

**GREENSBORO VOICES/GREENSBORO CIVIL RIGHTS ORAL HISTORY  
COLLECTION**

INTERVIEWEE:     Howard Chubbs

INTERVIEWER:     William Link

DATE:               September 18, 1989

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

WILLIAM LINK: This is William Link and the date is September 18, 1989. I'm in the office of Reverend Howard Chubbs. I'd like to begin by talking a little bit about your childhood, if you could, say, tell me where you were born, and say perhaps something about your early memories as a child about race relations.

HOWARD CHUBBS: I was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in February of 1936. And race relations in Chattanooga, Tennessee, were the same, I guess, as they were throughout the South. There was a deep polarization of the races, and the success or the lack of volatility always could be based on the fact that everybody knew their position--especially in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Blacks knew that they were second-class citizens and as a result, during that time, pretty much accepted the role. One interesting thing was that there is a white-looking side of my family who "passed" and used to tease us as being darker, that we couldn't go to the white theatres. The movies always got to the black theatres after they went to the white theatres, and I had some cousins who used to tease us by telling us what was going to happen in the movies, which we sort of resented.

I guess overall, prior to what I would consider "black enlightenment," or Negro Enlightenment as it was called at the time, where we decided that this was no longer going to work, the segregated pattern, you accepted what role it was that you were expected to play, always in subserviency and always trying to keep from rocking the boat and trying to keep white folks happy with your presence.

One incident has always stuck in the back of my mind. That is, one summer when I went to visit my aunt in Rome, Georgia--my aunt and uncle--to spend some time in the summer. Then coming back to Chattanooga, which is only about seventy-five miles, I got on a bus about dusk that evening and sat in the black section and the bus filled up to the point that there was one more white person that was supposed to sit in the white section, and she came and sat down beside me. And the bus driver got up and made me stand, at

about twelve years of age, the seventy-something odd miles from Rome, Georgia, to Chattanooga, even though there was a seat sitting there unoccupied, because I could not sit beside a white lady.

It turned me against buses. I never wanted to ride another one. And that's a scar that never will disappear. I was twelve years old, sitting in my seat, and this lady did not mind sitting beside me in order to get a seat, but I could not sit in the seats designated for blacks because she decided she wanted a seat. And I've never forgotten it. And it's a scar, I guess, that will never disappear. Again, for that reason I've never wanted to ride buses. And I have those nasty memories.

I remember when I graduated from Tennessee State University, even in 1954 when the Supreme Court ruled that public accommodations such as buses were to be open regardless of race and we were to sit wherever we wanted to, I got on the bus at Tennessee State, the week I was graduating, and sat toward the front. In Nashville, Tennessee, the buses all go around, circle around the capitol and when I got downtown, I had to transfer and get to another bus to get to the bus station to meet my mother, who was coming in on a train from Chicago where we were living then.

And several white persons got on the bus and said to the bus driver, "Unless you make that nigger move, we ain't going to ride this bus, and this bus ain't going to move."

And the bus driver said, "I'd like to ask him, but the law says I can't ask him." And that, that still is very vivid in my mind. Even after the law had passed, it meant that the law didn't really mean a lot to some folk.

I'm not totally negative about it, however, because my college education for the first two years were paid for by a white gentleman whose shoes I shined as a little boy in after school jobs. And when he found out I could not go to college because of the divorce of my mother and my father, he made it possible for me to get a better job where I could make more money, and realizing as much money as I made was not going to be enough, he had me bring my money to him and he wrote a check for my school bill and gave me enough money to buy some things I needed and sent me a monthly allowance. So all of my feelings are not negative, because without him I wouldn't be here talking to you today, nor would any of the good things that have happened to me have happened to me.

I guess you look at it from being bitter on one side because of the tradition, but you can't class and dump all folk together because no black folks sent me to school. It was a white man who had no reason, no responsibility to me, and who, until he died, made sure that my undergraduate education was paid for.

Fortunately for me, I was able to get a job as soon as I got to Nashville and I worked at a country club as a waiter. And later, when we moved to Chicago, I worked as a dining car waiter for the Milwaukee Road [Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad]. He didn't have to send me the money, but he was always concerned that it was there.

Even when he died, his wife said to me, "Howard, I don't know what your relationship, what your arrangement with my husband was but I want to continue it." It wasn't necessary to do it anymore; but he made it possible.

So you have mixed feelings about the race relations because if it weren't for a white man, whose brother incidentally was very active in the local Klu Klux Klan, I wouldn't be here today.

WL: You mentioned that most people just try to get on, just try to be able to survive the system. Was it possible to get by and avoid the kind of humiliation that you just described?

HC: The negativism?

WL: Yeah, the kind of situation where you had, where you would be publicly humiliated and, I mean, was it possible to go through life and avoid, under the system, avoid the kind of humiliation, or was it--

HC: It was accepted during that time that, for instance--I tell my son now, he doesn't believe it, but all the desks we had--I went to a school called Howard High School--all the desks we had in our schools were desks that were brought to our schools from white schools after the whites had gotten new desks. You couldn't write on top of the desk unless you put something between the desk and the paper you were writing on because the white kids had already carved their initials in there. We got used books. We were expected to learn a first-class education and the books were given to us. But hey, the teacher could assign you pages one-thirty-five through forty-two in the chemistry book. You couldn't do the experiment because the last owner of the book had torn out one-thirty-five through one-forty-two and there were no books to replace that book. You got hand-downs on everything, you know. But that was the way it was then and we didn't complain too much because that's just the way things are.

Only when the laws started changing and the Supreme Court became more active in securing rights for minorities, did you dare then become dissatisfied with the way it was. You know, as long as you knew that was the way it was going to be, you adjusted to it. You know, you realized that you didn't go in the front door of the hotel unless you had a bellman's uniform on.

I always--a funny thing, I worked at two or three hotels in Chattanooga as a waiter after school and as a bellboy after school hours, and I always purposed in my heart that at one of those hotels where Roy Rogers--I don't know if you remember Roy Rogers--occupied a suite, that one day I was going to sleep in that suite, and I did, later on in life, because it was important to me to erase that part of it from my memory.

WL: You mentioned earlier also that there was a fairly complete or extensive separation between whites and blacks?

HC: Yeah, yeah.

WL: Day by day, not much contact between whites and blacks, or only contact under certain circumstances?

HC: Only contacts in certain segments. You didn't live in their neighborhoods. You didn't even think of living in their neighborhoods. My mother was a maid and there was a maid's quarters, so on the day that my mother had to spend the night because her bosses were going out, she knew where her maid's quarters were.

