

Interview with Bil Moss
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May 14, 2009

Bil Moss: You have asked me a couple times an important question about being an African American woman related to the civil rights movement. Or was I treated as an African American woman? And I had indicated that during the first part of coming here and our marriage, that Harold and I were very close, very involved, and that everything was happening once we got involved, we did together. But as I look back at some of the articles, I notice, I think more than I have before, the difference in how I was treated and how he was treated and how it related to what we were doing. What I have today I think reflects that.

I have a couple of things to start with that really jumped out at me. I got little recognition in the work that I did. I have plaques, I don't need any more plaques, but I mean as far as relationships. For instance, just recently, on this event. Your professor, Dr. Honey, has been involved in this civil rights thing. It's been on TV. In fact, I just saw it the other night. Where they go through what was happening back [then]. My name was not mentioned one time in it. Harold indicates one time that "my wife and I were looking for a house." That's the only time [I was referred to]. We have a long history in civil rights together with separate responsibilities. The housing thing was my thing, and the men thought we'd never do it and it ended up being successful. At least we got the ordinance, even though later the referendum won, cancelling it out. But at least we got that far. Anyway, that was one of the things.

3:21

Another one of the things that happened was that the YWCA¹, when I went from Planned Parenthood to the YWCA. There was few, almost no, [black] executive directors of the YWCA. Their response to that was that they *train* executive directors. At that time I didn't have a degree and I hadn't gone to college at all. They decided to send me to school because I was the assistant. I did a little bit of everything. Particularly, the community kind of connections with young women, particularly black women. So, the executive director took a liking to me so they decided to train me able to take a higher position so they funded me.

Harold moved out the first day that I went to school. He called and asked why I wasn't home and I said "Oh you know, the deal was that I could go to school in the morning and then work at night. I'd work an hour or two later." That had been clear, I thought. But that really upset him. That was my first scholarship I had to give back. But when I look back on that. That was in the early fifties. Woman at that time were different than women now. Even me, I would *never* allow that to happen to me again.

KLW: You mean giving the scholarship back?

BM: Giving the scholarship back, yes, but I would have the understanding in advance that this was part of a benefit to both of us. This was an opportunity that had been given to me. I would have never sacrificed that kind of thing. The reasoning was that purely that when I

¹ Young Women's Christian Association.

approached it, I said, “What if something should happen to you?” and he said, “Well, I have a \$25,000 insurance policy so you don’t have to worry about that.” You know, that \$25,000 wouldn’t go very far nowadays. That was back in [the] 1950s - if I got hit by a truck maybe that would have worked!

Then there was just two years ago, the county did a charter review. The person that was selected from this district got into some legal troubles so was disqualified and had to give up the position. So, I inquired whether there was someone (she was African American) so I inquired whether there was someone that was going to take that position. At that particular time, I was told no. I said, well, it’s a volunteer position, it was also a position that I had, years before, had been the staff to the commission when I worked for Doug [Sutherland]. What happened is they “lost” my application. It was interesting because there was someone on the committee that had talked to me about support and they were on the selection committee and had come to me and said, “Bil, you know, I couldn’t support you because we didn’t have your application.”

When the chairman of the committee made the report, I imagine as I looked around that room that I had probably had a better resume than almost anybody in that room, at least I had more education, I think, I don’t think there were too many masters. I had the experience of having worked in that area before as a staff person. So, when the chairman of the selection committee gave the report, he said “We received eight applications but we had to toss out one.” He didn’t say whose it was. So, having had this information at the beginning of the meeting, I just came forth with the conversation that I was the one whose it was but I didn’t understand why it was thrown out because I had made inquiry and, I imagine, the period wasn’t open yet. The secretary had told me that the formal applications would go out on a certain date and I mailed it that day. What would happen was that they would choose three people and those people were supposed to make a presentation that particular evening. And those people, when I asked if I could make a presentation, the group agreed that I should make a presentation but under the circumstances I knew I didn’t have a chance. These are the three top people that the committee has come up with, I just wanted to let you know my information. So I did that.

