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Interview with Reverend Dr. B. Herbert Martin Sr.

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TRANSCRIPTION INTERVIEW WITH DR. REV. B. HERBERT MARTIN SR.
INTERVIEWED BY MATTHEW KEVIN ROBINSON
Recorded on 04/23/2015, 9 AM
Columbia College Chicago
624 S. Michigan Ave. 3rd floor RM 309

Matthew Robinson: Thank you Dr. Martin for sitting down with me today to discuss our interview project with the CCC Archive. This is an Honors Oral Histories project called *Chicago '68* as part of collaboration with the Chicago Metropolitan Council of Religious Leaders.

Herbert B Martin Sr.: I am B. Herbert Martin Sr. I have a junior running around somewhere right now [laughs]. Yea and I am currently Pastor of the Progressive Community Church and — we are located at 48th and Wabash. Which is the Near South Side of the City in that neighborhood called Bronzeville; Bronzeville community.

MR: I am Matthew Robinson, a Columbia College student. I study Art History and Arts Management, and am in Dr. McCarthy's oral histories class [spring of 2015]. And — am really happy to be here with Dr. Martin, and just want to thank him again.

HM: Well, it is my delight to be sharing it with you. It really really is.

[Audio Missing - ~ 9 seconds]

MR: ["Where are you from Dr. Martin?"]

HM: [I am from Mound Bayo]u Mississippi. Now Mound Bayou is the largest and oldest all black town in the country. A very historical little town, — in the North West Delta area of Mississippi.

MR: And what year were you born there Dr. Martin?

HM: 1942. Sounds like antiquity. [Laughs] 1942 was my date of birth – [REDACTED] [emphasis] 1942. And born and raised in that little town. — As a matter of fact you know, —, Matthew... I did not know really that white people ran the world until I left that little town. You're talking about culture shock... when I discovered that black folk did not run this country. [Laughs] And that's because the first um... lawyer I saw was black, the first teacher I saw was black, the first businesses...were all black. — Our school was founded and operated by black people. So all of [the] major institutions of my neighborhood and the town was all African Americans. And — [it was] very rare that we saw a white person in our town. And only when we left town did we encounter white folks in bulk.

But, as I grew into understanding, that Mound Bayou was allowed to grow and develop because of the racial segregation. It was easy for black sot come together like that —and develop. But once you were outside of that context that it's very clear that I was in one of the most racist, segregated states in the country. And — that was reality. Also, in that little town it was like a safe haven for black culture, black development, and education and so forth. Which was very

49 positive. It was mandated - even though we had to be a part of a state system of education - [that]
50 we had to learn Mississippi history for instance. All right. But before we could graduate high
51 school, we had to learn almost verbatim - Carter G. Woodson's Negro History book.

52
53 MR: Oh really.

54
55 HM: Yea. So what about, we learned the negative part of Mississippi history, and how subjected
56 we were as black people. But in order for us to maintain a sense of somebodiness we had to
57 master and be examined by our history teacher on Carter G. Woodson's Negro History.

58
59 MR: I see.

60
61 HM: Which gave us a good foundation, a good understanding, a good identity in terms of who
62 we were.

63
64 MR: Yea Yea. Could you describe your mother and father, (interrupts interviewer) and what life
65 was like at home?

66
67 HM: My mother and father were both share croppers. — If you know what that share cropping
68 history was. So that meant that we were at the bedrock of poverty. — [t]here were nine, ten of us
69 children. Five boys and five girls, — my mom and dad. My grandma and my grandfather. All in
70 one three room house?

71
72 MR: Really?

73
74 HM: And it's amazing [laughs] really! [Laughs] and we didn't feel like we were overcrowded.
75 Uhm — — — [pause]. Mom and Dad, grandma and grandpa who we called "Big Mama" and
76 grandpa. — I was raised up in that kind of family environment. Bad poverty but a lot of love. A
77 lot of sense of who we were. Sense of family [and] belonging you see? Values. You know.
78 Principles. And what we did at home we had to carry that at school and at church. And what we
79 did at church came back to school and back to home. And we so had that kind of village — sense
80 of belonging in my growing up days. And that is still the case in Mound Bayou. It is now 100
81 and maybe 20 some ought years. 1887 the town was founded by ex-slaves. And my ancestors,
82 my great great great grandparents were the founding members of that town. They came off of Joe
83 Davis' plantation who was the brother of the President of Confederacy, Jefferson Davis. So all
84 this history is back there around this little town. How it got founded. What the vision was. Even
85 of the Jefferson's. Joe Davis and his brother Jefferson Davis had this utopian vision of black and
86 white people living together in the 1800's.

87
88 MR: No way! (Quietly)

89
90 HM: And that's how Mound Bayou really got its beginning. So um that's the town I grew up in.
91 Rich in history rich. Music. Because what would happen... we got a liberal arts education
92 because our school teachers went away to colleges - historically black colleges and they came
93 back to the town — to teach us all these wonderful things. And so we learned about classical
94 music, about the best of art and about the best of everything. They imparted that to us. The best

95 of literature and poetry. As a matter of fact — I think the reason why I am a pastor and an orator
96 is because of those early influences from my school teachers.

97
98 MR: Oh.

99
100 HM: Who insisted on us speaking the King's English while at the same time being rooted in
101 Ebonics. So I can do both, as well as become a linguist because [of] my French teacher, my high
102 school French teacher gave me the foundation so that French became my second language. So
103 that now I can communicate in French and it's important because the work I do in Africa is
104 among the 42 French speaking countries in Africa. So — I take all of that back to my early
105 beginnings in this little town called Mound Bayou, MS.

106 [Which] Takes its name from the Indian Mounds and the Bayou's that surround it.

107
108 MR: Yes, I figured.

109
110 HM: Yea. The Chocto Indians.

111
112 MR: Wow. That is a really interesting history really interesting.

113
114 HM: Very exciting. So in a way...that's enough about that yes?

115
116 MR: Can I ask you, how was religion observed in your home?

117
118 HM: Huh?

119
120 MR: How was religion observed in your home?

