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Bridges that Carried Us Over Project

Interview Summary

Interviewee:

Pastor Chuck Singleton

Interviewer:

Jennifer Tilton

Interview Date:

April 15, 2022

Interview Location:

Loveland Church, North Fontana

Interview Summary completed by:

Kayla Edmonds, 2022.

Joel Zamora, 2022.

Caroline Blanchard, 2024.

Description:

Pastor Chuck Singleton was born in Joliet, Illinois. He accredits his pastorship at First Baptist Church of North Fontana as the reason for his migration to Fontana. He shares some racist narratives present in Fontana during the 1970s. He highlights early community leaders and their fight for equality: Jessie Turner, Ted Davis, and Charlie Redd. Pastor Singleton shares how Fontana schools pushed for Black History's inclusion within the school curriculum, opportunities for teachers of color, and opportunities for disadvantaged students. Pastor Singleton narrates the history and stories of Loveland Church. He further describes the vital role community organizers, Frances Grice and Valerie Pope Ludlum, played in the church and the local community. He sets forth how the I-15 Freeway impacted San Bernardino and Fontana's Tract homes which were located near Kaiser Steel Mill. During its original development this area held a vibrant Black community. Pastor Singleton explains the effect how the death of George Floyd and the emergence of The Black Lives Matter Movement had on himself, while recognizing the heavier focus on social justice and structural issues in racism.

Subject Topic:

- Inland Empire (Calif.)
- North Fontana
- Racism
- Segregation
- Housing
- Civil Rights
- Social participation

- Frances Grice
- Valerie Pope Ludlum.

Spatial Coverage:

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
Bethel A.M.E. Church	16262 Baseline Ave, Fontana, CA 92336
The Tract	North Fontana
Community Baptist Church	15854 Sierra Lakes Pkwy, Fontana, CA 92336
Kaiser Hospital	9961 Sierra Ave., Fontana, CA 92335
Christian Methodist Episcopal Church	Fontana, CA
Loveland Church	17977 Merrill Ave, Fontana, CA 92335
Mother McClellan Ranch	Near Northern Fontana
Cascade Sunrise Senior Citizen Housing Complex	7222 Sierra, Ave in Fontana, CA 92336

Temporal Coverage:

1960s- Late 1970s

Key Events:

- Bombing in Fontana, 1946
- Black Lives Matter Protests

Key Organizations:

- Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
- Allen Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.)
- Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (Fontana)
- Loveland Church
- Kaiser Steel
- Kaiser Hospital
- Campus Crusades for Christ
- Operation Second Chance
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Digital Video	00:00:43 – 00:05:13	Introductions, Pastor Singleton’s migration, and early racist reputations of Fontana
Digital Video	00:05:13 – 00:09:51	Description of the Tract and Fontana appearance in the 70s.
Digital Video	00:09:51 – 00:16:56	The influence of Mother McClean, Ted Davis, Jessie Turner, Charles Redd and Ruth Redd.
Digital Video	00:16:56 – 00:19:52	How the San Bernardino School District reached out across the country for more diverse faculty/educators, and created programs for disadvantaged students.
Digital Video	00:19:52 – 00:23:59	The origins of Loveland Church
Digital Video	00:23:59 – 00:32:25	Short Family bombing, the community’s response, and inspirations for resilience.
Digital Video	00:36:36 – 00:52:30	Vital activism and battles of Frances Grice and Valerie Pope Ludlum.
Digital Video	00:52:30 – 01:01:27	The negative impacts of 1-15 Freeway Exits on the North Fontana’s Tract.
Digital Video	01:01:27 – 01:10:40	Opportunities at Kaiser Steel and Kaiser Hospital and racial boundaries in Fontana.
Digital Video	01:10:40 – 01:19:58	Unification of the oppressed voices, discusses the church’s narrow mindedness on women, and Loveland Church name change.
Digital Video	01:19:58 – 01:21:23	George Floyd protests and Black Lives Matter
Digital Video	01:28:44 – 01:32:02	Discusses critical race and theory and Ruby Bridges’ school ordeals

Related Materials:

Additional oral history interviews are available from the Wilmer Amina Carter Foundation's "Bridges that Carries Us Over Project" on CSUSB ScholarWorks, <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/bridges/>.

Full interview transcript can be found below.

Interview Transcript

Start of Interview:

[00:00:00]

Jennifer Tilton [00:00:01] I think we are live, but I will just double check to make sure the machine. Yep. We are good to go. Great. So we're here today interviewing Pastor Chuck Singleton for the Bridges that Carried Us Over Archive where it's April 15th, 2022, at Loveland Church in Fontana.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:00:22] Welcome.

Jennifer Tilton [00:00:22] Yeah, thank you so much for having us today. Usually we have people spell their whole first name, so we get it all right. So maybe you can just first do that for us.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:00:32] C. H U. C. K. Is of course my nickname, but everybody knows me as Chuck, so we'll go with that one.

Jennifer Tilton [00:00:38] Okay, great. And Singleton is just S. I. N. G. L. E. T. O. N.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:00:42] That's correct.

Jennifer Tilton [00:00:43] All right. So we're here to have you help us tell a little bit of the story of North Fontana and this historic church, but also to have you share some of your own experiences and wisdom growing up in this community. So before we get here to North Fontana, why don't you tell us a little bit about where you were born and grew up?

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:01:00] Well, I was born in Louisiana.

Jennifer Tilton [00:01:03] All right.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:01:04] I grew up in the Chicago area, interestingly enough, in a community just on the south end of Chicago called Joliet. Interestingly enough, where our school mascot was the steel man. And, of course, Fontana. The mascot is the Steelers. Of course, we had a steel plant even as Fontana had one. Our newspaper was the Herald News. And Fontana's, when I got here, found out was the Herald News. So, a lot in common with Fontana.

Jennifer Tilton [00:01:47] Yeah. How did you end up coming out here? So what brought you out here to this church and to this community?

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:01:54] I had two really great friends. I was a minister from about 11 years old. And I had two older friends who... And we were all affiliated with Campus Crusade for Christ, whose headquarters is at Arrowhead Springs in San Bernardino, was at Arrowhead Springs in San Bernardino. And they had told me in some of our interfaces and various events as we traveled all over the world. And Campus Crusade invited, or asked, me to come after our time in Dallas, where we put together this big conference in the Cotton

Bowl. Campus Crusade, said, "We want you to go to our headquarters in San Bernardino." Well, these two guys says, "Well, if they're transferring you to San Bernardino, we want you to go to this church." And so I started attending this church when I wasn't traveling. My main job was traveling. And I started attending what was First Baptist Church of North Fontana. Loved it. Loved it. Was in an army barracks, a relatively small church, but loving, you know? Just plenty of hugs and a lot of warm and wonderful people, many of whom you've named since we've had our conversation beforehand. And so when I left Campus Crusade for Christ, this church, their pastor had left. They asked if I'd be the pastor, and I said, "That's not me. That's not my thing. I don't want to be a pastor." And so fellow by the name of David King said, "Look, why don't you pray about it and have you prayed about it?" And well no. I hadn't prayed 'cause I had my mind made up, but I did. And I felt that God told me to to come. And I did. I said, "I'll come for six months." And so my six months isn't up yet. Thirty some years later.

Jennifer Tilton [00:04:03] So what year was it that you first started attending church here?

