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Clyde Tyrone Alexander II

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Bridges That Carried Us Over Project

Interview Summary

Interviewee:

Clyde Tyrone Alexander II

Interviewer:

Jennifer Tilton

Interview Date:

Undated

Interview Location:

Unknown

Length:

01:39:56

Interview Summary completed by:

M. Camacho Nuno, 2024

Description:

Jennifer Tilton interviews Clyde Tyrone Alexander II, a man with an extensive history in construction and the community. At the start of the recording, the interviewee talks about family history within military service. He mentions his father was in the Navy and how, during that point in history, much of the Black community was involved in the military field. After briefly mentioning his family being a part of Tulsa's Black Wall Street, the conversation goes more into family history. Particularly, Alexander mentions his mother working in the Norton Air Force Base and that military service had been a bridge for a lot of the Black community but limited spaces made it difficult to enlist. That obstacle led to many Black men learning skills that will help in finding work. In Alexander's case, that meant working in construction. His father and a man by the name of Norm Wilson worked in this field and were even able to break through the racial barriers of construction unions in their time. The interviewee goes over the trials and tribulations of construction, especially having to do piece work, dealing with racism, improving multi-ethnic relations with local communities, and negotiating their work. Alexander talks about low-income housing construction in regards to redeveloping communities and how that caused conflict between planners, builders, and local residents. There was also a payment of giving thirteen houses to the struggling Santa Fe Federal and a local, community driven bank that was short-lived. Then he speaks on the time of the civil rights movement, and how his father had taken him to many protests and events. He further speaks on how the fight for civil rights led to attempts by the local government to put an end to these demonstrations, even going so far as to propose lethal violence as then-mayor Al Ballard had wanted. Many stable businesses had left areas centered around the movement, such as grocery stores, as the support for this kind of cause was never held by the businesses. When speaking about the San Bernardino riots that occurred in 1969, Alexander said that documents about the event are archived in the University of California, Riverside. There is the discussion of Operation Second Chance, which works to raise the educational levels and jobs skills for young people. The topic of Frances Grice also comes up in the discussion. When talking about Grice's relationship with Alexander and how she was ahead of her time with her goal

to move to cleaner energy and use of solar panels. The interview ends with Alexander speaking about something important to him, which is the need to have different levels of investment in projects. Instead of asking for things such as subsidies, he believed that investments like community centers and profit shares would be a better solution.

Subject Topic:

- The Bridges That Carried Us Over Archive Project
- Physical Infrastructure of the West
- Interviewee’s father, Clyde Alexander
- Black Wall Street
- Neighborhoods
- Cooking
- Entrepreneurship
- Military Service
- Unions
- Racism within the Union
- Racist Housing in the City
- Redeveloping Communities
- Civil Rights Infrastructure
- Notable People
- Community Resources

Spatial Coverage:

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
Norton Air Force Base	San Bernardino, CA (Defunct Location)

Temporal Coverage:

N/A

Key Events:

- Small Talk/Previous Discussion
- Knowledge regarding his father and the civil rights infrastructure
- The West side’s infrastructure
- Father was in and out from Oklahoma and California with his family
- Point in history where the Black community was enlisting heavily in the U.S. Army
- Alexander’s father was in the Navy but did not know during which war
- Had family that was in Tulsa, Oklahoma’s Black Wall Street
- Property in the Bluffs and the flooding that caused in part of the area
- Grandmother was known for her veal and cooking as well as an entrepreneur
- Growing up with a large family, most of which had done military service
- Unsure who was the first in his family to settle in San Bernardino and Los Angeles
- His mother worked in the Norton Air Force Base for 36 years
- Women worked in secretarial roles within the Norton Air Force Base
- Men had limited space in military or public service but there were limited numbers so this led to different forms of trade and skills
- Working piece work in construction than hourly rates
- A lot of people who worked in construction had passed from heat and health issues
- Alexander’s dad and Norm Wilson going into a racially-based construction union
- Wilson and Alexander’s father changing how projects are worked on
- Getting bonds in order to keep working

- The union not sending out workers for projects that needed the work
- Opening the work for new areas and for family after years of struggles
- Racism in the union and the need for flexibility with labor and housing change
- Construction workers of diverse, ethnic backgrounds led to a change in the market
- Latino and Black construction workers uniting under the same cause
- Racist housing layout within the City of San Bernardino
- An uncle of the interviewee received a ticket due to going in the freeway's fastlane
- Effects on projects due to financial and substance issues that had many victims
- Planning the city and negotiating for their work
- Not being prepared to work in structures or own companies
- Working with the community to get into investments and promote growth
- 50s through the 70s of not giving enough opportunities to the Black community
- Bank loans in the Inland Empire for the Black Community
- The systemic city underinvestments and racism in redeveloping older communities
- Not enough information to make enough sustainable communities due to racism
- San Bernardino had both racist tensions and a lack of progressive programs
- The "White Flight" that occurred during Alexander's childhood
- Ironically, the Hell Angels helped with the racial tension in the community
- The "Black and Brown" business alliance
- Low Income Housing and the problems with having too much of it
- Fresno as an example of planned community development
- Racism hindered the housing plans for the West Side
- More people Tilton wanted to learn about like Thomas Hughes
- Losing money from trying to help community see different houses
- Settling with Sante Fe Federal with the aid of 13 houses
- The short-lived community bank
- Alexander's earliest memories of the Civil Rights Movements
- More community action led to stable businesses leaving the area
- The lost of support if it was a minority community
- The riots that occurred in the 1969 in San Bernardino
- Bobby Cole started the first CORE chapter in San Bernardino
- Alexander going to many protests and events as a child
- Operation Second Chance and raising the education and skills of Black children
- Memories of Frances Grice and her cleaner energy goals
- Importance of community centers or projects and investments instead of subsidies

Key Organizations:

- The United States Navy
- The United States Air Force
- Golden State Mutual
- Operation Second Chance
- Community Development Center (CDC)

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Digital Video	00:06:54 - 00:08:05	Norton Air Force Base and the roles of non-military skills.

Digital Video	00:20:30 - 00: 21:47	Racism affecting a union and the construction work.
Digital Video	00:48:17 - 00:55:45	The problems that arise from redeveloping a community and how it ties to racism.
Digital Video	01:23:48 - 01:25:25	The riots that occurred in San Bernardino in 1969.
Digital Video	01:31:31 - 01:38:56	Memories of Frances Grice and the importance of community centers and investment.

Related Materials

Additional oral history interviews are available from the Bridges That Carried Us Over Project at CSUSB, <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/bridges/>

Full interview transcript can be found below.

Interview Transcript

Start of Interview:

[00:00:00]

JENNIFER TILTON: For me, always, when I do this, I'm like, my list of things to do, can I remember to do all of them? Because otherwise you get really mad at yourself later. All right. Now everything is recording. I'll check my list. Airplane mode. Yes. Yeah.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: I was looking at -- there was a name mistake. It was [Rosenthal?] not [Rockchop?]. Rosenthal.

JENNIFER TILTON: Oh, on the transcript. Okay. Fantastic.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Transcript. Rosenthal.

JENNIFER TILTON: That's great. I'll fix that. Rosenthal. Fix. Okay. Now, what was the other name that we had?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Rosenthal. It was Rosenthal. Joel Rosenthal is the (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

JENNIFER TILTON: Okay, Joel. Okay, great. Great. okay. So, we'll get started. Well, I want you to first just do one clap for me. That synchronizes the -- that synchronizes the audio and the video.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Oh, got it.

JENNIFER TILTON: And that way we [00:01:00] are good to go. I will just double-check that we are in fact recording. Looks good. And looks good. Perfect. Okay. So welcome back. Today we are here with Clyde Alexander, Clyde Tyrone Alexander II. Is that correct?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Yeah. Yes.

JENNIFER TILTON: But we'll call you Tyrone.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Right.

JENNIFER TILTON: And we're here to do a follow-up interview for the Bridges That Carried Us Over Archive, because you have an enormous amount of knowledge about your father, Clyde Alexander and the community that really built the civil rights infrastructure and the physical infrastructure of the West side. And so, we're hoping to get a little bit more stories, particularly about your dad. So maybe we'll start by just asking some background stories about your dad. Can you tell us a little bit about kind of where he grew up and what you know about kind of his story of how he came to San Bernardino?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Well, my understanding.

JENNIFER TILTON: Yeah.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: So, my grandmother, [00:02:00] (inaudible) lived in Tulsa, Oklahoma. So, I believe he was in and out of Tulsa between California, along with his other relatives. We have [Robert Cole?] or [Richard Cole?], and they kind of started migrating more or less to the West Coast, because at the same time, they also had sisters that were dating gentlemen who lived in the LA area. A matter of fact, one married a professional baseball player. So, they started gaining interest, plus they both were in the Navy. So, this area generally pulled a lot of military presence, particularly that era when black people, their free destination was usually in the military, especially with Air Force bases like George and Nortons and March and Riverside. So, we're all acclimated to that lifestyle.

JENNIFER TILTON: Your dad was in the Navy in World War II, or do you know anything about those stories or after?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Not really. Never got which war. I just know he was in the Navy.

JENNIFER TILTON: Right. [00:03:00]

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: So, it might even been the Korean War, to be

honest with you. Because that would be about his timeframe and most of his friends.

JENNIFER TILTON: And do you know, roughly, do you know when he was born?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: From what I understand, it was like 1926 or in there.

