

**Samuel Proctor Oral History Program**  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

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*-October 2013*

MFP-069

Interviewee: Willie Knighten

Interviewer: Michael Brandon and Joe Mathis

Date of Interview: September 25, 2010

B: This is Michael Brandon—

M: And Joe Mathis—

B: With Reverend Knighten in Sunflower, Mississippi. So, we're going to start a bit with just your general background, as you were just telling us a bit about. So, when and where were you born?

K: Oh, I was born about there . . . about a mile away from here, from here, south of here. After three years, my family moved out east of here about a mile and a half in the country, and my father farmed on about, probably three hundred acres of land. So, yeah, sharecropping. We just raised cotton and beans, stuff of that nature.

B: How did sharecropping affect your family?

K: Well, we really didn't . . . my father had sharecroppers. He standing rent, standing rent the land; he leased the land, and then he would use sharecropper. So, we made a decent living. Better than most people.

B: Did you go to school?

K: I went to school, but I didn't get a proper education. I probably . . . I was going to the fifth grade, had about a third-grade education as a kid coming up. I was kind of like the baby. I'm the baby out of twelve.

B: Wow.

K: I was kind of tough in school, got kicked out of school. I really didn't have the fifth, sixth grade level; had about a third-grade education. The teacher

just moved me up. They couldn't move me back, so they just had to move me up to get me out of the room.

B: Do you mind telling us what happened about getting kicked out of school?

K: Well, just being trouble and, like, when teacher, she was going to whup us, and I refused to take the whupping, because it wasn't justified, anyway. This teacher was in the home economics building, and she was with the girls' basketball team. I had a friend and, on our break—recess—all of the girls would come out and practice on the team, you know? This friend of mine wouldn't give them the ball, and so the girls went back and told the teacher, so she sent for us. It wasn't on me, but she sent for us, so she's going to give us kind of a spanking. Back in that time, you know, they whupped your ass. My friend, he was acting up; she was hitting him with a little strap, and I thought, man, go ahead on and take the whupping, that ain't that bad. [Laughter] So, when she got through with him, then she said, well, since it ain't this bad, ain't hurting this bad, I'm going to get something to hurt you. So, she got a stick. At that time, we had them big, tall heaters; you know, wooden heaters. So, she got a stick from the side of the heater. She said, I'm going to see that this hurts you. So, I didn't do no whupping anyways. I said, no, you're not going to hit me with that stick, ma'am. So, she talked to the principal. I told him he wasn't going to whup me with no stick like that. So, he stopped me in the hall and told me I couldn't come back until . . . unlessing I brought my father. So, I didn't bring my father back, so I just stayed away from school. I was around

fifteen years old. So, in the spring, school went out anyways, so I couldn't go back to the next semester. I was working on the farm; we plowed with mules, and I had to see about the cows. Most of my sisters and brothers was older than I was, and I got nieces and nephews older than I am, so I had sisters and brothers, enough for my mother and father. So, all of them were married and grown, but my father kept all the land and all the mules. I guess we had about fifteen heads of mules and three heads of cattle, and some hogs and chicken. I had to pump the water, and I'd be out there something, eight, nine, or ten o'clock at night; especially in the summertime, when you're working animals. And they can drink so much water. So, I kind of got tired of it. I came to town, I think, to pick up some ice or something or other; whatever the nature was. Chuck was going to North Carolina and I tagged in, actually. [Laughter] So, I went to North Carolina, started working on a tobacco farm.

B: All right.

K: From there, to Florida; from there, to New York; back to Florida, in and out of Mississippi, for about four or five years, I guess. Then I came back to Mississippi and got married, because I got a girl I knew. She was a little old girl. Stayed there for a few years. Then I moved to Chicago and stayed there for about seven years, just in and out.

B: Could you tell us a little bit about your experiences traveling throughout the South and working on different farms and things?

K: Well, I didn't work on too much of farms, no more than in Florida, North Carolina, New York. Florida, we would go down—a lot of my friends—we would go down and work at that potato factory, and then we would pick tomatoes, beans and stuff. Have to cut celery. It was fun to us. We didn't have expenses and I didn't have to go there and live, but just to get out. That was a lot of fun, too, staying on them camp. You had single women, single men. It was a lot of fun.

M: With all of your traveling, especially to the northern states, did it change your outlook on Mississippi and how the local Mississippians lived?

K: Not really. In all my traveling across the country, I still would choose Mississippi. I would choose Mississippi, because—I guess that's where I grew up in. I can relate to people better here. I wasn't used to in the city, you know, living next door from peoples for years and never hardly speak to them, or they don't speak to you. That's different in Mississippi, everybody speak. And you can meet them. First time meeting a person in Mississippi is like a new friend, you know? We just meet people and shine up and laugh and talk and chat with one another. But most cities didn't do that. People didn't trust you.

B: So, in going to a place like Chicago and, having grown up in the Jim Crow South, were racial practices a little bit different? Or was it just a different location and the same kind of racial prejudices?

K: It was different. I worked with bricklayers in Chicago, and some of them were German, these guys. What I had, I ended up—after getting saved

there and getting into the ministry, I end up with my own little service station. Me and my brother owned a little grocery store, but we still worked with bricklayers and stuff. Some of the white guys, regulars, used to tease me, you know, about Mississippi being Jim Crow and the whites. I said, well, if I had to chose the area between the whites in Mississippi and the middle of Illinois, I said, well, it'll be Mississippi. I said, because the white guys in Mississippi were straight up; if they didn't like you, they told you. But you guys have a grin on your face and put a contract out that night. [Laughter] So, you never really know where you stood. So, you all can move in the area and y'all could fence it, and then you don't sell land or houses to black people. You still isolate yourself. You are still subjugated. Nobody knew where they stood. I said, y'all put on a front; a false face. I said, but, on the inside, it's no different. So, I would choose Mississippi. I say because the white in Mississippi, they didn't like you, they told you. Another thing: if you stayed in a place that they would like for you to stay, that don't try to challenge their white supremacy, whatever, as long as you would work for them, they would turn you a favor. They would even help you through the wintertime, or loan you money. You can always get favors from them. But they didn't want you to rise up against them. They want you to stay on the same level, so, that's the problem that we really have. A lot of you say yes and no, so—you got along fine.

M: What role did your faith play in your outlook on the movement?

K: My faith.

M: Yes, sir. Once you got saved.

K: After I got saved?

M: Mm-hm.

