Louie Chavis Interview

Interviewer: Stephen Criswell, Chris Judge; Interviewee: Louie Chavis with comments by Kathleen Chavis; Transcriber: Jillian Weber

Beaver-Creek\_Louie-Chavis\_64kbs\_cropped.mp3

NOTE: [00:00:00:000] [Background chatter]

SC: [00:00:03:000] This is the good stuff here? (tobacco)

LC: [00:00:03:000] Yeah, that’s the good stuff. I want to give you some of that.

NOTE: [00:00:03:000] [Background Laughter]

LC: [00:00:03:000] He can reach in and get him a good handful.

SC: [00:00:14:000] Yeah, that has a whole different—that kind of pungency is mild.

LC: [00:00:22:000] No chemical processing whatsoever. The seeds, okay, were rolled up in beeswax. And the people that had them said ‘we don’t even know if they’ll come up.’ I said, ‘I’m going to plant 13 seeds for you.’

LC: [00:00:36:000] And twelve of the thirteen come up. Now, it does not get to be a tall bush. But it’s got a leaf on it that broad [*gestures with both hands*].

CJ: [00:00:36:000] Oh, is that the rustica (nicotiana rustica)? The little yellow flowers?

LC: [00:00:47:000] Yeah.

SC: [00:00:47:000] And this is—be very cautious? Is this inappropriate to grow?

LC: [00:00:47:000] No, no, no, no, no, no.

KC: [00:00:47:000] No. It’s just rare.

LC: [00:00:56:000] The only thing, the people that had it are American Indians—they don’t want to claim anything at all to being American Indian because the folks [inaudible] at how they were treated. My grandfather, a Pentecostal preacher from right here in the neighborhood, was socially accepted as a white man.

LC: [00:01:18:000] But I was a small chap, up to probably nine years old: ‘Granddad, what kind of Indian are we?’ ‘Oh child, we need to get us another topic. We don’t look like no Indian.’

LC: [00:01:30:000] Remember, fifty years ago there was a great shame, because I’m sixty-three. There was a great shame about being American Indian. I really, truly don’t see what it is.

LC: [00:01:44:000] If you look at myself and look at the vice-chief over there. Look at Barry (Chavis), his skin hue. They’re way darker than I am.

LC: [00:01:53:000] I used to think it was the neatest thing when we would go somewhere to eat and we had to sit outside. We had a picnic, you understand. Because of skin color they wouldn’t let most of my kin in the eating places.

LC: [00:02:08:000] Does that make sense?

SC: [00:02:08:000] Yeah.

LC: [00:02:08:000] Now, if you look at me and Trudy. Look at the blue eyes, okay? I’m one of the few people that you’re going to meet that has a birth certificate that says Native American on it.

LC: [00:02:22:000] Now, tell me that’s not an irony, as light as I am. My mother was English. I was born and raised in a place called Spotsylvania County, the city of Fredericksburg, Virginia.

LC: [00:02:35:000] Went to school when I was probably six years old. Come up with that thing, that law about impersonating an Indian. You’ve got to leave here boy. No, no, I’m just joking about that.

LC: [00:02:48:000] My dad had to move south. That’s where he was working after World War II was over. I come along in 48, so I started the first grade down there. Then we moved south, I think.

LC: [00:03:00:000] I’m never in awe, like now, about the potential of people that claim to be American Indian. And looking back fifty years, nobody really wanted to or would dare admit they were.

SC: [00:03:19:000] And that’s what I was saying about my grandmother. That’s why I was so surprised.

LC: [00:03:19:000] I maybe more amazed than anybody of the potential of tribes in South Carolina and even more so all the people that are claiming to be something that they might not be.

LC: [00:03:40:00] Now we know for a fact, and I told the judges in Sumter this two weeks ago, if you make and obtain state recognition, you know the only thing that you have to get?

LC: [00:03:53:000] A birthright. There’s no money. There’s no gold. There’s no rocks with gold. There’s no dust. A birthright. And on that piece of paper you can put down you’re American Indian.

LC: [00:04:07:000] Now tell me—and I’ve got four people right here from four tribal families right here—what is all the information or need to be something you might not be.

LC: [00:04:22:000] Surely, we got some professors in here that can honestly give me a better answer than I came up with. I just don’t get it right now.

NOTE: [00:04:22:000] [Someone talking to Louie Chavis (LC)]

LC: [00:04:22:000] I just don’t get it

LC: [00:04:37:000] Because my granddad though, he was socially accepted right here in Neeses. We’re what? Thirteen miles away from [inaudible] as a white man.

SC: [00:04:47:000] Hold on, sorry

NOTE: [00:04:49:000] [Audio Stops]

SC: [00:04:52:000] Okay, now, you were starting to tell us about your grandfather.

LC: [00:04:52:000] My grandfather, Lucius Chavis, a Pentecostal preacher from right here in Neeses.

LC: [00:05:04:000] We’re within twelve miles of the town of Neeses but even closer would have been the place called the Arbors. Now it’s known as Mount Beulah Pentecostal Holiness Church.

LC: [00:05:18:000] Before that it had a name, Four Pines. A lot of my family people know exactly where we’re talking about and exactly agree that this would be true.

LC: [00:05:28:000] Now, as a smaller chap, let’s say up to probably nine years old, in conversation with my grandfather where you sit on the couch by him and you could ask a question—‘Granddad, what kind of Indian are we?’

LC: [00:05:44:000] And you got the sharpest tone of that, ‘We need to change the topic in conversation now.’ For some reason, he did not want to go there.

LC: [00:05:55:000] Now, we know in 1820 the state of South Carolina did away with the term ‘Indians,’ that you could actually pick up any color, black or white you wanted, with no question, no proof whatsoever. He was socially accepted in the community as a white man, did not have any claim at all, and would not talk about that he was American Indian.

LC: [00:06:20:000] None whatsoever. And I used to find that just fascinating. Being in the South, other ethnicities do it too. Working in the field, or even whenever he had his logging company going with three oxen.

LC: [00:06:35:000] That was his skidders. Always wore a white shirt. Bib overalls. Always wore a hat, not so much a baseball hat, but like a hooded or sided hat.

NOTE: [00:06:52:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:06:52:000] Not so much a cowboy hat, but a straw hat if you will with like a four inch brim all around it. The white shirt is supposed to help reflect the direct sun off of you and keep you from getting darker – my thought.

LC: [00:07:05:000] But on the other side, you could not really truly hide who he was. Now, why?

LC: [00:07:15:000] Fifty years ago, sixty years ago, because I’m sixty-three, he would not claim anything at all of being American Indian. I find it kind of behooving.

LC: [00:07:26:000] I feel quite confident in my heart those that have crossed the other side, that have gone to the afterlife, had to have danced a jig when we got recognition, as a state recognized tribe in South Carolina.

LC: [00:07:40:000] Now, good, bad, for whatever it’s worth, I feel quite sure that these people actually celebrate that someone had went to the trouble to do enough research to prove that we were American Indian people.

NOTE: [00:07:40:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:07:57:000] Now, maybe y’all can help me with the stigma about being called American Indian. Now, on the same token, I lost an aunt.

LC: [00:08:08:000] Her name was Essie Chavis Geddings. She died Christmas Eve of this past year. Another aunt, Rollie Chavis Skinner, these two women used to sit and have conversations in a tongue, in a dialect—would not tell you about it, what they were talking [inaudible] until probably the last maybe four months when the [inaudible] came into play.

LC: [00:08:42:000] Would tell me, ‘I can’t tell you what the words are. I can’t tell you the meaning of the words.’ But yet she and another aunt would literally have conversations in a tongue, real guttural sounds, real sharp sounds.