JENNIFER TILTON: Yeah. And did any family stories come down to you about Tulsa?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: The family stories are pretty much around, of course, we were in Tulsa in the Black Wall Street. But more or less even besides that the difference in how land was handled, like, I think I heard a story between my father and Richard and aunt [Artie Fay?] and the [Dantes?] and my grandmother, and they were talking about how Blacks were more down in this area called the Bluffs, kind of slimy rivalry. But they were able to work the water, do what they had to do. The others lived above them in the higher areas and their water consumption was low. But they had these grander, paths and things that going on. [00:04:00] So a drought hit. So, they had to work with these people that they felt wasn't at their level. So rather than to do that, they purchased the land where they were move them up to where they were, but the overuse of the land caused that area to flood out. And they lost pretty much everything they had, but reclaimed the land that they gave to the family. So, these things that we would hear, but we didn't have detail, but we would go back to the properties that we own and it made sense, because you would see, they still had outhouses in the '60s that were probably there from the '20s. So it was, you know?

JENNIFER TILTON: Yeah. Some stories like that. Yeah.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Right. But you can see the motivation. They

each had their -- I think my grandmother had a small business dealing with restaurants. I know she was popular for a veal and some corn and potatoes or something like that. And my dad and then would always, when we drove back there, that would be the destination to eat. [00:05:00] But they always were productive.

JENNIFER TILTON: Yeah. So, she was an entrepreneur pretty early on.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Pretty much, yes.

JENNIFER TILTON: Interesting. And that was that restaurant in Tulsa?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: No. Hers was in Wichita, Kansas. And I'm not sure, but I think that aunt Artie Fay, which would be Rich Cole and Robert Cole's mother would had some type of food business going too. These are the grandparents.

JENNIFER TILTON: Oh yeah. I know it's a long time ago. Yeah.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: You hear the stories, and a lot of them I don't want to talk about because they're funny, but it's like, no, well out you guys like that, not that.

JENNIFER TILTON: That makes sense. So, you're starting to tell me, so how exactly were Richard Cole and Robert Cole related to your dad? So, they're...

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Their mother's my dad's mother sister. So, these, they all grew up together. It's a whole lot of them in different names. So, I'm not sure how everybody, but I know it had a lot to do with military. And then they started working in construction. And then Michael Joe [00:06:00] moved in with my dad. I think Richard moved in afterwards, and then one of my mother's nieces. But each one came and started their own type of business or skill after the military.

JENNIFER TILTON: Right. And who was the first to come here to San Bernard Bernardino? Do you know?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Not sure. I know my grandfather was here. Now, he's a different story. So, I'm sure he was here. But I think my dad came later on because he had the brothers and sisters that were here. I do hear that story.

JENNIFER TILTON: I see.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Because he would've stayed in LA but then he had younger siblings that he was just starting to meet.

JENNIFER TILTON: And they were here. So --

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: They were here. Here in and LA.

JENNIFER TILTON: Here and LA. Right. And then the Cole Brothers kind of came out afterwards?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Yeah. That was the family. Sisters are -- these are the kids that are together. Mothers keep their kids together. So, they were pretty close. Really close.

JENNIFER TILTON: Right. The cousins who come up together.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Right. I mean, they could feud, but you would know it's going to end at a certain point for sure.

JENNIFER TILTON: Yeah. And did your dad -- so, do you know when your dad moved to San Bernardino?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: I just know they bought a house [00:07:00] in 1954, right there on 16th in Medical Center. And every now, and they'll say, well, we lived over there before then. But I do know that they stayed in construction. And my mother worked for 36 years at Norton's Air Force Base.

JENNIFER TILTON: Oh, I didn't know that. What was your mom's name?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Eddie Lee Alexander. She worked, actually, her last assignment was working for the base commander. So, she was there, she retired out of there. So that was the basis for most people either worked at the

military or left the Air Force and worked in city, particularly, women worked in secretarial pools or places like that. I think at that time the majority of African American men were either trying to do civil service post office, kind of came out the military had opportunity for highway patrol, but at that time it was limited numbers. So, the majority of them learned different skills in construction. You had carpenters, people that did plastering [00:08:00] and concrete, drywall. A lot of skills. And a lot of them, once the door opened for us to work in Piece Work, which started with the carpenters, my dad and Joe and Ali, there's so many of them. I can't think of everybody's name. There was some brothers called JB and JD that lived in Banning. So, these Black construction crews who could put out footage, you had the larger group that came from San Bernardino. And we would work the other group out of Banning. And during the summers when they built the country clubs or golf courses in Palm Springs or in that area, they usually do four to 1500 units at a time. So, if you could brave the heat, you make great money, because wasn't nobody else going to go out there and work in that heat. And so instead of them paying us hourly, I think I mentioned this before, we did [00:09:00] Piece Work. And I keep remembering when we were laughing about this. It was, well, these groups from different cities worked for cash and they were able to get 1099s and the whole work while they worked on the projects. But better than that, they worked so hard. You had contractors that they worked for that would begin to complain that they were making more money or as much money as the contractor himself. And what he meant by that, not in terms of the profit, but just sheer -- I projected my houses to be built in six months and we're knocking him out in two and a half months. But he's the subcontractor. So now you got to bid with that general for all this surplus that's left out there. And it's hard for him because he's still got his retention and he's got to leave there. And he paid us not thinking anyone's going to run that.

Those were the roadblocks that [00:10:00] pretty much were our biggest issue.

Money was not, but hard work and healthcare was even huge. Because we lost a lot of people in heat.

JENNIFER TILTON: Ah, right. I imagine. Right. So how did your -- you mentioned in the previous interview that your dad and Norm Wilson managed to break into the construction union.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Right.

JENNIFER TILTON: And how did they do that? Because the construction unions are, I think, fairly famously at that time, pretty racially.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Well, that was it. Back to the foundation of the carpenters, they were excellent carpenters. And in those days, you had the apprentice and the journeymen, and they would put like anything. They would have Black workers, we would struggle more in the apprenticeship even if we were as competitive, if not better. So, you would have as [00:11:00] much knowledge by the time you became a journeyman. So, the two of them decided, look, one of us has to be a contractor because there is no way we're going to be able to have as many of us in this area. I cannot speak for others. But in the San Bernardino area, they were thinking, hey, look, we got a whole bunch of guys that are coming here.

They're disciplined, they're in the military, they have skills because back then we were either going to do construction work or peel potatoes or cook food in the Navy. So, you have these skills, or barbers. So, their thing was, let's just start. You do this, it's hard because now he's a union contractor, and now we have Black men that are qualifying. They're coming out of there, but we're not getting the work. It is not that we weren't being equally paid. If a project came out, projects have timelines. So, you're supposed to, when you fill that project up, you start where you left off and continue [00:12:00] to fill those projects until every man gets through the

cycle. Because you have to get so many hours to earn retirement and healthcare in those days. But they paid you well enough to where those funds came in. So, the way you frustrated -- I'm sorry, I'm uncomfortable. But the way you frustrate a group of people is, okay, look, we're tired of you being upset. Fine, you're in apprenticeship now. You're a journeyman. Now listen, we're in the cycle. You came in the middle of the cycle. Well, if you're managing, you know, you're not doing that to everybody, but you're doing it to us. So that means that as this project progresses, we come in when there's very little work, but enough work to where we can pay our dues and our healthcare and maybe a few bills and hope that another project gets bigger or overwhelming. [00:13:00] So Norman, my father and him, at the same time, these guys were sharp guys, witty, and they were pumping this into the union. At that time, the carpenter union was on Mount Vernon on the west side of San Bernardino. And I mean, you didn't hardly just think about this. We're on the west side of San Bernardino and you hardly seen Black people in the front of this, but they were in the neighborhood and we knew everyone that was in the union. So, we knew when you weren't working. So, you had this going on and we're finding out about projects after they're in process. So, they got together and they started saying, "Well, look, Norm, when you get a project, no matter what we're doing, we'll wait, even if they tell us to come into a late pro-- we'll wait. We'll do your project, [00:14:00] but we are trading." You get the time in and we'll start getting our own companies. So, in the meantime, a relationship between Jerry Van Asdale -- Jerry Van Asdale was someone who was in the military or had a relationship with my father, military, white guy, sharp. He's helped some offices within the San Bernardino infrastructure. And he worked with [Jerry O. Pettis?] quite a bit. So, he was our conduit, or more or less Norm's conduit to getting projects like the -- we didn't know anything about this, where they had large

government projects, but small contractors would get those projects and that'd be one or two houses or repairing government houses, but it was steady work. And a lot of people weren't really doing it because most of us didn't have the education to go through the paperwork process [00:15:00] or, an issue that still goes on today, we don't have the bonding capacities. Now, bonds are bigger now, way bigger now because construction is at another level. But even then, if you had to pay \$400 or \$200 to get a bond capacity, so you could do a \$10,000 or \$15,000 project, it was just hard for us to do that. So, the relationship with Golden State Mutual, which was a Black-owned insurance company on the west side -- God, I think [Mr. Albert Johnson?] was the manager for Golden State Mutual. So, I don't know how they were doing it, but they were able to slide to scale and within their circle, get certain contractors, like my father or even Richard or -- can't think of all the older contractors, but they were able to get small performance bonds again. So, you have an example, [00:16:00] but keep you working. the problem with that is when everyone else grows and takes off and their government projects match their resume, we weren't getting that. We were never going to see that. At some point, and to put it into perspective, we did a project and it took W.R. Buster, who at that time was partner up with the Weissman Family of LA that built the parking structure in downtown San Bernardino, that it was now part of the county building's offices. These gentlemen owned that parking structure. So, they had weight. And so, they would push because, and again, not to jump around, it was W.R. Buster that let us have a 24-housing track in the '70s in Redlands. So, there weren't going to be a lot of -- and it was a union job. And I remember as a kid, we had all of this [00:17:00] work and nobody being out there.

