



Dr. Jibreel A. Khazan aka Ezell A. Blair, Jr.

Jibreel Khazan:

First of all, servants of all, we shall transcend to all and all. My name, birth name is Ezell A. Blair Jr. I'm the first male child, first child, born to my mother, Mrs. Corrine Lee Williams-Blair. And my father, Mr. Ezell A. Blair Sr. Both of them were able to accomplish the achievement, become teachers in Greensboro, North Carolina. And so I'm the first child born to my mother, Mrs. Corrine Lee Williams-Blair, and I've held up the name pretty good. I have a sister named Sheila. No, she's a younger sister. My oldest sister is Jean. Jean Blair, and that was her maiden name. And Jean was the forerunner of my second sister whose name is Sheila. Sheila Blair. And of course they had their own married names. I didn't put their married names in there, but those were the three children that my father, Ezell Blair Sr. and my mother, Mrs. Corrine Lee Williams-Blair, brought into this earth. Any other questions you want me to answer?

Interviewer:

Yeah. Do you want to tell me about when you came to New Bedford?

Jibreel Khazan:

Yes. I graduated from North Carolina A&T State University back in 1933.

Lorraine Khazan:

No, '63.

Jibreel Khazan:

'63? Okay. 1963. And I couldn't find jobs in the local of North Carolina. So I took a job dealing with Job Corps. And Job Corps brought me to New Bedford back in 1965, I believe. And it was run by IBM and they had one core Job Corps here in New Bedford and another one in another state I can't think of right now. So we were taught how to teach these young men how to use a computer, what you call it, a typewriter. The thing that you type on.

Interviewer:

The typewriter?

Jibreel Khazan:

The typewriter, yes. And we taught them all those things. We also taught them etiquette, how to have manners. Some guys didn't know about manners. They never were told say a prayer before you eat your food. We have to teach some of them that. Then we had some guys who, they were younger than I, but they were more coasty to people in Chicago and New York. They were more fast than even we the teachers were. So we had some instances where I had a guy who was my student, and he's supposed to go to bed around 8:00 at night and come to class around 8:00 in the morning. So this day he came to the class like 10:30, almost 9:00. I said, "George," that's not his real name, "What are you doing, man? You're late for class." Well, I was up last night. What were you doing? I was with Susan. Susan? She's the teacher. I'm saying, "Hey man, we got to talk. Well, you don't date the teachers. You date young women in high school your age. Okay? No more of that. You spread the word to the



other guys."

Well, I had some guys in my particular category. They were good students, but also smarter than many of us. They had experiences with gangsters, which we never saw before. They all had experiences of having their own cars, even though they were 13 years old in Chicago and New York and other places, because they knew directing the proper things to do to get anything they want, even money. Some have had drugs, but we never caught anyone with it. And of course some of them were dating the female staff, one or two of them. Excuse me. Yes.

Lorraine Khazan:

[inaudible 00:04:23].

Jibreel Khazan:

Did I say the wrong thing?

Interviewer:

Okay.

Jibreel Khazan:

Okay. Well, those are some of the things that took everyday place in these Job Corps. They were good people, they were good students, but they had a life of their own. Some came from big cities like New York, some came from cities like Alabama, and they all brought their culture with them. Sometimes there were fights between them, but we told them, if we catch you fighting another student, you're out of the program. You have to be in the bed by 9:00 late. You cannot be out in the streets. You cannot be partying at other people's houses because when that happens, then they're going to blame the Job Corps for a fight or killing or stealing, all those kind of things. Plus, there were local politicians here who did not like the idea of Job Corps coming to New Bedford because they had another program and Job Corps program cut through the one they wanted. The real deal was we were paying people more money than what the city was.

So after being about almost two years here in New Bedford, there was one mayor who left New Bedford, went to Washington and told them he wanted the Job Corps to be taken away, because of too many of the job guys dating white girls. I didn't even know that myself. These guys were smart enough to bring women from Chicago and other places to be their partners for a whole week. We knew nothing about it. We were the dumb guys. They were smarter than us. So anyway, to get rid of that situation, we had to put new rules down. You don't go out against the laws that's set up here to operate this program and to help you become what you want to be, without having to lose you to the police department.