LC: [00:08:58:000] But would not share with anybody else, [inaudible]. Now, if she knew a linguistics of an earlier people, why would you not want to quote or share it? [Inaudible]

LC: [00:09:15:000] Both of them extremely active in the tribe. My aunt Essie, okay, was on the elders. I can’t tell you how long. But still, maybe is it a stigma?

LC: [00:09:26:000] A stereotype about being an Indian? And I used to find this fascinating—you could take and just slide in a room where they were at. They were not talking Indian.

LC: [00:09:37:000] They were not talking French, German. A total different linguistics or wording that I had no idea what it was and they would not share with me. Now why?

LC: [00:09:50:000] Maybe shame. I really, truly don’t know.

NOTE: [00:09:50:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:09:50:000] However, where would you like me to go from here, sir?

SC: [00:09:50:000] Let’s go through this language. I can hear Claudia Priest (a linguist) up in Rock Hill listening closely.

SC: [00:10:05:000] So you heard it?

LC: [00:10:05:000] Yes.

SC: [00:10:05:000] And you had no idea?

LC: [00:10:05:000] No.

SC: [00:10:05:000] And you said guttural? Can you—do you have a sense or have you heard something that sounds like it?

LC: [00:10:05:000] Not really, no.

LC: [00:10:15:000] You see, the greatest choice I had for help—after exercising, he passed away. He was a linguistics expert, okay.

LC: [00:10:29:000] You got an idea who I’m talking about?

SC: [00:10:29:000] Yeah, yeah. So he was working—

LC: [00:10:29:000] I had told him about it, and he had actually said he would love to meet and talk with these ladies.

LC: [00:10:42:000] And just a short spell later, it was only like two weeks later, he’d actually passed. Up there at the University of—

SC: [00:10:42:000] UNC-C.

LC: [00:10:42:000] Charlotte.

SC: [00:10:42:000] Charlotte.

LC: [00:10:56:000] So you know who I’m talking about?

SC: [00:10:56:000] Yeah, yeah, Blair (Rudes).

LC: [00:10:56:000] And that was the closest I ever came to really, truly finding somebody help me determine exactly what the tongue was, as far as tribal related.

SC: [00:11:14:000] Have both of these ladies passed away?

LC: [00:11:14:000] Pardon?

SC: [00:11:14:000] Have both of these ladies passed away?

LC: [00:11:14:000] Both of them have passed away.

SC: [00:11:14:000] And there’s no recording, I assume?

LC: [00:11:24:000] [to off-camera individual] Did Essie every say anything to you about a recording?

KC: [00:11:24:000] I can listen to those ones that were done several years ago that are in the tribal office. I don’t know what condition they’re in.

SC: [00:11:38:000] If you have some recordings and you want to restore them, we have a good relationship with McKissick Museum and they can do wonders there.

LC: [00:11:38:000] Okay.

KC: [00:11:47:000] I have not a clue what’s on them. I think Essie, not so much Rollie, but Essie might have—

NOTE: [00:11:47:000] [Background noise]

SC: [00:11:47:000] I don’t know. It might even be possible to listen to her speaking English and get some sense of, you know.

SC: [00:12:00:000] You get the right linguist in there to hear it.

KC: [00:12:00:000] She was hard to understand, even in English.

LC: [00:12:00:000] She talked very soft. The guttural sound.

KC: [00:12:00:000] [Talking over KC] But she couldn’t all the words.

SC: [00:12:00:000] Like a German guttural?

LC: [00:12:17:000] No, nothing at all German. I’ve had German neighbors.

SC: [00:12:17:000] Not like a [*makes sound*].

LC: [00:12:17:000] No, nothing at all close to German.

SC: [00:12:17:000] Would she do the stop, sort of [*makes* *sound*]. That sort of thing?

LC: [00:12:29:000] To a degree. But actually stopping or breaking of words.

SC: [00:12:29:000] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

LC: [00:12:43:000] Pretty much because of skin color right here where they probably—eight miles it was, was an Indian school.

LC: [00:12:54:000] We know that they stopped classes in 1953-54. If you could look at pictures of the children that went there, you would not have any doubt at all as to racial ethnicity of who these people were.

LC: [00:13:14:000] The vice-chief right here was [inaudible] in an odd way he might have been the same [inaudible] like that [inaudible] fellow in Norway (South Carolina). But you know, your skin color was kind of like your social acceptance.

LC: [00:13:29:000] You knew your place, you didn’t really, truly wander about or step out of line.

NOTE: [00:13:29:000] [Background noise]

SC: [00:13:43:000] This is the Pine Hill, no—what is the name of the school?

LC: [00:13:43:000] Four Pines.

SC: [00:13:43:000] Four Pines, okay. And the church started that, or the community?

LC: [00:13:56:000] [questions Mary off camera] Mary, did the church start it or did the school system start it? Because I thought the school system might have got this going because of the distinct difference of these individuals here.

SC: [00:13:56:000] Oh the school system.

SC: [00:14:10:000] Who could not go to—

LC: [00:14:10:000] Who could not go to regular, public, white schools we’ll say. And that might be an ugly or bad term.

NOTE: [00:14:10:000] [Background noise]

NOTE: [00:14:10:000] [Man off camera]: The church maybe donated—

NOTE: [00:14:10:000] [Background noise]

SC: [00:14:10:000] Okay, so the church was involved.

KC: [00:14:24:000] But we just recently found out about Beaver Creek School too.

NOTE: [00:14:24:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:14:24:000] Right, okay. Another one—

SC: [00:14:24:000] There was another?

LC: [00:14:24:000] It would be more towards, kind of in between North and Neeses.

LC: [00:14:40:000] It was in that area.

SC: [00:14:40:000] Okay, so another school set up in a biracial society for that third group because they aren’t allowed in.

KC: [00:14:40:000] But it doesn’t exist anymore.

LC: [00:14:50:000] Matter of fact the whole building has been torn down. Of course the land’s been sold to someone else now.

SC: [00:14:50:000] Are there people who went to school there, do you know?

LC: [00:14:50:000] Oh yeah, we actually know and have talked to people. And I’ve actually had access to yearbooks from there.

SC: [00:14:50:000] Oh.

LC: [00:14:50:000] And believe it or not, there were not no real what you’d call Caucasian people going there.

SC: [00:15:13:000] Who was teaching there? Were the teachers Caucasian, white teachers? Were they locals?

SC: [00:15:13:000] Let me skip on that because I wasn’t paying all that much attention for the teachers.

LC: [00:15:13:000] I was more looking at the pictures of the individuals.

LC: [00:15:28:000] And then, of course, the larger shots of say the third grade or the fourth grade or the fifth grade. You know, just something extremely stand offish that everybody was pretty much of the same skin hue.

SC: [00:15:42:000] You think that was the basis, pretty much, for this school? Just based on skin color?

LC: [00:15:42:000] It had to be. Remember, the state of South Carolina was nice enough in the legislature in 1820 to do away with the term Indian.

LC: [00:15:57:000] You could pick, choose, black, white, whichever you wanted, with no contest whatsoever. No questions asked about exactly who you want to be. I think that’s what saved my grandfather, Lucius Chavis. Socially accepted as a white man.

LC: [00:16:15:000] Why did he keep that? Why’d he turn his back? I don’t have a clue. I’m afraid to even answer. But even my dad, my uncle that I was named for, LC, very dark complexion.

LC: [00:16:32:000] We actually had pictures of him. Lost his life in a scaffold accident on a job up in New York where a scaffold fell on him. But extremely, extremely dark complexion.

LC: [00:16:44:000] Quite black, shiny hair. I don’t know if we had terms like Vitalis back then [inaudible]. But very thin person.

LC: [00:16:57:000] Now where else would you like me to go?

SC: [00:16:57:000] Well, did he identify himself or did your father identify himself as Indian? Native American?

NOTE: [00:16:57:000] [Background noise-clicking]

LC: [00:16:57:000] Dr. Criswell, I don’t think so. I really, truly don’t think so.

