

Dr. Charles Mosley  
Location: Nazareth First Baptist Church  
146 Pine Street  
Asheville, NC 28801

CM: I started school [in Passaic, NJ] at the age of seven because there was a polio epidemic, third grade, and school hours were shortened when I was in third grade. Because gangs were very prevalent I had to participate in a gang. Then I transferred to P.S.55[and had to deal with a new set of boys and gangs]. Then I moved to Asheville and started at Hill St. School in the 7th grade. In those days we walked, and even on snow days when the ice was really out there, there was no excuse; still we had to walk. You know if you didn't go to school you were marked absent. In the 7th and 8th grades, I had the most beautiful teacher, Ms. Sadie Moore; her husband was Clarence Moore, the coach at Stephens-Lee H.S.. And her son who was my classmate said that "Mother really loved Charles Mosley; there wasn't anything that he could not do. Daddy never did like Charles Mosley." He [the son] lives in Dayton, OH, now.

I had to go out for football, but I was not football material, and he would make fun of me in class. [Mr. Moore was his homeroom teacher.]

I prided myself on my voice--a top soloist--I have a tenor voice. The chorus was giving a recital called "The Seven Last Words" and I was the soloist. And the morning we gave that recital of the cantata, every time I was to hit a high pitch, my voice just cracked. Every time, all the way through the cantata. And when we got back to the room, he said to me, "What happened to your voice? You just cracked up all through the concert!" Graduated from high school in 1957, I left here with \$200 in my pocket ; I was going to Shaw University. Mt. Zion Baptist Church, which is right across the hill--they gave me \$200, and I thought that \$200 would take me through the year. Then after a month they [Shaw] told me I owed \$45.00.

KV: After one month?

CM: It was room and board. Tuition had been paid, but I had to pay \$45.00 for room and board each month. And Mt. Zion said not to expect anything more. And I didn't have a job, but I was fortunate in getting a job in the President's home, and I worked there during my freshman year. And I worked in the City Library--that would be Harrison Library--and that's where I met my wife. I asked her out. So I stayed down there and worked during the summer.

KV: Was she a student, too?

CM: Yes, but I never saw her on campus--just in the Library. And she never called me anything but "Mosley" until the day she died.

I wasn't sure I'd ever have a church, so I had a double major of opera [and religion]. A notice came to the school of a job opening with Rocky Mount. So I got on a bus and didn't have any idea of where I was going. This was down in Raleigh--not Asheville--see I'm in school down there. This church needed a pastor. There were two other students on that bus, but they already had churches. (laughs) I was the only one who didn't have a church. No shame at all! I was there only three years and the women there were wooing me for their daughters, since I was young for a pastor.

Some of that congregation are still in touch with me now. In fact, one lady called me just last week. They call me as if I'm still their pastor. Every one of my churches have been like that.

I was at that church only three years. When I got married, the women came up to the wedding--the women and the men and the children came up from Rocky Mount; and some relatives from NJ came down to Asheville. They're all deceased now. We had quite a few witnesses.

KV: Sounds like it.

CM: Then I got called to Sycamore Hill Baptist Church; now that's where our State Convention is going to convene the last wk in Oct., in Greenville, NC. Sycamore Hill Baptist Church--I was called there and at that time I was 24 years old. Rev. Trapper was very upset that I was leaving him. But Sycamore Hill was the largest church for Blacks for a radius of 50 miles. Another student stayed at the same church for his entire career at the same church that had considered me. So I went there [to Sycamore Hill] and preached and stayed for three years.

Then I was called to Belmont; I had never heard of Belmont. it's between Gastonia and Harlan. It's a small town nestled between Mecklenburg County and Gaston County.

Then I was called here [The Nazareth First Missionary Baptist Church, 146 Pine Street, Asheville, 28801. Urban Renewal had just come through when I came.

I was in Raleigh during the sit-ins in the 50's and early part of the 60's. Citizen Times interviewed me about that. It's hanging up in the Vestibule--where they found that story I do not know. And I said "That coffee [served me at the counter] was boiled in the depths of Hell--it was so hot."