JENNIFER TILTON: What do you mean nobody being out there?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: The union was not sending the carpenters. They

were not doing that. So, we learned from that experience to where every evening the deal was, okay, we'll go work the projects. Because, again, we have a whole family of carpenters, brothers, cousins, everybody, and you're sending our family to somewhere else, but no one's coming to our project. But we know that there's other companies where families are allowed to work with their family. We even within the union structure.

JENNIFER TILTON: And they weren't sending you other workers?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: No.

JENNIFER TILTON: They weren't your family?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: No. They were sending -- let me correct this.

They would send us other workers. They didn't show up all the time, but then even if they showed up, when you are a contractor, you're basically a subcontractor. So, your performance is vital. And if you can't hit that, then [00:18:00] the guy that they know that they've worked for, who's licensed, who's on that list, that campaign, and have him come in and finish your project, that's devastating. So, we would hit that all the time.

JENNIFER TILTON: And do you feel like the construction union was sort of actively undermining?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: It was definitely under -- you're on point. But the problem is we were still union. The union had control of all projects. So, we started doing projects with the union out in Palm Springs and other areas and high-end areas. So, there was so much work in Palm Springs and so much money in Palm Springs. And the union kind of pushed its own self out the way for us, because we would stop showing up, would still pay our dues. There's no sense in us standing in front of the union hall. And we started forming our relationships with the W.R. Busters, the Weissman families, the Rosenthals. And these were guys that

[00:19:00] knew us from working on projects in LA. So now we have these relationships to the point where now we're working on Bob Hope's house. So that transition of punishment created years of when it slowed down, we could go to Palm Springs and work. And it also opened the door for us to bring, because of the amount of work, family members, friends, anyone is willing to come over that morning at four and learn how to do it and can get past that heat, you get to learn a skill. And you're going to make good money. And that transition from control of the union and Piece Work during that period created a lot of extra money for a lot of, not just Black construction workers, but other minorities that work. Right, because now you could work for as much as you want to put in your pocket.

JENNIFER TILTON: I see. Right. A question, I mean, so when you were doing those Piece Work jobs, [00:20:00] were they still union jobs even though you were in --

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: No.

JENNIFER TILTON: No, they weren't.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: No. That's what broke the back of the union.

JENNIFER TILTON: Interesting.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Because now we've got the traction of larger companies and they're looking at the bottom line. So, you got, for the union, they have this structure, we're going to go through the health -- basically collect the bargain. But with us is, look you're getting six dollars per square foot to do the framing work. We'll do this portion of it for three dollars per square foot.

JENNIFER TILTON: So, do you think that the sort of racism in the union helped to break the union, fundamentally?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Absolutely. Absolutely. Because again, when you control something -- and it's evident in this country, when we feel that we have

control, we grip it and we own it. And when change comes, we miss an opportunity. So, the union should have been more flexible because not only did that work, that part [00:21:00] of labor change, but even the way the housing market changed, because a big track, probably when I was a kid, they weren't going out building 40 and 50, a matter of fact, 50 was a big track. Now they're building hundreds at a time. But the technology is different. So, you can't have a bunch of guys out there slinging hammers all day trying to keep up with a hundred houses that you had to manage your projects. So, with it being labor intensive, and now you got a union that's hitting you with a budget that says, okay, if we get past this amount and it's hourly work, but you need to get your timeline, they're going to pick us all day long. Because the difference is now, we're working for -- the more work we get done, the more money we make, the less time we're on this job. For them, that's money making.

JENNIFER TILTON: As far as you know, kind of your extended family and these kind of networks of Black construction workers created the Peace Work system?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Mm-hmm.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Yeah?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Pretty much. Well, we can't [00:22:00] exclusively claim it. Because so many people, like again, the JB, the brothers JB and JD out of Banning, California, those two brothers between them brought 15. And then they had guys like JW and I think the other guys' name, they brought their family. So, any given point, we would have anywhere from 60 to a hundred Black or mixed workers on projects. And that was how we made the difference up and changed the market. Because once these -- we knew if we just pound away, stay on it, do it faster than anybody, we're going to always work. But the developers are

going to follow us because me waking up, waiting on you to do the standard was six months to finish the house. And I got a construction clue that just brought me into being through. Because now, if you look at tracks, they're done in three months. That's the change. But it also brought another set [00:23:00] of change. We had to do things right. Our competitors, once the other group caught up to this Piece Work, they just had to show up and do what they had to do. And they still gave them all their money, but then they would pay us to go behind him and clean it up. So, it was a wawa moment.

JENNIFER TILTON: Yeah. That's a really interesting.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: But when big tracks came, we couldn't get the contract. We ended up working for -- and this is important to think about, we ended up working for a very large lumber company who had enough power to go to any construction site and say, I want them to be your framing contractor. We have one job. Do not mess his lumber up. And what we learned from that was other ethnicities, they didn't care. So, it would be lumber everywhere. And we were getting paid to go clean that up and fix [00:24:00] the mess on the houses. We were like that last group. And so, we had two problems; when we show up in town, we had everyone in that town who hates us because we're replacing a different ethnicity on this site, and under the guise of we are better than you. Which is not what we were trying to do. We were just trying to eat. So, we would have to work all day and stay up all night and watch our tools and everything, just to keep us working. We did it because we had promised a certain group that we will always have work as long as they followed us everywhere. And it worked for years. People that have worked for us have built their own custom homes, both in the Black community, Latino community, Asian community have worked for us, they've built their own homes. We've worked for some of them [00:25:00] out of respect.

We even learned how to -- because it was hard for Latinos and work too, and so when we realized, look, we live in the same neighborhoods, we both got to eat up. I can't fight you all day and then go out there and swing hammers. So, these early -- my father, Richard and these guys, particularly, my Uncle Joe, they learned how to trade within the Latino community to where we actually were building apartments in East LA. And no one in East LA bothered us, because we did the work and we traded their specialties and our specialties, which transferred into how we began to plan our development projects and how to bring other groups in. Most people see houses. "Oh, he built 200 houses." But the political, the politics behind that were interesting. We had [Warner Hodgkin?] who was on Little Mountain who was building a [00:26:00] golf course and some homes. And he was doing what we called in the early days, a planned community development. But it was early. So, it was kind of really not it functioning the way it should. And we didn't have a strong planning or general plan within the City of San Bernardino because the general plan itself was broke up to maintain a racist perspective in housing.

JENNIFER TILTON: Can you elaborate about that a little bit?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: So, we now have bridges that go from the east side of San Bernardino to the west side of San Bernardino. Up until I think in my late, and maybe in my thirties, all of the off-ramps would go on that side of town. I had an uncle, my dad's brother, uncle Charlie is one of the only -- we laughed at him for years because he's the only person that we know of who got a ticket getting on the freeway because the on-ramp was in the [00:27:00] fast lane, and the highway patrolman pulled him over and gave him a ticket for getting on the freeway in a fast lane. That's why I know it was racist. At that time, we had turmoil, we had issues. Majority of the people moved from valley Truck Farm. We began to migrate to the western end of San Bernardino from as low as Valley College. These were

cultural transitions that even the houses I grew up in, they were not built for Black people. This track was not built for black people. Period. Yeah. And I know the builder, personally, we worked for him. And he talked about it. His effort to get us in there was to show the talent. But the Inland Empire has had two layers of understanding. We have an old school understanding. We've [00:28:00] had a lot of turmoil. We fear fast change or better planning. You know, we each take our pocket, we do what we do, but the bigger piece suffers. That's why the town doesn't have what it needs in terms of money. It's pretty planned. And those were the things that we worked on in those days with the larger companies that wanted to be here. Because it was important for my father to talk about planned community developments and his reasoning when we built Orangewood Estates with the housing for being that active in the banking and forming partnerships with like Bill Gate with Belgium banks. It wasn't about him building a portfolio for personal use because the majority of that money went back into the track to add stuff, to keep our track as competitive [00:28:00] as any other track. But there really wasn't that kind of money for us in there. We had to take a hit. Again, it's a racial kind of thing. Well, we lost 2.5 million dollars for the infrastructure, which was our profit. And inevitably the city filed bankruptcy and we will not get it. It is on record if you want to look for it. It was never handled correctly. His alliances and his relationships with the W.R. Busters, Joel Al, Mr. Weissman and the office they had on Bundy in Santa Monica was one of the most amazing, think tanks, I'd ever seen as a kid coming from the west end of San Bernardino. And that helped me understand why his perspective of the West end of San Bernardino changed and was different than [00:30:00] the traditional community. Understand, he's got a relative that he's tied to that have a different perspective. And they didn't want to be involved with this, something they could not control. And I think those two entities are the reason why

that golden opportunity didn't come together. There was just this deep unwillingness to really look at a bigger -- well, we've never been asked that. We were getting more than we'd ever had, because it was right in there tucked in with civil rights, and right before the plague, the crack plague. So, by the time their dreams got to a certain point where they had the type of money and political power, they had to fight this other drug. And many of -- some of the people that we had major respect and did well, they suffered as well, whether they were addicted or kids were addicted. So, a lot of these pre-planned things that were going on, he was sick in the beginning of it. [00:30:00] And many of the leaders were also having financial issues because we're going through a recession and we had projects that are going through this recession. And then we have these other things that are going on.