SC: [00:17:10:000] One of the reasons I ask is because your uncle, working in construction, there was a big movement to hire American Indians to work construction when the World Trade Center was built.

LC: [00:17:21:000] Okay, well even before—other projects in New York where we would particularly go out of way to find the Seneca Mohawk people for the steel workers that actually had no fear of heights.

LC: [00:17:34:000] Could look down but they could do their job and not be affected by the quotient of height or ‘whoo boy if we fall.’ So, most amazing.

SC: [00:17:44:000] I mean that would be a situation where if you’re looking for a job and you looked Mohawk you’d say ‘sure!’

LC: [00:17:44:000] Right. In a way it worked great for employment at a time particularly after the war.

LC: [00:17:57:000] And most of these people who came were primarily steelworkers.

KC: [00:17:57:000] Can I interject something here?

SC: [00:17:57:000] Absolutely.

KC: [00:17:57:000] There’s something I’m doing research on I’m trying to come to a conclusion with.

KC: [00:18:12:000] Louie’s great grandfather was in the 22nd infantry Company I of the Civil War.

KC: [00:18:22:000] And a lot of his cousins and brothers and uncles and were in that company. And it was a lot of the surname basis of what this tribe is today.

KC: [00:18:37:000] And when I went to try to find research on the 22nd infantry, you know they are listed, but I couldn’t find a lot of information.

KC: [00:18:48:000] And I kept saying, well why hasn’t been much been written about them? Because they were one of the units that traveled all over the place.

KC: [00:18:57:000] And so then, as I got to do all of this research with the tribe and everything, I started thinking. And I have to go check this out with Dr. Long down at the Confederate Relic Room, and I’m hoping he’ll give me something in writing about this.

KC: [00:19:12:000] But, you know the colored troops were always separated. But this was not a colored troop. Yet they were not written about, they were not embraced, they were not talked about like the other ones were.

CJ: [00:19:25:000] The 23rd were African American.

NOTE: [00:19:25:000] [Background noise]

KC: [00:19:25:000] And I’m just wondering if, because they were dark skinned soldiers, if they were just pushed aside because of the fact they were dark.

NOTE: [00:19:25:000] [Background noise]

SC: [00:19:39:000] Where did—a lot of Catawbas fought for the South.

NOTE: [00:19:39:000] [People talking over each other]

KC: [00:19:39:000] But they had to have been adamant about not being colored.

SC: [00:19:39:000] Have you asked Brent (Burgin) where the Catawbas went? What unit they were in?

NOTE: [00:19:39:000] [Background noise]

SC: [00:19:49:000] Because you know, all the Catawba men went off and fought.

NOTE: [00:19:49:000] Unknown noise.

SC: [00:19:49:000] And I’ve never heard anything—where did they put them, in terms of did they put them put them with the white troops or did they have a second unit.

KC: [00:20:00:000] I don’t know, but I wanted to do some more research with this because I’m looking at it since there are so many of our forefathers that were in that particular unit. And they didn’t have things like an Indian unit.

SC: [00:20:14:000] Right. But the Cherokee, the white chief—

CJ: [00:20:14:000] Stand Watie?

SC: [00:20:14:000] No, no, the white chief.

SC: [00:20:27:000] William Thomas, is that his name?

KC: [00:20:27:000] Um-hm.

SC: [00:20:27:000] So he led a Confederate Cherokee group and I don’t know if they were given a battalion number or a unit number or if they were just the Cherokee.

NOTE: [00:20:27:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:20:38:000] And about half a mile over here is where the Major Henry Hartzog Salley was actually the Captain of his unit.

LC: [00:20:52:000] Buried right down the road here. Got a great big marker.

KC: [00:20:52:000] And see, his great grandfather’s buried up here at Pleasant Hill.

KC: [00:21:02:000] But there’s no military, no nothing, which we’re trying to work on getting that for him.

NOTE: [00:21:02:000] [Someone coughing]

KC: [00:21:02:000] I just thought it was strange that as I was doing a lot of the history, which I do for the tribe and then I got-

NOTE: [00:21:02:000] [Background noise]

KC: [00:21:02:000] all this and when I would try to find some other documentation—and I’d find them back at this 22nd Infantry Company I.

KC: [00:21:21:000] So then I could look for pension records and things like that because I’m trying to get dates so I can help with the genealogy.

SC: [00:21:33:000] Where you might want to look is—you know, there were a number of reunions.

KC: [00:21:33:000] I found a couple of them in the *Times and Democrat* (Orangeburg, SC newspaper) when the 22nd met for reunion.

SC: [00:21:45:000] But it didn’t list—

KC: [00:21:45:000] And this was like in 1895, but it didn’t list the people. It mentioned that they had a reunion and that there were several ‘old gents” there, but they would not list the people.

KC: [00:22:01:00] And I said, well, at least that’s better than nothing. But it’s still not telling me who was still alive. You know, his great grandfather died in 1911 and I couldn’t even find an obit on him.

SC: [00:22:14:000] Really?

KC: [00:22:14:000] Nothing.

CJ: [00:22:14:000] Have you searched the, what’s called the OR, the Official Record of the War of Rebellion at long?

KC: [00:22:14:000] Um-hm.

KC: [00:22:22:000] And like I said I’ve been running into some brick walls with all this and I just can’t help but wonder is it because they were dark and they were Indian and they were being treated like a colored troop but they weren’t a colored troop.

CJ: [00:22:37:000] Could very well be.

LC: [00:22:37:000] See my grandfather, great grandfather that is, Richard Morgan Chavis, was at Appomattox. He and another person of the 22nd—walking back after the war.

LC: [00:22:51:000] It’s been told that they actually ate corn that was in horse troughs. Or even smutten corn (corn covered with fungus) that was still on the stalk.

LC: [00:23:03:000] You get back to the partner that was with Richard Morgan Chavis my great grandfather. He made it all the way back, with exclusion to crossing the Wateree River.

LC: [00:23:14:000] He drowned somewhere about Camden after the whole war.

KC: [00:23:14:000] Not your great grandfather.

LC: [00:23:14:000] Not my great grandfather, but the partner with him. [Inaudible] at the same time.

NOTE: [00:23:14:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:23:26:000] So, kind of ironic. Kind of ironic.

SC: [00:23:26:000] Let’s go back to what you know of the early history of Beaver Creek.

NOTE: [00:23:26:000] [Background noise]

SC: [00:23:41:000] How did this group become a distinct community?

LC: [00:23:41:000] I think the community was already there.

LC: [00:23:54:000] There’s an old boy in this room right here people, John Barry Chavis. At somewhere about sixty-two he kind of got got interested but really got strong at it by 1966.

LC: [00:24:08:000] He’s probably the foremost reason that we’re here. The community, it’s always been here.

LC: [00:24:18:000] Just for some reason, we did things that ancient people—that had been passed down from generations before.

LC: [00:24:27:000] We’re not the only people in the southeast that were hunter gatherers or that, planted three different seeds in the same hill. Other people I talk to, their people do the same.

LC: [00:24:40:000] I’m pretty much astonished that a lot of our people still plant their crops on a curve. We don’t have a terrace here.

LC: [00:24:50:000] If you look, this is pretty much flat sand ground. I can’t figure out why. But some of our people still do this. There’s no real need to plant it in a curve instead of a straight line. This is still being done by some of our people.

LC: [00:25:16:000] …The younger people are not really interested. Now, as far as the active community being here, I’ll say this in truth. Most of my immediate kin will probably meet you, greet you, talk to you.

LC: [00:25:32:000] But if you ask something out of the way—‘where does so and so live,’ oh no. You have just crossed an invisible line. They won’t tell you anything.

LC: [00:25:43:000] Is it clannish? Certainly, it would have to be.