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:04:06] Well, I started attending. There's a good question. I need help now. And that one, I think it probably it was in the seventies, though, for sure. Maybe the late seventies and. Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:04:21] Yeah.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:04:22] Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:04:23] So take us back to the late seventies when you were first coming to this community of North Fontana. What was it like back then? How would you describe the community and some of the people you remember from those early days?

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:04:35] One of the first things I would say is its reputation, which wasn't good. It was known for two things and really, you could merge those into one. It was known on the one hand as the birthplace of the Hells Angels, and they aren't very diverse, in their thinking. And then second thing is known for it was headquarters for one of the branches of the Ku Klux Klan. So you can merge them together and say racism.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:05:13] So Fontana was known by most people in the Black community, and really not just Black community in general, many people knew it as such. Of course, it had the distinction of the steel mill, Kaiser Steel, which drew people from all over. Most people if you were Black, you moved to San Bernardino or another area to live. Until some entrepreneurs came up, with what was a pretty good idea, to build some tract homes. And they built these tract homes in North Fontana. And it was henceforth and forevermore known as the Tract. So people still know it as the Tract. It's where some of those people we've been talking about a moment ago lived. And it was the Black community and a lot of fun, a lot of barbecues, a lot of backyard picnics and a lot of events took place in the tract. It was very folksy, very colorful area. And to a certain degree, still is. But that's what. My impression when I first came to Fontana was.

Jennifer Tilton [00:06:30] Yeah. Yeah. So tell me more about what the Tract was like. I mean, back in the day, way before you moved, I think there was some farming up there.

Yeah. But by the seventies, was that mostly gone? And it was just kind of suburban homes up there or what was it like?

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:06:45] No, no, no. First of all, there was that small farming. More. By quite a few people. I want to say almost everybody had a backyard garden. But in addition to that, the tract was without keeping in mind, without the 210 freeway or 15 freeway, without those freeways, it was vineyards and chicken ranches. So there were a lot of chickens and the biggest flies that you ever saw on your life. And so with the flies and and with the vineyards, that was what Fontana geographically, or at least in terms of the way it looked, that's what you saw when you came to Fontana. All of these stoplights and even stop signs weren't there.

Jennifer Tilton [00:07:36] Right.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:07:36] They weren't there. And I still remember once coming in the fog through Baseline and Sierra. And I thought I saw some lights coming from the other direction. And just in case I stopped. There was no stop sign and no stoplight, but I stopped. And the other car who had a stop sign just came barreling through. And I kind of, I could look inside and I saw the guy. I could tell he was not even aware that I was there. That was the kind of thing that was there at that time. So if you can imagine Baseline and Sierra. Where our housing, our senior housing complexes are churches, senior housing complex. If you can imagine that without stop lights that gives a pretty, that's one of the busiest corners now in the north side of Fontana. If you can imagine that without stop signs and stoplights, that is what Fontana was like.

Jennifer Tilton [00:08:40] And vineyards and chicken coops. They're not so many of those anymore either.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:08:43] Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. And yeah, most all the vineyards are gone. I remember when Mother McClellan, who some people will remember, she was a wonderful member of this church and a wonderful leader in the community. She owned twenty acres in North Fontana, and she came to me and said, Pastor, I think you need to why don't you buy ten of these acres? And when she told me the price. I said, "Oh, mother, you know, I don't. Have that much money." Ten acres. \$10,000. I know. \$10,000. But if you do the math. Man, what an investment that would have been. Had I bought. That ten acres. But as I said, I didn't have the money. So it's relative. But nonetheless, it would have been a great investment that just, again, shows how tremendously things have changed. And now you could even buy one of those chicken coops. For \$10,000 now.

Jennifer Tilton [00:09:51] Tell me about some of the early members of the church who you remember meeting. So you can tell me a little bit more about Mother McClellan, but some of the other early leaders that. You got to know early on who probably aren't with us anymore.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:10:03] Yeah, there were some that were tremendous leaders. And, you know, one of the things, too. And you. Dealing with, is it correct to say contemporary history and kind of putting things together? One of the important things. For anyone. Who respects the times that they live in, I mean, respect the times that you live in later. I mean, who would have thought that? Oh, Jessie Turner. I mean, that that complex named after her here in North Fontana, a marvelous context, surrounded by half million dollar and probably a

few million dollar homes right next to a freeway. Beautiful, complex. People get married there. People have their other kind of banquets and receptions. They're named after. A woman who was. Very modest, modestly dressed, not fancy, but just kept plugging away, doing what she did. Importance is appreciate your history because history is being made right there next to you. Jesse Turner would be one great example of that. And again, not that we took it for granted, but we. Didn't know that she was and she was going to. Blow up like she has.

Jennifer Tilton [00:11:31] And so tell me a little bit more about what kinds of things she did in the community to kind of build the community.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:11:37] Well, she had I think I could say this and her daughter. Ellen, you may already know of her, and I hope you'll interview her. Ellen lives in our Loveland, Cascade Sunrise Senior Citizens Housing Complex, but she could give you a lot more juicy things and interesting things. But what. Stands out to me is her love for youth. Her concern about the youth, many of whom are now senior citizens. But she cared about youth. She cared about community. She wanted to make sure that they got a fair, square share of opportunities, both educationally, while they were in Fontana High School. At that time, that was the only school. Now, of course, we have Kaiser and Summit and but at that point, the only high school, in fairness, there was it was important. And she was willing. Along with some. Of the heroines in San Bernardino, are working together and sometimes modeling one another, because what had to happen in Fontana often was a mirror of what had already taken place in San Bernardino, at San Bernardino High School, or San Geronimo, or one of the ones there. And then, you know, seeing the need in Fontana, the road was tougher in Fontana because it wasn't so understanding or people weren't so malleable and sympathetic to the need because of the presence of people like the Hells Angels and the Ku Klux Klan, which made Ellen Turner all the more excuse me, Jesse Turner, all the more of a standout that she could take the stand. She did. She had help standing with her. You know, people like Ted Davis. Ted Davis was, I mean, just a real firebrand and head of the NAACP, Fontana branch. And Ted led the charge. He was a bold, vociferous fellow who would said who said it straight, said what he meant and stood with Jessie Turner. I should say. They stood together because the impact they had for the community was because of the teamwork. Nobody had to feel alone in Fontana. And there was that temptation. Because most people. You no doubt know this, most people are sheepish and they'll take it, right? Well, that's just the way it is. Let's just leave it alone. And Jessie Turner was the kind that said, no, we're not going to take that and we don't have to take that. And Ted Davis was right there. With her on that.

Jennifer Tilton [00:14:52] So what were some of and some of these fights may have happened before you moved here and some were still going on when you got here? Yeah. What were some of the fights that. They were really having here in Fontana, in the schools and in the city. What were the kind of struggles they were really pushing for?