Funny thing, when I was a kid I went to Indianapolis, Indiana, to visit my aunt who worked for, in service for a white family, the Herrings, a very rich white family, I'll never forget. They had two daughters who were older than I, and during the day while I was there with my aunt, there was great interaction. We played together. We enjoyed each other's company even though they were older than I. There was no difference then, but at dinner time, when it came time for Janie--and I don't know what her sister's name was--to eat dinner, they went in the dining room. And I thought that the relationship would continue at dinner time, but I went to the kitchen and ate with my aunt. And I think I remember that very, very vividly, that all day long we had done everything together, except when it came time to be white and black, and we separated. And I think that's pretty much how blacks viewed it at that time. My parents were not dissatisfied. They were dissatisfied, but not to the extent they were going to do anything about it, because it had always been that way. I think we saw another side, but we never, we never really, at that time, envisioned that it would change a whole bunch a lot.

WL: Was there a sense that things were going to change? You went to college during--you mentioned *Brown* [v. *Board of Education*] and obviously *Brown* brings a new environment. Was there a sense that things were changing there? There's an opportunity-

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HC: Well, yeah, yeah. I think there was a sense that ultimately they would change, but segregation was so entrenched in the South that blacks were actually afraid to push too much for what they were supposed to have had at that point. You know, the Klan ran rampant. And there was overt racism, not the subtle type that we have now, that said, "We don't care what the law says but you damn niggers are going to stay in your places." Just as when I was sitting on the bus, I was fearful for my life. I was about to get up and move, and had not the bus driver--move to the back where I was supposed to be--had not the bus driver decided that his time for the bus to take off had come. And as a result,

those white gentlemen, white persons, who wouldn't get on the bus because I was sitting there actually were willing to inconvenience themselves and wait for another bus. They were not going to get on that bus with a nigger sitting in the front.

I don't think that we ever dreamed at that time that things would change to the extent that they have changed. We had no precedent for the dream. It had never been different and the "separate but equal" had sunk in to the point that--I think, during that time, that blacks still had a slave mentality where, "Hey, you don't want to push this thing too far." Martin Luther King scared the hell out of black folk as well as white folk, because we didn't know what was going to happen. We heard about the demonstrations in the South and the violence that came. And blacks at that time were afraid of the violence, that it would spread to where we were. We wished, as well as whites, that he could have done it some other way. We were not as perceptive that the dream's time had come, and that somebody's going to have to die. Somebody's going to have to be inconvenienced, but only in pain does growth come, or birth come. And we weren't quite so sure that he wasn't pushing it a little far.

WL: Ordinary people just, I think it's like, most ordinary people want to get by and they don't want to--

HC: Don't want to rock the boat. Well, security's an important element. Even the churches during that time were not very vocal, due to the fact that, hey, who did our people work for? They could get to the churches, the white community could get to the churches by firing the members of the churches. They could exact great intimidation against even ministers, because if ministers don't have any members, then ministers don't have any churches, and as a result--but white people have always been very shrewd. They never messed with the churches to the extent that they might now, due to the fact that they wanted blacks to be happy somewhere, so they wouldn't realize how miserable they were other places. So churches they left pretty much--they even gave churches that had no business ever having a loan because they had no visible means of repaying--they always did, but, by chicken dinners and this type of thing--they gave them loans of enormous amounts to build churches so that black folk would be quiet in their churches and could be happy.

They had their method to their madness. The black preacher at that time and the black teacher were the two respected people in the community. Black preachers during that time could ride huge cars because it gave--the banks were willing to loan them the money to buy them. "Keep the rest of the black folk quiet. Maybe one day if you're nice, you'll get one too."

WL: Did--there's--as student at Tennessee State, was there--students are not subject necessarily to direct, this kind of intimidation you just described, in other words, they--or were they? What was--

HC: Well, at the time, yes, separate but equal. Tennessee State was the only black, state-supported institution and remains predominately black--though now I understand since the merger decree, Tennessee State is probably now 50-50, or maybe more white than black--but at that time, the state of Tennessee had only one black institution that it supported, so all the money for black higher education went to Tennessee State University. Tennessee State University at that time was probably better off than many of the other black institutions in the state, in the country, as far as funds were concerned, because other states were supporting more than one black institution; the state of Tennessee was not. It was never going to be what the University of Tennessee was. It was never going to be what some of the other institutions were. But it was always going to be a step ahead of what most of the black institutions were.

So there was a degree, a feeling of accomplishment and favoritism there, until you dealt on another level and--but no, we didn't feel any intimidation. It really didn't bother us. You know, Tennessee State was a very happy place at the time, superior athletic teams that kept loyalty and so forth there and a good education. As I look back now, I consider that the education I got beginning in 1953 was as good as was available to a black student who did not attend a majority school at that time, so I have no regrets.

WL: And it was--later, sit-ins in Nashville were spearheaded by the students from Tennessee State.

HC: --students from Tennessee State. I was gone.

WL: Right. That was--

HC: I was gone at the time. I think Harold Ford, who was a congressman out of Memphis, and that group came in later. And there were a lot of the older more established blacks in town who wished they hadn't done it either. I remember hearing Martin Luther King speak to Tennessee State University during the middle fifties--I think it was about '55 or something like that--and he was at that time a celebrity, though certainly not as important as he later came to become, because he had led the Montgomery bus boycott and a couple of other things which now, compared to some of the other victories we had, were minor things.

WL: You went from Nashville to Chicago?

HC: Chicago. We went to Chicago right after having been admitted to Tennessee State. We moved from Chattanooga, my family moved. My sisters, who were younger than I, spent, did most of their high school and most of their schooling in Chicago public schools, where I did not go to public school in Chicago at all, because when we graduated, when I graduated, I was sixteen years old. I was admitted to Tennessee State that fall and so even though we were moving, I didn't go to any public schools there.

WL: But you went to Chicago in the summers and--

HC: Oh, yeah. Yeah. I worked. I worked.

WL: And then you graduated from--

HC: Tennessee State, I went back to Chicago.

WL: How did you--what differences did you find going from--

HC: Oh, it was like moving to heaven. There were so many more things to do. The segregation was more subtle. It was more tolerable, tolerant as far as I was concerned because I was allowed to go places and didn't have to go to the back door to go to those places. A kid of that age, "Hey this is a new world," you know? Even though you lived--and now that I look back on it--even though we lived in a segregated neighborhood in the south side, still there was nothing to say I could not go everywhere everybody else went. In Chattanooga, I lived in a segregated neighborhood, and could not go, you know. I didn't have to worry about getting on "L" [the elevated train] or the subway and finding a seat in the back, you know. You sat where you damn pleased. You could go in a restaurant, wherever you pleased.