K: Oh, I came back. When I came back, it was much different, because I had played a role in the civil rights movement before I left, because I worked with the Southern Christian Leadership Movement, on the movement that Dr. King had developed. So, I worked with that. Had me a lot of guys coming here from the cities: California, Pennsylvania, New York. Some of these young guys—and I was young at that time, too—guys come in, like Joe Harris, McLaurin and those guys. Then you had guys like the Scattergoods and Joe Daniels, and Margaret Kibbee. Some of them came in, you know. But it was all across the state with them, though we get some in our area.

B: So, how did you get involved with SCLC?

K: Well, when they first started, it was fun to me, because I never had no fear of white or black. [Laughter] I was in jail. I had come here and, in [19]61, I believe—I think that's come from New York, coming back through here. Then I had a girl pregnant, whatever. Went on to Florida and come back home for the christening and spent my money; couldn't get back to Florida right away. [Laughter] Me and my boys, we had robbed a gambling house and I end up in the county jail. In the county jail, well, I was kind of the leader of the gang, I guess. I had guys in their thirties following me in my late teens and early twenties. I had a friend that got killed at the robbery.

He died when I left in a getaway car. Most of the guys that I was raised up with around here, they were still working on these plantations. That's why they say I went off to the whole thing, because the in and out, and I really didn't stay on the plantations with the people; got work with my father.

When I was in the jailhouse, well, I was there for three months, four and a half months. Tried. Well, it sobered other guys, as well. The county seat there in Indianola, the jail sat on the bayou side and the courthouse side across from it. They didn't have the jail in the courthouse at that time. I was there, and I had a public defender, so, he tried to get me to plead guilty for seventeen years in the state penitentiary. The chief deputy, the sheriff, he ran the jail. So, he was in good with the judge. So, he told the judge to give me a county farm sentence, so they could keep me around the jail. Say he like a nigger with mud. Because, at that time, I didn't care what he called me as long as I didn't get the seventeen years. So, with armed robbery carried for a minimum of three years to capital punishment. So, we came out with the minimum, and they had to split it up. So, what they did, they kept me in the jail for six months—sold me, at six months, for five hundred dollars. I could either do another five months or pay the five hundred dollars and go home after six months. They give me the two-year good behavior. So, I had one partner that shot another guy. He being due about nine months in the penitentiary. So, the other guys got out on probation because they worked on these farms down here and their bosses came over and got them out. But they wouldn't get me out



because they said they didn't know too much about me and what kind of guy I was. So, while I was there when the civil rights movement there got started. So, Mrs. Hamer, them, and some more came over. I think my wife, auntie, Mrs. Townsend, they came over to register to vote. So, they kind of beat up on them and throw some in jail; well, they ran them away. They wouldn't let them vote. Then, they began to send some teenagers then, some young men and girls. They'd come out of Alabama and join and different areas, that descend in this area. So, they had them in jail. So, I was working at the county jail, doing my time, and I think I locked up the first crew they brought in. So, then I got a chance to communicate with them, so they were telling me what was going on. I had about two more months to do. So, when they came up to the courthouse, the sheriff and them wouldn't even let me come over there; they run me by. But, as soon as I got out, I got with them. [Laughter] So, that's where I got started. Me and my boy, we were the first somebodies in Sunflower County march. Martin Luther King met us in Indianola, and we marched from Sunflower to Indianola. This little town, in fact, had the first black to run for mayor in the state of Mississippi. Didn't win, but we ran. Young man come from Indianola called Brown. But my father was never wrong. He didn't have no fear of white folks, either, because he was raised by white people. [Laughter] My sister and them in Chicago and some, they were much older than I was, so I talked my daddy into running for mayor. So, they come down, and they want to beat up on me, talking about how I'm going

to get Daddy killed and all of that kind of stuff. So, we kind of backed out just to satisfy them. But, he was going to be the first person running for mayor, so they didn't want him participating in it. That's basically the way we got started. Then, Mrs. Hamer, she was down in the election, and I kind of worked with her, going from house to house, trying to constrain blacks to come out and vote. So, we got involved like that.

B: So, when you first talked to some of the civil rights workers, did they have to do a lot of work to convince you to work with them, or once you heard them talk, were you—

K: Oh, no, no, huh-uh. That was the in for me, because, at that time, I didn't talk to white folk. I didn't like white folk. [Laughter] It's sad to say, but I didn't talk to them. I would come in sometimes, you know—I worked on a farm with my daddy, but we had to wait till the end of the year, before harvest, before you make any money. He could always get money to farm the crop with, but we had to wait till after the harvest, until he sell everything, before we actually have money. So, we would go out, we would pick cotton for other farmers, you know. Daddy would let us go out and work on a Saturday. We didn't have to work at home, we'd go out and make a little extra money. So, I would drive trips for some of the other whites. The plantation that my wife raised up on, this guy, I would go over there and I would go out and work for him sometimes. He had one son, a white kid. He was raised up with us. He loved the black peoples. His daddy, he had his daddy on one, trying to get me out of jail because he

didn't thought it was fair they got all the other guys out, left me in there. Because none of the other farmers didn't know nothing about me, and they didn't know about the things that guy had in there. I would work for him, but I played with his son, but after I kind of growed up, I didn't have too much for them, neither. I would go there; all the guys would meet there in the morning, getting ready to get on their track and go to work. So, he'd give everybody an assignment. You know, tell us what field to go to and he wants you to be planting, you going to be planting and doing this. So, when he give everybody an assignment, they say, yes, sir. They're going to it. So, when they give me my assignment, I sit up there and listen. When they give me my assignment, I just asks out. So, he asked my brother, did I have any mental problems? [Laughter] My brother said, why did you say that? He said, well, I tell everybody else what to do and they say yes, sir. When I get through talking to him, see, he don't say a word. He just walk out there. He'll go out and do it, and hell, he'll do a good job, but you don't know whether he's going to do it or not. You never know where he stand, because he never talk to you. [Laughter] I avoid talking because I refused to yes, sir, no, sir, to a young white. I would avoid talking to him. So, other than that, I wouldn't say nothing. I just let them do all the talking. [Laughter] So, bow my head. That's kind of the way that I would work with them, but it wasn't no problem for me to get involved in the civil rights movement, anyway, because I was glad to see somebody

would stand up against the whites, because it was always my thing to do so.

B: You mentioned doing canvassing with Mrs. Hamer. Did you have any difficulty in the community, or were people responsive to the message you were spreading to them?

K: No. Sometimes, we had the people that were doing the campaigning go around and try to get them out to vote. Sometimes, they had a problem, so we would go around and talk to them. We were able to persuade some, and some of them we didn't, you know? So, that wasn't the problem, but I loved working with her, because we would be walking the streets. She'd say, come on, baby son, you're making history. We're making history. [Laughter] I didn't even know what she was talking about. [Laughter]

B: So, she was well aware that she was doing something that would have a legacy that would carry on throughout time.