So that worked for a while. Unfortunately, the politician who was the mayor, he went to Washington DC and told him he wanted Job Corps to be ended because there was too many colored guys dating white girls in New Bedford. He told a lie that caused the termination of Job Corps in New Bedford. It was one of the best things ever [inaudible 00:06:56]. I ran into some guys now who are in their 30s and 40s. No. 40s and 50s, who were Job Corps members. Most of them have become very successful people. They work for IBM. Someone in Alabama, I was sent there when they closed Job Corps in New Bedford, and I took my wife there with me. But I decided that I didn't want to go to Alabama. I wanted to come back to New Bedford.

There's a saying. When I was a child, I thought as a child, I spoke as a child. I sung like Smokey and Robinson with a quartet in high school and when I got to college. And I was fortunate enough to be a fraternity member called Alpha Phi Alpha, and that caused a disagreement between my father and I because he was a Sigma and my mother became an AKA. She was the sorority of my male fraternity, my mother was. So my youngest sister, she became a member of the sorority of my father. He was Phi Beta Sigma. She was Zeta Phi Beta. So we had differences in the family, but we loved each other.



Lorraine Khazan:

New Bedford.

Jibreel Khazan:

New Bedford, I'm sorry. Okay. New Bedford. Where did I end off about the fellows in Job Corps?

Interviewer:

Yeah. So you said Job Corps ended and then you moved away, but then you came back.

Jibreel Khazan:

Yeah. I was married by that time.

Lorraine Khazan:

Did you want to talk about how you met Parky Grace?

Jibreel Khazan:

Yeah. When I came to New Bedford in 1965, they called it Job Corps. I was only here one night and I was living with three or four elderly women whose father was in the civil war. This was 1965, right? 1965. And she told me, "Ezell," that's my birth name, "If you do not come to my house by 11:00, I'm going to lock the door." Only been in New Bedford one day, went the band club in South End, where the Cape Verdeans were. I met a guy named Parky Grace. Parky Grace became a person of great status. He was a young man, about 19, which I was at the time. And he was the head of a local group of young men. He's 10 or 12 or something. He was the boss.

And that evening, I couldn't get into my apartment lift. I'm outdoors at like 12:30. So Parky Grace walks up to me out of nowhere. He say, "Hey bro, what's going on?" Bro, I'm not your brother? What's your name? Ezell Blair. They call me Easy. Hey, Easy, so what's wrong? I said, "I got locked out of my apartment on the third floor." Where your friends, where your relatives live? And I can't get in until tomorrow morning because the lady told me if I was late coming past 11:00, she was going to lock the door. So he said, "What are you going to do now?" I don't know. He said, "Don't worry. You work with Job Corps, yeah? We have some competition with those guys for girls." I said, I'm no competition because I don't have no girlfriend. Right now, I don't need one. Don't every need one, because I lose money anyway."

So he brought me and let me sit where you have today, the building for the NAACP in New Bedford. I walk it everyday. It's near the housing development where I live at. And what do they call it today?

Lorraine Khazan:

Temple Landing.

Jibreel Khazan:

Temple Landing. So Temple Landing came out of the Job Corps. And we have good relationships with everybody there. Some young people, I've known their parents for like 40 years and they're now in college, many of them, or they're going into the military. And I encouraged them. I said, "Just don't go in the military," because if they can get a gun. Some guy said, "I don't want any guns," because they'd been exposed to people who have guns.

And my friend, Parky Grace, unfortunately for him, he was a person who was working with the African-American community, feeding children and other people food. And some people on the higher level of the military set or the policeman set did not like him and others feeding people or children. And the government wasn't feeding them. So there began a war against the street people like Parky and others who were concerned about the



community. He wasn't taking drugs himself or nothing, but they didn't like this. So they began to make war against Parky and other young men and women in the country who were feeding children. Which-

Lorraine Khazan:

What was the organization?

Jibreel Khazan:

Huh?

Lorraine Khazan:

What's the name of the organization?

Jibreel Khazan:

I can't think of the name of now-

Lorraine Khazan:

It was the Black Panthers.

Jibreel Khazan:

The Black Panthers. The Black Panthers.

Lorraine Khazan:

So you had Black Panthers in New Bedford.

Jibreel Khazan:

And we had some white Panthers too. There were young people who wanted to have something to say about how Vietnam was affecting the average person on the street. And then you had family also affecting and war, and they done a good job. But what happened was he was pointed out along with one of his cousins or friends, and they were both put in federal prison. They were also, what do you call it when somebody gets hurt? They had people putting irons and hot-

Interviewer:

Oh, they were tortured?