121
122 HM: Oh man... that's the...I mean that's foundational. Of course we were all Christians, believers
123 in Jesus Christ. That was early early introduced into the life of the family. And so our values our
124 whole culture surrounded around the church. And the in those days, my coming up, — we were
125 ecumenical - and what I mean by that —. We would go to the Baptist church; we would go to the
126 Pentecostal church or the Apostolic church, and then go to the Methodist church as well. So that
127 gave us this sense of not separating ourselves as Christians, [you] see?

128
129 MR: I see.

130
131 HM: If you were the Apostolic, we got along with you pretty well. Although Apostolics say that
132 everybody else is going to Hell, still we cooperated and worked with them. But — my main
133 training, my early religious education was in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the
134 AMEs. And I loved them because they gave you this continuity from Mother Africa. They were
135 called African. So we were called African Methodist Episcopalians. And so — that's the tradition
136 I grew up in. Every Sunday.

137
138 MR: Throughout high school too?

139
140 HM: All through high school.... Now that age 9 - this is how strong it was - I received my call to

141 ministry. At age 9.

142
143 MR: Only 9 years old?

144
145 HM: 9 years old, I was very clear about my religious experience and the experience I had with
146 God and His spirit. You know um... that was a powerful time in my life. But I was a
147 preadolescent, so I had to go and do all the adolescent things... that adolescent boys do. And so I
148 didn't really own up to it because you get kind of poked fun at at being old-folkie or holy-rolley,
149 you know kind of things.

150
151 MR: *[Laughs]*

152
153 HM: I wanted to be part of the (or their) teenage activities of that day. And I got into all the
154 mischievous stuff that any teenager would get into to. And then finally, graduating high school -
155 going to Philander Smith College, in Little rock, Arkansas. And I remember when... it was
156 almost like compelling that I go to the [little] church, where the pastor was, and tell him that I
157 had been called to preach. That was February the 22nd, 1966.

158
159 MR: Ah. Ok.

160
161 HM: Wow!

162
163 MR: Can I ask you about one instance in Mound Bayou, where you were walking alone and you
164 were approached by men from behind. Am I correct? And could you just recount what happened
165 with that, and was that the first time you experienced racism first hand?

166
167 HM: Oh let me tell you. This was part of my graduating high school. I should have been maybe...
168 18 or 19...somewhere around there. Me and my best friend, the two of us, in those days of course
169 the Civil Rights Movement was in its heyday. And I was a part of what was called the Student
170 Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). You know um. I was under the tutelage in those
171 days of Mr. James Bevel

172
173 ~11:55

174
175 (Incoherent) - Who was the field secretary in those days for SNCC (pronounced 'snick.') And
176 um he was doing the mobilizing and the teaching and the training and recruiting of students,
177 mainly high school students, teaching us how to register people to vote.

178
179 One night me and my best buddy came to the session, we received our instructions. He (the best
180 friend) lived about two miles out of the little town of Mound Bayou. And so we had this thing of
181 course, cuz he was my best buddy, we would walk each other home. We called [it] 'peace
182 awayhome.' Peace Away Home. So I was walking him peace awayhome — down the road.

183
184 MR: And that's you're together when you're walking peace awayhome is it just two of you?

185
186 HM: It's just the two of us.

187
188 MR: Two persons in each piece awayhome group?
189

190 HM: No...Let's see how I can say this— it's a part of this culture, when we say "Okay, I'll walk
191 ya peace away home." That means I'll go halfway home with you, and you can walk the rest of
192 the way home, and I'll turn around and come back. Yea, okay.
193

194 HM: And so we were walking peace away home. And we got about a mile out from the town and
195 that's when this truckload of...of... vigilante type white people who knew what were doing,
196 registering people to vote. And we were registering people on these plantations all around the
197 town all around the surrounding area.
198

199 MR: And kind of, they were all sharecroppers for white towns?
200

201 HM: For white plantation owners. Yes, for white plantation owners.
202

203 HM: We were registering people out on the plantations. And not just... But there were some
204 black landowners also. So we were registering them as well. We were getting everybody
205 registered. But that was really a no-no. For...because you know that was a statement of real
206 power. One man one vote, that kind of thing.
207

208 HM: So we were on our way out there and this truckload of white vigilantes... and the weapon of
209 choice in those days was the weapon that Lester Mattocks, down in Georgia had introduced, was
210 the ax handle. So they beat us, they jumped us and they beat us with these ax handles. Kicked us,
211 beat us, and really kind a left us lying for dead there on the side of the road. — [Pause]
212

213 HM: My best buddy as far as I'm concerned, although I was badly hurt; my buddy was injured
214 worse because they kicked him repeatedly in the groin. And really they busted his testes. [Pause].
215 So I regained myself enough to help him to go all the way home and laid him on his front porch,
216 and calling his mom and dad.
217

218 HM: Paul — Paul Turner was his name. Strong. You know? And I think the more he fought back
219 the worse he got the beating. But Paul was the sibling to 25 other kids. 26 kids was in the Turner
220 family. They were a BIG family on the plantation. All right, so they were *valuable* you know
221 toward —but anyway we got beat pretty bad. Um — I still carry this calcified knot. I won't be a
222 good bald-headed guy because I got these lumps in my head. But these calcified lumps in the
223 back of my head from being hit with those ax handles. But ya know I have recovered; I had
224 recovered very well from that. I don't have headaches or anything like that.
225
226

227 MR: And what happened after? Who did you tell?
228

229 HM: There's not much... you told your parents, you told. I told — I told James Bevel who was
230 our leader. (Incoherent) But what do you do? There was no recourse really.
231

232 MR: Did you continue on?

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~ 16:18

HM: Well YEA! [Singing] Ain't gon' let nobody, turn me around. Turn me around... that was our song. That was one of our fighting songs you see? "Ain't gon' let nobody turn us 'round. We gonna keep on walking, keep on talking, marching on to freedom land. [Singing ends] That's the kind of determination that was in us, and that was the kind of determination in all of us. We refuse to quit, we had a sense of meaning and purpose direction and termination to get people registered to vote to move toward freedom and get justice. I mean it was just energy, it was corporate energy, and it wasn't just individual. But it was a corporate sense of belonging to something bigger than yourself.