K: Right. Well, I had a friend—he's still living off, that she nursed him on a plantation, from Ruleville. She was very familiar with the family until she started. Then, she kept time and, you know, when you weigh cotton, the amount of cotton you're picking, all of that. So, she kept writing up the cotton and the time that people—

M: Would take to pick theirs.

K: Right. So, she was kind of chose out from the other blacks. She was intelligent enough to keep records for the whites and all of that. So, that's why they were so much upset with her, that they thought that she was—

after they give her the best job and everything, that she would turn against it. So, that's why they really were upset with her.

B: Mm-hm. So, you worked with her with the Freedom Vote in [19]64 and into [19]65, after the passage of the Voting Rights Act?

K: Yeah. Well, during that, I didn't do a lot of work with her because she was doing a lot of traveling at that time. But, when she was in this here, that we worked well.

B: So, you were close with her?

K: Huh?

B: So, you were close with Mrs. Hamer?

K: Not exactly. Hm-mm, not as close as some of the others. I just knew, when she was in this area, whenever I had a chance to be doing work with her. But me and my boys, friends, we were about the first somebodies that were willing to march.

M: Going with your traveling, were you ever looked on by the white power structure as an outside agitator? Because you had gone to Chicago and had gone to New York?

K: Oh, when I come here?

M: Mm-hm.

K: I grew up here. Some of them though, somehow, they thought again and criticizing, but someway, they never messed with me. [Laughter] Because I think they thought I was crazy. My daddy used to teach us, because—he wasn't scared of whites because he was raised by whites, and he lived in

a home with them, a bunch of white from England. So, he'd never had that fear. I guess, because of him, we never had it, either. He would always tell us, if you have to cross them, then you'll see that they're determined to mark and kill you. Don't run off nowhere. Don't let them catch you in the woods or catch you, capture you, something like that, because they're going to take and they're going to torment you, cut you up piece by piece, privates part off, or point your eyes out. He said, never let them do that. He said, you see you can't get away, then die like a man. That always stayed in me. He said, don't—he kept, in fact, I got the gun. I kept a high-powered rifle with me, and I kept a lot of shell. Even before my time, he used to get into it with whites, and they'd talk about night riding; getting in. That's even before I was born, even when I was a baby. He would come home and send my mother and the other kids away, and he would sit outside of the house and wait on this. Happened they never showed up. That was always in me. I think some of the whites knew where I'd stand, but they could have easily killed me. That wasn't no problem. But, I guess God protected me up until this time, because of my ministry. I never had no fear, but they would throw out hints at me. I left and, after staying there for a while, I left in [19]67, went to Chicago, going on. Stayed there about seven years. My kids, wasn't a good place for them, so I moved back to Mississippi. So, when I moved back, the Southern Christian Leadership Movement had kind of died down, so they had kind of put on a little heat and then housed the NAACP. So, that's bolstered with being in a political

race. I come in back, then, I got in the NAACP. So, I was the county president there for the NAACP for twenty-one years. I just gave it up.

B: Was that a chapter in Sunflower?

K: For Sunflower County.

B: Okay.

K: Young man had a—I got in, I got on a preaching job then. Got more preaching with this fellow when he died. But a young man called Dodson, Nelson Dodson, lived in the north. So, when he died, I took it. When we have election, I ride the county, I'll put bullhorns on my car. The whites, they would hate to see me coming. [Laughter] I would hold rallies across the county.

B: Mm-hm.

K: Mm-hm. And they would hate to see me coming, because I was parked right in front of the voting poll booths or what have you. So, I did a lot of things then, dealing with factories and different job companies; police brutality, people were treated wrong on their jobs. I would go and deal with the issues.

B: I'm sure there was a backlash to some of your activities in this area, right?

K: Not really. Because one thing that does—the thing that I couldn't handle, when I pull the state in, a lot of times, I pull the Justice Department for Washington, D.C. in. I had them, they would—I would call them so much, they start keeping up with me. On election in Sunflower County, they would call and ask me, do y'all need anybody down there?

B: So the federal government was responsive.

K: Right. So, a lot of things, we would handle from the state level. So . . . I never got too much . . . fact, I got a lot of favoritism, because I had banks—like they'd repossess stuff or foreclose people, you know, wasn't a lot of property like that. They'll call me and I can be, I want it. They could use the favoritism, because my thing was, if your opponent is black, I can support you. I support the worst black against the best white, and still think I made the best choice. I'm not prejudiced, either, but we're playing catch-up. We're going to be thirty-nine percent of the population of the state of Mississippi, than I think we ought to be thirty-nine percent representation.

B: Mm-hm.

K: Now, I deal with a lot of black against white, as well. My thing was being straight up. After they learnt me, they said, you know, we thought you were about the craziest black man we ever saw. [Laughter] Because I spoke out. I don't care who you is or where you come from. I can't get in black churches now. [Laughter] Because I speaks up against some preachers, how they're treating members, how they rips them off. See, we try and raise food and stuff to help people. I'm working hard on old Mexico. We built a big church out there in El Paso, and I'll go across to El Paso and Juarez. That's about the worst city in the world right now.

M: Yes, sir, it is.

K: Mm-hm. So, right now, I'm working out of South Africa.

B: Wow.



K: But we smuggle food and clothing and stuff across the border there, to Mexico. Mm-hm. So, I would tell pastors and things—they'd come up, people paying tithes and stuff—you curse at the preacher there, let's not talk about the commandments, talk about us. The Bible talking about us. Talking about the priests, the shepherds. Believe I've tried to be the ones who probably serving humanity. Gotta use reverse psychology on people, now I get up and preach against it and they don't never enter the church. [Laughter] I say, we're the ones—you know, man, in fact, I'm on the radio now. I said, y'all demanding tithes out of these poor people, and y'all got millions and millions of dollars worth of tithes, and now people are getting ready to starve. Where are the storehouses? There's no storehouse. Y'all have bewitched these people. You know? You use sorcery on these people. So, I can't get in their churches by being straight up. And I've been straight up with white, straight up with black. You don't enforce our freedom out in the world. I did my wrongs, but I was straight up with people.

B: So, do you feel like the work you're doing now, here in Mexico and South Africa, do you feel like that's a continuation of the work you did in the movement?

