

Code 700010  
Subject Reverend Brenda Taylor Rosario  
Date 4/14/2010  
Interviewer Jennifer Chaloux

Abstract Reverend Brenda Taylor Rosario talks about her childhood growing up in the Central Neighborhood, and her family connections with the community. They have worked with the city of Cleveland in cleaning up the neighborhood since the 1970s.

Tags Central Neighborhood, Community Orchard, Community Gardens,  
In the log 'RR' represents Reverend Rosario, 'JC' refers to Jennifer Chaloux, 'F' refers to the facilitator, who asks questions at the end. Reverend Rosario's three year old grandson was present and can be heard throughout the interview

Special Notes minutes:

0 RR: Introduces self

JC: How did you come to live in Cleveland?

RR: Moved with family from Louisville, Mississippi because father was looking for work.

1

JC: Tell us about the community/neighborhood you live in now. How did you come to live there?

RR: Originally lived on 14th and Woodland. Construction of highway moved them to old Jewish neighborhood on East 61st between Quincy and Central in 1959, has lived there ever since.

JC: What was it like growing up there?

RR: When first moved there, they were tearing down everything, garbage everywhere.

2 RR: Flowers on E61st

JC: How do you feel about the neighborhood now?

RR: Loves it. Transition from black nationalists in 1960s, stores closed up during hough riots. 1978 family began to clean up the neighborhood.

RR: Mother began first gardens, neighbors followed suit. Councilman Lonnie

3 Burton, city trucks sent to clean up neighborhoods.

RR: Cleaned up garbage with city of Cleveland, E59th to E65th from Woodland to Quincy. Baited neighborhood for 5 years to get rid of rats. Mike White became  
4 mayor, new homes. Improvement into the 1980s and '90s, Summer Sprout Program Trusted God and He came through with brand new homes, now the vision is carrying on and want to cooperate with the reimagining of Cleveland. Older sister Florence has an orchard, I have prayer garden at 2349 e61st street. Most of the students from

5 CWRU and

6 Inspired by university students.

JC: You said the City of Cleveland started working with you after they saw all that your family had been doing with that street. What are the differences between what the neighborhood was like then and now?

RR: It's beautiful. Our mayor has been working with us for years. I was a precinct committeeman for over 23 years, since she started under Lonnie Burton

They know if they give us money, we get it done – we work with the community and everyone. They know me, they call me the "Bible Lady". I work with everyone, try to  
7 make things better for our children. Apple trees, peach trees, etc for everybody.

JC: This is the program that you were talking about on the corner of e61st and quincy?

RR: Yes ma'm

JC: NPI (neighborhood progress incorporated) did a series of workshops over the summer of 2009, were you involved in any of those?

8 RR: No, got started in this project [grant program] this year.

JC: How did you hear about the grant program?

RR: Becky from the Cuyahoga County cooperative extension, and Morgan Taggart were already in the program. My sister wanted to have an orchard put up on the corner. They have a garden across the street on e61st, part of the garden tour.

JC: What inspired you to write the grant for this project?

RR: Wanted to help family and community, always been inspired to help people. Garden behind my house, people come there to pray. [shows pictures in book]

Sit on the bench and pray [shows more pictures]. Been working a long time with the children, trying to help get things done. It's called "A Place to Grow". Live in bad drug  
9 infested neighborhood, over the years had the houses torn down. Lonnie Burton and Bill Clinton was running for president, came through and saw all the empty  
10 land, approved a grant for 10 million dollars to build new homes.

JC: The project you're working on now, how did you come to choose that particular  
11 location?

RR: Because it's still vacant, only place they didn't build new homes. The city asked people to get the lots next to them and do something with them. Sister started a garden across the street. We got a grant for the orchard on the other side, approved us

JC: Do you know why the developers didn't want to build there?

RR: They said the owner of one of the lots owes \$60k in taxes. I don't know, you'd have to ask downtown. They said go ahead and make it beautiful to help do  
12 something to uplift Cleveland.

JC: Tell me about your particular project, what are your hopes and dreams for it? What are your plans?

RR: T be successful and beautiful for people to come and eat, like a garden of eden

JC: So in the orchard, what type of fruit grows there?

