who helped to build Little Caesars Arena [John Perkins], worked with Barton Malow, started his own development company, worked with Randolph Vocational [A. Philip Randolph Career and Technical Center], and he's going to be building a brownstone in the community right here in Islandview. He's going to be doing that in the next year or so. We're helping him with that project. And then, we have Roxbury Development, which is actually in West Village--or North Village, which is now--North Village is the newest village in this area and neighborhood. We're doing some work with them to build the community and neighborhood to have the capacity to make that development happen.

So, we've been doing this since 2013 when Detroit was broken up into districts, and that process is going very well. We meet the first Monday of every month, and we put everybody on the same page. We support each other and the work that we're doing to the best of our ability. But also, too, we've got people from the Health Department who come. We've got the Wayne County Treasurer's Office, sometimes I'll send people. Chemical Bank has been good at coming. The Small Business Association has also participated in coming and a lot of business owners around Islandview and even some Downtown. They've all been participating. Now, we're looking to duplicate the process in Flint [Michigan]. We're working with some folks in Flint, Ypsilanti [Michigan], and San Francisco [California]. So, it's interesting.

[0:36:12]

**PB:** It is. And, those are the Five Alive meetings.

**BR:** Those are the Five Alive meetings, yes.

**PB:** Okay.

**BR:** Yes.

**PB:** Can you walk through the process by which the Five Alive meetings came into practice? Like, was this a conversation that said, "We should all get everybody to the table?" Like, walk us through that, if you would.

**BR:** Yeah. So when Detroit was broken up into districts in 2013, we had a town hall meeting so we would know the candidates who were running for city council. So, it didn't make no difference who won, we were going to have a relationship with them. That was our thing. We were going to have a relationship with whoever this is. And so, we had a town hall meeting. And from that point, we decided that we would have to work with this person and everybody else that's in the community

neighborhood. So, that's why we created Five Alive was to bring all of those people into the room.

Now, at the meetings--just so you know, the meetings are one hour. One hour. Folks have been amazed and come and say, "Wait, wait, wait. You going to have a meeting with all these people, and this will be one hour?" Just like church, you don't have a right to waste people's time. That's what the Assistant Pastor said all the time. So, don't waste their time, and if you make it good--and now, we have an agenda, and we're kind of mean with time. So, nobody gets up, dominates the conversation. You can't go down a rabbit hole. We don't do distraction and side conversations. We have an agenda. We stick to it. It starts at six. It's over at seven. You can keep talking, but the meeting is adjourned at seven o'clock. And if you're still here about 7:30, I do say have the conversation in the parking lot because we will put you out. And, that's one of the reasons why it's been successful.

So if folks want to get on the agenda, they know that this is going to go out to thousands of other people. So, to come into the room and if you were--let's just say you were a developer who wanted to come to the community and neighborhood. You'd come to the...the Five Alive meeting. You'd put out what it is that you think that you'd like to be able to do. Our job is to be able to take it back to the rest of the community. So, the rest of the main stakeholders in the room take it back to everybody else, let them know what's going on, this, that, and the other. It's not a shoe-in if you come to Five Alive because you still got to through a process of being able to be recognized to be worthy to developing Islandview.

Because if you try to do it without coming through us, we can be your worst nightmare. I don't want to go off on that end. Because there is such a thing as righteous indignation. You know, sometimes you can't be nice, and you've gotta kind of let people know this is not that neighborhood, that you must come and you must also be a part of the neighborhood. Five Alive allows you to also be part of the neighborhood, meaning we don't want to see you as just a developer. I expect to see you in the community and neighborhood, at our community meetings, at the backpacks giveaways, at our community marches, and our community town halls. You need to be at all of those things. And, I give them credit. The developers and the folks, they do show up. They do show up. So far, we haven't had a bad apple yet. Not yet, but I know it's coming. Some fool gonna

think I ain't gotta listen to them people over there. It's gonna be a rude awakening. But so far, that has not happened. But, we're prepared for it if it do.

[0:39:22]

**PB:** So, what does that preparation look like? What were you thinking, like strategically thinking? Like, say somebody--you can name your rich white guy--comes in here and says, "I'm going to develop on this block. I don't give a damn about this Five Alive or Church of the Messiah. It's my money."

**BR:** First, I want to see you actually come and start developing on the block. Chances are you own most of the land over here, you ain't gonna get past us anyway. We are the developer. We got 213 units of housing. We own 40-odd vacant lots, and most of the developers in the city, they know each other. I trust the people with planning and development. I trust the people with our city manager and our city councilperson. Because chances are if you come over here and you just say, "I'm going to do this anyway," I'm gonna get on the phone. "Who let this motherfucker come over here and just think that they was just going to come over here and do this thing?" Who is this person who thinks they can do this? I will go knock on your door. I will have a conversation with you, and I will tell you the right protocol to do it.

Now, I must admit--God, we got to go back for a second because this did happen. It did happen in a weird kind of way. We had somebody who wanted--there was a nursing home down the street, and he wanted to turn it into a halfway house, and I was thinking, "Mmm... Okay, not too sure about this thought and idea." The gentleman who owns a business up near there called me and said, "Pastor Barry, are you aware this is getting ready to happen?" Then, the folks from the Villages called me, the people from the Mustard Tree Co-op, "Are you aware of this?" And, it was almost like, "No, what are we going to do?"

So I'm like, "Let me go see if I can reason with this man." Found out who he was through our communications director here, went down the street on the boulevard to talk to him. And basically, he told me there is a hearing, what he was

planning on doing, and I didn't have a say in it, and basically for me to get out of his office, that the only way that I can have a say is I have to be within 300 feet, and Church of the Messiah is beyond 300 feet. And, I told him, "Well, you got to understand our townhouses are across the street from you. So, our townhouses are a representative. We have seniors. We have families. We have kids. I want to know who these folks are going to be. Now, we are a church. We work with Ray-rays and Pookies. So, maybe we can work together, and we can come up with a plan, make sure they got jobs, make sure they in school, make sure they're vital members of the community and neighborhood, find some way for you to introduce this to the community correctly." He was not interested in this.

So, it was a city council meeting. [laughs] It was a city council meeting that they were having to decide on whether or not he'd be able to get to his zoning, the hearing, and all this other kind of stuff. And so, all of the people within 300 feet, they say, "We all going, and we're going to oppose," and it was so funny. I went anyway, and I go, and there's the city council hearing, and they stopped, and they said, "Oh, so you want to do this in Islandview. We hear your plan. So, you need to get community buy-in. The strongest community organizers over there is Church of the Messiah. So, go have a conversation with Pastor Barry, and if he is in agreement, then therefore we will relook at your proposal." Here I am. No, I don't agree. So, it's not happening. And, that was a while back. Now, that probably is owned by the Platform, and we're doing affordable housing. [laughs] God is good. A virgin had a baby.

