

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Oral History Interview
with
David Edwards

By Mary Bergman

Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Washington, DC

November 1, 2012

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NARRATOR: David Edwards
DATE: November 1, 2012
INTERVIEWER: Mary Bergman
PLACE: Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Washington, DC

PERSONAL DATA

Birthdate: October 12, 1953
Spouse: Divorced
Occupation: Journalist, Blogger, Poet, Electrician, Computer Technician, Construction Worker, Entrepreneur.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW

Interview with David Edwards explores what he believes to be the causes of homelessness in Washington, DC and why homelessness continues to be such a persistent issue. Edwards recalls his work history, history as a whistleblower, and history of his own periods of homelessness. Edwards is a self-described advocate-activist and details his plan for reducing homelessness in DC. Edwards is also a poet and novelist, and shares poems and plot lines from his novel.

INTERVIEWER'S COMMENTS

There is a background journal for this interview. There are both audio and video recordings of the interview. The interview was conducted by Mary Bergman, a graduate student at American University. Alison Koostra, also a graduate student at American University, video recorded the interview. This interview occurred two days after Washington, DC and much of the East Coast had been shut down by Hurricane Sandy, and a week before the 2012 election, in which incumbent Barack Obama (D) (the first African American president) ran against the former governor of Massachusetts Mitt Romney (R).

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INDEX TERMS

1970s; 1980s; 1990s; 2000s; 2010s; African American Artists; African American Computer Programmers; African Americans; Boston, Massachusetts; Brown, Michael; Communal Living; Computer Technicians; Consumer Credit; Creative Writing; DJ Greaseman; Divorce; Economic Depression; Economic History; Energy Conservation;

Family Relationships; Gage-Eckington Elementary School; Green Energy; Homeless Shelters; Homelessness; International Brotherhood of Electric Workers (IBEW); Inventions; Jackson, Jesse; Labor History; Labor Unions; LeDroit Park; Maryland; McKinley Technical High School; Novels; Pensacola, Florida; Per Pro Representation; Poetry; Powell, Colin; Prairie, Georgia; Science Fiction; Seventh Day Adventist Church; Shelter, Housing, and Respectful Change (SHARC); Social Media; Social Security; Street Life; Student Loans; Unhoused; Union Strikes; Upper Northwest, Washington, DC; Washington, DC; Washington, DC Statehood; Welfare; Writing; Voting Rights; Y2K

Washington, DC Oral History Project

*Transcription of Interview with David Edwards on November 1, 2012
at the Martin Luther King Jr. Library in Washington, DC.*

MB: Mary Bergman
AK: Alison Koostra,
DE: David Edwards

0:0:4 DE: And, with or without? (Indicating baseball cap that reads "Free DC.")

MB: Oh, it's up to you!
AK: Whatever you want.

MB: Looks good. So, we're at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library in Washington, DC. It's November 1st, its 12:30 now (laughs). Mary Bergman interviewing David Edwards. So, we're all official, we're ready now. So, David, do I have your permission to record this interview?

DE: Absolutely, I checked with my agents.

MB: Oh, good, good.

DE: We'll be good.

MB: It's all gone through. So, how long have you been living in Washington, DC?

DE: Well, they, what's that word, they released me from Freedman's Hospital October the 12th, 1953.

MB: 1953.

DE: That's right.

MB: And, what's your currently living situation now?

DE: Well, uh, a little over a year ago, I got a federal housing voucher grant. So I know have a one-bedroom apartment, I'm pretty stable in terms of housing.

MB: How long were you unhoused, or-

DE: Well, the last spat was about six years. Six and a half years.

MB: So, given your experience, can you tell us why you think homelessness has become so entrenched in Washington, DC?

DE: Well, its—my general theme is because it's the Nation's Capital, so a lot of attraction here from all over the world. So you have a mixed culture, mixed diversity, and cultures have their own political pull. And, the Washington, DC, most of my life, was predominately African American descendants. And with that in mind, and the surge of being politically oriented, in tune, they begin to grow politically. And a lot of backlash, has taken years, and those other political components, has pushed back the African American population. And one of the ill effects was high rates of unemployment. And, of course the school system has been dilapidated for decades and decades. It's now a surge of being improved, and the improvement seems to be directly related to what I refer to as, well, what's known as gentrification. It's brought a lot of improvements to a lot of city services, including schools.

But the general population is not keeping up with the pace. We know it in our rent, in our food costs; we know it in what's now expected of the school system, to be an internationally globally competitive industry. And we're not prepared. (Pause) Generally, the average student is not ready for that. And, typically, for instance, myself, I was a network engineer. I found myself competing with people half my age, with double college degrees from all over the world, and that's when my health cracked. (Laughs) So, I'm really physically disabled, and that's one of my biggest challenges in the last several years. (Pause) So, does that kind of, answer the question, because I can take it further?

MB: Yeah, I mean, we have all these questions, but, it seems like you already had something—

DE: Yeah!

MB: Do you want to say—

DE: Well, I kind of started a track record of things, when I look back at all the times I've been homeless over the years. As I mentioned, Freedman's Hospital was like, not the best times and (pause) the person whose supposed to been my father raised me and my brother. So, I didn't know my parents. Not directly, I knew them indirectly over the years. And, that was my, technically, I call that homeless also. (Laughs) Anyway, it went on and later on when I went to attend school, I wasn't really prepared for schools. My grandmother was a fourth grade graduate. I mean, if you can call it graduation. She got out of school in the fourth grade, in a small town in Georgia. Prairie, Georgia. And her father was a sharecropper. So, her literally contribution to my brother and I wasn't very, very competitive for the environment. Even the public schools at that time.

0:4:00 So, at the ripe old age of five (laughs), I didn't go to school. My grandmother was a domestic worker and I went to work with her. October is kind of a bad [month to be born in], if you don't start school in September, you have to wait a year. That was my first indoctrination to public schools, was a full time job. (Laughs) And I was helping my grandmother more than anything, but I did baseboards and toilets, was my specialty. (Makes the sound of a toilet plunger.) I'm real good, anyway. So, moving right along,

then when I finally started school, I was not really prepared for the diversity, the language and things like that. So, but however, I did retain, I did stay back one grade.

MB: So this is all in DC, or in—

DE: All in DC.

MB: Okay.

DE: And, in Washington, DC, in LeDroit Park, Gage[-Eckington] Elementary School, Miss Karin decided I was going to repeat a year, though I did go to summer school that year to try to make up for it. She surprised me anyway. But, never the less, that changed my attitude about school. I cut a lot of play out. So, I was doing very good, from that point on, until high school! High school created a whole new dynamic, cultural thing at McKinley Technical High School. It was incredible. It was pecking order, pecking order, pecking order. It was group, group dynamics. It was interactions and often, violence, of course. Well, unfortunately, infamously.

So I went back to my home, I triggered to go back to my work ethic. I started being a manual laborer, at 10th grade I was a full-time union worker at the Washington Bulk Mail Center. So, the Longshoreman's Union, and I was a union person before I got out of high school, with no high school diploma! And I was in the union. And, unfortunately that's when the world of politics took the first smack in my face. The Sea-Land Services was the contractor, they outsourced to Saudi Arabia. And, to watch that bulk mail contract with the US postal office, it's over. And King Fahd, if I'm pronouncing his name correctly, said, "If you come to my country, if you've got a high school diploma," and I was a year away (laughs), "You can come with the business, you can be a worker," and the pay tripled, I understood, but I never made it out of the country. My folks weren't very apt to international travel, and I was a year from getting my high school diploma. So, I ended up being unemployed after high school.

0:6:28 And, eventually, you know, I move all the way to Boston. I found my mother, in Boston. Apparently I had a good aptitude because I also worked part-time as a clerk earlier. I end up working in a bank, and I learn first-hand. As a matter of fact, the political era was to include minorities. So, I was selected to the American Institute of Banking, and I said, "Wow!" And I was doing fantastic, until I learned what the monetary system functioned like it would, what fiat currency was about, and the Federal Reserve System. And that stuff, it shook me up. I resigned. That's the first time I ever quit.

MB: Wow.

DE: And I met the—Matter of fact, my boss, my direct supervisor was the son of the school board president, an African American. The first African American, Paul Pox, elected to the school board in Massachusetts, his son was my boss. I told him what I thought of the infraction monetary system, and I left. And he was surprised but, I don't

know. I told him steel's going to blow up, 1974, I said "This is going to blow up in your face," and I think some things happened between now and then. But, nevertheless, I was still with my mother, and she and I weren't agreeing. I was chasing the ladies, too. (Laughs) And I had no place to play, which is kind of involuntary, but it was fun.