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:15:07] I think probably. One of the most notable one. Was in the teaching of of history, black history. And it wasn't so much. A total curriculum. It was. Just mention just. That there be some mention of black leaders and heroes and heroines and the treatment of in the history books, which was, I think, a probably a big deal for Ted Davis. The treatment of the Civil Rights Movement, which was then still very fresh. Plus the acceptance, I'll say, of things like breakfast programs for the disadvantaged children and things that we now take for granted, lunch being provided at schools. And, you know, that's everywhere now. But at that time, it wasn't. The result, of course, impacted grades and impacted attitudes, I

believe I'd have to say. Part of that also was a thing concerning fairness in hiring. You know, whether it be faculty and staff at the high schools, at the junior highs, and I say that with the plural, because then, of course, as a pointed out, now we have more than one high school. But at that point it was just one. So it was a matter of opening up opportunities and recruiting black and brown staff that the consequence of some of that agitation was the school district making a what I think was a bold effort to reach out. So they reached, for example, all the way to West Virginia and brought a fellow by the name of Charles Redd. Everybody call him Charlie Redd and his wife, Ruth, both of whom were educated and qualified schoolteachers. And so they came to Fontana with that in mind. And Charles again was one of those who became a. Very active leader. In the. Community, in addition to being an example as a teacher. So both Charles and. Ruth don't take away from her, but he did most of the active work. So the school district made a concerted effort to. Reach out. And the Redds are. One example of what happened. Another was a lady by the name of Randolph. Alter. Randolph, Katrina Randolph. And she was another who was recruited. And because of the efforts that the Fontana District made, these kind of people, quality people. Came to Fontana as teachers and made a difference. And the. The impetus. The impetus for that recruiting was very much Jesse Turner, along with Ted Davis. I don't want you know, I want to paint an accurate and fair picture for the sake of both of their families. But Ted Davis.

Jennifer Tilton [00:18:47] And really making those demands and pushing. Yes. And finally. Right. Getting them to see that that was.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:18:53] And I'm really glad you put it that way. Making those demands, because now looking back on it, it it seems kind of innocuous. Okay. So Fontana hired some. Black to okay, good, good for them. But it had to be demanded. And that's the thing. I mean, you know, Frederick Douglass. Put it this way, that the oppressor concedes nothing without a demand. You've got to demand some things. And of course, most people would prefer just the solitude, peace. And the passivity of just. Going through. Life, you know, get your Kool-Aid at the end of the day, watch TV and all of that. And what made. Some of these folks so significant is that they refused to just. Sit back and relax and accept things as they were. They made a demand. And the demand and. With some reluctance, with some with some reluctance, the demand was. Met. And the consequence was some of these wonderful people that I've just named.

Jennifer Tilton [00:19:52] Yeah, yeah. Those are great stories I would love to know a little bit more about. Any other of the kind of elders in the community that you got to know and even what you know about the founding of the church itself. Obviously, those are going to be stories they pass down to you. But I'd love you to tell a little bit of those stories of how this church got founded before it became Loveland. Okay. And who were some of those folks who helped found it?

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:20:18] Okay. And I'm hesitant to make it all about Loveland. But there were you mentioned Draymond Crawford. And the reason why he is probably one of the oldest testaments and witnesses to what Fontana is about is because I said to you a moment ago that he goes all the way back to 1949 and you said someone. Goes back that far. And the reason why. He does is because he was a little boy when this church was founded. His mother brought him. So, as he likes to say, he was playing outside in the driveway when the church was founded. And so that's how it started. It actually, as many Baptist churches are. It was a. An intentional split off from another church. So there's a great church in our

community. Community Baptist Church is its name. And Community Baptist was a church. And then. Willis Davis, gentleman by the name of Willis Davis and Jesse Mae Frazier and Jewell Sneed. And I could name a few others. They formed. First Baptist Church of North Fontana. And this the new branch, I'll say. People like to say that if you go to a town, you'll find First Methodist Church, you'll find First Congregational Church, and you'll find first, second, third and Fourth Baptist Church. But so but this church then outgrew. The mother church. And in fact, all the other churches in the community and rose to some significance, whatever differences were healed. And they got over it and everybody became friends again and began to fellowship.

Jennifer Tilton [00:22:45] Do you know what kind of led to the original kind of splitting off or.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:22:49] Well, I like to tell a story about the the church that split, because there was a group that wanted to put the piano on the right side. Of the pulpit, and. Another group, they wanted to put it on the left. And they fought for years and split. And then finally they came back together to discuss it and and they sang what what side of the. Church was it that we wanted now? So, no, I. I couldn't tell you what it was. I know that it was I won't say irrelevant, probably felt very relevant to them. But back in those days, 1949, people were. A lot more partisan. When it came to religion and a lot more, let's say, committed to their rightness. And regardless of what Jesus said. Regardless of what the Bible said. Who had. You know what I think was a unheavenly attitude about earthly things.

Jennifer Tilton [00:23:59] When you first moved here, did anyone tell you stories about the struggles of that early community formation in the forties? And in particular, I kind of wonder there's a very famous case of a bombing of a family who moved into Fontana. Yeah. In 46 for Christmas. '45. And I guess I wonder if that was a story that was passed down in the community or not so much.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:24:25] It was, yeah. That was a story passed down in the community. And I think some of those people who did that kind of thing back in the forties and fifties and sixties, because we go back to Birmingham in the sixties, Bombingham, as we like to say, my father was a friend of Dr. King. I marched as a little boy with them. And so when I came to the community here, I heard the tales. I heard the stories. And saw it as a frightening opportunity to engage a community to get something done. Found a lot of reticence. Most people didn't want to do anything about it. But what was a real motivation for me was the loud threats of the Klan, the Hells Angels, basically, you know, they did their thing. But. But the Klan, you know, the papers, both the Herald News, which is the Fontana paper and the Sun, and sometimes the L.A. Times would cover what Mr. Metzger, who was the leader of the Klan at the time, you know, he could sneeze and they would cover it. And for us, it was not going to threaten us. It was not going to stop us. When we invited Martin Luther King, the third, to be our speaker at a Martin Luther King Day. There were threats. And I remember one of the reporters from The Sun asked me what I thought about threats. And my response was and and remains that a bulldog can whip a skunk, but it's really not worth it. You know, we weren't afraid of them and we weren't going to fight them. I mean, if they'd come, I would, I'd just as soon dial 911 as to carry a gun. And we believed in what we had learned from Martin Luther King and from the civil rights movement and nonviolent social change. So we were committed to that in North Fontana and in the community as a whole. So we saw change take place. Now we operated very much like one community, often with San Bernardino. So we were. Involved in some issues that took place in San Bernardino. One of the. Reasons. Why is

because. Many of our members, like Frances Grice, were probably more involved in Bourdieu San Bernardino. Politics than Fontana, but not at all neglecting what needed to happen in Fontana or Rialto. Or Bloomington. Wherever it might be. And so there was a kind of oneness, a network of people. Which I think still to a certain degree, exist. And there was a kind of a real call. We saw the successes and some of the failures and some of the violence. Across the country and were not willing to be, I'll say, left out of progress. And so here in Fontana and the San Bernardino area, we we fought on to get the progressive things done.

Jennifer Tilton [00:28:28] And what are some of those, you know, in your experience once you became pastor, what are some of the kind of big struggles that you remember sort of participating in in that broader network and and kind of who were who were some of the leaders and organizations who you really remember kind of taking those stand?