MR: That's very inspiring

HM: Yea. That's the way we did it and we continued to register people to vote. You may have heard of a woman in our era by the name of Fannie Lou Haywater. Have you ever heard of Fannie Lou? You're twenty-four aren't you? [Laughs]

MR: Yes [laughs]

HM: Okay. And so anyway. Really what you're dealing with sitting here is sixty years of history. So I may say a lot of stuff you may not know about. And I need to say this to you. I count this conversation very important, because you need to know it. And it's your generation that's got to change stuff in this country. So I am imparting something to you, it's not just your class project. This is coming up out of my heart, and up out of my experience of 60 years as a civil rights activist. So I am going to say that to you and so...

Graduating high school.

MR: Then you were going to Arkansas.

HM: Going to Arkansas to Philander Smith College. Which I'm sure you haven't heard of either. [Laughs] It was one of the HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities). And — [I] got a scholarship. Let me tell you how the scholarship came as a result of what my high school teachers imparted me to me man. It was mandatory that we not only study but that we memorize volumes of stuff. History, events, personalities, dates, literature, poetry, so forth. And — since my English teacher - God bless her heart, God rest her great spirit - that woman insisted on us becoming articulate and informed. You know when we left her class we were ready to face the world, and to go to college. I got a full tuition scholarship in the dramatic arts because I had memorized volumes of Shakespeare. I had memorized volumes of just all kinds of stuff. And I could just spill it out you know? So I was fortunate enough to get this four-year scholarship in the dramatic arts and got my way through school by working part-time. I of course had to work as well. To accentuate on my scholarships. Which is another interesting piece in my development, —, I was hired — because I'm a farmer - raised on farm environment. And since I had become this articulate person I was hired to be the gardener and the butler at this very wealthy white man's house.

279
280 MR: Really?
281

282 HM: He was [a] retired counsel general to India. And I was hired to be his butler and his
283 gardener. And I learned all kinds of stuff in that environment I would go to school and then come
284 in the afternoon, work whatever dinner parties or whatever I had to do at this very... Frank Lloyd
285 Wright - man listen. It was a stone and glass house [that] Frank Lloyd Wright designed. Built in
286 the side of a mountain overlooking the Arkansas River. It was a fantastic place! A learning
287 experience because, him being a diplomat, would bring all these foreign visitors to town and
288 such. I'm telling you're waking up cells in my brain that I haven't thought about lately...
289

290 HM: So anyway I worked my way through college on a dramatic scholarship and working as a
291 butler and gardener and majoring in a double major in psychology and social work. Social
292 casework.
293

294 MR: I see
295

296 HM: I went on through school there at Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas.
297

298 MR: And with regards to your religious background, what was the first thing that stood out to
299 you at Philander?
300

301 HM: Well, it being a religious school. All right. Now. It's a Methodist supported school. The
302 United Methodist Church supported that school, and so by it being a religious environment and
303 me being the spiritual — infected person that I was, out of my great grandma, my grandma, and
304 my mom - everybody. And the local church that I was a part of. It was just a fit for me to be in
305 that environment and to continue developing. So I had what was called a calling on my life, you
306 know? To be, you know, at first I defined it to be more like a public person. Like a Martin Luther
307 King kind of thing. It never dawned on me really and seriously that I was being tracked to pastor
308 churches and pastor people. But that developed and I got my first two churches. Little country
309 churches. While in my senior year. At age 23. I pastored my first two churches. The first church
310 had 10 members and the little church about 10 miles right down from it had 5 members. Oh man!
311 [Laughs] That's how I got my start. And they couldn't pay me, they could not pay me. So what
312 they would do, since I had a wife by then, and one baby. — They could not pay me uhm — a
313 salary so what they would do is have what they would call a pound party. They would bring a
314 pound of beans and a pound of rice and a pound of meat or something else. And I had to take this
315 back home for my family. [Laughs]
316

317 And Matthew listen man. At one pound party, Sister Bright was that woman's name. She showed
318 up a live chicken. [Laughs] Let me tell you. A live chicken, she was so proud of the chicken.
319 And I couldn't say that I couldn't take the chicken, I had to take the Greyhound busman. I got out
320 there on the bus and here I am standing on the side of road waiting for bus to come, and I had
321 this live chicken, and I had to get on the bus with this live chicken. And what the guy said was:
322 He drives up, opens the door for me to get on, and he looks out of me and he sees this live
323 chicken... and you know what he said? He says, "Well you must be a preacher." [Laughs loudly]
324

MR: [laughs]

HM: But anyway, that was just a little humor for this. But that was you know a real thing. And of course my wife being a country girl she knew how to kill the chicken and dress the chicken, and we had chicken dinner. Fresh chicken right off the farm. Okay... [Laughs] I don't want to get you off track too far.

MR: Oh no worry. So, what was it that was different about your preaching style that you brought from your background? And, as an activist that had already had experiences as an activist, how did you bring that into your preaching?

HM: I would find those. It was easy for me really to find instances of justice in the Scripture. — And you grew up with hearing preachers in those contexts talk about those social justice texts. For instance, Moses leading the children of Israel out of Pharaoh's bondage out the bondage of Egypt. Equating that with us being set free from chattel slavery. You know? And so those kinds of passages of Scripture. Then of course Jesus being looked at as a liberator. A freedom fighter, changing things, change agent. So I grew up with that kind of understanding. So whatever was going on religiously or spiritually in my life had to have some social relevance to what was going on with our people, in the nation, in the country, and in the world.