There were certain neighborhoods, certain ethnic neighborhoods that you--you could go anywhere. You went down to 22nd, Cermak, and all down there--which is what they called "Jew town"--to buy food and nobody bothered you. You didn't want to live down there because all the Jews lived down there. You'd go over to Chinatown--you didn't want to live over there, all Chinese lived there. So the ethnic separation was probably much more pronounced. There were more ethnic groups there. You know, the Italians had one section, the Jews had one section, the Mexicans had their section off of Ashland Avenue.

And, by and large, blacks were not the low rung on the totem pole in Chicago, as opposed to having only two societies in the South. You had so many societies that you really weren't at the bottom anymore, you know. So as a result so there were a lot of things you could do. You'd go to a baseball game, sit where you could afford a ticket, you know, enjoy yourself. Where, in the South, you still sat over there in the colored

section. They didn't call it black, they didn't call it Negro, they called it colored. And that was a change. That was a change. You'd go to the beach and you don't have to worry about your section of the beach, you know. Whoever was lying out there in a bikini, you laid beside them, whether they be white, yellow, green, or polka-dot. So that even though you had multiple cultures and there never was really, there never was really integration, there was not segregation. Each group chose its own.

I used to deliver mail when I got out of school before I got a job doing social work. And I delivered mail in a Polish-Lithuanian neighborhood. Now, they were all Poles and Lithuanians out there. They got the *Catholic Digest* every week. I hated it because they were the heaviest dag-blasted newspapers in the world. You'd go into a building--might have thirty-two flats, you know. You've got box, a locked box here; you open the box and put mail in each slot that's there. And the worst smell in the world. I couldn't get the smell out of my nostrils all day. But that was their smell. They lived there. They didn't have any problems there.

So, I guess, you had a multi-cultural type of situation where it was segregated, now that you look back on it. But it wasn't segregated to the extent that it was in the South, and that is "Niggers, stay in your place. And you ain't never going to be white." What hurts you most is, you could see a low-class, low-life, no-money redneck cracker with a second grade education who calls you "Boy." And it bothers you. It bothers you, especially if you've got an education and he doesn't, you know? You've got to move off the sidewalk so he can walk on it.

WL: And that would happen all the time?

HC: Oh yeah, yeah, in the South. Can I get the phone? Sorry.

WL: Sure.

[Tape is turned off temporarily]

WL: You worked as a social worker in Chicago. And how long were you, did you do that?

HC: About two years.

WL: Two years. Was that, what kind of work did you do?

HC: I was with the public assistance work, ADC [Aid to Dependent Children], VA [Veterans Administration], DA [Domestic Assistance], old age assistance, you had the whole gamut of assistance programs, of entitlement programs.



WL: So you became fairly well acquainted with Chicago and, I guess, the layout and the social characteristics?

HC: Yes, I did.

WL: Did, following that, if I understand correctly, you moved to Richmond?

HC: I left Chicago in '59 to attend seminary at Virginia Union University in Richmond.

WL: How about the move from Chicago to Richmond?

HC: Well, it was quite traumatic, quite traumatic. Because you're moving from a city, which I still consider to be one of the most exciting cities in the world, to a city like Richmond, the "Old South" again. But you had a different type situation there, you know. You had proud old blacks in Richmond who had what they called FFVs, "First Families of Virginia." They were just as proud of being Richmonders of long duration as were white folk in Richmond. You didn't cross that line. In fact, I married one of them. And there were some who were members of the congregation I served. A funny thing, FFV to me--when I went to Richmond, there was a sign up on Broad Street "FFV, Fine Foods of Virginia." They made cookies. You know what that meant? So finally, one day one of my members died, and one of the officers said to me, "Reverend, you know that she was an FFV."

I said, "Fine Foods of Virginia?"

He said "No! First Families."

[I said] "Oh, is that right?" I didn't know what it meant. I didn't know.

They lived in the older section of town, which now we would call dilapidated, but they were proud because that's where the families of the city of Richmond lived. You know, they had a library--black folk don't have a library--they had a library right down in the middle of the block, and they could trace their heritage back as far as anybody else in Virginia could. And there's still some of them around, incidentally, in Richmond.

I guess my social life in Richmond changed because I became very, very close to--well, one of my member's husband was one of the oldest undertakers in town who was an FFV and very, very rich. And he sort of took a liking to me. So I leapfrogged from a social nobody to a social somebody, because I was his somebody. [laughing] As a result, it made a difference. I tell my wife all the time that had I not leapfrogged, I probably wouldn't have met her, because she would've looked down on me, too.

WL: So he became some sort of a mentor?

HC: Yeah, he was sort of like a godfather to me. And for the seven years I was there, really I lived as he did, and that was very well. I got used to then having a maid to fix my food, this type of thing, because he had all these things. He was a very wealthy man. In fact, the ring I have on my finger, he left to me when he died.

WL: Did that change the perception toward segregation?

HC: No. It's nothing to do with segregation. A.D.--the man's name--A.D.'s parents came from Monument Avenue in Richmond, which is where the wealthy whites lived. His cousin was Joe Bliley, who was the biggest undertaker in town, needed about seven funerals a day to make ends meet. A.D. was black. Joe Bliley was white. But A.D. was the rarity in town, in that you just didn't mess with A.D. Price. He was The Black, as far as money, influence, and because his family had opened that business in 1876, so it was tradition there.

It's a sort of false world when you live in that world because all of the advantages--for instance, Mercedes now are popular. A.D. had in 1962 a \$20,000 Mercedes. Now, in 1962, a \$20,000 anything was a lot of money. But I guess I had some advantages because I was his that I would not have had, had I not been his, so that many of my friends who were in seminary with me, never did have. You sort of leapfrog the social group to a position that you wouldn't have been in otherwise. I was fortunate, I was blessed. He liked me and he did not have a son, he had daughters. But I was the son he never had. So it gave me a little advantage.

WL: What kind of environment was there in, this was, let's see, you came in '59, you were there for--

HC: Until '66.

WL: A period of great change.

HC: Yes. Sit-ins--we went through those there. As soon as they started them here in Greensboro, we started them downtown, in front of Thalhimers and Miller & Rhoads [department stores] in Richmond. I'll never forget that one day I was out there walking the picket line in front of Thalhimers. And I've always had a short fuse. I was not really designed for picket lines et cetera because I was not going to put up with some things. It was cold, December, and a white lady walked by and spat in my face, and it was as if she had hit me with an ice cube as cold as it was. I walked out of the line; I didn't get back in line. Because hey, I was going to do the cause more harm than good because I was going to cuss somebody out, and you weren't supposed to cuss, you were supposed to walk, walk, and walk.

But there was a change, there was a change in Richmond, too. Now Richmond was much more progressive than Chattanooga would ever have been, because you had much more enlightened people. Whenever you have a high percentage of your citizenry educated, you've got a lot more changes. You had Virginia Union there, which is one of the old black schools, Medical College of Virginia down at the bottom of the hill that did some things. Then you had Virginia State right over there, you had Hampton right over here. So really, Richmond, sort of like Greensboro, had a higher, higher educational level, and as a result a much more progressive black.