K: Well, in a sense. In the movement, it was kind of like a moral thing. The ministry is more of . . . in spirit. See? The ministry requires you to serve humanity. When I was hungry, you didn't find feed me; naked, you didn't clothe me. I just got through last week, when twenty-six acres of green—

say, we buy land and stuff, and we're getting ready to move down here and feed people. We serve fifteen hundred senior citizens a month now. I'm the only preacher involved. We use the USDA food; we don't . . . feed them, but we serve them. You know? We give them a bottle. We have two eighteen little truck coming into the county every month. So, my thing is to serve humanity. I give myself to serving people. That's the way my daddy was. We lived in a big house right out—like we're talking about going out east there?

B: Mm-hm.

M: Mm-hm.

K: We lived out there in a big house, and people, you'd see us move in on it. [Laughter] My dad would take a man—see, I'm in my seventies, and so, I go way back when there was no welfare; no Social Security for a while, not in these areas. When a person got too old to work, they would walk the street, because there was plenty of houses in the country then, like every quarter of a mile, near about, you'd see a house. No further than a mile to the house. The old people would walk the street, I mean walking. We call it walking the road in the country. They would stop at this home and spend a night and that family would feed them, and so they would walk next day there, walk to another home. They were wise enough not to put a burden up on one family, because everybody was in need, mostly. But my father, he would take some of the older peoples in like that—he

would take two or three at a time and keep them for two or three months.

He was always helping people.

B: Was that kind of mutuality, your father's giving spirit, that was very common among everyone?

K: Well, in a sense you could say that, but not as much with him. It wasn't as common as he would do it. But most people would help one another. But black people survived, at that time, because of helping one another. None of the peoples had land or stuff. Even if they was renting land or working sharecropping, one family get through with their crop, chopping it out, getting ready to lay it by, the other family would go over to help them. There was no money exchanged; there was no charge. I think that's the way we survive. That's what I teach in the ministry now: we're headed back that way. Unlessing we network as we did in the past, we won't survive. And this country is losing out fast, because I've been in about eight countries. You get people come in from poor countries, they coming in, networking. They're not coming in looking for a job, they're coming in to be a part of the American dream, and Americans losing out on everything. We here in America, but America really don't own America. We're about to be owned by peoples of other countries. I don't know why they can't see it. A lot of these farmers now lost their land and has been bought from other people from other countries. Because they know how to operate it, most of them working for people from other countries. They don't even own their land. This is what we're up against.

B: Are you optimistic about the future?

K: I understand it's a threat—I think America finna fall. Our ministry—I was under a tent. I got something in Mississippi. I come here to try and preach it together, to help people to survive and get land. I spoke to about forty preachers over in the North. I said, preachers, why are we building all these big mega-churches? Why don't we pay about \$230,000 and put it into a pool, and set a committee up over it, and let us do our own supermarket and dry goods store? We've got our own Wal-Mart. And let us tell our women, this is your store. You and go and trade. I said, just in this area, we could easily turn over a hundred thousand dollars a month. Land come up for sale, we could purchase the land, or we could lease some 16 Section land because this comes up, we got it in the stack and it turns. It comes up every year. All right? So, we can raise food. People work on the farm anyway; we can raise food to help people. None of those preachers opened their mouth. They just sit there and looked at one another. I said, say something. See, it's not a good idea; black folk don't work together good or that ain't going to work. I said, then we can set up a bank. People can come and borrow their own money without all this high interest rate, because all this red tape is their money, anyway. We're just stewards over it. So, they looks at one another and they said nothing. But, after me, they say, we've got to keep him out of the church. He's going to corrupt those peoples' minds. [Laughter]

B: What do you think is the reason for that hostility? I mean, it seems like that's a great plan. Why would they be so hostile to it?

K: Because they are all for themselves.

M: Take their hand out of the pot.

K: I told them, y'all no different from the white supremacists. They ripped them off on the farm, y'all ripping them off in the church. So what? I told our people, no, we're causing trouble. I got my daughter calling me the day before yesterday, concerning Eddie Long in Atlanta, Georgia. Him calling my wife, say I'm there looking at—I was getting ready to go to church last week, the week before last. I said, well, yeah, I was sitting there watching this guy. But this guy getting ready to fall. I said, all those guys; Eddie Long, [inaudible 37:46], Ross Parker, T.D. Jake, all those big mega ministries fixing. I was preaching under a tent. I do tent revival, street service. We're doing street service today in Indianola before the Sunflower supermarket. I had a lot of young people out there. I was under the tent preaching, and I pretty much stop. I say, oh, my God. People looked down. I said, God finna let terror here in America. In two weeks, they hit the Trade Towers. I was in the church preaching. I said, we're finna to have an economy that crash; Wall Street going to fall through. That was that Sunday. The same week, it fell through. Most things I preach, I got taped, and you can get. Everything happening in America right now and across the world, I been preaching. And I been doing all this with a third grade education. I sit on an economic development board with

the grocers that got all these Double Quicks and things, with the bank, I'm the only black on that board. That was all with the blessing of God. I take y'all from sheeps out in the field, I put you here, and I sat before king and government. So, that's basically been my life. I don't know if he's here in time or not—I got a nephew, if you saw him, you would think y'all were twins.

B: Really? [Laughter] That's funny.

K: My brother, talk to him. He's sitting over there looking at you, you look so much like him. About the same size and everything. When they got Margaret Kibbee, that worked in the civil rights movement, she worked up there. My brother used to tell me when I used to live, why, you're going to get yourself killed running around there with these white folk. [Laughter] You got to get out of this stuff. After things settle down, you wouldn't believe, he ended up marrying her. [Laughter] So, they got five kids.

B: Really?

K: Mm-hm.

B: That's actually an interesting point. How were the interracial relations during the movement? Were there tensions, or did people get along well?

K: Well, there was a lot of tension during the movement. I think that's what they were afraid of. Let's see. That's the guy who is from Alabama, when he said that, he said, let them niggers go to our school? Y'all going to let these niggers eat at our lunch counter? Then they're going to want to go to our school, and then they go to our school, they're going to be wanting

to marry our daughters. We ain't going to have that. [Laughter] But, when all of it begin to take place and work itself out, I think that money meant more to them than their kids did. They started accepting their daughter in interracial marriage with the son, and then, it wasn't as great as they thought it was going to be. You know? I don't think he was much . . . I think the white girls and the white boys, most of them wanted to check one another out, I think that's basically what it was. I don't think the white girls wanted black husbands. I don't think the black boy really wanted—

M: White wives.