[This coffee was served at a sit-in at a Woolworth's in Raleigh, in which several Shaw students were involved. Emma Baker and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee staged a weekend conference, "Sacrifice for Dignity" for all students from various states interested in sit-ins.]

He expanded on this part of his life in a later phone conversation (Jan 21, 2011):

The counter was closed for food orders, serving coffee only after days of sit-ins. Ever since getting the tip of my tongue burnt from that coffee, I refuse to drink hot coffee, only We [the students] were literally threatened while marching in front of Woolworth's by whites who heckled and tormented us, but we [the marchers] were arrested, not the hecklers. We were fingerprinted and I guess I have a criminal record, The magistrate released them, hoping we would not cause more trouble. We marched for several days until Woolworth's took down the barriers at the counter, for between the marchers and the

hecklers the store was losing income. This was a highly heated experience--highly heated and you could cut the tension with a knife. Eventually other stores in Raleigh opened up to us. But churches didn't necessarily follow suit.

The Shaw University campus was divided at that time between the East Campus and the West campus, and a Baptist Church occupied the island between. It would not let African Americans in to worship, so they attended the Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in downtown Raleigh where Rev. W.W. Finlater was pastor. This church and the pastor were very open to integration. Eventually the property of the west campus was sold to the city.

Back to regular interview of 10/09/09 on topic of "Urban Renewal"

Evil had been going around. And people [effected by Urban Renewal] thought they had been tricked and gypped, because we had black businesses and services and they were affected. This church, along with Mt. Zion and other churches, were primarily supported by the neighborhood. When Urban Renewal comes in, it affected miles and miles. And it affected what churches they could attend [since there is no bus service on Sundays and most were without cars].

Urban Renewal took much of the property of Black people. And much of that black property that had been taken through Urban Renewal is still not being used. Much of it is not being used.

KV: Really!

CM: Much of it. The Black congregations most of all got set back. Most of them [congregations] never got over it .

Expands on this again in Jan. 2011 phone conversation:

In essence Urban Renewal was Negro Removal. The older families at Nazareth Baptist were locals who walked to church; we were a neighborhood church then. Now we're not. Blacks will travel miles and miles to attend church, but now we have to use vans to go get our members. When I was still here in my childhood, I was a member of Mt. Zion and viola Proctor would walk from house to house to pick up kids and walk them to Mt. Zion. Josie Clark at Nazareth did the same for kids there, and St. James A.M.E. had a woman who did that for St. James. We were neighborhood churches.

(Federal Statute required locales receiving federal funds to establish for the area designated for Urban Renewal a neighborhood committee that would theoretically have input on the City's plans and process, and now we're looking at a list of people who served on that committee, which included Dr. Mosley's name. Documents imply, however, that the agenda was preordained by professionals, not by the neighborhood representatives.)

DM: Jesse Ray, owner of Jesse Ray's Funeral Home; both of them (?) are deceased. J.P. Jackson, I think he's in Real Estate. (indiscernible)

KV: Do you remember Peggy Shook?

DM: No. Hunter D. Watson, he is deceased. Annette Coleman, I think she's manager of a

bank uptown, I think First Citizens'. All of the ones I've mentioned were Afro-Americans.

Hunter Watson, Annette Coleman and Jesse Ray.

(Now we're looking at lists of Housing Authority Board members divided up into the years they were serving. List provided by City Planning Office.)

DM: 1985, '86: Hunter B Watson, Logan Delay, Annette Coleman, and Jesse Ray--all of them are Afro-Americans. All are deceased except for Annette. 1988: Hunter Watson. Logan Delaney, Annette Coleman, Jesse Ray's been dropped off. '89: Annette Coleman, Logan D. Delaney, Mabel Hawkins is still alive and so is Annette Coleman. (City Records)

KV: Were any of them members of this congregation?

DM: Not any of them.

KV: Not any of them.

DM: '90: Annette Coleman, Logan Delaney, Mabel Hawkins--Afro-Americans.