At that time there was more black progress in Richmond, per capita, than there was in Chicago, because the black folk in Richmond did well. My wife's father, before he died, owned eight dry cleaning establishments, and he had something like a fifth or sixth grade education, but he had done well and made money. So it was a different life all together.

I had to get used to, again, the Chattanooga style of you go to your black movies and like in Nashville, you would sit up in the balconies, which is what they were still doing in Richmond when I first got there, but the changes were slower taking place in Richmond because blacks were much more comfortable in Richmond. They didn't really see a necessity at that point of rocking the boat because the boat was going pretty well for them at that time.

[End Tape 1, Side A--Begin Tape 1, Side B]

WL: We were talking about Richmond. Richmond had, as you mentioned, a high percentage of educated people and, I suppose, educated environments tend to lead toward sometimes more toleration. Was the white community in Richmond, what was their attitude, and did that educational factor also effect them?

HC: I think whenever you have an educated, a large educated group of blacks, it's harder for the white community to ignore them, so they give you positions that are really not of great significance but are much better than is normally expected for blacks to occupy. And the blacks in Richmond, because they were large in number, eventually it came to a point that--now the blacks in Richmond realized their political strength. They realized their political strength. For instance, you remember Senator Harry Flood Byrd? Senator Byrd had been a senator from Virginia for ever and ever, every year. Blacks had an organization called Crusade for Voters. The black voters in Richmond voted 99.9 percent the Crusade ticket every time. If the Crusade came out with a ticket, blacks were going to vote it. The whites could count those votes and say if there are going to be 18,000 black folk voting, 17,996.2 will vote the Crusade ticket, every year. We had been voting against Senator Harry--every time, we had been voting against Senator Harry Byrd, they had

been voting against Senator Harry Byrd, and every time he won. And they were much more sophisticated.

Finally, before I left Richmond, Crusade for Voters decided that if we voted against him every year and he wins, this year we going to support him; we're going to vote for him, and we'll embarrass him, and they did. They voted for, they recommended the vote for Senator Byrd. Senator Byrd cursed and swore and did everything in the world to say he had not sold out to the niggers. But some of his more conservative—well, there's nobody more conservative--but some of his suspicious allies said, "But you must have. Why would they be voting for you?" It embarrassed the man so much, the man died the next year; they appointed his son.

But they were sophisticated; they could count on 99.9 percent of all blacks to follow the Crusade ticket. As a result they were able to get some things, because the power of the vote was such, and there are so many black folk in Richmond. It was at the time when whites were fleeing to the suburbs--Henrico, Chesterfield County, they were booming, booming, booming. So you know what's left in Richmond? The white folk who couldn't get to the suburbs. And as a result, that's when blacks really got into power in Richmond. Because as the whites fled, the black vote, even though no larger, played a much more significant role. And blacks were able to do some things that they had never been able to do. And as a result, up until, up until today, I think, for the last several elections, blacks have had a black mayor in Richmond, black city manager in Richmond, black superintendent of schools, because they got the vote.

Now whites are moving back in the city. And the funny thing is, those old houses downtown, next to my old church, that were considered to be slums, they've taken those old houses, gutted them back to the brick wall, built beautiful, beautiful homes that have increased the value ten times. And they're moving back because they want to take the city back over. Because blacks have had it, and it's a funny thing, you know, black folk being in charge of the state capitol, because you know state capitol is right downtown across from City Hall, so the mayor really was, I mean the governor really was living in a city run by blacks. It was quite the thing.

I think again they're trying to incorporate more of these places so that they can increase number of white voters and unseat some of the black incumbents, and to some extent, it's happened. But Richmond has a sophisticated black voter to the extent that simply because you're black doesn't mean you get the black vote. If you're black and no-good, they'll vote for a white over you, if the white promises to have their interest at heart.

WL: Let's talk about your arrival in Greensboro. That was in 1966? Were you at that point called to a church here?

HC: I was called to this church [Providence Baptist Church]. My total association with Greensboro has been as pastor of this congregation.

WL: And had you been to Greensboro before?

HC: No. I came once to visit, well, to candidate, to preach to the congregation. At the time I came, Redevelopment [Greensboro Redevelopment Commission] had taken the church building and just destroyed the church building. It was the first black brick church built in the state of North Carolina, in 1871. But Redevelopment had redeveloped, and they [the congregation] were holding services in A&T's [North Carolina A&T State University] auditorium on A&T's campus.

I came really to satisfy the dean of the School of Divinity at Virginia Union because he had been requested to recommend somebody to the church. And as a favor to him, I agreed to leave Richmond one weekend and come down here and preach, because I really had no intention of ever coming here. I knew nothing about North Carolina. The only place I'd ever been was to Durham and that was to a basketball game when Virginia Union played in CIAA tournament. But I knew nothing about the place. And "tarheels"--I expected--I didn't know what "tarheel" meant, these guys walking around with bib overalls. The funny thing, when we drove down Lee Street, sure enough, we saw a black guy wearing some bib overalls and some broken-in shoes, and my wife looked at me and I looked at her. I had no idea. That was my impression. And that was the first thing that sort of substantiated what I had always believed, but then I found it to be a totally different place.

After I came here, they invited me back. I was very surprised because I didn't think I was very impressive that Sunday morning. But I was surprised when I was invited back to preach again and then was called to be pastor the church.

WL: And Providence used to be located--where was its previously located?

HC: Right where the post office is, right on that spot where the post office is. Right over on the railroad track. In fact, they say that during the, after slavery, that black people used to take train excursions to ride to Greensboro to see the black-built, the black brick church, the Negro-built brick church, because it was the only one in the state.

WL: What sort of impressions did you have about race relations in Greensboro in 1966, or did you have any? Say, again, comparing it to where you came from: Chattanooga, Chicago, Richmond.

HC: Well, and probably I'm not, probably I'm not the right one for you to interview. When I came here, Henry Frye and some others, who are stable names of Greensboro, [such as]

Lewis Dowdy [former president of A&T], they had some dialogue groups with some of the [white] city leaders: John R. Taylor, Rich Preyer and his wife, and some of these here. These are people that I met upon coming. Had I pastored, again, another church, another type of church, I could probably answer your question more frankly. I could see an openness far in excess of what I expected to find. The Minister's Fellowship, the minister's organization, was integrated by the time I came here and I was very, very welcomed by Claude Boyd at First Baptist, John Redhead at First Presbyterian Church, Rabbi [Fred I.] Rypins who was at the synagogue and, who was it at the Catholic Church? Dolan, Monsignor [Hugh] Dolan. I was very welcomed. They made me feel at home among them. I guess because of the congregation, the upper-middle class black congregation, I was given some advantages that no other black church in town would have afforded me as far as being included in the more enlightened area of the city.

