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Interview with Pauline Bradford

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Pauline Bradford

Tasha Triplett: This is an oral history presentation of Pauline Bradford at her home in Portland, Oregon. This is an interview project for the Oral History Civil Rights in Oregon course at PSU. The interviewers are Tasha Triplett and Patrice Mays. The date is March 9th, 2010. This is the first interview.

Could you, Ms. Bradford, could you please give us your full name, date of birth, and place of birth?

Pauline Bradford: Okay, my name is Pauline Bradford and I was born in Greenville, Mississippi in 1928. January the 31st 1928, okay. I was raised by my grandparents and I have one living brother. There were two brothers that are dead and one sister that's dead. [door bell rings] Pardon, see who's at the door, stop your interview.

Patrice Mays: That might be my friend dropping off my laptop.

PB: Check it out see.

[Pause]

PB: It’s getting colder out there isn’t it?

PM: I apologize.

PB: Oh, no problem. Okay, and then I came out this way to visit an aunt, she sent for me. And I stayed. And then I met my future husband and waited until he returned from service. We got married. And we had three children and we were married for 50 some years before he died. Now I think I have eight, no seven grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren that I know of so far.
I've lived here in Eliot neighborhood association the entire time. I lived right next door when I
got married and I just moved over on Stanton and stayed there for 35 years and then moved here
and been here about 30 years. Now, okay and here, and then I went to school here to kinda
complete, you know, during the war- this was wartime.

[Phone rings] Oh no. Cut your deal off. Let’s see who…reach me that phone over there.
[Tape recorder stopped so Ms. Bradford could answer the phone]

PM: So are we recording again?

PB: Yeah. Okay, so where were we? Okay, I was going to tell you about the schools I attended
and I attended them here in Portland. Okay, and…

PM: Ms. Bradford? Do you mind if we interrupt you if we have questions or do you want us to
wait until the end?

PB: No, you go ahead and interrupt.

PM: Okay. I don’t mean to pry into your personal business, but do you know why she was living
in Portland?

PB: Oh, we had come out to the shipyards. This was back in the shipyard situation days and
that's where you had jobs. Cus’ this was in the 40s, okay. And then the shipyard closed.

In fact, I should tell you an interesting story about my husband. It actually was… we
were in Vancouver. I came up on the bus from Mississippi. Thirty-five miles an hour. That was
six days and seven nights or something like that, you know traveling. Anyway, I got off the bus
in Vancouver and I was supposed to catch another bus to Bagley Downs, which was - I thought in
my mind, coming from the South, that Bagley Downs was an English village, I didn’t know any
better. Anyway [laughs] um, when I got off, and then you had to just kinda catch another local
bus there, see. And uh, here is this soldier, and he heard me ask somebody where the bus was to
Bagley Downs, and he came over, “Well, hello young lady I… I can help you?” [chuckles]
Anyway, I say, “Well, I’m sure if I come all the way from Mississippi [laughing] I should be able to find the way to Bagley Downs.” Oh he said, “No, that’s fine too, but I don’t mind helping you,” cus’ of course I had my suitcase- you know. And uh, he says, “Well, I have nothing to do, so I’ll just ride on the bus.” Anyway, he did. We got there to my aunt’s place, and there was a note on the door that said if they weren’t there or anything to just knock on the door of the people the next door down of the apartments and, uh, they would be sure to be there. So, I knocked on the door and they said, “Oh, they’re there, they don’t go anywhere. She and her husband would be home.” And I just went back to knock a little harder, okay. But, it was kinda embarrassing 'cus here was this young lady - young girl - coming up from the South... With a soldier! [gasp] Oh, my God! [laughs] And my uncle said, “Okay, well thank you, young man.” [laughs] But I’m thinking that poor auntie, I’m thinking, oh my God, what is she thinking? You know how that goes, after all I was just a teenager, you know. Anyway, it was so funny. But anyway, then he says, “Well, can I stop by to see you?” And of course I’m dumb, you know, I like to talk to people. “Yeah, no problem, come by.” [laughs] Anyway, so as soon as he was off work every evening, he would catch the bus and he was right there. Well, see auntie and uncle were there, and it was one of those little project apartments where, you know, the housing. And you just had um... it was like a little living room, kitchen area and a bedroom, right, and that was it, see. So you kinda, a little short area. And um, we would talk and talk - I enjoy talking, this is the bad part. He was a good talker too, so we could talk about all kinds of things, it was interesting, the World Fairs and everything, you know, I mean, that was just the way it was. And of course, my aunt and uncle were there, so there you are - this is the deal. But then I had to do the dishes - they cooked and then I did the dishes, right. So, he would sit there and yak with me while we were doin' the dishes and what-have-you. And then, uh, my uncle would say, “Now, soldier, it's nine o’clock. We have to go to work,” because right away I got a job.

And she got the job with me, made sure that I got the job working with her... so that she could keep track, you know, of everything. And that was good, because that was a protection. So that was the situation, and then when the shipyard closed, that’s when we moved here. She bought that place. They bought that. But that’s kinda, you know, how that worked.

But he, in the meantime, he had to go over seas, so - I laughed, it was so funny because, the night that he got his orders and he had to leave, and he came by and then he said, we wanted
to go outside the door. 'Cus, every night at nine o’clock it was just, “okay, bye-bye!” {laughter}
you know, and he wanted to give me a kiss! Cus’ he'd be gone for that long, so, that’s what went
on. And he, you know, worried about whether or not I was gonna, you know, wait. You know
what I mean, you know how that stuff goes. And, so that’s what happened.

And I laughed because, one time he asked to take me to a dance and that was fine, except
my uncle had to chaperone us. [Ms. Bradford holds up her hand and raises three fingers and
laughs.] So there was three of us that was going to the dance at the Hudson House, which was
 kinda… The dance was held at a place where, um, the single men lived, you know, that didn’t
have the wives with them. But then they had the hall there, so they could have entertainment,
dances and things. So that was kinda [whispering] the interesting part.

But then I came and then I went to PCC [Portland Community College]. And um, PCC in 1964 offered their first college transfer class, where you could take certain classes at PCC in
certain subjects, you know it was a college, and any Oregon state higher institution would
recognize the classes if you passed. That was in 1964. But I’m jumping ahead of myself. But
talking about the schools. So then, I did take that and got an associate degree, and then went on
over and got a bachelors at Portland State. And then I went into teaching.

TT: So you got your bachelors in education?

PB: Uh huh, in education at Portland State. And then, um, I left my government job and went to
education, which took a little cut in pay really. But then while I was there, a few years later I
went to Portland… University of Portland to get the masters in education. I was older then ‘cus I
was forty by the time I went into education. So, that’s a little bit of the schools.

TT: Do you mind me asking how long it was for your husband to come back from overseas?

PB: Oh, it was about a little over a year, because the war was over then in ’45, you see, and then,
of course he came back soon because he what did is reenlisted, if you reenlisted you got a chance
to come back to the states sooner. You had to reenlist for a year, but you didn’t stay, you had to
still do your time, you know, so he ended up doing his time in Virginia, but we got married.
TT: So you got married as soon as he got back?

PB: Yeah, shortly after he got back, yeah. So, that was kinda interesting, but that’s it. And um, then um... [mumbles quickly reading off of the biography form] School attended, location, graduation, degrees, okay told you about that. Occupations. Okay.

Well, yes young lady, after the war there was not very much to do, so I did all kinds of jobs. You know, I mean, I mopped floors at Emmanuel Hospital. I washed, uh, hair at beauty shops, where you do just the hair stuff. You know, you did the cleaning, the hair stuff, cleaning all that stuff to be ready for... Cus’ I worked at one of the buildings downtown there, and they had a lot of, you know, operators, and so they had enough where they could hire somebody just to, that was their whole job - just cleaning the utensils for the people. Then I worked at a bag factory, where you just put the bags there and the thing swooped it up [motions a swooping gesture with her arms] and took all the dust out of the croquet sacks and bring it down. I worked at a, uh, spring deal where they - you know when your making the springs and you just stand there at the line and just kinda guide the springs so it goes to the next thing. [Ms. Bradford is describing her occupation at a mattress factory.] Just anything for extra money. I was a dishwasher at restaurants, you know, all those kinda things for a long time.

In the mean time, I took the federal exam. But, you know back in those days, they had your race on them and... I never got a call, I got the report, you know, the grade back and it was quite high, but I never heard anything. I wasn’t by myself, I found out later, but at the time, you know. Anyway. Then, I think there must have been something in the federal law that came along that said that the federal agencies were supposed to - it went off on ya. The federal agencies were supposed to kinda, you know, be civil rights type thing, you know, for people. Anyway... then one time, I was still I guess working at Emmanuel as a maid 'cus - mopping floors there you know - and I got a call to go down into revenue. And they were hiring people, that time of season, you know. They needed a lot of people to file and to uh, people who typed, to type - 'cus this was before, automation was, at the time. Anyway... I started there, but when we got there - and there were several other black ladies working there - we found out that they had been doing this all the time. Those people they've been hiring them every year, they weren’t even on...
hadn’t even passed any kinda test. But they just, see this is the way it was, but you see your race was on your application. See, later on in time, they took race off for a long time, but at that time it was so, you didn’t get called. They just looked at it, if it was Black… forget it. [Ms. Bradford gestures her hands open palm toward me as if she was pushing the air away.]

