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### Clarence Harris

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# The Bridges that Carried Us Over Project

## Interview Summary

**Interviewee:**

Reverend Clarence Harris

**Interviewer:**

Ratibu Jacocks

**Interview Date:**

August 19, 2014

**Interview Location:**

Rialto, California

**Length:**

01:02:33

**Media format:**

Digital Video (mp4)

**Interview Summary completed by:**

Nicole Mayhew, 2021

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**Description:**

Reverend Clarence Harris (1928-2017) describes his early life farming in Delhi, Louisiana, the roots of his relationship with God and the church, and his path to San Bernardino. Harris speaks frankly about his life experiences, beliefs, experiences with racism. While Harris did not have a formal education, he taught himself how to read and write. He learned how to build houses in the 1950s by watching others, and became a cement finisher. Harris and the interviewer are joined by Harris' daughter, Lisa Blacksher.

**Keywords:**

- Steward
- Methodist Church
- Farming
- Gospel
- Church choir
- Construction
- Housing
- Cottonseed oil mill
- Cotton

- Education
- Preaching
- Methodist Church
- Negro League Baseball
- Own Your Lot Bill
- Temple Baptist Church

**Spatial Coverage:**

General Location/Address	Name of Site (if relevant)
Delhi, Louisiana	
Mangham, Louisiana	
Monroe, Louisiana	
St. Joseph, Louisiana	
Tallulah, Louisiana	Cottonseed oil mill
San Bernardino, California	
Champaign, Illinois	

**Temporal Coverage:**

- 1940s (Farming in Louisiana)
- 1940s – 1950s (The Methodist Church)
- 1950s (San Bernardino, CA)

**Interview Index:**

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Digital Video	[00:01:23]	Reverend Clarence Harris recounts when and how he learned to farm during his childhood in Delhi, Louisiana.
Digital Video	[00:03:20]	Schooling for black children in Louisiana during Reverend Clarence Harris' childhood in the 1940's.
Digital Video	[00:05:01]	Reverend Clarence Harris recounts how he learned to farm through his interests.

Digital Video	[00:08:22]	The abrupt end to farming for the Harris family in Louisiana and how white people within their community altered the work that was available to the black community. Reverend Clarence Harris' family farmed until 1946.
Digital Video	[00:09:18]	Reverend Clarence Harris recounts his move to Mangham, Louisiana and St. Joseph, Louisiana and why his family chose to move there.
Digital Video	[00:10:49]	Reverend Clarence Harris discusses his time as a steward in the Methodist Church in Louisiana, beginning at ten years old.
Digital Video	[00:14:17]	Reverend Clarence Harris explains how he learned to read and spell and add from his community.
Digital Video	[00:16:59]	Reverend Clarence Harris' early successes as a steward of the Methodist Church and record keeping.
Digital Video	[00:20:14]	The inability of African-Americans to participate in national league sports and the pushback by whites in the community.
Digital Video	[00:24:08]	Working as an African-American picking cotton and working for mills for sixty-five cents an hour in St. Joseph, Louisiana.
Digital Video	[00:25:40]	Cottonseed oil mills in Tallulah, Louisiana.
Digital Video	[00:27:25]	Reverend Clarence Harris' motivation to move from Tallulah, Louisiana to San Bernardino, California was to try to become a successful gospel singing group with fellow members of his church.
Digital Video	[00:29:48]	Reverence Clarence Harris became a preacher in 1979.
Digital Video	[00:31:29]	Reverend Clarence Harris recounts how he became a preacher.

Digital Video	[00:38:08]	Previous marital disputes and Reverend Clarence Harris' daughter, Lisa, and his son.
Digital Video	[00:40:59]	Building homes in San Bernardino, California in the 1950's.
Digital Video	[00:42:40]	"Own Your Lot Bill," renting construction, and San Bernardino housing construction.
Digital Video	[00:45:56]	Reverend Clarence Harris' biggest influences: Reverend MacDonald, who taught him how to read, and Fred Williams of the Temple Baptist Church.
Digital Video	[00:50:32]	Reverend Clarence Harris urges young people to practice, "practice makes you better."
Digital Video	[00:51:31]	Racism in the San Bernardino housing construction business.
Digital Video	[00:53:55]	Reverend Clarence Harris' advice to young people today.
Digital Video	[00:59:01]	Difference between buying a car and homes in the late 1900's and today.
Digital Video	[1:00:42]	Reverend Clarence Harris' advice to young women.

**Full interview transcript can be found below.**

## Interview Transcript

### **Start of Interview:**

[00:00:00]