My wife was the first black teacher. When they hired me, they hired my wife to teach. She was the first black teacher at a white school and they put her at Irving Park [Elementary School], which was the top school in town, the rich, the richest school in town, with an old lady who turned out to be a very fine lady, Miss Carolyn McNary, who was the principal, who didn't like black folk at all, and she agreed with the superintendent to take this black girl from Richmond. And I guess they decided if she could make it at Irving Park then maybe integration will have a good chance. And she was very much loved at Irving Park, stayed there for a long time.

So I guess really I had some doors open to me, that because of the congregation were open to me, and without the congregation probably would not. So my estimation of race relations when I first came here probably were false readings of what actually was.

WL: And you had, as pastor of one of the premiere congregations in town, you had, you were part of kind of a network that--

HC: Yeah, yeah.

WL: You mentioned there were dialogue groups. Could you elaborate a little bit more?

HC: Yeah, yeah. You had groups, I don't even remember the names of them, but they came together and they talked about racial problems. They ate in each others houses. They really were concerned about making Greensboro a better place even before it was decided we were going to have integrated schools. I think there was much more underground integration going on.

Secondly, after I'd been here about two years I became president of Greensboro Minister's Fellowship, which held its meetings at First Baptist Church. So I never really had, I never really had to deal with, I guess, what some of my other counterparts did deal with, because of the congregation I came to. I was asked to serve on the [Greensboro]

Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. And I joke now and say, "I guess I've been just about everything they're going to let a poor black nigger be in Greensboro without telling you that you're still a poor black nigger."

WL: In the late sixties, there were a number of things happening, however, at the same time that would've effected your position as a pastor of a prominent church in a leadership position--[such as] potential for violence, 1968 and 1969. How well did Greensboro, do you think that the Greensboro community, deal[t] with the crisis?

HC: Let me explain what my contention was in regards to the Greensboro community and power structure then and what it is now, and it has not changed. The Greensboro community has always done whatever it had to do in order to avoid national attention for not doing what it was supposed to do. It will follow the letter of the law. It has no feelings for the spirit of the law.

When they found out they had to integrate the schools, and I'm skipping ahead, they found out they had to integrate the schools. They learned from Charlotte. And the city fathers of Greensboro--the fathers, which were men remains to this day in the hands of a very few people who run the city, who ran it then, who run it now--decided that that was not the image that they wanted portrayed of Greensboro. So they did everything in the world--and I worked with some committees to get a smooth transition. [We said] "Let's avoid Charlotte. We don't need that." And it worked. They did exactly what was necessary.

So what you had was, you actually had desegregation without integration. We desegregated the schools, you know, which meant that black boys and black girls could sit next to each other, but the society itself remains to this very day in control of the hands of a very few people and not the people whose names are these [?].

WL: And that hasn't changed in the last twenty years?

HC: No, no. We used to laugh and say that Winston-Salem was a great big plantation because "Massa Reynolds" [R.J. Reynolds] ran the plantation. When Massa Reynolds deserts the plantation, then the plantation goes to pot because you don't have any leadership prepared to take over for Massa Reynolds. But Greensboro was run by corporate heads and the persons who owned Jefferson Standard [Life Insurance Company, later Jefferson-Pilot Corp.], who at that time owned Burlington Industries, who at that time owned Blue Bell [Inc., an apparel maker], who at that time owned all of these other things, many of which are gone now. But, it hasn't changed; it hasn't changed.

WL: You think that's--you mentioned that leadership style--that's very interesting what you just said. Presumably that works well, or it's--for people to adapt in certain situations, for example, in 1971--

HC: They said, "We aren't going to have it."

WL: And "we'll just do it."

HC: "We're going to do it; we got to do it. We don't want to do it, but we're not going to have another Charlotte here."

WL: And they moved quickly to do that.

HC: They set up the committees of the right persons in town. And the committees knew that, by virtue of the fact that they existed, what they existed for, and they did it.

WL: What would be the disadvantages of that kind of leadership style or that kind of leadership system?

HC: Well, from my studying history, the most successful and most efficient forms of government have always been dictatorships. Democracies are better, but, hey, dictatorships are much more quick, much quicker, and much more efficient.

Greensboro is a permissive in politics, and that is that strangers, even strangers, can come and involve themselves in it to an extent. But I still see behind the curtain the hands of the power that you're never going to see, but they're always there. I could just about predict the city's position on any given item by how it effects certain people in town. It isn't the same as Master Reynolds's plantation, but the power of the city is a very closed, innocuous kind of thing. Nobody really knows, except everybody knows. But the powerbrokers, again, are the invisible individuals of this town.

The mayor has no power; [city manager] Tom Osborne has power as head of the chamber of commerce. Not because he's Tom Osborne, but because those who wield the power, wield it through Tom. [Former mayor] Jim Melvin is a symbol of the power, but he's not the power. [Jefferson-Pilot CEO] Roger Soles and a few others who are good friends, good friends, still call the shots. It can be good; it can be good. It has backfired on Greensboro. Greensboro really has backfired.

I remember when I sat on the board of the Chamber of Commerce, the one word that they did not even allow in the chamber was "unions." No, we didn't talk about unions in Greensboro, North Carolina; Burlington Industries, [?] Western Electric then, that building out there on [Interstate] 85 was bustling and hustling. Organization was not the problem. It was what we wanted.



For instance, they wanted “controlled growth.” Because what--we had Burlington Industries, we had Western Electric, we had Blue Bell, Wrangler, all these corporate headquarters set up right here in Greensboro. They wanted what they called “controlled growth.” Didn’t want any industries because they said, “We don’t have water here, and if we bring this industry in.” In New York, they have unionized workers, so the presumption was that we had to bring unionized workers here. “We want to control what happens.” What happens? They never counted on Western Electric and Burlington Industries disappearing. So the economic base ceased to be what they had counted on all their lives, and they had nothing to replace it.

The little shops, the little businesses, the little manufacturing and industrial corporations had tried during those times, because you had cheap labor, ideal climate, access to roads, all of the things that would make a small business want to come here. They really didn’t want it because the powers-that-be said, “That isn’t what Greensboro’s all about.” And when the powers-that-be are no more, then you’ve got no power base in Greensboro.

I wrote in my project for Drew University that I thought Greensboro was probably the most recession-proof town in North Carolina because you didn’t have to worry about factories and small businesses; you had to worry about corporate headquarters, which as long as you had that, you controlled your empire. And Greensboro, I felt, was corporate headquarters and universities, which were about as safe as you can get. Hey, [now] the corporate headquarters left, the universities are catching hell. So it changed, it changed. They never predicted, they never anticipated the change to come.