So it was kind of easy for me to develop this public activist...mentality. And perspective on things [like] freedom and justice. You know God is a God of justice God is God of righteousness. So that was very strong inside of me. And then with the demonstrations, you know for — for public accommodations - which is right. You know? Tearing down the walls of racial bigotry, and racial segregation - even though it was risky thing to do, you risked your life in doing so. If you wanted to be a serious follower of Jesus, it means risk. Yea. It means risk. And so that's how it developed all through my formative years and days. And thank God I had mentors. You know older pastors. Who were of the same way. Even when I got to Chicago I wound up being under the mentorship of a man who was a very — strong, social justice advocate. And so in my early formative days in Chicago in the early sixties - mid-sixties. I was really being schooled in that way. And then MLK was active, you know Jesse Jackson who was my contemporary. I could see these in Stokely Carmichael and all these others who were... you know? I wasn't alone. I had much to identify with. So it became sort of an easy journey for me. Yea.

MR: And when did you graduate from Philander?

HM: I graduated Philander in August of 1967. In 1967.

M: And did you come to Chicago right after that?

HM: Well, in those days I was in the AME church. The African Methodist Episcopal Church. And I had gotten what I thought was a full scholarship to Payne Theological Seminary in Wilberforce, Ohio. So I and my wife and my first baby made our way to Wilberforce, Ohio to Payne Theological Seminary. And that became a very difficult experience because once I got there the scholarship was not available.

MR: Oh so you would have had to pay your own way?

HM: So what happened since I had this social casework background, at least academically. I wound up getting a job in Juvenile Court in Dayton, Ohio. I would go to school in the early part of the day, and then find my way to Dayton Ohio to work from 3 pm to midnight and then find my way back to Wilberforce Ohio. And that was one of the most difficult passages because I had to hitchhike my way from Wilberforce over to a little town called Xenia, and then from Xenia over to Dayton to get there by 3 o'clock in the afternoon in time to work. Then I'd work until midnight, all the public transportation was gone. So I had to hitchhike my way back from Dayton to Xenia and then from Xenia to Wilberforce. And this was all of September and all of October - and it was getting cold.

MR: [unintelligible]

HM: Whoa...man. This was late 67. Late October, early November. At the end of that school term, mid-term [I] took my exams and I said this is not going to work. [Laughs quietly]. And [it] just happened I had a friend, a brother. And who had a friend who was clergyman - a Methodist pastor. They came to visit me. And that is how the invitation really came to come to Chicago. But at that same time, a woman who I grew up under in Mound Bayou had become a public school teacher in Chicago. She sends me an invitation to come and speak at her church to her youth group. November the first of November. And I had my baby and wife - we made our way on Greyhound bus [laughs]. To Chicago!

MR: All right!

HM: Yea! I remember, coming to Chicago, in those days the Greyhound bus came around Lakeshore. The first thing I saw was this HUGE gold statue, something that had remained from World Fair Exposition of 1893... Something like that. And I said Wow! This is what Chicago looks like. But then I was coming right during the days of rage. 1967, things were happening, things were changing.

~ 31:01 *[cell phone vibrating]*

Racism was at its height. Police brutality was unbelievable in this town. And so I wound up being deposited in Englewood.

MR: And that's where you first lived?

HM: That's where my first place in Chicago was. My first address with my wife and my young baby. We were there attending the St. John AME church which was not too far from my little apartment. And we stayed there a while - this moving into January of 1968. I'm going from 62nd and Throop, which is in Englewood, all the way to North and Clybourn to the Ishim YMCA where I had gotten the drop in social case work - working with boys in trouble with the law.

MR: I see. And who were those boys?

417
418 HM: These were kids that an agency, a Methodist agency, supported by the Methodist church,
419 called Methodist youth services. Methodist Youth Services
420 Had this... They would rent room in YMCAs for housing for these boys. And all these were guys
421 that were really gangbangers, they were cutthroats. They were some real tough guys. As a matter
422 of fact, the first week on the job - one of the boys in our case loads and murdered in his room.
423 Stabbed to death. That was a shocker... That was like in January maybe February of '68.

424
425 And then of course I was connected in with the movement still.

426
427 ~ 32:41

428
429 The NAACP, ACLU, SCLC, Operation Breadbasket in those days. With the leadership of Jesse
430 Jackson and some of the others in the Chicago` area. And so I connected pretty well with — the
431 movement here [cell phone ringing]. So then, moving and working and at the same time wanting
432 to get back in school. So I decided that September of '68 I would go back to school.

433
434 MR: Oh okay.

435
436 HM: April 68. I am coming, getting ready [and] closing out my caseload at the Ishim YMCA,
437 and then all of sudden across the news. Comes the announcement; That Martin Luther King has
438 been assassinated.

439
440 ~33:27

441
442 MR: And you heard it on the radio?

443
444 HM: Yea. On the TV. That he had been assassinated. And within hours of that announcement all
445 hell broke loose.

446
447 MR: Really?

448
449 HM: Yes. Rioting and burning building and looting and similar to what's going on there in
450 Baltimore. Similar but [with] purpose different. Unbridled anger in these communities broke out
451 and all of the organizations, civil right organizations, community organizations what we were all
452 plugged in to. The Black Panther Party, which was a significant part of this era also. Now also
453 during this time there were plans being made for the National Democratic Convention to be held
454 at Chicago. So there was another — this is a... Wow! [Pause]

455
456 African Americans were doing their thing in terms of civil rights and justice issues and what
457 have you. White kids were also doing their things, of course it was demonstrating against the
458 war. You know in Vietnam. Because we both, both blacks and whites, had these justice issues
459 going it was easy to communicate across lines. Now among the whites there was an organization
460 called the Student for Democratic Society. And there was a faction to that group called the
461 Weatherman. The Weatherman Faction. All right?

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I got plugged into those guys.

MR: Okay.

HM: [laughs silently] All right?

MR: And, can you tell us what were they about?

HM: They were the more radical wings of the Students for Democratic Society, SDS, and the very radical wing of it. And they were the ones that would really cause most of the rioting and the outbursts of violence and so forth. Ok? Now. April, and they took advantage of what was going on with African Americans you know. In just one movement almost.

MR: How did you meet them?

HM: It was easy you know. [Laughs] They were there!

MR: You just got to know them?