So, that was one time, but it didn't get to where I thought it was going to go. But, the community did get galvanized and stop and say, "What are we going to do?" Not that we were against possibly against having a halfway house, but what did that mean to us as a community neighborhood? Now, if he would have come correctly and would have come and said, "Hey, this is my name. This is what I want to do. Is there a way we can work together? Can I put the people at the community at ease?" Because he was just thinking about the money, and my thing is that is not going to happen here. So, I don't know what he wound up doing, but it's not down the street.

So, that's one of the ways. Had to stop and think back, but that was actually before we actually created Five Alive. That was before we created--but the



community was already galvanized, and people were calling me, “Pastor Barry, what are we going to do?” Okay, let’s work within our legal rights before we have to take it to social justice rights. Because that’s...probably would have been next, which would have been a whole different thing. Me, Ray-ray, and Pookie, we would’ve all been out there. So, yeah. Mhm.

[0:43:46]

**PB:** So, I’ve only been to one of those Five Alive meetings, but for those of us who haven’t, put us in the room in what those conversations look like with the developers from, say, Platform. When they come to you and say, “We’re going to have this housing development, and we want to have it at 20 percent AMI [Area Median Income],” like, how do those conversations go?

**BR:** So--just so you know--we also meet with the developers outside of that room, outside of that room. So, a lot of times before they bring it to Five Alive, when it comes to development, most of the time they had a conversation with us first. Because first, you got to ask permission. And so then secondly, our thing is to make sure you don’t get lynched in the meeting. This is what’s going to come up. This is where the concerns of the community and neighborhood is before you even go in there. So, a lot of times we’re never blindsided in those meetings because we meet with the people before because they have to get on the agenda.

And so then therefore, we let them know that if they wanted to come in, they want to have a thought, an idea, this, that, and the other, we kind of give them a heads up. This is what the community and neighborhood is already thinking before you enter that room. Now because we are Christians, I'm going to be nice this particular time. I'm not always nice, but I'm going to be nice this particular time and kind of give you a heads up. This is what the community is thinking. This is what it is. You may want to reconsider this before you walk in the room. Because we’re going to tell you, “You walk in the room, it may not turn out the way you think or expect.” Now, all things are done decently and in order. So, there's never an argument, there's never confusion, or anything like that. We just want to prepare you for the people you’re about to go into the room with. These

are the stakeholders we've gotten together for the purpose of bringing about equitable development, and they know that when they come here.

So, a lot of times--sometimes, the conversation will take place first, because it actually goes there. Now, of course, they don't have to be in 100 percent in agreement with us, and we allow developers to go in there and not 100 percent in agreement and kind of get lynched a little bit. We'll be like, "See, we kind of told you," and we're the united front. So, you've got all these groups and organizations in here who actually represent thousands of people who live in Islandview. So, how do you want this to be? So, are you listening? Are you paying attention? How can you make this happen? A lot of times, too, with our larger developers, we let them know, "You are a multi-million dollar organization. You do not lack money. There is no such thing as you not making money from your development per se. You may make less, but this is what it is that you need to do. You go on home to a nice comfortable house. We need to make sure that everybody have a nice comfortable house." So, yeah.

But, the meetings are set up that the agenda is set. You need to be--you need to prequalify to be on the agenda. You need to ask. You get a maximum of 10 minutes per speaker. You get a maximum of 10 minutes. But, there is a 15 minute spot that's left for open discussion where anybody can talk. You can not talk out of turn. You must raise your hand. It must be decently and in order, and it will be one hour, and we will cut you off. The politicians are a bit harder. So, we--I literally stand next to them and will kick them. They go long, I'll kick them. Stop talking because we're going to cut you off. We're going to go to the next person. So, yeah. So, that's kind of the meetings, a little bit.

[0:47:10]

**PB:** Could you talk about some of the--are there one or two big successes that you can point to that have come out of those Five Alive meetings or working with the developers that have come in?

**BR:** One of the ones was one with the gentleman down the street. So, he came to us for another developer who wanted to work with us. This other developer brought this other gentleman, and he came, and he said, "Hey, I really want to do the development down the street. There is a four-row townhouse," and we said, "Why are you asking us? We don't own it," and he said, "But, you have a lot of clout with the city." We don't know you. And so, we kind of did a background check, checked out his developments, checked out some of his other stuff. He presented the plan to us. Then, we agreed with the plan. We called down to the city. We called the Planning and Development Land Bank, helped him get the development. We thought it was--he said it was seven bids or 11 bids, and they said, "Do you vouch for him?" and we said, "Yeah, we'll vouch for him," and they gave him the development. And, he got it, like, on a Wednesday or Thursday. He started like that Monday. I don't even think he waited a week. He started.

But, we had our come-to-Jesus moment. All of your skill trade folks are coming out of this neighborhood. All of them. And, they did. All of them. We have the employment office. We will vet them for you. So, everybody we sent to him, he hired, and that's interesting. Some of the folks he hired came through the court system. So, we have a partnership with Frank Murphy Hall of Justice, Judge Kelly Ramsey. She sent us people who she felt as though don't need to go to jail. So, she sent them to them. She said, "I will sentence you instead of going to jail. Your sentence to go to Church of the Messiah." Not to church. Not to the church service, but you are sentenced to go there and work with them. And so, we work with them. We help them with their resume, get their state ID [identification] and driver's license, clothes, whatever it is they need. But for those who we feel as though we can work with, we took some of those people and sent him directly to them.

And, it was one--it was so funny. A father and son came here. Now, I'm not the person who's supposed to do the employment. That's the Assistant Pastor Wally [Gilbert]. Wally is by the book. I am not. And so, they came here. He wasn't here that day. I went downstairs. I talked to them. I'm like, "Okay, you seem reasonable, like you've got some sense, and the judge sent you, so." And, we just talked a little bit about his history, and I picked up the phone, and I called Joe [Ventimiglia], and I said, "I got a young man for you," and he said, "I'm coming up that way anyway." He came up here, met the young man. The man started working the next day. Then Wally got wind of--"Pastor Barry, you didn't put him through the system! You

didn't check out his resume! You didn't..." Sorry! But, he got the job, so. [laughs] But, he got the job. And so, he hired 26 people out of the community, and the development is almost finished. It's almost finished, and that's one of the things that came through our Five Alive that was part of our community benefits agreement that was successful and worked. That was one of the things that worked.