**Unknown** [00:00:05] Start over, OK. It's recording.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:00:05] OK. We ready now? [inaudible] Take two.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:00:13] Today is August 19, 2014. My name is Ratibu Jacocks and I'm interviewing Reverend Clarence Harris for the Archiving Black History in the Inland Empire Project. Your name is spelled Clarence: C-L-A-R-E-N-C-E.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:00:36] Amen.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:00:37] OK. And Harris: H-A-R-R-I-S.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:00:43] Amen.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:00:44] OK. And we're interviewing Reverend Harris in his home in Rialto, California. Thanks so much for letting me talk to you today. Where were you born?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:00:58] Delhi, Louisiana.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:01:01] Delhi, Louisiana. And your parents, or -- was who?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:01:06] My father's [was] my father's name was George Harris.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:01:08] George?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:01:08] George.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:01:09] Uh, huh.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:01:09] Harris.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:01:11] Mmhm.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:01:11] And my mother's name was Isabella Holland.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:01:15] Holland. OK. And what kind of work did they do?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:01:18] Farm.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:01:21] Farm?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:01:21] Yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:01:21] Did you farm with them?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:01:23] Oh, yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:01:23] Where did you learn to farm?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:01:27] I learned the greatest part of my farming experience when I was eight years old.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:01:34] Eight years old?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:01:35] Yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:01:36] So how did that come about?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:01:38] It came about because of my mother's action one morning. She couldn't get up to do what she needed to do.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:01:47] Uh, huh.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:01:48] And, [I'm a little old smart] man.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:01:51] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:01:53] So, I said -- I talked her into [inaudible] to let me go catch the mule and hook him up. And go to the field with the men to do work.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:02:05] So, your mother would normally go herself?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:02:09] Amen.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:02:09] How many sisters and brothers did you have?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:02:10] I had four. Two sisters and two brothers.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:02:14] And you were, where? Where do you fit in?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:02:17] I fit in the middle.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:02:18] You were the -- you were the middle child.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:02:19] The middle child.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:02:20] So there were some older and some younger.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:02:22] Younger.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:02:22] So, the older one didn't volunteer, or were they already out there?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:02:29] Well, we was a split family.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:02:33] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:02:34] Back then, men would just walk off and leave the women.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:02:38] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:02:39] Didn't make any difference. So, my father took two of the children with him and my oldest sister was raised by my grandmother.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:02:48] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:02:50] And that left me and my little brother.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:02:52] At this house?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:02:55] At the house.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:02:55] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:02:55] Our mother's.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:02:57] So at this house -- are you the oldest now, at this house?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:03:00] Yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:03:01] OK, so you're the oldest now. So, it was kind of natural that you would step up and do what you volunteer to do: to go farming. And you were eight.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:03:13] I farmed.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:03:15] Ok. Were you? Well, you're saying to me, if you're eight years old, there was schooling. Were you at school?



**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:03:20] There was no school for me.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:03:21] There was no school.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:03:22] No because them -- the young black boys -- had to work. The only time he could go to school was in the winter time. When there was bad weather, we had to walk three miles to school.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:03:36] Three miles?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:03:36] Three miles.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:03:36] And what kind of school did they have? Was it in a church?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:03:43] Well, one was in the church. But we had a Pilgrim Junior High School three miles away, and that's where all of the kids in those areas went.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:03:56] So, you had to walk?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:03:57] I had to walk.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:03:58] OK. And, so, it wasn't a lot of schooling for you?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:04:01] No.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:04:04] And, so, you learn -- how did you learn? I mean, how did you know how to farm? Let's start with that.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:04:10] Well. Farming was very easy. It wasn't anything hard and complicated about farming. All you had to do was just get the -- feel ready and do what you need to do. And plant! And protect.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:04:29] And protect -- you're trying to preach here, Reverend! So, so, so. Plant. You know -- get it ready and plant and protect it and it grows and --

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:04:44] And at the end you -- you harvest it.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:04:48] Harvest it.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:04:48] Yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:04:49] And so you knew -- did you know all -- when did you start learning the whole process?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:04:55] The whole process, I knew that before I was eight years old.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:04:59] Oh. So you already knew.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:05:01] Already knew, because I watched the men. And especially my grandfather. And I was a little fellow five years old. I would walk in the field with him all day while he'd get the land ready to plant.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:05:20] So, did you know you were learning?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:05:22] Of, course, I did.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:05:23] Oh, OK. And why were you learning?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:05:26] I was learning because I was interested.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:05:29] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:05:29] I wanted to learn. I wanted to know.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:05:31] So, they didn't have to whip you and say, "Clarence, you better get out there." They didn't have to do that.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:05:39] Didn't have to do that. I was eager and ready and willing to do it.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:05:47] OK, [inaudible]. When -- when did this first notion come to you to be eager, ready and willing? When did that -- what can you remember, what -- how old you may have been when that happened?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:06:01] When that happened, I was eight years old.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:06:03] You were eight. So all these things were happening to you -  
-

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:06:07] [Before and present].

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:06:07] OK, so would I be safe to say that you were learning things until you were eight? And when you became eight, a certain knowledge comes to you --

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:06:18] I already knew it.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:06:19] You already knew it.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:06:19] Already knew it.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:06:22] But the time to perform, then --

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:06:25] Was not.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:06:25] It was not there.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:06:26] That's right, but I did. [inaudible]

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:06:28] Yeah, so. So, look. How long did you stay in Louisiana?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:06:41] I stayed in Louisiana until I was twenty-one. About twenty-two. I left there when I was twenty-two.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:06:49] So, what -- what, what type of work, besides farming, did you do while you were growing up?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:07:01] [Unless,] are you speaking about after I grew up and understood? Are you speaking about the time, before, when I had to do all the things that a young man had to do to take care of a mother and a son?

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:07:16] See, I don't really know what you mean by what a young man has to do. What did a young man have to do during that time? What years were that? What year are we talking about?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:07:29] We're talking about 1942-3.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:07:32] 1920?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:07:34] 1940.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:07:35] 1940.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:07:37] '43.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:07:37] OK, so this was dawn of World War Two.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:07:42] World War Two. I was big enough, now, to [remember].