HM: Yea I got to know them. I think that I got to know some of them because here. This is what developed: I didn't know them in April. I was mainly within the African American community, dealing with the Black Panther Party; you know the radical movement within our own wings. The National Black Liberation Front - so forth and so on. Um. It was only after I had registered at Garrett Theological Seminary at Northwestern in September that I met the Students, SDS people. That's when I really met them. And — and then when we knew that the National Democratic Party was coming, it was time to demonstrate. So we were coalescing efforts between the Black Power movement and the Student for Democratic Society - and particularly out of the Weatherman faction.

MR: Okay.

HM: All right. Now, so I am now in Evanston and have become the pastor [chuckles]. Wow you're waking up a lot of memories. — I had become the pastor I was a student pastor of the only Black Methodist church in Evanston, Sherman United Methodist Church. And by being the pastor of that church it put me in touch with a network of Methodist pastors - all of whom were white. You know, but I had made friends with them. And so the day of the riot in 19...at the National Democratic convention, we just happened to be out here in the park. Grant Park. Right here.

MR: Oh you were in Grant Park?

~ 37:29

HM: Right here. Yes in Grant Park. And — Boss Daley had already warned if we would continue this violence and so forth that he was going to order the police to shoot and kill us. He

actually ordered the police to shoot to kill [short pause]. And when this riot broke out — there are other significant law enforcement personnel. Edward Hanrahan for instance who was the state's attorney, [a] wicked man. Evil. As far as I was concerned. The sheriff, the county sheriff in those days was Richard Elrod. I remember these names. Richard Elrod, running after one of the students during the [time of the] riot, slips and falls on a curb right at State street and — wherever Marshall Fields is somewhere along there in those days. And hits his head on the curb and actually breaks his neck. But he survives it, survives it, but he's paralyzed now. And he's wheelchair bound. —

~ 38:40

I wonder, God bless him; I wonder is he still living? I'm not sure — but all of us were being chased by the State's Attorney and the deputies and the sheriff deputies and so forth. I head back home, which is in Evanston, All right.

So I'm at home, late that evening [knocks on the table three times] [Pauses]

This knock came at the door. I open the door and there was about 75 maybe 100 of the SDS students.

MR: Oooh. Okay.

HM: They had followed me to Evanston, they needed refuge. They needed a place to sleep and they said Herb would you allow us to sleep in you church. They're really running from the deputies, the sheriff's deputies, they're keeping from getting arrested. But come to find out — that's 75 or 100 standing in the front, my front yard. Was just to tip of the iceberg. All of them were running from the city, there were thousands of kids. So I called the other pastors and said hey look man, we've got hundreds of hundreds of kids - and most of them white kids, they weren't black they were mostly white. I said they're out in the cold — and it's kind of rainy and stuff so why don't we just open up our buildings, let them sleep overnight, and maybe they'll go back to wherever. Man [pauses] the next — night. Cuz you know these kids [they're doing] LSD, you know all kinds of drugs, you name it they had it.

~ 40:09

MR: And they're from all over?

HM: They're from all over the world really, all over the country. And this is the hippy crowd they called them. The hippies and the flower children and all of all kinds of stuff. During the days of sexual revolution and all that [that] was going on. So —, that night Hanrahan and the sheriff's deputies knocked our doors in man.

MR: Your church doors?!

HM: Our church doors. And came in after those kids, and came and arrested the kids - hauled

553 them off the jail whatever they were going to do. And issued a subpoena to us.

554
555 MR: Were you there when they...?

556
557 HM: Yea! They gave us — all of us all the pastors. We were charged with aiding and abetting
558 fugitives from the law. And we had to appear before a grand jury for that.

559
560 That was my real introduction to Chicago - through the 1968 days of rage and so forth. Also at
561 that same period of time, this is when Hanrahan and the other sheriff's deputies also murdered
562 Mark Clark and Fred Hampton on the West Side.

563
564 MR: And — as far as the Black Panthers, did their messages influence what you were doing, did
565 you hear them?

566
567 HM: Of course. Of course. We were friends. Yes! We knew each other. And — and the way the
568 media — described the Black Panthers was just a bunch of radical senseless killers. It was not.
569 They had a future plan of how we take care of African American children, they had feeding
570 programs, they had educational programs, and they had tutoring programs going. It was very
571 positive. And then they also said by any means necessary will we be free. And they demanded
572 armed warfare, with the police in particular. And that's what happened, so they were killed. They
573 were killed. I still keep up with Fred's brother. Uhm. [Pause]

574
575 But anyway that's a, that is a piece of it. That is an unfortunate stain on this town's history. The
576 way black men in particular black people in general were literally massacred and murdered. And
577 continue to this day. We've just seen it. We've just seen it recently. How the state's attorney, how
578 she brought a lesser charge against the murderer of this young woman. She brought
579 manslaughter, and when the judge saw it and considered the case - he said this is not properly
580 before me, this should be a murder case, not manslaughter. So he throws it out. But the officer
581 who did the killing is exonerated and goes free. So we see these things and it continues over and
582 over. And I'll tell you, Ferguson, Missouri, and New York and what you see in Baltimore now, is
583 the result of this kind of war between African Americans and the police. Continues to this day.
584 So we're not as free as we wish we would be. We've got the push on.

585
586 MR: What do you remember them saying? Specifically, Fred Hampton, Mark Clark...

587
588 HM: Well they say, they were aiding, I mean they were hiding caches of weapons and all this
589 stuff.

590
591 MR: Oh I mean them themselves. Do you remember any particular message or time that you saw
592 or talked to them?

593
594 ~ 44:15

595
596 HM: I would say all of our conversations were about all power to the people. That was the code.
597 Black Power, but all power to the people, so it was a people's movement and this is how it got
598 branded as communist; you're a communist and so forth. [Cell phone vibrating] But no it was

very positive of local communities. Developing our communities, owning ourselves as Blacks and Africans - black is beautiful came out of those kinds of movements, black pride came. That was the message. But it seemed that any move toward black unity, pride and power was a threat to the existing powers that be. And it remains so it wasn't changed. A little subtler. But it's the same thing. Whether it's on university campuses, whether it's in city hall, whether it's in state government - and whether it's in US Congress as we see the tremendous hatred and umbrage that they've had toward the President - who is our first African American President. But grossly disrespected by those who consider themselves white, privilege. White and privileged.