0:7:55 I returned to DC, and I ended up working in banking a little bit longer, but I shifted to one of my other aptitudes, to technician, and also electrician. So, I went into the local union again. That's Local 26, IBEW [International Brotherhood of Electric Workers]! I liked the concept, but they weren't ready for the surge of African Americans looking for work. And there was resistance in there. So, after protesting at the Department of Labor and protesting against what was called Cedar Program, which worked under the Department of Employment Service, and the Department of Labor, and I was the only person who showed up downtown with a protest sign saying, "Unfair practice!" 'Cause they were typically stating there that without certain advanced training for an African American male, that you could not be a craftsman. You couldn't be an electrician or a plumber competitively. And the training itself actually dumbed you down. And I was, by age 24, I was threatening to sue them if they didn't put me in the union, because after 24 years you cannot join in an apprenticeship. So I was approaching 24 years old, protesting. Well, they admitted me. By that time, I had two years' experience as a trainee, under Cedar, which they didn't count. (Laughs) So, I was not a journeyman two years ago, which would have been after four years. And that was very annoying. That was like, abusive. That, to me, measured the abuse. So, it resulted in being laid off. Matter of fact, I've been laid off seven times. Only quit the once, and I mentioned that one already, but I've had seven layoffs, and that's really what contributed to the dysfunction of the continuation of income, savings, and in the midst of that, trying to be that entrepreneurial spirit my grandmother taught me.

I tried to open a water delivery business in the [19]80's, and I could not get financed. And I had good credit; they said I could buy \$30,000 worth of automobile in a heartbeat, but I could not buy a \$10,000 commercial truck, and that was puzzling.

0:9:56 MB: Did they have a reason why?

DE: "Well, you never purchased a new car before!" They want you to have that extra 150 credit points for buying a new car.

MB: (laughs)

DE: And then buy a new one. I had a 1964 Beetle Bug, and I drove it! Everybody gets stuck in the snow and I was fine. It was wonderful. Some of those jobs as a construction worker were 30, 40 miles away. I know where Chalk Point, Maryland is. If you all want to see a coal power plant cooling tower, two of them, the ugliest things in the world! You drive across, take it from a distance! Don't go close to them things, but anyway. As an electrician, that was one of my stops, one of my assignments. And it was very reckless. There were some dangers there I don't know that I want to discuss right now. But, nevertheless, protesting the union was one of the things that, for instance, I found a check

stub lying on the ground. I picked it up, looking at it, it's like current, and it was almost six or nine months behind in promotions. Friend of mine, named Percy Drecks snatched it out of my hand. He and two other African American young men I was tutoring in algebra and pre-calculus, you know, trigonometry, some of the things you need, are required to be promoted into the field of being an electrician. This is what they say we can't do very well. But, nevertheless, I'm tutoring them, and I'm protesting the union, saying, "You all should tutor these guys, and not hold their money back," cause they came from trade schools, and GEDs and they didn't have the background they were hired for. And myself, I had a technical, McKinley Technical High School, had the aptitude, and you wouldn't even let me in the union until I threatened to sue you! (Laughs)

MB: Right.

0:11:47 DE: So, it was, it's always political. It's always somebody else's domination of a field, trying to get employed, or even going to school. UDC [University of the District of Columbia] was just forming in the early [19]70's, and it was so disorganized, and I really preferred, I wanted to go somewhere else for a bit, in Boston, for a minute. And although I have been in and out of college over the years, I think I might be the oldest junior, you know. (Laughs) So, I like the entrepreneurial thing. I like being your own boss. But, to finance, to capitalize a business, it's an extremely political, overburdened, marginalized, disenfranchised, dysfunctional thing. And I think it has a lot to do with the color of my skin. But, nevertheless, I didn't own any property. You want to have good consumer credit that did not equate to commercial credit. Which I think, that is the big demarcation. That is the big spoiler and hell, its holding a whole lot of people back.

My grandmother, she was industrious, she was an entrepreneur. I have to tell this story, it's very important. Because when I was five years old, she's dragging me on the bus, and on to a streetcar. At certain points, you have to get out of the front of the streetcar and go to the back. And that was 16th and U Street [NW]. It happened often enough. This one specific time, she did the (pauses) she did the couch. She pulled out her handkerchief out of her purse and she began to fan the chair. (Mimes dusting off a seat.) I'm looking, I'm looking, and I can't figure it out, I've never seen her do this before, and I started to say something and she gave me that look. (Laughs)

MB: (laughs)

DE: Like, "Don't even talk." But this guy, as we were walking towards the rear, this man called her. He said, "Where do you work at?" more or less. And we ended up working at his house. He was a Caucasian male, and he said, "Have your people call me," because everybody knew each other. Glenn Echo, Georgetown, Glover Park, (laughs) and I kind of prefer that spot of town to this day. You know? We end up cleaning his house later on that day. Well, this was a time just before the era where we were fighting for the front seat and Civil Rights, and I didn't really know or understand all the stuff that was going on at the time. Later on, I learned through hindsight. But she sold this front seat! She sold it! "Come right on, sit right here." We had another job. It would be just after dawn in the morning until 11, 12 o'clock at night. She'd be dragging me the whole way; I'd be

sleeping on her shoulder coming back. A double, double shift. But she bought her house, and her kids, most of her kids went to college. She maintained. Her husband died before, long before I was born.

0:14:41 And it was an interesting story how she met her husband, who was a divorcee from Philadelphia. And she was from Prairie, Georgia, which is an hour south of Macon, Georgia, which is four hours south of Atlanta, Georgia. They pump daylight down there, it's so far. Anyway, I eventually learned that I lost an uncle from (pause) lynching. (Pause) And I, and her father was so shrewd on trying to get her to produce 400 pounds of cotton a day is why she hated it, and she was trying to get away from it. She said she won't ever set foot in Atlanta again, and she never did. Oh boy. And I met her brother, who's a pastor, a preacher down there. And he has a congregation and he actually developed a street called Joe Lewis Avenue. It's in Prairie, Georgia, and he built houses on it. So, he made some progress. I did not understand.

Anyway, back to Washington, back to the union. The electricians union. Eventually, I'm getting lay off. Those red, those pink slips keep plaguing me. So I decide to have a review board hearing, and I told them that I wouldn't return to the union. Because it was dangerous for me and I had protested it and how they selected African Americans and tried to demarcate us as being non-, incapable towards these tasks. There was a few of my associates who died on their own construction sites and I was getting a strong message there. I decided not to retain.

0:16:12 So, I took some tests, I'm pretty good at science aptitude so I end up working as a technician in a robot lab. There's a robotic lab in Gaithersburg. Electronic control systems and robotic arm systems for the beer can industry. (Laugh) Because a beer can is a special, I mean, that's a technology! Making this very fine, soft, velvety soft beer can. (Laughs) That's the trick, that's an art form. They use radiation to detect if there are any holes and things like that so it won't leak. So that's why robots are in that field and not human beings.

So, building the machine, I did incredibly well. However, I ended up being laid off, and I competed for the position during the year I was there, with individuals from West Africa, who were trained in Britain, who were now competing with me for a job in Montgomery County! (Laughs) I've never had a job in the District of Columbia. I'm always in the suburbs or 50 miles away in another state. That's really a weird thing, because most people I know, they go to college outside of DC, Howard University doesn't accept DC residents, very rarely. (Laughs) Not as full time students, anyway. For the other courses they give, okay, but otherwise, typically out of town. Anyway, seeing some body politics, economic things, there's things we have little or no control of, and thus, we are marginalized. I think that's the term, the most recent term. So, competing for employment is a big thing.

0:13:53 There I was, 27 years old, living with my grandmother. That cramped my lifestyle something serious. I had good credit, had worked for nearly four years, I applied for

eleven apartments, and none of them would qualify me. Well, in the union, you changed contractors.

MB: Right.

DE: And they were telling me, “You changed jobs too often!” (Laughs) The contractor, I learned, was not reporting everyone’s employees. He was doing this only to minorities. Thus, the credit bureau gets a “ping” every time you change jobs. You lose 30 points every time they “ping” you. I was like, 35 years old when I learned that process. It’s been going on for 30 years! What’s going on here? Because every time there’s an inquiry into your credit bureau, you lose points. (Laughs) And every time you change contractors, they call the credit bureau, and that’s what they shouldn’t have been doing. Or at least acknowledged the fact that this is a union reassignment, not a firing, you’re being reassigned to get a well-rounded quality of work.

And, because I had worked my way to a position where I was doing control installations, not just bull work, you know, truly control. Often, Singleton would get me when they were doing hospital control systems going. I worked at the power station, I’m sorry, the water treatment plant here in Blue Plains. You walked in; you think you stepped on the *Star Trek Enterprise*. That thing is laid out! (Laughs) I had the blueprints and a fine-control screwdriver; I had to take the work with me. It was integrated work, and aptitude, I was doing fantastic. But at one point, they don’t need you anymore, so they ship you somewhere else. And those changes of jobs are what the credit bureau is acknowledging. “You changed jobs too often.” So back in those days, it was like, \$20 to apply for an apartment. Now it’s a lot more. I spent \$230 applying for apartments and none of them—eventually, about two years later one of them called and he qualified me to move in. But that was after I left the union.