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:28:47] Yeah. You know, let me start with the celebrated things which have some significance in terms of rights and progress, like the establishment of the Martin Luther King statue in downtown San Bernardino. You know, beautiful moment. You probably know it was defaced a few times, but that was. A big moment. And it's hard to explain how something like that feels. Of course, now we have in Fontana a similar thing with honoring Dr. King to me as one who knew him, and through my father. Worked or saw or. Marched with him. It, it, it, it has a kind of irony in this fact that most people weren't celebrating him. not even most black people he went to, unless I get off tract, let me say. He went to. The largest conventions of black churches in the world and not one mention of his name. And I know a couple of cases where he was sitting on the front row, not that he was. Coming to be recognized. He was a pastor. So all the other pastors were there and he came and said and not even mentioned. And there. Was in that. Largest group. There was a. Resistance not only to him as a person, but to the movement. And with. Honor and respect to. The fact that he's passed on, Dr. George Jackson, who was the president of that Baptist group. Literally fought. Verbally criticized the Civil Rights Movement. And Dr. King. Maybe hard to understand that, but if you take that back in its context to what was going on around there, there was enough resistance that it it was a question that had to be answered. Are we for it or against it? And some took the comfortable route of saying, "Okay, we're going to be against it." And that started, however, when he stood up against it. That started another Baptist Convention of churches called the Progressive National Baptist Convention. I've spoken. In fact, I spoke at their convention a few years back. I can't remember, but it was before his father died. And I remember a joyful conversation after I preached standing at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles on the steps and having the opportunity to talk to Martin Luther King. The first about his son and all that. And we just there was nobody else around. So we just. Stood there and talked. He spoke earlier in the day and I spoke in the evening. And I had him all to myself and got a chance to just talk. I think I'm off your question now, but.

Jennifer Tilton [00:32:11] Also by bringing it back to kind of San Bernardino you were talking about first lifting up the some of the more celebrated things like the Martin Luther King statue. But you also maybe wanted to share some of the other fights that are or struggles that were less recognized.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:32:25] Yeah, one of the big issues really not only here but in its in that time was. An accurate portrayal of black history. Or any really, for that matter, any. Portrayal of black history. And it be of course, it was difficult for some people to. Understand. Why that would be important. But but it was just, you know, who were we anywhere? And did

any of us do anything except shuffle and say, yes, sir. And so black history. Was a big a. Big issue. And, you know, to know that a black man invented the stoplight, the shoe lasting. Machine, so we could wear leather shoes or or. Design. The street. Structure in Washington, DC, which is nothing to brag about. But of all of those things and many more, that it just if you feel oppressed. Or beat down and then. Somebody says, guess what? There's some people who look like you who did something and you go, Wow. And when Richard Allen. Who is the founder. One of the founders of the African Methodist Episcopal Church back in 1793, when he was put. Out of a predominately white Methodist church and not literally put out, they built a balcony and said blacks have to worship in the balcony. But when he. And the others, Absalom Jones and some others left, he made a tremendous comment. And it was we must throw off the servile fear that has beset us that we've been trained up to. I mean, that's we've been trained up to serve our fear. And so in Fontana, with the Klan, Hells Angels, there's kind of a there was a kind of servile fear. You wouldn't expect the mayor would be a black woman and that of Fontana that without going out of Warren. That is a major incident. But with her and and some others that have including dream that have risen up, it would be unheard of. In fact, it wouldn't. Might have been tolerated as early as the seventies. It would not have been tolerated by the Klan and Mr. Metzger and probably to a large degree. By the Hells Angels. Right. Right. So that that black history issue, the the proper teaching of it, the recognition of black heroes like. Jesse Turner. And like Martin Luther King. Oh. And really. Ted Davis deserve some, even though we haven't done anything to honor him. But he was a real go getter. Or like. Ruth and. Charles Redd again, folks that we take for granted in in our time, in. That time. But later. You look back and you see how they made a tremendous difference by what they did and by standing and, as you said, demanding.

Jennifer Tilton [00:35:59] Now, you've mentioned a couple of times Francis Grice, who I know was a parishioner here and is an incredibly important figure in the history of this region. I mean, it likes to say that everyone has Frances Grice stories. We wish that she had been able to finish her book and that we had it, but we don't. Yeah. And so, you know, we're asking people to help us remember her and what some of her contributions are and who she was. So maybe you can kind of take us back to when you first remember meeting her and some of the memories you have of her as a member of the church, but also as a leader of the community.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:36:36] I probably have more relevant stuff as a leader of the community. That's not to say she wasn't a good church member. She was. And coming out of Detroit, wanting to cast her dream in California, she and What's, Valerie's last name. They came to San Bernardino. What is probably most significant. She started something after her life changed. She had a change in her life, had a difficult moment when she first came here. Had a difficult time. Very. Valerie Pope Ludlum had to get that in. And they had a difficult time in San Bernardino, but they kept pushing. And when the life change, she had led to her connecting up. With a few large corporations. Starting as a result and with those corporate donors. Operation Second Chance. I can't tell you how many people I met who were business people working in government. Assistance to counsel people, members of the assembly, really, who got their start. At Operation Second Chance. She had a second chance. She had a second chance. She had a second chance. And so she started this to teach computer skills, social skills, work skills, interview. How to how to get a job, what kind of job to get for. And, of course, to raise the level. Of your expectation with Operation Second Chance, she hired a tremendous staff and got some amazing people behind her who I who I still love and remember. And then nationally got some recognition and then some more help on the

national scale with Operation Second Chance. That was a big deal. At the same time, while she was seeing success with that organization, she was also very much involved in wanting to see city government on a fair level in San Bernardino. And so there were a number of I will go into all of them, but there were a number of of. Ordinances. That were unfair. There was the I'll give you this one as an example. When there was the the building of the the freeway, the 10 Freeway, and not a single exit ramp into the west side of San Bernardino, which. You know, for well, for simply that the commercial benefit of having an exit ramp of where you put your gas station. Or your. 7-Eleven or. Or your grocery store, all of those. Things are made different. But she had the keen eye to spot that. Why No Exits is going right through the West Side, but no no exits there, no library there. And she agitated for it, recruited. Me and some others. And we. Protested. We fought. And I remember one one city council meeting where she called me at the very last minute. So I arrived late and to me, she was the hero. But when I walked in, the council was discussing this particular issue, and it was kind of one of those things where the bottom line, they didn't use these words, but where the bottom line was, you guys want too much, too soon. And when I came walking in, she stood up, having been seated on the front row, she stood up and walked up the stairs. just to. Walk back down with me. And I. Was. You know, okay, what do you want me do? And and she gave me my instruction after we sat down. But we did. Get some progress. What she was doing, she told me later, was she was making a point because she'd done the complaining. And when I walked in, it was though I as though I represented the clergy, the ministers of the community, and she wanted them to know her voice had backup. I didn't get that at the moment. So it was that kind of thing. So both the founding of Operation Second Chance in one hand and at the same time agitating for ordinances and rules and and not only locally, but even as far as the California State Assembly and Senate, that there were things there that, well, she instituted wanted to make sure were done. And so challenged, challenged, challenged assembly members and state senators on some of the issues that she felt. And we felt really were important. So quite a lady. Quite a lady.

Jennifer Tilton [00:42:16] Yeah. Now, she you were talking earlier about the ways Martin Luther King was controversial in his time. Yes, she, too, particularly in the early days, was controversial in her time. And so what do you think the what how would you understand some of the pushback she got even in the black community for her leadership? I mean, how do you understand that? And how did she understand that if she talked to you about it?