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:07:46] But you weren't -- you didn't participate in World War, in the military.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:07:50] I was too young.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:07:51] You were too young. OK, so let's get back now. I'm talking about the type of work you did. You started farming when you were eight. And -- going through the whole process, did you do any other type of work after then, until you were twenty-one?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:08:06] Well, we left from where we farmed at and we -- we need to do something else here.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:08:15] But come on, let's do it. I don't know, I'm talking to you now so I want to do it with you.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:08:22] What I think that you need to know about all of these things in the farming business. We farmed until 1946.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:08:35] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:08:37] And at this time society -- white society -- was moving on with other things to take away the farming from us.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:08:45] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:08:48] And, here we were, raised in the country and all we knew was country.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:08:53] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:08:53] And they sent us to city, to the town. What did we know when we got to town? Nothing.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:08:59] And what town was that?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:09:02] Town was -- the nearest town was Mangham, Louisiana. And, then, the large city was Monroe, Louisiana.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:09:10] Monroe.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:09:11] Yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:09:11] OK, so you went there. You moved there. Who moved you there?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:09:18] My mother married a preacher. And we was Methodist. And they sent him to St. Joseph, Louisiana.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:09:31] To preach?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:09:32] Yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:09:32] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:09:34] And, then, he sent for us out of where we were to come down there because he had a job for us.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:09:41] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:09:41] So, we all packed up and went to St. Joseph.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:09:43] How old were you then, about?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:09:46] I was about almost seventeen.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:09:51] OK, so you were almost grown when this is happening?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:09:55] Well, I was grown.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:09:57] You was grown. You were grown since you were eight! I don't want to mess up here. But you were much more -- are you, you looking at girls?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:10:10] Oh, I really didn't care too much about girls at that time because there was so many other things that was more important than girls right then. I only got interested in girls when I got down to St. Joseph.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:10:26] Oh, OK. But until then, you were interested in these -- all of these other things pertaining to farming or pertaining to what activities?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:10:34] Pertaining to how to live.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:10:37] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:10:37] How to live long. And these things I had on my mind all the way.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:10:44] So, were you preaching then?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:10:45] No.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:10:46] You weren't preaching, but you're studying? And you're learning?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:10:49] Well. [inaudible].

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:10:49] You're laughing at me.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:10:49] I was a deacon.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:10:58] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:10:59] In the Methodist Church, at ten years old.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:11:02] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:11:04] And in the Methodist Church they do things differently than they do in the Baptist Church, or any other church. For that matter, they had quite a [congregation]. We had the young folks' activities, which was Sunday School, and ushering. Singing in the choir, if you could sing. So, these were the activities that I had at ten years old.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:11:40] And you participated in them?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:11:43] Of, course, I did.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:11:44] Usher?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:11:45] Yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:11:46] Choir?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:11:46] Yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:11:47] Sunday school?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:11:49] Yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:11:49] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:11:50] And I was the youngest steward. In the Methodist Church, they do not call them deacons. They call them stewards.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:12:05] Stewards, OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:12:06] That's according to the Bible.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:12:08] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:12:10] And I had a certain number of members that I had to -- that I had to see every month to get money or whatever they could give to the church. And, then, when it come time to make a report, I had to report. I had to make the report in the church.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:12:37] Well, so, how do you get around?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:12:40] Well, if you want, you'd spend a night in other folks' houses. You'd walk three or four miles, and you'd spend a night at someone's house. And, then, you go further, and, then, you come back.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:12:55] So, your parents weren't worried about you?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:12:58] No, I was in good hands.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:13:01] Why? How did you know that?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:13:03] Because I had God on my side.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:13:05] You knew that. Now, how old are you when you started recognizing God? Because we talked about farming and we also talked about you being a minister. When did you recognize God?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:13:16] I recognized God around seven years old, in my life. Because of the things that I was doing that I didn't really know, but I had something inside of me that was giving me the information and urging me on.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:13:37] Was that your parents?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:13:39] No, that was God.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:13:41] That was God, Himself? Directly?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:13:41] That was God, Himself!

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:13:43] So, so --

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:13:44] His son, Jesus, let's put it that way.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:13:46] So, you had a close relationship with God and his son, Jesus Christ, early on?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:13:52] Absolutely.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:13:53] And it came how, again, now?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:13:55] When I was seven years old.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:13:57] I know. But how did it appear? How did it come? How did you know?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:14:02] I knew because I was not one that was going to school.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:14:08] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:14:09] Knowing how to spell, read.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:14:16] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:14:17] The information was coming from God and -- and I was getting it because I would look at what you was doing. If you said something that I needed to know or understand, I would block it. Right up there. Two or three days later, I would see somebody, and I would ask them to explain that question to me.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:14:43] The same thing that you have blocked in your mind?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:14:46] Correct.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:14:46] OK. And they would explain it?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:14:49] Absolutely. This is how I learned to spell and to read as much as I could.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:14:57] Mmhm.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:14:59] It's just how I did it. But one thing I was good at was math. I was really good at that because that's what I wanted to learn most. To not to be cheated out of the earning that I had earned.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:15:15] And that was a mathematical problem?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:15:19] Absolutely.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:15:20] And you learned how to count?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:15:23] I learned how to count. I learned how to add. I wasn't good at multiplying and subtracting, but I could add, boy.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:15:29] And you could add.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:15:29] I could add.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:15:32] Well, let me ask you this, then. I mean, this is a side point, I'm going to get back to what we were talking about. But, did you play cards?



**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:15:37] I played cards after I was grown.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:15:41] OK, so, you didn't learn adding and subtracting with cards?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:15:44] No.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:15:44] Some people I talked to did. OK, so. So, so. So, you're getting this recognition of God. And God is speaking to you, and you would hear something that someone says. And, then, if you didn't know it, you would block it, and, then, you ask some other people that would tell you. And, then, you started learning, and, then, you started remembering. So, did you recognize yourself as being special?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:16:15] Sure, I did!

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:16:15] I thought, so! [inaudible]. Yeah. Yeah, I'm getting that impression. You know, and I just wanted to know how you felt because there is a lot of people who don't know how special they are -- with much more than what you had!

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:16:37] I'm a [religious] person.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:16:40] Yeah, you're [really special].