But anyway, stayed there until I got pregnant with my youngest daughter, and at that time, you could not continue to work if you were pregnant. And you had no rights. You know how [unclear] we come back with it, that time you didn’t, so that means I stayed there until I left, oh, about a few months before she was born. And then, um, what did I do then? I didn’t take any other jobs in between.

But, later on I got a job with the market news- down in that old Washington Building - as a fiscal clerk, where you worked on storage charges. In other words, the grain was stored in the warehouses and as they loaded it out, you had to figure how much money they had coming and it was like on several points, so many decimals across. And this had to be done on seven bank machines, or when we first got there they were so far behind some of us had to try do this by hand, which it was kinda cute until they got enough machines for everybody. But that was part of the job, you know. I stayed there for quite a number of years until automation. So, here I am right along with automation. Automation came along and what happened with automation, automation you only had twelve spots in the card, so everything had to be reduced to twelve. {inaudible question} Well, twelve slots period. In other words, and the rates that we were paying for the storage was over decimal point, maybe five or six characters over. And we, a lot of us had turned in - how do you call it? - suggestions, 'cus you could get- you know, they want suggestions and sometimes if they accepted a suggestion, you got a recommendation, or you got a little stipend for it if it was accepted. A lot of people had turned in these deals. “Well, why can’t we lower this and then it wouldn’t have take so long to do it?” You know... It would take an act of Congress. Well, guess what? When they decided they were gonna try automation an act of Congress took over. {chuckling} And they were reduced to be the point three and about three spaces, okay. Anyway, and the machines that would do this were about as big as this room. {Wow.} You know, that was the first parts of it. And then they moved, then they had to make use of this, and so they closed the office here and moved it to Kansas City, that way they could take stuff from different parts of the country, not just the west coast. So that was a displacement
of people for automation at that time, you know. That was part of it, anyway. The other group
that worked there at the time they went to St. Paul, Minnesota, the ones that did dairy and poultry.
This was just vegetables and grain.

PM: Okay.

PB: Okay, then I was home for a while. And then, I got this little job down at the U.S.
Courthouse as a market news reporter, half day. But my children were up then, you know,
getting into high school. So, I didn’t have to pay as much for babysitter, because when I worked
half of my salary went to the babysitter. We both, you know, the baby sitter and me, we shared
my income. Mine. [Ms. Bradford pats her chest.] Anyway. Then, uh, let’s see okay… Worked
at market news there.

And that’s when the- 1964, when community college did that college transfer class; I saw
that in the paper. And after all, I was right down on Broadway and Main at work, and Shattuck
School was Portland State at that time. And, um, so Portland Community College anyway was
there, then so I went up there and took classes there. And then, you know, that turned on into
Portland State, and so, um, then I decided, okay, I’d go on, take the classes at - go on and get an
education, get a teacher’s certificate, you know, education. And I did it deliberately, because it
was either that or work full time. But since I didn’t have to pay babysitting and childcare
anymore by that time, you know, ’cus my husband worked a swing shift type, so he kept an eye
on the kids, very much so. [laughs] Anyway, that way, with the half-day, financially we came out
about the same. So it was either to go into work full time and maybe buy a new house or
something, or just go a head and get the education, and I was a little mad at my husband because
he had the GI Bill and he would not go back to school.

PM: Oh, my goodness.

PB: And you know how that was - he would take a little part time job at the Portland Hotel or
something - this is extra work now - instead of going on. He was very talented and very
intelligent, but, you know, they have their own ideas, you know {chuckles} What, you know?

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[Ms. Bradford throws her hands up grinning.] Anyway, so he had time to do all this stuff... But anyway, so I said if you won’t I will get mine then, and [laughing] so I did and it was something I’d been wanting to do for a long time, so I did, and that’s what happened; I went to college there. And then, when I graduated in ’70, then that was this big decision. The job I had - they really liked my work as a reporter there, and um... Then, the professors said “Wait a minute, now. You’ve gotten your degree, you need to go into education. You need to go ahead and do it, since you’ve taken it,” you know. Another thing, while I was there, when I did the student teaching, I insisted that I get my student teaching in Beaverton ’cus I wanted to find out what they - at that time Beaverton supposedly had the best school district in the state. They paid the most money and their students were doing really well. And so I thought, oh okay, what are they doing out there? You know, ’cus after I…

PM: Is that okay? [Patrice fixes the monitor on her computer that is recording Ms. Bradford.]

PB: Oh yeah, no problem. Because, you know, when my kids were in school I was active with the PTA and all that kinda stuff and 4H, you know, doing all those things with the kids and what have you. But I kept thinking what is it that they’re doing out there that’s different.

TT: Where did your children go to school in Portland?

PB: They went to Magdalene Heart, ’cus it was right down the street [chuckles], for grade school, and then one of the daughters went to North Catholic ’cus that opened up about that time, ’64. And the other one when she got up, she went to Mary Crest. They had moved, moved my school. [laughter] Here I had the high school, grade school here and high school next door, right. And anyway, she went out there and then my son, he went to North Catholic most of the time until he went back to live with my brother. But it was so interesting, you know, thinking... My husband he was active with all of them, transporting. In fact, we laugh because we said that one car we had, all it did was haul children around, {laughter} ours and everybody else’s. [chuckles] That's true, you know! You go through that phase of life when that’s it, you're practically living in… It decided to die on you or didn’t it.

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[Short interruption Patrice had to fix her computer screen so that it could keep recording Ms. Bradford.]

PM: I have to keep it bright.

PB: Oh, okay, that’s fine, that’s all right. It’s still, you're still hearing me hopefully.

PM: Yes.

PB: Okay, so that was part of it and you know, you are trying to be involved in things, but not as much as you would be involved if you didn’t have that going on. See raising a family was quite a deal, and I did - the kids all were involved in a lot of activities, and dancing was one of the activities, and so gosh… And then putting on plays, you know, like Oklahoma, South Pacific and Westside Story and all that stuff, they put on in the parks and up in Washington park. Well, see my daughter, Patricia, she was doing this with Mildred [Shoes] and also doing some of the choreography for them, you see. And then she was teaching a class, a tap and modern jazz class out in Oregon City. So, on Saturdays, you can see what I mean, here like the car was [Ms. Bradford gestures driving steering a car quickly then moves her hand like a car in a z figure] - zoom zoom zoom zoom! - {laughter} back and forth several times, so that kinda kept you pretty busy. So there were other things going on in the city that you were not involved in cus’ there’s a limit, limited as to what you were involved in, but you were aware of a lot of what’s going on, you see.

PM: May I interject?

PB: Sure.

PM: Okay... so going back to being involved - your involvement with the Tubman Club, NACW...

PB: Okay, okay well.
PM: *I know you’re going to get there eventually, but was there a driving force? Where your children a driving force for you to become involved in those organizations?*

PB: What happened was the lady lived next door to me belonged to the Harriet Tubman Club, Mrs. Conway. And she invited both Angie Britton and myself - the neighbors on either side of her - to come visit the Harriet Tubman Club. These were older ladies, they were more or less in her age. She was a little older than we were and they were interested in getting some younger women involved, right. Good. Okay, so we did. But then, that was during the time when Deltas and things like that had Jabberwocks and things, you’ve heard about those type of things going on. And so that was there, all good. But then of course Harriet Tubman, you know, they want someone and I have a picture somewhere of - they had our children to represent their club in the Delta’s Jabberwock, [chuckles] and of course they came in third or something like that, you know, for the deal. But then, I was so impressed with those ladies. They were so concerned all the time about each other, about the neighbors, you know. If someone was sick, they would make sure that someone was gonna go over and maybe clean the house for them or fix some meals for them, you know. That just seemed to be the concern they had for them, and I had... And meeting with them, I didn’t hear a lot of negative talk about things, you know, people. They would talk about, you know, things in the community and what have you, but it was more or less an uplifting type thing. And for me, that was something else, 'cus after all I hadn’t been involved in any clubs as a kid, except the little sodality, you know, your little church type thing, but as far as other type clubs, I hadn’t been involved in. They were just - I just admired them. Of course, they put you, pardon me, they put you to work right away. [chuckling] As soon as you got in there. But that’s how I got involved with the Harriet Tubman Club and I did, um, I do have a picture here of the Harriet Tubman Club and you can see what I said about the older ladies and you can tell right there. [Ms. Bradford brings out an old black and white photo of the Harriet Tubman Club members around the time she joined.]