We got other offshoot things that worked, too. So, the young man from Legacy Development [John Perkins] who started that--the 26 year old--one of the things we told him that some of our seniors need in order to age in place is they need new porches, new kitchen, roof, this, that, and the other. So, he said, "Pastor Barry, give me six young men from the church." Got him six young men. He had eight young men. They picked out a day. They started working together. He started training them doing different things. And then, we went over there, and he took three old ladies, all in their eighties, who were aging in place, and we did their porches and their kitchens and their roof, and he did it for free. And, that was one of the things that came out of our community benefits agreement to help the people who already live here, and that was his way of saying back to the community. First, he lives here. And then secondly, we helped him acquire his land for what it is he wanted to do, introduced him to the people from Planning and Development and the Mayor's Office, and that's how he was able to get his project started. So, that was another way that that happened.

And then with the Platform, we came to an agreement on what was affordable housing. [laughs] So, that worked out, too. So, they're going to do real affordable housing, and you're going to be able to tell which one is which. The other agreement that we came to with the Platform on was a couple things. So, one was also the young man who has a clothing line [Vincent McWilliams]. He has a clothing line making the clothes at the church, this, that, and the other. He was able to open his shop at the Fisher Building because of our relationship with the community benefits agreement. So, we said, "You're going to give this young man an opportunity to be successful in business and open up this clothing store," and they did it on their dime. They redeveloped the room for him, put together a strategic thing for his grand opening. I mean, it was really, really, big. It was really, really nice. He's doing very well at the Fisher Building. So, they helped him right out the neighborhood.

And then, we have--wait a minute. There was one more. I forgot. There was... It was... God, it'll come back to me.

**PB:** Yeah.

**BT:** It'll come back to me. But, there was another one where we actually took some young people and worked with them and had a developer work with them. So, yeah.

[0:52:32]

**PB:** So, the CBA [community benefits agreement] with Church of the Messiah and Islandview...

**BR:** Mhm.

**PB:** We know how the CBA process now is in place now that we have the ordinance in the city books. How is your CBA process different than the one that took place, say, at the old train station, the one that's taking place with Fiat-Chrysler?

**BR:** Yeah. Well, for the most part, ours didn't come kind of after the fact. It came before the fact. It came before a lot of the stuff started happening in Islandview. We created it before that because we had the foresight to be able to see and know this was coming. Because our community was somewhat organized anyway and we had all these great activists in this community neighborhood, it was not hard to get us all together and say, "Hey, we need to all be on the same page. We need to have our t's crossed, i's dotted, getting ready for what's getting ready to come to our community neighborhood."

But also, the difference, I think, with us, too, we're not looking to them. We never look to big business. We do everything ourselves. We created that clothing line. We created the tea beverage company. We created the--we're the internet providers. We created the employment office. We built our own houses, our own business. We weren't looking for Dan Gilbert, Chrysler, Ford, none of that. We don't need them to actually be able to do what it is that we're doing. And, part of the reason why we kind of--we did our thing. Nothing against the work that they are doing, but personally, in my opinion, part of the reason why we created this was because everybody was saying, "Well, we ain't thinking about Islandview. We're not thinking about your neighborhood. We're not putting our investment there. That's not valuable enough." Our value is not based on somebody's bottom line of a fact sheet for money. It's based on the value of the people who have lived here and who have stuck it out. So, our thing is we go create our own value. And because we're kind of ahead of the curve, now you can't just get in here. I dare you to just walk in the door and say, "I'm just going to bypass them."

Now, Church of the Messiah has been on the news and documentaries for all good reasons. We would be out there, and that's still a good reason. Somebody's got to stand up for this community and neighborhood. This is not one of the places where we're just going to roll over and say, "We'll just take whatever it is that you give us. It's not going to work like that. And so then therefore, we're not asking for that. Now, we have been in that situation to whereas somebody as big as Ford and Chrysler are coming. The thing is that I will tell those people in those community and neighborhoods, "These are automobile manufacturers that made Detroit, but they are business. They will up and leave your community high and dry just like General Motors did Poletown, and what happens then?" What happens is they stop and said, "Okay, we've had enough, and this aint making enough money." That community, that investment in that community, what I think that they should do is literally take 50, 60 million dollars, set it aside somewhere. If they up and leave, this community can start all over again with that investment from a car manufacturers.

I love Detroit. I love the car manufacturers, but they're sometimes--I just stop and think to myself, "Come on, y'all. Don't. You're leaving a community." It's the people. We make it about money, but there's got to be an obligation and responsibility to the people in the community and neighborhood. And, that's what it is that we look at: the powers, the people in the community and neighborhood.

Because who picks up the pieces? If a developer who is basing it on money and the bottom line and income and all of--if they decide this is not profitable anymore, what happens to that neighborhood or community? And so, you have to think about that. That's why the community needs to be organized so that they know that they are valuable even if they don't have big time investment in them because they need to find ways of being able to find the investment to do within themselves. So, we invest in Islandview, and no developer comes here. We good. [laughs] We good.

[0:56:41]

**PB:** And, that's--what I'm hearing is a totally different narrative that the city spins, ...

**BR:** Mhm.

**PB:** ...that these major corporations spin. I'm hearing this at the FCA [Fiat Chrysler Automotive] CBA meetings that ya'll ought to be grateful that we're bringing these jobs in here.

**BR:** One of the most--see, my thing is you all should be grateful that we stuck out in Detroit and didn't move and leave. That's my thing. Those are the true heroes, the people who stayed in Detroit and stuck it out while everybody else was running for the suburbs, going past 8 Mile, Alter Road, this, that, and the other. Thinking, "Oh, it's such a horrible place and dangerous city." And then all of a sudden, your value is based on somebody else determining what that value is. So now all of the sudden, the same city that wasn't shit, that should have dropped off the map is now so valuable that the whole world is coming to it, and it's almost like, based on what? So, if it's not based on the people that are there--to me, the true power is the people who stayed in Detroit, who decided not to leave, who said, "We're going to do this, and we're going to stick this out." Those are the ones who deserve all of the respect, and that's the people that's in Islandview.

But, our thing is we're not going to wait for somebody else to value our neighborhood to--oh now, because I hear people say, "Oh yeah, it's up and coming in Islandview. Aren't you happy?" Islandview was founded when I first came there in 1997. It was good then. It's good now. The value is not based on being determined by the city or being determined by a billionaire or being determined by anybody else. It is the people who live there who's been building it saying it is valuable. When the church started building houses, townhouses, rehab apartment buildings, it was valuable then. We already made that claim. We made that claim. That's not for them to determine. So even for the new people in Islandview, you still want to come past us. You're still going to have to come past us. It's going to happen, too. You're going to meet Pastor Barry.