KC: [00:25:51:000] But there was a huge response back in 1998 when Barry wanted to get the community back as an Indian-type community.

KC: [00:26:00:000] There was a huge response, but then as time went on it just kind of all fizzled. Because I think they just didn’t get what they thought they were going to get out of it.

SC: [00:26:10:000] Oh yeah, yeah.

LC: [00:26:10:000] I think a lot of it is the word entitlement. So many people—it is extremely valid just now, May, June. School is ending.

NOTE: [00:26:10:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:26:26:000] People are calling—‘how can I get my child the $80,000 to go to college with?’ Well how do you actually tell these people that even the federal people don’t give you this gratuity?

LC: [00:26:38:000] If your child can go to college and is a member of a federal tribe, keep and maintain a certain grade average, there will be money there for another semester.

LC: [00:26:49:000] But as far as actually giving you $80,000 for your child to go to school is kind of a great misconception.

NOTE: [00:26:49:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:26:59:000] There are a lot of people right now, 2011, that have the greatest idea, an illusion—Lord, if you’re American Indian, no county taxes, no city taxes, no state, no federal taxes.

LC: [00:27:13:000] Oh gosh, you’re going to get free hospitalization, free medicine, free dentist, free glasses. Y’all this is the joke.

LC: [00:27:23:000] How do you actually convey to people—and I don’t dare doubt or question that these people really, truly are not in hard times—that would maybe like a handout.

LC: [00:27:37:000] That sound good on one side, but most of our people, with the people in this room, they’ve either got a pride or a dignity or a humility about them that might not would take it if it were thinking.

KC: [00:27:37:000] I honestly…

LC: [00:27:51:000] Not knowing exactly what the commitment would be of how long you would have to pay for it. Does that make sense?

SC: [00:27:51:000] Yeah.

LC: [00:27:51:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:27:51:000] But still, so many people have spread so many different rumors.

LC: [00:28:00:000] ‘Oh Lord, if you’re an Indian you get this, you get this, you get this.’ In truth, it’s not there. We waited way too late—the Civil Rights Movement, okay?

LC: [00:28:11:000] With Lyndon and Lady Bird in the 60s, if we could maybe have got on the program there— However, we can all look and see exactly a great disparity has been done because of this, okay?

LC: [00:28:25:000] What was this supposed to be called, the great society? How did that go? Maybe not too good. So I’m amazed right now about the number of people that are on some kind of welfare or social aid, that maybe have not worked none in their life.

LC: [00:28:42:000] There will be entitlement. However, if you’re lucky enough to ever get there, you don’t need to worry about getting off of it. And that’s kind of a great travesty.

NOTE: [00:28:42:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:28:53:000] To us as individuals, just as much so to the federal people who have a casino—I actually had the opportunity a couple of years ago to go to Harrah’s.

LC: [00:29:04:000] Now, I didn’t go to play anything.

NOTE: [00:29:04:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:29:04:000] I kept walking until I found somebody that had two earbuds in each ear and a black suit and a white shirt on. I asked him, ‘surely you work here.’

LC: [00:29:17:000] I said, ‘I’m looking. I don’t see the first indigenous person working here. I don’t see the first American Indian.’ ‘We don’t have any. We don’t want any.’

LC: [00:29:27:000] They’re given x amount of dollars to pretty much stay away. We bring our own people in. We work our own people. I said, ‘You need to tell me there’s not the first Indian even washing dishes or holding vacuums or mops.’

LC: [00:29:40:000] ‘We don’t have any here. Don’t want them.’ Now, it actually worked out good for a way because these people every six months get a certain amount of check. But again our social structure’s kind of gone in a handbag.

LC: [00:29:57:000] Why should you actually work, sweat, and toil for a job when you can sit in the house and receive x number of dollars? Now, one of the biggest catches is you’ve got to be on the federal rolls.

NOTE: [00:29:57:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:30:09:000] Doesn’t matter what the tribe is and we’ve done a great disservice to our people. Truthfully looking, right now, from my heart, Beaver Creek, oh gosh we’ve got a lot of people now with degrees.

LC: [00:30:24:000] Our people sold ourselves short. Deliberately. If granddaddy was a logger, daddy was a logger, what are you supposed to do?

LC: [00:30:34:000] Lord anything but logs. Does that make sense?

SC: [00:30:34:000] [*laughter*]

LC: [00:30:34:000] No, I’m serious. Because now—both of my chaps have degrees. My daughter went to college. She’s got a Master’s.

LC: [00:30:45:000] My son’s actually working on one in forestry. Now, yeah, he’s working kind of in timber business, but he’s not a logger. I just think that we have literally sold ourselves short as a people.

LC: [00:30:57:000] We might not could have met the social structure at the time where if you had a college degree.

LC: [00:31:05:000] Most of our people of the Beaver Creek right now, the older people, they’re not too good with reading, writing. But you take and tell them there are four chickens in one nest, excuse me, four eggs in one nest, there’s two eggs in another nest over here, there’s one egg and there’s four eggs in this nest.

LC: [00:31:24:000] They’re pretty good with numbers. Just how did the structure come from when we really truly didn’t feel we needed education?

LC: [00:31:38:000] And I’ll be truthful now—53-54 school year. If you’re American Indian, when you could cursively write your name on a page, it’s time for you to go.

LC: [00:31:51:000] So how did this disparity start? How did we actually lose value of self, of potential of what we could do, what we could become? There’s got to be some social stigma. And I’m actually not smart enough to put a finger on a pinpoint.

KC: [00:32:09:000] I’m going to interject here. Just working with the people, being the tribal secretary and office manager, I don’t know if I’m 100% right, but basically what I feel is that if you need food stamps you can go get food stamps.

KC: [00:32:27:000] Just as an American citizen, as a South Carolinian citizen. You can even get a college education if you work at it.

KC: [00:32:37:000] If you make good grades you can qualify for scholarships. You don’t have to be Indian.

NOTE: [00:32:37:000] [Background noise]

KC: [00:32:37:000] But when it comes to the entitlement part of it, a lot of that was pretty much done through the Civil Rights stuff.

KC: [00:32:55:000] But then the Indians didn’t want to be lumped into that. So they wanted something entirely separate but didn’t know how to go about getting it separated from anybody else, but yet not feel like their some kind of Cherokee or welfare case.

KC: [00:33:12:000] So all of that intertwined together just got to be a very confusing scenario about where they wanted to be and what they needed to be doing and how to go about getting it.

KC: [00:33:23:000] Because if you need help, there’s help out there from the county level to the state level to the federal level for any American citizen.

KC: [00:33:34:000] But if you don’t want to go that route then your other routes are kind of limited because—you don’t want to go the African American route.

NOTE: [00:33:34:000] [Background noise]

KC: [00:33:34:000] You don’t want to go the Hispanic route.

KC: [00:33:47:000] But there’s not really a direct line for just Indians.

NOTE: [00:33:47:000] [Background noise]

KC: [00:33:47:000] If that makes sense.

NOTE: [00:33:47:000] [Background noise]

SC: [00:33:47:000] Yeah, it does.

LC: [00:33:47:000] But the disparity….

KC: [00:33:56:000] But they just have so much pride, and yet I’ve never dealt with a group of people in my life—Indians just don’t agree on the time of day most days. And I don’t understand that. You know, I said you defeat—

NOTE: [00:33:56:000] [Background noise]

SC: [00:34:10:000] Are you talking about within—

KC: [00:34:10:000] Within a tribe.

SC: [00:34:10:000] Okay, not even Indians within the intertribal—those meetings we go to.

KC: [00:34:17:000] No, they just want to be so argumentative all the time or so doubtful at times, and I go okay, I don’t want to lump this to say this is an Indian thing.