As it turned out, Jim Walton was the person in charge of the committee, and Harold was the person, that even though he was the chair of the committee, he was pushing for Harold to get the position. As it turned out, it was a disadvantage. If I hadn’t been there, I would have supported Harold getting the position, too. What bothered me, was this kind of tactic. I’ve been in government long enough to know things just don’t disappear (unless you want them to). What happened was, he didn’t get it either. I think that’s been a sore spot with some of the things that have happened.

11:58

I’ve noticed since then, I have not, another instance that happened about a year ago. When this project was first being brought to the public, it was at the [Tacoma] Art Museum, that this happened. All of the people, current and past political people were introduced and I wasn’t, and one of my sorority sisters got up and said, “I think you left off [Bil].” I know the person [Stephanie] Stebich who is the executive director and so Bev Grant said “I think you left one off, and past Deputy Mayor Bil Moss is here.” That was a direct reflection of

having been, everybody, not just the current political people, but also all of those people that held political office were introduced. It's things like that I have noticed. It probably indicates that I have stepped on a few toes. But those are coming from *my own* people, not from anybody that's against me because of my color.

Getting little recognition or support from, particular from the black males in the community.

14:10

I have belonged to the Links and I'm in a sorority and I've had enough exposure with and without Harold because we were married 22 years and we were divorced 22. I had enough exposure that I can build a base without them. But then I still have to go my community and I still, to a certain extent, they are in, you know some of those people are in positions that it would be to my advantage to have support me as opposed to doing underhanded things. I think one of the things that I've noticed that has happened, [is that] after the event at the state museum, I got invited to be a recipient of an award at Weyerhaeuser. The person that in charge of the department that makes those choices, I believe, did that because they wanted me to have some recognition or to feel at least. They probably would never acknowledge that but [it] happened so close together and it was a complete surprise and that's what that glass one is over there [points to glass award sitting by window]. That was just last year.

KLW: What's the award?

BM: It's during the Martin Luther King "Living the Dream" award for community service.

Anyway, one of the things I guess I mentioned to you before this has done has started me to digging and really obsessing and it's also opened some old wounds, you can tell. And there are fewer wounds than good times, but they're still there to be opened, I found out.

16:47

Did I mention to you that I'm taking this group to Portland?

KLW: Hmm, mm.

BM: There were 14, 15 with me went up to Portland and it was very, very good. We had Marilyn, from the City Council, two people from the school board, two ministers, we had a school administrator, a social worker and a number of educators. We went to look at a project in Portland that has done a really excellent job in assisting the school district to work with and deal with at-risk young people. And it's not a school, or a charter school or anything. It's an after school and support kind of program. I had the chair of the school board, Kim Golden. The day after that she called and so I'm meeting with her tomorrow in order to talk about what we can do. It's not like moving a system in and changing our system, but there are some vital kinds of things that they do that might be helpful. The schools that they deal with have an over 90 percent graduation rate and they deal with kids from the 3rd grade to 24 years of age, through college or through their first job. I brought this for you so you can see a little bit about that.

KLW: Are you going to present to the school board at some point?

BM: Hopefully. One of the persons that went down too, in fact she drove the van, was Cheryl Jones. She is real active up on Hilltop with a program, working with the city, and working with the leadership on the council in order to bring a program to Hilltop that dealt with at-risk kids. Her's is aimed at closing the gap between black kids and others in their education. She called yesterday and she had about six school board members. She wants to put together a summer school, a middle school up in Hilltop because except for Jason Lee there isn't one in that area. And so, [it] is part of Allen AME church, not part of it, but it's a spin off from there as a non-profit. And we purchased a building across on MLK and 13th, right next to the post office. Valhalla used to be a Swedish hall. She has received \$1.5 million in two sessions from the legislature to remodel that building and to start up a program. The program she wants to start up, there was some advantages of her going down. She has asked me to help her advocate for that program. That's what I did yesterday, it's been a fast week! Then Friday, we're going to talk to the chairman of the school board. In that group, was the assistant superintendent. She's already been working with kids. That comes out of what is already being done. And she's also got more than a million dollars because she's got a million from Microsoft because she used to work for Microsoft. That's part of what's been going on.²