We had to get on some--this was not nice--but we had to get on some people who had moved to the community neighborhood, and they were riding their bikes, and we were too, and they were riding their bikes, and we waved, and they didn't do nothing. We went around the corner, cut them off, and stopped and said, "We said hello. Can you speak?" "Hi. Hi. How are you? Yeah." "Welcome to Islandview." So, sorry. Sorry, you...you come in and, "I ain't gonna talk to you." You will speak to us. Sorry. You knew. We were already here. You knew you didn't come discover this. We already here. By the way, who are you anyway? So, kind of funny when you stop, and you say, "I'm Pastor Barry. Church of the Messiah down the street. Welcome to the neighborhood." After I just cut you off, okay, go ahead. [laughs]

**PB:** I mean, that's what being in a neighbor is, right?

**BR:** That's what is being in a neighborhood. You have to sometimes teach people that. You know, you weren't scared to move over here, but, what, you'll only speak to the people--you got your nice house over there? I got my nice little church. I live in the church, so my house is bigger than yours. [laughs] But yeah, yeah.

**PB:** I mean, I see that as bringing a suburban mentality into a city.

**BR:** Yes.



**PB:** That individualism, that...

**BR:** And, we don't want that mentality.

**PB:** Right.

**BR:** Islandview is a small town because mostly everybody do know everybody. We know all of the people who own the businesses. You go in, everybody's on a first name basis, even the bus drivers. The bus drivers--and I must admit the police over here speak, too. We made them do that, too. Our young people made them do that. It's like if you gonna stop and arrest us, you're gonna stop and say hello, too. I'm like, oh, that took balls. [laughs] But, they did it, and it's in order to create the environment that you actually want.

But, we have to stop and say we're not going to be living in our houses terrified and afraid. We're not going to be afraid of our neighbors. We're going to speak. We're going to come out. We're going to work together. We're going to do some things together. We have to teach community and neighborhood. And, what we're trying to do in Islandview, too, is we're trying to keep that village mentality. When I was a kid, I lived in the village. It was a village. And now, you know, everybody keeps saying we lost the village mentality, but the village people aren't all dead. So, ain't that funny, the village people ain't all dead. But, the village people are not all dead, so we still get to keep the village mentality where we can look out after each other in this community and neighborhood. Islandview is the greatest place in Detroit to live, in my opinion. It is the greatest place. And, it's not up and coming. It's all already up. It came already. It's just being improved upon. That's just my take.

[1:01:07]

**PB:** Now, I know that you have an appreciation for history, too.

**BR:** Oh, yes.

**PB:** What I'm--from our previous conversations, right. And, a lot of what I'm hearing in this conversation, the values and the analyses that are inherent within this emphasis on the CBA, on local control, ...

**BR:** Yes.

**PB:** ...community power, ...

**BR:** Yes.

**PB:** ...self determination, ...

**BR:** Yes.

**PB:** ...these are all hallmarks of Black Nationalism, ...

**BR:** Mhm.

**PB:** ...Black Power movements.

**BR:** Mhm.

**PB:** Can you talk about how you see yourself or Church of the Messiah within that kind of historical tradition that's so rich and grounded in Detroit?

**BR:** Yes. Well, for us, it never left. It never left. People always like to talk about how, "Oh, how it used to be." Well, for some of us, that actually never left, and just because there's not as many people practicing it or doing it or knowing about it does not mean that it actually left the community and neighborhood. Now, I'm sorry. Where would you put me? I'm going to talk to my neighbors. I'm going to build a community, and that's just in me. I'm not going to sit behind bars and be scared of people, this, that, and the other. It's not going to work like that.

I figure if you gonna die, you gonna die for what it is you believe in because it kind of reminds me of one time--and this was our own apartment building across the street, and there was a woman who lived in it, and somebody was outside playing music extremely loud who was visiting somebody else there. And, she called me. She said, "Pastor Barry, do you know who's playing that loud music?" I'm across the street. I'm like, "Nope, but let me go tell them to turn it off," and she said, "No, no, no, no, don't do that. You've got to be careful how you talk to people today." I'm like, "So, you going to lay in bed sick and suffering while some son of a gun just plays music loud because he don't know he's in the community where you just cannot do that?" So, I go across the street, and I tell him, "Excuse me, but there is a woman in there. She's sick in there, and your music is so loud it's keeping her up. Can you turn it off?" And, he just looked at me and said, "Who the fuck are you?" I'm like, "You see that church across the street?" and I walked across the street. "I'm the pastor of that church. We own this building you in front of. You here visiting someone, correct?" And, he was like, "Yeah." "I need to have a conversation with them because maybe they need to be evicted because maybe they don't know what to tell their guests coming into a community. So then, let me just go in here and talk to who"--and he said, "No, no, no, no. I'll turn the music down." Thank you very much.

But, why did I have to do that? And, I wound up talking to him, and I'm like, "But, why did I have to tell you? Why would you come play music so loud that you were willing to keep up the whole neighborhood because you want to listen to music that loud? You don't know the difference between public and private. In your house, you play your music, but if it affects other people, people don't want to listen to this. And, why are you listening to something so degrading in the first place?" This, that, and the other. We got into a conversation. Wound up coming to church. I baptized him a month later. [laughs] But, it was one of those things, and

when she called me, and she was like, “Oh. Thanks, Pastor Barry.” I said, “See, the thing about it is if I would have gotten killed from that, at least I would have died for what I believed in, but I was not going to sit in there while you suffered and not done anything about it.”

So, sometimes we can't be fearful all the time, and the thing I looked at too, I'm old enough to be his father. Now, we've gotten into as whereas older people cannot go approach our younger people because we're scared of them? Are you serious? We're afraid of our own children. That is a mentality that we need to stop right now. We don't need to be afraid of our own children because of the fact that we have a history and the knowledge of teaching them what it is that they should know and who they are.

Part of what it is that we teach the people at Church of the Messiah--because there's 60 percent young black male under the age of 30, I have to teach them a lot of history. So, we learn a lot of history in this church. A lot of history. That's why that picture of Dr. King is so big. And on purpose, we learn all about history. It helps to have members in the church, too, like Blair Anderson, who was a Black Panther. So now, we learn about all of the reasons of why we had to stand up, why we had to do the stuff that we did. One of the things that I miss, that I honestly, truly miss about the Civil Rights movement is, at one point, everybody was on the same page because we were fighting a common enemy, which was racism. It was the common enemy through which we all had to fight. It didn't make a difference whether you were Black, white, Muslim, a Jew, atheist. It made no difference, and we knew what the enemy was, and we fought the enemy knowing what it is.

Now, we've forgotten who the enemy is. We've forgotten the enemy. We've broken it up, and we've compartmentalized everything, and the media's done a damn good job of convincing us that we are each other's enemy. And so now, we have to teach our young people, no, that's not your enemy. And, what we teach them now is racism, poverty, those are your enemy. And so then therefore, don't get it twisted. You are not my enemy. You know, because I've had to talk to coke dealers and all this other kind of stuff. You ain't my enemy, but you getting the fuck off this building, but you're not my enemy. It's one of those things where you have to take the time and talk to them and let them know where their power is and how to go about making a difference and a change. So, it helps to have so

many people here who have kind of been through it and to know about it. Once we stop talking about it and once we stop emulating it in the way we do community, we've lost. So, we're still here. Here it is a part of who we are as a church. All of that history is there. All of that history is there.