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:16:42] Sure.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:16:43] So, and that came to you -- now, I really need to get to the - - we're going to get to you getting to California, because you're not here yet. You're in the city.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:16:51] Before we get to California --

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:16:51] OK. Still living in Louisiana.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:16:54] Let's go back to when I was ten, eleven years old. Back to the church.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:16:59] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:16:59] To certify this point, because this is important to me. When the time come for the stewards to make their report of what they had gotten from the members to the church, for the church, I had it all itemized. Everything in a separate place. And when it come my time to do my thing, oh, I was on it. In fact, the minister said, "let's, let's, let's stop this young man right here, so we can let the whole congregation understand that he's the only one that knows how to do what we're trying to do. The only one that knows what we're trying to do!"

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:18:03] So, I'm still trying to understand. How, how does -- how did you itemize it? You didn't -- you said you didn't write. So, did you write it down? What did you do?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:18:13] I printed it.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:18:15] OK. You could --

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:18:16] I printed it good enough for me to understand it.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:18:19] OK, was this there -- whoever -- what they gave you, you had a name and the amount. And then somebody else, and you add that up. So, you were able to add that all up together?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:18:35] Absolutely. Separated.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:18:37] And made a report?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:18:38] Made a report.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:18:39] And you were the youngest?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:18:42] I was the youngest of all of the stewards.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:18:45] And, did you -- did I understand correctly? That you said you were the only one that knew how to do this? This way?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:18:52] The bishop stopped everything because of my statements to what I was doing, he said, "hold it, young man. Let us have the church to understand that you are the only steward that has gotten up and explained and gave direct information about everything you've done."

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:19:22] And, how often did you report this?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:19:24] Once a year.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:19:25] Once a year?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:19:27] Yes, yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:19:27] Oh, so you kept it for the whole year?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:19:29] Yes. Like a secretary.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:19:35] OK, so where is this going on now? You're in the city now? You still in the --

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:19:40] Still in the country.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:19:41] You're still farming. And, so, how was your fun and games? Play stuff?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:19:48] I did. I did all of that.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:19:50] You did. With the boys and girls?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:19:52] Boys, mostly. Girls didn't play with boys down there because they didn't allow that.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:19:59] What kind of games did you all play? Was it baseball? Or football? Or?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:20:03] That's all we had was baseball. And we'd play baseball with sticks. Anything we had that could hit a ball. We made our balls.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:20:14] Well, did you think about being a pro? Play at a higher level, or being professional? Because there were Negro Leagues.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:20:24] I knew that wasn't probable for me.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:20:30] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:20:31] Because of who I was and where I was. I recognized how bad that the society that we live in disbarred us from anything that we needed to do.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:20:46] So, you had no hope or ambition to go on to that?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:20:51] Lot's of hope.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:20:53] OK, well, then, what did you know? Why did you say this society wouldn't allow it?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:20:58] That was then.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:21:01] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:21:01] And, then, we moved into another era, like now. I did lots of things. I've been a real man. A real man of God, who does not have a church today because of mistakes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:21:23] Mistakes?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:21:23] Mistakes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:21:24] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:21:24] But, I'm happy. Because of what I did. And because God, yet, keeps me here for some purpose. Whatever that is, I don't know yet. And while we are speaking on this -- witness right here. Last Saturday, I sit down in the den and I was blinded by a great light for more than three hours. I couldn't see her, I couldn't see the television. All I could -- everywhere I looked, it was this great light. That was the brightest light that I ever saw. And, then, I thought, "well, what is God doing? God, are you going to take me now? Or, are you going to let me stay a little while longer?" This was all in my mind, when I was saying -- the only thing that I spoke out loud about was: I told my wife how much I loved her. And I always wanted her to remember that.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:22:46] That was last Saturday?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:22:47] Last Saturday.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:22:50] OK. And, so, I'm going to move along, but you can bring me back. But, I'm trying to get to the California. Where do you -- when do you start being interested in girls? In a more serious way?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:23:05] When I became eighteen.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:23:09] Eighteen?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:23:10] Eighteen. That's when girls became introduced to me.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:23:16] And, then, did you get married at that time? Right, eighteen?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:23:21] I had to. Because that's when I got a girl pregnant.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:23:29] That's a mistake, too! You talk about mistakes, we all have made them! [inaudible].

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:23:29] My wife knows about it.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:23:29] Well, one of the things, I'll put this on the recording. See, I always found you really fascinating to me. Personally, I told you this before. And, because, you remind me of me. And I see you, and I see me, and I just like to see

somebody that's like me, and not like them. But, anyway, let's get back. So, you got a girl pregnant and you got married. And, then, did you stay there? In that town?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:24:08] I couldn't because there wasn't enough there to do at that time. This was two years later, when we first met there, there was nothing to do but pick cotton. And, you know, you don't have cotton in the spring, in the winter to pick. So, we had nothing to do other than. So, I was doing all of that. I was -- I was started out hauling logs from the swamps to the mills.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:24:46] How much were you making?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:24:50] Sixty-five cents an hour.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:24:50] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:24:54] It's all they would allow it to be. But we made it, so. I couldn't live in St. Joseph anymore because it was too small. I didn't have enough room, knew too many girls.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:25:12] So, the town couldn't hold you?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:25:12] No.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:25:20] And where do you move?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:25:22] Up to a place called Tallulah.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:25:25] Tallulah?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:25:25] Tallulah, Louisiana.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:25:27] That's a bigger city.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:25:29] Yes. It wasn't -- yeah, it was bigger. And it was more popular because it had more to offer to the black --

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:25:40] What kind of work did you do there?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:25:40] I worked in an oil mill. Cottonseed, being, pressing, getting the oil from it.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:25:51] From the seed. And how long did you do that? How many children do you have now?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:26:00] Beg your pardon?