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:42:43] She definitely did. She definitely. Did. I think there were there were. In terms of how she was publicly perceived, I think there would be. Two things that. People. Used. Against her and I might say unsuccessfully used against her, but it. Hurt. One was her reputation that before she. Got her life together, she had a reputation for not, you know, because back then, if you're going to have children, you got to get married, you know, and that kind of thing. And and there was rumors about her again, that was before the change in her life took place. Even if it weren't, it matters. Not because. You know. Jesus said something like this and John eight let him that is without sin, cast the first stone. So her reputation was one thing. And then she was vociferous, she was vocal. Francis didn't hold back. She would boom. Right at it. Mr. Mayor. Boom. You city council people boom. And and yet with. That being vocal. It was in order she didn't disrupt the meeting, but when her time came she was straight up and. She. At the same time, Jen, she moderated that she moderated that I want to say towards the end. But I have I have to take it back further than that. She over time moderated that. Still is forceful. But maybe a bit more diplomatic in the way she presented herself and presented her concerns and complaints. She was a lot more

diplomatic. Plus, she had some really, really good girls and guys at her side who helped her to moderate it and who took a different approach. A quick example of that. As with the NAACP, there is the, for want of a better word, the marching in NAACP. And and and then there is the legal issue. So there's NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the NAACP that does the marching and agitating all. A lot was done with people like Thurgood Marshall, who, as you know, became a Supreme Court justice as a part of the legal defense fund. A lot of things were done on. The legal side that were not achieved on the marching side, and that. Is important. So Francis learned how to go from one side to the other and probably spent towards the last 15, 20 years of her. Life on the kind of legal defense side. Using the influence and the Authority of law as opposed to. Let's say, the disruptive voice.

Jennifer Tilton [00:46:05] Right. You maybe were already here when they were finishing the school desegregation case in San Bernardino, and I don't know. So that's a good example of sort of, they did protests early on, but also then did a lawsuit. And I wondered if you have any stories about how she experienced those wins, but also that long fight, right? That was a, I don't know, twelve year fight.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:46:34] Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:46:35] Yeah. And I wonder sort of if she ever shared stories of that or what you observed in that kind of school fight in San Bernardino.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:46:44] I could probably go more from the atmosphere of her stories than my own experience, though I was around and her frustration. And again, I point to Valerie Pope Ludlum also, who was one of the leaders. It was amazing, Jen, especially back then! These mommas and they want to be known that they were mommas, these mothers in San Bernardino. And again, it wasn't because of reticence on the part of the men.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:47:23] It was it was they they came along behind them. But these mothers said, no, you're going to do this, my children are going to have a right to certain things. And so and Valerie, again, she was very vociferous. She was a voice, a strong voice in that fight. So these mothers led the charge and we all admired watching them make that charge and achieve what was achieved in San Bernardino. Looking back on it now, of course, is like, okay, you got the right for fair treatment. Yeah. Okay, that makes sense. Everybody should be treated fair. I mean, that makes sense now from a 21st century perspective. But if one could just feel the resistance of that day, then it would to put it in some kind of perspective. It's important that persons feel the resistance of that day, knowing that you are being looked down upon, knowing that that people were saying things about, here they come, what do they want now, you know, and that kind of thing. Knowing that and making a deliberate choice, I'm still coming, I'm coming, nonetheless I'm coming. The things that we see now and it's a part of the the national landscape in this sense, had Fontana fallen down, had San Bernardino fallen down, the nation would be different.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:49:06] Maybe the new US Supreme Court justice to be.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:49:11] Wouldn't have happened if there weren't cities like this one and others across the nation. That made a big difference.

Jennifer Tilton [00:49:22] Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:49:23] Thinking back to the North Fontana story. Well, actually, before we move on from Francis Grace, one more Francis Grace question. I've spent some time talking with Bobby Bivens about her story and her second chance. And he's had a lot of wonderful stories to share. He's talked a little bit about the the struggles at the end with losing that amazing building that they built. And you must have been pastoring her through those struggles. And I wonder sort of what what you remember of that time and what happened from your perspective that that led to that loss and how she dealt with that? Because that seems like that was a real challenge for her.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:50:03] Yeah, well, it was a challenge. It was a big challenge. And I almost mentioned Bobby Bivins a few moments ago when I was talking about the people who stood with her and he was ace. I mean, one of the real pillars of of what she did. And we're still Bobby and I are still friends. Painful. It was a mixed mixture of pains for her during that season because it was not only the loss that and you probably know about her son. There were. And that the consequence was like dominos. A number of things in her personal life were loss of financially. It became a tremendous strain both on the business and on her personally. Our church was able to help some and and.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:51:12] She used her really wise connections, I'll say she used her connections to to survive at first and then a little more to kind of recover and do some other things before she left us here. So it was painful. It was painful. And again, the only real way to appreciate it, Jen, is to put it in the context of her personal experiences at the center. Right. Because if you know, I mean, that hurt. The death experience of a child. And as a pastor over the years that I've been doing it, it just no words. I can't I can't it won't fit inside Webster's or Merriam-Webster dictionary, but that by itself. But then when you add the building and all of that, it is it was just tremendous. And thankfully, the community got it back. Thankfully, but that was years later.

Jennifer Tilton [00:52:30] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Nonetheless, a big loss. I wanted to bring us back to North Fontana for a little bit. Historically, communities like North Fontana often have under-investment from city resources, right? In terms of infrastructure, community, you know, water rights, stuff like that. I wonder if the community here in North Fontana had to organize a lot to kind of get investments from the city and county to kind of upgrade the community. And if that was some of those early fights as well.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:53:06] The only way to put that in perspective is to look at this, that there were some gains. There were a whole lot of losses.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:53:14] There were times when we demanded something or requested something or discussed something, and it just didn't work. And one of the things was something that later did work in Fontana. We asked for a well, I'll put it this way the council system in Fontana back then was general. It was, you know, you got to get the most votes from the whole city. And we ask mainly because, as we've noted, North Fontana was the mostly black community. So we wanted to have aldermen and women. We wanted that. And we just could get nowhere. We not only wanted it, we organized it in such a way to present to them, show, here's how we can do this. And we want to be represented. No, we're not going to do that. Well, you're the majority and you decide what you're going to do. We can make a noise. And we did. But it was looked upon as just some more black protest. Then

later, that's what we have now. So after. After all those years. But here's. Here's what also came with it.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:54:41] What changed? North Fontana? Oh, probably, I'll say permanently was the freeway. When that 15 freeway came running down from Las Vegas, cutting off San Bernardino. And, you know, to a large degree, but some people still. A lot of people still use the 215 and go to the 10. But coming down, that 15 Freeway changed Fontana forever. If we think about it just in terms of Vegas, L.A. or the commercial benefit to the left or right of the freeway, that's one thing.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:55:24] But if we think about it in terms of a mile from the freeway, two miles. The communities, the homes. The value of those homes. And so the consequence of the 15 coming through was those vineyards. And it was still vineyards. When the 15 Freeway was finished. Those vineyards became Duncan Canyon, and they became, you know, all the marvelous homes that are now built in Fontana. And the tract is still there and it has increased in value, but it was kind of a twist on the point.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:56:07] Of gentrification. It was kind of a twist on that because, of course, you wanted to improve the value of of the homes. But would that we could have successfully encouraged the land owners, at the time who owned acre to 20 acre parcels to hey, hold on, hold on and get what you want. So they got some money. They got some from it, but not like Mother McLellan. But she didn't get nearly what that property is worth. Now, you can sell me for \$10,000. It was ten acres. You figured it out. Thousand dollars an acre. And now you know it's 400,000 an acre. So there's a lot of money left on the table all across North Fontana. But the 15 coming through and then later the 210 crossing that. So the whole community has changed.