And, I remember telling them. I was not in Black Bottom. My parents were when they came to Detroit in 1946, and I remember my mother saying how in Black Bottom, she said, "One of the greatest things that we had in Detroit at that time was racism and segregation." She said, "Segregation, the good thing about it was at least everybody was in the same neighborhood. Once segregation left and you can live anywhere you want to," she said, "That was one of the things that kind of messed us up a little bit. We still should have stayed in unison together because we built our own everything." She said, "Because you couldn't go into the white butcher shop, we created a Black butcher shop. Because you couldn't go to a white dealership, there was a Black dealership. And, all of that money stayed, and the garbage man who lived next door to the school teacher who lived next door to the janitor, all of those people all lived together," and she said, "That is the mentality that we need to get back again." I kind of grew up with that mentality, but it was mixed race. But, everybody was there together. And so now, was one of those things. Now, I carry that, and I'm trying to teach that to our young people. We can't allow to let that die, and we cannot allow it to skip another generation either.

So, we have to keep telling the story. And as a matter of fact, we need to do--we need more, in my opinion, today than we did back then. We need it more today. We're more polarized today in Detroit. That's the craziest thing. We're more polarized 50 years later. We're more polarized today than we were back then. But now, it's the thing of classism, not just racism. Part of it is classism. So, yes.

[1:08:14]

**PB:** So, when we're looking at--I want to kind of come back to the CBA that y'all have been working with. You mentioned that 26 guys from the neighborhood got hired on that project of row houses, and people are getting hired other ways. There's affordable housing being built. Can you talk about some of the lasting

impacts or the broader benefits upon the community as a whole that you've seen come out of that?

**BR:** Yes.

**PB:** Like, what is the next step? How do those jobs translate into a stronger community?

**BR:** A lot of ways. I'm glad you asked that question. That's the question most people don't ask that they should. What happens is is when you take a Ray-ray or Pookie who has been to jail, the judge sent him over here. So, there's a partnership between the community and the judge who say, "Go over to this church, this community-based church in order to get a job." You come over here because of what it is that we believe, and we are a community-based--we want to reconcile you.

So now, this developer is going to take a chance on you, whereas he would not take a chance on you if he didn't come to this community. Because he came to this community and wanted that development, our thing is you're going to have to work with us according to our terms. So, you will be hiring some returning citizens. The returning citizen who is making 37 cents an hour in prison is now coming out making 20, 30 dollars an hour, and now he can get his life back. But, that 30 dollars an hour, he can now--he got enough money to be able to have somewhere to live. He has an opportunity to buy housing. He has an opportunity to be able to take care of his children. Now, his children are looking at him not as daddy in prison but the provider, the person getting up going to work everyday. Change the mentality. Not because the community coming from the church say, "Okay, son of a gun."

Now, you can't move. You will stay here in Islandview, and you will make your living in Islandview, and your child will be raised in Islandview. And then, we'll see what you have been redeemed, but also, too, they're in a community neighborhood that they can come and say, "Hey Pastor Barry,"-- or anybody at Church of the Messiah--"I want to be able to start my own business. I want to be

able to do a development company. I want to be able..."--and all of the resources are there coming out of the community. You ain't going to the city to get it. You're not going to big business to get it. You're not getting no politician coming making no promises. This is based on you and your community talking about your power.

All of the other part--this is the other part that I wanted to mention, and I'm glad you said community benefits agreement. The other agreement that we made with the Platform, our bike shop is coming out of the basement, and it's going to be in a free-standing building. So, we're going to have a bike shop down near Belle Isle--so you know it's going to be a big success--down near Belle Isle where all these bike races coming all over, and they're all over here that they're going to do that. We sat down, had the conversation, and they said, "Okay, so we're going to do the bike shop." So, we're going to make it a worker owned co-op. So, it's going to be a worker owned co-op where we're going to take the bike mechanics, teach them how to run the business and own the business. Now, they will own the business as long as they live in Islandview. The business will never leave. If you move, you forfeit your ability to run the business. So, it is a community-based business that's set in the community. We paid attention to these manufacturers in other places that actually have the choice of being able to get up and move where they can make more money. Here is about the people. It's not about the money, it's about the people. But if you live in Islandview, there will be an opportunity for you to be able to do this.

Now because bikes are seasonal, they said, "Okay, Pastor Barry, so we need to do something else." So, that's spring and summer. What are we going to do for the rest of the year? We can't close the business down. Of course not. We're going to have a restaurant. So, I used to own a restaurant. So, we will have a restaurant. So, it will be a restaurant and a bike shop. Might as well get something to eat, get a sandwich while your bike is getting repaired or is custom made, or you're buying a bike or the accessories. Since we're close to the river--alright, Blair [Anderson], you make the leather craft. You're going to make the leather bags that's going to be attached to the bikes. You're going to make the seats, and you're going to make the accessories. So, one business gets the business of another one. And then, we will be able to use our commercial kitchen downstairs right now where we're training young people to be able to go into the culinary arts. We adopted Davis Aerospace Golightly School [Davis Aerospace Technical High School at Golightly Career and Tech Center] through DPS [Detroit Public Schools], who came to us and

said, "Adopt this school." And then, we were thinking about, "Hmm, culinary arts. We can train some of these kids to work in this store. And by the time it's up in this restaurant"--but also, too, we got a celebrity chef who has come to the church who said, "I want to work with y'all." So, we're going to have a celebrity chef help us to launch the business when it's done. A virgin had a baby. So... [laughs]

That's how you--and so in your community, all of this development is helping the people directly in the community and neighborhood. Everybody going to say, "We need to do our community benefits agreement based on DIVA [Detroit Islandview Village Alliance] down in Islandview." That's what it's going to be based on. So, we're going to constantly be building the people and also, too, our development. Don't make no difference how much money it is. It's ludicrous to say, "Oh, if it's over 75 million dollars," or something like that. So, you send over the smaller development, you don't gotta ask nobody nothing. No, you come in here, you want to invest anything, you want to stop, and you want to talk to us. So, it's a whole different mentality. Whole different mentality, so. Totally different.

[1:13:53]

**PB:** Is that like a written document?

**BR:** Yes. Yes. Yes. That is a written document. Because also, too, what a lot of people did not understand, our community benefits agreement is for the people who get the jobs. So, our thing is, too, the returning citizens, the same way we have to make an agreement with the developer in order to make sure that the jobs was there, the opportunities for the employment was there was first given to the people who actually live there and taking the store fronts and making them entrepreneurship opportunities that, too, some of the people who are going to own the storefronts gotta come out the community and neighborhood. We have to make one with the people who get the opportunity. You cannot move. Do not tell me now you're going to make you money out of this neighborhood and out of this community and take it to the suburbs. It ain't happening. You have forfeited your right to work on these projects. Don't tell me that. It's because you live here, because you are a valued member of the community and neighborhood, that's why you got the opportunity in the first place. Because you live in Islandview--like



I tell people all the time, American Express said it first, but membership has got its privileges. Membership, it has its privileges. So, there you go.