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:26:01] How many children did -- I don't mean that now, now. I'm talking about when you moved to the larger city.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:26:07] Only one.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:26:08] You only still had the one child.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:26:10] Yeah.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:26:10] OK. All right, and how long did you stay there?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:26:15] I stayed there until 1951.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:26:19] And, then, what did you do?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:26:21] We came to San Bernardino, California.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:26:23] So, what made you come to San Bernardino?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:26:26] One of the boys had an auntie here and a lot of relatives and he thought it was --

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:26:33] One of the boys? Which boys?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:26:36] Well, his name was Freddy Williams.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:26:38] Freddy Williams. OK, and he was from your hometown?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:26:43] Yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:26:43] And he had moved to San Bernardino?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:26:45] Yes. We all come to San Bernardino together.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:26:47] Oh, OK. And what happened when you got here? Was this much different than where you came from?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:26:58] Oh, yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:27:00] OK, here we go!

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:27:00] Oh, yes!

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:27:02] We should be talking by ourselves!

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:27:11] [inaudible] I don't mind, I don't mind.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:27:13] I'm telling you there is five generations now, looking at this, so.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:27:17] I don't mind talking in front of my wife because nothing have I done that I have not told her.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:27:24] Right.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:27:25] She knows all of my weakness, all the stuff that I did -- she know all about it. But, to get to your point about why we came to San Bernardino, California. We had a gospel singing group. And we thought, in Tallulah, that if we'd come West we could become famous singing gospel. But it didn't happen because, of say, members in the group didn't like the status of what was going on.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:28:15] Who were some of the people in the group? Were they from San Bernardino or were they from Louisiana?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:28:19] They were from Louisiana, in San Bernardino.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:28:22] But they're living here now?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:28:23] Yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:28:24] Now, who were some of them? What were some of the names?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:28:26] Do I have to name?

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:28:27] No, you don't have to think about it. There was a group. And they were Christian. Singing gospel music.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:28:35] Yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:28:35] OK, all right, trying see what we're talking about here. And y'all -- did y'all sing in nightclubs or only in churches?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:28:40] We sang in churches. Everywhere anybody would listen to it. [Even,] we'd sang in your living room. We just loved to sing.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:28:51] How many was it?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:28:53] It started off about seven of us and it winded up just four. When we got here it was only four of us. And then we picked up the fifth man after we got here.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:29:05] And what did you sing? Lead? Base?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:29:08] I was the background man. I sang tenet.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:29:13] Sang tenet, in the background.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:29:14] In the background. I don't know what song -- every song, yet. I can't sing it.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:29:20] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:29:21] All I can do is roll in the background.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:29:26] So, so, so, you met God when you were ten and you're doing these things in church, in Louisiana, and then you go out here and you sang in the choir and in churches. And when did God call you to preach?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:29:44] That would've been -- what, baby?

**Unknown** [00:29:48] 1979.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:29:50] 1979.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:29:52] 1979. Because I met you probably in '82 or '83 and you were Reverend Harris at that time. So, I don't know -- you denied being a preacher.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:30:03] I really didn't want to be called all that.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:30:06] You didn't?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:30:06] No, because I understood that [Reverend, no man], and that was the wrong thing for me. I wanted to be called a brother.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:30:19] A brother?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:30:19] In Christ. But there's a lot of stories to this, you're asking me, now.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:30:26] Well, come on, that's why we're here. We got about another half an hour, or so. So, let's do it.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:30:34] I come about being a preacher -- we was on vacation.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:30:42] Who is we?



**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:30:43] Me and my family.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:30:44] OK, how many children you got now? During that during that time?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:30:49] During that time, about six of them.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:30:50] Six? Six in the family?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:30:51] This one wasn't with us because she went with her mother.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:30:55] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:30:55] So, it was six kids: five boys and one girl. And we were in the northern part of California at [Heralon] and we had a big party on a Saturday night. And a folks in [Heralon] told me that -- "we want to hear you sing a song in the morning at church." But, I was drunk!

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:31:28] When they told you that.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:31:29] This is the truth, I was so drunk you could smell it off me sitting in the church. And the preacher had preached a wonderful message and he was getting ready to dismiss the church. He said, "No, no, no, no, no, no, Reverend! You cannot dismiss now because we've got to have, here, [Sister Hall's] brother sing before we go!" [inaudible].

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:32:05] And that was you.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:32:08] That was me. After I told my wife [inaudible]. [We sitting together] [inaudible] telling me, "You've got to go!" So, I finally got up enough courage to walk out in the hallway. And as I was walking in the hallway, I saw a [bannister] over the church -- a sign. [Fully out of wood] -- holy. And I addressed that before I got to anything else I was going to do. I tried to explain what each letter meant in holy.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:32:52] In the what now?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:32:52] In holy.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:32:53] Holy. OK. Holy, OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:32:56] And I looked at the first -- the first letter had my name! Harris. And, man, I want to talk about this thing. So, I talked about that and turn around and address the pastor, preacher, after he preached. And I told him, I said, "I think that you did a wonderful, a wonderful job today." Because I wasn't going to church,

so anytime I would, the preaching was great. So I told him how I thought that his message was. And before I could get to the song that I'm going to sing -- I didn't know anything, anyhow, so it really didn't matter what I said. So, he said to the church that -- he said to me, telling the church, and I'll tell him I was a sinner. And you asked a sinner to get up on a Sunday morning, in the church, to bring, to sing a song for you, when the man of God had preached a message that I thought was best I had ever heard. Anyhow --

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:34:06] [You sad about it?]