KV: Don't worry about the next years because the official major Urban Renewal years were ended by then. I was interested in the late '70's and '80's right now. Now here's a list of elected city government officials. So if we start with '79, do any of these names bring back remembrance of being involved in any of the discussions that you attended or presentations that you attended in regards to Urban Renewal?

DM: You're asking me about Urban Renewal; I wasn't involved in that.

KV: I guess I need you to explain why they would list you as being a member of the Citizens Advisory Committee then?

DM: That's a neighborhood advisory committee; we met about the concerns of this neighborhood. But I was not a part of any outstanding committee.

KV: Well, didn't that committee ever discuss Urban Renewal?

DM: We discussed this particular neighborhood, and how we did not want it misused and taken advantage of. We were concerned about businesses moving in this residential area.

KV: Do you businesses that a were not Black-owned?

DM: No, we meant businesses in general, because we wanted this to stay a residential area because we didn't want all that traffic they would bring.

KV: And businesses included doctors' offices?

DM: We mainly didn't want doctors' offices and Mission Hospital buying up all the property.

KV: You'd alluded to Mission Hospital in an earlier meeting. Are they buying up some of this property over here?

DM: Oh, yeah, they're buying up all they can now. They're buying up all they can. They literally destroyed Hamilton St.! All those people had to give up their residences that they'd lived in for years! And what's so sad, most of those properties that they'd bought are not even being used. Some of the houses are still vacant. But Mission bought them. And they had to find residences somewhere else. I've got one member--Irene Jones--had to move two or three times since then.

KV: Oh, no kidding. That's rough on anybody.

DM: Yes, yes. She lives in Overlook Apartments now.

KV: Where's Overlook Apartments?

DM: It's next to Bartlett Arms on Bartlett St.

KV: Oh, yes, I know where that is.

DM: And it's a terrible place for drug trafficking and I think prostitution to some extent. That's right.

KV: Well, the Federal Government had ruled that there had to be a Citizens Advisory Committee where urban renewal was occurring [those projects receiving federal funds], and this is the list, and I copied it from a document inside included in a box that the City Housing Authority donated to Ramsey Library. It says the Citizens Advisory Committee for East End/Valley St. is to be Rev. Warren Bock, chair; Jesse Ray, Jr.; Juanita Hennessey, Oscar McCoy, Robert Smith, Ralph Brown, Sr., James Turman, Rev. Charles R. Mosley.

(HACA Box 25)

DM: I remember that.

KV: And it said that the selection of these citizens was initiated on Sept. 13, 1977, at a regular development meeting; that the population of the total area had been invited to attend. And eventually it says that the people in attendance [interview is interrupted by a cell phone call for the Reverend.]

Interview resumes on the "Dollar a Lot program.

DM: The city said people could pay a dollar a lot down to build their little houses. But remember that was a long time ago. So many of the people who did that are deceased.

KV: I know, but not all of them. [interrupted again by another cell phone call for DM.]  
KV reads off a list of priorities from a Citizens Advisory Meeting.  
Do any of these priorities sound familiar to you?

Some of the Committee's goals include. Providing adequate parks and play areas, adequate parking for churches in area, providing some "Clustered type apartments for elderly", acquiring vacant land for resale as lots and "Initiate an ongoing home bldg. program, and relocating residents within the neighborhood if at all possible." They also wanted a connector from Biltmore Ave. to "Carroll Ave., and a through "all weather street [i.e. not dirt] from S. Valley to Poplar St." [however Poplar disappeared into College when College was widened.]

In regards to some of the objectives like housing for the elderly and playgrounds: Map p3 Site Plan shows four different areas designated for elderly housing, each of 8 units. One was to be on Carroll St. close to Pine St. within walking distance of Tried Stone Church; the other was on Pine St. bordered by Latta St. Another was to be on Pine St. near its intersection with Miller St. The fourth was at the northern end of Pine St. and the northern end of the redevelopment. Area across from St. James Church and bordered by Mountain Street.

Playgrounds: Several are identified on this Map 3 Preliminary Site Plan. (Housing Authority Document, HACA Box 25 in Ramsey Library, Special Collections)

DM: Oh yes, they sound very familiar.