TT: *Do you mind naming the women in the photo?*

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PB: I can’t name them all, but I can tell you this. This was Ms. Anna Sheppard, Mrs. Randolph, Avel Gordly’s grandmother. [naming bottom row to top row, left to right] {Oooo!} {laughter}
And this is me. And I’m trying to - this was Mrs. Johnson, I think, that - you know they always talk about Tom Johnson - you know, he owned a lot of property and stuff years ago. Well, maybe you never heard about him, anyway that was his sister. And this Mrs. Leftridge, Mrs. Britton, Angie Britton, Viola Morgan [Martin\textsuperscript{iii}], I can’t remember these two ladies' name... Wait a minute now, did I get her mixed up? You know, suddenly these two ladies look a lot alike, this one [pointing to the woman second to last on the top row] is Johnson, and this lady [pointing to the first woman on the top row], can’t think of her name now, and this one [pointing to the last women on the top row], she hadn’t been there too long and she left around, at that particular time and I don’t know [Balsiger\textsuperscript{iv}] could have took that photograph, I don’t know what year that was.

TT: Wow, so this was the entire, this was the Portland chapter of the...

PB: No, that was just Harriet Tubman. Now, wait a minute, remember Harriet Tubman Club was just one, at that time there were sixteen clubs. It was the Oregon Association of Colored Women’s Clubs, okay. And during those times, that was the main issue going, you had all kinds, you had the Altruistic, Literary Research, Multnomah Women, Kwanzans - just a whole group of them, okay. Because with that, any group could get together and form a club around the interest they were in, but then they would still join the state and then the region and then the national. Now this national is a part of the National Association of Colored Woman’s Clubs, that’s the oldest Black women’s organization in the world really. ‘Cus that started in 1896 after the call came out in 1895. So there’s a lot of history on that, you know, and you can look… Mary Church Terrell\textsuperscript{v} was the first one. But here in Oregon, the first president was Gray, her name was Gray, her last name. Katherine Gray. Those women were always active in doing all types of things, but different groups had different things, you know.

Now the, let’s see... [Ms. Bradford is reading quickly from the biography form]

Occupations, school attended, okay, occupations, positions held, I’ve given you little bit of that… 'Cus I did go to teach at Peninsula Elementary School in North Portland and I stayed there my
entire teaching time. I taught kindergarten for about eight years there. And then I told you then I
went to University of Portland took parts, was gonna take a whole year, didn’t get the whole year,
cus’ I couldn’t get any body to take my classes at the school. But I took most of the time off for
that year and I got the masters. And then, I left that position and went into the position - it was
called special assignment, but what it was, it was like the assistant principal. So you had all of
the discipline and all of the, everything. So you know, the kids and the parents out there just
considered me the vice principal. ‘Cus it had been a K-8 school before it went into year around.
Now it was year around the whole time, I was there when it started and it was still year around
when I left. This particular year, this year, they’re not year around anymore - this new coming
year. But prior to that. And that’s a long time, because I retired in what - was it 89’? I mean,
yeah. Yeah, twenty years ago.

[Pause]

[Ms. Bradford grins and throws her hands up, laughs] {laughter}

Anyway, yeah. Well, but that, uh... So that was what I did then. But see prior to that
you heard the all of the other jobs I had, you know, as a truck reporter when I was with the
Market News. In fact, during the first two or three summers, I still went back and relieve the
people at the Market News, ‘cus they kept thinking that I was gonna change my mind and stop
teaching and come back out there. [laughs] Oh, golly, but it was kinda interesting. It was
worthwhile. I worked like a slave though, you know, ‘cus I kept thinking… you know, we had to
somehow or another get things across to the kids.

TT: Why did you choose Kindergarten?

PB: That was what was - see in those days, they assigned you.

TT: Okay.

PM: You had no choice?

TT: Why did you choose Kindergarten?

PB: That was what was - see in those days, they assigned you.

TT: Okay.

PM: You had no choice?
PB: Yeah. What would happen is, you didn’t have to go - See nowadays, it’s completely different, because the teachers go to the different schools and the schools have committees and things that interview and pick them. At that time, you got hired at the school district and you were sent to a school. In other words, if a principal needed a primary teacher or what have you or upper grade teacher, the school district administration did all of the hiring and they sent the person and unless something was wrong with them, they stayed there. ’Cus principals change too, you know, as teachers do and all of that. So, when I, okay that... So then when I retired, I just didn’t do anything else as far as, just spent more and more time with all this volunteer junk.

TT: And that’s when you got into it?

PB: [chuckles] Oh, volunteer?

TT: Oh, I was just checking.

PB: Well, see, I got involved with neighborhood associations, you know, a little bit of that, and some how another one thing leads to another, you know. You get put on this committee, you get put on that committee and you get put on that committee, and the next thing you know you got yourself spread out all over everywhere.

But you also, at the same time, fighting - you’re making sure that when you are on these committees that you were speaking up for fairness to people. And it was amazing because sometimes, you know, just being a minority in the room when decisions are made would affect what was said, believe it or not. Sometimes they’d forget it. And you have to remind them. see. You know how it is, you get used to people being around, and you just forget that maybe they’re representing someone else, and let your hair down? They do that too. [chuckles] So what happens is, that would be the thing and you try to get people involved, but you know how it is, it is awful hard to get to get folks to come to things and I know why. What happens is, first we stay busy and all that, and then other things, they feel like their voices are not being heard, you know what I mean. And we have to remember to is - I laugh about it sometimes, in a way – I said, okay so you have seven people there that has a voting power and you’re one person a vote, your never
gonna get to win it. The only thing you can do is remind them of the issues, and sometimes when you remind them of the issues, that slows them down. But if you sit there and be quiet, you can forget it. You know what I mean? You do have to speak up sometimes, and you have to choose the way to speak up. Sometimes you get it done by being very tactful, or hitting from a different angle. Or, and you better know - it’s best to know what the whole thing is based on. You know, why they have you there in the first place. Sometimes you’re there because they need you to say they have minority representation! [chuckles] So you have to kinda use that to your advantage. And it does help, but I don’t know. Now, over time - I’m trying to think of what could be relevant here...

You know, the urban renewal stuff that is going on. The first deal was - now the first one, after all, was down there where Portland State is. But, I keep telling those people, there was a difference, those people were Italians mainly. But Italians are Caucasians and they could still move into any part of the city that they want to, and they could start a new business anywhere they wanted to, and they would get support from that community. And they could get credit.

You see, the problem with African Americans here in Portland - ‘cus after all, you know they wanted to send everybody back anyway after the war, let’s face it, that was no secret. Even the, um, what do you call it - even officials and stuff, they were all into that, they wanted them all to go home, you know. Well, you could not get credit, so the businesses that were started more or less, most of them were started out of the people’s own savings. It just happened that the wartime allowed people to save because there was nothing to buy, you were working seven days a week, and stuff was rationed. So unless you just threw your money away when you got through working in the shipyard or one of those, whatever job you had, you had a chance to accumulate a little wealth, moneywise, right. So, if you decide to start a business, you started with your own and whatever business - if you was, how you say, a good businessperson, you accumulated some, right. So, you ended up - and since it was so segregated with all these little signs, about “we cater to white trade only” and all those things that were around, you know, and if you went to the Egyptian Theatre down there you had to go onto the second floor. You know, all that kind of stuff see.

So… you ended up with the businesses down there where the Memorial Coliseum is, and also all down Williams Avenue and Vancouver and all down there. You had all kinds of
businesses for everything you needed, from, um, hat shops to dress shops, shoe shops, people
who make, who repaired everything, dry cleaning. You had all that type of business, all kinds of
businesses, right. Grocery stores and what have you. But, you paid cash for it, because the banks
would not let you have credit. And of course, the grocery, the wholesale houses, they didn’t give
you any credit either, you paid for it.

Well, when they moved everybody out of the Memorial, first place, it moved a lot of
customers away. Some people left the city. The businesses that were there had to close down,
and that type of deal, but where were they gonna go? First place, you go over to start a new
business, you gotta have some money and you need some credit, and your customers are gone.
You got to build up a whole new clientele. And that is one thing, I feel like the business, Black
business community has not recovered from any of that. See, and then to knock it off, the rest of
it - ’cus they were all mainly lined up, even though they lived all over the city, most of them were
in this area. And so, you ended up with constantly clients being moved away with the freeways,
and then even the school district. It was over here on 6th street in a little building and then
suddenly it moved over there and took those people - that’s where the main headquarters are,
there. [Portland Public Schools District in now located on Dixon St.] Yeah, okay that area had
people in it, and a lot of black people and they owned their property, a lot of them. Okay. So,
that’s um... There where the coliseum is, there were little restaurants and shops and stuff all the
way down, would be Weidler now, from the bridge on. And that’s why, when they did that,
doing of the coliseum deal, they left that fifty feet there. You know, where the parking lot,
parking structure, between the parking structure and the street, they left fifty feet there -
theoretically, supposedly, that that was going to be rebuilt into a shopping areas and businesses
and stuff, ’cus after all, it had been at one time, right, you see. That never -they’ve never done
that, right. So that’s kinda the way that part hit, okay.