RR: Apples, peaches, cherries, pears, and grapevines. Across the front want  
13 burning bushes like a fence. Asked for blue spruce trees, rusted benches.

14 JC: Who else was involved in this project?

RR: Taylor family and our community – we all work together. Cleaned lots, removed tree stumps with the help of the mayor's committee. Now just waiting for them to order supplies.

JC: After Nov. 10, that's when the funding that you have ends for now. Who's going to keep up the garden after that?

RR: We will! We work hard! Taylor women are beautiful women but we work like  
15 men.

JC: Are there any needs that you have now going forward?

RR: God will show us everything we need, and we cooperate with the city and CSU.

JC: Everybody seems pretty involved in it, were there any reluctant neighbors in this  
16 project or was everybody ready to help?

RR: Everybody wants to help! Who doesn't want fruit? Mainly want to do it because of the children, give them wisdom that food doesn't come from the store, God makes it grow from the ground

That's how children learn, getting out and playing in the dirt and seeing things. When I was 5, the city had a garden program and I begged my mother to get me a little  
17 garden patch

My grandmother had turnips, and I hated the way they tasted but I loved to see them grow. She had peach trees, apple, sweet potatoes, etc. We saw that and said "why can't we have this too?" So we started a garden in the city. And I asked my mother  
18 what th

She said it didn't affect them because they had the farm. So during this recession,  
19 people can grow their own food, save their money and survive.

JC: These gardens have great environmental and social effects for the whole city. Can you tell us about that?

RR: Yes, when the neighbors see things growing it catches on. When people see a nice place, it makes them want to have a nice place too.

Children pay attention to everything that goes on, good or bad, so you want to have something good for them to see. You have to set an example for the children. Put  
20 good things in your body.

21

Then the neighbors see, and they catch on, because their kids start to ask why they don't have grass, flowers, strawberries, peach trees, and that's why they come to the  
22 garden and help and enjoy the fruit.

JC: You were talking earlier about how your mother started the garden, and then  
23 when the garbage started filling up the streets, even the city joined in to help out.

RR: If you start cleaning up someplace, it just has an effect on the people and they want to start to change, instead of littering.

Put up a fence and flowers, everything just caught on. The councilman set it up so  
24 we could get flowers and give them free to the whole neighborhood.

JC: The lot that you're going to build the orchard on, right now it's completely vacant. Do you know what was on the lot before?

RR: Corner store, beverage store, ice cream parlor, houses when I was a little girl,  
25 barber shops, a BBQ, and a post office.

JC: When did those buildings get leveled?

RR: Over the course of 20 years, from the hough riots through the 90s. Close to 30 years.

26 JC: How long has it been vacant?

RR: 5, maybe 10 years. City of Cleveland came in with the programs, want us to do something with the land. They want it to be a 'green city on a blue lake.'

RR: When I talked with Burton-Bell-Carter, they looked it up and one of the lots owed a lot of taxes. So we built around it because the city bought the lots around it.

JC: What are your long term hopes for the orchard? Do you hope it gets passed down and stays there forever?

RR: Yes, hope that everybody in the community comes and enjoys it.

28 JC: Are there any other projects you have in mind for the future?

RR: Well, God will carry out his plan in his timing.

29 JC: Are there any other things you'd like to add?

RR: I thought you ladies were very nice, and I hope I get to see you when you come to the prayer garden, you're welcome to come and get fruit.

F: When your family came up from Mississippi, was it for work or what?

RR: Our log cabin burned down, and my mother came to Cleveland looking for my father.

30 That was in 1954.

F: Have you stayed in the same neighborhood since childhood?

RR: We lived on e46th st for a while, on 14th and allen, then we moved to e61st st in 1959.

F: You said you have children, how do they feel about your efforts?

RR: Theyre proud of us. We love Cleveland and they love us. We do the best we can to make things better for everybody, the whole Taylor family.

Have to live right and do right, and that's what I try to do. Do something to uplift

31 people, they don't have to live like that.

Before Mayor Jackson got reelected, I prayed that he would be our mayor, and he's

32 our mayor now in his 2nd term.

33 [introduces grandson and talks about him wanting attention and getting restless]

34 End