K: Not only that, they thought it would be—you know, you do have some of that. Like, that was already common among the white man and the black womens. That was already common. So, the white women was about as much on the bungles that we was. It didn't make no difference. But there was a lot of black women that had babies was cross-breeded, you know. Yeah, because we just didn't get bright just to get bright. [Laughter] That was a reason, mm-hm. So, there was just a lot of things. So much other stuff happened and went on, but this is most—some of my life story. They have a book coming out, they got some of my life story, about my life wronging and then going on; friends getting shot, dying in my lap in a getaway car and that kind of stuff.

B: Sounds like you could do a movie.

K: Mm-hm.

B: It's fascinating. This has been a great experience, hearing your story.

K: Yeah. I still did want to bring this book with me today. This very place right here was the grocery store, and this side here was a restaurant. The brother that owned this store, his wife was in the hospital in Louisiana—no, in Vicksburg, Mississippi. He went down there with her. So, when we come to integrate this place, and we have the blacks come in for service—we didn't do it too much then, we let the blacks that came in and worked with us and teach our registered voters, registration drives, because we had to interpret the whole Constitution to qualify to vote. But we had people to come in, so they come in here to order some soup. The young man that owned the place, his brother told him, told the blacks, said, look, we only serve decent white folks in here, and no niggers at all. [Laughter] So, I hangs up with—[Laughter] So . . . but, they kind of fell in line. Now, I'm more afraid of our own people.

M: That leads me to my next question.

K: I think some of the white—because most of your government jobs is, just about, handled by the blacks. I have a meeting every second and fourth Monday night, entrepreneur meeting. So, I brought in this chairman, the manager of the Farm Administration. I brought the manager in of the rural development. I brought the manager in at the unemployment office, and . . . whatever, something else. SCLC, two office—then I brought in some of the people from Alcorn University, because I work with Alcorn University, and I sits on this rural farm board. I brought all those guys in and all of them was black. And all of them knew one another. All of them were



young, and they were graduating from Alcorn University, and they all know each other. See, but they hold a position. You might see, call on, a lot of this stalled, all these cliques and stuff is just about run by blacks. Blacks don't own, but they manage it. So, I think the opportunity to open up blacks, but now I'm afraid of our own people. I think the whites is afraid of them, too, because they have no fear no more. See, it was them with the white—the idea with white supremacy, kill us out, because they needed us to work. They just wanted to schedule back, and they would kill a few just to send a message. But now, that don't work. They're afraid of them ever since, but yet they trust us more than they trust their own people, because when times get hard, white—they would tell our blacks, say, y'all just takes enough to go to jail. If we're going to take something, we're going to take something worthwhile. This black-white businesses, they know that. They black ain't going to take too much. They have to take a little, but they ain't going to take too much. So, that's why they place them over their businesses, and they'll trust them more. And the whites in this area, they hate other poor whites. It's hard for a poor white to get a favor from a white person. Of course, blacks, same thing.

B: So, do you think there's something that's been lost in the black community over the years that has led to this situation?

K: Well, I think . . . really, I think the thing that hurt us the most are the charity that we've been getting. The Democratic Party—and I'm a Democrat—social programs. I think it's damning us, too. It took away our ability at

being a man. We wait for handouts. I agree with the Republicans in this sense, that you can't get ahead in life on welfare and all of this, but I don't agree with them in cutting all the programs off before you develop the jobs. I think you ought to have an option, not just snatch you all and talk about going to work where there's nowhere to go to work. So, I agree with the Democratic, with the social programs, but don't take away their manhood. Social programs is when you don't have an option. But I think, when you have an option, then I think they should pull you off that program, because you'll never get ahead in life. That's what food stamps, social programs, what have you, and subsidized housing—I'll be seventy-two on my next birthday, and when I was coming up, there was no welfare, nothing, for older people. They used to give away stuff called commodities. Now, from that, to food stamps. I got seven kids. My baby is thirty-three years old, and I never received commodities or food stamps. And my wife never helped me pay no bills. She just retired from Home Help Agency. She had a retirement plan. She's sixty-six. So, she retired so she could get her Social Security; she could get her retirement. The clinic's in Indianola, and the doctor found out she had retired, they got her to come and work at the clinic, so she going to check peoples in, and she make more doing that than she was running a hundred, hundred and fifty miles a day across the county and that other country seeing about patients. Than she was getting then. But, even now, she don't help me pay no bills. She told me, said, you don't treat me like other men's wives

treat them. I said, what you mean? So I went there, got to church, I said, I want to see the hands of all the wives that's helped their husbands pay bills. All the women raised their hands but two, and I don't think those two was working. [Laughter] But those fathers, they have to end up taking care of their wives. I said, now, I told her, I said, now, you see that, don't you? When I was chopping cotton for a dollar and a half a day, I still took care of all of the expenses. Now, if you're going to get something over my budget, then you're going to handle that. But, if you stay within my means—

M: You take care of them.

K: Then you never have to help pay bills. She's still getting them kids, and they're grown—grandkids, that's all she ever did. She would save me on buying clothes and house furnishings. She loved to do them two things. She'll save me buying my own clothes. I got clothes I never wore, because I fuss at her so much about going and buying them. But that's just my belief, that's my faith. I think a man should make a living. And if he can't, I think the wife should pitch him. The Bible said, the man is the head. Well, they don't mean that you can have dominion, now—that's a different type of head. Bible also said, the man make his living by his the sweat of his face. I said, y'all don't have no problem with that one. [Laughter] So, I had a good life. Rough life, bad life, but really did never suffer. If I did, for my own thing. I still fight for justice, civil rights. I don't go in a courtroom and tear it up. I'm not going to be a case myself. Something I didn't cover—

they're supposed to lock you up for contempt of court, interfering with the judge, and prosecutor turn . . . when a prosecutor turn, go out and write all that bad stuff in the paper about me. They would never arrest me.

[Laughter] Put in the paper how I come out and act ignorant and how I interfere with the court, being a preacher and all that. They just got to disgrace me, you know. But I be right. You know? When we have police brutality. Then, somebody go in and file a judgment against me. Why would they just accord you, got to have a hearing, see, should we indict them? You don't have no hearing that says you're going to indict me.

[Laughter] So, you indict them—if they're not guilty, they're not guilty. Why you got to have a hearing, see, should you have a hearing to indict? That's not even legal intelligence.

M: If you had to speak to the younger generation, to just looking at where we're at today, what advice would you give us?

K: The advice—I think the advice that I would give is, stay in school and get as much education as you possibly can. But, because a lot of things slip through my fingers because of my education—with my level of education, it was just my ability and my knowledge, wisdom that I have, to get me to this level. I don't . . . have the education I need for the feeling, a difference avocation, doing that. But I have the basics and the fundamentals. My thing is practicing experience. I've been involved. I've been in stocks, shares, mutual funds and all this kind of stuff. I sit on economic development boards. I was . . . in the city government for twelve years.