WL: That kind of change has happened in the last five years?

HC: Yeah.

WL: How responsive do you think the city has been to the needs of the black community in Greensboro for the last twenty-three years, since you’ve been here, based on what you’ve just described?

HC: Greensboro has done what it has to do. For instance, I sat on the Redevelopment Commission for nine years. I really learned what politics was all about then and I got a nasty taste in my mouth. I would never run for political office, there ain’t no way in the world. I don’t need the headaches involved with it. I live in this neighborhood. Now, I sat on the commission and we must have spent over the nine years at least twenty-five million dollars. Yet I was never able--and one man on a five-man commission--to get the neighborhood that I live in a redevelopment plan; which taught me that the game of politics is that he who has the money makes the rules and that it’s their game, their rules,

and the only way you survive is to play it by their rules. And if their rules don't happen to include you, then forget it.

I threatened to quit. I wanted to quit, but then I said, "If I quit, then who are they going to replace me with? At least blacks will know what's going on while I'm here." Greensboro will never, never voluntarily do more than the law requires in regard to black citizens. The unfortunate thing is that the militancy of the past is not present today, when there were people who were willing to lay down their lives for the causes. Blacks in Greensboro, by and large, are pretty comfortable, too comfortable. And as a result, the boat-rockers are not here anymore. In fact, the worse enemy the boat-rockers have is black folk, not white folk; because there are certain conservative blacks in this town who if somebody decided to rock the boat, would kick them off the boat, because they've gotten comfortable. And no progress occurs when you're comfortable.

WL: Do you think that the only way, the only effective way to bring about change in this environment then is to, in fact, test it, or challenge it, or rock the boat a little bit more? If you go along with the system, it didn't--

HC: I've gotten to the point--when I was younger I didn't want to rock it too much because the boat might sink--but I'd gotten to the point that I realized that without Nelson Johnson, without Howard Fuller, without some of the guys who were the nasty words to the white community, that the white community would have never talked to Howard Chubbs. Howard Chubbs was an "acceptable nigger." He could use the king's language, speak the King's English. I knew which fork to use. I wasn't going to smell at a meeting. I wasn't going to embarrass them. But they wouldn't have dealt with me, if it hadn't have been for Nelson, if it hadn't have been for the rock throwers, if it hadn't have been for the students at A&T's campus who said, "Bring your damn tanks over here and blow your buildings down. You built them. You're going to have to repair them. And if you kill one of us, we'll keep on coming." Those kids are the ones who made it possible for me to sit in this room right now. They didn't realize the contribution they were making. And in retrospect, the only reason a white community needed a Howard Chubbs or some others is because they weren't going to deal with them. They'd go as far as the law required.

WL: You suggested, if I heard you correctly, that there were, there are or were differences within the black community about strategy--

HC: Oh yeah. There were those during that time who felt that you ought to negotiate. My philosophy has always been negotiate first, and if you can't negotiate, then you demonstrate. Them kids don't see it that way. They don't care nothing about negotiation. They leave that to us old folk to negotiate. I wasn't old at the time, but I was thirty years old. They don't care. If they see a wrong that needs to be righted, they attack it then. And

the naiveté of young folk is really the only thing that has gotten any of us anything. Because hey, if you're negotiating from a point of strength, you're setting down the parameters of the game, you set down the rules. "Now this is what we're willing to talk about, not what we're willing to give." But when you're scared that somebody's going to burn that building down, you negotiate a lot quicker.

Jesse Jackson and the kids in the sixties, when they walked downtown against their parent's objections, against their school, school principals were putting kids out [saying] "You demonstrate." The white folk said to the black folk, "If you let your kids demonstrate--"

Hey, A&T--Dr. Proctor was president then--they came to Dr. Proctor and said, "Dr. Proctor, you've got to control your students." He said, "You control them. They're students. We brought them here to learn how to think, not to learn how to be robots." [unclear] Anyway, so he could take a very bold step, beside Jesse Jackson, [unclear] take another position.

And these kids walked downtown and said, "Find you some more jails because we're coming." That was the best thing that's ever happened to black folk--[Thinking] I want to go to jail. But there are some kids who went to jail and made it possible. White folk in this town, like in other towns, respond to crisis. They will not sit down and calmly plan and negotiate a way to effect positive change. And the outcome of history of black and white relationships in this country has been that they only responded to a crisis situation which threatens economics and physical property.

WL: Let's talk a little bit about the Klan shootout in 1979. How would you evaluate the causes of that and what would you say the most important consequences of that were?

HC: My honest opinion is that the whole thing was orchestrated by the, the Nazi Party, by the Communist Party. It was orchestrated. The dumb Klan ain't got sense enough to come in out of the rain. I don't have any problem with Klansmen. In fact, I'd rather deal with a Klansman than to deal with the three-piece-suit pseudo-liberal. I know where the Klansman is coming from; I can deal with him. It's the guy who sits and has coffee with me, and offers me a drink but at the same time uses it and stabs me in the back; I don't deal with him too well. I deal better with the Klansman out here in my parking lot than I can in the boardroom downstairs, downtown. I know how to handle him.

Nelson Johnson, who is now a minister, has come back to Greensboro. He's been converted. I believe in conversion. I don't know. But he claims--I'll accept what he claims, I have no reason to believe it untrue--they suckered the Klan in. The Klan's stupid as hell. It is rednecks out here. The only reason they're Klan is because they don't have anyone to look down on. They can't look down on black folk. They're ignorant as hell, so as a result, they've got to have somebody to look down on, and black folk were the only ones we had. Now when black folk start acting funny, and blacks going to talk

about communism, oh, that ain't going to work. The whole thing was orchestrated; it just got out of hand. I think that the Communist [Workers] Party wanted a confrontation. They just didn't anticipate how far it was going. It wasn't a black/white thing. It was two stupid ideologies that were bent on making some hay.

WL: Happened to meet in Greensboro?

HC: They could have met in Reidsville or anywhere else. But you see, Greensboro was fertile because the Communist Workers Party could say that we've got the institutions in town that are very tolerant. It would never have happened had the march taken the route that was planned. So somebody had to orchestrate this thing. So we take it down here in the projects and the project folk are not going to let these Klansmen come down and do that. White folk didn't know the Klansmen were going to bring their shotguns and rifles and things. Somebody miscalculated the thing.

WL: They figured they'd be dealing with clubs and--rather than shotguns.

HC: Oh yeah. Yeah.

WL: What was the reaction? I mean, in many ways it seems like the reaction in Greensboro--

HC: There were some black folks who felt that they didn't want to deal with Communists either. Black folk ain't never been Communist. We're capitalist. I drive a Cadillac because I like driving a Cadillac because I can afford to pay the note on a Cadillac. I don't want Communists telling me that I'm going to get the same thing the guy down the street has. We are--black folk are probably the most devout capitalists this country has.