MR: Right.

HM: A dangerous combination, some of them are white wealthy and saved. Religious. But it's that same mentality that gave rise to the Ku Klux Klan. The Klu Klux Klan came to be Christian - they're Christians. But they thought nothing of taking the life of a black man. So we have a lot of this mentality and this attitude as high as Congress now. As far as I'm concerned the Tea Party is nothing but the Klansmen dressed up with tea bags. [Laughs [~ 46:16

MR: So — around the DNC 1968, that was your mentality right? And that night you were issued subpoenas; they knocked down your church door?

HM: Mhm.

MR: So was there a moment where you feared for your life or the lives of people around you?

HM: Yes. Of course.

MR: What were those?

HM: Well, being in the park out here and Boss Daley said shoot to kill them. You want to dodge the bullets of use, and the order was shoot to kill. And the police was shooting to kill. And — in order to keep from being killed we fled to what we considered to be areas of safety and refuge that was heading north. — Most of these headed north, because a lot them were university Northwestern University students. You see? And we lived in that whole Evanston complex area. And they knew what my address was because we had been working together, planning together so forth and so on. So — When they needed refuge they sought to come to the churches and it just so happened that I had some influence with the white Methodist pastors in those communities and they agreed - they said okay Herb we will open our doors and let them in you know so forth and so on. But now I'll tell you another [laughs, coughing slightly] was when the members of these churches came to worship and found their doors damaged and some of the stained glass windows knocked out.

~47:54

Because of the sheriff deputies had done. They were made with us. So we [laughs [we almost lost our churches because we got put out of church. Because the members of the church were

displeased with us opening the doors to let in this riff raff into these nice sanctuaries. But that's part of it.

Also, back during those days, Matthew, you had. There was an element that was different from the Black Panthers and that was your strong gang community like the Blackstone Rangers and the Black Disciples and all these folk you see. They had different agendas.

MR: What were they, or how did you see them?

HM: Well, hey. They were gangsters! They were killers. Yea, you know so that's what they were about. And of course as far as law enforcement was concerned, they connected them with the Panthers - and their agendas were different, their agendas were different. Just to be Black and male — you were in danger of losing your life. They didn't care whether you had an education, or whether you were just on the streets or where you were. And that still is the case. So yea, there were those times where you feared for your safety. 49:21

You feared for your life. And when you hear that the chief of the city says to the police force "SHOOT TO KILL." [Pause]

49:35

Yea. So you know your life is expendable.

MR: So how did you find out, how did you hear that message?

HM: It was in the newspaperman! It was, I mean, plastered across the Sun Times, the tribune. "Shoot to kill" Yes!

MR: On the day OF the demonstration?

HM: Yes. Shoot to Kill.

~ 49:58

And I would be interested as to where Stan Davis was in those days. [Laughs] Because a lot of the white kids I knew them, and I only in the aftermath, years after this was over. I began to meet some of those who were out there in park with me. But they were all young and everything. And I've met — whole families, you know white families. Who were really north suburban types - like Winnetka and Wilmette and all these places. These kids were coming from the North, very wealthy families. You know participating in this. And the only reason I began to know them years later was that they began to emerge at different levels of the society in Chicago. I've come to find out that they too, like I was, were out there in the park. Throwing bricks and bottles [laughs] and [yelling] all power to the people.

~ 50:59

691 MR: What drew you to the park, why do you think you went there?
692
693 HM: Well that was the meeting ground.
694
695 MR: I see.
696
697 HM: That's the place where you come to get your strategies how you're going to deal how you're
698 going to march where you're going to do certain kinds of activities where you're going to disrupt
699 you know things. And then of course our main objective was to register a great discontent with
700 the Democratic Party. And the Democratic Convention. — I'm forgetting in 1968 who was the
701 President? I'm forgetting, who was our president, who was it?
702
703 MR: Nixon. Well it was...
704
705 HM: He was in the Republicans.
706
707 MR: Well it was Lyndon B. Johnson.
708
709 HM: Lyndon Bain Johnson - how can I forget?
710
711 MR: He decides not to run... he says he won't run again.
712
713 HM: Yea. [Pause] Yea.
714
715 MR: And that's the Democrats with Hubert Humphrey and George McGovern, trying to build up
716 the peace coalition.
717
718 HM: Yea, you've got it.
719
720 MR: to get a Democratic president in there. And then meanwhile Nixon is nominated — in either
721 Miami or Atlanta on the Republican side.
722
723 HM: But I'll tell you, he was bad news man. [Pause] Nixon, and — —
724
725 what's his name? Oh my God... He was horrible, the FBI guy.
726
727 MR: Hoover.
728
729 HM: Hoover. [Expression] Wow. I mean it was a horrible time. And then of course with the
730 Vietnam War going and what Nixon was doing to roll back any efforts of Civil Rights in this
731 country - he initiated all of it. And then after him of course came — Reagan. And the other
732 subsequent Republican administrations roll back the clock on us.
733
734 ~ 53:05
735
736 We got the voting rights bill. Well first we got the 1964 Civil Right bill passed. In the aftermath

of John Kennedy's assassination, and then in 1965 Voting Rights bill as the result of the killing and the slaughters of young civil rights workers in Philadelphia, Mississippi. You know, you're waking up a lot of things. All of this was going on, and then finally we saw Thurgood Marshall go to the Supreme Court in 1968 finally. And we saw people like Constance Motley appointed a federal judgeship. And. [expressive oh]. And then we were fighting the battle for fair housing during 1966 when King came to Chicago - I was a part of all that.

MR: Yea.

HM: And then the demonstrations in Marquette Park for fair housing. And even Martin Luther King said about Chicago. Man he said he feared more for his life in Chicago than he did in Mississippi. That just shows you how strong the racial climate has always been in this city. This town to this day remains the largest most racially segregated city in the nation.

MR: So was there a difference between how people were dealing with racial tension and strife in Evanston as opposed to Chicago?