NOTE: [00:34:17:000] [Background noise-clinking sound]

KC: [00:34:30:000] Yet, I find it so prevalent when I deal with all of the tribal members. It just, it’s like pulling taffy some days to get even the simplest of things done.

KC: [00:34:40:000] And then you go watching TV and you hear the same things even in Hollywood back forty years ago. The Indians were viewed then fighting and not trusting each other. I said well must be an inbred thing then.

NOTE: [00:34:40:000] [Background noise]

KC: [00:34:53:000] It doesn’t make any sense because some things they’re like their own worst enemy.

NOTE: [00:34:53:000] [Background noise]

KC: [00:34:53:000] And I thought, why is this?

KC: [00:35:03:000] Because it shouldn’t have to be and it shouldn’t be.

NOTE: [00:35:03:000] [Background noise]

KC: [00:35:03:000] And like Louie said earlier, if they had stood up for their rights a long, long time ago, a lot of these issues would not even be here today.

KC: [00:35:16:000] But they didn’t, and so everybody else kind of beat them to the punch, so to speak. And the federal government is like, ‘You know, we’ve had enough of this syphoning of everything we’ve got and getting nothing back, so we’re just going to put limitations on it.’

SC: [00:35:28:000] Well this gets back to the thing you were originally talking about with your grandfather and not talking about it.

LC: [00:35:38:000] A social stigma.

SC: [00:35:38:000] Yeah, well the other thing is community support. So if your grandfather had gotten accepted in the white community, that was his social support so he wasn’t looking to—

LC: [00:35:38:000] [inaudible]

SC: [00:35:52:000] Your what?

LC: [00:35:52:000] [Inaudible]. He was socially accepted by his white friends and peers as an equal.

SC: [00:36:01:000] Yeah, but you started this by going to your grandfather and posing that question, what kind of Indian are we? How did you know you were some kind of Indian?

LC: [00:36:11:000] There were just some distinct features. Okay, high cheeks bones would be part of it. Hair would be one. Facial structure, high cheek bones.

LC: [00:36:21:000] I think my granddaddy’s [cheek bones] was so high, not trying to make fun, I think if he were to blink his eyes, his eyelids might actually get on his cheek bones. That’s how high—

SC: [00:36:31:000] Now hold old were you when you would go and ask him?

LC: [00:36:31:000] See, he died in 1966 and I graduated in 1966.

SC: [00:36:31:000] Okay.

LC: [00:36:31:000] So I have a very, very good, vivid memory.

SC: [00:36:41:000] So you were old enough to be self-aware and be aware of what an Indian looked like.

LC: [00:36:41:000] Well I was actually more aware—and still, my immediate cousin’s lineage—one child, twins.

LC: [00:36:57:000] One child might be as light as skinned as you and I. The other, not quite the tone of your shoes, but more the tone of my shoes.

LC: [00:37:10:000] Extremely dark. And of every set of twins, if one is extremely light, one on the other side extremely dark.

LC: [00:37:21:000] Most people really, truly, deliberately go lay in the sun to go soak up rays and get a tan. These people, they come out with one.

SC: [00:37:31:000] [*laughter*]

LC: [00:37:31:000] No, I’m serious. There are just some great, distinct features there.

SC: [00:37:31:000] So you saw this—

LC: [00:37:31:000] As a chap, sure.

SC: [00:37:41:000] So you knew something was going on. You go to your grandfather and say ‘Hey, what kind of Indian are we?’ And he cut you off.

LC: [00:37:41:000] Well—

SC: [00:37:41:000] Or he said, ‘let’s change the subject.’

LC: [00:37:41:000] He kind of, sort of cut me off, but he used another term. ‘We need to pick another topic to talk about.’

LC: [00:37:55:000] Now, even at 7, 8, 9 years old I felt that there was something that wasn’t really, truly right that he was not going to talk about.

LC: [00:38:05:000] Because if you did this continually—see, years ago, everybody didn’t have a television set. So on Sunday you either went to somebody else’s house of the family or they came to your house.

LC: [00:38:24:000] As a chap, and I reckon other ethnicity people do the same thing, the grownups ate first.

LC: [00:38:36:000] And my gosh, I likened one time, there won’t be a bit of chicken left by the time I get there. Y’all, I was almost a grown person before I realized there were other pieces of chicken besides the chicken neck and the chicken fat [*laughter*].

LC: [00:38:51:000] Don’t make fun. Even a fried chicken foot, if it had been boiled for a while, right tasty. You just don’t get a whole lot for your money.

LC: [00:39:00:000] About like escargot. You just have to dig that hard to get him out of the shell. I think the biggest thing for myself would have had to have been, just skin color.

LC: [00:39:15:000] And again with that—now I got to tell you about the clannishness of the people. And I don’t worry other people might do the same thing. All I have to worry about is my immediate Indian family.

LC: [00:39:31:000] But most of these people are just hard working people. I said earlier in conversation with the tribal gathering, most of these people are Christian people. Probably 99.44% of them are Christian people.

LC: [00:39:45:000] Now that being said, it doesn’t matter that you’re-

NOTE: [00:39:45:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:39:45:000] Methodist, Baptist, a few Lutherans, got some Presbyterians; got quite a few Pentecostal people.

LC: [00:40:02:000] We’ve heard in church and lectures from theologians that after the breath is taken from you, you’re interred to the ground.

LC: [00:40:18:000] And at another time, when a trumpet sounds, some people refer to it as rapture. They’re coming to get you. They’re taking you home.

LC: [00:40:28:000] Our people—I’ve said and admit, they’re Christian—they’ve kind of got a little, small problem with this. Because most of my people, okay, have a great thought and grand illusion possibly that when the life is taken from you, immediately, your spirit’s gone on to the next life, the afterlife.

LC: [00:40:51:000] Now tell me about this peril where I think pretty much all American Indian people have this. I’ve used the term even today I think, in this interview already, about walking with the ancients.

LC: [00:41:12:000] Their body here [*gestures low*], laid down, cold, blue—their spirit, their soul, our people think it’s already gone to the afterlife [*gestures towards sky*].

LC: [00:41:25:000] Now, would it be immediately? Very possible. I can’t answer that. But my people, I believe most people in this room right here, actually think the same thing.

LC: [00:41:37:000] You already walk with the ancients. That’s telling me that your spirit’s gonna go. Have you ever had this question before?

SC: [00:41:48:000] Yeah, yeah.

NOTE: [00:41:48:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:41:48:000] So, now, you’re agreeing with that. Is that pretty much not an American Indian trait, philosophy, following?

SC: [00:42:00:000] It is.

LC: [00:42:00:000] Others are waiting for the trumpets. On the other side, you and your immediate kin, when the life leaves you, you’re already gone to walk in the afterworld, the afterlife, to cross the river of life.

LC: [00:42:23:000] Please pick up and go. I’m just kind of giving you some thoughts that struck across my wavelength [*laughter*].

SC: [00:42:23:000] Let’s see, let’s see.

CJ: [00:42:33:000] I’ve got a question. How did you, a noted hunter, trapper, and fisherman, come to hunt and fish with South Carolina governors? [*laughter*] How did that help the tribe and the recognition process because it seems to me it was a pretty important position?

LC: [00:42:49:000] It has been a great benefit. Just looking at myself, I’ve had several [inaudible] find the humor in hunting.

LC: [00:43:09:000] However, back to the basic question. I’ve hunted ducks, deer, you name it, I’ve hunted it. I had an opportunity—a good friend of mine—his name was Billy Moonman Goff.

LC: [00:43:25:000] Talked me up about thirteen, fourteen years ago—I want you to come over here [inaudible] guide. I said, ‘okay, I know about release ducks.’

LC: [00:43:39:000] ‘Come over here to just meet some of the people and try it once or twice to see if you like it or not.’ I told him, I said, ‘I’d be glad to.’