0:20:01 So, incidentally, because of my aptitude and tenaciousness to perform, and I already had two years as a trainee, now I’m pushing three years as an apprentice. So, actually, they would assign me six to eight guys to put to work: “Keep ‘em busy.” I’m not the direct boss, I’m not really a foreman, but I would keep them busy. Dispersing materials, cleaning work sites, installing things, pipe humpers, I called them. (Laugh) Anyway, the pull crew, pulling big heavy installation cables. One specific afternoon, two of the young men who were summer workers, now they were training in the union work, they disappeared out of my sight. I said, “Alright, I’m going to go find these guys.” They’re always goofing off, anyway. And so, I’m about to turn this corner when I hear these voices, one of them was saying, “No, no, no. Don’t buy a new truck! Refinance your house and pay off the truck!” These two white guys are talking about how their parents, their uncles, their fathers are the in the union and that’s how they get placed. And there was an argument about how they were going to refinance their homes to get a new truck. And that’s how you do it. You get the drunk, you pay two years of insurance, and one guy was telling the other guy how to put it all together. And I’m listening to this, and I can’t even get an apartment. (Laughs) And these guys, I don’t know how they flipped their homes and things to finance their life. So, the culture, and what supported them to be abreast of that sort of economic advantage was there for them. But my parents didn’t

have that history in the trade or that connectivity. And then, family, to do the same thing. But, nevertheless, it's a strong degree of being ferociously unfair, the dynamics. The credit bureau reporting me every time I change jobs, these guys, they don't have that issue. The credit bureau is backing them. I got my used Volkswagen; they got a 4x4 RAV. Oh, dear, I'm telling them, "Go pick up some pipe!" (Laughs) That fulfills me in my quest, satisfying. But nevertheless, things move on. That was a lesson learned.

0:22:20 And like I said I didn't make it to Saudi Arabia, and the union thing is breaking down, and I wanted to get back in the technology field as a technician. And I left there and I went to Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Lab, there's a Jet Propulsion Lab in Laurel, Maryland. And I was doing work in a specialized department, and there were several types of applications: safety appliances, things that make electronic components flight worthy. And my basic job was conformer coding. So one guy was a couple years from retirement, and he and I start being buddy-buddy. So, I think this is the first real relationship I had with a white guy. We were kind of buddy-buddy. But, nevertheless, he left after about three or four months, he went on vacation. I ran the lab for two weeks, and I got 100% flying colors. My appraisal was high. When he came back, everything was fine, beautiful. So then about two months later, Ronald Reagan got in office, and he cut the defense budget. (Makes slicing sound) Pink slip in my hand. I was kind of devastated and I was leaving and I forgot my top secret badge, it was still hanging on my coat when I got home. Now I've got to take this back. The next day, I took it back, went to my lab to say goodbye to my buddy. Three white men were working in my position. I said, "No." I went to the boss' boss. I'm not proud. I didn't get a chance to brown my eyebrows long before they rehired me. (Laughs) No loss in pay, I had no real complaint, but they put me in a different department.

0:24:00 So there I was, a contractor, and these three guys were made permanent at Johns Hopkins. I lost my ticket to go to college, right? So, another six months went by and Jessie Jackson went to Syria and rescued Goodman, the bombardier who died in the crash. He rescued him, he brought him back. It was a hero welcome thing going on. But this one radio station [WWDC] we had to listen to all day long, every day, called Greaseman [Howard Stern type "shock jock" popular in Washington, DC in the 1980s], that's the choice of the audience that I was a minority of. Some of it was funny, I cracked up pretty well, but this boy, he insulted Jesse Jackson. He went off on Jesse and I went off on him. I picked up that phone, I got to his boss. Apparently, because of the Johns Hopkins extension, I got straight through. (Laughs) And I was chewing his boss out, threatening his license, his political dogma, I quoted FCC regulations, I'm trying to quote regulations I don't even know. I know about regulation 15, which is interference of signals and I through that at him. Before I got off the phone, Greaseman was apologizing. And my coworkers are hearing me bust his boss out. They laid me off two weeks later. I caught a lot of grief for that. It was like (harrumph). I wasn't getting along with anybody. That was unfortunate. So I got a second pink slip, went on unemployment for a while. Took a little vacation. In between jobs, you relax a little bit.

But, that relaxation took me to a religious organization called the Seventh Day Adventist Church. For about four years, I lived on commune with a bunch of folks. So it was like, it

was in Hancock, Maryland, Frederick, Maryland, farms, big house. David Garuess was doing his thing out west. (Laughs) And here we are, we were. The Church really liked us, but they didn't appreciate how we did things. Like,

0:26:08 MB: So, what did you have to do, on the commune?

DE: We ran a health food business. As a matter of fact, we delivered health foods all up and down the [east] coast from New York to West Virginia. And we ran a health food store here in Washington, DC. I was managing the health food store. I created this veggie burger, tremendous. Just recently, I rebirthed my veggie burger. You familiar with (pause) on Columbia Road, Potter's House?

MB: (shakes head no)

DE: Well, anyway, they have a kitchen, and most of their employees are lower income brackets. They allowed me to use the kitchen to make a batch of my burgers and they sold out. It was too much physical work for me. I was kind of introduced to food vendors. You know the one out in front of Martin Luther King?

MB: Yeah.

DE: Well, she tasted a burger. It hit that cultural clash! We got an Ethiopian selling half smokes and [you're] introducing a veggie burger. It bounced off her real fast! Anyway, we were running the health food store on Georgia Avenue, doing pretty good. However, the director was double dealing. He was running a set of books here, another over there. I separated from him and I just left. I didn't just leave leave, I squatted a property in DC that's owned by the same cooperation. I squatted it for four years. See now, a (laugh) that's eight years of not regular income. Well, in the middle of that I started driving a bus for Montgomery County, so I got my credit rebuilt and reestablished. But I couldn't buy a water truck! I wanted that water truck bad!

0:27:54 MB: Your entrepreneurial spirit!

DE: I'm serious! Ford Corporation said, "No." Maryland Credit Union, Montgomery Country Credit Union says, "No commercial loans." And they loaned me \$5,000 in cash, but that was not enough. Even with that down payment, Ford Credit said, "No." The Maryland National Bank said, "No" also. Said, "Well, you work full time, and now you want to drive a truck, too. Sounds complicated." No, I got my first employee waiting in the wings. I had purchased a used van, because it was registered with insurance as a passenger vehicle, to put a ton of water in it was (pause) I'm glad it didn't have an accident, because that would have dropped my insurance. Anyway, I got past that and I built up a good cadre, I had a dozen stores and 15 homes. I'm ready for the truck, and I'm ready for an employee. And, that's what stopped me. Even when they said, well, Maryland said, "Well, lease a truck for six months and see what happens." A truck for six months, I couldn't afford an employee. I couldn't afford to buy gas! That's horrible. So the insurance and the lease for the Ford, that didn't work. I wasn't doing that. That

stopped the whole program again. So, again, access to capital that makes more capital. That's a formula, but for some reason there is always this bridge, this wall that says, "Hey, no no, you don't qualify," for whatever. \$17,500 worth of truck, but I had a \$30,000 drive off the lot, no-money-down automobile credit. Now, it's like, disgusting. But that's the difference between consumer credit and commercial credit. And that's the first lesson that really, nowhere in school do they tell you about commercial credit.

0:29:36 MB: This is the first time I'm hearing about it.

DE: No one prepares you for it! Here's consumer credit: get a good job, save some money, buy your first car, and get an apartment. When you buy a car, in six month they give you 150 points for your credit bureau. Guess what happens when you default on a house?

MB: (makes thumbs down sign)

DE: You lose 150 points from your credit. That's it! If you have a 700 score, you drop down to 550. And that's why people are walking away from their houses right now. Because they can rebuild it, they can go buy a car, and rebuild their credit. It's disgusting. Anyway, my grandma paid \$13,000 for a house and sold for \$487,000. That was the time to buy a house, and I got turned down from a house twice. So, the house I'm now squatting in, the cooperation goes defunct for a lot of reasons. The owner had purchased it in other people's names. And that was a fraud.

MB: And this was the health food store?

DE: Yes, this was the health food store, and that whole drive about that. Now, the health food store was located in a retail building but the building we purchased as a nonprofit cooperation, a 501-c3, was supposed to be a health center and this building. But when the company went and defaulted, someone got seriously hurt and died in an auto accident. And it was crashing. So, anyway, the first right of refusal was my leverage. \$60,000 balance due. I get illegally evicted. Marshall shows up with guys, why should I doubt it was illegal? He flashed some papers at my wife, but it was bogus. I learned much later. I should have called the police on him. I'm just learning those routines now, whatever, 40 years later, 20-some years later. My first child was born and three of them, my wife and my kids, were sitting on the sidewalk. This is 19-, what year was that? 1991. We were sitting on the sidewalk, looking at all our stuff. But anyway, I end up settling with my lawyer who's supposed to be helping me and she found us a tax house that we used for two years. And you just pay the taxes on it for two years, it was a settlement thing. So that was a brief, it took about two months for that to happen, living with friends and things. Another brief turn of homelessness.