Now in the meantime, you had the NAACP and Urban League. The Urban League more
or less worked toward getting jobs for people and a few things like that, because they were
considered less threatening to the power structure. The NAACP was the one that if something
was going wrong you would go to NAACP to get some relief, or even just the threat of the
NAACP was gonna be out there, whether it was picketing or whether it was filing a lawsuit or
what have you. Okay, so those were the things that kinda helped to do things.
But then it turned around, you ended up with the gangs coming in, see that kinda messed up some things. And that came in, you know, we are on this highway between California and Seattle. This town has always been an open type town in a way, if you think about it. Because it’s a seaport, in the seaport, and it was logging all around on the outside, so you had people always - especially the men - coming into town to have a good time. Now Dorothy - one of our mayors – and now this is scandalous but I will say it {laughter} - she cleaned up the town. She closed down all the houses that they had, you know. But guess what? There’s unintended consequences. They went to the street and that’s what ended up messing up our neighborhoods. Because here you still have these folks coming in from the country and the sea and from on the highway, you still have these folks doing it, right. So, except the high class ones - you know the one with money, they still have hotels and all that stuff, you know. That never bothered the ones with the money, heavy money. But, then so they started street hustling, going on. And it was bad enough with the hustlers, but it was rough on the regular people who were not interested. You couldn't walk down the street without somebody pestering you or saying something to you or looking for it. And this would happen to girls. So, those are just kinda some things that happened, you know. You observe as you sit back and listen to some of this stuff.

And of course, we have always tried to be active with this. When Reverend Jackson [an activist in the Black United Front] was cross the street over here at Mount Olive [Baptist Church.] He was very active man and later Ron Herndon [an activist in the Black United Front], they tried their best to try to improve things around. If something was happening they would go to city council of wherever, you know, to do it. But we don’t have quite that much activism going on right now. And we retreated a little bit because, for one while we had two or three Black city council people, you know. I don’t know what all happened. The one just died, Dick Bogleviii, but you had Charles Jordanix and what have you. See, now there was another thing that went on during this time that I don’t know a lot about because, at the time this was going on I was busy going to school, remember, and working and kids still. But they did a lot of work with the poverty program, the one that they did in the Northeast.

PM: Was it the Black Panthers?
PB: No, the poverty. [Analog recorder tape stops.] It filled up, I’ve already filled up your tape.

See how much talking I’ve done? {laughter} Oh, girl!

I’ve just tried to be as honest as possible, so you... {more laughter} And this is my point of view, there are people who have different ideas and different points of view, but my whole deal is that sooner or later some day if you keep working at it, it will change. But it's not gonna change by itself. I’ll tell you that. And really the main way to get, for things to change is for a lot of us to be involved in things and show up, even though you may feel like you have wasted your time.

PM: You said earlier even that sometimes just by being in the room you would influence the decision making.

PB: That’s right, that’s right. And see, you will be criticized for being there and they think - by your own people - by saying that you’re not doing nothing. You know what I mean? But the idea is that if you can get as many, the more the better, that’s the idea. Because everyone had their own talents, you know. Some people can speak real well, some people can think real fast, and some people have a sense of humor and say the right thing at the right time. [Giggling] You know what I mean. And some people have contacts, you know, from the old time, when the people would be sitting in the room and they knew everything that was going on downtown. But nobody thought they did, because after all they were supposed to be just invisible people. It didn’t mean that that mind was blank, they thought just as well as the next person. Okay, now I guess I’ll listen to your questions. I’ve given you enough information.

PM: Well, I had a question, just to focus a little bit on the Civil Rights era. So I’m talking about the time form about to 1950 to 1967, between that time. You said you were going to work and various jobs, you started in the shipyard post war but after that you were kinda doing odd jobs...
you got credit ’cus you spend a lotta money at the store and they know who you are. Guess what?
You don’t have any credit! I will have to tell you, this is funny. When my auntie and them
moved over there, they finished the whole house, right. [Cohn’] Brothers was right on the corner
of MLK and Hancock there, right in that building. And we spent a lot of money, and I'd spent
two hundred and some dollars for my own bedroom set, ’cus I had to pay for my room, the set, the
furniture in my room. They bought the furniture for the rest of the house. And so, then I bought
a house and I went and I thought I’d like to open an account, ’cus I got a house and I need a little
furniture. [Ms. Bradford says rolling her eyes.] And they said, “Oh no, we don’t have any account
here.” I said, “Well, we spent all this money.” “Nope, you don’t have no account here.” That
was the way it was.

PM: Do you think that that forced a lot of people to have relationships with Korean or Oriental
storeowners or maybe Greek storeowners?

PB: At that time, it depended on who – ’cus you know there's a tendency sometimes for minorities
to, for other minorities to look at us as a minority as not the thing to do, and the reason for that is
because when minorities come into this country from other places, even African Americans, I
mean Africans, they are looking to go where there is wealth. And if they don’t think there's any
wealth in that community, the tendency is not - if they can make money there, that's fine, but they
still have that arms length thing. [PM: Gotcha.] If you see what I mean. And it’s because it’s the
basis for our country. You know, in other words, if you want to build wealth or you want to learn
how to do something real well, you go find the person who’s done something real well. And
when they look at us… [PM: What have you done?] Yeah, no matter - sometimes it backfires on
them, but that’s just the way it happens, you know.

PM: So what was the climate around the city during that time? So people didn’t have jobs, they
were doing odd jobs if they could get them. What was the climate like while things were going on
in the South - they were marching and having sit-ins, what was happening here?
PB: Oh, during that time? Here, they weren’t doing the marching or anything that I can recall, they were just supporting the people down there. See, ’cus technically here, supposedly you were free to go anywhere. Technically, you know what I mean, and there were a few people that challenged some of these places that - how do you call it, that didn’t serve or didn't wanna - but they’d go in and sit for a long time and occupy the places, you know. And they did it, but it was not dramatic, ’cus there weren’t that many people here to do it, and it was a bigger city. And I know one lady was talking about how they had gone down to a couple of places and just sat there. The people didn’t wait on them so they just sat there. See, they were very selective here, as I recall, see. They didn’t confront you, they just - in other words, if you came in for dinner or something, and they served everybody else all around you and kinda ignored you. That type of a thing.

TT: So, at that time, do you know how did white people react? Because you described how the NAACP and the NACW and other groups, when they started kind of helping the community, and all of this displacement and different things were going on. How did white people react when that social organizing kinda started to happen?

PB: They were believing what was said to them by the realtors and, I imagine, banks, and indirectly by what the city was doing in a way, because they kinda helped this mess along. They were kind of, you know, just kinda ignoring you a little bit, but not doing anything for it. They gave lip service to it. You know how you can say lip service to something, and then make promises that don’t get kept.

PM: So, while somebody’s watching, “Oh well we’ll do this?” [Chuckles]

PB: Oh yeah, but as I said now, the fact that we got to those city council members during that little time, that was kind of a really, you know, a step up. For a while, it was thought that Portland was kinda progressive in a lot of things. For instance, when it came around to wanting to name Union MLK, that was all - well before when they wanted to name a street after Martin Luther King, at first they were trying to do the one over town, but you know that went nowhere.
And then when they came over to do Union, there was all kinds of fighting up about that. Some
of the businesses changed their address to the side street because they didn’t want that. It was
unreal. And they came up with all kinds of excuses about the historical name of Union.
[chuckles] And the thing about it is I recall, I was looking on an Albina plot from, you know from
way back when, and that street as far as I could see on there was Margareta. You know, but I
mean they came up with all kinds of stuff, you know. It was a fight just to get that. And some of
them they just never did - you know, they still talk about it. So that’s why when they were
talking about Rosa Parks, it was a good thing he went through and did it right away, because if it
had gone through the other, it would have not have made it. Just like Chavez, you see what I
mean. You know, I was thinking, ugh, my goodness gracious… And then China town, I thought,
[laughs] I thought, well wait a minute Chinatown, yeah you were down there, but
wait a minute, that is also where they had all those Blacks down there, you know. That is where
the railroad people came in and they had the hotels, and I remember Mom’s Chilly Bowl being
down there on 3rd Avenue and all those kinda streets. There were [laughing.] that wasn’t just
China… It’s just that – see, there always was a problem with this whole thing.

African Americans were more American than anything else, really. So, you did not have
a country that you could say, okay, my home country is - what do you call it - Tanzania. Or my
home country is Ghana. And they have an Embassy or somebody that can check up on... Well,
we’re the only - except for the Native Americans - we’re the only ones that didn’t have that. And
then, to tell you the truth, when you come from the South, let’s face it, I would be hard pressed to
find one African American that is strictly African. There's no such thing. Through those years,
there were so much mixing going on. Definitely, see, all kinds of ways. It was just like in
wartime, you know, in wartime. The invaders always mix up a certain amount with the people
that are there. That’s how come we got so many of these little Korean, we got so many of these
Vietnamese kids. Some of them came back, some of them didn’t. Men are men. Even though
they gave them condoms, they left plenty of babies. No matter where they go. And the South
was no different.