KLW: Part of this is an existing program.
22:37

BM: Yes, these kids, it started out as a technology group. These kids were upset about the youth and child abuse. She took 'em down to Olympia for the kids to talk to Governor Gregoire. So that was at the height of last year. She said "What are you going to do about it? Write me a paper." So the kids not only wrote a paper but [they] ended up getting a video together and bus signs, they did a whole thing. That's the kind of thing, we already have the technology, we have a retiree from Microsoft, for about three or four years, has been teaching kids how to use the computer, how to repair a computer, those kinds of technical skills. What she's aiming at is more math and engineering kinds of skills. So, that's the thing I will be working on going forward, too.

KLW: And you're going to hopefully integrate this program with the new potential program.

BM: Right. I don't know whether, and I didn't make copies of any of these, but I did want to give you a sense of my experience on the council and a few other [things]. [Brings out folder of news clippings].

24:45

Are you aware of the Patriot Act?

KLW: Yep.

BM: When I was on the council, there were, I think, only about four of us, three of us, that felt that the council, even though we had no legislative responsibility relative to it, that we should make a statement. So, this was the statement that I made on that.³

² Article 1, "Child abuse no match for youths and music," April 6, 2008.

³ Article 2, "City might reaffirm liberties," August 15, 2003.

KLW: So, this is while you were on the council?

BM: Yes. This is, at the [Tacoma] Dome. I've been on a number of art things.⁴

KLW: So, this was 2003 as well. I wondered when those palm trees appeared. I've been here since '98 but don't think I had been in that area.

BM: I think I was standing in for the mayor at the time, I think I was deputy mayor.

KLW: Yep, "Deputy Mayor Bil Moss."

BM: This one was my support of the Broadway Center and that was on the council, just me and another councilperson who later, after she left the council, she became the director of Clover Park Technical College. She and I were the art people on that.⁵

KLW: It's so nice that that [project] has happened now.

BM: Here's the information about the child abuse. [Hands me CD and pamphlet].

Albers Mill, are you familiar with that? I was involved in the negotiations with them because for a long time, they couldn't (they turned them into condos), they couldn't do that, they had a hard time doing it.⁶

KLW: My previous job was at BCRA, the architect who designed that.

BM: When I talk about Reverend Brazill and that prior to the sixties and during the sixties, who was a minister that was extremely active in getting employment and getting housing. This is an article when he retired. I was responsible for the Earnest S. Brazill Street that is now running, instead of 12th street, until Sprague. I was responsible for that.⁷

KLW: [Referring to newspaper article] Does this building still exist?

BM: You wouldn't recognize it. It's still there. Right on that corner but the remodeled it and they built (they had a building fund for a long time). It's on the corner of, I think I street and 12th or 13th. It's now expanded and repainted.

This also has to do with the Patriot Act.⁸

Do you remember the Brame Case?⁹

⁴ Article 3, "Tacoma celebrates 'Urban Oasis' dedication," March 21, 2003.

⁵ Article 4, "City digs deeper for Broadway Center," May 1, 2003.

⁶ Article 5, "Albers Mill one step closer to preservation," August 29, 2000.

⁷ Article 6, "Shiloh Baptist Church celebrates 50 years," July 12, 2003.

⁸ Article 7, "Civil liberties resolution loses, will get 2nd chance," August 20, 2003.

⁹ Tacoma City Police Chief David Brame shot his wife and himself in front of their two children in a Gig Harbor parking lot. The City of Tacoma faced criticism for employing an allegedly unstable police chief.

KLW: Hmm, mmm. That was when you were on city council?

BM: Right. In fact, it took up half of my city council career. I was given credit for developing a committee to kind of resolve how, what we should do and how we could resolve some of the problems.¹⁰

30:45

KLW: What the citizen's group successful? In hindsight?