Jibreel Khazan:

Yeah, they were tortured. And so it got to the point where Parky could no longer take it. Neither could his cousin. And they both died in prison.

Interviewer:

I'm sorry to hear that.

Jibreel Khazan:

He was my friend. He protected me from getting hurt.



Lorraine Khazan:

Jibreel, he didn't die.

Jibreel Khazan:

Huh?

Lorraine Khazan:

He did not die.

Jibreel Khazan:

He did not die?

Lorraine Khazan:

No, he didn't die in prison. But when you started to do things here, when you started things with the Job Corps like Black history, remember you and some members of the Job Corps, the first Black history program in Bethel Church?

Jibreel Khazan:

Yeah. It's a long time, I remember that. But yes, some of the churches, Bethel Church here asked me and some other guys, another friend of mine, trying to think of his name now. Do you remember his name? He went and worked for the nation Islam in Boston. Octavius Row, Octavius Row.

Lorraine Khazan:

Octavius Row.

Jibreel Khazan:

Octavius Row and others. When he left Job Corps, he went to Boston. He got a job with the Nation of Islam, founded by apostle-

Lorraine Khazan:

But here in New Bedford, what did you guys do?

Jibreel Khazan:

What we did in New Bedford, we had classes on African American history and we also, we were asked by citizens, could their children come sit with us and learn history of African people, which we did. But then I had a friend named Russell Wayne Barrels, he was a brother who joined the military when I came here in 1967, '65, '66.

Lorraine Khazan:

[inaudible 00:14:56].

Jibreel Khazan:

He was an A student in mathematics and also in learning about money. And his idea was to come back to New Bedford one day and be in charge of feeding children and others like the school systems are doing now. And also giving them knowledge about passing courses in mathematics, or he taught about civil rights himself. And he was a good man. And the only thing about it was we lost him too young.



Lorraine Khazan:

What about the Islamic classes you guys held?

Jibreel Khazan:

Yes. Octavius Row and I began having classes on Islam here in New Bedford. Octavius also later on went to Boston and he's a member of the Nation of Islam, founded by a brother, the nation Islamic's father. And so-

Lorraine Khazan:

Elijah Muhammad.

Jibreel Khazan:

Huh?

Lorraine Khazan:

Elijah Muhammad.

Jibreel Khazan:

Elijah Muhammad, yes. Elijah Muhammad was the leader at that time. So Octavius was ready to come to Boston, to help him teach many of the children there about African American history, the value of going to school, staying in school. And that's what he was doing. And then Vietnam broke out.

Lorraine Khazan:

Remember you guys did the first African Black History Week, Black history events here-

Jibreel Khazan:

In New Bedford.

Lorraine Khazan:

... at New Bedford at the Bethel AME Church.

Jibreel Khazan:

Yes, yes. Please forgive me. I need my memory. She can tell me. It's very important.

Lorraine Khazan:

[inaudible 00:16:45].

Jibreel Khazan:

When you take a dude that's 82 years old, telling him to remember memory, I don't remember everything. That's why I'm glad, God bless America. My wife.

Lorraine Khazan:

[inaudible 00:16:57].



Interviewer:

Yeah. Tell me about the Black History Week.

Jibreel Khazan:

Well, we started in New Bedford, and Boston also, having history of African American people, their achievements and things like that. And we went to one church. That church has been removed by Daddy Gracious Church, no longer exists.

Lorraine Khazan:

No. The Bethel AME Church.

Jibreel Khazan:

Bethel AME Church. And they asked me and asked some of the guys at Job Corps, could we have a history of African American people. No problem. I still had the stuff in my head after-

Lorraine Khazan:

Which you did a celebration too.

Jibreel Khazan:

Yeah. We did a celebration of Martin Luther King Day, some other people, his wife, and some of those people also came to teach in Massachusetts. So we were able to grab a lot of these stars and introduce them to the children. And we know it had an effect upon the generation, like my children. My son is in his 60s?

Lorraine Khazan:

50.