LC: [00:43:48:000] From people like former Governor Jim Edwards, on down. People of the Democratic caucus, Republicans, okay.

LC: [00:43:59:000] In honest truth, if I don’t move out of this chair, you know I’ve told you my first fib for the day. They actually let me take a gun and hunt with the man.

LC: [00:44:09:000] You know our Governor, Mark Sanford, he was more interested about taking his children hunting.

LC: [00:44:14:000] Lots of times he was leaving his gun propped in the corner of a blind and letting his children shoot. Once they’d had a limit he’d undo his gun out of the case and load it up occasionally.

LC: [00:44:24:000] As far as actually the benefits, oh gosh, it would have to be a benefit. It didn’t matter which party or which house they were in—house seat, for example, or which senate seat they held.

LC: [00:44:40:000] For some reason these people have kind of had a compassion for us as a people. I’m talking about us American Indians. That’s kind of what really, truly got us started.

LC: [00:44:55:000] Have I been lucky? Certainly. Has it benefitted Beaver Creek Indians? My vice-chief over there, Kathleen and Joann Adams, John Barry [inaudible].

LC: [00:45:15:000] I’ve never come back and said about exactly how many shells it takes anybody to get the ducks. That’s irrelevant. He got his ducks, you understand?

LC: [00:45:24:000] But no, it’s just opened many, many, many, doors that possibly would have never been open to me. If you listen to me talk you know for a fact I’m not a Northerner.

LC: [00:45:35:000] Am I scared? Yeah, I’m scared. No. I’m at a place right now that teachers like Beth Goodale at Lexington High School where I graduated in 1966, Miss Pearl Smith, Miss Ida Compton, Miss Jean Crouch, would have never figured by any means, nor myself, would I be doing what I’m doing.

LC: [00:46:03:000] For a long time, I thought I was pretty proficient, climbing poles with SCE&G as a journeyman lineman. The only time people want to see you then is when they didn’t have lights. ‘Can you get my lights back on? Can you?!’ Okay.

LC: [00:46:18:000] But no, grandfather had deliberately had a job for me. I never really, truly questioned what it was.

LC: [00:46:28:000] I can take you right now off of a street in West Columbia, right there across from the race track. Take me a moment to think of the name of it.

LC: [00:46:38:000] But I’d been working on poles. I know you, being from Columbia—there’s a pickup truck riding around all the time. Great big, eight-foot, plywood signs on it that says ‘Jesus Saves, God love you.’

LC: [00:46:55:000] You’ve seen what I’m talking about?

CJ: [00:46:55:000] Oh yeah, I’ve seen that.

LC: [00:46:55:000] Well parked right over here, two yards away, you had me thirty foot up a pole. You can’t help but look over there and see that.

LC: [00:47:04:000] Well I went on and did what I had to do. We were changing and increasing size from smaller wire to larger wire going through the house. I came off of the pole. I stepped down on the ground, undid my safety, snapped it back, and the [inaudible] that worked on the house was pulling the wire.

LC: [00:47:22:000] He didn’t jerk it. He just pulled the wire. Bam! The pole fell to the ground. So I promise you grandfather had something in store for me and I didn’t know what it was.

LC: [00:47:32:000] Remember now, we hear a lot about and we read things about the footprints in the sand or the hands pushing you. Just a long time, if you got the patience, you let somebody push you or lead you or send you in a straight direction, you’re going to eventually get to where you actually needed to have been.

LC: [00:47:53:000] Agreed? But that’s the honest truth. I think it initially started off about how I got the help of the governor or the legislative people.

LC: [00:48:04:000] It would have to be sheer luck. And I don’t even believe in the term luck. I think grandfather, without a doubt, had something planned for me a long time ago.

LC: [00:48:14:000] Everything I’ve touched has not been roses. I’ve come up many times with the short end of the stick, on the other side.

LC: [00:48:25:000] Like others with the other tribes, I’ve taken an oath and an obligation and a charge to the Beaver Creek Indian people to do what I can while I can, to take them to a place they’ve never been before.

LC: [00:48:38:000] I’ve taken this about as seriously as my having two Herb Parsons duck calls that are actually collector’s items. Probably worth about a grand a piece.

NOTE: [00:48:38:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:48:48:000] On the other side, isn’t timing something to do with it? I’ve even had people I’ve hunted with actually send a donation to the tribe.

LC: [00:48:59:000] Now, has it been beneficial? Certainly. Did I deserve it? No. I might have been in the right spot at the right time. Now I know I kind of danced around exactly what you want here.

NOTE: [00:49:13:000] [BREAK IN RECORDING]

CJ: [00:49:16:000] Along the same lines, you’re a gubernatorial appointee to the commission of minority affairs?

LC: [00:49:16:000] I am. Governor Sanford, I went hunting with him one day. I asked him, ‘What’s involved to get on the CMA?’

LC: [00:49:28:000] He says, ‘Well, I’ll send you the paperwork if you can pass the SLED investigation.

CJ: [00:49:28:000] [*Laughing*]

LC: [00:49:41:000] I will see about getting you to the next step, the South Carolina Senate where we’ll vote on you. If you can beat those two criteria,’ he said, ‘I will personally sign the paper making you a commissioner.’

LC: [00:49:54:000] Let’s see, in the last probably four or five months, I’ve gained about—having time, availability, and really, truly, a deeper passion to help my family.

LC: [00:50:11:000] I actually applied for a position on the board of the Savannah River Site, CAAB—Citizen and Advisory Board. Well, I filled out the paperwork.

LC: [00:50:24:000] After the SLED people Okayed it, they didn’t have anything to do with it. Now we’ve got some new terms—FBI, CIA.

CJ: [00:50:24:000] [*laughter*] Federal men.

LC: [00:50:34:000] After they came out, the only thing I think they could find was one parking ticket in twenty-five years and he paid it the next day.

LC: [00:50:44:000] I try and observe all, but remember too now, in front of the South Carolina Senate, I actually raised my hand taking an oath of charges and obligations to adhere to the Constitution of the state of South Carolina and subsequently all laws.

LC: [00:51:00:000] Again, I just happen to have maybe more free time. I used to hunt and fish a lot. I have not fished in probably ten years. I have a boat. I’ve got anything you want to take to fish with. I’ve got a bigger calling to try and help my tribal family.

LC: [00:51:17:000] Not just Beaver Creek, but right now being the only Indian Commissioner for the state of South Carolina—in the last couple of weeks I’ve been to the court and they actually put me down as an expert witness to go there and testify about exactly how tribal structures of tribes get started.

LC: [00:51:36:000] Whether or not one person makes himself-

NOTE: [00:51:36:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:51:36:000] and the rest of their family a particular position of a tribe. I said, ‘You left out the key element—the people.’

LC: [00:51:47:000] I said, ‘The people really didn’t vote on it.’ I even told the court, I said, ‘Everyone here with esquire behind their name is aware of this and I’m going to speak for everybody in the courtroom.’

LC: [00:51:57:000] When the people left Europe, the old country, and came here, they didn’t have any idea how to set up a government. Either they were ruled under a king, a monarchy, or on the other side a dictatorship.

LC: [00:52:11:000] I said, isn’t it strange and ironic that the United States government was formed after an Iroquois Tribe council government with three separate branches?

NOTE: [00:52:11:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:52:21:000] Now the people with esquire and the judge included, they shook their head that they knew about it. But most people, they sitting over there with their mouth ajar and agape, not really too understanding that some of this was even true.

LC: [00:52:36:000] You see, I’ve said already to everybody here I have glaucoma. As a matter of fact, October past, I just had cataract surgery. I have glasses primarily for reading.

LC: [00:52:55:000] You would figure at 63 years old that you wouldn’t really, truly need or want to read anything. There’s not any good news really to read in the paper. Think about it. Today’s headline was about Boeing—about a right to work state as opposed to Washington State.