Elect officials, elect officials. I did twelve years as a councilman, board of aldermen. So, my thing is to get them to try to get all the education they can. And knowing how to network—we're far behind, money is short. We can't get . . . the loans that we need, as other people can. And, you know, we call it free enterprise, but we have a leash; we got a leash on us. You run as far as you can, but the leash only let you go so far. We got to find a way to penetrate the law. You can't beat the man, join him. Find out what makes him tick. Find out his technique. See how he survives. Another example for the people coming from another country, poor country, how they network? How they spend their money and build a cash flow among themselves? Stop some of those twenty billion of dollars that blacks is spending in the entrepreneurial world, and nothing being spent across the tracks where we live. Own land and stuff, don't be like the PLO. When you don't own nothing, and the borrower is a slave to the limit. Make God your priority, because we are one of the people is connected with our Israel bloodline, believe it or not. We was brought here. We fixed—we got to find out where we fit in, in the prophecy and in the Bible. Every race of people come to America on their own but us. America is the lamb. We are the people, the government system that go through and forth through the world as a wounded lamb, seeking peace among all nations. Have no people within their own country. America will fall within her two-party system. When the Democrats come up with a good idea, the Republicans going to fight it. Republicans come up with a good idea, the Democrat

going to fight it. I said this thirty years ago: this country will fall within her own system. But we are people that God going to bring through, but we ain't ready. Jesus said that God will bring us into a land that flows with milk and honey, that we can serve him all our life, by fear, by righteousness, and in holiness. Now, the lawyer think it was the land of Canaan, but that was the natural Israel. But the spirit of Israel came to America. We come here for freedom of worship. God granted that. He said, but bring your seed into a land. We were the only people that was brought here. Other people come on their own recognizance. We was brought here. We was sold as slaves. We are the people that James said: fifth chapter of James, "Be patient, my brother. But oh, rich man, how for your mercy? Your silver and your gold is being kept. But be patient, my brother. He said, rich man said they done swept down your field, you held back from them by fraud. You kept your debts, they did not resist you. But now your turn is coming, and your silver and gold going to kink on you. You're going to heat it up for yourself for the last days. You have nourished yourself at the time of slaughter." You know? In slaughter time, that was probably good eating. But said, but, your time comes. So, America now is at the edge of the cliff. I have to try to tell our people to prepare yourself. Quit looking for things. Start trying to get land. I sets up churches and put pastors in them. Like that one in South Haven up there, growing like mad. And I teach the young people, the pastors. I say, get ready. Get the land so you can start feeding this. Pastor, Bishop, we got to

go back to the land? We got to go back to living off the land? I said, fool, you're already living off the land. You just ain't playing the process enough. I said, but you living off the land. I got a guy, we just purchased a plant up there in Cleveland. Going to send it up to process holdings, we getting land for holdings. One of my men was running that. I don't know if you've heard about Alan Can and Company in Moorhead?

M: No.

K: They come. He ran that company. He just come in and shot it down, so we are using it up there. But I would tell the young people, prepare themselves. Don't look for nothing big. Look to survive and to raise your family. It ain't going to be nothing big anymore. America's best days is behind us. All this stuff they're talking, that's why when they say, peace and safety, they inserted the scripture. America got to pay her dues. God grant America the freedom of worship. We have "In God We Trust" on the money and everything. Now, America don't want God's name no where. The God say, any nation forget God, we are going into captivity. That's why we are here. Every nation is plotting against us. I told people thirty years ago: I said, Soviet Union, China, is waiting on the downfall of America. But I would think, with my knowledge, trying to figure out what God is giving me, soon as they drain America will these little guerilla warfare, America going to be the keeper of the world. I thought soon that America weared itself down in the utility, or industry. After making for war, they would move in. But no, they're waiting on America's weakness that

they will buy America out. Now, Americans looking for China and Soviet Union. Now China's saying America lost their way with the economy. If we'd like to have some more money, we got to help show you how to build your economy. If America accepts money on that turn, what is America doing? It's opening a door to communism. There will be no more free enterprise. America's people will not stand for a government system without free enterprise. So, you get president knocked off; senators knocked off, congressmen knocked off; so, America be just about a slaughtering country within itself. Now, God like America. Most preachers don't know this. God permitted America to become one of the greatest superpowers, not because America is so great in the eyes of God—God allowed America to do this in order to sustain Israel. America is the only country that is looking out for Israel, because Israel tied in with America. Now, when God gets through using America—from protecting Israel—then America will be dashed into pieces. And God have a place for Israel just to stand. Now, my thing—I got young people, I been to a two-week revival, just last night. I'll be in Jackson next week. It tells the people, prepare yourself to take care of your children. Try to get land and stuff. Try to get as much education as you can. Know how to survive, because, don't try to get up on a hill anymore. Don't worry about your factories. Don't worry about your big business and all your supermarkets, because there ain't going to be no fooling and stuff to get in there. California can't get by. Now, if you got land, produce going to be one of the best things in



America, to raise food. Because we got a good water table. California's short of water. Some of the other states short of water. You have to watch the news, hold your focus, see what's happening, because the Bible give all the signs of everything. We've got to know where we are and where we're living. Right now, we're in the eighteenth chapter of Revelations, that God said, Babylon, the coming mind of God, and Babel has become the habitation of debtors. Where is Babylon? Babel? It's all right. I mean, it's all right. That's Babylon. That's old Babylon. These people committing suicide, all of this here for religious purpose; otherwise, they're being driven by the money force, and that's why God sent them to become the habitation up there. Iraq would never overcome, it would never be a country that you can live in or continue to get worse. The Bible said it would come like a dawn in the wilderness. And this is where we are now. The world confused. Bush was sent there by God. I told the people before he got there. I said, this Bush ours. He put there by God to break the economy. They want to put it on Obama, but Bush did it. He broke the economy. He wasn't elected in that time, he was appointed there by the high Supreme Court. That's the way Bush got there. Bush broke the economy. Any time you break your economy, it's going to cause you a penalty. Obama trying to pay the penalty to turn it, but it ain't going to work. Even if you got to hire them in your taxes, and your taxes went to the chancellor clerk's office, and you didn't pay it at the tax assessor's office, you got to pay a penalty when you redeem it back. If you were