Jibreel Khazan:

In his 50s. So he got a chance to meet some outstanding people in history here. Plus that New Bedford, Massachusetts is one of what you call the IBM people. IB Him. Yeah, IB Him. And so that's how we got them to come because they were going to Harvard, Yale, other university. Come to Job Corps in New Bedford, talk to these kids about ... And many of the young men here and some of the young women who were here in Job Corps in some areas, many of them became the successor of the idea that we can help people. We can help young people. We were once maybe put in the clinker for taking a piece of bread, but now we're out and we help the kids in our area. That's what they did. They did a great job.

So with Job Corps being taken, after two and a half years, we had to sign, find out somewhere else to work. So I began working in Boston with OIC, Opportunities Industrialization Center, that's what we call it. The founder was Reverend ... What was his name?

Lorraine Khazan:

Leon Sullivan.

Jibreel Khazan:

Yeah. Reverend Leon Sullivan, he created OIC. And OIC became for about 10 years, the medium which taught anybody who wanted to learn and go back to school. So we had a branch in Massachusetts, in Boston which lasted about 10 years. I was there for about six or seven years. Right?



Lorraine Khazan:

Yes. But during that time you were doing things in New Bedford too.

Jibreel Khazan:

Yeah, yeah.

Lorraine Khazan:

You were volunteering at the local schools and the United Front.

Jibreel Khazan:

Yeah, United Front.

Lorraine Khazan:

And you went to the school committee and you asked them to approve the first Black history class.

Jibreel Khazan:

Yes. I forgot that.

Lorraine Khazan:

Do you remember that?

Jibreel Khazan:

Thank you for reminding. She's my reminder.

Interviewer:

Yeah, yeah. [inaudible 00:20:04].

Jibreel Khazan:

If you want to be happy for the rest of your life, get yourself a pretty woman to be your wife and teach you that for [inaudible 00:20:13] get your good world to be with you. She's so sweet.

Interviewer:

Yeah. Do you want to tell me about the volunteer work you were doing in New Bedford schools?

Jibreel Khazan:

Yes. We began to be invited to speak to the children in school as well as junior high school, elementary, high school, and even the college that were around here too. And some of the people who worked at the college were men and women who we taught when we came to Job Corps. 10 years later, they finished college and they're teaching there. It makes me feel good, you know? There's a song, I feel good, don't you know I could? But everything changes, and so now I'm in the senior level of-

Lorraine Khazan:

Talk about going to the school committee to ask them to approve a Black history class in the New Bedford public school system.



Jibreel Khazan:

See, she's my memory. And we went before the public school, we asked for ...

Lorraine Khazan:

You went to the school committee.

Jibreel Khazan:

The school committee, we asked that the kids get lunches, right?

Lorraine Khazan:

No. You asked to start a Black history class.

Jibreel Khazan:

Yes. To start the Black history class.

Lorraine Khazan:

This is important because it was reported in the newspaper and there was a quote from a man who said that he was so impressed with his speaking to the school committee, and that was the very first class.

Jibreel Khazan:

Can you speak louder so they can get you on the ... I want you to be on this thing.

Lorraine Khazan:

You speak. You say it. It was the first class.

Interviewer:

So you gave a very impressive speech.

Jibreel Khazan:

Yes. The first class concerning talking about African people who did outstanding things, those who live in New Bedford. The one, we just honored about two months ago, the statue. Frederick Douglass. I happened to be in New Bedford with the Job Corps, only been there less than a year, and I saw this church. What's the name of the church named after the man you were talking about?

Lorraine Khazan:

Zion.

Jibreel Khazan:

Huh?

Lorraine Khazan:

Frederick Douglass Zion Church.



Jibreel Khazan:

Yeah. Frederick Douglass Church, right? And I walked there one day and saw this lady and I said, "Wow." I said, "We talked about Frederick Douglass here. Did you read him in the book?" She said, "No, I knew Frederick Douglass." You knew Frederick Douglass? And this is 1965-68. She said, "Yeah, he went to this church." Lady, how old are you? She said, "I was 12 years old when I became a student." Somebody in New Bedford, time with age, knew Frederick Douglass, worked with Frederick Douglass. I couldn't believe it. That's when I said I ain't leaving this place. Excuse me. This is too much to believe. People say you're smoking too much marijuana. I said, "No, man. I met a lady who knew Frederick Douglass and she's still living." You better leave that place. I know they got some strong drugs in New Bedford but you need to leave that place because you're losing your mind. I said, "I'm not losing my mind. Well, I'm losing my hair but I'm not losing my mind."