Jennifer Tilton [00:57:09] And how much of that sort of tract area is still African-American long term homeowners there?

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:57:17] Significant amount. Yeah. Excuse me.

Wonderfully, I'll say a significant amount is still African-American in the tract. Right. And you can you know, you can know where that name came from is attractive homes. There are a lot of tracts around there now, but that one it was just labeled.

Jennifer Tilton [00:57:37] Right.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:57:38] The tract. And there are still numbers of long term members who have lived there for many, many years. Wow. I think of Mother Edwards and she's 90 something years old. Wow. There's several families that still live in the in the tract.

Jennifer Tilton [00:58:08] And they still do. They still own like an acre themselves or not?

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:58:13] Most of them. Not quite L.A. most of them it's, you know, maybe half an acre. So but, you know, it's worth something. I'm sure it's worth a lot. Yeah. And the some of the developers have attempted to help them get out and increase the size of checks to help them get out. But like like I'll say some of them I won't name names because

that's getting too personal. But but for the most part, in the actual tract area, they're saying, no, I don't want to leave. I've been living here for 40 years. I ain't going anywhere. So. Right.

Jennifer Tilton [00:58:55] So there are some developers who wouldn't mind taking some of that land and turning it into big houses.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:58:59] That's right.

Jennifer Tilton [00:59:00] New tract.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:59:01] That's right. And some of them have the the tract stretched. Didn't stretch as far as Sierra. What's the term Sierra Hills or something? Country Club didn't stretch quite that far. Some of the home land ownership did. But so over there is that church I mentioned a moment ago. Community Baptist Church really close to the Sierra.

Jennifer Tilton [00:59:36] Yeah.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:59:36] What is the term? I can't remember. The country club area, the golf club and the Jessie Turner Park Recreation Center. So?

Jennifer Tilton [00:59:49] So landownership kind of extended all the way over to there.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:59:52] That's correct.

Jennifer Tilton [00:59:52] And then where on the east side did it kind of go to?

Pastor Chuck Singleton [00:59:58] To Catawba? Oh, well, I'm giving you that part doesn't mean much. But if you go to where the Home Depot from to the east and there's a strip mall, several strip malls where there's restaurants and it abuts, it comes right up to the edge of it. A lot of the land, though, just west of Catawba is not improved, but it's owned by developers or the city. So. So a lot of that tract. In other words, the edges of the tract have encroached a bit, and it's not as as large as it was, but it's still there.

Jennifer Tilton [01:00:56] And do you know who developed that tract in the beginning? Right. Were these kind of.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:01:01] You know, you raise a question that. Yeah, the mystery of I'd like to know that. I think Draymond maybe Draymond and Stella they don't live there but they might have some matches that question.

Jennifer Tilton [01:01:12] I mean I've seen advertisements in the California Eagle in the forties selling land out here in North Fontana.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:01:18] Hmm.

Jennifer Tilton [01:01:19] So, but I don't know you know, it's hard to tell.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:01:22] You know who exactly. Right. Yeah. And no, I couldn't tell you that. I couldn't tell you that.

Jennifer Tilton [01:01:27] And were there are some historic black businesses in North Fontana that people remember that you even remember from back in the day?

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:01:37] Yes.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:01:39] When you say black businesses, I'll say it this way. Two or three mom and pop grocery stores, one of which is still there on Highland. It was interesting it was the largest I believe. It's been sold, but it's still black owned. There are people in that one. And there were some some mechanic shops, some as they as they say, garage mechanics. So there were a few people like that. But in terms of thriving businesses. No. Most people in the tract worked somewhere else. And brought their.

Jennifer Tilton [01:02:34] Yeah.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:02:35] As we mentioned, Kaiser Steel was a great and big employer at the time and Kaiser Hospital as well. And then the school district, as we've noted, hired a number of people who became a part of the tract community. And probably, interestingly enough, city governments, both Fontana, starting with San Bernardino, were hiring a number of black city government folks who lived in the in the tract community. Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [01:03:12] And do you remember some of so when you first moved here in the late seventies? It's not like those racial boundaries in terms of where folks could buy housing had entirely disappeared. Do you remember? I mean, so how do you feel like did folks push those boundaries in any of those years that you remember sort of pushing for access to other neighborhoods, fair housing sort of stuff in Fontana?

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:03:37] Indeed, yeah, for sure. People push for it. Interesting. One of the probably psychological dynamics of that whole issue of housin', is that most people don't want to push.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:03:51] If you're a minority, you don't want to go where you're not wanted, you want to come home, be relaxed. But I came from the Chicago area and I didn't really think it matter. I wasn't going to take no for an answer, but didn't think it mattered first. So when we began to look for a home, the realtors took us to the tract and other areas. I didn't dislike the tract, but I wanted to see several things.

Jennifer Tilton [01:04:26] Right? What are my choices?

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:04:27] Yeah.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:04:28] And, and I was told, well, you know, if you can imagine someone saying this 21st century, probably not. But I was told, well, this is the black area and yeah, okay, what are the other areas? And the realtor who didn't seem to have any level of bigotry in his tone or attitude almost apologetically said, Well, I can show you a few other things if you I mean, if you insist you. And he showed he showed us a couple of others. We found that really amusing in California.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:05:20] I mean, if had been Mississippi, Louisiana, but in California, you know, Golden State. I, I just couldn't imagine.

Jennifer Tilton [01:05:28] In the seventies.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:05:29] Yeah that you, you telling me. Yeah. It was much like what happened to us in the same period we were looking for a house, visited a friend in San Bernardino. In an area that wasn't on the West Side and when I left his house, it's dusk pulling off and I got stopped.

Policeman pulled me over and I, you know. Hey, cool, I pull over. I pull out my driver's license and as is my habit, I always turn on the dome light and I showed it to him. And you know, everything was seemed to be friendly. And then when we finish and he gives me back my license and there's no, I didn't speed, I wasn't doing anything wrong. And he said to me, you know, I stopped you? And I said, No, no, why? He said, because you're black. And he said, There's no black people live in this neighborhood.

Oh, okay now I'm here I mad, I was cool up to that point. Everything was cool far as I knew. But you're going to tell me straight up you stopped me because I'm black. And so I gave him a little little grief about it. I said, Hey, let me tell you something. At time the whole issue of driving while black and all that had not yet come up. And I explained to him, I just came from a friend's house right down the street. He happens to be black, he has a white wife, him and his wife live right down here. So you're wrong do that. He said, Well. I can do what I want.

I said, okay. And that was it. But I'm thinking about that just in terms of the presumption. So to put on a hat that says I'm going to go to the neighborhood where blacks live. Put on a hat that says, I'm going to accept the fact that this cop can stop me just because I'm black. You know, the the the psychology of oppression is, I think, somewhat difficult for anybody to understand, whether you're black, white, brown, yellow or red. It's difficult to understand the psychology. So I'm supposed to automatically have this in my head that I might be stopped because I'm black or I'm living in this neighborhood because I'm black. But what I loved about Fontana and the opportunity here and the tract is that it was pretty well defined boundaries, and where the fight needed to be was pretty well defined as well. So, okay, we got to fight Frances Valerie Pope Ludlam we got to fight. Ted Davis. All of these team members, we got to fight. Here's where the lines are. Here's what we got to fight.