LC: [00:53:16:000] Is that noteworthy to me? Not really. I was kind of amazed also about Amazon, that we make all these promises, yeah they gonna keep 2,000 jobs. I mean, in a way to see it, this kind of put the stymie on American too, now doesn’t it?

LC: [00:53:32:000] There are no mom and pop hardware stores. You know where one is. We don’t talk about it. But really, truly, you’ve got to look hard now for small mom and pop owned businesses.

LC: [00:53:45:000] And boy, do we look back thirty years ago—we had gobs of them.

NOTE: [00:53:45:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:53:45:000] It didn’t matter what you needed.

NOTE: [00:53:45:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:53:45:000] America’s changing and I hope that our people are ready and can adapt to another change.

LC: [00:54:02:000] Because, we can’t keep taking the stymie and getting beat black and blue and being left behind-

NOTE: [00:54:02:000] [background noise]

LC: [00:54:02:000] because of our self-motivation, our self-interest.

LC: [00:54:13:000] Now, time to move on because I know you’ve got a long ways to go. I’ve been to Rock Hill before. [*laughter*].

SC: [00:54:13:000] Oh, let’s see.

SC: [00:54:24:000] Just listening to you, I forgot what I was thinking. Well, Chris you got any questions?

CJ: [00:54:34:000] I could talk to Louie for days.

SC: [00:54:34:000] I know, that’s the thing. Trying to think, what can I ask?

LC: [00:54:34:000] Well, I’m available as a minister. I can do marriages, okay? Tell me what the occasion is, I’ll be there.

SC: [00:54:44:000] Have you done marriages?

LC: [00:54:44:000] I actually have done some marriages.

SC: [00:54:44:000] Yeah, how’s that?

NOTE: [00:54:44:000] [Background noise]

SC: [00:54:44:000] Have they taken?

LC: [00:54:44:000] They actually seem to be going well. But I made them sign a release.

LC: [00:54:55:000] If nothing bad went wrong, don’t let me know if something good happened, don’t let me know. They were on their own. As a matter of fact, as a people, as a culture—and this is going to be a little bit strange and odd.

NOTE: [00:54:55:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:55:13:000] An arrow, with point, is actually given to the bride. She has the power, whenever need be, to break her subsequent claim for it.

LC: [00:55:32:000] A reason to go seek one of my wife’s attorneys, F. Lee Bailey. Don’t let nobody tell you an attorney can’t move a mountain. Like they said about Mohammed, he was coming to the mountain.

LC: [00:55:42:000] Oh yeah, F. Lee Bailey will help you find a mountain. This is our culture, our tradition as a people.

LC: [00:55:53:000] The bride is actually given an arrow, and any time she wants to break or dissolve it, all she has to do is [*makes popping noise*] break it.

SC: [00:56:03:000] And the groom?

LC: [00:56:03:000] The groom? He’s on his own.

NOTE: [00:56:03:000] [Background noise]

LC: [00:56:03:000] He’d better hope Johnny Cochrane is available.

LC: [00:56:18:000] I think really, truly what we as a tribe—we’ve lost so much of tradition and culture. That’s what we’re trying so hard right now to try and bring back.

LC: [00:56:32:000] And we’re kind of stymied about it because number one, we’re totally different people than, we’ll say the Cherokee.

LC: [00:56:45:000] Why do I have to have somebody who is of Cherokee descent come and tell me about their thing?

LC: [00:56:45:000] As far as telling stories orally? Oh yeah, our people used to do this without a doubt.

LC: [00:56:59:000] Kind of a tragic irony, again, we don’t have anything now they have said. And I’ve realized exactly the importance and magnitude of what y’all are trying to do—to save a little bit of those that are here right now that have grown up in a particular culture, kind of semi separated from everybody else and in a way that’s kind of hard to do if you live in a city or in a neighborhood.

LC: [00:57:29:000] You’ve got so many different peers from so many ethnicities. It doesn’t really take much for people to read an open heart and you can have a friend.

LC: [00:57:39:000] You play it good, you could probably end up with forty. But still, the words chanted from momma and grandmom—people judge you by the company you keep.

LC: [00:57:51:000] Now, y’all, when I was growing up, one of the biggest threats would have been buying beer.

LC: [00:58:00:000] We didn’t have the first clue about popping a cap on somebody. Somebody said ‘roach,’ you better be jumping up and taking a step on him to squash him.

LC: [00:58:13:000] We ain’t had the first clue if you told about reefer, the weed. I’m amazed I’m 63 and all my live, I’ve never been around it. Don’t need to. Only up until probably ten years ago, I learned a compound word.

LC: [00:58:28:000] That’s two words that makes one: kidney stones. In actuality, they try to convince you it’s something about the size of a bb, but look more like a sand pearl to me.

LC: [00:58:38:000] But trying to pass it [turns and speaks away from the camera – inaudible]. [*Laughter*]. That’s the first actual encounter I was able to drink the beer.

LC: [00:58:51:000] If I don’t move out of this chair, I’m up at the Lexington County Hospital emergency room. I drove myself—I was duck hunting. I had to upchuck a couple of times before I got there.

LC: [00:59:01:000] The doctor was gonna be real nice and ask me, ‘Mr. Chavis, do you drink?’ I said, ‘Oh yes sir, oh I sure do. About a half-gallon of milk every day, maybe a glass of orange juice, maybe a cup of coffee, half gallon of tea, maybe a gallon of water.’

LC: [00:59:14:000] ‘Oh no, Mr. Chavis, do you drink alcohol?’ ‘No.’ ‘You gonna start drinking beer.’ I said, ‘I am?’ He said, ‘You are. When you feel it start to move, drink a couple of beers.’

LC: [00:59:25:000] I’ve actually had some in the refrigerator so long thank goodness Budweiser puts a birthdate on them. [*Laughter*]

LC: [00:59:25:000] After about four months, I figure they had gone bad. Throw them out and go get some more.

LC: [00:59:36:000] But, I just don’t have any great compassion for drinking. I’ve actually seen what it’s done to so many other people. I had a brother, and notice the term had. He enjoyed it.

LC: [00:59:52:000] I believe the aircraft carrier *Enterprise*. He could have actually drank enough in his lifetime—he died at thirty to have turned that baby around.

LC: [01:00:02:000] However, two totally different individuals. Same mammy, same pappy. Just thoughts in total different places.

LC: [01:00:15:000] He’s dead and gone and I’m going to talk about him for a moment now. You’re welcome to edit this too. He could sell an Eskimo living in an igloo a side-by-side refrigerator freezer, convince him he needed it.

LC: [01:00:26:000] Not only that, but he could sell him aluminum siding for this dwelling too, convince him he needed it. I’ve never in my lifetime really tried to sell anything.

LC: [01:00:37:000] I just think, I said earlier, grandfather had a job for me. Didn’t know what it was. And if I’ll be truthful, this is not a job being chief.

LC: [01:00:50:000] It’s the biggest commitment that I think anybody will ever make. Remember, I told y’all before, I used to hunt and fish. Oh, I duck hunted [inaudible] really quiet down in the cold months.

LC: [01:01:04:000] And nobody in their right mind wants to go out there and try to shoot and call ducks or work a wet dog steady up in your face. ‘How’d I do on that one? I got that one, right? Did you see me?’[*laughter*]

LC: [01:01:17:000] So, again, just going about actually taking a charge, open commitment, to help turn things around for our people.

LC: [01:01:31:000] Our tribal mother, who is not here, maybe the next time we can get y’all to come we’ll have her here. Probably lived as hard a life as anybody. I can remember going to friends’ houses.

LC: [01:01:44:000] The television screen was actually oval—it wasn’t like this [*spreads arms really* *wide*] oval. Sheer amazement [*pretends to stare at screen amazed*]. They looking at it—little people in there.