JENNIFER TILTON: This is in the early '80s.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: In the early '80s, late '70s. But they did an excellent job. He is bringing back this knowledge on -- and I've been to a lot of meetings that listened to them. And then I watched the transition where they were bickering, but it was because there was a lack of understanding how this puzzle worked. So, we grew up always having the model of, you have to have financial control and banking, but you cannot have a banking system that cannot produce matching funds. That's just his philosophy. Because if you can get the matching funds and you control the property, even if you get racism, it's kind of hard to argue with somebody that has their documents [00:32:00] and their financials together. These were things that we were learning, or he was learning. And I was just in the background there from W.R. Buster, Mr. Weissman, Nate Weissman, and Joel Rosenthal. Now, Joel Rosenthal was a huge architect. The project he's got up and down Santa Monica, Sunset, La Cienega, you name it, Malibu. But he was a quiet

giant. So, if Joel drew it and put his engineering crew on it without spending a dollar, it was going to get approved in LA and not in a stack. So, these were the type of meetings that we had to go to. I don't know about a lot of the other stuff, but learning strategies, understanding the -- having a general, a plan for the city and understanding [00:33:00] how to negotiate without losing control of your general plan, you grandfather things in. So, when we started with Pioneer Park Plaza, that wasn't so much about just the senior housing, it was about bringing wealthy, strong community planners to San Bernardino. Without Joel Rosenthal, who was a whip, not just in the structures in LA and the structures that we build in San Bernardino, this guy's family to this day, pretty much draw at least 70 percent of the low-income housing as well as influencing how financing has done. In fact, this group of men who work with us are probably part of what developed what is called now the Southern California Association for Not-for-Profit Housing, [00:34:00] because many of their heirs are movers in this. So, this was the knowledge we were trying to bring to San Bernardino. But at that time, the way the politics was structured and the limitations of building, like I thought with our projects, we were really building project, but with this opportunity to sit down and get a perspective and understand what the real sector of business is doing, and he started talking about the banking again. And more or less, he didn't say generational wealth, but he said sustainable business and other skills, construction skills and teaching the community how to -- instead of us always having to call a plumber, the people that worked on our sites, our plan on these projects was let's find a strong Black contractor, even if he's okay, and [00:35:00] let's get him on this project. I'm sure [Ms. Carter?] knows. In the early days, we were hiring anybody that had a decent license that was a black contractor. They got work on our project. Those were the biggest, probably contracts that most of them have ever gotten. And then [Mr. Dukes?] came along

and was doing his thing, and they were able to move that way. Well, these were the plans that we talked about when I was nine, 10. You know, if I do this, each one teach one. And then if that guy becomes a better framing contractor than us, the competition will give us better product. But if we can structure the streams of money to some type of community bank, then we are paying our own interest. He also felt that even with the housing, this was why it was important to go with the tax increment of bonds. He's thinking, if I can get a balance, a reasonable house payment, then we can go after -- and I've sat and watched these again with these [00:36:00] power brokers. They were trying to figure how to turn the curve on, I think was, I can't remember what it was called, but it was 80 percent in your track, it was your regular building, 20 percent had to be affordable housing. It was Cal-- something. That was back in the '70s. That was the greatest program because it gave minority contractors at least 10, 15 houses. And that's what you need to build a good track with. Wasn't a lot of them.

JENNIFER TILTON: This is kind of weird. So, the affordable housing were the pieces that were given to the minority contractors, not the --

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Right.

JENNIFER TILTON: Why?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Well, because everything -- remember now the 105 freeway, or -- yeah, the 105 or the Century Freeway project, we were known for being a good contractor. So, this project was designed -- 105 was designed to rebuild and get ready for freeway, but it was also designed to relocate, rehouse people who didn't have [00:37:00] the kind of money for this, because it pretty much like just what we call intimate domain. They used it a lot. So, the project was -- the program was designed to hire minority contractors. So, we're back to what I was saying earlier about, well, how many more minority contractors are you going to find

who are going to have a million dollars or half a million-dollar bonding capacity?

They may be able to do the work, but they don't have the bonding capacity to get the contract. So basically, you could be as good as you want to, we don't really care as long as you have that insurance. And even if you messed up, we can put this claim in and we are going to make out great. But in the end, if you ever bring up this was racist, we're going to point out that you didn't have what you needed.

But there was no programs --

JENNIFER TILTON: To create that.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: -- to create that. Or more importantly, there, you get a license if you spend X amount of years working in the field, then you get [00:38:00] a class that gives you like basic economics on how to count your books or whatever. But it doesn't teach you how to form relationships, how to get to correlate with a lumberyard that will actually do your breakdown so you could be more accurate in your labor. That it wasn't there, it wasn't there, it just wasn't there for us. So again, my father's philosophy was -- and we lost a lot of money, was, okay, let me form this relationship with Boise Cascade. Let me form this relationship with this concrete company. And so, we had this Rolodex, and then we would have Weissman's or W.R. Buster to vent us, hey, look, the guys, one of my guys. So, it gave us more access, and it gave us a strange conduit to getting materials, but we could get what we needed to do what we needed to do. Which in turn taught us how, if we don't ask Mr. Weissman [00:39:00] to give us a three-million dollars bill, we don't have to. Because now we have a partnership with the Belgian bank who sees a product on the ground, knows we have a relationship with this lumberyard. So, we're going to have them put the three million dollars in what is called fund control. Standard business. But when we talk to people in the community to hire them to be the contractor, we were talking a completely different

language. Like, what do you mean I got to put 15 percent in retention and I've got to get past this and you got to sign a voucher. And then the bank -- we were designed to do the work, but we were not prepared to do the growth. And without that, we're not preparing ourselves to work in a structure.

JENNIFER TILTON: Or to own the companies. Is that right?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Or own the company. So, when we get these few companies, which was the battle that I watched, because I was really young, with [00:40:00] a whole lot of information, probably not trusted by many. Because I was kind of in and out. And I know a lot of people were like, why is he always around? But I was in school. Like I quit going to college to go sit through this. So, we've seen people who were building -- CDC was redoing a whole bunch of houses.

JENNIFER TILTON: Sorry, what's CDC?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: It's Community Development Center. Was doing a bunch of houses. It was a government subside program. We saw Operation Second Chance create young black business women, great programs. But we have to go back to the training that we were learning, why have a program when it's almost like being that guy that makes a cold call to talk you into buying something in the book. Then after you run through all your family members, you don't have nobody else to sell it to. So that's what we were doing to our community. We were passing information. We were training people, but we didn't have a conduit to where they were going to go. So that frustration's going to mix into whatever [00:41:00] else is not going well. And then the powers to be weren't trusting each other and hurling into their own corners on their projects and not seeing the bigger picture. So, he would come back and would start talking to people about, "Hey, look, I get it." And his famous words were there's enough money in it for everybody. You don't have to do this, but we have to have a general plan or a

planned community development. So that's what forced the issue to bring up what was later called Northwest Redevelopment. The ideal was through us working within the Weissman's and the Rosenthals, and purely all of this work we did was to learn how to be as good as these guys that are great. So, there are structures, the way they deal -- culturally, this was a Jewish community. Awesome. [00:42:00] Like the disciplines we need to pay attention to. So, if you are a business owner in this community, if you followed all of the traditions, the financial end has a unique communication structure where everyone who's vested in the community has the ability to put X amount of dollars into an investment fund outside of the community bank. This investment fund guaranteed 35%, no matter what amount you put in, long as there's enough money to meet a level that we need to walk into the bank. Even if you got bad credit, if you got 60 percent of cash, the bank's going to give you the 40 percent. And then you're willing to put it into a structured flow pattern to pay it out, the bank's happy. And we couldn't put those two things together. The [00:43:00] point was, when that 35 percent comes out of that structure, that now has increased the value of your community, that shop owner has a dividend coming in that helps his shop.

JENNIFER TILTON: Right. So did your dad try to build that sort of banking structure, investment structure?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: That was the plan.

JENNIFER TILTON: That was the idea. Okay. But before you tell me the plan, can we go back to a kind of a sort of basic question? We've been trying to figure out more how, particularly the -- so in these early days of the '50s and '60s for sure.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Sixties. Yeah.

JENNIFER TILTON: Sixties. Well, '50s, '60s into the early '70s, there's a lot

of history of bank discrimination against African American loans. There's the FHA policies that encouraged redlining and disinvestment in Black communities. But I've never been able to get a real sense of, [00:44:00] say, how bank loans and all worked right here in the IE in terms of for Black homeowners who were buying these homes that say your dad was developing in the early '60s or that development in Redlands that he developed in the '60s. Right. How did folks get the loans for those homes?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: The development in Redlands, those were rich people's houses. But the one in San Bernardino, and the reason why, again, I mentioned Warner Hodgkin and his project, see the tax increment bonds, and we went to a lot of like Santa Fe, federal different -- it was designed to keep the housing and the finance affordable. The bond would cover the cost of infrastructure or hold the taxes in advance for 20 years. So then at the 20th year, whatever the tax amount is, that's what would be paid. Plus, they had free use of all CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER:

[00:45:00] that money through the bond to ensure that they'd get the money back for the project. Ergo, that's where we had the loss of money, but it was how they were able to not give us a fair construction cost. Like they sold us the property for a dollar. You read that in the paper. It's like, oh my God, he got a great deal. No, you give me a dollar, but I have these restrictions and partnership and who comes in restrictions. That's pretty much, let me have at least one leg I can kick with, and the other leg I can swing with. But the other two got a point and watch out for what's coming. So...