So some of my friends told me, "We're going to come to New Bedford to see what you're talking about, because you're way out there, man. Those people died." I said, "No, some of them still living, 100 years old." And it's true. That's one reason why I didn't really want to go back to North Carolina, because I found my love of my life. She birthed me four children? Three? Okay. I must've been thinking about me being that fourth one. That's right, the woman is smarter. That's right, the woman is smarter. Smarter than a man in every way. Harry Belafonte used to sing that song. I said, "What did he sing that song for?" And then I heard over in the kitchen, "He wants to remind you who really runs this place. Thank you, dear." Yes, it's true.

Then I had friends, I began to work in Boston with OIC, Opportunities Industrialization Center. I think I did that for about seven, eight years. Going back and forth everyday from New Bedford, to Roxbury. And I met Reverend Sullivan, the man who wrote that program. It must've ran about 10 years in many other states in America and he did a great job. How many millions of people did his program helped to get educated, get jobs, in the cultural district down in, I'm sorry, in Boston? A lot of our clients got jobs in the industries and the big time things, to have money. They give raises every other six months. We worked with people like that.

Now, some of those people would not recognize me anymore because some of them were able to earn close to \$1 million a year for their jobs, for Reverend Sullivan's program. I hope that it can be brought back again sometime because our children, as well as the elders, we need to be brought up to date. Now my big challenge is, where's that computer? Did I forget the next move? Because now I'm 82, right? So now, I'm having my granddaughter to teach me what she knows about computer. And their generation now is being challenged to learn computers, to not only learn the computer, to learn a new language, Spanish. Okay, I'm on the board of directors-

Lorraine Khazan:

You were. [inaudible 00:26:24].

Jibreel Khazan:

I was on the board of directors.

Lorraine Khazan:

Of the West End Daycare Center.

Jibreel Khazan:

Of the West End Daycare Center. And I enjoyed that, meeting young children. How young were they, seven and eight?

Lorraine Khazan:

No. Preschool.



Jibreel Khazan:

Preschool. So those were the ones under six years of age, right?

Lorraine Khazan:

Yeah.

Jibreel Khazan:

They had a good time with me. I brought my ventriloquist dummy in class one day. You did that? Well, yeah. Anybody interested in learning? My mother said she didn't want to hear anything like that. I'm going to school to learn how to be a teacher. Well, you can be a good teacher. You can also tell ideas to your students to make them happy.

Lorraine Khazan:

What's the school in Acushnet that you did?

Jibreel Khazan:

Going west or east?

Lorraine Khazan:

Going north.

Jibreel Khazan:

Going north. Those were students, I think, who were going from junior high school to high school-

Lorraine Khazan:

No, it was a preschool.

Jibreel Khazan:

Preschool?

Lorraine Khazan:

Yeah. Nevermind. You don't remember [inaudible 00:27:31].

Jibreel Khazan:

I do remember talking to young people.

Lorraine Khazan:

Miss Lawton.

Jibreel Khazan:

Ms. Lawton? Yes.

Lorraine Khazan:

And she was the owner of ... She ran the school and used to do preschool.



Jibreel Khazan:

I know.

Lorraine Khazan:

And used to do Kwanza. Used to do Kwanza.

Jibreel Khazan:

Yeah. I've been thinking about them the last-

Lorraine Khazan:

Celebrations.

Jibreel Khazan:

That was about, what, 20 years ago?

Lorraine Khazan:

Yes.

Jibreel Khazan:

Yeah. She had me come at Thanksgiving, Christmas, to talk to the children and I was like I'm a ventriloquist, so I was the dummy and the kids-

Lorraine Khazan:

Was it Rainbow? What was the name of the ...

Jibreel Khazan:

Rainbow Cushion or something like that. In fact, I thought about them maybe going to talk to them in a couple of weeks, see if she still has the school for the children, little kids like five, six, seven, eight years old. I would go in there with my rabbit ears on. Mom, he grew ears. He got ears like a [inaudible 00:28:31]. And the mother said, "You cannot grow your ears like that. This is just a thing he uses at Halloween." I didn't know that. But I believe he still has those ears like the dogs. Okay. So I had him on my mind a couple of days ago. I said I'm going to maybe contact her and see if she's having a Christmas program. Maybe I could come and tell them songs about Christmas.

Lorraine Khazan:

Or Kwanza.