KV: One of your concerns was relocating the elderly.

DM: Oh yes. Relocating the elderly was a serious concern, because it's difficult for them to readjust. I has this experience in my second pastorate in Greenville, NC, when redevelopment came in and removed ALL [draws this word out to emphasize the thoroughness of the planners' approach there] of the elderly people who were members of my church, and who had lived around the center of the church for many years. And they just removed them and the area that became vacant from the sale of their homes they just used it for a park, not for any buildings or anything--very few buildings. They used it for a park, and I had many deaths during my four years there--of those elderly people; because they could not make the adjustment.

KV: Yes, it's a vulnerable time of life for changes like that.

Oh, and the notes about the committee also indicate that a member of that committee was picked to be a full-time liaison between the neighborhood and the consultant which was Butler Engineering, and Robert Smith was the one who was hired. Out of all the members

of all the committee he was paid. Do you remember how that choice was made?

DM: No, I don't--no idea whatsoever. But Robert Smith had great concern about the redevelopment and process and to that extent, that might be why. And he is the Director of the Asheville-Buncombe Human Relations Council now. His position there grew out of what he was doing during Redevelopment.

KV: And I know he still shows up over at Burton St. [in W. Asheville, where the state DOT has talked about taking part of Burton St. in expanding rte 240 to make more room for traffic for the I-26 connector. [Burton St. had been hit in an earlier Urban Renewal Plan when I 240 was put in by the State Dept. of Highways.]

DM: And I know he was very involved two months ago they were going to send all the people on Grove St. [at the Sr. Opportunity Center], to an activity center on the west side-- did for a while, too. And I was chaplain there, still am. And we contested it for weeks persistently.

KV: Who did you have to take it to?

DM: We took it to the Dept. of Recreation. They sent representatives, and they heard us, and so now the people in W. Asheville have to come to Grove St.

KV: They wanted to close one due to budget cuts?

DM: Yes. I used to teach predominantly African Americans, and now it's an integrated group that I teach Bible Study to.

KV: Where was that center? It wasn't at Burton St., was it?

DM: No, not there it was another center that the Rec. Dept. had out there. That's where we were going.

KV: [returning to the discussion of proposals for changes in the East End/Valley St. neighborhood and the priorities/concerns of the residents there]:  
Here's a copy of a map [from Box 25 of the HACA Collection in Ramsey Library's Special Collection] for how changes would be made and this was presented to the members of this area as possible realignment. You can see that Pine St. is now the "all-weather" through street that runs from College St. and that was renamed as Martin Luther King. They have playgrounds designated here, another one here, and one up here. They have identified this as a neighborhood retail area, so it would be that area that's basically across from your church. [Now the area is occupied by residential streets, East-End and Hazzard Ave.]

DM: Yes

KV: They have identified different areas for elderly housing--it would have been apartments, I would guess. Here is one, there's another one down here, another one here and another one here. [Carroll near Pine within walking distance of Tried Stone Church; Pine St. bordered by Latta; on Pine St. near its intersection with Miller St.; northern end of Pine St. and northern end of the redevelopment area across from St. James Church, bordered by Mountain St.

DM: Is that where they're located now? There is an apartment here at the development end of Martin Luther King and right here going up Mountain St. on the corner of Martin Luther King. And then there's another one down here below the church on Hildebrand St. Can you see St. James? It's right on the corner of Mountain St. and M.L. King Drive.

KV: So it would be right here. So that one didn't materialize?

DM: It did. And there's another one down [there] by the same company. Yeah, it's right on Martin Luther King.

KV: They were calling this Pine St. at the time.

DM: There's just one block of Pine St. [after Urban Renewal] now.

KV: There's supposed to be another one down here, way down off of Charles St. Do you remember anything about that?

DM: Charles St.? Those are private homes.

KV: Oh they are? So the retail area never showed up, did it. [It was projected at the community meeting to be in an area across M.L. King from Dr. Mosley's church.]

DM: No, it didn't.

KV: But there used to be all kinds of retailing in this area

DM: Not immediately here.