**PB:** So, that's, like, a two-ended agreement.

**BR:** Yes!

**PB:** So, the developers have got to agree to support the community, and the community members gotta agree to...

**BR:** Yep, and support the community, yep. And, that's how we end gentrification. Guess what? You can't take it if you don't move. A lot of times, I have to tell people when they say, "Oh Pastor Barry, aren't you worried about gentrification in Islandview?" Actually, no, because you've got to remember all we do is affordable housing. So as long as there is Church of the Messiah, there will be affordable housing. There will be somewhere for you to live. Now, we're not against millionaires moving into the communities. So, if you want to live down on Jefferson [Avenue] on the [Grand] Boulevard and you want to pay 1,500 dollars for a studio, that's fine. But, it's going to be right next to our two bedroom townhouse for 600 dollars for a mother raising her child or for a senior raising a grandchild. They're all going to be right there together. God bless you. Equitable. Yep.

[1:15:56]

**PB:** So, can you talk a little bit about the impacts that the housing corporation has had in the neighborhood?

**BR:** Yes. The housing corporation, we have about--I'd say about 400 residents? Somewhere between 300, 400 residents that's here because of the housing corporation. The housing corporation is a little bit two fold. So, the housing corporation, we created two things. We created the housing corporation to build affordable housing in Islandview, and it only builds in Islandview. So, we don't

have scattered sites. It's all right here in the neighborhood and community. And so, that's his job, to build affordable housing. Then, we created the BLVD Harambee, which is the Building Leaders for Village Development. BLVD because we're the boulevard, which is the empowerment piece.

And, just so you know--when somebody steal this, you heard it here first--empowerment here is spelled i-n-p-o-w-e-r-m-e-n-t, the power from within. The power you have, your God-given abilities, talents, gifts, and whatever talents that you have, it comes from inside of you. You give it back to the rest of the world. That's your agreement with God. Whether you believe in him or not, you made an agreement. And so, it's a thing about when we take the power from within, the power from within the individual, the power from what's already in the community, and then use that in order to build the community. That's why we do all the entrepreneurship. That's why we have the extracurricular activities. That's why we're the internet provider. We're making it a one-stop shop to be able to say you come to Islandview and look at it. It's why I don't like churches.

So, you come here, rent a house, townhouse, apartment. You come to the church to get your job. You come to church to start your business. You come to church to pay your internet bill. You come to church because you pay from the bank. You come to church because your business is here. I wonder what the other preachers do. This is church. And, we got a service on Sunday on top of all of that. But, it's the thing where everything you need is in the community and neighborhood.

So, we're trying to make this a powerful community and neighborhood that is going to be the envy of the rest of the world. Now, God told me to build an empire, and he said, "Build it on earth." So, we're going to build an empire. We will own everything, and I mean it in a positive way. And, I don't mean for the purpose of money. I mean for the purpose of being able to show people it's the way to do business right, it's a way to conduct your affairs right, to do right by people and there has to be a return for all of the--between 5[000] and 7,000 people getting out of prison every year coming back to Detroit communities. What's going to happen to these people, and what's going to happen to these communities? And, I agree. It always amazes me. We notice this happening every single year, and there is nothing put in place to be able to prevent this from reoccurring every single year. Unless it's a business, and you're making money off

of all the people who are going to prison, so yeah, unless that's it, my thing is to put you out of business. So, we're working in order to stop that recidivism rate, to do something about that. And, that's part of the reason why we work so hard.

So, the housing component is to provide affordable housing even in the area that everybody is now looking at. I mean, let's face it. You're a block from the river, and you live in affordable housing where millionaires will pay all this money to be able to have the same view and the same access that you have. It is a privilege to be able to live here. I don't mind the other part. I feel sorry for anybody that don't live on the East side of Detroit, sorry. And then, you don't live in Islandview, I feel sorry for you, too. And, we're the closest of all of the villages--Indian Village, West Village, [Joseph] Berry subdivision, the Gold Coast. Islandview got access to that river, and our community is--Belle Isle is part of our community. So, yeah. So, that's why we named it Islandview, just so you know that. Islandview, a view of the island. Islandview. So, that's why the city, when they expanded it, I'm like, "You know that ain't no view from the island. You're on McClellan [Avenue], and you can't see it." So, I don't know why they did that. But, that's for their reason, but Islandview is right here.

[1:19:54]

**PB:** So, is there any plans--or maybe this is already in action--for community land trusts in Islandview?

**BR:** Oh my God, yes. Now, we used to have one. I think it was back in 1993, but I was really kind of just getting here, so I didn't have a chance to kind of be moseying into that. But, we are having a conversation right now, and it is because of that thing with Fiat-Chrysler. That conversation has spawned this other conversation to where we are talking about that. We just had this conversation last week. So, yeah, get ready. Wait till that happens.

**PB:** So, is that conversation about what's next?

**BR:** The next meeting, because they just brought it to me and said, “Pastor Barry, would you be interested in doing this?” Hell yeah. Let's get this started. Let's get going. Let's not--I hate a whole bunch of talk. Let's get it going. And, it's needed. It's needed.

[1:20:44]

**PB:** So, who do you envision being the assets in that kind of venture?

**BR:** It would be, in my opinion, the [James and Grace Lee] Boggs Center, Genesis Hope, Church of the Messiah, possibly Field Street Association, maybe the folks at Charlevoix Village. MACC Development might want to be a part of that. But yeah, we need to have that conversation. I think that would be a good conversation to have, and maybe we can even present it in something like Five Alive. So, it just kind of all depends. Just got to be careful of who you present that to and make sure that folks in the community and neighborhood get the real benefit because that's what our whole thing is, making sure that people in the community and neighborhood get the real benefit. We don't want it to be the other way around.

[1:21:32]

**PB:** You mentioned earlier that your CBA, your model that you built here, you've been working on kind of teaching others how to use that. You mentioned San Francisco and other places. What advice, if you're giving us, like, a crash course on--or a how-to guide replicating CBA...

**BR:** Oh, no. Okay, yeah.

**PB:** That's kind of a big thing. Like, what are the core components? Like, I live in Southwest Detroit. Like...

**BR:** Southwest Detroit is very well-organized...

**PB:** Right.

**BR:** ...on so many different levels.

**PB:** So, whether it's Southwest Detroit or North End, wherever we want--or Boston Edison--wherever we want to look at, what does a neighborhood have to do to build the kind of CBA that you've built here?