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:34:08] Yeah.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:34:12] And then what?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:34:14] And, so I said. And a sinner being asked to sing a song. I almost said I'm drunk, but I didn't say that. So I struck out on the little song that I had heard them sing. And I sung about [inaudible] and I went to my seat and sat down. "Have I given anything today?" [Singing]

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:34:49] That's what you sang?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:34:49] That's what I was singing. "If I have given, anything today."

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:35:09] And I sat down, didn't know the rest of the song.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:35:15] So, what happened now?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:35:16] Well, after that, they was calling me Reverend. I didn't understand that. How I went from a drunk one day to a --?

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:35:29] To a Reverend.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:35:31] So, we was heading from there to Illinois. That's where --

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:35:44] This is the singing group?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:35:44] No, this is our vacation. Me and my family.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:35:49] Oh, OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:35:50] And we went from there to Champaign Urbana Illinois. And when I got there, we were getting ready to go out. And all the ladies telling my wife: "you can't go out with this preacher!" And she said -- she laughs, says "[inaudible] [in the whole city. You're no preacher.]" But, anyhow, that's how it started.

And, then, in the action of this -- this is when I promised God that I would change my life if he allowed me to go on to Illinois and get back home. That I would change and I'd get on board in the church with him when I got back home. I promised God that. And I did.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:36:51] You did? So, when were you born? How old are you?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:36:58] Right now?

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:36:58] Right now.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:36:59] Eighty-six.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:37:00] Eight-six, so I can figure the rest out. All right. So, how old were you then? When that experience took place?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:37:11] How old I was. I was 50?

**Unknown** [00:37:12] That was in what? '76? Or, '79?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:37:18] Yeah, around there.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:37:17] Around '79.

**Unknown** [00:37:22] 1979.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:37:22] Yeah. How would I have been then? [inaudible].

**Unknown** [00:37:23] Well, '28, '79. What fifty?

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:37:27] Fifty something.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:37:27] [inaudible]

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:37:30] So, you had developed and learned a lot of different things before you came to God.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:37:39] Yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:37:40] Completely, as a preacher and serving God?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:37:43] Yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:37:43] So, how have the things that you did helped you in your life then, and even now?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:37:52] Well, it helped me to balance out the rest of my life because -- I have to go back and mention her.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:38:01] Lisa?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:38:01] Lisa.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:38:03] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:38:03] My oldest daughter.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:38:04] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:38:06] And her two brothers.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:38:06] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:38:08] And her mother. Which we could not get along. At all.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:38:15] The mother? Not the children. So --

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:38:18] The mother.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:38:18] You and the mother?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:38:20] We just couldn't get along.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:38:22] Couldn't get along.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:38:22] At all.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:38:23] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:38:24] We just fighting like cats and dogs. Everyday!

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:38:24] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:38:29] I would -- I would walk out the house and go to rehearsal -- practice. And if I went back when she thought I was going to come back. She used to [have my clothes] in the bathtub, out on the front porch or behind the door. And so she simply got so that she would not open the door. She put the night latch -- the night latch on. So my oldest son, by her, Red. He said, "Dad," he said, "when you come home, mom do not want to open the door, so just come down." [inaudible] I get up, and open the door for him. He was a smart little boy, too. So, that's how it happened. And it got so bad that I said this -- I got to get out of this.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:39:24] Separate.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:39:25] But I hated to leave my children. It was hard for me to leave the three of them. Because those three children was part of my whole understanding about children. That other boy that I had in Louisiana, we didn't make it two years, but, anyhow.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:39:52] So. So, how did you feel, though? When it finally came about that you have to do this? You're out of here. How did what you feel was? Not what happened. But, how did you feel?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:40:04] I felt like it was something that I had to do because I could see myself about to get in some serious trouble. And this is how I understand the guidance of God, in your time. He will keep you from doing stupid and silly stuff. And, so, I was going to -- [I was going to kill my mother.] At least it's what I had my mind. But she stopped me from doing what I had all my life to do. And I said, "OK, Lord I'm listening." So, I got out of the marriage.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:40:50] And you were in California then?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:40:54] Yeah, San Bernardino.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:40:54] San Bernardino. OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:40:54] Yeah.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:40:59] And you were talking earlier about doing some -- building some houses.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:41:05] Oh, yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:41:07] You started doing that when?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:41:11] In the early '50s. Along, about, '55, '56.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:41:17] And you were in California when that's going on. How did you learn that?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:41:25] If I saw a man do anything, I could do it the next day. Because I had that kind of God-given talent. And I depended on the leadership of Jesus Christ in my life. And he put me in the right position to do a lot of good things for a lot of people in San Bernardino.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:41:55] So did you build a house from scratch or did you re--

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:41:58] We built it from the ground up.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:42:01] And who are some of the people that helped you do that? Do I know them? Are there names?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:42:06] No, because -- because uh. well, you might know one of them. Willie Brown?

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:42:14] Yeah.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:42:15] You knew Willie Brown?

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:42:16] Mmhm.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:42:16] He was one of them. You know, Spoon, his brother, Eddie?

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:42:22] No, I don't remember him. My wife probably will. She knew a lot of people before I came. So, they worked with you, too.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:42:32] Yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:42:32] So, where do you get the money for -- for the material to start the project?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:42:38] I -- they call it ["Own Your Lot Bill."] And, so, I was smart enough that I didn't have money, the know-how, to go and get the money. So I knew a couple of folks that was in the business. And, so, I went and talked to them and they said, "yeah," and that was called [renting] construction and the construction build houses throughout the San Bernardino area. Now, in fact, one of them is up in -- up in Northern California, now. I guess he's still living there, I don't know. But anyway, they took it over and they gave me a job in their company and allowed me to do things that --

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:43:30] So, could you read blueprints?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:43:33] Huh?