You have to remember, when we think about America, we have to think about the fact,
now who settled America? Who did settle America? Some people came over because they were
adventurous, but when they were trying to colonize the Americas, remember they sent over a lot
of people out of prisons and things. They sent over all the misfits and things from Europe. So, you had a variety of folks, good and bad mixed in. And that's why it was so bad up in the early days, you know, with the witch-hunts and all that kinda stuff. And some of that stuff kinda trickles down in some ways for some people.

TT: What do you mean by that?

PB: It all depends on what their family have told them. Because my feeling is this - the reason that you don’t get, sometimes the Caucasians have a hard time accepting black people as equals is because they have been told or taught so well that they weren’t, and so much of a effort was put in to tell them that they were not. And it’s awfully hard to feel like what your parent or your respected person told you was wrong. That’s awfully hard to accept. So, we have generations to go before it’s universally accepted. You see what I’m saying? [TT: Yeah.] And that, and so you ran into all those kinds of people. But there’s always a few that have a very good conscience and are educated enough in their minds. Now, I mean, 'cus after all there are some real educated people that are plain… {Laughter} Plain, plain, plain, plain... [laughing] You know how I mean? [grinning] How should I say, they are completely off, but, you know what I am saying – so, that all varies according to what they can think.

TT: Who were those here, as far as allies, because there is such a small black population here. You know, were there allies in the white community?

PB: There always were some, you know like the Friends – what is it, that's that group that doesn’t believe in war, you know what I’m talking about.

TT: The American Friends Service Committee?

PB: Pardon me?

TT: The American Friends Service Committee.
PB: Maybe that’s what it is, but you know the Quakers, that group and some of those that were always there to support you, you know. And then there were always some well thinking White folks. There’s always been. After all we wouldn’t have made that Civil Rights thing if there hadn’t been. You know, I keep telling people that you know after all, there were a lot of white folks that died in the Civil Rights Movement. And there were a lot of them that were kicked out from their towns and cities because they sided with the Blacks. So you have... It has to be that, 'cus a small group could not do that. But it just depends. After all if... I don’t know... See, what had made it so rough was that people tried to - how do you call it - justify slavery from the Bible. See, and that a distortion of Christianity. And I hope some day that somebody will have a slavery museum in the Smithsonian. [Phone Rings]

You can stop that for a second it you want. [Tape recorder is paused. While Ms. Bradford is talking on the phone, the digital recorder is left recording because Patrice was not sure if stopping the recorder would erase the interview.]

PB: Where was I?

PM: You were hoping that there was a slavery exhibit at the Smithsonian Museum.

PB: Yeah. Yeah, because I think if they ever do it, and usually when they do something they do it right, all the way through. Because the slavery that, my feeling, that the slavery that was in this country was different than any slavery in history. Because most of the times, the slaves were where you conquered a country and you made them slaves for a while, but you realized that they were people you know. But there were things done in this country for slavery, the idea was to dehumanize, break up families, do every thing that you could so that there would be no... no recovery. No matter what. And I don’t think that most people understand that. You know. I don’t think... Have you heard that before?

TT: I... yeah... I feel that most people don’t understand it as well, like today.
PB: You see what I am saying. And I think, just like the Holocaust, you know, that’s kept up on all the time now. [chuckling] Slavery needs to be, because I think, because it will take something deep like that to have people who still do not believe that their parents, their grandparents, their great grandparent were wrong, to understand why. And it won’t be coming from us. [Ms. Bradford pats her chest several times.] It would be coming from an independent historical fact. You see what I am saying. So that’s, I won’t live to ever see it but, anyway. Hopefully, you kids will. [laughs]

PM: Do you remember when Martin Luther, Dr. Martin Luther Kings came to town?

PB: I remember when he came to town a couple of times, but I didn’t get to see him.

PM: Okay. Do you know what kind of impact that had on the city as far as maybe energizing people?

PB: It energized, it always energized the groups, the people who were bringing him here and the people who he was speaking with. But now you know, that when he was pushing all of this stuff, you’ve got to remember, you also had people who didn’t feel like he was doing anything, you know how I mean. {Laughter} You've got – [lauging] I’m sorry, you wanted me to be honest with you – there was [inaudible] that wouldn’t make any difference. After all, all those times the years before - and then the non-violent part… That took a lot of discipline. That... Gandhi was his idol, you know, that’s who he patterned it after. But, there is that almost instinctive, want to fight back, you know, but the idea to see that non-violently you can actually win. But, look at how many people had to suffer and die, and see that’s why I was saying that there were white people that died then too. So, you know, you always have some good people, some awful people. And it isn’t that all black people are good, now remember. Look at Africa, they’re fighting among themselves all the time. But a lot of that is still the, um - some of it is the effects of colonialism, but some of it was just natural. When there is a shortage of wealth, he who has the wealth attracts those who don’t have it. And different ways, to get some for themselves or to take it all, it doesn’t matter, you know, that's how come you have wars all the time, you still have wars, in
other words, 'cus that was the way to do it. I go over and take all your gold and silver and stuff
and bring it, that’s mine and my family. The heck with you.

TT: Well, I wanna jump back a bit just 'cus you know being students from PSU we’ve learned a
lot about the history, you know, of Portland State as well as African American students at
Portland State. How was it for you being at PCC in Shattuck Hall in 1964?

PB: Oh it was fine, 'cus let me tell ya - during that time, the kids in the class were, most of them
were um, what do you call it, trying to get out of the war. They probably, some at least at the
community college level, they were practically all young boys. Now, remember I was not a
young person then. I would have been in my thirties, see. So, I’m the old woman. And the old
woman is bringing up the grade curve. {Everybody laughs.} Now, you guys know what that’s
like. But, you know, after all I’m there to go to school, get my work done. And after all, going
like I was, going from work and there and then to home, I didn’t have a lot of any activities. I
wasn’t on campus you know like you kids are, see. My deal would be to come, go to class, do
what I had to do, get back, and that was it. So, it was interesting. And see, it was kinda new 'cus,
think about, if you could kinda look back, there weren’t too many older women going back to
school then. I think I was the, almost the first in this neighborhood that did that. Later on, there
were more starting, because then some of them started getting a little government help to do it,
you know. But, I remember having to speak a couple of times with some groups to try to tell
them, yeah, you can do it, you know, get back and go ahead. But, I was going, told you why I
was going.

And I always loved… Told you that my husband and I were yak, yak, yak, what were we
yakking about? We were yakking about everything going on in the world, we’d read newspapers
and stuff, we bringing everybody up to date [laughs]. And some people, I know my aunt and
uncle probably thought we were terrible. {Everybody laughs.} Oh, golly…

PM: So, I remember speaking with you over the phone, you mentioned some things about the
changing neighborhood and what happened, and I have three questions that I’ll ask that, you can
answer in any which way. How was the change in the race affected you neighborhood? What
PB: Okay. [laughs] Let’s see when I moved, we moved here, there were, pretty… It was a kind of a mixed neighborhood when we first got in, you know. There were still white families around, but they were mostly older families, older people, right. So either, some of them stayed until they died, but a lot of them moved because the realtors, realtors make money when they sell property, right. So they had a good way of saying, ‘you better get rid of it now because these folks are moving in and your property value is gonna go down! So you’d better hurry up and sell your property.’ Now, what they didn’t say, which never came out of all this stuff, you didn’t hear, they were not giving their property away. They were selling their property for a good price, because, guess what? They had a captive audience. The people couldn’t buy anything anywhere else, pretty much. So, whatever they asked, you had to pay if you wanted it. Right? So, here they could sell an older place and go buy a newer place, probably with the same thing. You see? But the realtors, their whole deal, you know, using that, and the banks, of course they are going to loan them money to buy out there, right. So they were all making money. So pretty soon, if you moved in, maybe two or three of you in there, give it a couple of years or so, almost everybody would be black.

Now, all of a sudden, I think because of the land boundaries, you know, urban boundaries, and land is scarce, and all of the sudden the property inside of the city is very valuable. And they discovered the older houses are very valuable because they were built with good wood and stuff, you know, and all of that. And thinking on the model of San Francisco, alright, so people had come in and ah! Well, maybe they sold their property in California, California was more expensive, right, and they come down here and they find the price is fairly cheap considering. And ‘oh, I can buy that and do it all over and still have money from what I did back there.’ So, that all helped the gentrification thing going on. But, and so what happens is, some people that were renting - ’cus some people had rented these houses for twenty-five and
thirty years, stayed in the same place. Had no reason not to, because the people, they did their
own wallpapering and everything else in it, you know, and painted it, you know, kept it all inside
beautifully. Well, they first didn’t know the, and don’t let ‘em - the person who owned it died,
then the family would say 'oh, well, I gotta to have my money now;' so they took the money. So,
you were gone, out the door. And then some people just decided, 'well, I can take this money and
I can go back South and I can buy more and have some money left.' So, all those things came in
to make a difference.