Jennifer Tilton [01:08:23] Yeah. Yeah.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:08:23] Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [01:08:24] So, yeah, there was a clarity to it.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:08:26] It was a clarity. It was a clarity.

Jennifer Tilton [01:08:28] And also, I mean, in some ways, one thing we've been hearing some people talk about is I don't want to say it as a benefit, but like an outcome of the segregated neighborhood, like North Fontana or the West Side was a kind of cohesiveness of the community.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:08:45] Right.

Jennifer Tilton [01:08:46] That meant that people really were connected to each other. And then, you know, we're connected and all the institutions in the neighborhood to then be able to fight the fight because everyone knew each other.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:08:57] Absolutely.

Jennifer Tilton [01:08:59] And if folks, when folks are more distributed across space as they are now.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:09:04] Yeah, it's much more difficult. Yeah, much more difficult. And, you know, Jen. Bringing that up is significant, because watch this. Now where I came from I grew up South Chicago projects and Ghetto, and I knew the ghetto. One is I mean, there were some areas that were. Worse than where I grew up, whether it was in Chicago or Harlem.

Places I'd seen and been to, California was a bit deceptive because when I first came, first visit to California, my driver would pick me up. I was going there to Arrowhead Springs wanted me to say, pick me up. L.A.X. Want me to see a little bit of L.A. So he drove me through Watts and he drove me through other parts of South Central, and there have been riots and stuff. And my mind was, what are you all writing about? It was California dream.

Jennifer Tilton [01:10:09] The little houses.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:10:11] The little pretty houses, clean yards were manicured. And then when I got to Fontana, it was pretty much the same. People took care of the yards. They had their nice little fences. They had flowers in the yard. All that I wasn't saying that it was equal, and I wasn't saying there's nothing to protest. But it was a big jump from the Projects to seeing roses in the yard in Fontana.

Jennifer Tilton [01:10:39] Right.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:10:40] What unified the oppressed? What brought the voice? The CNN, MSNBC of the community was, and to a certain degree remains the church. And so we could when we got together, what shall we think about housing, fairness, gentrification, Rodney King, what shall we think about it? Not to say that we had to have preachers to tell us, but, we got a perspective. To stimulate our thoughts about whatever was going on. We got a perspective from the churches and and preachers. And so lest I go off on my churchmen speech.

It just is an important thing because in in Fontana, with the two or three great churches I mentioned community and of course this one. Which was at that time First Baptist Church of North Fontana and then Bethel A.M.E. Church. And the whole idea of a church being A.M.E. African Methodist Episcopal and you almost said that sounds so unfriendly. Are you saying you only want African people? It really wasn't started because of it was. Started because they only wanted Africans. It was started because they weren't wanted. And so they left and started a church that particularly appealed to the Africans in 1793 who were right after the revolution, who were disenfranchised and left out of the other churches.

Jennifer Tilton [01:12:23] Is the A.M.E Church, still active here in North Fontana?

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:12:25] Yes. Yes. In fact, Bethel A.M.E Is the A.M.E. Church there on Baseline in Fontana. And but at that time, there was also what's called the C.M.E/ Church, which at the beginning was Colored Methodist Episcopal, but they changed it.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:12:54] Few. Right around it in the seventies, they changed it to Christian Methodist. They kept the C.M.E. but changed it Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. So there and the C.M.E. church is very small, but a good congregation.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:13:13] One of the things with the Methodist, just so you know this for future reference, they try to change their pastors every five years. And so whoever was here.

Jennifer Tilton [01:13:24] I know it's you know, it's the one of the founding pastors of I think Bethel A.M.E.Church was his name was Toussaint A. Patterson. He founded also the church and in, I think Perris and also the church in the Valley Truck Farms.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:13:43] So, you know, these things.

Jennifer Tilton [01:13:44] I do a little bit. We interviewed his daughter, who is 94, was just a couple weeks ago.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:13:50] Oh, wow.

Jennifer Tilton [01:13:51] Yeah, yeah, yeah. But he was a real leader in this whole region.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:13:54] You are doing that. And I need to see this when you finish.

Jennifer Tilton [01:13:58] We're learning. We're learning a lot. Well, great. I guess there's one story we haven't told which I should ask, which is how did this become Loveland instead of First North.

Jennifer Tilton [01:14:14] Right.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:14:14] Baptist Church?

Jennifer Tilton [01:14:15] First North, Fontana.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:14:16] Right.

Jennifer Tilton [01:14:17] Okay. How did that switch happen?

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:14:18] All right. Sure. You know, I suppose the good thing about this is you get to tell the truth. And the bad thing about is you have to tell the truth. The what happened was that back then, as I said, there was a lot more parochialism in churches and there were a couple of things that were changing.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:14:55] One is that we we even to this day base, whatever it means to be a church on the Bible. All right. And most Baptists back then would have said the same thing, except that they had they had some Baptist polity and dogmas that we didn't like. And it was part of the reason why we grew so much.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:15:23] All right.

Jennifer Tilton [01:15:23] You are pushing the boundaries already sort of.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:15:25] We were pushing the boundaries. And I'll give you an example. We believe and this sounds pretty innocuous now, but we believed that that spiritual gifts, could operate in the church. Which meant some things for women as well.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:15:48] And so that was taboo. Women speaking in church, for example. You're sitting here in the, quote on quote, pulpit, and it's a platform and we make that holy and people are nothing. People aren't holy. But this platform is. Big, big desks this ought to be here. And the preacher stands up and thunders from the desk. Well, we were changing on those things. And some of the Baptist didn't like it. Oh, denominational leaders are. And so I was challenged on on that. One of the policy issues or dogmas was if a person joined the church who's already a Christian, but they came from Methodist or Pentecostal. They needed to be re baptized. Okay. I couldn't find it. There's a thing in the Bible. So this thing called this is a thing called alien baptism with it there was also a thing called Alien Communion. That is the Lord's Supper. The wine and the bread. Oh, you're not a Baptist you can't have we couldn't we couldn't countenance it. And so and with the first thing that I mentioned about God operating in the spiritual gifts and women. And now many, many of those brothers would be embarrassed to hear me say this, but to tell you the story, because a few years later, they changed. But at that point, they they put us out.

Jennifer Tilton [01:17:33] Right.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:17:34] All right,so we couldn't be First Baptist Church. So I believe God gave us the name Love Land. And so Love Land, we took a year. We didn't just change overnight, took a year, met with the some of the people that I've just named. We spent a year with them discussing it, I mean, in the Bible studies with the deacons. We spent a whole year and then at the end of the year, we took a vote and we made the change in 1981 to Loveland. And that's what we've been ever since. Now, meanwhile, they kicked me out, but a few years later, I wasn't there. They had a convention and they were looking for a new leader of the district, the Baptist district. It was called Tri County. It was there's four counties in that. But somehow they track your name. Yeah. Old, name. Right. And I was in Chicago. I was teaching at Moody. Moody Bible College.