JENNIFER TILTON: What were the restrictions, though? I don't understand what the restrictions were.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Well, if you have an RDA, so in the RDA there are

funds that for minority contractors, developers, and there are developer fees, there are to assist you with infrastructure. You know, the curbs, the gutters. So, then we had a mandate to build [00:46:00] upgraded underground infrastructure in a community that had never had that. And then we're in the middle of the community where there's nothing coming down the streets to link us that way. So now we have to upgrade all of the infrastructure around us, which is a death nail to a small contractor. To put this in perspective, Richard Cole, the cousin, at least 10 years before that, was going to build homes that are now built on 16th Street on the other side of State Street from where we built our homes, California Street, from the other side of where we built our homes. And the project never happened because the infrastructure over there was septic tanks. So, this guy was going to have to spend money for sewage. He's going to have to come off of the already precondition power sources. So those [00:47:00] were the disadvantages for minority contractors. So, the way the Jewish culture dealt with it, that we learned with was that investor fund, because the investor fund allowed you to pay for all of the upgrades for the community at Ergo adding value to your community because now you have upgraded state-of-the art equipment or a power sources. So, these were the things that were going on for our project. We had to give an arm and a leg up in cash, even though there was a tax increment bond. So, we had to build, if you ever go back and look in the archives, you'll see that we built the entire track, the pads, the sewage lines, the whole nine yards, just so we couldn't get -- took like that again. [00:48:00] Because you would have to do the process. So, we just finished everything so we could just plug and play, which was genius because even after he passed, other developers had the luxury of, all I got to do is build a house. I don't got to deal with the infrastructure.

JENNIFER TILTON: Right. And was there a kind of systemic city

underinvestment in infrastructure on the West Side compared to, say, the north end.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Absolutely. Absolutely. Generally, in the other communities that we built projects -- case in point, we built this brand new 200-house project, and the infrastructure, streets, the curb and gutters were in good shape. But if you drove to the east, you still have -- you were allowed to build condominiums and low-income apartments right next to housing. In any other city in the United States, that's a death nail. There's your racism. [00:49:00] You don't have to look anywhere, but just how you will not drive to any other community other than minority communities where you see people building brand new homes for their family, and the project is next door. If you go to any other progressive community that has nice homes and you want to build upscale apartments, you're going to be in court the next morning. And you're not talking about bringing in low-income, you're talking about somebody who's going to pay 3000. So those are the things when they tell us we're going to redevelop your community, which is again, in the prior view, this is why we hated it, we were looking at it from a different perspective than the local community. We were learning why they do it and how racism was part of it, but how we were so under-prepared in the business aspect [00:50:00] of it. Even today, we still do this. So, what they would do to us is -- and we still do it, and you hear it all the time, even right now, you hear us all running to be a 501(c)(3). That's great. I'm not down on you being a 501(c)(3), but now you've got to go to this finance guy or your investor who is now going to look and say, when we get this grant, we'll give you a million dollars management fee and a 30-year contract to be the not-for-profit management for my project. Well, okay, but this guy now who puts you in this business, he's satisfied his need to show that he's compassionate and empathetic to your culture. But in the meantime, his rents are subsidized. So, he's getting a hundred percent and guaranteed renters, and you're

hanging on for [00:51:00] dear life, stressed out when you go home, but you're a business owner. That's, we didn't like that. We felt like, if you are going to take that route, let's go back to the deposits in the bank. Let's go to the private investments. And then you have more of an opportunity to go back into your community and not fear intimate domain, but understand how to negotiate and come up in a better situation with a better home, but improve your revenue in the community.

JENNIFER TILTON: So, you're talking about some kind of tensions around this redevelopment effort and some people in the community who opposed the kind of vision your dad was -- or didn't understand, maybe fully the kind of vision your dad was moving forward.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: It was purely the not understanding. Again, we're talking about a culture that is now coming into making this [00:52:00] kind of -- this is all new. I mean, this was new for all of us. The non-for-profit money, these opening up the non-for-Profit Bus, us being developers, this, we were making more money. I mean. Think about it. He built 200 homes in the Black Enterprise. That's a big thing. That's a national magazine. That's how much, and then of course, Valerie Pope and Frances Grice were showing up on TV and LA in these different -- so we were in what I call a renaissance, but we weren't prepared because of racism. Gt to put the word. It is more racism. We didn't have enough information to really understand how to build a structure that will allow us to be, have sustainable opportunities. And that's what we were trying to bring in. So, when you bring something new in the community tensioned up, and was like, "Oh, hey, we don't trust these guys you bring, who are these guys?" They got -- uh-uh, they operate different. [00:53:00] Well...

JENNIFER TILTON: Also, I mean, people had been already burned by redevelopment, right? I mean, so there was some redevelopment in downtown. I

don't know if you know much about this, but in fact, Lois Carson was talking about this. In some of the downtown redevelopment, a bunch of Black homeowners, she said, were displaced and ended up kind of in the public housing that was built over on the West Side.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: , that's what I'm talking about. The intimate domain. So that's where the tension was. So, it was misused, intimate -- I was young, but I do understand what happened because we always get this history list. So, I understand what they were saying. But San Bernardino, some of it is racism, but some of it is that the city never really had a progressive kind of program in it. We had tension, racial tension between Al Ballard and my father in the '60s and the riots and the West End of San [00:54:00] Bernardino. That definitely cut us off for a while. Twenty-five years before we built the track, after that happened, so you can see there was racial tension. We've had the drugs, we had schools at that time that -- Cohen High School, I know when I was in high school and before they were throwing rocks at the buses because we were now shipping Black kids to those communities. And when Black families moved to those communities, they were having problems. So, we had a lot of different things going on. And then along with that, we started migrating into the West End, and of course the Bench Area in Rialto, which was extremely racist in itself. But those are opportunities within our culture to show we can afford to live better. The problem is, we had no growth pattern. You live in a valley where the people that move here, move here because they came through the military, so they need to be new families or just passing through. And we would have more passing through than new families. And so that [00:55:00] created tension in the community, no matter what group you were in. And then we were in just bad situations. The road here on baseline, you enjoy it, I remember people getting washed away trying to get from the West Side to the

Bench Area because the road would wash out. There was no money. And that's where we lived. So, you had, pretty much the red line that you talk about, existed. Much of the West Side, for instance, Delmann Heights, I know where we lived, they weren't built for Blacks, but when we moved in, they were vacated. And I remember there was a program my dad worked on with the city way back then, I'm not sure what it was, but they had to go back in and fix a lot of those houses up. And then they were purchased by Black owners.

JENNIFER TILTON: Do you remember that white flight in the house, the area where you lived?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Oh, yeah. When I was a kid, I think I was like five-years-old. And the family still lives there now. We were the only two Black families. Then the [Tanners?] [00:56:00] moved in and [Drew Warner?] moved in and [Albert Johnson?] moved in. And then Dr. White built his house across the street from us, Dr. Titus White. And then I can't remember her name, but her daughter is now one of the top people at Cal State, San Bernardino. Her mother bought that house, then [Dr. Holder?] built his house. Then the first principal in San Bernardino, she lived next door. So, 16th Street, and then we had St. Anthony's, the Catholic school. Now, prior to that, the majority of the neighbors down the street were white and we'd go trick or treat, and it was like, but overnight it was no Black people. I mean, no white people. And you would walk from -- and our street was that, and even all down in where Gilbert Street, some of the neighborhoods now that everybody says they're terrible, those mixed were salt and pepper white. It was safe. We could walk all the way [00:57:00] from baseline all the way up through that neighborhood. No issues. But the more that we moved in, the more they would leave. But these were nice neighborhoods. They were middle class, well-taken care of neighborhoods.

JENNIFER TILTON: Yeah. And that pattern of white flight, folks just left, but were there explicit tensions? Was there any resistance?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: The only resistance was -- from just listening to the conversation, not this (inaudible) was when Magnolia Estates went down, they put a lot of money, not for us, into Magnolia Estates. And if you go over and you look at the houses, you can see there were a cut above anything in the '60s and '60s.

JENNIFER TILTON: Where's that?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Magnolia Estate.

JENNIFER TILTON: Yeah, but where is that exactly?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: On the West End of San Bernardino. On the corner of Medical Center in Magnolia. As soon as you pulled out that street, you'll realize that wasn't built for the typical, it was actually one of the newer house tracks. It wasn't built for us. So, at that time, probably other than on 11th Street, [00:58:00] one of the first hierarchy of Black communities on the West Side, enough to where the two doctors built custom homes around the corner. Then before that, down by San Bernardino Valley College was the area. And again, the valley truck.

JENNIFER TILTON: So, you mean the Magnolia and around 11th became sort of more elite Black neighborhoods?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Magnolia, 16th Street, and all those areas were more elite. And north of the Community Hospital, the 21st, all those areas had really decent homes and really nice families. In fact, the Holders, Dr. Holder, when he built this home, moved from those areas like north of where Muscoy Elementary School is. And those were all well-established middle-class families.

JENNIFER TILTON: You said something about you had heard stories that Magnolia, there had been some story about more resistance to Blacks moving into

Magnolia.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: There was. There was resistance, pretty much in it. That was, I mean, you had the Pizza Hut there. [00:59:00] You had all of these estab-- White Front was over there. So, you can see the demographics. You had the mobile homes that were pretty nice. So, you had an established Italian, white mixed area that weren't going to give it up. You had the bowling alley, Sand High Bowling Alley, and the Highway Patrol. So, you can kind of understand the dynamics of the neighborhood. So, as we begin to move into the neighborhood, there would be different things that took place. But ironically, the stabilizer for the whole thing was The Hells Angels. They still have their headquarters right there on the corner of Muscoy and I think 17th Street or 18th Street. Yeah. They would come out and ease the tension. Even when the riots went on, they were working with the Black community, easing it on out. So that was our -- to this day, anyone in that era will always say, let me go to Hells Angels. They would fix bicycles. They would come out if they [01:00:00] seen things going on. So that kind of softened the heat on the cultural. And then with the Latino area, we established doing business and what we called the Black and brown, as far as the businessmen were concerned. So, you had the owners of meatlers, Jimmy Carnitas, who's not there anymore. You had the Juan Pollo, taco guy. That chicken, it was still small then. It was, it was something different. And these men worked together in their two different cultures. And if one got money, the other got money and they learned to lobby. We don't do that anymore. I don't know why. And we don't do it within our culture. These were the things that the (inaudible) and people like my father and Norris Gregory and John Hobbs, even though they were competitors for running for office, the whole idea was to pattern the West Side to be more like successful communities.