0:32:10 So we moved on, I'm working for Montgomery County as a bus operator, and I started getting sick. The respiratory problems start kicking in, stuff like that. And I'm finding out that it runs in my family, heart and respiratory problems are devastating, killed my

grandmother. And my father died from heart related diseases. And in 1995 is when I had my first heart attack.

But it was right on the cusp of working, I was in the Welfare-to-Work program at the time. The program required me to go to this training and I gladly told them IT technology, and restarted my career as a computer technician. So, it was, during that time, being in this work program, that I was hired as a contractor out at Anacostia High School. The contract was for DC government. So, I went to all the agencies, doing various services for the agencies. But, nevertheless, a few permanent jobs were created to hire students. One of those jobs went to my instructor's supervisor's son, in his maiden name. And when I found that out, I got on the horn and I just started yelling at people. The program was eventually shut down, not only for that but for the fact that this specific director would take several DC government employees to the Bahamas for the week or the weekend and stuff like that. He was doing it, and he was doing it with non-profit money, not with state money. But it was money for the participants. And they shut that down, too, eventually. But that's when I realized I was a whistleblower. I was protesting for the bank, and protesting for the union. I'm a whistleblower, and I finally got that word together recently.

0:33:50 MB: It's funny you say that, because in my head I was just going to ask you, "Do you think you're a whistleblower?" (Laughs)

DE: (laughs) When my family went through economic strife, we ended up with several family councilors and things like that. And the advice I found, and took the advice that one of the councilors gave me: write it down. Don't try to argue with your wife. You've tried that you're not teaching each other anything; you're just at it. (Pauses) But anyway, and it's bad for the children to watch that, too. My wife whipped my behind so many times, she could hold an argument. She could talk, and get all sympathetic. And all that emotion just blows you away, right? Well, anyway, I started writing it down, thus I started analyzing things very carefully. And I realized that not only was I whistleblower then, but back in the day, when I was in grade school, I'm the one to tell the teacher and the neighborhood mothers and grandmothers what their children are doing. I was welcome into 20-something homes anytime, for dinner or TV or whatever. Some folks, some of my comrades, my buddies would say, "Mom, why'd he get the big piece of chicken?" (Laughs) Because I told their mom a little thing. I'd be informing them of what's going on. I'd tell them enough to catch their children at it. Or to interfere with them involving themselves with the wrong people in the neighborhood. And I got good at that. Eventually, it kind of caught up with me. That's why I got these muscles, because I've got to stand my ground, I guess that's the term.

Anyway, so that's what's when I really realized it's my core competency. So, today, I consider myself a journalist. I started an organization. It's called FoMAA: Freedom of Media Advocacy and Activism. And I assist homeless people on becoming entrepreneurially involved and politically involved. SHARC, which is where I met you all, is one of my trial bases. They're into programs and so I went in there and the process of being there, something beautiful happened. I hear this compassionate voice in the crowd, you know, "We need T-shirts, we need t-shirts! Let's do T-shirts!" She kept

saying that. So she really got conversation going to the entire board. And we acknowledged, yeah, I'll buy your T-shirt, and the chairman, Eric Sheptock said, "All we have to do is come up with the money and we can outfit a thousand people with T-shirts." And she said, "Okay!" So I'm going to help her do that. But then, they didn't really want to divert the attention and the capacity of the organization to the project. And they began to talk it down. And I said, "No, you can't talk it down, because it's been ratified." And, as a matter of fact, we started a committee called "Branding Committee," so her T-shirt was now part of the organization called SHARC. And I supported it, some other people supported it. So, that was what I really wanted to set out to do—to assist people who are economically disadvantaged, to become abreast of how the system works, to become a part of it. So, it didn't stop there.

DC laws for source, and being somewhat familiar with that, not really in all, but I did approach Michael Brown's office, the councilperson at large, Michael Brown. And we have an interview coming up. And if you go out for a source, expanding to include tax sheltered money that goes to non-profit organizations that produce print materials, artwork, and other services. When that money's spent, a homeless person should qualify as an intern and go with that money and go into that shop, and put hands on that shirt project, or that business card or brochures or whatever and get that work experience. And it's as an intern with a stipend, from unemployment or wherever. So, it perked somebody's eyes in his office, his staff said, "Hmm, sounds interesting!" So, they said me an email and said they wanted to set up an interview and take this thing further. Because there's a big fight about first source and contractors at big construction sites and things like that. So, I've been blogging that site, and things like that. I'm hoping to expand my web business and web concepts, because it is a publishing company. I do call myself the "acting chief editor." (Laughs)

0:38:10 MB: (laughs)

DE: I hate literature, spelling, all that other stuff, but here it is! Anyway, I've a strong suit in science and math, weak in literature and history, but that's my passion. Apparently, I've flipped over, I've flipped the script on it, and I love it and I can't get away from it. Three o'clock this morning, I'm on the internet.

MB: Wow. You've lived a lot of lives.

DE: (laughs) I'm serious. It's exciting. Since I began to begin to take the advice of the councilor and write things down, I've written about 125 poems. I'm two-thirds of the way into my first sci-fi novel.

MB: What's the novel about? What's the basic—?

DE: —What if—

MB: —Don't give it all away!

DE: I won't! Now, what if there were no African Americans at all and slavery never happened. What would America be like? And I predict America would be 150 years future into technology. That's what I project. We would have done so much better if we didn't go that route. And, Africa would be the United States of Africa. (Laughs) Because it wasn't torn up by the slave trade, okay? And, the American Indians would still be the dominate culture here. So, that's a whole new genre of constructs. And it started out from a protagonist who happened to be a sociologist at a southern university that his parents started. Because they started a road construction business way back before slavery. They had a construction company; they're the ones that built [Interstate] 95 and all these other major projects. And they had major contracts with NASA, and then NASA has been defunded and re-shifted. And it went back to Russia, where their hometown, where these people's origins are. So, there's a lot of analysis and similarities in the book. And it has some exciting twists. I've got a steering committee and focus groups on part of the book. And I went down to study on how to write a book. And I realized my protagonist was too strong, he needs a stronger protagonist, I mean antagonist. The story arc and character arc and first plot point and deciding incidents have to come in and the milestones that make you turn the pages [have to come in].

0:40:17 MB: Well, I already want to read it. (Laughs)

DE: (laughs) I'm serious! (Laughs) It's coming up. Anyway, taking that advice from the councilor, "Write it down," started a whole thing. The self-analysis, the close look, discovering that core competency. That tattle-tale is now a journalist, so you've got to develop that core competency. It's always been with you, something you do naturally, you don't even think about it. It's what you do all the time. So, that's one exciting thing and that's what I look for in another person, especially people on the street. God gave us all something; we're not born for nothing. We all have something. Covered up with a bunch of noise and pain, and all this stuff, but underneath there, there is something. And I think, being in a homeless situation where you get house and stability is really. I took my SSI income and I moved to Florida, where the rent is more than one-third DC rent, so on a sliding scale, I paid \$350 for a two-bedroom apartment in a gated community, with a swimming pool (laughs).

MB: When was this?

DE: Ah, Southwest Florida, a little town called Punta Gordo, in Fort Charlotte.

MB: (stammering) What time was that?

DE: 2010.

MB: Okay. Oh! So, did you just come back to DC?

DE: Yeah, I just came back!

MB: Okay.

DE: Yeah, early (pauses) came back in March 2011.

MB: So, you were in DC then Boston, then DC, then Florida, then back?

DE: Well, Boston was a long time ago, back in the [19]70s.

MB: Right, back in the [19]70s.

DE: Yeah, I went to Florida in December 2009. I caught the Silver train when the snow just shut the city down, the last train out. (Laughs) It was a Silver Liner from Union Station. (Laughs) And, 22 is a long—17 hours on a train, another 4 on the bus, that's incredible. I wouldn't do that again. And when I came back in March of 2011, the first class section, you walk through that section on the airplane, guess who's sitting there?

MB: (shrugs shoulders)

0:42:14 DE: Colin Powell. I'll tell you, wahoo! I said, "Sir, you inspired my whole family." We really admired him. He's a republican, but

MB: Yeah.

DE: He's not perfect, okay? (Laughs) So, and I acknowledged him and his wife. And I went on, and he smiled and acknowledged me. I went on and had the flight back, and as we landed, the airport's been shut down for snow. (Laughs) So this is coming and going. I don't know what this is.