**BR:** It's a couple things. One, don't get distracted by stupid things. People have extremely stupid conversations and self-interests. Cannot be about self-interest. You've got to get your priorities, and you've got to get them down early. You've got to have people at the table who you trust. It can't just be anyone who shows up. This is not one of the things where you get volunteers. We have a thing here called voluntold. I don't wait for volunteers. You get the qualified person, and you say, "I'm sorry, but you're the one who's going to do this because you know how to do it." "Pastor Barry, I didn't volunteer." "I didn't ask for volunteers. We need you. You know how to do it." When you ask for volunteers, you be like, damn. I deal with them, and I know they ain't gonna do it. So, we don't do volunteers. It's called voluntold.

You've got to get the people who you know are the community stakeholders, and that's why with Five Alive--Five Alive is not a town hall meeting. Anybody can't come. We don't have time for rabbit-hole conversations. We don't have time for distractions. We don't have time for self-interest. It's got to be where it is about how do we build the community and neighborhood, and how do we hold the people accountable. Now, we've had people come to the thing who've had their own ulterior motives, this, that, and the other, but they're no longer invited because we don't have time for that. So, you've got to get the people who have invested, interested stakeholders who are kind of--I don't want to necessarily say assigned, but appointed, who the community can trust, 'cause you'll be spending all of your time trying to get infrastructure right.

Then, you've got to be willing to teach the people in the community and neighborhood their power, their power and authority. It is up to them, the power in the community and neighborhood. A lot of times, we look at ourselves as if we're customers to a business. We're citizens. With that comes right and privileges, and when you are the citizen of a community or a neighborhood or whatever, you have right because you are there. The other people who are coming in are the ones that don't have rights. It's almost like as I looked at the thing with Fiat-Chrysler, and I'm thinking to myself--I'm listening to people who have been there for a whole long time, and they're saying things like, "Chrysler is God, and you are on your knees begging," and I'm like, "Get up off your knees. Don't look at it that way." So, you are a citizen, and that is your right. They're the investor. They want to be able to come into your community neighborhood, this, that, and the other, but you have the right to be able to do that. So, you need good counsel, but you need to educate the people to understand and know their rights, finding that proper infrastructure to be able to do it.

And then, look and see what's already working. Work with the folks to find out what's already working. The folks from San Francisco, I did not expect that. There was an organization that came here a couple summers ago, and we were on their little tour of Detroit, and they came, and they saw the work that we were doing, and these guys came to me, preachers, and they said, "Oh my God, we can't believe y'all took your own neighborhood and got the employment office. You got the young people. It's like, oh my God, and we live in a San Francisco area called Bayview, and it is the last part of San Francisco that has not been gentrified. Can you give us some guidance?" So, yeah. I'm planning on working with them.

Then, I had a preacher come in to me, and he said, "I went up to Flint, and there's this thing called the Gathering of the Shepherds, and there's 16 pastors representing all these denominations, and they want you to come up there. They want to know how y'all created DIVA and can we do it in Flint?" Went up to Flint. Next thing I know, all these preachers came down to Detroit and looked at the neighborhood and community. They looked at all the stuff that we're doing, and they're doing it up there. They're doing it up in Flint. They just named it something else instead of DIVA, but they're doing it. So, it's really good to be able to look and see what's going, what's working, and making sure that you've got a pretty good infrastructure.

The other thing is, too, if you stop and--my God, don't give up. Just... I try to tell the folks here, you're born to win. The only way that you honest and truly get up--give up is when you don't even make the attempt. That's the only failure is when you don't make the attempt. And, you have to do it anyway. And sometimes, everybody's not going to go with you. When I redid Church of the Messiah, the congregation re-voted against me. They re-voted--the then-congregation. Now, they hold no authority. So, I've earned that title of pastor. And, I always look at it this--well, I'm not going to off into that. [laughs] I'm not going to get off into that. But, the thing about it is doing anything is the right thing to do, and not only are you dependent on it, but the generations that's coming behind you is looking for it, too.

Get people of sound mind, people who are not distracted. Get really good infrastructure. Learn from the people who actually started it and are doing it and paying attention to it, and then see what can work in your community and neighborhood. And also, build a really good relationship with your police department, your city councilperson, your state rep[resentative]. Get to know all of those people, and get the pulse of the community and neighborhood. I would recommend that people would have town hall meetings just to kind of find out what the interest is in the people in the community and neighborhood, and do it anyway. That's my thing. A virgin had a baby. Do it anyway. Do it anyway. Never let anybody tell you what's not possible. And then, I did the sermon on you outran 400 million sperm just to be born. So, you good at beating the odds. So, if the odds are 400 million to one or less, you can do it. So, you can do it.

[1:27:37]

**PB:** So, I want to pivot a little bit. As just a time check, we're at about five to 11. So, we can start wrapping up. Detroit has this incredible history of visionary preachers. When you think about C. L. [Clarence LaVaughn] Franklin, ...

**BR:** Oh yes, he was amazing. Yes.

**PB:** ...Reverend Clay [Evans], ...

**BR:** Yes, yes.

**PB:** ...and countless others in between, ...

**BR:** Yes.

**PB:** ...how do you see yourself within that tradition?

**BR:** First, just like I said before, I never wanted to be a preacher. But because I am, I don't want to die not making a difference. The scariest thing for me is to stand before God after I die and for him to say, "Barry, that was nice, but let me show you what you could've done if you would've had just a little bit more courage and little bit more faith and some balls. Let me show you what you could've done." So, I stop and think about that every single time. And when you stop and you think about why we're here, the preacher is a servant.

That's why I have a problem with the preachers today because I think if you're driving a Bentley and your congregation driving a bus, you ain't qualified. If you live in a penthouse and they living in the projects, to me, you're unqualified. I think every preacher should be sequestered to live in a neighborhood where they church is. It's up to you to stand up for that community and neighborhood if you're going to represent it. I don't begrudge anybody who makes a living from it. I can't do it. To me, it's a call, not a job. I'm not being paid by the members of Messiah because I think then they can come tell me what to do. You ain't my boss. This is my boss. I am to serve Him in order to serve you. The only way to serve God is to serve your fellow men. We are servants, and we're not to be served. That's just my personal opinion.



But, I want to be able to make a difference, and I think I've lived enough. I think about, okay, so if I wasn't a minister, would I still be doing this? I don't know. All I know is it is the greatest thing to do in the world. I wake up everyday happy because I know I get to wake up and make a difference. I really get to do that. And, it's up to us to make that difference because I think it's hypocritical to get up in church on Sunday and say, "God is good," and your neighborhood look like Beirut, but your church is in good shape. I think it's hypocritical to be able to tell people to pay their tithes, and they're on a fixed income, and you living like a king. I just have a problem with that.