running a foot race and you get behind, you got to run much harder to catch up. Anything that you lose on and you have to redeem it is going to cost you. So, Obama knows that, but nobody is going to believe that. Why get further in debt? It's going to cost you more, but it ain't going to work. Now, Obama think he's there to turn the economy, but that's not his role. In the fifth chapter of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar, when he was dreaming, he was the greatest king in the East, in Babylon. He was rolled up, driven from his kingdom. He ate grass with the animals for seven years, wild, raving beast, with claws grewed out, until he came unto himself and knows that it's God that rules in the kingdom of man. God puts up who he wants, he takes down who he wants. Those who never be elected, I'm satisfied, because my prayer, Lord, let your will be done. He said, there will be wars and rules, and I'm telling the people, don't be praying. That's a waste of prayer, praying to God to stop the war. Jesus said, be war and ruling the war and all these things have a need to be. Now, who is me to tell God they don't have a need to be? So, we're praising his will. Obama's thing is not—to help bring, to win world government. He's thinking that to turn America. But Obama's the only somebody that can bring the leaders of the nations of the world together. In the summer meet, he had eighty-five percent of the world's leaders together. No president in America never did that. He's working on the other fifteen percent. Once the leaders of the world coming together, and God going to bring the world into poverty, then they're going to all assist and going to have to work together in order to

survive. They're going to bring peace. The only peace then will be against the sense of God that won't bind—because once they set up the world order, then they're going to set up a world religion. And know what their religion going to be? Going to be the Catholics. Any of y'all Catholics? Huh? [Laughter] Well, they're going to be Catholic. With the book that we got going out—it'll probably sell across the world—I got a DVD. It's going to sell with that book. I'm preaching on the holy church, which is the Catholic Church. I know I'm going to get some feedback, but it's the holy church. If you read Revelations, it called the woman that made the world wrong with the fornication of a women. She sits on seven mountains, or seven hills, way you want to calculate it. The Catholic Church, the headquarters in Rome—I've been there. It's in Rome. Rome is the only city in the world that sits on seven hills. Sits on seven mountains. In every country I've been in, the Catholics is there. I would believe that ninety percent of Chicago were Catholics, and they look at the Pope as he's a great god. There's no such a thing now as a priest. Jesus put an end to the preacherhood. Jesus is our high priest now, and these people still bowing to the priest. And the castle will be that church, it's called the Holy Church. That's why we have . . . and only somebody now, in any era, any country, any state, anywhere you are, the only somebody have the answer for the problem is the church. It was given in the Old Testament, in Leviticus. God said, My people, that are called by my name, he said, if I send pestilence, if I send famines in the land, if I send pestilence, if I let

the locusts devour the land and all of this, he said, but if my people that are called by my name would humble themselves and pray and turn from evil away and seek my face, I'll come help, and I'll heal the land. That's your answer. And we've got to get our young people and teach them how to survive. If not, we'll have slaughtering among ourselves. The whites in Mississippi and other states know that. They know when all the jobs shut down. They know our mind; they know the attitude that we have. We're going to try to take some, steal some, and now they're buying up all the guns. This governor of Mississippi done pass a law now—Mississippi never had a self-defense law. Excuse me. But that's where we are. Our preachers is no better. We don't even have preachers in these areas that really cares for the people. If they did, they'd tell the people the truth. They'll quit ripping them off. My daddy—we had animals and stuff in the farm, raising cotton and stuff. You work to plant the crop and you work it up to about the first of July. You lay the bounty. Now you wait for it all, the fruits and stuff on the farm to get ready and get ripe. All the cotton gets ready about the first of September, so, you had, like, two months, and them are the two hottest months—were, then, at that time-in the year was July and August. But right now, the way the climate done changed, we about in June. But, during them two months, when everybody else sitting down—mostly—my daddy helped me out there. We cutting hay and all this kind of stuff; we baling up hay, we getting ready to stack it up so the animal and things would have food for the winter. That's a shepherd's job.

The preacher, the pastor there's the shepherd. They are not even looking out for their sheeps. They're ripping the sheeps off. In the Old Testament, the sheeps die for the shepherd; in the New Testament, the shepherd supposed to die for the sheep. I'm buying farmland right now, and my member's not giving me a damn penny on it. I do all this kind of stuff. I'm paying for it out of my own pocket, and I'm buying it in the church's name, so when the bottom fall out of everything, y'all can go out there and start raising peas and corns and chickens, some hogs or whatever it takes to survive. Then, I got another piece of land, because all my kids are away from here. We got two daughters in the state of Mississippi, but all the other of them in Texas and Ohio. They have to come back—I tell my oldest son, he helps me. But then with that, how are they going to leave there? They can come back and find some old trailer, they can go out there and set it up on their farm, and they can go out there and plant them a little something—plant some peas and greens, raise them a hog, raise them a chicken. They'll survive longer. But America's best days is behind her. The closer you get to that time, the further people are getting away from God. I used to lead young people. I was over at the Youth's College Division for NAACP, plus, I was the president, as well. I done carried busloads of kids all over the country. I've had police escorts out of Jackson, Mississippi, all the way into New York. I had kids—I got organized to go in Moorhead and different places, and when it comes time to go, the people and churches and things don't, I don't know why y'all

want to follow that old preacher. He ain't nothing but a Jim Jones. They stopped all the kids from going; I got two kids out of Moorhead. I come to Sunflower, come to my old hometown—I live in Moorhead—I picked up guys off the streets, young girls off the streets, what they just call hoodlums on the street. I picked them up, and I had the best youths out of the trip. Because when we got to North Carolina, we went to having other buses joining us. I think with Virginia, we had one join us in Baltimore, Maryland, because I had a police escort from Jackson into Atlanta. We left there Saturday night, about one o'clock. So, I had police escort into Atlanta; got into Atlanta, Georgia that morning. We had . . . a rally there. So, we pull out on that Get Out The Vote campaign. By that night, we were in a town called Sylva, North Carolina. You know where that's at?

M: No, no.

K: You don't know where it's at?

M: No.

K: Okay, we were there. We spent a night there, and we had a rally the next day—get out the vote campaign. We left there and went to Richmond, Virginia. We had a rally there from Richmond, Virginia to Washington, D.C. We had a rally there. Al Sharpton was there with us. I had a police escort all the way. From there to Baltimore, Maryland—and they were really excited in Baltimore, Maryland, because we're going right down Broadway. We was escorted by motorcycle, six cops. They blocked this interstate, and then they blocked the other one off beyond that. The other

couple about blocked the others off, so we had a straight ride through.