JENNIFER TILTON: Right. And so, was there a [01:01:00] name for this kind of Black brown business alliance or it was just kind of an informal side?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: It was informal. Just informal. They were members of the Masons. And they had the youth Masons. The whole idea was to continue to develop. But again, you had a lot of big fish and a very small tank. You had a lot of very talented, progressive Black people, my father probably being amongst the elders of them. And everybody wanted their plan to be shoved in there. But we don't have that. If we build 200 houses and then you build 1500 units of low-income, you're creating the same problem, because eventually the homeowner's going to get frustrated because that value's not going to go up. And our whole thing was to begin to show people how to maintain your neighborhood, maintain jobs, and maintain values.

JENNIFER TILTON: Right. And so, who was [01:02:00] kind of pushing for the expansion of low-income housing in large numbers at that era? Pretty

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Pretty much everybody but us.

JENNIFER TILTON: Okay. Okay.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: And even today, when you talk to people, it's frustrating for me because of the way, when I talk to the local people that I know real well, you'll see the white developers, they'll come in and they'll be like, okay, we're going to do this. Like the Renaissance, the projects you see here, and then you talk to the Black developers, and we always are talking about 501(c)3s. That money's not free. But we're not thinking beyond the box. If you could talk a guy into doing a project with you who can say, I'm going to give you 1.9 million dollars in project management fees, and you know you're not really worth that, why not say, "Look, I'll do better than that. Let me make two or 300,000 and that extra 1.6, train me how to do this and let's put something into this land and you teach me. I'll give

[01:03:00] you 40 percent, I mean, I'll give you 60 percent so that it is done." But the ideal is to learn what he's doing. And we don't do that in our communities. When we put in the Northwest redevelopment or even the -- oh God, it was another one that it was tax revenue thing that we put in on -- worked with on Mount Vernon. When you talk to our culture, we shortstop it. We immediately say, okay, that's all good, but where is the free money? Well, no, if you have control, the Northwest Redevelopment was our first shot at introducing planned community development. The mandate for the Northwest Redevelopment was that the community had a say on what went into the community. Great ideal, great concept, but our leadership in the community [01:04:00] was not there yet with understanding, or we didn't have enough information. We'll tell you, this will work for, this is for you, but you have to teach people numbers. And we always think short-term, but we were thinking long-term and sustainable and creating ways to get jobs. There was another, then we did -- that was a Route 66 bill where you got subsidized for hiring people and training them on your job. It was a tax rebate kind of thing. That was brilliant strategy. It was brilliant planning. Because now you're putting in your businesses and you're supporting and you're choosing where they are, like a puzzle, and then you're creating a trained workforce. So, in our community, the pushback for most people is just, we don't understand what you're talking about. You're speaking in another language. And we've never been there before.

JENNIFER TILTON: Right. And that history of the redevelopment and getting burned kind of made people resistant in general? [01:05:00] Maybe.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: I got a chance to look at redevelopment from a different perspective. [Stafford Parker?] moved here from Fresno to run the redevelopment here in San Bernardino for a minute. Well, I had worked with Stafford Parker from like 1982 until even after my father died. So, Fresno is a

perfect example of understanding how to do planned community development. So, Stafford liked the work that we were doing with the Weissman family and planning for Fresno, that we wanted to bring that concept to San Bernardino. Again, San Bernardino is an old kind of political town. So, they will promise projects to certain groups, even if the project doesn't match your needs or what will work feasibly in your community. It was a good old boy, you get this project, you get that project, and these projects clashed. That going on, we didn't have a chance. But we were trying [01:06:00] to move our communities to that level. He understood off-ramps on State Street. He understood what we see now that's going on Riverside. He saw this coming, but there was no desire to do business on the West Side. And he said something one time, and I'm going to say it again, there has always been the push to have general elections in San Bernardino, rather than having your council person come from your community. There's not very many progressive communities or communities trying to grow. They have donut holes in the most valuable property that you have in your community. But we had that on the West Side between the county and the city. Anytime any developers, we tried it as a family. We went in, we tried to negotiate with the county and the city to close the donut hole and do better projects. But as long as we were Black in doing it, that wasn't going to happen. I do believe there was someone there for that. But [01:07:00] you also see now that the freeways here, you see them opening AM/PMs now in those areas. Those areas are valuable, but you've gotten rid of a lot of the obstruction. How are you doing those projects if those donut holes still exist? So, it had to have been racism that kept us from being able to plan the West Side. The battle was definitely the State Street off-ramps. That's a mess. So, I'm sure somewhere along the line who ever grandfathered in, they're going to change that.

JENNIFER TILTON: Tell me the State Street bond ramp, is that when they

redid the off-ramp so they came to the West Side?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: The off-ramp comes into State Street. We've did offer. I've worked with Victorville with my father. Victorville, Lancaster, everywhere we go, they don't do off-ramps like that. They do not do that. And so, when you come off of State Street at the end of State Street, they got a special road that takes you down into the Zion low-income housing. But they allow individuals to build houses [01:08:00] at the end of the off ramp. And then you have a large swath of land that could have been used to generate tax revenue for the community. So now you have this land sitting there. There's no general plan, there's nothing for it. When you get off the freeway, you see this house. So, nothing's going to make you drive back into the community. But you see the lights descend you north towards Cal State, San Bernardino. So, it's clear that someone has a future plan. And if you watch the progression from State Street coming this way, someone's on the outside pulling streets. We needed to, as a community, we never got to the point where we really understand how these politics were being used. Even if we had people that were in power, a lot of times, I'm sure, I'm close, a lot of times these developers have the revenue and the backing to just tie the land up. I'm sure [Lewis?] has been on this since before he did Terra Vista. Mm-Hmm. And Lewis picked up his from (inaudible) in Corona [01:09:00] when he stretched out in Corona. So, these are here, we just don't get a piece. And we don't negotiate in.

JENNIFER TILTON: Alright. I want to kind of switch gears just because we've touched on a couple things that I want to dig into a little bit. And that is -- well, maybe before we switch gears, there are a couple of people you've mentioned who I would love to know a little bit more about. And even just like a story to help us know who they were as people. So, you mentioned [Thomas Hughes?], right? He's someone I can tell was a big deal, an early real estate agent.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Absolutely.

JENNIFER TILTON: But who was he? I mean, what do you know about him? What do you remember about him? Any stories?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: He was just another, well-rounded business man who was pro-business development. In his real estate office, he had a lot of retired Air Force and local people there became real estate agents. And a lot of them opened their own offices. But he also was brilliant in developing [01:10:00] what we're trying to accomplish now in general or wealth, generational wealth. I think at some point, jokingly, he mentioned he owned like a hundred or so houses. He probably really did, because he was a real estate guy and he was smart enough to buy houses in communities where he had a lot of houses to sell and rent them back out. But keep good renters from the community where it looked normal. And he was able to sell back to people in community, get them through finance, help them learn how to buy homes. So, he created -- he was a good -- of course there were other real estate people, but he was very good at what he did and very steady. And so, he was a player. He also was important to us because he had the track record and the background and the assets as a real estate broker [01:11:00] to support us if we pushed for him to be our real estate broker of record, when we built the 200-house track. That was important because Thomas spoke the language that we needed outside of that standard real estate language to the people who are going to come there. You were going to feel comfortable if you saw Tom Hughes versus somebody else in a Black community selling homes.

JENNIFER TILTON: He's an old timer or was an old timer. Like he came as I understand, in the '40s or something.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Most of them did. Yeah.

JENNIFER TILTON: Do you know anything about how he became a real

estate agent?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: No.

JENNIFER TILTON: Because it was easy.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Because when I met him, he was already --

JENNIFER TILTON: Right, he was established. Right.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: He was there already established. It was really hard.

JENNIFER TILTON: Where was his real estate office? Do you remember?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: It was on Mount Vernon. Just north of 9th Street or just below 10th Street. For that time, he had a great office. He had a great office. And he also owned the building next to it and was renting it out again. He was...

JENNIFER TILTON: Yeah. And do [01:12:00] you know anything about, I mean, any other things you remember just about him as a person? What was he like?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: He was smart. He understood property. He was very important to us as developers and keeping up with the market because remember, we're building houses and he's the broker. So, he also had a real political presence in that real estate market where he could pull from other groups and bring in more better-suited real estate agents for our problems. Because again, even if you have a Black real estate at that time, even if you had a Black real estate broker or whatever, you still didn't have the trust. Most people as a developer always would tell us, okay, who's really backing you? Who's really making decisions? Can you really do that? And we lost a lot of money because in typical fashion of my father, [01:13:00] he wants you to have that opportunity. So, if we build a house and somebody said, well, I don't want that closet because I want to

walk from the garage in the house, we would do that. And we made the biggest mistake in development in the first phase, trying to get our community used to seeing new housing and having someone build a house for you. Which we never got that before this. So, we could get the people locally more invested into the housing and moving into a better direction. And of course, we had a lot of interest from, excuse me, from LA and other communities because we had the 10 percent interest and the one-dollar closing cost.