But, anyway, things happen when you humble yourself and get the opportunity. That housing started me writing. Now, I went back here and stayed with my brother for a while. His divorce started and he was living in the same spot, his wife left him. He was getting, well, he told me how he wanted his eggs one morning. I said, "Okay, sure, you better get yourself a Hallmark card and write your wife or something." But, anyway, that eventually broke down; I ended up back at a shelter. And although I did fine in Florida, walking and exercising and losing weight, but in the DC area, the environment, the air quality affects me. And then when I went in a shelter, it got worse. I ended up in the hospital quite a few times, and things like that. So, although, again, being (pauses) self-sufficient or trying to be self-sufficient, and protesting and doing this thing that I call my core competency. I threatened the housing providers when I was in the shelter, for loss, and I documented stuff and shared it with them. Other DC government [agencies] have shut down their first choice programs. In September of last year, they found me a federal grant, [just] sitting there. So, the program shut down. I can live anywhere in the country; I don't have to stay here in DC. But I couldn't organize enough to go back to Florida with such short notice. So, I ended up taking a lease here at Jubilee House, and that's when I got back to the writing again. Those poems are incredible. I brought them with me today.

0:44:15 MB: I'd hoped so!

DE: (laughs) It is (pauses) Poets on the Fringe, that's an important group, and I'm being introduced to Federal Reports, and I'm looking very closely at Split the Rock, that's another group. They have charters with the Bus Boys and Poets cafes and open mics or this or that, or membership mics. And they split the income, \$5 at the door cover, is split with the poet. And I'm trying to get there! But, anyway, I could share a few lines of this.

MB: I would love to hear it.

DE: Okay, well, it's about homelessness. (Pauses) The by-line is "Those that see, hear; those that hear will speak." The title is "The Missing Book of Homelessness." [Reading:] "Let not the shelter"—I still haven't gotten to the point where I can memorize it still. I think between the strokes I've had and the heart attacks I've had, I have a memory thing that's not—it's coming.

MB: Well, this is all on tape, so no one will know if you're reading. (Laughs)

DE: Okay. How about that. [Reading]

1:1 Let not the sheltered want, be helpless nor tolerate self-misery.
1:2 Hold not the cup of sorrowful bribery. Nor pity-party invitations from me to you, nor from them, though others will offer
1:3 Throne not many a park bench, nor set in the seat of the scorned.
1:4 Rule not a ruined singularity of throng.
1:5 March not the path of dualistic plurality. Nor seek the eye of judgmental zealous piety.
1:6 Own wages laborer, housing family needs.
1:7 Desire what every soul desires, freedom from homelessness, not homelessness from freedom.

2:1 Sake true employment opportunities, with real ownership of wealth, but forget not capital reserve fidelity of the greedy.
2:2 Strikeout, pitched unconquered doubts, no more time to receive scarcity handouts. Gifts not good enough to give out, more of what found many here on so many poverty routes.
2:3 **Nor** stand here, you with me, remember liberties are not free.

3:1 Bless it, His cross lying before a wondering disenfranchised marching feud. But few would enter nor comprehend.
3:2 Puzzled by marginalized hardships, marred by anger and selfishness, so remember again, give even when it seems to hurt no pain no gain the hymnal went.
3:3. Feel the Spirit Air in each step. Stop, renew awakenings.
3:4 Who have not given, when and where? Last felt joy giving to any neighbor in need give rise to these and to these give.

4:1 For some died, some hated, others envy still. Now, remember again, be forgiven. The power, and the glory was always there, begotten love of this world.
4:2 Let nations protect the many, then communities restore their-own. Thus poverty shall be of an alien construct. When placed on the backs of the strong.
4:3 Be it homelessness a kingdom of freedom, then? An economic singularity of alienation seeking free space labeled not an infestation. A birth defect wounded insurrection, another self-imposed segregation, suffering all nations.

5:1 Then take care, renounce despair. Give power of change to the Air.

5:2 Then Spirit will light it's flair on each homeless pit, given life pursuits of happiness, the homeless, made helpless, would not, know it?

6:1 Let families make the community stronger then hunger disappears, anger no more, the faint healed, jailed recidivated addicted cleansed, poor no more.

6:2 Support this bridge to freedom then, great tasks lay ahead for some.

6:3 But for those whose names, foul to the Spirit, the wealthy of all nations labor to snare, Renamed these hard-times, '*homeland-ness security-less*' such is without care.

7:1 Material and social capital not shared. Laden empty words not spared.

7:2 Hope for a season when reform is the order of the day. Philosophers', Philanthropist's desires either keep sleeping change for justice not peace or change for peace for justice.

7:5 More unanswered questions stacked on more words of dichotomize choices

7:4. Let not tides of change, not one domain, not only one would die. Brutal and debased moral values proclaims, who benefits and why?

8:1 Renew organic not dynamic literacy. Bestow understanding on the many, Air power of discernment, then save feuds of humanity before judgment.

8:2 Awaken untold solutions of change, gridlocked by that mammalian creature, a destructive capitalistic global singularity, an outreached greedy global architecture. Ending homelessness is lacking inside their infrastructure.

8:3 Not such affrighted dreamers can see. The poor will always be. Heed listen to these novelties, most on so many roads to poverty.

(Laughs)

0:49:34 MB: Thank you for sharing that with us.

DE: This is like, I write poems in groups. That's what they tell me, "You don't write one poem, you write five or six at one time, and you call it one poem." And they said, "Break it down!" I'm working on various things.

MB: It's an epic poem, you know.

DE: Yeah! There you go!

MB: Like *The Odyssey*.

DE: Yeah! So, I've written to younger people, I've written about my separation with my children, which I'm publishing. I've written about some of the social things and political things and that's really the drive. So, that's why I call myself an advocate-activist.

MB: And you're publishing these—

DE: I'm about to create my own publishing company, and go online, print-on-demand, and things like that. Invite blogging and the social media constructs, that's kind of my drive for that. So, yeah. It's coming, it's coming. And more it comes, the more I'll be writing poems and trying to do this over here, and its two different worlds now. The engineering thing is secondary to me. This creativity thing, that's what I want to share with people. And the publishing company should be, you know, you bring your works, too. And we'll have a literacy group to help train and support each other on that. So, the objective now is to take this medium, go into the first source

law, and expand it to include interns. Those interns would be at shelters. So, when the shelter system ends at 7:00am, 9:00am, open an art workshop until about 3:00[pm]. So now that participant can get a workshop environment. Where, not only writing poetry and things like that, but making handbags, producing things, artworks. I met one lady who was struggling with the income levels; she was at the flea market in Northeast, DC. She takes used jeans and makes new clothes. Reconfigures clothes with the jeans. And this stuff is fantastic! And it's handmade, and she put premium prices on it. But she needs to take that to industry, get 25 workers, not a sweatshop. And because the structure of the law says we can't run retail out of a home, that means we need a warehouse and once a year, or twice a year, sell it off. Have a big silent auction on the internet, or do something. So a person after a year comes out with an experience, and some money to start a business. I see that happening. That's the art workshop, art studio workshop.

0:52:13 There are individuals like myself who are trying to get published. The technology of publishing, the management of publishing, I'm lacking that. But that creativity is rolling right one. (Laughs) So, I'm serious. I've got to get those questions answered, so that's one of the things I want to talk to Michael Brown about, when I get that interview with the At-Large Councilperson. There are three items I want to discuss with him. One, that I just mentioned, is the intern position. And I wrote a poem to that, too. Also, the other is the reduction of welfare benefits. Now, I could have the Metro pass where I don't pay anything, but I prefer to keep the one where I pay 50%. I'm close to changing my diet where I can get rid of the food stamps, which is not that much anyway. Also, my lifestyle now, I'm also an inventor. My electric bill is less than \$10 a month, because I know how to conserve. And I have a product that I actually, it's a Smart Installation, is what I call it. I'm trying to patent that. The patent fee is not that great, but a patent agent and a patent lawyer, hmm. (Laughs) I won't take a step over without those guys. It's a wonderful device, it works very well, and I'd like to actually incorporate it into the art studio to produce employment and distributors and installers. So, it's oriented for that purpose.

So, I see myself moving in that direction, turning shelters to daytime workshops. You have your bed at night, but you just can't feed a man, you've got to show him how to fish! So it would be the same facilities, it says, "Sleep now," and it says, well, I don't want to use the word slave in that context—but "Work for yourself." So, "Sleep at night, self-employment in the daytime." That should be in any facility, especially government run facilities. This new 125-bed [shelter] they're supposed to be making up? It's [only] nighttime, and then they close the door during the day. That's ridiculous.

0:54:18 MB: How late do the shelters generally close? What happens in them during the day?

DE: Nothing. Sometimes they have a security crew come through and clean, and they lock it down. And I know that about Adams Street, New York Avenue, they don't want homeless persons [during the day]. There are other political dynamics at each facility. There's a slew of women and family shelters.