But there was disappointment and disgust in the black community as well as the white. You see, because you have black folk and white folk, pseudo-intellectuals leading a demonstration from a black neighborhood. And our black folk were saying, "Why didn't they take them to Irving Park and let them shoot it out?" Because police wouldn't let them get out in Irving Park.

WL: So at the end it raises questions about why was it here?

HC: Yeah, yeah. Police wouldn't have let them come in Irving Park. No. So they just used us. It wasn't a black/white confrontation.

WL: So the resentment that came out of it, came not so much toward one side or the other, as much as the situation that made it possible?

HC: Well, blacks have always considered the Klan to be mindless people, stupid; and they considered the Communist Workers Party to be made up of intellectuals who manipulated the stupid in accomplishing their purpose. Again, they just didn't count on the fact these folk would come in here with guns--clubs and fistfights, fine. They could've gotten plenty of help down in the neighborhood. But hey, they come out with shotguns, the folk in the neighborhood got the heck out of Dodge, too. And they were left out there. Some of them died. Not because of their beliefs but because they miscalculated that particular performance.

WL: You served on the advisory committee that reviewed the events?

HC: Yeah. We went down. I served on the Human Relations Committee. I did just about everything they're going to let you or ask you to serve on when they've got a crisis. I think that the city responded in the only manner it could; it was ill-prepared to handle it. So you tried to seal off the area and get all these people down, and they weren't coming down here anyway; the Communists weren't going down to City Hall. The Klan wasn't going to City Hall. So here we are trying to rectify a situation that we had--

[End Tape 1, Side B—Begin Tape 2, Side A]

HC: --Communist. Plus you had--some black folk looked at it as you've got some white intellectuals at [The University of North Carolina at] Chapel Hill and Duke [university], duping some stupid black folk into doing something dumb again. You know, they resented it--they resented that.

WL: Then the connection with Nelson Johnson.

HC: Yeah, yeah. Well, see, Nelson had been--again, Nelson was good for the city at the time. He served a purpose, because if Nelson doesn't act the fool, most of the time they are not going to talk to you or me. So he was good for the city. He got a lot more done than we give him credit for. But Nelson had passed the stage where he had the great majority of black folk as supporters. When he announced he was Communist, the city council--black folk know, black folk love the church, and "love the Lord." And when you start talking about Communism and here the Communists say that you got to get rid of religion because religion is the opiate of the people and only crazy folk and poor folk go to church, you've offended the church. So his base of support as far as the black folk was concerned was just about gone.

WL: Whereas earlier, he had--

HC: Oh yeah. He was with the Poor People's Party and all these other euphemisms, which were the same thing. Then he could really get some support because black folk are poor. You go with the garbage workers, the sanitation workers, they're poor. You go with the bus drivers, they're poor. We can identify with them. But you go with the Communists, they ain't poor or black. They're primarily white. The question is: what are you doing with them? So Nelson had really lost it. He had lost his impact on the black community at that time, and he would never regain that.

WL: The work of this committee that was appointed by the mayor, the city council--

HC: Just to put out the fire; put the fire out. It wasn't going to accomplish nothing; put the fire out. They weren't so sure at the time who was responsible for the fire to start off with, and they had a black police captain, Hampton, and they were trying to lay the blame on him that he wasn't communicating with his officers and this type of thing. They tried to find all types of scapegoats. It was a carefully orchestrated confrontation that got out of hand, that's all it was. To the point that when they had the trials, if you notice, not a lot of black folk cared one way or the other what they did to them.

We had the U.S. Civil Rights Commission come in here right after that. They had hearings down here. I had to go to the hearings and be part of the hearings and all this kind of thing. I didn't really see what that accomplished. Hey, if you need a commission to decide that there's segregation, and how--this is why I don't get on anymore commissions. No more advisory commissions, period. I will never serve on another advisory group. Because advisory groups are simply what they say they are. They advise other folk to decide whether your advice is any good. No. No.

But if you need a commission or anything to determine that there's segregation, there's prejudice in Greensboro, North Carolina, then you're a lot dumber than I think you are, you know. And usually you set up these dag-blasted groups to keep from doing anything, period; you give it a semblance of propriety when there ain't really none whatsoever. They know what's going on, I know what's going on, they know what's going on.

WL: And that was the case with this--

HC: Well, they really wanted to diffuse it right quick because they still didn't know whether they're going to come back, the Klan's going to come back. You see, the Klan have the mentality of about a fifth grade child. You know, I wouldn't have as much problem with the Klan if they were a little more intellectual, but they're stupid. They operate on instinct, you know, base instinct, "law of the jungle" thing. They've got some smart folk, doctors, lawyers, medical school people, who are out here manipulating them. The

Klansmen are really the victims as far as being baited into a trap. Now, those who baited the trap just didn't count on what the Klan would end up doing.

WL: I guess it takes, sort of thinking about what you said earlier about the way that the city responds to national publicity, it took on a different light, didn't it? I mean--

HC: Twice. Twice. When they had the shootout between the National Guard and the students at A&T and Willie Grimes was killed on the campus over there--still don't know who killed him; he was killed by a small-caliber gun--I got calls. I must have gotten ten calls that morning from friends of mine over the country, "Chubbs, what's going on in your city? What's going on?" And I told them, "Hey, I'm looking at it the same way you are. I ain't going over there with those crazy nuts."

But the city at that point, again, get's some information to see what we can do about the situation. On the Nazi/Klan thing, they couldn't hush it up. We had--I remember when we got to City Hall--I got there about four o'clock--there were news photographers, cameras from all over the world in that short of a period of time at City Hall. You can't shut this up.

So the city tries to use the old thing, something you said, that this just happened to be the place it happened. It happened here for a good reason. Can you imagine them going over to Burlington and having a shootout? Who cares? But Greensboro was the place, the home of the civil rights movement. Greensboro has a black college, two black colleges. Greensboro's young people are not stupid, ignorant farmers. They are seeking an education. So it gives it much more attention than if it happens in Fayetteville or somewhere else.

And the city did the best they could to shut it--couldn't shut it up though, couldn't shut it up. Which is why a whole lot of very overt, meaningless gestures were made regarding racial harmony and reconciliation, and I guess I was a part of that, too. But nothing changes. The more things change the more they remain the same.

Greensboro at the core is as racist in 1989 as it was in 1966. More subtle. There's more inclusion, but often it's meaningless inclusion. I think it really came home to me--the chairman of the Redevelopment Commission that I was serving on was retiring. By seniority, I was the next person to serve as chairman. I would have been. But I got to the meeting the next morning--there were only five of us in this meeting, only five--I get to the meeting, and the motion was made, seconded, and passed that some person who had not been on there for about a year be chairman. And I learned then, or at least I realized then what I had learned long ago, that the meeting was held before 7:30 Monday morning, and I was the only one who wasn't invited. The more it changes, the more it remains the same.