NOTE: [01:01:44:000] [Background noise]

LC: [01:01:55:000] There was only really, truly one station in Columbia. Do you know what it was?

CJ: [01:01:55:000] Channel ten.

LC: [01:01:55:000] No.

CJ: [01:01:55:000] No?

LC: [01:02:03:000] Nineteen was the first station. But we didn’t have a television. So I can truly take and look back and tell you—rest of my family here can—when Christmas came, oh it was a special day.

LC: [01:02:19:000] You still had a few chores you had to do. That cow’s gonna get milked, you understand me? Somebody’s gonna go out there—it’s in the thumbs too, [*imitates milking a cow*] I can assure you. But somebody’s gonna milk that cow.

LC: [01:02:31:000] But, they don’t want all of the money. My vice-chief and his wife do it for the tribe. They give a little small brown bag.

LC: [01:02:42:000] It’s got fruit—an orange, a tangerine, an apple. It’s got hard candy. It’s got gum. That’s exactly how scarce money was.

LC: [01:02:55:000] Yeah, most everybody here was [inaudible] whenever school started. You’d either sold enough hogs if you hadn’t already butchered and put up [inaudible] with that first frost.

NOTE: [01:02:55:000] [Background noise]

LC: [01:03:06:000] If we had a little bit of money for, we’ll say Dungarees. Dungarees were kind of baggy, nothing at all like Levi’s or Lee’s.

LC: [01:03:20:000] But I believe when my mother passed away about September of 95, I was actually kind of looking real hard for some old shirts, night shirts.

LC: [01:03:35:000] In truth, they said Adluh flour (flour sacks). Don’t give me no sneer. I’m telling you times were tough.

LC: [01:03:46:000] But see, after you done wash the thing a couple of times, it felt way darn better than burlap. Take my word. Burlap was gonna make you scratch like you got the fleas.

LC: [01:03:58:000] But you know, as a people we thought we’d come a long ways. There was not a lot of money.

NOTE: [01:04:04:000] [BREAK IN RECORDING]

LC: [01:04:08:000] Look, in honest truth, I had one brother but there was not really, truly a lot of money. I was almost a grown person before we ever got a television set.

LC: [01:04:20:000] Yes, like other people in the South-

NOTE: [01:04:20:000] [Background noise]

LC: [01:04:20:000] we listened to country music on Saturday nights. Oh boy! [Inaudible] really, truly, there wasn’t a lot to do.

LC: [01:04:32:000] At one time, I was probably the most proficient marble shooter that you ever would play with. I’m talking with regular marbles, or yellow jackets.

LC: [01:04:44:000] We had some aggies, we had ¾ marbles (shooters). You turn your knees up in your britches.

NOTE: [01:04:44:000] [Background noise]

LC: [01:04:44:000] Crouch down like this here, okay?

LC: [01:04:53:000] Mommas would light your little fanny up for tearing them up. Would actually sew patches on. That little bit of clothes that you got gonna last you through the school year.

LC: [01:05:03:000] Most of my family right here would tell you that we’re not lying or exaggerating. Times were tough.

LC: [01:05:03:000] Lord knows, there is no doubt in my mind.

LC: [01:05:15:000] We were not a vagabond people—that we lived off the land.

NOTE: [01:05:15:000] [Background noise]

LC: [01:05:15:000] My dad had friends [inaudible].

LC: [01:05:31:000] But on the other side, after we worked a couple of months, we needed to loaf a couple of months. You understand what I’m saying? Now, he had a job with a now-defunct railroad called Atlantic Coast Lines.

LC: [01:05:46:000] Breaker, flagman, whatever. Yeah, we worked there for a while. I learned some new terms—shanty. We gonna play cards in the shanty.

LC: [01:05:58:000] Then you just drag up [inaudible] and do something else. At the time of his [inaudible] 1975, he built a bait shop and loan store right by Highway 67.

LC: [01:06:11:000] It was called The Sportsman. He could hunt and fish with the best of them. But on the other side, I’m talking about my own kin out there, just really, truly did not have no great empathy or magnitude for poor, working on a job.

LC: [01:06:28:000] All I needed to worry about was just enough money for today. Maybe tomorrow will take care of itself. Looking in truth now, that might have been a reason that we never had that television set.

LC: [01:06:47:000] But thank goodness [inaudible]. Now on the other side, we might coon hunt three nights in a row, get ready to turn the deer dogs loose on a Saturday where you could take a ride all over the countryside for the next week-

NOTE: [01:06:47:000] [Background Noise]

LC: [01:06:47:000] gather the deer dogs back up.

LC: [01:07:06:000] Would you say carefree? Certainly, would have to. Somehow grandfather provided today. He’ll do the same for tomorrow.

LC: [01:07:15:000] See, my grandmother and grandfather, all my Chavis kin, the Williams side—people like to fish. They didn’t want to take and load the boat up to fish.

LC: [01:07:27:000] When you had enough in that live well that you had a good mess of fish for supper, it’s time to go. ‘Oh, they biting the neck of the hook right now.’

LC: [01:07:38:000] ‘We got enough. We can’t eat this many fish right now.’ So you leave. Grandfather provided today so surely he would do the same for tomorrow.

LC: [01:07:51:000] I reckon it’s still in our DNA. How do you actually own a piece of land? I think that’s kind of really, truly got me a little bit stymied.

LC: [01:08:00:000] After the Revolutionary War—

NOTE: [01:08:00:000] [Background noise]

LC: [01:08:00:000] the people that win the war said ‘We didn’t truly have money to pay them, but we gonna give you x number of acres of land.’ Nobody was nice enough to tell these people that if you didn’t pay the taxes on it, we gonna re-own it next year.

LC: [01:08:17:000] Might take a year and a half but we’re gonna own that piece of land again. If you really truly can own it, put it in your pocket. You can’t put a tree in your pocket.

LC: [01:08:28:000] You can’t put air and water in your pocket. You can’t hold but so much dirt in your pocket. If grandfather provided, surely he’d do the same for you tomorrow.

LC: [01:08:38:000] I don’t know if that’s a carefree attitude. I think it’s most of our people, not just the Beaver Creek Indians. Not just the people of South Carolina. You know, if you’re only here for a short spell, live life and we’ll worry about tomorrow when it gets here.

NOTE: [01:08:38:000] [Background noise]

LC: [01:08:56:000] Now, please go on with your conversation here and anything else you want to cover because I might need to come to USC to finish it.

SC: [01:08:56:000] Well, what I’m thinking about is I think our recorders are running out of space is the thing.

LC: [01:08:56:000] Now, I have been here for four hours.

KC: [01:09:10:000] You need to zip it.

LC: [01:09:10:000] If you ever would like me to get up, I promise you I am full of honesty.

LC: [01:09:20:000] Everything I can say and that I’ve said, I’ll take a sign of everything that this is the truth. I’m just telling you, as a people we’ve done pretty good.

LC: [01:09:35:000] We’ve still got so far to go. The only hope for us now—if you look today, everyone’s fond of children. If we can’t instill in their thought and they can’t pick up the trail behind us, we might be completely extinct like the dinosaurs in fifty years, maybe less than fifty years.

NOTE: [01:09:35:000] [Background noise]

LC: [01:09:55:000] Because thank goodness, now, our chapter is like any other chapter. First thing they’ve got to have is an automobile.

NOTE: [01:09:55:000] [Background noise]

LC: [01:09:55:000] None of our children has ever had a pair of sneakers that says Nike or Air Jordan, for example. *[Laughter*].

KC: [01:09:55:000] [whispering]: He just goes on and on.

LC: [01:10:10:000] Have they? If it said Walmart or Kmart—Y’all I wore Keds so long my foot actually conform to kids. [*Laughter*] Thank you and bless you for your time and conversation.