MB: So that affects if you wanted to get a job on the 3rd [overnight] shift. You wouldn't have a place to sleep during the day.

DE: Well, that's exactly what happened to me in 2007. My relationship with my wife broke down, judge said, "You just give her headaches." And he gave me the boot. That was it. All the noise everybody made. She's finishing college, too, so I was sympathetic. I said, "Alright, I'm out. I'm not going to protest. I'm out." And I get a stay-away order, legitimated stay-away order. Said, "Okay, I'm out," and I got more creative. I found a job. I have elderly friends. I go to them to help them get their prescriptions and all that sort of stuff, drive them around, buddy-buddy-

buddy. One of them cosigned for a vehicle for me. Some technical things happened, but eventually I took that car and I found a job in Ashburn, Virginia. (Laughs) Its 40 miles for here! I'm back in that 40 mile thing, what is with this 40 miles! Give me 40 acres and a mule, don't give me 40 miles! (Laughs) So I was a security guard, and I went to 4:00 and I got off at midnight. And shelters won't take you in after midnight. So, my car was my home for a little over a year. Between the three of those things happening, my health crashed again. Social security denied me a second time, too. But this time, I fought them. Although I hired a lawyer, the lawyer never got my medical records. I couldn't even get my medical records, with all this stuff that's happened to me. There was a backup, it was incredible. But surviving is the thing. Surviving. I don't really look like I'm disabled, but that's a very thin margin.

0:56:34 So, I drove to work every day and I'm in DC and a lot of times I stayed out there. The family court got more involved because I was accused of violating the stay-away order, which was not true. Unfounded. I was far away. But they dropped the charges in the civil court and re-initiated [them] in the criminal court. And then, after continuations again, they dropped them again. So, I got a record. (Laughs) And so, my wife has friends. She's got buddies. She's got buddies-that-invited-us-to-Clinton's-Second-Inaugural-buddies. Those types of buddies. Not only to the parade, but to the dinner. Oh! She's got buddies. (Laughs) She's well-liked, her personality is tremendous. I mean, it's incredible. That kind of left me in the dog house, underneath the doghouse, forever. So, (pauses) I quit the job, well, actually the fired me because the doctor said I couldn't do the standing, and so I ended up drawing unemployment. I won the lawsuit, and unemployment. It was the pressure on the job.

0:57:51 I'll describe it like this. As a security officer, I wrote up more violations in the history of that company.

MB: Whistleblower!

DE: (Laughs) The employees there were pressing back, and my company's front line, daytime workers would catch a lot of grief. They were the major violators. They were poking with their security system. They were poking me, poking back against me. But management loved me. Oh! They loved me. (Laughs) It was incredible: "Oh, look at that, that's a coffee stain." I did some CSI. (Pauses) The Verizon Data Center is where the job was, computer technology. I feel like I was at home, all these servers, all this good stuff right here. Fiber optics, all that good stuff. Hands off for me, because I'm protecting it, I'm security. I'm not a tech, right? But I found a drop of coffee in a restricted area for food and beverages. I write it up. (Laughs) It wasn't there the previous shift, so I documented it. So, now they use the cameras to track that time, and they found the violator. (Laughs) Coffee in a restricted area, he gets written up: "How did they catch me, I'm the only person around!" But they got them anyway, right? CSI: David Edwards! (Laughs)

Anyway, I was catching grief for that. But that was probably the reason why they pressed when I couldn't come to work and I was sick. And they did fire me for, well they tried to call it "abandonment" and all that good stuff. That didn't work, they lost their unemployment, which then, and Social Security denied me anyway. 17 months they reversed the decision on their own: disabled. I was going to the hospital, the medical situation was saying, "This guy cannot stand, cannot be in shelters, and can't be out on the street." Doctors are now saying that. And they weren't, the homeless shelters weren't doing anything about it. Why? I whistle blew against the NHS. (Laughs) I've been a whistleblower for years. I changed some things. That whistleblowing is something else. So, I'm now saying, "You're retaliating against a whistleblower," that was the

heart of my (pauses) never-got-to-be lawsuit. And they handed me a federal voucher out of nowhere. All of a sudden, they got it. Anyway.

1:00:01 My buddies on the street [couldn't] stand it, either: (pretending to cry) "Oh, how they gave him one?" All this stuff, they don't know. I've been settled down for nearly 14 months now. The writing is just, the creativity, the novel, things like that. My case manager at Jubilee House, I amaze her, I give her, and well she actually read a part. She read about 30 pages of the manuscript. I'm really going back now to strengthen my protagonist. I need to get those character arcs, those things rolling. Now it's not a book— it's a trilogy. (Laughs) I'm serious! Because, actually (pauses) I end the book, we steal the Shuttle, use some Sci-Fi technology to go back in time, we do genetic engineering of a kangaroo gene mixed with a Black woman and create an animal that implanted in the South portion of the United State. So, when the settlers came, they found this animal that they can domesticate. It can pull up trees, plant, pick cotton. So, the demand for slavery went down. (Laughs) So, thus, the slave trade gets altered. They use this animal for this altered future.

They rediscover time travel; they go back and wonder why these bones [they find] are only 500 years old. This thing did not create back in the dinosaurs or the paleo eras or things like that. And they went back at just the right time to see the Shuttle landing. (Laughs) in Pensacola, Florida. (Laughs) Or, what would become Pensacola. They interrupt it, they seize it, so it never got to plant this animal to supplant slavery. But, they use this technology to go back, to bounce back, through time: Kennedy assassination, these things that happen. That's why the book started getting really funky! So, the protagonist himself, in an altered time line, ends up in the natural timeline, my mother who is also a domestic worker, one of these household maids, he impregnated her. Now, he impregnates his daughter, who is supposed to be a secret to the family sort of thing. But that child will be put up for adoption. He ends up being one of the protagonists' antagonists. In the era where the protagonist is now, he's a college professor. He's giving a dissertation, a re-dissertation to a mixed audience of public. One of the major opponents is his own son he didn't know. Meanwhile, he's battling his son over issues and the phone rings. Because the secret society people are calling him, "You're talking too much!" So he turns on the screen, and electrocutes himself. Pop! Goes out. He's not totally dead, and the security guy, who's a Black guy, who's now the protagonist, resuscitates him. (Laughs) While he's unconscious, he's talking. You know, the dialog is tremendous, I'm serious! So, he had a near death experience. Because, he defended one of the comments made to him from the secret society message that he wasn't supposed to give out in public. But, little did he know that the stage crew that was orientating the station put him on the internet. He is now on the internet, live—

1:03:28 MB: Viral.

DE: Chatting live is going on, questions. He thinks he's talking to an audience, but he's talking to the whole world! (Laughs) It crashes the university's computer system, so many hits. Ping! It crashes. So, the provost offices call him, "Get off the internet! What are you doing?! You aren't supposed to be doing this!" And he's defending himself with top secrets, cultural secrets. (Laughs) So, I'm bringing in all this stuff into the plot. It's (pauses) it's a page turner.

MB: Yeah! Do you, I mean, obviously, you know, the—what am I trying to say. Do you feel like your life has influenced—do you pull a lot out from your life into the book? I mean, not the space travel, but—

DE: Yeah, there are elements in there. Elements of dysfunctional families, Black women being abused. The stage crew director is actually a student, an intern, she's running the stage crew, and

she is Skip Gate's daughter, in theory. (Laughs) I gave her a different name, changed her name, things like that. So she has revenge on her mind. Meanwhile, he has proponents of his scheme in the audience who are trying to back him up. So there's a lot of dynamics there. And then his own son is out there. And he's got a Pan-African name. (Laughs) They discuss things, and it goes into different philosophies that sociology would produce. The argument is getting good. Writing term papers in college now storyboard plots for me. (Laughs) So it's getting good.

But anyway, it goes on, and at one point in the alternate life, the same protagonist now has a German maid in a retirement home on Mars. Because society has advanced so much further because slavery was removed. But he had a little *deja vu* of the whole thing, because he likes Mint Juleps. (laughs) Yes, I go home and I experiment with Mint Juleps—it's research! It's beautiful. It's fantastic! I've got to do this research.

1:05:48 MB: Life imitates art, that's what they say.

DE: (laughs) So, Kentucky whiskey with confectionary sugar, and what else—and mint, fresh mint and crushed ice. I did the whole thing! See, I don't have these tracts of alcoholism and drug abuse. That's not a problem with me. That was never my problem.

MB: Did you see it a lot, with people you knew, or?

DE: Alcoholism?

MB: Yeah.

DE: I didn't hang with; I don't hang with people from the street. Once I broke out of that camp, I'm at the Library of Congress, uptown —again, I like uptown, Northwest area. That's where I go, it's quiet. I even camped out there; you know where Nebraska [Ave] and Wisconsin [Ave] come together?