Jibreel Khazan:

Or Kwanza. Of course, I don't know if anybody's practicing Kwanza in New Bedford area, but I bet you they do it in Boston. So I can tell people to go there or go to, what's the other state next to us?

Lorraine Khazan:

Rhode Island?



Jibreel Khazan:

Rhode Island, yeah. Why not?

Lorraine Khazan:

You used to be on the board of the local Community Action Agency.

Jibreel Khazan:

Yeah, I was. Did I lose that job or did I-

Lorraine Khazan:

It wasn't a job.

Jibreel Khazan:

Did I work [inaudible 00:29:26].

Lorraine Khazan:

You volunteered on the board. And you also received a reward from the NAACP of New Bedford, a lifetime membership.

Jibreel Khazan:

Yes. And I had that on my mind yesterday. I got to pay some money so I can get back my enrollment.

Lorraine Khazan:

You don't have to pay.

Jibreel Khazan:

10, 20 years, I didn't pay?

Lorraine Khazan:

You don't have to pay.

Jibreel Khazan:

I'm not going to tell nobody that.

Interviewer:

Do you want to talk about your work with the NAACP?

Jibreel Khazan:

Yeah. The NAACP was brought to me when I was four or five years old. My father was one of the original founders of NHCP in Greensboro, North Carolina about 78 years ago. He was in World War II. He was fortunate enough to be a college graduate and guess who paid his way to college from the time he was 12 years old until he finished North Carolina A&T State University? A Caucasian man who came out of nowhere. And my father was 12 years old and looking for a job, all kids do. And this man came to my house. What was his name? Mr. Zider? No. I'm trying to remember his name.



He was a single man who had his own workshop and he came to my great-great grandmother's home in Greensboro, North Carolina to rebuild the top of her floor. And he had the same name that my grandfather had, my father's father. His name was Ezell Blair ... Robert Blair. This man's name was Robert Hendricks, I think. And summertime, he was there to fix the outdoor house for my grandmother, my great-grandmother. I wasn't born yet. And my father said, "Granny, will you ask the gentleman if I could help him?" And the gentleman said, "Yes, Mrs. [inaudible 00:31:37] I don't mind hiring your kid." My father's about 11 or 12. And that was something that was unseeable.

And what happened was as my father grew, he became the top roofer on the house. He became also a person who assisted this gentleman to build houses. One day they went to another city and a Caucasian guy called my father a nigger, and he was going to hit the guy in the head. But my spiritual father said, "Listen, Blair." He said, "I know you're upset Ezell," which is also my name. He said, "I want you to take the rest of the day off." He said, "We're outnumbered. Like five of them and it's only two of us, three of us. And we going to get ourselves killed here. So you just take the rest of the day off and relax. Everything will go all right." He was the kind of father that my father should have had. But my father's father walked out on his wife and three children, and that was sacred. And they broke up what my family needed, the little children, three children, one mother and the father's gone. They're only like three, four and five years old, six years old to lose a father.

Well, my Robbie she joined the WAVES in World War II. What you call the women?

Lorraine Khazan:

Yeah.

Jibreel Khazan:

My other aunt, she became a heck of a singer. No, that was Robbie. The second one, Maureen, she became a cook. Her food was so good white people came in the negro neighborhood. Hey, you can't go there, Negroes live there. Shut up. I ain't had the right food over here yet. I'm going to the colored, have some hot hamburgers. Yeah, man. You got the nerve to talk. Get out of here, I don't want you in here. These people feeding me good food. Your restaurant hasn't fed food for me for a long time. I ain't coming to see you no more. So these three children were geared by a grandmother, an aunt, and they survived without having their so-called father there.

He had the nerve to get another woman for a wife. He came into the house one day. I wasn't even born. The three children, the male and two sisters, and said he was going to get another wife. Many people were shot for that, a lot of them were and killed. But my great-great grandmother who was married to the preacher at this time in Greensboro, she brought the three children to Greensboro, North Carolina, and she gave them loving care. My great-great grandmother's husband was a preacher of New Zion Baptist Church in Greensboro, North Carolina. Today they're the only church downtown on Martin Luther King Boulevard in Greensboro, North Carolina that's run by a African-American community. I think it cost \$45 million. I haven't been there to the new church yet. Baptist but I don't swim in. Don't put me in that pool. I don't want to get drowned. We are not going to drown you. Not yet. I know. Because I'm going to go one time and walk through there. I'm not going to swim in the pool. I heard people pull the plug out and got drained away. Excuse me. One of my jokes.