For six weeks while I was there, they had a convention and they elected a new leader for Tarrant County. His name was Chuck Singleton, so I wasn't even there, but Draymond Crawford was there. He calls me in Chicago and said, Hey, guess who the new moderator is? I said, I don't know who. And he said, you. So anyway. So I got kicked out, got elected head, didn't change. So they changed and we spent time together. We, you know, we I reluctantly took the role and served as moderator and here we are.

Jennifer Tilton [01:19:22] Well, that's a very interesting story.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:19:23] Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [01:19:24] I would ask just the last question that we've been asking people. You were not an elder. Elder, but you have lived through some of these previous eras of struggle. And for my students today who are growing up right now in an era of the Black Lives Matter protests.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:19:43] Mmhmm.

Jennifer Tilton [01:19:44] I think it's interesting for them to hear from a generation that's been through earlier experiences of what it's like for you to live through this moment and what you're kind of thinking and feeling and reflecting on as you think back across time.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:19:58] Yeah. I'm really glad you asked that one. I made a deliberate effort after the George Floyd murder and the massive protests that erupted here locally. Every town across you drive along ten freeway, some that may have two black residents or had protests. Not only here, but, you know, Jerusalem, London, Paris or across the world. And you wouldn't have seen a black face on some of them. And yet they were protesting. Holding signs saying Black Lives Matter. I deliberately participated. Sometimes with other members of the church. But I deliberately because I believe that justice is a god thing. I believe he cares about it. Dr. Cornel West put it this way. He's a personal friend. He put it this way Justice is what love looks like in public. It is essential that. Justice being included in things like the gospel. A white brother who's the head of World Vision international, Richard Stern. He wrote a book called The Hole. Hole.

The hole in Our Gospel because for many years and in my experience as a churchman time I was 11 or 12 or two. Now there's there was a a kind of a separation between what was called the social gospel and the evangelical. And it ought not be an evangelical would look with disdain upon the social and say they don't care about the Bible. They're just trying to get civil rights. And and oftentimes civil rights folks, on the other hand, would say all they care about this. So having the of the no earthly good and what needed to happen and what needs to happen and what we're advocating should happen. Right now, I'm writing a book that deals with justice and the race issue in particular. There. There must be the replacement of that, that there are 317 verses in the Bible that talk about justice, and we treat it as if many people treat it as if it doesn't matter. I was as evangelical as I am now when I had the chance to march with Martin Luther King all committed to God then, Dr. King was as well.

And and there are many people who I heard one lady say, well, you can talk about justice, but don't say social justice, you know, as if that makes a big difference. So that there must be replacing the hole in our gospel. The gospel involves both. So BLM or any other justice issue automatically ought to involve the church. We find a similar reticence today, as there was when Dr. J.H. Jackson ignored Martin Luther King. People think justice doesn't matter to God. That is about as ridiculous and preposterous as anything I could ever imagine.

Jennifer Tilton [01:23:39] Yeah. And how do you feel like you've seen the problem of racism change and not change over the decades that you from when you were a kid to now?

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:23:55] I believe the biggest change, Jen, is this. The biggest change is that people have to examine it. Who thought they never would. And here's what I mean by that. I've been I've preached a series of messages, and we're we broadcast our messages. And I've had friends who've call, written, sent messages, who object to the emphasis on social justice. Who have.]Who just have great objections to the thought that God cares about social justice, some of whom have said things like, well, that's because your father was friend of Dr. King. You grew up in the moment. That's the reason why you're concerned about it. It really is not. I had a period of time when I wasn't concerned, and I regret that. But I did have a period when I wasn't concerned. So the difference now is that there are friends who were friends until the demand increase, began to show up when Barack Obama was elected as president.

So what's your problem with them? Well, you know the Democrats, they this and that and the other. Yeah, but you didn't say that when Clinton was elected and he was a Democrat. So why is it Obama's bother me so much? And what I conclude from that is this it was all right. And you say we're equal. It's okay for us to be equal until it's my turn to lead. And we, I say, are not, black people have never and aren't demanding something undeserved. We've been here from the beginning. The first to die in their revolution. Crispus Attucs.

We know how to work. We. We've been working for 200 years without pay. We. We invented things to make our work and yours easier. Like the cotton gin, the [unclear]machine, the streetlight. Whatever it might be.

So we've been here. We're not demanding something that we don't deserve. And we didn't show up. We were here at the inception. And yet you want to turn and say you're you're demanding something. You want too much, too soon. You got to you got to wait your turn. We're we're not strangers. We're not even immigrants. And so at this point, that attitude has got to be understood. It's not a I will beat you up or I'm going to cause trouble or of a physical violence or something if if you don't get it. But it's that no, no, I demand the respect from you that I give you. And with that, let's let's let's move forward in America. That's that that's the difference. It is at a point now where people have to decide, is it okay if we're equals? All right. You say it is is it okay for me to be the captain among equals? Okay. And some have gone as far.

As to conclude, okay, if you take my philosophies, then you can leave. If you're if you become white, conservative, right wing evangelical. Okay, go ahead. But you better. And what. If I'm not a white wing? Right, white. Wing, white, conservative, evangelical? What if what if I'm not that that's. That's where race is becoming a fine point now. Yeah, well, I think people are beginning to understand it at a level that they didn't understand it before. And if we. Excuse me for.

But if we can just understand that. Oh, yeah, there's structural issues. So what many people want to do is paint a flag critical race theory. And they wave the flag. Critical race theory. Abraham Lincoln emancipated slaves. Critical race theory. Martin Luther King marched critical race theory. And they wave the flag and want to make that the issue. I don't want critical race theory, you know, and that's. Not what you know, this as a as an educator, that's not what critical race theory is. Every time you talk about black history or the history of racism is it's not critical race theory. Critical race theory, as you well know, is a graduate level analysis of the

effects of racism. It's not. Martin Luther King, Abraham Lincoln, per se, but they want to dismiss it as if it doesn't need to be talked about.

Ruby Bridges. Ruby Bridges was five years old when she had to go to school with 12 US marshals. And now someone says, I don't want my kids to have to deal with that. At ten or twelve, this little black girl at five had to live it. And your kid can't learn it?

The contradiction. That in and of itself is a form of racism. It may not be outright Ku Klux Klan bigotry, but it is racism that you don't want to discuss. The experience of Ruby Bridges or my father or my mother, or worse yet, my grandparents, that you don't want us to learn about that in the course. So you, you know, and I'll get on my soapbox. But, but the whole idea of, pull up, pull yourself up by your bootstraps and we'll be all right. Look, look at the immigrants that come from India or somewhere else. God bless them all. But anyone that had the whatever it takes to get out from India and come here is already a leader. He's probably going to do more. As a result of leaving his country or coming here. But to then say that is if blacks aren't going to do anything now, we you wouldn't let us in Wall Street.

I'm not talking to you Jen.

You know. But you wouldn't let us in Wall Street. So we built our own, we built our own Wall Street. The black Wall Street. And it got burned down, all because somebody felt we didn't deserve it. So the reality is. That unless those things are looked upon, unless that kind of history is examined. There's no way to really come to a real sense of justice.

Jennifer Tilton [01:31:43] Well, I think that is a fantastic place to end, honestly. And I thank you so much for sharing both stories of the community and your passion for justice with us today.

Pastor Chuck Singleton [01:31:57] Thank you, Jen. It's a pleasure. Pleasure to be with you.

End of Interview:
[01:32:02]