When we go through this intersection, those old motorcycles go around, brrr and go beyond them others, and we had a noise—people lined up on the street like we're presidents. [Laughter] So, from there to Newark, New Jersey, and from there into New York. So, we got to New York about that Wednesday, and we worked out all five boroughs in New York. And black folk cussed us. [Laughter] So, I got a lot of pictures with black—we used to have black parades and we used to have rallies and so on. In the penitentiaries and we would have people from the drugs bureau, and narcotics. So, we did a lot with the young people. In my heart, with the young people, I got so stretched out in the ministry we just couldn't get nobody to take it up, over.

B: Everything's been clearly fascinating. There's a couple things I wrote down along the way I wanted to just ask in the end. Were you involved with unions at all? I remember you saying you did some bricklaying work in Chicago. Was that unionized work, or . . . ?

K: Yeah. Well, you had to get in the union.

B: Mm-hm.

K: And I fought for the union here, too.

B: Okay.

K: But . . . you know. It was good, in a sense, but they were crooks, too. They ripped peoples off and didn't represent people that they should. I'll never forget, I went over to Delta Pride Catfish Industry down there in New

Orleans. So, we had people working there, and they were having problems out there, a little old supervisor. This short, white lady. So, I went over there and talked with the president and manager. When I got there and talked with him, I introduced myself and told him I was president of the county NAACP. I was talking nice to him, all. He came out of his bag on me, said, let me tell you something. NAACP does not run this company. I said, sir, NAACP doesn't even no intention of running this company. [Laughter] I said, but my duty's here, to tell you, you got a job—a problem—within your company. What is the problem? I said, I got peoples here that cannot work under the environment of some of your supervisors. I said, now, and it don't make sense to have to bring the union in to discipline handouts. Well, I told the peoples already that, if they bring the union in, we're just going to shut the doors and close it down. They won't have no jobs. I said, well, I don't know what you done told them, sir, I said, but my people done told me that they can't work under this environment. Now, they done got this company started, and then done put in a lot of sweat here. So, if that's the way you feel, we're not going out without a fight. Now, you ain't concerned about your job, your secretary's job, and your supervisor's job; we just bring the union out and you set the plan, and we all go out together, because I'm not going to let you send them out one by one like this. So, he said, well . . . don't start encouraging the union, then. What is the problem? So, I told him about the supervisor. He said, well, I can't see that, because she's very religion. She gets on me



about my religion, behave. I said, sir, I did not come over here to talk about your religion. I came over here to present a problem to you. I said, now, but since you done brought up your religion, I said, do you not know that the religious people been fighting over there in the Middle East for the last one hundred and fifty years, sir? Since you done brought up a religion, did you not know it was religion people that knocked off Saddam? Since you done brought up religion, sir, do you not know religious people said to crucify Jesus? I said, now, she might be very religious; I don't know.

[Laughter] That shocked him. [Laughter] Well, I got to get on—I said, no, sir, that wouldn't be wise at all, because if you and tell her something that some of the employees said, she's going to try to find a legal way to fire them. Why don't you stand back and watch her? And when you catch her out of order, then you go to her. You ain't got to tell her nobody told you anything. I'll do that, then, that's a . . . okay, I appreciate it. I said, well, I got another problem. [Laughter] What is that? I said, your people been working here a couple years, three years, and they haven't got a raise. They need a raise. Oh, well—I said, well, you're making money while employees, the people that making you money, can't make more money. They got a cost of living, sir. When I got through—well, I'll think about it. I'll talk to the board. [Laughter] So, I left. That was that . . . that Friday, the man in Moorhead called me. He's a white man. He asked me, he said, Reverend Knighten, person I met at the factory over there at the Delta Pride said he been thinking about y'all's conversation was about

yesterday. He said, told me to call you and tell you. Then he went to laughing. He said, what'd you do to that man? I said, I didn't do nothing. I just went over there and talked to him about some problems. He said, that man called me about 1:30 last night and asked me what kind of guy you was, and he ain't been able to sleep since you left. [Laughter]

B: When was this?

K: This was back in . . . I think it was in the [19]80s, when we brought the union in there. I don't remember exactly what year it was, now. I think it was in the [19]80s.

B: And you said you were in a union when you were in Chicago, bricklaying.

K: Yeah.

B: Was that a CIO union?

K: . . . I don't even know now.

B: But you didn't spend too much time there, did you?

K: No. When I worked there, about seven years.

B: Oh? Seven years?

K: Mm-hm. But we would end up in different unions and different counties, because everything is going in a different county.

B: Your local changers.

K: Yeah, you have to deal with the different locals. [Laughter] But I think all of them was on the same head and whatever, even if they had different locals.

B: Was it an interracial union, or . . . ?

K: Well, it was just the employees for bricklayers; tradesmen. So, you had different unions for the labor, the tradesmen, and, you know, bricklaying. But most of the time, they come out there. Your boss, the supervisor, they really had to take care, because they took out your pay, mm-hm. They just give you a card. I'll never forget that one job—one guy come over, he was bricklaying, a white guy walking around there. This guy from the brick company called, Cross-Walker Construction Company. He saw the black guy walking around and he's one of the big guys from Norfolk. He come over there and told us, what's your name? He told him. We can't peoples on the job like this. How many hours you got in this thing? The guy told him. He said he wrote him a check and told he was fired, and wrote him a check. But the guy who worked with the general contractor, he didn't work with us—so this guy wrote him a check, so he stuck the check in his pocket like he was leaving the job and went on around the building, went back and went back to working with the company. So, he done paid another guy off that don't even work for him. [Laughter] So, we thought that was so funny, you know. But, we were just working with different locals, I think, when I left there. I just put all that behind. I never try to remember much.

B: Do you remember what year you left Chicago?

K: Oh, I left Chicago in [19]74.

B: Oh, okay.

K: Mm-hm.

B: All right.

K: Because I been president of the NAACP for twenty-one years.

B: Yeah.

K: I came back in [19]74. I just left Rome then. I had started preaching in [19]72. I got saved in [19]70, [19]70. In [19]70...[19]71, I think, I started preaching.

B: Okay.

K: And I just had went to . . . to Israel and left there and went on to Rome. I left Rome and come back. It might have been [19]71. We stopped in the chain plant—oh, boy, I had it right on my tongue. I can't even recall the name now. You know? But, anyway, we stopped at a chain plant, and some of the people got on. They put them back on, let our touring get on first. After we got on and taking off, about two hours after we took off, they shot up the airport. Killed about thirty-seven people and wounded right around a hundred. We just had taken off. But we had prayed before we left, because the Israel and the Arabs was in the war at that time, and God give us the go-ahead, so he protect us out.

B: Mm-hm. Wow. You have anything else?

M: No.

B: Is there anything else that you would like to say?

K: Well, not really. I just . . . no. I appreciate you all getting all the young peoples involved.

[End of interview]

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