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:43:34] Could you read blueprints?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:43:35] Oh, of course.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:43:35] You learned?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:43:38] Yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:43:40] So, if I understand correctly, you learned a lot of things by watching someone else do it. And you put it in your mind. You had questions, you would ask somebody else to explain it. Then, once you've got it down, you'd begin to do it.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:43:56] I still ask questions.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:43:58] And you're still learning?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:44:01] Yes.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:44:01] What you -- what you learning now?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:44:03] Well, you don't want me tell you what I'm learning, now. But, since --

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:44:13] I asked you.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:44:14] I will tell you that I'm learning how to be a man of old age. Who God has blessed to be eighty-six years old. I'm learning how to deal with the problem that -- that presents to you.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:44:32] An old man.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:44:34] Yes. And -- I'm stuck with my wife. She told me, she said, "I'm tired of talking to you about taking medicine." I just didn't like it, I didn't believe in it. So --

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:44:54] [inaudible] You're so much like me. Go ahead, though, tell me.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:44:57] So. And, she said, "you don't have to be hurting the way you're hurting, if you would just take something for the pain." So, I got to hurting so bad one day, last week, and I said "honey." And she said, "yes." "I oughtta wish you'd go to the store and get me some of these. I had looked at it on television. What do you these do?" So, she went and got me some of these. And thank God I'm able to walk to this chair and sit down at this table in front of you and speak to you about it.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:45:41] So, who are some of your biggest influence -- influences, or influence, in your life? Who influenced you? Besides God and Jesus Christ, that you mentioned. Humans, people?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:45:56] Reverend MacDonald. And the old pastor before, Fred Williams, at Temple Baptist. His name was Reverend -- what was his name? [inaudible].

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:46:11] Reverend Short.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:46:11] From them I learned -- from him I learned a lot because I would sit down and talk with him. About anything. He gave me that leeway. Anything that I wanted to talk about, with him I could talk about it. So, I got on the question with him about doing something without knowing it. And what state of mind that you would like to be in if you did that. And mine was being drunk. And he said, "no, son. No. You would never do anything drunk. But be drunk."

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:46:57] That's what he tells you.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:47:06] [inaudible] In my life, with Reverend MacDonald. He was only [inaudible] [ninety percent of] [inaudible] I learned a lot from him.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:47:20] What's one of the things he taught you?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:47:24] He taught me how to read. And how to pronounce words in the Bible the best I could. And he always told me, "son," he said, "never allow yourself to get in the position that you won't be able to do." This is his words to me, and I thanked him for it. It's the way I am today.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:47:48] Will you give that advice to young people today?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:47:51] Of, course, I would.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:47:53] Be able -- say it again, then, so I can make sure I got it right.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:47:56] He told me not to ever allow myself to get in a position that I couldn't have, or do anything, about. In fact, if -- if I was at church and a preacher asked me to get up and read a certain scripture, if I knew that I couldn't read that scripture, don't do it.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:48:21] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:48:21] It was important. You don't need to let everybody know how dumb you are.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:48:28] Well, [inaudible] I'm going to correct you. When you use the "dumb" word. It's not the word at all, from what I am seeing. And I can't let this tape take that word and let people know. Because you know that it's not true with you. So, I'm trying to see a better word that you could use.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:48:53] Well, it was -- the better word to use in my mind for that would be "misunderstood."

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:49:02] Right. Something you don't understand.



**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:49:05] Right.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:49:06] Right. And we all have things that we don't quite understand.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:49:10] And he told me that always remember that every man today who has a Master's degree once was the same as you. He had to learn this coming up [inaudible]. That's why I am, and that's a man.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:49:39] So, do you feel that certain people are better than you?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:49:43] I don't feel no one is better than me. I'm the greatest gift God ever put out here.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:49:47] And that's -- and that's a key. And the reason that I'm asking you this, I'm interviewing people from the World War Two generation. That's what I call them. You know, they've got good memories of '42, '43, you know, during the war. And I haven't found any who didn't believe in things like you. And I'm wondering where that grew -- got it from. And, then, how does some of our young people lose it?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:50:26] Well --

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:50:27] And don't have what you're telling me you have.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:50:29] OK.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:50:31] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:50:32] Practice makes perfect. Practice makes you better. If you practice a thing, whatever the thing is, you will learn more about it, and greater of it. That's what practice does, and that's what I did. I practiced.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:50:54] Yeah, but I'm talking about -- how did you know your worth and your value?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:50:58] Practice.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:50:59] Tell me how, because I don't quite understand it, what you mean.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:51:04] When you come home at night, your work does not stop. You come home at night and stuff you didn't understand -- that day when you were there, you go back over it, to find the question or the answer that you didn't have. That you needed to get.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:51:28] Well, it takes a lot of patience.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:51:30] Yes, I got patience. [inaudible] Ain't no man got more patience. I've got as much patience as Job. So, that's how I learned to do things. And while we are on this same subject about learning about the words back then. This company that I was working for before had a lot of Southern whites on it. And all they knew was the n-word, and they told me that: "you would never be nothing, n-word. Nigger." OK. I can accept that. But I am going to prove to you that I'm better than what you're saying. So, I went on to do the things that -- in the work field, learning how to build a house. First, lay the foundation and prepare the area where you're going to pour the concrete. Get all of that ready. And do the things that you need to do. And, then, set the form for one of the concretes. And, then, from there, you put the house on. I never -- I said, I never saw a man build a house hanging in the sky and put the foundation under. I never saw that. So, the only time I did see something simple to that -- similar to that was when they was moving houses from different places in San Bernardino and building bigger houses in the places where they was moving these from. And when they get then, they jack them way up in the air. So, you had to work under it. To get it fixed, so they could set it back down on the ground. [That's what I learned, that's what I learned.]