KV: But I mean on Valley St. and . . . .

DM: And Eagle St., Market St., Grail St. there was a grocery store there--Chisholm's Grocery Store.

KV: I remember hearing about that; it was within walking distance of Stephens-Lee and students used to go there to buy lunch material.

DM: It's still there; they made it into apartments. Corner of Grail and Max.



KV: I'll have to look for it on my way out of the neighborhood. But the rest of the retail that you had access to on Valley and Eagle and Market wasn't replaced.

DM: No, no.

KV: Was there any bus service that you had before this urban development plan?

DM: Oh, no, no.

KV: So people had to live within walking distance of churches and grocery stores and shops. Was there a taxi business?

DM: Oh yes, we always had cabs.

KV: I remember seeing a picture showing a cab company up on Eagle St.

DM: It was called "Your Cab." And there was another one as well, called . . . [indiscernible]; they both used the same cab stand.

KV: Was there a gas station in this area?

DM: Gas station up on Market St.--Jones Gas Station and Grocery Store. They had one down on McDonnell.

KV: Do you remember a drive-in called . . .

DM: Dreamland. Yes, at Six Points.

KV: Where's Six Points?

DM: Down on South Side. You're flexing my memory now. Wait a minute. Now you're flexing it too much. Now don't forget I wasn't here.

KV: But you remember some of this.

DM: I remember some of this.

KV: Some of these changes didn't happen until after '78.

DM: But I was doing quite a bit of traveling then.

KV: Oh, why? What kind of traveling?

DM: Doing preaching, revivals, workshops. I'm quite a traveler. Even in my state of health, I'm still quite a traveler. I still go as much as I can.

KV: I know you're going to a conference soon. . . .

DM: I try to do that.

KV: You find it keeps you alert?

DM: Keeps me alert, keeps me active.

KV: What do you miss most?

DM: I don't miss much. I miss being able to preach every week--I'm no up to that.

KV: I mean, what do you miss most since Urban Renewal changed things? What do you think of the way it was handled and its long-term impact on race relations here in Asheville?

DM: Well, I don't believe, I don't believe the right people were truly trying. I don't believe that people truly got market price for their homes. Many of them had to resort to complexes for the aged, because what they got from the developer would not be enough to let them buy another house. Housing prices now are through the roof; so these people who were homeowners--**homeowners**--had to resort to senior apartment; had to resort to renting again or leasing. Now how is that helping **US**?  
(interview interrupted by his cell phone)

KV: Did they adequately compensate the businesses in the area?

DM: They didn't compensate the businesses and we have not been able to develop Eagle St. and Market St. For some reason it gets blocked very time it goes up before City Council. And the businesses that have attained up there on Market and Eagle have been predominantly white. And the businesses have been purchased by whites. Two funeral homes -- Henry and Anne Wilkins --Henry's Funeral Home--it was closed when I came back in '75, but I don't know what year it was closed. Wilkins--he went out of business and went to Florida for a while and he came back and he opened up on S. French Broad, and Hart joined him. So at that time it was Wilkins and Hart Funeral Service. Then when Wilkins died, Hart took over the whole business and it became Hart Funeral Service, and it eventually moved to Phifer St. And he died, and his son now has a thriving funeral home business. In fact he had a funeral here yesterday. One of my best soloists, in fact you may have heard him the Sunday you were here. This church was packed, even in the balcony.

KV: How old was he?

DM: Seventy-two. He was wiped out in about three months; wiped out by lung cancer.

KV: That's too bad.

DM: Yes. We're going to miss him.

KV: I bet so . (pause) What else was up there on Market St.?

DM: Market St.: You had a building right there on the corner; it had doctors, it had beauticians, a drug store on each corner--Steele's Drug Store on the left hand side. When I was a teenager we'd buy our ice cream over at Steele's and try to eat it at the YMI. But Mrs. Harrison would always come and throw us out. She'd say, "You bought your ice-cream over there, now go over and finish eating it over there."

KV: Who was Ms. Harrison?

DM: She was the pharmacist's wife.