Anyway, so that's what happened to my father and his two sisters. By the grace of God, my father was 15 years old or 13. No, he was 12. The minister, not the minister, but the man who came to build a house with my grandmother. He took my father as his own kid and taught him the trade of being a carpenter, even an artist [inaudible 00:36:13] but the artist also. And I wondered where I would be today, I may cry, because of this one man. He's a Caucasian guy. He had no children. He adopted my father as his son. That's how my father was able to finish high school and college. Mr. Ingram. He told my father, "Easy, I like the work you do. You are working hard." Because my great-great-grandmother word that my father would become a slave. But it wasn't to be.

And so from there on, my father learned how to do roofing. Then he went further down the line and learned how to build houses, but he never let me have a hammer. Dad, when I'm going to get a hammer? You're not ready for



a hammer now. No, no. You can get hurt with a hammer. You can hit yourself in the head, then you won't exist no more. I can't afford to go to a funeral. Junior, you're the clean up man. All I'm doing is the dirty stuff. My mother said, "Be quiet and do what your father tell you to do." But I don't want to be the dirt man. Well, you are the dirt man. You're the guy who cleans up all the stuff that he messes up. Just think, you're more important than he is in a way. He going to build a house, but who's going to clean all that stuff around it? All that dirt, bricks and stuff on the ground. You should be proud of yourself, Junior. I'm 12 years old.

But it don't sound too cool. I'm out in the sun. You're getting blacker everyday. [inaudible 00:37:48] like you're southern. Your face getting browner now. You almost look like the comedian. What was his name? His name was ... I can't think of this comedian's name. He was a comic. Lorraine, what's the name of the African American guy who was comedian? He was the big time comedy of African American people for Amos and Andy. Do you remember him?

Lorraine Khazan:

He was a comedian?

Jibreel Khazan:

Yeah, yeah.

Lorraine Khazan:

I don't know.

Jibreel Khazan:

That's all right.

Interviewer:

That's all right.

Lorraine Khazan:

I'm sorry.

Jibreel Khazan:

We was just talking about family affairs.

Interviewer:

We don't want to go on too long so-

Jibreel Khazan:

No, we can end it.

Interviewer:

Are there any final stories you want to tell from your time in New Bedford before we wrap it up?

Jibreel Khazan:

I just wanted to say one day, I walked out of my front door and my wife's with me. I think we had one or two children at the time. And I said, "God be with me until we meet again. [inaudible 00:39:03]. God be with you until



you be again." I didn't have it all right. But a tune came in my mind, because I made the right choice. Her father made the right choice for her. You know, I can shoot a gun. Well, since you put that, sir, don't worry. I'll be back at 8:30. We went on a date, 7:00. I'll be home at 8:30. Then we're there, it's getting close to 8:30, I'm calling a taxi. Taxi, I want to go [inaudible 00:39:38] I want to go here, I want to go there. Nobody's answering. Up to 9:30, 10:00, there was no taxi driver answering my question. I said, "Your father going to kill me." Daddy's okay. No, he's your daddy but he's not mine.

He said, "If you don't bring my daughter home at 10:00, then we going to have a fight. I was in the military and I shot people in the world, in the gun." Don't you worry, sir. I'll be home by 9:30. We didn't get there at 9:30. Called the taxi company for two hours. No taxi cab showed. Finally the guy showed up around 20 minutes to 11:00, and the father told me 11:00 is [inaudible 00:40:26]. I got there five minutes past 11:00. Please, John, don't shoot me. I did everything right. Ask your daughter. Dad, he tried to do something right but he couldn't get a good taxi. Okay, since his daughter says so, okay. You look just like you look when you went to the prom. No touching the girl. No touching. You gone automatically [inaudible 00:40:52] everything. I did all the right things. And she said, "Will you come back?" I said, "You got to talk to your father first." I almost got killed by this. This is not playful.

So I started getting invited to lunch on Saturday afternoon. Mother was nice, father said "alright," and then I started getting invited to Sunday afternoon, chicken, everything. Oh man, I think I was married about a year later. Good food. Plus a father who cared for his children. A mother who cared for her child. And I found the right one. If it wasn't for her, I wouldn't be here.

Interviewer:

That's lovely. Thank you so much.

Jibreel Khazan:

Thank you.