So, that's why for the C.L. Franklins and for the Clays and all the other ones who did the work, I believe that that's a calling, and they didn't forget about it. And, I wonder what they would think. If they would stop and think, "There's 4,000 churches in Detroit. What're we doing?" Where is our responsibility? What happened to the preacher that was in the face of the politician? What happened to the preacher that was in the face of the big business? What happened to the preacher that was in the face of all of this craziness and foolishness to say, "This is not going to happen, not in my community, not in my neighborhood. You will do right by them."? A lot of them have kind of sold out.

And so in that case, I hope that by the time I die, it will be a difference for that, and people will remember I showed up. I want them to remember that I honest and truly showed up. And for the people who are left at Church of the Messiah, I don't want it to be where, "Oh, Pastor Barry gone." Nope, give them hell. Keep working. Keep building a community and neighborhood. Do it even more so because what you want to do, you want to leave a legacy behind that is able to say it was not just one person. It's us collectively together. God will call out a particular person to kind of take the lead, but we're all leaders. We all have a say. We all have a stake. So, I think that's vitally important.

So, yeah. There better be some legacy, but I don't want to just be a picture on a wall to say, "Oh, that was the pastor of the church when I was here," and you go on about your business. Uh huh, it's got to be more than that. But that legacy, the greatest legacy that you can have lives on in the people that you lead, that regardless of the fact that they know your name and mention your name, you've now created these other people you helped to be able to build them enough to

whereas it continues. And, I take it from the point of view of Jesus Christ. They figured that after they killed him, okay, it's over. Those other fools, those 11, those other 11 got up and made a difference. They remembered the stuff that they were taught, and they went out there and started duplicating and doing the thing. And then, the world knew, "Now, this is a movement."

This is a movement. I hate--sometimes, I just--religion--and I hate that word religion--but it should be a movement. The Church of the Messiah is more of a movement than it is just a religion or a denomination. It is a movement of a mindset to be able to go out and make a difference. And, that's what we're supposed to do, go out and make a difference. And then, let the world and the community know God do love you, but it comes through people. We keep believing, and we keep asking God, "Why is it like that?" And he keeps saying, "I didn't make it like that, but I made you. You go out and you make it different." It is up to the people, and it is those other preachers who actually believe that and did that. And so, if I'm aligned with them, that's good company. That's good company.

[1:33:06]

**PB:** If you were to give a quick definition of what equitable development means, what it is, what would that be?

**BR:** Equitable development is there's room for everybody. It does not mean equal. I keep telling people this when they say, "Well, Pastor Barry, you're talking about making things equal." I ain't talking about making things equal. I remember--I think it was the assistant pastor [Wallace Gilbert] who gave this example, but it's true. So, how tall are you?

**PB:** Six [feet] two [inches].

**BR:** Okay. I'm 5 [feet] 6 [inches]. So, if somebody said, "I'm going to give you a ladder to look over this wall." You can give us both a ladder, you're still taller than me. I need a taller ladder than you because I am shorter than you. So, we were to

make it equitable, my ladder would be taller than yours, and it don't bother you. The bottom line is we both need to see over the wall. So, you don't care that the ladder is taller. If it was equal, we'd get the same sized ladder, and I still may not be able to see because you taller than me. So, equitable means you make sure that the person gets what it is that they need even if it means it's not equal. So then therefore, we got a thing at the Church of the Messiah where we're always talking about is it right. What is the right thing to do? Equality is not the right thing to do. Equity is the right thing to do. So, you have an opportunity to be able to get what it is that you need, and if your need is a little bit different, then we take care of that need.

It makes me think--and I'm a preacher, and you've got me talking, so I'm going to give you a scripture about how Jesus did this, and he told the story of this man that had a vineyard, and he was hiring people. So, he went out at six o'clock A.M. in the morning, saw people standing by the side, and he said, "Do you all need to work?" and they said, "Yes." So, he said, "Come work for me," and he put him out in the field. Then, he went back at nine o'clock, and then he went, and he got some more. And then, he went back at three o'clock, and he went and got some more. And then, he went back again at 5:30, and he went and got some more. Six o'clock came, and they all needed to be paid. And, he paid the ones who started at 5:30 first. By the time he got to the ones that started at 6 A.M. in the very beginning, they were like, "That's not fair." He said, "No, I told you that you all get a day's pay for the work that you do. I didn't tell you how long the day was going to be. So, don't blame me that I'm generous. So, you got what it is that you got, what you needed, money. You were standing by the side of the road, and these were standing by the side of the road." And then, in his eyes, it made no difference. According to the world, that's not fair. But in the eyes of God, it's fair.

It's almost like when you look at the fact of do it make a difference that somebody know who God is from the time they 20 and died 80, or if somebody get it at 79 and die at 80. Bottom line, you both entitled to the same thing. That's equity. It's not equal. It's not 'cause you been there longer you get something extra. Nope! The bottom line is getting a relationship and knowing who you are. That's what you want the person to be able to get to. That's why we believe in equity. Has nothing to do with seniority, the amount of time. It's availability to the opportunity that's presented to everybody. Equity.

[1:36:09]

**PB:** And, I want to wrap up with kind of visioning question. I want to phrase it two ways. One, what is your vision for an equitable society? Like, what's your vision for the future of Detroit? But, put another way, you come to the end of the line, God says, "Well done, good and faithful servant." What does your community look like at the end of that line?

**BR:** My God. Boy, that's a...that's a good one. Okay. So, what does the community look like at the end of that? Opportunity for everybody. Equitable community towards whereas it makes no difference who you are, you can live in Islandview. It's not one of those things when you stop and you think about Indian Village, you think about how much money you make, and you stop, and you say, "Oh, I can't live there." You think about Palmer Park or Palmer Woods are the different neighborhoods in Detroit, and you think about, "Oh," and you immediately stop and think, "I can't live there based on my income." In Islandview, it won't be based on that. You want to live there because of its accessibility to the bus lines, its accessibility to the freeway, its accessibility to the water, its accessibility to Downtown, its accessibility to all the other resources that you need.

So, it makes no difference whether you're a returning citizen and you got out of jail, whether you're a single mom and you got your kids, whether you're a senior on a fixed income, I know I can live in Islandview because that's the neighborhood where all the resources are, and it's open to everybody. That has nothing to do with class, has nothing to do with race, has nothing to do with income, has nothing to do with education. It has to do with willingness. But, you understand that when you live in this community and neighborhood, that there are some requirements expected of you, and that is to be a good neighbor, to be an asset to your community and neighborhood, to bring up somebody else at the same time, and to use your gift and talent to be able to make that neighborhood to be even a better place that people want to come to and stay. That's what my vision would be.

**PB:** Is there anything that we didn't cover that you wanted?

**BR:** No, you've covered everything. The only other thing I want to say is church is at 12 o'clock on Sunday.

**PB:** Thank you, Pastor Barry.

**BR:** Thank you.