And now the people who sold out and left, most likely they couldn’t come back here if
they wanted to, because they couldn’t afford it. And that has been a pretty bad deal because so
many of the families that have a lot of children, you know, that really should be able to come
back and have a piece of the stake are gone. And that’s the sad part about it, because I was just
thinking, if I look down the neighborhood now, who do I have here up on Hancock that’s left?
[Ms. Bradford points toward the window] Sonia, the one lady right down the street here, and she
– her property, that was her parents’ property. You go down that next block, there may be some
people renting there, but the owners, the owners is just, all completely, blacks gone. Dean’s
Barber shop, and I think they own the house next door to it, but that’s about it, see. There was a
Chase, those houses on the corner there down there, right down there. Gone. This is true even on
Stanton where I was. They've done a lot of building and what have you, but I think of ownership
there now - one, two people, two black people still own something over there. But the value of
the stuff is going up, up, up! And so, that’s the way that is. Now, what was the other question?
[lightly chuckles] 'Cus I’m really rambling here.

PM: *What would you like to see change, because do you think that the meetings that they are
having at the Elks lodge* is a vehicle for that change?

PB: [Laughs]

PM: [Laughs]
PB Hahaha! Not unless they are going to give them some money to buy some of this. Well, what I’d like - for some of those people over there that have not been completely displaced, maybe it might slow it down some so that a few stay. Or maybe a little education gets around to some of them, that it’s valuable and they put the effort and money into it. A few that’s left. But you know how it is when everything is gone and just a little bit left. That’s the deal, see. But – well, naturally I’d like to see the neighborhood more diverse, I just feel that way, you know.

And the other thing that I keep telling these folks - you know when people come in from out of state, they think, ‘oh, this was all run down and how those people didn’t care and they didn’t take care of it.’ See, I get upset when people do that, because they didn’t realize what the people were going through just to keep the property where it was, ‘cus if they had left it vacant, it would have been all rotted and it wouldn’t have been there in the first place. But, first place, couldn’t get credit. Right? Okay. Didn’t have the jobs to pay the high price of stuff, to do too much, and did what they could to keep it up as best they could. So, now instead of, instead of saying, ‘well I’m glad that they kept it up so I could buy it,’ they’re 'all these people, I don’t know what they did. Oh they just, ugh, it was just a mess.' That’s the part I don’t like. And that’s the part I’d like to see change. I’d like the people coming in to recognize the struggle that the people had keeping it up to where it was. And to recognize that if there hadn’t of been for some of those people in the neighborhood working on knocking out redlining, they would not have been able to go to the bank and get a loan to buy there, in here now. But it was from - and it did not get done by other people, it was done by the people in the neighborhood. The same ones that they would look down on. And that’s an educational situation and I don’t know how it will ever get out, but that’s something that they need to know, because we did not get...

I worked with POP, Portland Organizing Project\textsuperscript{xii}, to get the redlining knocked out. And that did not get done until we were able to use that Community Reinvestment Act\textsuperscript{xiii} to its fullest. To threaten that we were going to file against the US Bank when they wanted a visa card. Now, since then, they have changed in Washington the Community Reinvestment Act. See, every time you move up a little bit, then something comes to snatch you back a little bit.

PM: \textit{Whoa!} [Laughs]
PB: You see what I mean. And that's the thing that people have to be constantly fight and aware of, you know, okay. But anyway, so that was one group that I did do a lot of volunteering with. And that was a church group. Portland Organizing Project. It was made up of religious churches, but they were using the model from Chicago, the South Shore type thing.

PM: So, not to pry too much into your personal beliefs, but you mentioned that your children went to Magdalene Heart; you guys are Catholic family.

PB: Yeah, that's, well... Technically if you are Catholic and you have children, the old school deal was that you were supposed to send your kids to Catholic School if it was financially possible and that was.

PM: Okay. But, were you familiar with the church that started out in the Vanport area and kinda grew in its membership. I'm drawing a blank right now. We saw an exhibit on...

TT: Oh, Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church.

PB: Vancouver Avenue Baptist Church, yeah that's just across - that lady that called me, one of them was a very staunch member [Ms. Bradford grabs her shirt which muffles the microphone for a second,] in that church there, girl. She even, they did that hundred year deal and she even bought me one of these big books! You know, from Vancouver Avenue. Yeah.

PM: Do you remember doing work with them? Because I know they did a lot of activist work during the Civil Rights, you know, and had people coming in...

PB: I'm trying to remember. Now, the Lutheran, I'm trying to think, remember whether... I think maybe at the tale end of it they joined. They kinda came in with POP, but POP was strictly religion at the time when it was operating. Now, it's called an area something, you know. They kinda went outta business and there's another group that has replaced it. The one that goes -
pardon me - and fight for, oh umm, all kinds of rights, worker’s rights and things like that. Area Organizing, but I think they have the unions in it and everything else.

TT: *Jobs with Justice?*

PB: They are kinda out growth with that, from that you know. But it's that other group, what is it… Oregon Area Organizing, oh shoot I can’t think of… can't get the name together. But, Portland Organizing Project was consisted of various churches and the churches ended up financing it, because each church that joined it would assess a certain amount of money to pay the cost of operating it. But then it was, you know, volunteers were the main people that were doing the work, you know, and they had different committees. There was a jobs committee, then there was a housing committee. I just spent my time with the housing committee at that time. So that’s how come I was deeply involved with that. But it was various churches, different groups - Lutherans were heavy into it - to work on that one issue. But that other areas is doing the same thing, except that they now have more than just churches. They have the unions and some other groups involved. They’re working on that Jobs with Justice and all that stuff.

PM: *I know there is a Jesuit Volunteer Corp that’s further down on Williams.*

PB: [very softly] Probably.

PM: *I did work with them.*

PB: Yeah, see they do a lot of work too. You know there is an awful lot of deals, but this particular deal was, came in at that particular time. You know how groups come in and get started and then they kind of move on. You get some people working, you get some people interested in delving into the problem and we delved...

‘Cus you see what happens is, we didn’t know we were being redlined. A lot of people didn’t. A lot of people were redlined, and if you ask them, were you ever redlined, they'd say no.
They don’t know they were. The only time you'd find out is if you decided that you wanted to borrow some money or you wanted them to loan you some money on your house.

TT: And they would be denied?

PB: Yeah and they’d tell you why. You'd say, “Well okay, come take a look.” “Oh no, we can’t loan money over there.” “What do you mean you can’t loan money over there?” “No, we can’t loan money over there.” Now, I actually confronted the head of uh, it was First National Bank at one of these meetings that we had over at - I think it was Vernon Lutheran Church over on 18th or somewhere over there – about the deal. 'Cus what had happened is, we had half way paid for the house over there and we had a bank account there. We were making the payments through the bank, right, the little slip. And we had a checking account there and we were both working and we decided that we wanted to borrow some money on the house. We were gonna do some work in the house and some other things, right? And they said no, they couldn’t do it. “What do you mean you can’t do it? Well, why don’t you come take a look at it?” ‘Cus, you know, the house was in good shape. “Oh no, we just can’t loan money over there.” “What do you mean you can’t loan money over there?” That’s how we found out. My husband was so upset. We got the money alright, but we got the money from, we had to go to a mortgage company, you see. But that’s how we found out. We took that check back there to them people and they said, “Well, we’ll cash it…” “All I want you to do is cash this check and take out what we owe you and that’s it.” So, you know, those were the kinda things that happened. So, I know that there are many people that thought, that did not know that they were being redlined.

PM: You were talking about education and being educated about what's going on in your area.

PB: Yeah, and you can, you know, think you're aware of everything and still not be aware of everything. You see what I’m saying.

TT: Well, I have a final question and then [Patrice] you can finish up with any questions you have left.
PM: Okay.

TT: *But, I was reading* how to motto of the NACW was, you know, “Lifting as we climb” and I thought that was really interesting, considering things I’ve read about you, about you being a community historian, and the things you’ve discussed with us today, but what do you think, how do you think that motto is important for today’s generations with all that you’ve been telling us about education and the importance of knowing?

PB: Well, the whole thing about it is that, technically with that, you’re supposed to be trying to bring someone up with you, that’s the reason for that. You know, you’ve seen the, what do you call it? The pin, the picture of it – it’s a picture of a lady climbing a rock. Because you’re supposed to try to pass your knowledge down, and you’re supposed to encourage people to do the best they can and try to help. In other words, the better, the more people know, the more they’re advanced, the better they improve themselves, the better it is for the race and the country as a whole. Because it’s not, we don’t want it just to be us, we want it for everybody, ’cus we live in the country. And you want the country to prosper. But you want everybody to be able to prosper and you wanted everyone to be treated fairly. And that’s kinda difficult sometimes for some people to take in, you know. ‘I wanna be treated fairly, but I don’t care if you’re treated fairly or not,’ you know. That’s not a good deal, because it has to work for everyone. And it’s just like, decide well…

The homeless, now that’s a deal that has to be dealt with. People need to have a place to stay if it’s anyways possible. Now. True, some people maybe don’t want to, but if you – say that you got a hundred people out there homeless, at least fifty percent of those people really want to be in a house. You gonna have some people that are weird and, you know, got ideas that are mentally messed up in all kinds of ways and full of drugs. But at least half of them will wanna be in a house. And with this economy, the way it is now, you’ve got so many people that's homeless, it isn't even funny. There’s so many living in their cars, it's unreal. The kids, the whole families are living in their cars. They’re homeless. But there are people in the world,
don’t want… 'Don’t bring them to my neighborhood!' [PM: laughs] Not knowing that they could be in the same boat.