HM: Yea, but — Evanston was like removed. All right. Like I said they were the white wealthy and saved bunch. Which is dangerous combination because they did not recognize that they held the strong hold - the purse strings. That's where all the wealth was. And — but the good part about some of that was that you had very wealthy families who were very in tune with what the black panthers were doing. That was interesting for me to discover that.

~ 55:16

As a matter of fact, there was one woman from Wilmette or Winnetka somewhere up in there. In those days, her name was Lucy Montgomery. And you ought to look her up man. Lucy Montgomery was married to a very wealthy billionaire. But Lucy Montgomery literally supported the Black Panther movement in this town. She did.

MR: Really?

HM: She did. And was out there in the park, with us! [Laughs happily] Yes she was. A little petite woman, with a big black hat on you knows. She was a socialite. But Lucy Montgomery, I shouldn't ever forget her name. She and her husband Ken Montgomery underwrote full tuition scholarships for Bobby Rush. To go to Dartmouth. They were hooked in with that level of wealth and influence in this country. And they underwrote not only Bobby but also several other radical blacks' scholarships to attend Dartmouth College.

~56:41

Lucy Montgomery, bless her heart.

And her daughter I shouldn't be ha-ha should I put this on. 56:47 because she's still active. She my age. So she was a teenager, or you know a young adult out there in the park. You know she was a flower child. Got to know her. And you know she is still, let me tell you what she's doing

783 today: This woman is seriously committed; with whatever wealth she has seriously committed to
784 prison reform as it regards African American people. And wants to do everything she can to
785 bring a halt to mass incarceration. And spends her money on reentry programs [for] men coming
786 out of prison. So forth and so on. Is very effective in working with all of us in getting the death
787 penalty abolished in the state of Illinois. So we still have that kind of coalition out there among
788 blacks and whites. We don't tell the story about it enough.

789
790 ~57:45

791
792 MR: So what kept you stable during those trying times?

793
794 HM: My belief in God. I just believe that there was a righteousness that had to prevail.

795
796 MR: And in what you were doing?

797
798 HM: And in what we were doing. — Determination, being president on the case for Black
799 empowerment, self-determination. We used to call it. And did not mind laying our lives on the
800 frontline you know for it. And then when Fred Hampton and Mark Clark and the others were all
801 shot up and killed on the West Side. More determined to see things change. And. it seems as if
802 today though — Matthew that the more things have changed the more they remain the same.
803 And even though with all of the Civil Rights gains of the 1960s, — mmm...

804
805 All of them chipped away. 58:47 we went through this terrible time in the 70s [with] the Nixon
806 and others where reverse discrimination cases were filed against us to strip away Affirmative
807 Action and the gains of the past. And we've seen just recently that the Supreme Court itself
808 literally gutted the 1965 Voting Rights bills. Took away all of its enforcement powers. 59:11 so
809 we've lost tremendously. And — in professional schools like law schools, medical schools and
810 so forth [are] underrepresented by blacks. We are over represented in prisons and
811 underrepresented in academia. So just things have changed. And I can see it. And having lived
812 through it. And sometimes I feel like I'm a dinosaur you know? Kind of left to tell people like
813 you this story.

814
815 ~ 59:55

816
817 MR: [Laughs] it's very important for people to hear this story. So in that year, '68, and that time,
818 how has that influenced you as a religious activist?

819 HM: It was very much. Because during those days I was in grad school, from '68 until '71, and I
820 tried to structure my curriculum around urban issues and poverty you know. And how to work
821 with the poor and empower them and encourage them. So I say okay, you may not have the
822 wealth, but you've got numbers. And there's power in numbers, and if we get everybody
823 registered to vote - which is a strong suite of mine. We got everybody registered to vote and then
824 get them educated about the issues and then turn them out on Election Day, we can make a
825 positive difference. And that's how we elected Harold Washington. Yea.

826
827 ~ 60:54

I would never forget it. A lot went into his election that began in the 1960s. And then eventually he got courage enough to run for major, and we had organized the communities and registered people to vote. And he won. Yea.

So this vote issue, this power of the ballot, remains very very important. And trying to get young African Americans to understand how important it is to use the power of the ballot to change things in this country- that's the way it has to be done.

~ 61:36

MR: In your years as an activist, what would you say you are most proud of?

HM: You folks like you.

MR: You don't have to say that! [Laughs]

HM: I am serious.

How can I use my — 60 years of experience and training — whatever it is, how can I use this as an offering to your generation. That's what it, it means a lot to me. My children my grandkids you see. My great grandkids you see, at this stage in the game I have some of those coming to growth [smiling]. So quick it seems. But it's real.

So I think I am proud [pause]

That I am still alive and lucid enough and clear enough to pass on whatever gifts God has placed inside of me. Opportunities God has placed inside of me to pass on the succeeding generations. That's my moment of pride.

MR: What do you think has been the most positive consequence of the things that happened in the 1960s and your role as an activist?

HM: You know I think sometimes Matthew I have to fight becoming cynical. Or becoming apathetic. As I said earlier, because it seems like the more things change the more they remain the same. And to see... pause to finally just come to grips with the reality that white privilege trumps everything that we are about. — White privilege trumps affirmative action. The white skin remains the penultimate in this country. And I think to first have an analysis of what's real. Now I am by all means not prejudiced against white a person; that's not what it is. I'm talking about power when I'm talking about white privilege now just — any individual white person. And I think if I can help pass this analysis on that look: There is still at the bottom rung of this nation a need to keep certain populations poor and disempowered right? Understand that, don't be romantic about it, and then the few of us who have an opportunity to rise into these echelons of accessibility of white privilege - don't forget who you are.

~ 65:00

And this is what I wish that more of our entertainers would understand, black entertainers. More of our black athletes would understand. That you're still Black, don't forget it. And then so that I won't become cynical about it, I just stay plugged in to my deep spiritual resources and to know that in God I am strong. As a matter of fact, because I experience God in the way I do I am the strongest among the strong. And so are you.

~ 65:49

M: What do you value most about what you do now?