BM: No. Because, as that article indicates, there was about four committees. What happened, they fired the manager, I left the council. What happened to the committee, it was not recognized. I have an article (oh, here.).¹¹

Dan Voelpel and that reporter [Peter Callaghan] are two of my favorite people. They gave me more positive publicity.

This is interesting, and until today it didn't hit me, this is a bond issue of Tacoma. "Voters just say no". In the picture, what it says with the people that are standing here, Harold is with me. But it always says "Councilman Harold Moss and his wife" and I was the city councilman.¹²

KLW: Oh, wow.

BM: That's the kind of thing, actually may have not bothered me until I started looking back and saying, some of the things are - -. That was not a county, it was a city bond issue, it was not a county issue. Whenever he had something, I would participate, and when I had something, he would participate. They never got over me just being his wife.

33:40

KLW: So, he was on the *county* council in 2001?

BM: Uh, huh. Ok, here's a question about what I would do if someone gave me \$10,000.¹³

KLW: What did you say?

BM: First, I would look at my options.

This is something I pulled out because on the back side you can see a picture Reverend Brazill and some of the other people that were [there].¹⁴

KLW: What is the publication, the "Dispatch"?

¹⁰ Article 8, "Citizens have leader, mission, no work," July 29, 2003.

¹¹ Article 9, "Councilman should back off mean criticism of Brame panel," June 13, 2004.

¹² Article 10, "Voters just so no," May 16, 2001.

¹³ Article 11, "Would you squirrel away a windfall?" March 23, 2003.

¹⁴ Article 12, Dispatch photo montage, February 6, 1997.

BM: That was a publication, the owner of the Dispatch, I think she's in the picture. This was a paper that was in the Hilltop

KLW: Is it still being published?

BM: No, she died of cancer about three or four years ago.

KLW: And the newspaper didn't continue without her?

BM: Yeah, it went on for a little while but they didn't, it finally [closed].

One of the things in my listing of stuff, I had left off, and didn't realize until I started going through stuff. We were United Way co-chairs, Harold and I. Guess who did the work?¹⁵

KLW: What year was that?

BM: '97, I think it was. But, it was the year, up until the time, that had the largest increase during a period, if you read down the article, that wouldn't necessarily have had an increase.

KLW: Wow.

37:00

BM: I don't remember how I got involved in this, except that they called and asked me if I would do this. This was MultiCare. They had this campaign for cancer. I have this one to show, there were five of us. She's the president, you probably know her, the president of Columbia Bank. She was one of the others, there were five of us.¹⁶

KLW: Cool. So, someone from MultiCare called you and asked you to do it?

BM: Yeah. They selected five people and I was one of them.

Here is my stand on gay rights.¹⁷ That was really funny. The Ministerial Alliance, which is an alliance of Black ministers, was anti-gay rights. The white ministers (or mostly white ministers) have an organization, too, were supportive of gay rights. The night that we voted on it, I had a whole half a council chambers of black ministers watching me vote against them. So, I have to look at that, in terms of sometimes, maybe I haven't always been a follower. I haven't noticed (like I said two ministers went down with us [to Portland to visit SEI] and two others had initially committed before I had to change the date) so I haven't noticed that – that hasn't caused me a problem. But it was interesting that the only black person on the city council was voting against most of the ministers that belonged to the Ministerial Alliance, and they had come out to support the vote.

¹⁵ Article 13, "United Way contributions exceed 1996 record pace," November 24, 1997 and Article 14, "Community shares United Way's success," December 7, 1997.

¹⁶ Article 15, Smart Women Get It advertisement, October 30, 2002.

¹⁷ Article 16, "Tacoma makes gay rights the law," April 24, 2002.

KLW: Do you typically see that, that the Ministerial Alliance, or some black group, that they feel, obligated to vote, or support along the lines of other black groups? Is that a typical response? That there is some need to stick together?