TT: Yeah, that’s true.

[Pause]

PB: Did I miss out on what else you said, did I answer that question right? What did you, what did…

TT: Well that’s kinda getting into where I was going but also, you know, what would you say - you kinda started, you’ve been addressing me and Patrice, but what would you say to today’s generations?

PB: Ah, today’s generations, ohhh... [Ms. Bradford makes a face and rolls her eyes jokingly.] {laughter} My only problem, every generation, the generation before talks about how bad they are. But my problem with this generation, the generation coming in, is that they've got it worse than anyone has ever had, because the world has grown smaller. And they’re having to, gonna have to compete with people all other the world that are putting their nose to the grind. And they’re saying, “I don’t wanna!” So my hope - the thing that worries me about the generation is, when you start to think about economies all over the world, some people will be the ones that do the thinking and make the - how do you call it - the high level stuff, right. And there will be those that have to be the workers at one level. Then there'll have to be those that are the workers at the bottom level. And my problem is that I think that too many of our kids are wanting to be there at the bottom level. And they don’t know that when you’re at the bottom level, you’re either gonna be in bad shape or you’re gonna be in jail or dead. {PM: Yeah.} [short pause] And their brain, you learn better as you're younger. You can always learn, but you learn better, quicker and faster when you’re young and they’re wasting that time.

I don’t blame it all on the kids. I blame a lot of that on that parent level, ’cus I think that there was a - I think there’s that group in between who grew up too fast and did not get the maturity and education they needed themselves, and then they’re raising kids. So, they don’t
have anything to pass down to their kids unless they get into it themselves. And sometimes by
the time you get it into the kids, get down to get it to the kids, it's almost too late. They've got all
types of bad habits, they got to get rid of this habit, they got to get rid of that habit. That’s a
problem and that’s what I worry about. Especially in America. When I think of India and China,
they got more architects, engineers, all over the place...

[tape recorder stops and I have to change the tape.]

TT: You can continue.

PB: And they don't have any, what do you call it - unless they're mentally, uh - dropouts. They
get that stuff.

PM: At a national level.

PB: Yeah, all of them. The poor, there's no such thing as being too poor to learn. You know
what I mean? And that’s a value that they have, right. And all you have to do is look at the
people who come to our country. True enough, a lot of them that come to our country are really
from the upper class that came over, you know what I mean, or the business people. After all, we
didn’t get a lot - except maybe the Hmongs – we didn't get a lot of the people that were at the
bottom of the line. Most of them that came, a lot of them had experience with being business
people and what have you... {PM: Professionals.} Uh-huh. And that, and they have their kids.
Most of them have kids, a lot of kids most likely. Their kids are right there to contribute to their
family well being, regardless. Regardless. Until they get up and get married. But you notice, so
therefore all of that wealth is being put together.

And you know what? Many years ago, Black people did that. But they stopped. They
became too Americanized. You know. But they did! So, that’s my fear. Unless we can get all
the kids, all of a sudden - see, a star, if I’m a basketball or a football player and all that and make
a lot of money. Or if I’m not that, I can see that drug dealer coming up here with all that fancy
car and all that money and that looks good, too. [pause] But education will the best thing.
Otherwise, they'll be the ones down there doing the dirty work. And my problem with this is that the rest of the world is moving ahead and we’re moving down.

And if it's gonna be this deal that, that you can make goods and services and like - I saw a picture in the paper - or where was it, on television or something - about China. You know how we’re going to bicycles now, right? You remember, they’ve been on bicycles all the time. Guess what they doing? They’re going to cars! And building their houses, all out in the rural areas. And they own them, they don’t have a mortgage, right, 'cus whatever the little bit they did, you know what it is... And it's not big children there, 'cus remember they have that rule, one child only. {PM: Yeah, the four, two, one rule.} Yeah. That’s what I’m talking about! Okay, so, but…

Well, wait a minute now... So, they will be the ones up there and who will be the ones doing the dirty work across the world? Americans, if - right now, they say that they have to send to India and those other countries to get the high level techs that they need out here at Intel and what have you.

TT: Yeah.

PB: And we don’t have nurses and doctors. How come we don’t have nurses and doctors? Well, I think, number one, they did not want to create many. They made it so hard for people to get in the nursing and doctor's schools. You know, they only take so many, so many. They could have expanded that. {TT: It's also really expensive.} I know, but it don’t have to be that expensive. Not if they had a lot of them. Sure, it's gonna be expensive. If you've only got a certain few, the scarcity brings the price up. Just like when they started off with the few things at community college for nursing, you know, the little nursing, that was much cheaper. Then when they go into a plain nursing school, you know, a four year nursing school. And they don’t have the three year like they used to have, you know, like Emmanuel Hospital used to have the school of nursing, which was, you just went right there. They had, each hospital pretty much had their own nursing schools. But the doctors - and look at, talking about Cuba, they got doctors the send all over the world, they train doctors, you know. It isn’t that they can’t, that the brain power isn’t there. It’s the will power and the financing too, but that - when we decided we wanted to send a man to the moon, guess what? We did it. When Russia beat us there, the government - now wait a minute -
they said the government shouldn’t do it, the government did it, didn't it? It took the government
to do it though. [pause]

TT: That’s true.

PB: So, there’s a lot to think about. And I know I went off that question with you. [Laughter]
Now, what - you had another question. You gave me three questions and I know I only
answered about two. Okay. I did, okay. [Patrice and Ms. Bradford are speaking at the same time.]

PM: You answered them but, I was just going to go along the same vein. Kinda like what would
you tell people today, I was gonna ask has civil rights for Blacks in Oregon or Portland
specifically changed or improved by your standards or from your understanding?

PB: Well, it has improved some, because after all, you're not gonna to be, you're not gonna see a
restaurant that’s gonna have a “We serve White only.” [chuckling] You’re not gonna have those.
And chances are, the few places that are kinda, don’t really want to you do come in, and give you
poor service, you know, you can either stay and wait for the service and give them a bad time or
you can say, 'forget it I’m not interested in it,' you know. But there’s not that many that will do
that nowadays, here. But there are always undercurrent ways of denying things. 'Cus I kinda
often wonder, you know...

Now, the internet is an interesting place. I don’t use it for these folks, like the way that
they like to do it, right. But there's so much stuff going on - what do you call it - plots and things.
How should I say, planning and stuff that goes on that’s being done, that’s not being done toward
the open public meetings law, you know. I don’t think, because how are you gonna have an
open; if you're gonna be emailing somebody something about this and they're emailing you and
you guys are deciding what you’re gonna do, and then you are ready to come and bring it to the
deal and you’ve already decided. Does that mean that everybody has email and everybody is
going to be listening to you? No. And the open meetings law was that you do it at an open
meeting where everybody who happens to attend the meeting will hear it. So, there are some
things that are still kind of interesting, but I guess everything will all - you don’t expect it to be
perfect. ’Cus after all, if we got it perfect, what would you guys have to do?

TT: That’s true.

PM: Sit back and… {laughter}

PB: [Laughing] No way! You’re gonna have to do some work, too.

TT: That’s true.

PM: [Quietly] That’s true.

[Long pause]

PB: I guess you guys are done, but don’t worry. This is, this is just me.

TT: Oh, its great. We have a lot. This is, I am really excited to and looking forward to doing the
transcribing [PB: Have fun...] and re-go through...

PB: And knock out a whole lot of it, [chuckling] ’cus I tell you. I just thought, well this is good. I
like to pass on to some, what I think. ’Cus I think it can be helpful. At least become aware that
you need to be aware of everything that goes on. It isn’t that, you don’t want to be fearful. And
take some stuff you get with a grain of salt.

TT: Well, it’s very helpful to me personally, because I am in the education program at Portland
State and I want to be a high school teacher. And so to hear your story and then be able to pass
it to people even younger than us who are gonna be the next generation coming up.

PB: Yeah, it’s gonna be interesting for them, but I tell you, at heart, teaching is hard work.

transcribed by Tasha Triplett, audited and edited by Joshua Ross
TT: It is.