HM: What I'm doing right now. You know sharing with young African Americans who are so bright and who are anxious to learn and who don't mind listening in order to learn. — I like doing what I'm doing right now. I pastor a congregation of people who have always for the last 92 years - we've been right on that corner at 48th and Wabash teaching and encouraging and sending young people forward. Giving them a sense of who they are in God and letting them know that if they have God at the core of their being, then whatever they do academically [whatever] career they [choose] that they're going to be all right. Don't forget God.

MR: If you could turn back the clock on your life as an activist at any period, what would you do differently?

HM: What would I do differently...? You know that's a hard question because I see that as who I am now is as a result of all of the experience of my past, whether positive or negative. That they've all contributed to me being the man, the person, and the spiritual leader - whoever wants to call it - that I am today. So, I would choose this moment. As I look back, this moment and the unfolding of this moment into the future - you see.

~67:50

I've had some exciting times on the way. For instance the work that I do in Africa, I am so excited about that. As a matter of fact, when it was clear to me that I was not going to get my 40 acres and a mule that I was promised, I went and bought my 40 acres in Ghana. [Laughs]

And I know how to breed mules so I can get my own mule there. So, these are highlights, moments of being there with the Ghanaians, being in Mother Africa, being on the continent, and watching the spirit of the people - even though [there's] untold poverty. I mean, you know poverty in America is nothing like poverty in Africa, but the difference is that poverty in America destroys the human spirit you see? Poverty in Africa pushes it forward; it doesn't break the human spirit. And so when you're there, even though these people are the poorest of the poor, they're happy! Since they are alive and they are human and they have community they have family, this kind of thing. So that's a highpoint. I think when I purchased the land, that was a great moment for me. Yea. It was a great moment for me.

~68:52

So, right now, when I go back at the foot. I've got this — the chief that I negotiated the land deal

with said okay you get 40 acres. But then he says. My 40 acres that I am giving you is far larger than the 40 acres that you would do in the US. He gives me these two mountains overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, all right? And at the foot of the mountain is a village of about [one] thousand people.

~69:33

So until I can develop the land these people at the foot of the mountain, I let them farm the land. And whatever produce they raise they can sell at the market they can use it for their own families and so forth. So I think that's... I like that. And watching children and grandchildren and grandkids those are great moments. Graduating high school going off to college, they're knowing who they are. That they can make a real contribution, not only to their people to their community but to the nation to the US and the world. Yea.

I think that kind of stuff I am happy about that.

~ 70:15

[The interview goes on to discuss Harold Washington and Dr. Martin's role in the election of this famous former Mayor of Chicago].

~ 77:55

[HM: That was **27** years ago Matthew. Wow.]

No wonder this all sounds like history to you. You weren't here!

But I am glad you're doing what you're doing and I pray that your project is successful, but that it means more than a class project.

MR: OH yes. It definitely does. I was going to ask you what you think kind of the future role that religious activists should take is.

~ 78:38

If you were speaking to younger generation about activism, about religious activism, you know people kind of doing things like you.

HM: Well, I would say it this way - which I know the millennial generation, of course which you are a part, so disconnected you know from that religious tradition of our ancestors. [I would] challenge the young people as I do constantly anyway to try to find ways to reconnect. Because the Black church is the only institution Black people own AND operate. And if we lose that which we are doing fastly, we're losing it in terms of its strong purpose for activism. If we lose that then we've lost the last hope for real empowerment as a community. — What I see on the horizon for the Black church in particular, it frightens me. In terms of the young preachers who are coming to pulpits. They're mainly focused on money and the rich and the famous. And you see this foolishness; you even see it on TV now. Where they're talking about the preachers of

967 Los Angeles and the preachers of Atlanta whatever they are. But it's all about a kind of ego-
968 greatness. It's not about service, you know, to our people.

969
970 ~ 80:16

971
972 How do we... pause... for instance: we just saw this brother in Atlanta Mr. Creflo Dollar who
973 asks his people to buy him a 65 million dollar jet? Can you imagine that? But he's serious! And
974 he wants it and he defends it. He says that [laughing] not only am I asking for a 65 million dollar
975 jet for today to do whatever I need to do, but if it comes to be that I need a space shuttle to Mars
976 I am going to get that too. So we're way off and that kind of mindset, when the masses of our
977 people are incarcerated and behind bars and the mass of our people are still poor you see. And
978 here in Chicago, [not so much Atlanta], some of the pastors here have built facilities like a 50
979 million dollar house of worship, a house or something... in Roseland! Do you know where
980 Roseland is?

981
982 MR: Mhm.

983
984 HM: The poorest of the poor. I mean that's just decadence. But that's where their minds are. Rich
985 and famous, jet aero planes, prosperous, while the majority the masses of our people are still
986 using LINK cards to eat and to feed themselves and house themselves. So I have a very critical
987 concern about it. And I think—I think pastors should live well, I think, like me I think a pastor
988 should live as well as the best member of his congregation's living. See what I am saying? You
989 should live well, I don't think you should take a vow of poverty, but at some point you've got to
990 understand that our calling is not to wealth and prosperity, but is a call to serve the needs of the
991 least of these among us and empower the people. That kind of [thing]. If we're serious followers
992 of Jesus Christ that's what we've got to do.

993
994 So I would say to the young people, rediscover your spiritual roots. Because if you don't get
995 anchored spiritually, that should be your foundation, anything you build on that foundation, if
996 it's not founded like that, it's going to crumble. It's not about wealth, it's not about money, and
997 it's not about power and all of stuff out here. But it's about service to the least of these among
998 us.

999
1000 ~ 83:12

1001
1002 Don't forget!
1003 Give back to your community; give back to your people. This is a gift that you're giving back,
1004 you know? It's a benefit to you academically sure. But it's more than that. It is a gift back to the
1005 people. That's what I would say to the millennial. As a matter of fact my daughters and my
1006 children here it all the time. [Laughs heartily]

1007
1008 MR: Thank you Dr. Martin. It has been really great talking to you.

1009
1010 HM: Yes, my delight. And I am always available to you.

1011
1012 [Recording ends]