BM: No. The Ministerial Alliance, it's a group of ministers. It's not all black ministers because my minister does not belong to it. So, it's not all of the black ministers but those that belong to that organization subscribe to the tenets of that organization. Gay rights and abortion, they are some issues that we have in the black community too. We have black people that didn't vote for Obama because he was pro-choice. Anyway, that situation happened to me.

KLW: Did they respond to that after? Did they call you?

BM: No. I say one thing, during that time before we vote, we hear testimony from people that want to talk. So, the council can say something. I usually, in fact, I got criticized for not getting involved in a lot of conversations on the council. When I felt real dear about an issue, I would speak up but I didn't do that too often – not often enough for some people anyway. So, that night I said that in my bible, it says that we should love one another. And in my mind, gay people are people and they should have all the rights, they should be able to buy a house, they should be able to do the things that they needed to do to take care of their families. So, later, one of the ministers, he was a pretty vocal in his group, did compliment me and that that was the only thing that he got out of it but it was a compliment that they couldn't deny. He did later make that comment to me. I haven't noticed, that any of them, like when my daughter passed, they were real responsive, because she didn't belong to any church, they were really helpful, really responsive to me.

And I think that I have been the only black president of the board of the symphony orchestra here [Tacoma Symphony Orchestra]. Before I was asked to be on the board, they were doing this campaign and this picture appeared in there brochure. The photographer still has used that in his advertising.¹⁸

KLW: Did you have any idea that it was going to be in here?

BM: Yes, I knew that they took it for the campaign, but I didn't know that it was going to be in the brochure. I wasn't involved with the symphony prior to that time.

KLW: This was 1997-98. My first year at the symphony was in 2002. That's what I love about the symphony, still using the same pictures today! That's really neat. So, he did a photo shoot?

BM: That was the first time I had ever had anybody make me up and tell me what to wear, it was really an experience. That, and the one with MultiCare.

44:57

So, those were mostly the things to give you an idea besides what I've done in that chronology – this gives you some idea of the things that I've been doing.

KLW: Can we talk a little bit more about the city council?

¹⁸ Article 17, Tacoma Symphony Orchestra brochure, 1997-1998 season.

BM: Sure.

KLW: I'm just interested in getting a little bit deeper into that experience. How did you like that experience?

BM: It's funny. I have always, at least I always thought of myself as always being out front in relationships. Even though I've been around politics and had some real feelings about politics, I really was naïve. The first week I was there –

KLW: This is after you've been elected?

BM: Yes, after I've been elected. The first week I was there, I'm drawing a blank on his name, he's now on Pat McCarthy's team. He was on the city council. Anyway, he invites me and a councilman from another district that was elected at the same time, to breakfast. So, we go to breakfast. In effect, what he was doing was laying down, getting his little group together for how you vote. Me and my big mouth, I said, "Now, look. I don't want you to take me for granted. If you don't involve me in making the decision, don't feel you can automatically count on my vote." But I didn't realize. Before that statement, he'd said "We'll meet every two weeks and go over the agenda." He was supposedly helping me to get acclimated. I never had, it was almost like the garden club, I never had another invitation to breakfast.

KLW: Really? Wow!

BM: But I know there were [breakfasts] because the other person was a male and periodically (I sat across from him in my little stall) and periodically, I would hear them discussing business and what kind of vote it should be and they would mention, "You know, the other morning. . . ." So, I knew it was still going on even if it wasn't every two weeks, it would still be going on and I was not being invited. I learned a lesson from that. Think it but don't say it! [laughs]. As I said, on the council, people learn pretty quickly, I should say, people label you pretty quickly. They know you'll support this thing and you won't be for that thing or they have to politick you or something. Anything that had to do with fair employment or those kinds of issues, I can be sure to be included in them, to make sure that I'm going to be on the right side, on the winning side.