PB: Some people put a lot more into it than others, but you know, it just depends. And it depends on, each subject is different, see. High school subject is a little bit different than grade school. You gotta do a lot of thinking, what have you, but I mean - in other words, you don’t have to have a lesson plan for a ten minute presentation. [chuckles] That’s the problem with the primaries and the kindergarten. You know, you gotta teach every subject. And half the time, it’s the planning. And the planning is, you planned for a half hour to teach for ten minutes, see. So... But, it's still, everything’s important. 'Cus it's important, better late than never. But I like, when I went to Europe, we had this deal when you get off the bus, they tell you, “Okay, better late than never, but better yet, but better ever... [trying to remember] but better yet, never late.” [laughing] Oh golly…

PM: So, I feel like with this generation, like my generation, Tasha’s generation, we kinda have this charge to become involved and kinda take over some of the positions or kinda pass the baton, get the baton passed from leaders such as yourself. When you were at our age, what do you think that the charge was for you as a young person?

PB: Well, see this is the thing, coming from the South. People who came from the South had different ideas. See, you thought you were coming to a land of milk and honey, [laughing] which it wasn’t, but that was - you know what I mean, the idea was things are better up North and what have you, at least for jobs and for people treating - and then, you come and you find things were almost just the same, you know. You get these shocks on the way, you know. But you still felt that, well, you're gonna make it better, or you gonna fight for it. You couldn’t feel like you were gonna make it better, but you were gonna get in a fight to try to make it better. And so, you do the best you can, you know, you do the best you can. And you realize, you're not going to be able to get it all right, but you hope that some other people will follow along and complete it, you know. And so, and that’s my goal.

My main goal, and I’m gonna talk about my Harriet Tubman Club now. Well, we’re just old ladies now. Now they do work with a youth group, that’s true. I mean, that’s like
young children. That’s at the state level. But, my deal, like I was telling... [Ms. Bradford moves
and her microphone is muffled.] we got to get some young women involved in Harriet Tubman so
we can keep this club going. This club was organized in Portland in 1922. Now that’s a long
time. {PM: Yeah!] And I don’t want this generation to be it! [points to herself] See, after all,
there were sixteen clubs in Portland at the time and they’re all down to four now. In ’58, when
integration came along, a lot things changed, because it opened up a lot of stuff for different
people that got involved in things they couldn’t get involved in before, okay. And then there was
a while when we came along with this stuff, nobody wanted to be called colored. So, you see you
have all of this, these little things going through. And there’s just so much. But now I’m down to
Avel, myself, Mrs. Ransom, and my daughter. I keep her in - the one that’s not here, the horse
daughter, she’s out in Nevada. But, you know. And that’s it see. And we have to get some more
members, and I was telling Ms. Avel that we have to keep this club going. Now that’s my one,
you know, how you get a personal mission, my personal mission is this club has to keep going.
’Cus it would be a shame, it's been here in Oregon going on all that long time and then it just die,
when it can be whatever the group wants it to be, you know. The membership decides what they
are interested in. They can meet as often as they want to. They don’t have to have, gotta have a
meeting this month, got to have - they can meet whenever they want. They just gotta organize
around something.

And the later years, when we were older, we would meet in - most of our deal, we would
be bringing in - 'cus we didn’t live in the same areas and what have you - we would be bringing in
information about what’s going on in our part of the town or the things that we knew about, and
that was kind of interesting to share. It was kind of a sharing deal. And then of course, we ate,
you know, visited. Maybe we wouldn’t see each other until the next meeting. You know,
because people lived in different parts and go to different churches, you know. But it was still a
way of communicating.

And then there’s always something coming down from national that they would like to
have you help them with or talk about, you know, ’cus their headquarters was Washington D.C.
And they just renovated a building that their struggling to pay for, but when you think about it,
that they’ve had their headquarters there all these years and their history.
And maybe, you might check in the library just for curiosity, check and find out about the National Association of Colored Woman’s Clubs. And see, because they put their minutes, that’s the one organization that had the minutes from the beginning, and they put them on the universal press, recorded all their minutes and put it up. But they were not available unless the college bought the thing, you know, for the deal. But there is information about it, so a person could go, National Association of Colored Women. Not National Council, gotta remember that they keep that separate. National Association of Colored Women’s Club. And so that’s the one, that’s the thing that I want to keep going. And we’ve done a lot. We used to present the... Well, when Reverend Jackson was there, we used the hall and basement over there and, like, we presented the first woman chief to the community, you know. The mayor would come, the governor would come, you know, to speak to the community. I don’t hear about that anymore, now.

PM: Do you think that there’s a community for them to speak to?

PB: Oh yeah, because after all - see that picture there? [She point's to a picture of a group of older women on the coffee table.] That's from Mount Olive and we just got through with out luncheon, and we were headed out and one of the ladies said, “Oh, this fella wants to take a picture,” so he took it. We were all ready to go home. {PM: Is that okay?} Uh huh. You see what I mean?

Those are just the women from the club, you know, the organization that were there. The guests and everything were gone, you know how you’ve cleaned up and everything. See, and so you probably know some of those ladies, 'cus they go to various churches.

[long pause]

PM: [Chuckles] Wow. [Taps the photo.] I can’t think of her name.

PB: Which name? Which one was it?

[Patrice leans toward Ms. Bradford to show her the person she is pointing to in the photo]

PM: And where I know her from, but she’s in the back. She’s in the back there, she’s a larger bodied woman.
PB: I think I probably know. Show me which one.

PM: Right here.

PB: Oh, yeah, that’s Sally [Hearse], Ms. [Hearse].

PM: Oh, well I don’t know where I know her from but...

PB: Oh well. She had a daughter here, but her daughter is in California now and she has brothers... Sally [Hearse]...

TT: Do you mind if I take a picture of this with my camera?

PB: Oh no, no problem. Would you think it’d be better to take it of a black and white one?

TT: Do you have a black and white version of this?

PB: Look on the side there and see if there is a black and white version. If you find dust, don’t pay attention to it. [laughs] Look close to the deal and see if there is another picture in a frame. It'll be standing, sitting, should be sitting by the toward the...

TT: Oh here? I see it.

PB: Is that the same thing? Yeah. Might need to dust it, dear.

TT: You know, it's actually not that dusty.

PB: Okay.
PM: Tasha, do you remember the date of our presentation?

TT: Oh, I have the flyer. It's the eighteenth.

PM: We have a presentation on what we learned, like the process of collecting oral history and a presentation of what we've learned. We would love to have you attend you have the time. [PB: chuckles] If you could join us?

PB: Let me see, the eighteenth, what is going on? I’m trying to think… Thursday the eighteenth… I’ll see if I can come, 'cus if I can I would love to. I’m one of these people that do show up at some of these things once in a while. Yeah, I was trying to think of where, what did I do with my calendar… I try to half way, but the calendar doesn’t tell me everything but it's um… Did you see it?

TT: Do you mind if I take a picture of these as well?

PB: No, no problem, honey. Hopefully you can get one of it. You know, almost you need a piece of - I found a white piece of material or something to put underneath it, and then it, let me find… [Patrice helps Ms. Bradford take the microphone off of her lapel and we officially end the interview at around 2:30 PM March 10th 2010.]
i. The spelling of the last name here is uncertain. It is transcribed phonetically from the recording as “Shoes.”

ii. Jabberwock was conceptualized in 1925 as a musical variety show for the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority that consisted of skits and dances, the Jabberwock has since evolved into a more diverse program that continues to raise funds for scholarships and other Delta sponsored public service projects.

iii. Ms. Bradford says “Morgan,” but according to the 1957 National Association of Colored Women’s tax report, her last name in Martin.

iv. The spelling of this name is unclear. It is transcribed phonetically from the recording as “Balsiger.”

v. Mary Church Terrell was the first President and one of the founding members of the National Association of Colored Woman’s clubs.

vi. The Egyptian Theatre was built in 1924 and was located on Martin Luther King Boulevard, then Union Street. Before the passing of the Public Accommodations Law in 1953, African Americans had to sit in the second floor balcony.

vii. Dorothy McCullough Lee, 1949-1953

viii. Dick Bogle was the first African American television news anchor on the west coast, the second African American to be elected to the Portland city council and he was a police officer in Portland.

ix. Charles Jordan was the first African American elected to the Portland City Council.

x. The spelling of this business name is unclear. Ms. Bradford may be referring to Cohn Brother's Furniture, whose main store was located on SE Hawthorne Boulevard, but may have had a warehouse on what was Union Avenue, now Martin Luther King Boulevard. See http://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/Record/4607242/

xi. The Elks Lodge is located on North Williams Avenue. It was originally built in 1926 and first served as the Colored YWCA. It has been the stable community meeting place for several clubs and organizations.

xii. Portland Organizing Project started in 1985 was once an activist coalition of twenty Portland churches.

xiii. The Community Reinvestment Act of 1977 is a United Stated federal law designed to encourage commercial banks and savings associations to meet the needs of borrowers in all segments of their communities, including low and moderate income neighborhoods.

xiv. The spelling of this name is unclear. It is transcribed phonetically from the recording as “Hearse.”