WL: And that would be fairly typical?

HC: Yeah, yeah. I think--let me say this to you, I think black survival, in a society like this, can only come about when you realize that it's his game, his rules. And in order to survive at it, you must know the rules and that it's his game, and you get as much out of it as you possibly can, never deluding yourself to think it's going to be played on equal terms. The table's slanted, because there are more of you than there are of me. And you own it. It's your city. The unfortunate thing is that most white folk don't know whose city it is either.

WL: Would you--how would you describe the effect of things that have happened since 1966, or earlier, say since 1960? For example, schools, and for example, changes in the political system or the district system? How would you characterize those changes? Partly good, partly bad? Mostly good, mostly bad?

HC: Mostly good. The schools are desegregated but not integrated. My son is a junior at Grimsley High School. My son came along during the time of "progress," social change. And until--in all of his days he has been at school with white kids. He was a bright kid and as a result he went to traditional school, you know, the best school, did all the right things. We put him in UNCG [University of North Carolina at Greensboro day care program] when he was two and a half years old, or two years old. Oh my, he wasn't even that old when they kept him out there. I remember the time when Howard was three or four years old and I drove over there and all the little kids--white, black, girls, boys--after they go swimming, they drop their little pants right in the middle of the floor. Nobody looked at each other, nobody cared about each other, slept next to each other, and he kept many of these friends.

Then he went to public schools. We put him over at Price Traditional School, which was nothing but the city's private school at that time for blacks, for gifted kids. After Price, Murphy, which was the advanced Price, then over to Kiser, which was advanced that, over to Grimsley, which was advanced that, and in the process, my son never made black friends because he was never around them. Yet at a certain point--and they loved each other. He used to go to their house, spend the night, party, hang out, whatever--at a certain point though, when dating time comes, when some other things come, that changes and he's left out. Because he hadn't been black long enough for the blacks to accept him, and yet he was no longer accepted by whites.

WL: So, that's a very difficult position. It starts in junior high and high school?

HC: Oh yeah. It starts in junior high. So I say that they're desegregated but they're not integrated because even on the football team--he plays on Grimsley's football team--after practice he comes southeast, they go northwest. They see each other in the game; they



count on each other in the game. But that's the end of that. So you've got desegregation without integration.

Even with black folk living wherever they want to live in Greensboro, most of my friends who live there, live there; and there isn't the relationship that I have with my next door neighbor and me, where three of us men stand out in the yard at night and talk about what goes in the daytime. That never happens in that situation. So you've got desegregation without integration.

I think it helped, it's good to say, yeah--and I'm not so sure that integration is a realistic goal in this society; not really. Because our differences are so obvious. You know, that--not just in Greensboro. I'm talking about all the country. I realize that segregation in Chicago was desegregation without integration. You know, I could go where I wanted to, but hey, I always went back to the south side at night. I don't know. As far as the other thing you mentioned, you said the school system and what else?

WL: Well the city, the district system, I was thinking about.

HC: Oh, the district system has been good. Black folk have to get sophisticated enough to realize that simply because you run against a black incumbent does not make you less black. And that happens all over the country, that's not just here. Two white folks will run against each other in the same district. Black folk, once they get in, they don't want you running against them. [The incumbent will say] "What are you saying? I'm not effective?" This type of thing. That's the only thing.

I don't think--I think the district system has made people more aware that there are blacks there. But I think sometimes blacks, like whites, don't know how to play the political game and get some things done, you know. If the only thing that the district system does is say that we're going to give you two black seats on the city council, but you aren't going to ever get anything accomplished, then are you any better than the two whites who can get something accomplished? Does the color of your skin mean that you've made progress? I submit, no.

We've got two city councilmen now and I'm not too proud of them--two blacks--for the simple fact that they've not learned how to form coalitions. They're not learning how to play the game and that is to give and take.

I resent that everything is a black and white issue, you know. It's almost as bad as county commissioners. I consider the [Guilford] County Commission about the worst political organization ever been founded in the world. In fact, I think that North Carolina has two zoos, one at Asheboro and one in the county commission, because they ain't got good sense at all. They don't know what's going on where. But--

WL: You mean the current county commissioners?

HC: Yeah, yeah. They're a bunch of dummies. They haven't accomplished one thing. All the women down there on menopause and the men don't know whether they want to be Democrats, Republicans, or whatever, you know? In fact, I've been asked to serve on commissions, on boards, by the lady who's head of county commission. I've got to go out today to Jamestown at twelve o'clock to help plant a tree. I'm going all the way to Jamestown to say a prayer over a tree that's being planted.

But I refuse to serve on it. Ain't got any sense in that place. I was going to serve on a new drug task force. I looked around--they just got a new Drug Task Force--I looked around; they've got every organization in town serving on the task force. What you going to get done with thirty organizations? They don't really want to do anything. They just want to say, "We've got a drug task force." Hey, I don't have time for that. I don't have time.

WL: Those big groups don't accomplish much.

HC: You never do anything in a big group. If you need some recognition, then you don't mind serving. I don't need that. As I said, they've let me serve on everything they're going to let a little poor black preacher serve on, and from now on it's going to be meaningful or I ain't going. I'm going to have to perceive that it is meaningful.

WL: What would you say--this is my final comment here--about the future, what, well, let's say, for Greensboro and race relations? I know that's a very difficult question--

HC: I don't anticipate race relations are going to change a hell of a lot. I don't anticipate race relations in this country are going to change a hell of a lot. I think that things are different from what they once were. Any fool can see that. But I'm not so sure that that always indicates progress. Motion does not necessarily reflect progress, I mean, progress as far as I'm concerned.

I think that probably we are in some positions we haven't been in because we're needed in those positions, not necessarily because we're wanted in those positions. I still go over to the Greensboro Country Club every now and then for a luncheon sponsored by some white folk, and I get waited on faster than the white folk because the black folks weren't used to having to wait on me at the white country club. They don't know how to handle it, you know. I get two pieces of pie. That's segregation. [Laughter] I don't need it, I don't eat pie. I don't anticipate a lot of change, not really. I think Greensboro's a good place to live. Every time I'm offered a job somewhere else, I think about the quality of life, and I think it's about peaceful coexistence more so than total involvement. I guess it's because I'm not an idealist who believes that, before the Lord comes, that there's ever really going to be one society. I'd like to be able to be simply recognized as a human

being who has an opinion, maybe worth no more, no less than anybody else's. But at least listen to him. Don't do me any favors.

[End of Interview]