49:12

That was mostly, by the time we vote [on the issue] we already know what the vote is going to be. Because the discussion prior to the time of the vote will give you some indication. I pretty well think that I had a pretty good experience on the council. [Sharon] McGavick, when I first got on the council, I think we were the two women. And we kind of, in art issues, equality issues, economic issues, we were pretty well, I don't think that we were ever opposed to [each other] – not because we wanted to agree with each other, it's because that's the way our principles ran. I think that Bill Evans, he was the other person, he had been [a] retired priest and owns the store up on North 27th and Proctor, he was on [the council]. In fact, I was reading something today that he is just going off.

51:04

I just stopped at the end of my first term. And the reason that I did that was that, Harold had run for mayor the year before the last year of my term. I was somewhat blamed for that because there were people who had supported us both that didn't feel like we should have two Mosses on the council [Hands me article].¹⁹ I learned later that there had been people that had asked him why he didn't ask me to resign. I didn't know this until later and he never asked me because he probably knew what the answer would be. I think he still blamed [me]. That happened in November, and New Years Day is when we separated again.

KLW: So you really think that he was that upset about the election?

BM: Well, I know he was upset about the election and it was later that – and I was coming to my second term, and again I said “No, I'm not going to go for a second term” because we were in the process of divorce and I didn't want to have all of that. That's why I didn't go for the second term. Not, that I didn't feel, in fact, I feel I *could* have gotten elected. There was nothing that I knew of out there that would've said that I couldn't. I was the incumbent. But I didn't want to face the public and all of that stuff. So, there again, I allowed my relationship, you know. Sometimes I think about that and look at it as part old school, and part of my own insecurity. As much as I have done and as independent in some ways as I have been, I was still very dependent upon that relationship that didn't work anyway.

KLW: Both you and Bil - - -

BM: Harold.

KLW: Both you and Harold, sorry!

BM: Oh, people do it all the time because his name is Harold Gene. People get mixed up [laughs]. It's a mess.

KLW: You're both still involved in similar organizations. Are you both still involved in the NAACP?

BM: No. I tried to separate myself. I have a lifetime membership in the NAACP, but I don't attend meetings, that kind of thing. I don't know if he does either. I go periodically to the yearly banquet. As much as possible, I still kind of [separate]. It's been, that was New Years' Day 2002. You know Victoria?

KLW: Woodard? Yes.

BM: I was at her kick-off the other day and it's the first time in a while that we've been in the same building at the same time. We still hardly speak.

KLW: I just met Victoria last week. I've seen her name, I'm sure I've seen her picture before. But we were sitting at the same table at the Heart Association lunch so I introduced myself. At

¹⁹ Article 18, “Moss family shouldn't have two council votes,” November 11, 2001.

Metro Parks, I always see her name up on the wall, so I told her, “I’ve finally met the woman behind the plaque!” She was wonderful.

BM: She is. Initially, I knew her from my church. She was a teenager when she starting going to my church. She’s very gifted. She’s got a beautiful voice and she’s a natural director. She’s done little kids – she’d be an interesting person to interview. She worked for Harold for about seven years, she was his assistant on the county council. Before then she worked at the Urban League. In fact, he got her from the Urban League and at her event she said “When Harold stole me from the Urban League.” He’s kind of a father figure to her.

KLW: She’s running for city council? In what district?

BM: I think she’s running city-wide. In fact, I know she is because she called me and asked me to support and she said that she had to run city-wide because she had to run city-wide for the park board. And she’s already done that and she’s in ALF.²⁰ And she’s real active in church with a number of the choirs. And there was standing room only, there wasn’t even standing room, you were out in the hallway, at her kick-off. It was a very eclectic, very diverse group. Business people, work people, women and men, and all colors. She’s got a good support base.

58:23

KLW: I need to get my city council races straight. I can’t figure out who’s who. I need to write it all down to figure out whose running.

BM: Actually, it won’t be all clear until the last week in July – it’s when the filing is. It’s a long time. I think last year they changed it. I am thinking it’s May but it can’t be or we would have heard some publicity about it now. Anyway, it used to be the last week in July that people actually filed. Then some people you never hear about – they don’t know that you start campaigning six months ahead of time. Then you file. You get a number of people last minute.