JENNIFER TILTON: Oh, so really good financing.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Yeah. Great finance. And that was the key to the tax increment bond. That was our competitive hook. And it also was our savior. Because with those numbers, and again, brilliant in negotiating, we sat down several [01:14:00] times with savings and loans. And I didn't know what he was doing, but in the end, I realized this guy was setting them up to buy them out in finance. And nobody could tell us no. And it worked. It really worked. We ended up giving up 13 houses as a settlement to Santa Fe Federal. They were in trouble. So, we had them and we knew they couldn't fight with us because they had to get past their financial issues. So, we gave them the 13 houses. Probably most people didn't even know this happened on the West Side. And the 13, he picked the 13 lots. We had to build the houses, but they were strategically picked right in the middle of where we were building 72 houses. And I was complaining, because we never built 72 houses. We stayed at 50. But it was brilliant. The houses you had to pass all of our signs you had to go to -- or we had the only sales office. They weren't allowed to have a sales office, but they were allowed to put advertisement in. Looking to the Ford, this guy looked at that sign and they said 4.2 interest [01:15:00] the first year, 4.3 the third year, and the fifth year, 4.6 to combat that 10 percent fix. And he looked at me and he says, these guys, if that ever, they called it

floating interest rates at that time. He said, if that ever takes hold, it will destroy the housing market. But we destroyed them because eventually they just made a deal with us to take certain off that money and leave that ideal alone because it was killing them. They should have just took the check. But again, he fought beyond that.

JENNIFER TILTON: Interesting. And indeed, it did kill the housing market once they actually created that.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Yeah. Well, I laugh about every relative I had, that was in shouting distance when they were doing this in 2006, when it started. I was like, don't borrow the money. We couldn't qualify people when we built homes, we were trying to qualify Black people to buy homes in our track. One of them was a drywall contractor. We know he made a hundred thousand dollars a year, but he paid himself in cash. And because of the way we financed, [01:16:00] we could not qualify him for the house. So, we had to teach him, pay yourself a salary. So, those were the things we tried to do, including the bank. We couldn't hang on. He got sick and a lot of things happened.

JENNIFER TILTON: Right, right. Because he did have a bank for a little while, right?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: We had a community center bank. But community center bank was a spinoff from the Belgium bank. And their thing with us was, we still want our cash from the sales. We will ensure the loans, but we had to push those loans through Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac even at that end. Once we kind of tweaked it a little bit, it was hard to maintain that one percent in closing cost. It was going to be two or three. So, we began to lose money, put it in perspective. So, we were sitting on tracks for a long time because we had to rely on construction money, which is normal [01:17:00] when you are a Black developer, because now

what happens is we have these houses we did the finance. We have to come out of takeout. We have to do a takeout loan, but we're already embedded for financing these homeowners. So, we negotiated a portion of our control away, which they would not do this to any type of developer where we were receiving pretty much management fees to sell our own houses. And then our perspective of building the next phase changed. We couldn't go and say, okay, I'm going to build these houses. We now got to ask for permission. And for him, you might as well just shoot him. Because now he couldn't push through the people he wanted to qualify, because at some point, we kind of went through the community and now we're kind of pulling people who are one two before, but they're now in a position. But now we can't finance you.

JENNIFER TILTON: Right. Because he didn't really confront --

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: He was pretty sick at [01:18:00] that time. It was kind of tough. We had a lot going on. A lot going on.

JENNIFER TILTON: Okay. So, let's back up in different track. Another thing we're trying to understand better is the history of the civil rights movement in San Bernardino. And your uncle, well, not sure he's your uncle, Richard Cole. Anyway -

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Cousin. Yeah.

JENNIFER TILTON: Cousin. His name comes up a lot. And I think your dad was involved, like a bunch of the folks who you're talking about were sort of involved in some of the early stages. And I know you knew a bunch of the players. And so, I guess I'd love to kind of take you to that kind of political moment out of the real estate stuff for a minute, to think about like, what's even your growing up, what's your first memory of the civil rights movement here locally?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: They basically wanted to, as everyone built

business developments, they wanted to make statements with -- well, at that time, this was the movement. So, the Boys Club was a project. So that's where they all - - the relatives [01:19:00] got together and they supported, I think the Urban League, the Boys Club, most of the centers, youth centers, all these groups. They met all the time. And it was wonderful because they would take an assignment and that would be their thing. And they worked together, including small businesses. I think at that time we started having restaurants. The Kola Shanah and the Johnson family were actively at one point trying to open a grocery store.

JENNIFER TILTON: Who's the Johnson family?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: The Johnson family, I can't figure. One owned a body shop. And he had a contract for years to repair cars and trucks for the police and the sheriff. The other one, I'm not really sure what he did, but, oh, he was a minister at a church. Because church was on a medical center.

JENNIFER TILTON: But you don't know their first names.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: I've been so long. I can't think of it. It took many to remember that. But they just had regular routines where they, they had organizations. They supported their organizations. They would take the time to talk to each other about what they were going to do. Whether they agreed or disagreed. [01:20:00] Excuse me. Even if they didn't agree, it was unique in how they support each other. They might be mad in public, but they would've private meetings and work it out. We don't have that now. We get in our positions, we stay there. But they did understand the biggest picture. They understood maintaining the council seat. It's your flag, you're in the middle of building something. So, as civil rights went on, we had short challenges in terms of the mayor not wanting things to happen. Ballard, he was involved in slowing things down, a strong arm with the police. He wanted to, I don't know what he was trying to prove, but he was trying to

step down any movement, whether it was a Black community, a brown community. Excuse me. So that [01:21:00] was their thing. We we're going to open centers. We need to have jobs. I think that opened the door for why even the (inaudible) union moved off the West Side. They even took the banks that were successful off the West Side. Bank of America was on Mount Vernon. Safeways was on Mount Vernon. And you saw the more control they took in building the community, the more the staples disappeared. You could roll down Mount Vernon and you would have what you would see in any community. But the more that they tried to grow them, they would just pull it out from under there. You have, again, White Fronts was on the West Side. Why did it leave?

JENNIFER TILTON: What is that?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: White Fronts was one of the historical grocery store chains in this area.

JENNIFER TILTON: Didn't know that.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: They were on the West Side, but they left. Why? The bowling alley changed as we changed. And eventually it just closed. In any other [01:22:00] community, Fontana, for example, they saved those communities. They saved them. We never could get that type of support or the ability to plan our community. There's a lot of vacant land, but because it's a minority community, you see it all over the country. They'll let you build 20 houses, him built 30 houses, and then if you need a road, you just killed it because you built outside of our general plan. And once we see that you're not using the property right, we can come in and take you out. And as long as we are doing progress, take that away from you and do something completely different. So that's what we work to try to avoid.

JENNIFER TILTON: Yeah. So how is your family involved in some of the early political organizing?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Again, the NACP. Again, Urban League and [01:23:00] just generally networking and showing up at other events. There was an event one time where a young man was shot the first time that he was hired by Edison. Not in particulars, but I remember the entire community came together. The NACP came together and it also gave us a boost in getting people hired by the Highway Patrol and other jobs. It showed that we need more opportunities.

JENNIFER TILTON:

I see. You don't remember anything about when that was?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: It had to be around the, well in '69 is when they had the riots on the West Side of San Bernardino. So, it would have to be right in that circle. Either through the '60s or as early as in the seventies or '72 or '71.

JENNIFER TILTON: Okay. So, what do you remember about the riots on the West Side in '69?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Well, I think they wanted to name the street, Martin Luther King Boulevards [01:24:00] and kids from all the community was basically at Muscoy Park, and there was a lot going on. They were riding. I remember my mother was helping kids. There were tear-gassed, my father, Thomas Hughes, Norris Gregory was a city councilman and other men, they went out on, at that time, they called it Muscoy. And the police were there and Al Ballard ordered them to shoot the kids. So somehow or another, I know my father was involved, I think it's archived in the UCR library. He was involved in negotiating him, not shooting the kids. And subsequently the police were removed. And then we started having different events like the police or the fire department would come down 16th Street because they started recognizing Norris Gregory as a city councilman. And of course, they started working on the West Side to improve what they did have. We had small projects that came in. They [01:25:00] supported him.

JENNIFER TILTON: What do you think was archived at UCR?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: At UCR, you can pull his name up under Clyde D. Alexander. And they have 25 different articles that range from the '60s of the movement that we just talked about right up to the last --

JENNIFER TILTON: In their newspaper archive?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Yeah. Newspaper.

JENNIFER TILTON: Okay. Yeah.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: So, but it's in UCR, ironically, I tried to find it (inaudible), it shows up in UCR.

JENNIFER TILTON: Yeah. They've archived the local papers.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Right. So, they have more in detail. Basically, the same thing I have on that, as far as a kid, I've seen a lot. The city council meetings were interesting. Most of the things that we did didn't happen in the meeting. We would be at somebody's house. I think I was at Bob Hopkins house so much telling people just know it's walking up. So, they never really talked to our communities in the open. All our deals were subsequently, what do they get out of it?

JENNIFER TILTON: Right. [01:26:00] I'd love to know, you may or may not know this story, but it sounds to me in reading some of the newspaper archives that I think Richard Cole, but it might be Bobby Cole, but I think it's, anyway, I'm not sure which, was the founder of the CORE chapter in San Bernardino.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Bobby Cole.