MB: Yeah.

DE: (laughs) So there's a little green patch right there?

MB: Yeah!

DE: Yeah, I'd go right there. You're not seen. I don't know how you're not seen! I had my little roll out, my backpack, and my sleeping bag. I'd sit up there with my iPod on, reading and writing. Spend the night right there! Traffic is a little smoky—gas and pollution, but it's not that bad up there. If I doze off, I don't feel unsafe if I dozed off. And a few blocks over is the Saint Columbus church, and the minister. At Saint Columbus Church there are memorial benches. Park benches, memorial park benches. Two of them, one is more secluded than the other. That was my night camp. Pitched! I had my big bag with a little plastic over top of that, put on some music; watch some TV on this phone here. Anyway, I was there, the folks in the morning they got used to me. I think they had to do with me getting the [federal vouchers for] rent as well. Behind-the-tables connections, whatever. Somebody had vandalized the copper downspouts at 1 o'clock in the morning when I got there I noticed it, and I called the police and reported it. (Laughs) I'm calling the police like, "Somebody busted up my camp site here!" (Laughs) So, I got the local gestapo, you know, they got used to me. And then the Friendship Library, they know me very well. I reserved a room like this, the little studio rooms they have. Very nice library.

1:08:09 The drop-in center at Friendship Place, I clash with the people there. I do, I clash with them. I take it in stride. One of my friends, who is a homeless veteran, he and another veteran—I went back to Boston just for whatever, I don't know why I went, I just took that \$1 bus, that thing works! I'm serious! (Laughs) I went and I spend about ten days. Do you know there's two Long Islands in the United States? There's one in Massachusetts, outside of Boston. It's not as big as the one in New York. And, on it is a Saint Elizabeth-type facility. Big buildings that were used for the mentally disturbed back in the day. It's now a shelter. 1,200 people get bussed there every day, from different places. So I met this one specific veteran, he has an oratorical voice like Frederick Douglass or somebody, so he's got this personality—it's tremendous. He uses a flute; he's a musician as well. I talked to in to coming back to DC. Not just to come, but go into the VA. He said the VA up there is just too crazy. Half the people on the street just won't mess with the VA for some reason. I don't know what they go through.

When I tell him this story: In 1977 I signed up for the military, for the United States Army. I passed their test and I wanted to be a Huey Helicopter pilot. They never called me. And they asked me why did I want to be a helicopter pilot and I said, "Well, I want to get my boys out." Because I had enough street stories, I know what two clicks from A-Con Delta is. And he said, "You must be crazy." But then the war winds down, later on in 1977. So, that was another disappointment, too, because I was ready to go.

1:10:05 Yeah, I'm at my grandmother's house still. (Laughs) She didn't play! "If you ain't by eleven PM, don't come home! You can come home for breakfast, and let me know you're alright. Come home for breakfast. But if you ain't here by eleven, I don't want my door open." Grown man without a door key. Isn't that disgusting?! (Laughs) Ew.

MB: That's harsh, that's tough.

DE: Well, you give them their respect. That's what they loved about. Two, three doors up my next neighbor, his mother passed away recently. Her son was a little older than me, so he didn't really hang with me, didn't really like me. Whatever. But she told him repeatedly to find me. She was down in a retirement home, near death. She told him repeatedly, find me, find me. She's one of the mommas I would inform! (Laugh) So I eventually visited her a few times before she passed away. So, I had these elderly friends. It was nice. It was companionship sort of friendship. I got along with my grandma and that sort of thing is still there with me. Now, I rekindled that, because you know, elderly people need friends. And I think that's another potential industry, or sort of preoccupation for people, homeless and those who can qualify.

Just don't assume we all are addicts and druggies and mental processes. Don't assume that. Because people can get cured from those things. And there are some people who have managed not to get too deep in those things. My charges are false. I get voter registrations. (Laughs) I've been a juror 14 times. Have I happened to mention that? Maybe that was telling me something you know?

(Pauses) It's longwinded, dealing with society. Dealing mainly with African American people. I'm trying to stay abreast and dealing with those types of issues that affect us. So, I really got this theme about potentially getting involved with politics, but the stress is something that I don't want. The stress factor—I don't deal with that. But, never the less, moving forward it seems that that innate talent is now my meal ticket and should be my career path. I'm making it that, it's happening. And those contacts I made, there are very few that are surviving over the years. I can hardly find any of my buddies that I grew up with. They're in jail or deal. It's incredible—whole families are gone. So, I don't know. It's something else.

1:12:33 So, where I'm standing now is at the door of a career path that should have started back in grade school. (Laughs) But there was no real support back then. I tested out of chemistry within a week in 10th grade. They said it was the toughest teacher at McKinley Tech, but she promoted me in a week. I took an oral test right there, and I blew her away. I told her everything I knew about the subject and she signed me off. Peer pressure turned on me! I don't understand that. I don't get along with people my age—I just don't. Is it jealousy, is it a reaction, is it a challenge, the pecking order, all these sort of things rolling and rolling constantly. At home, it's like African Americans don't support African Americans. I've seen immigrants from a variety of cultures and countries and language backgrounds come here and do well.

1:13:30 MB: Why do you think that is, that there isn't the same support network?

DE: (pauses, sighs) It's—I hear one thing all the time: "What's in it for you?" When I'm offering someone something, to get involved in something, what's in it for you, I have to answer that. It can't be something they don't want. They already have preconceived what I'm getting at. I'm way beyond the capacity of their imagination. And that becomes a decision factor. And why that question, why that position, I really—I'm working on it. I'm trying to figure that out. It's like, you know, you're going to abuse me to get there and then leave me behind. It's fear, jealousy, a combination of emotions. And I really can't get anyone to talk heavily on it. They get repulsive. For instance, when I got my first, I got a \$2,000 check, back payments from Social Security. I'm at Adam's Shelter; I met a PhD, a former politician, two PhDs, and a business manager. I said to these guys, "Look, let's sit down and have a meeting." I paid them \$35 a pop just to sit down and talk for a couple hours. They made promises and this and that and the other and had no intention in following up on them. I paid them to do some research—they haven't done it yet. I stopped paying them. And some of them are still around, some of them got some position, but some are still in the shelters. And why they behaved that way, I don't know.

1:15:01 Social Security has promised me \$8,500, and I ended up getting \$2,300. The rest of it got lost. Well, the IDA account from DHS had to be paid back. That was \$4,000. The lawyer got \$2,400 and he didn't do anything. They would not give me an appeal where I could have then said, "I terminated the lawyer." I could have terminated him, because he didn't do anything. He didn't even get my medical records, and I never sat down with an attorney. I went to a desk, I filed some papers, and I was waiting for an appointment. When you get the medical records, then you have an appointment. I never got the medical records or the appointment, and he got \$2,400 bucks. Three years later they finally gave me a part of this, just about two months ago, downtown on M Street. And they had been telling me they were balancing the equation all along. I moved to Florida, and I transferred my Social Security account there, they found \$315 owed to me that they gave to me. I said, "Well, this is proof that DC was telling me something that wasn't accurate!" And I could never get, I filed for another appeal and I never got that. That's two months ago, I'm halfway there. There was supposed to be a formal hearing, (laughs) they told me point-blank, "We don't have to give you hearings." (Pauses) "We're Welfare. We don't have to give you hearings. These are not entitlements." That's what they argued. And apparently, I must be accepting that, because that's what's going on. So, I said, "Well, if I got that money on time, I think I could have pushed this business two years ago." I could have never gone to Florida and got the business going.

1:16:47 It's about my patent. At that point, at that time, even when I was in Florida, I used my patent, my electric bill, it was an all-electric facility, was \$30. Hottest, coldest, it doesn't matter. It can handle the temperature. My little concept helped out. So, now with two years background and now Pepco says it's—

MB: It's right next door, Pepco.

DE: (laughs) I'm serious! So I refused to reapply for the subsidy grant, the energy assistance grant. So, I said, "Survival, I've done that." So that's part of my reduction, Welfare reduction, I call it "Welfare Footprint." So, I'm reducing my Welfare Footprint. If I go back to Florida, which they say they don't necessarily have to take you, is what I was told by the appeals office at 1133 on [North] Capitol Street, the appeals office, room 319? Mr. Queens says, "Another state doesn't have to take you because you have a grant." So, WHAT?? I was in Florida for a while, I still got the ID. I still have a state ID. (Laughs) So, it's puzzling. I don't know what I'm going to do now, because I was planning on going back. The air quality, that's the biggest thing. But getting this business started before I go, because it's where the connections are, right here, right now.

1:17:59 MB: So, do you think, is DC just a more well-connected place to be?