KLW: Did you feel, on the city council, that you were able to make the change in the community that you wanted to?

59:40

BM: I felt I was able to do the things that I wanted to do. I was able to respond to people’s concerns about the garbage not being picked up, or the property next door. I could have a direct response to them. I was able to initiate, like that E.S. Brazill Street, I was able to initiate. Part of the art of the whole thing was being able to get people to support what you wanted to do. And I didn’t look at that as being hard, I just looked at that as being work. It was consoling that you nobody just said, “this is what’s going to happen” and it happened. You had nine people, or at least five people, that if you are going to get anything through, you’re going to have to deal with. I kept pretty active because at the time I was on the council, I was the only one that wasn’t working, so I spent a lot of time. I wasn’t working or like, Bill Evans had his business and Connie Ladenburg came on before I left and she was

²⁰ American Leadership Foundation, a non-profit group that promotes and strengthens community leadership through classes and service.

working for Safe Streets. Almost everybody had a job of some kind and I was the only one at that time, that gave my complete time to the council.

KLW: Sounds like a big benefit to have that time.

BM: Yeah. I don't know if I was any more informed than the rest of them but I did spend a lot of time going over the different issues.

KLW: So, when you, for example, had the idea about Earnest Brazill Street, you mentioned sitting in your cube at city council, is this something where you say "hey, so and so, what do you think about this idea?" and toss things around, or is it more formal than that?

BM: Actually, that particular thing came from a request from some members of his church who wanted, or felt that there should be, some recognition given for him because he had died. Some recognition given to him for all of the efforts that had been put into what he had done and the accomplishments and so forth. They called me and we went to breakfast and we discussed and they asked how they should go about doing it. I indicated to them, 'cause they had to go through the committee, how they should approach it, what kind of support they should get, who they should make contact with and so forth. And at the same time, I was talking to my council people and I went to those people first, that I knew would be supportive. Then, from there, because they helped me to convince the ones that would have been less supportive because a lot of it, is you look around and you count. You count above five and you might as well - . There's no sense in, if its seven or eight, there's no sense in you, unless you really feel strongly about something. Like with the gay issue, I really felt strongly about that.

When I was at Planned Parenthood, I had my first issue with that. I had hired a woman that was gay. She had indicated that when she interviewed. She was a social worker. I was interested in her ability to do her job more than I was interested in what kind of sex life she had. So, later on, I expanded to Puyallup and one of my staff people, a male social worker, was upset about the fact that she was promoted to do the Puyallup thing, he wanted to do the Puyallup thing that she was doing. So, he came to me, with that concern, that here was a gay person that was counseling girls. And so my approach still was that I hired her to do a job, as long as she was doing her job well, then I was not interested in what she did after she finished her job. That was none of my business. She is now, the director of Planned Parenthood in Tacoma.

KLW: Really? That's great.

BM: Down on MLK, 9th and MLK. Issues like that, I felt very strongly about. And I could be out front with those, that kind of issue. Most of the time, it was supporting other people's issues.

1:05:50

With the Brame thing. My issue was fairness. Let's be fair, let's allow people the opportunity to express themselves. So, that was a big deal.

KLW: I think that I put on our original questions. I think we've touched on this throughout but has (and this isn't necessarily a civil rights question) [reading] "Has Tacoma made progress in the way you thought it would? What issues stand out that need to be addressed?"

BM: I have pros and cons on that. Back when we first came here, there was a real push for civil rights and equality. So, there were things that people did that brought that together. For instance, Harold became president of the NAACP and the vice-president was a Unitarian Minister and so during that time, we were "un-churched" and the Unitarian Church was on [inaudible] and 12th so we started going there. I became secretary of the church. We started taking our children there. But the people there were really in to civil rights, the Unitarian People, and into doing things for the community. Also, the Jewish people around the community were real active in housing and civil rights and equality and that kind of thing.