JENNIFER TILTON: Bobby Cole. Okay. Bobby Cole. And so, I wondered if you knew anything about how he got involved in CORE?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: His job. Bobby worked in civil service. And a lot of racism going on. And he was a GS or something in the federal, and he went

back to school and got his degrees and became an expert in dealing with labor issues at the time on the job. And he did so well that he moved from San Bernardino. They had him in office in Pasadena. And he moved his family to Northridge. But Bobby, he actually was the brain thrust that we went to when we talked about [01:27:00] different things. He did a lot. Bobby was --

JENNIFER TILTON: So, he worked in the civil service?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Yes.

JENNIFER TILTON: Do you know, what did he do in the civil service?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: He had a lot to do with civil rights or dealing with discrimination in that form that he worked in. Because even after he retired or whatever he did when he went to college, he worked for years as a consultant over labor issues or discrimination issues for that federal agency.

JENNIFER TILTON: I see, I see. He's not still around, though.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: No. Bobby passed probably about seven years ago.

JENNIFER TILTON: But my guess is he started the CORE chapter before he started to work for the --

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Right. Bobby was the more disciplined of the three cousins and he would be the brightest. He would probably be the one that would figure it out.

JENNIFER TILTON: Yeah. Did you ever go to any of the protests in San Bernardino? Because I think he helped to organize some early ones. You would've been a little kid.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Well, his son, [Andre?] and I are the same age. We would go. We didn't know, we would be there. We would see the groups, but you're [01:28:00] a kid, you don't know what it is. You see your parents getting --

their main CORE. But they took us to everything so that we could get through it. And remember, these are men who have mothers who lived through Black Wall Street in Tulsa. So, they had that pride and that desire. And you could see it. I mean, if you talk to Andre, Bobby's son right now, he's passionate about this cultural, the issues that we have [Brandy?], all of them. And they bring that into their businesses. That's why they're driven. We're not going to wait for you to give it to us, we're going to get there. We're going to do it. And when you come from that culture, they're protective too. Tulsa is a community thing. We didn't make, we had too many large thinkers, but not enough space [01:29:00] or not enough understanding on how to plan our space. And that's what they were trying to avoid.

JENNIFER TILTON: Right. So, you don't know anything more about kind of his involvement in CORE? You were too young and this is around '63 (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: They talked about CORE when I was five. And it was like, "What's that?"

JENNIFER TILTON: Well, I don't know what's that.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: And I was there when they were working on Operation Second Chance, when they were on 2nd Street.

JENNIFER TILTON: Yeah. Well, I'd love to know also a little bit more about Operation Second Chance, and also any memories you have of the mothers organizing around the schools when you were a little kid.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: It was -- I went to private school. So, my experience on that was I would come from school, we'd see it happening, but I could see real Vista and the neighborhood schools not having the level of the other schools went to, because I lived in the community, and I would go to school, say at a Grace Christian, on the other end of San Bernardino CLYDE TYRONE

ALEXANDER:

[01:30:00] and I'm coming home and I'm seeing, okay, you don't have that in school or even with my daughter, she went to St. Anthony's. I went to St. Anthony's. We were just talking the other day about how I had to take her out of the public school and put her into St. Anthony's because she was so far ahead of them. And then when she left and went back to public high school, they were doing things that they were doing in the eighth grade. So, the protest was they weren't putting the tools in these schools that were for you. Even me as a kid, I remember being told, oh no, you're not going to do that. You're going to be this. That's how we were either taught to be a maid or work for somebody. If you said engineering, you'd get looked at crazy. But this is generational. So that's what CORE and all these other groups were about. That was the passion behind even Operation Second Chance, to get skills into their hands. CDC was to train this community of [01:31:00] young Black men, what construction was or how the process worked, solar panel. When you look back, they fought in terms of let's teach them about solar panel. Now it's the biggest thing out there, but those young men are not able to get in the door. And they're trained. So those are what COR, the predecessor of CORE, Operation Second Chance, CDC. CDC was the left arm to the right arm of this Operation Second Chance. That's what they focused on all the time, these programs.

JENNIFER TILTON: Yea. And building them.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: And building them.

JENNIFER TILTON: You knew Frances Grice fairly well.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Yeah.

JENNIFER TILTON: We are really trying to get more stories of her. We do have an interview with her for the archive, but no tape for it, unfortunately, just the transcript. But we'd love to have you share any kind of memories that you have of

her as a leader, of Second Chance, but also just as a person.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: I think a lot of people didn't know we got along or even knew we knew each other. But I always wanted to [01:32:00] know her from the time I saw her on TV one time talking about Operation Second Chance. But Frances was brilliant. She would, again, she would deal with energy programs, programs to help train people, house people. She was always putting in position where we could advance on how our homes operated, or financing on cars, clothing, job preparation. She was actually putting the skills in place, but again, we didn't have a place for that to go. But in later years, her energy, in dealing with clean energy and those things, those were jobs, but no one in the community gravitated to it, or the community itself didn't take a total advantage of these rebates. So, these are what they started on in the late '60s or through '70. And the politics ran out. All that happened. The [01:33:00] politics ran out. The community was depressed from drugs. So, we planned all day long, but most of it was derailed because we just didn't have anyone to give it to.

JENNIFER TILTON: Right. It sounds like their kind of energy stuff was, they were almost ahead of their time by a good decade or so. Two decades. Yeah.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: They ran CDC for at least seven to eight years in solar panel. The closest we got to in building is Rikke Van Johnson House has a solar panel that heats his hot water tank. That was the first solar energy package that we put in anything. And that was in 1979. And she was teaching people in the '80s how solar worked. So, they were ahead of their time. All the tools were there, but with red lining and the inability to push money to community, it just couldn't happen. There was just too many big people in [01:34:00] that small spot and no room to even put targets. Again, [Valerie?] was brilliant. She owned that company. CDC controlled where Lowe's was and where Walmart was out here in San

Bernardino off of State Street. She was ahead of her time. And these people worked. I sat and watched them work on it. I went to meeting with my father and they talked about it. And what they were trying to do, and what should have happened, was just two different things. They had the right idea, but they just didn't have enough information to understand how it works. She's in the not-for-profit, 501(c)(3), we're in the for-profit. The investments that should have went into those centers should have been planned. They should have had targeted areas. The city knew this, the county knew this, and [01:35:00] I'm sure if you ever -- if we could talk to Valerie about it, she would tell you they handcuffed her. And it had to be racism. I don't care what anyone tells me, because you have the most coveted industrial center today, and you had control. How did they get that from you without going back and having meetings over the general plan? And this had to be allotted for this. It didn't happen for them. So again, we're giving you opportunities, but we're stifling your growth. And that's what these early minds were thinking, I could do this. If Frances could have got even a third of real opportunity that any other group would've been given, we'd be at another level.

JENNIFER TILTON: Yeah. I don't know much about Valerie Pope or her work at CDC, right?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: So, the sisters, Valerie [01:36:00] and Frances. So, Frances had Operation Second Chance. CDC was more -- each one had its own component. But I think CDC, because I understand building. That was just next level. Awesome. She was doing a solar farm when it was new technology, untested technology in a Black community. That's phenomenal. We don't even realize till this day the impact -- till now you see the impact of solar. She wasn't putting the solar panels on the houses, which we always said that wasn't good. But she was smart enough to know that they had to be exposed and that was what hurt

the project. You don't want to buy a house and have this box out here with solar panels. And even now you don't want the solar panels in your house. But, hey.

JENNIFER TILTON: Huh. Where was the solar farm, [01:37:00] that she was --

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: It's still over Delmann Heights. I don't even know. I mean, Delmann Heights has changed so much. You might be able to find some of those still up because they were just randomly all over the place. And then some of them were really well-placed, because it's like is in somebody's front line. That's not going to sell.

JENNIFER TILTON: No, that's a problem. Yeah.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: So, it was just early days. But again, and I keep hating to beat this dog, we had great ideas, but we didn't know anything about planning a community, planned community development.

JENNIFER TILTON: Well, I'm cognizant about time because we've been talking a long time.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: I know.

JENNIFER TILTON: And I don't want to take you all day. But I guess is there anything else we haven't talked about that you feel like is important?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: I don't know if at this point we can do this, but it's still important that we can establish some form of community centers or, again, [01:38:00] back to strategically planning our own projects and not necessarily asking for subsidies, but asking for different levels and different types of investment rather than trying to invest in a complete project, have profit shares or shares with say, the water company or the solar panel companies to assist in helping them reduce the cost of energy or working more with land that needs to be upgraded. I think they have a golf course behind here that then needs help. I think those are

opportunities for minority groups or Black groups to get their feet wet and deal with those type of projects. If you're going to let it sit there, why not put it to work? And I think that's where they work. But for us as a community, we really do need to have strategically planned developments, which each one of them always talked about that.

JENNIFER TILTON: Yeah. That's helpful. Any last memories of Frances Grice, [01:39:00] Valerie Pope, Bonnie Johnson, just as people?

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: They were just great. I mean, I didn't talk business with most of them. We used to sit in a room and talk about, I'm 60-years-old and I mean, yeah, I remember when you were a kid. So, imagine somebody telling you they remember when you were a kid and you're 60. So, in our later conversations that's what we centered around. Frances, although was pushing for something that I had put together, but I didn't want to pressure her. She stopped doing well. But we lack that leadership really. Right now, we need it really bad in a real way. There is opportunity, but there's no leadership, so I don't know.

JENNIFER TILTON: Well, thank you so much for talking to us.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: No problem.

JENNIFER TILTON: All right.

CLYDE TYRONE ALEXANDER: Hope I didn't waste you guys' time.

JENNIFER TILTON: No. No. It was super interesting. Let me slowly turn all these things off. Fortunately, there's a way to edit.

End of Interview:
[01:39:56]