KV: Wasn't there a library in the YMI?

DM: Yes, Ms Hendrix ran that.

KV: Was she paid?

DM: Yes She was paid, I guess by the City.

KV: Because Blacks were not allowed in the bigger library?

DM: Oh, no!

KV: Well, if you think of anything else, please let me know. Were you pleased with the representation rendered by Bob Smith as citizen representative for the Advisory Committee?

DM: Bob Smith is a very dedicated person.

Now subject has changed to the YMI because Dr. Mosley had been on that Board for a while.

DM: Mr. George Ellison saved it; He came to my rescue and offered his services when things were tough. He kept the YMI open. He had a lot of contacts and became Chairman, and I did not mind that. And I became Chairman Emeritus, which means between now and Eternity, I can go to any meeting I 'want to because I was with them in

the real struggle.

KV: Who was trying to close it?

DM: The IRS--we owed-- they had not paid the employment taxes and then they were behind on the mortgage with the Nation Bank (?). And Ellison was able to negotiate with the Bank of Asheville and now we have payments that I hope we can handle with the Bank of Asheville.

KV: So it's ongoing.

DM:  
Yes.

KV: But otherwise, where is its funding coming from?

DM: Private donations. Businesses and corporations. We would get grants from an agency called Rural . . . Rural something. We had to come up with certain guidelines in order to qualify. And then the County allowed us so much money. And Matthew Bacoat was the main person who helped us get those funds; he would write the proposals to different people. I think he's working with One Youth at a Time now. Robbie Williams is still the director.

End of recorded interview

Telephone Interview, not recorded, 2/2011

Dr Mosley: In regards to the sit-in in Raleigh at the Woolworth luncheon counter: There had been a conference at Shaw Univ. called "Sacrifice for Dignity." He was a senior at the time(1960), and although the counter was still closed after days of sit-ins, they could get hot coffee served to them. It was so hot that it burnt the tip of his tongue so has not drunk hot coffee ever since--"That coffee was so hot it must have been boiled in the depths of Hell!"-- so he drinks only iced coffee and the iced mocha served at McDonald's, not even hot mocha/chocolate. They also picketed Woolworth's and were threatened and "tormented" by angry whites who heckled them every time they marched, The marchers were arrested but not the hecklers. So the Reverend was fingerprinted and probably has a jail record; they were released, the Court hoping they would not cause any more trouble, but they continued marching for several more days. The Reverend says, "It was a highly heated experience; the tension was so thick that it felt as if you could cut it with a knife." Between the hecklers and the marchers, they interfered with Woolworth's business, deterring business [remember this was in the time when Woolworth's was like a

small department store] until Woolworth's took down the barriers. Eventually other stores opened up to African Americans so their "Sacrifice for Dignity" paid off.

Shaw University was a divided campus at the time, having an east campus and a west campus. A Baptist church occupied the area of the break. Eventually the property of the west campus became property of the city of Raleigh. In downtown Raleigh was Pullen Memorial Baptist Church led by W.W. Finlater who was very open to integration. (The NC affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union has an award named in his honor.) So a number of Shaw students attended that church.

"In essence Urban Renewal was Negro Removal"

To illustrate this he talked about its effect on his church:

Older families in Nazareth were all locals who walked to church, as were other churches in the East End area of Urban Renewal. So when they were removed, attendance dropped significantly, as did church coffers. Now Nazareth is not a neighborhood church but Blacks will travel miles and miles to attend church, he says, especially if it's the church of their childhood. Now, Nazareth has vans that will go pick up members. For neighborhood churches like Nazareth and Mt. Zion, some female member would walk from house to house to pick up children and bring them; He was a member of Mt. Zion as a child [recall they gave him some money for his first year away at Shaw.] Viola Proctor would do that for Mt. Zion, and Josie Clark did the same for children at Nazareth. St. James A.M. E. also had such a person. When churches were neighborhood churches, they could operate as a sort of organizing principle of the area, and their pastors would be important members and spokespersons for the neighborhoods. (My observation, not his.) Note that the original plans for renovating the East End kept the churches in situ.