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:53:41] So, what would you say to young people today, 2014? Not - this is going in the future, but I want to know, what would you say to young people in the San Bernardino, Inland area today?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:53:55] I would tell them, look, you have to be a man. You have to stand up to the man that God made you to be. You can't cry about things you don't have. You got to get out and get it. Say, I was smart enough to take jobs. I would take your job if I worked with you! That's how smart I was. That's the kind of understanding I had. So, when a man wouldn't give me a job, I would go to his job and get my [tools] just like the poor fellows that was working there. I didn't care how long it took. But, when I got on the -- on the job and on to working, I had them guys cracking up so bad they was falling down, laughing [inaudible].

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:54:47] So, so you use -- you use this -- we got a few more -- a minute. You use this word: man. You know, you would be a "man." What do you mean by that? Because I'm not sure I understand that word, as you said it. What's a "man"?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:55:14] Well. God issued some things in every man from the time of Adam until now. And every man has the same quality in him that God put in the first man. And, somehow, the quality never took an affect on some folks, but me, I matched the quality.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:55:47] And that's what? What is that? Tell me what that is.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:55:50] Quality is something inside that you don't see, but you have it in you. And some folks never know that they have quality. So, the quality

that God put in my father, and mother put in me, I'm putting that same quality in my sons and daughters. And they -- they are smart.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:56:16] I know that's right.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:56:16] Really.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:56:16] OK, before we -- Lisa, did you have any questions you would like to ask your father for the tape? That may be good for the project, [that I miss.]

**Lisa** [00:56:36] Let's see, Dad, if you could say just a few things to your great-grandchildren, to little Aiden that has just been born. What is that you would want for that generation to know?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:56:53] I would want them to know: to do all you can to get the greatest education that you can because today education is [inaudible]. No education? You don't [grow] -- you don't eat. You starve to death if someone don't give you something. So, that would be my statement to my young children. Learn the curriculum in the school. And, then, take the curriculum from the school and put it in you. And, then, go do what you need to do.

**Lisa** [00:57:32] OK.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:57:33] Well, I need to follow up on that question, because the great grandchildren are going to look at this and they say, "well, you know, Papa, you didn't have it. The education that you're telling us to get. Why are you telling us to go? Why can't we be like you?"

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:57:49] You can't, because at that time, I was on the edge of slavery.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:57:54] OK?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:57:56] And my children today are not there.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:57:59] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:57:59] We have moved on and -- and of, course, we still --

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:58:07] [It still affected some.]

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:58:08] Of, course.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:58:09] So. But, but -- you know -- you don't think the generation now, or the future, two generations from now, will be able to function the way that you did without the education that they need today. You said they can't.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:58:27] They can't.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:58:28] OK.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:58:28] And one last thing that I want to say on this subject that you have brought forth. My great-grandson -- great-great-grandson that was born today. When he become twenty years old, an automobile will be costing -- just a plain automobile -- will be costing more than hundred thousand dollars. That's how they work.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:58:57] What did they cost when you first remember?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:59:00] When I first remember a car?

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:59:01] Having one.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:59:01] A brand new car you could buy for less than 2,500 dollars. T-Model, Ford. She had Oldsmobile, Chrysler.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:59:18] And the house? How much did it cost for a house when you first remember?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:59:23] When I first remember is when I bought my first house, where Lisa was raised up in there, on [Pico]. That cost eight thousand dollars.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:59:36] How many rooms did it have?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [00:59:39] Two. It had two bedrooms, a living room and a dining room and kitchen. And one bath.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [00:59:46] And one bath. So things -- the things. The prices, were different. The circumstances are different. And, so, the kids have to get an education to follow the latest. What? Tell me what I understand [inaudible].

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [01:00:04] You understand it right. Because this is what I'm always trying to advocate. She taught me a lot. Because she was able to do the things that the boys could not do. Because the boys would go out and make mistakes and get themselves in a position to where they have family. School was out. Because I learned that you cannot go to school and learn working in a construction field. You don't have that kind of time.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [01:00:40] Mmhm.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [01:00:40] So, this is what I would say to anybody. And I tell the girls -- the girls are smart, but they should take time to bring the men up. The men don't understand certain things about the curriculum, whatever the lesson is. They should be able to teach you something, help em. But there's some of us are stubborn. We don't want, like me.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [01:01:08] You don't want to take that -- I'll leave.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [01:01:11] I'm not going to let her tease me! [inaudible]

**Ratibu Jacocks** [01:01:15] So, where did that come from?

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [01:01:20] Blessings of God!

**Ratibu Jacocks** [01:01:21] Not -- the stubbornness.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [01:01:24] The stubbornness comes from me in the country and having to do things as a little child that I didn't have time to be a child. I had to be grown up. Had to deal with all of the insensitive things that the whites was doing to us. And still do the work. And then try to get the money from it. So, I managed it pretty good.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [01:01:54] I think so, too. I just wanted to tell you, Reverend Clarence Harris --

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [01:02:00] No, Brother Clarence.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [01:02:02] Brother Clarence Harris. That's better for me, too. How much I really appreciate this interview today. I told you before, but now I can go and listen to it all the time without bothering you. But I may have something else that I may want to ask you. I thought I'd look at it again and [inaudible]. And we all review it, so if we do, I wanted to leave the invitation open to come back and talk to you again.

**Reverend Clarence Harris** [01:02:29] Thank you.

**Ratibu Jacocks** [01:02:30] All right, thanks again.

**End of Interview:**  
[01:02:33]