One of the things, I don't remember who was responsible for initiating this, was that we had Friendship Teas and during probably this time of the year, there were houses all over the city, like they have house things now where you go and see the beautiful houses. We did that with people. The intent was to meet people at their home, in their own environment, and to learn about them. I still have lots of people that I knew from that time. I don't notice that going on now. We are more separate than I think we were then. I think that because we have access to better education and more education now but we're still segregated into our – you know, I'm in my sororities, I go to my black church, I'm in the black women's organizations. I have belonged to the symphony and I have belonged to other organizations but that's not a typical kind of thing.

And one of the things that has been missing for a while is, to me, that idea of coming together and working out those kinds of racial and discrimination things. Although I do notice that with our younger women, like Victoria's group, and a couple of the Links young women, that are attorneys and so forth, they are part of the board of the YWCA. I'm noticing that that's begun to happen again. But I think that that part of integration has not happened. It may be that nobody would come out during that time against what was happening at that time. I think now, reverse discrimination type things are - -. People that no longer feel that we're trying to integrate the society, they feel that one is taking something away from the other – I notice there is more of that.

1:11:38

On the positive side, there's more opportunity. I think in some areas there's more acceptance. There's more relationship building. So, it's both things. You know, it's not perfect, there are still places, you go to a school or you move into an area, there's still places that you aren't exactly accepted or you have that feeling that you aren't accepted. But you don't know if that's because of your race or because of, I always say, it's because of the other persons problem, not mine. Whether they just have some problem or not. So, that's about my personal feeling about – there's a lot of things still needing to be done – everywhere on all sides that could make things better.

How do you justify that half of the kids are still dropping out? The educational gap for black kids. How much of that is what has happened to our family structures and how much of that is what is going on in our school districts, or the teachers fault or the community's

fault. My feeling is that it's the total thing. It's not one thing. You can't take a kid. We talked a little bit about this. You take a kid that was really bright and you put them in a place like Charles Wright and they're there with the Weyerhaeuser kids and these kids and that kid of high resources but they go back home to Hilltop. And when they have excursions and so forth they can't attend, they can't afford. If they do, they're on the side, people looking at 'em like "what are you doing there?" Now is that any different feeling than the white kid in that same situation. Is it because of color or is it because of class or what is it? I think that there is a lot to be answered.

KLW: And it sounds like you're still making some of that change with this program.

BM: I'm still trying. You know, I'm trying to do my part. And trying to really be fair in saying that we as parents, not just black parents, all parents have some responsibility. We as the individual child have some responsibility. We as a community, because I came up in a community where Ms. Jones has as much right to your behind as your parents did if you were doing something wrong! [laughs]. But that we *all* are somewhat responsible. And if we look at it in the total, that we'll all get what we need and what we want and what is necessary out of the young person. But then some things just don't make sense like that. You put me in a million dollar house and I'm hungry. . . . is it because of my color or what?

1:16:16

[Kristina lines up photo shoot. Clear up specific questions from the first interview. Asks about NAACP newsletters.]

1:22:40

BM: Well, thank you for listening to all of this. I haven't talked to anybody about all this stuff in years. And I've never talked to anybody about you know, my - -. It has opened up a certain amount of wounds that I thought were closed up tight. Because I have had a lot of opportunities and people have been very supportive in a lot of instances. I've been frustrated in that the people most important to me weren't necessarily always supportive.

KLW: So, I asked my mom this on mother's day. She said at church, they were asking all the mothers, "What is the best thing about being a mother?" So, I've been asking all the mothers I know. So, I'm wondering what you would say is the best thing.

BM: Being a mother. And I have enjoyed beyond my children, I've enjoyed being somewhat of a "mother figure" to a number of young women that I'm very proud of and, well, I say young women and at least one young man, that somewhat have adopted me and call me mom. No relation by blood but I feel very motherly toward them. As far as encouraging them and mentoring them because they're all grown. I have cards that say "you're like a mother to me" and that's the highest compliment you can make to me. Because that means that I'm having some kind of a positive effect on your life and I guess that's what mothers are for.

1:26:28 END INTERVIEW