DE: Yeah, the employment and the cultural shock down there. I needed isolation when I went down there, and I got *plenty* of it. (Laughs) Plenty of isolation, no question about it. It's hard to make friends with neighbors, things like that. Just walking through the neighborhood, because I don't drive. Walking through it's like (sighs). (Laughs) Somebody let their dog out one day, and a car almost hit it. I don't want to be mean, but this dog's like, UGLY, vicious, barn-yard dog. I was going to feed it my frozen chicken, I was walking with my grocery bag: "Here, eat some frozen chicken legs," or something. I said, "Wow!" but then the car nearly hit it, and it decided to run back to the house. Anyway, it was not, well nothing really specific happened down there. It was very quiet.

So, when I applied to go back to school, I found out that one of my lenders had gotten a default judgment. The American Student Association handles that money for the government, I said, "You see there, Sallie May is giving me a deferment, (unintelligible) is also giving me a deferment. How'd I end up with a judgment [of default]?" And then they were trying to get \$30,000. I started with \$9,000. How they got \$30,000 (laughs). So they were trying to fraud, steal, lie, and cheat and I managed to get a judgment. So that stopped me from getting money to go back to school.

So again, I'm getting these roadblocks, through political and economic strategies. It's like why so many liquor stores and things are in the city. We don't manufacture guns, we don't manufacture drugs, but they're concentrated in our city. So these political things happen to us, influences from outside the city. Outside of the body politic that we can reach; being a city, and not a state. Again, my third action plan is statehood. That's what I've got my head on now, my hat. So, I wrote a wonderful poem.

1:20:02 MB: Great!

DE: I'm going to give you this quick snapshot of the poem, okay?

MB: Okay.

DE: I call it "Reasonable Accommodation." And it's called "Free District 'C' & Me," because of the legal stuff I went through and DC's going through. [Reading:]

Movement empowered, struggling again, Wakening
Non-obvious paths to say when. Planned patterns

Cyclical and methodical, Macro paths leading to where, last saw you, Again, and again. Love what I

See woman, movements from within. Human empowered convicting soulful sister, Usurping, humane natural constitutes, innate community synergy. Not lost but stolen, folded and manipulated, Alienated rights bounded abused, misused.

con't...

Stalled advances controlling time,
Congesting and ingesting rivals.

Forces of humility,
Followed, Outlined,
Unmoved, Not lead.

Serpentine moments,
Serpentine movements.
Advances into herself.
Free District 'C' and me.

They love this one at the convention. They had a summit, a DC summit, and they loved it. I had a chance to publicly read my poem and I've improved it a few times since then also. So that's one of the more political poems. So, it's about—the liaison says that the District of Columbia is a disabled cooperation—a person by law, by Constitutional law, a corporation is a person and because the District of Columbia could not go to Congress, this disability is a reduction of life activity. This is what I learned that the Americans with Disabilities Act functions on. You have reduced life activity; you're considered disabled. Well, the District of Columbia is disabled, and the Americans with Disabilities act should allow a reasonable accommodation. Meaning, the states that ratified the District of Columbia to be a state should have liaison offices, funded by the ADA office that would now usurp and support and promote the will of the people of those states that said, "Statehood for DC." And give a lot of help to Eleanor [Holmes] Norton, who right now gets some help from one Senator from Georgia, who now somewhat takes away from his time and his constituency, which he's not authorized to do, the buddy-buddy thing, and speaks for Eleanor [Holmes] Norton on the floor. Now, his constituency is losing, and the taxes and time are being shared with the District of Columbia. And that's unfair to those people, to that state, and to that Senator. That liaison office should be created in Georgia and all the other states that have a majority of—and pay those people a couple million dollars or whatever it takes to run that office. If they have 20 million residents, the liaison office should be bigger and cost more. And the Congress has to fund the ADA, and the ADA has to fund these offices to support Eleanor [Holmes] Norton and other efforts towards statehood. That's the strategy. And that came out of me, and it shocked me! (Laughs) I don't get involved with politics, I mean I stopped since the [19]70s. I said, "Forget this foolishness." It almost put me in the ground. I'm not trying to be with Martin [Luther King, Jr.] like that! Not Malcolm [X] neither!" (Laughs) I said, yeah this is wonderful, but I don't think I'm anybody's hero. So, I brought a couple copies [of my 3-point plan] you all can have, eventually.

1:23:36 MB: Great! Well—

DE: So that intern program, the liaison office, and reduction of the Welfare Footprint. Those are my plans. Now, when I speak to someone about giving up food stamps, some are like “You must be out of your mind!” (Laughs) And I said, “Well, if you really look at it,” especially people who get, like \$18, “What are you really giving up, it’s 18 bucks!” (Laughs) So, I’ve got \$58 dollars, it isn’t that much of a big deal if you really think about it. It’s like I wrote in the poem, selfishness, anger. Marred by anger and selfishness. This thing is integrating around me. So, one of the young ladies at the SHARC meeting announced the “Willing, Ready, and Able” T-shirts, and didn’t have the means to, the monies weren’t there, of course. That was entrepreneurial-ness coming alive. That was a moment of entrepreneurial creation. And we need to support those things that their level, and then integrate them into the First Choice program, the First Choice law. As the First Choice (pauses) expansion, First Choice Law expansion to include tax money, donations that go into the tax shelter now should be imposed on by the law. The law says, “Hire.” Well, there’s not necessarily enough money to hire, but you can intern, which is about the development of hiring. So, that’s strategy. The liaison office for reasonable accommodation for statehood, and reduction of the footprint.

So when you go into politics, you’ve got to put something on the table. You have to bring something with you into politics, so that’s the objective. I’m trying to find 100 families that will support the footprint reduction, and intern and work towards the liaison offices. And go to those states and be hired to work in the office to be hired to promote the states and the residence who support ratification of the District of Columbia as a new state, as a job! If that money goes up to Capitol Hill, the interns go with it.

1:25:57 There are some very talented people in the street, there are. There are a lot of people who are disturbed and have other issues, too and need real help. There are a lot of manipulators out there also, people running from child support. Which is what I discovered. The judge that told me, “Get out!” also told them no child support from me. I think that’s what turned my ex into a monster. She was turning colors. “Who is that? What is that?” And I think that was really what cooked up the secondary charges of violating the stay-away order. I looked into child support issues—Dads Apprehensively Divorced. I understand child support. If you are economically scrapped, you have these orders to pay \$500 a month, and for the last five years you’ve been broke; you still owe \$500 a month! If you go to the courts with some kind of plan, even if it’s a \$2 plan, they restructure the \$500 to \$50, \$60, something. Then you only owe \$50 until you get, you know. That \$500 is accumulating. It will not stop until you go and confront, go to the courts. I met people here from Southern California, (laughs) New York, Massachusetts—all over the country, right here. They say the shelter program is nice, but they’re running from things like child support, background checks. They used to do sweeps, the DEA, FBI, they used to put up a barrier where you walked in, you get in line at the shelter, they stand there and look at you, every person, pretty detailed. Inside the office, they look at signatures and things like that. They’re looking for somebody. I don’t think it was a manhunt, I think it was a sweep. You know someone who jumped bail, outstanding charges, that sort of thing. They actually take him out of the shelters, not going chasing him out of the shelters. One specific time, like 30 or 40 guys disappeared. Most shelters have no beds; suddenly you’ve got 30 empty beds! They got the word or they got busted, or whatever. So they do these sweeps, they’re doing extra things to decriminalize the shelter programs. And to see that people are reporting to their parole officers.

1:28:07 I had a parole officer! Seriously! I’m serious! I gave her headaches, so what. (Laughs) Oh, I’m not going back. “But here, go pee in a cup every week.” I went to the judge and said, “Judge, look, I’ve been doing this stuff and for what?” He looked through the record and said, “Alright.” And he dropped it all. I had to have a psychiatric exam. I protested being stripped search at the Fourth District.

MB: I hope you won.

DE: “What’s going on??” It was terrible! And they changed my name, when they processed me at the 4th district. They gave me a different name and a different age. They changed the spelling in my name; they dropped my whole last name and rewrote my first name. My picture now is on a false name, and false birthdate. Actually, I don’t think they were supposed to be arresting me. They were harassing me to the max. And I think it’s really blowback from the whistleblowing. There has to be some reason they disliked me like that, processing me like that. Never the less, it was the first time I spent the night in jail. I was waiting for the hearing thing. I laughed at them, I had fun. It was fun. The second time was not fun anymore. I sat on the floor next to the door in protest. “I’m not supposed to be here!” The concrete was cold.

1:29:37 MB: Can I ask you about the poster behind you, unfortunately we have to give the room back to the library soon, and we should probably schedule another interview, if you want.

DE: There you go, seriously. That is my “bucket list.”

MB: okay.

DE: these are things I want to do. First I started FoMAA, now Team FoMAA is the build version of FoMAA, in which I’m asking people to join me. I mentioned this is my e-Publishing company, which I call M, M and Eye. When I was in Florida, I created this character called MicUS. And that’s M, M and Eye, and “eye” is supposed to be the literal letter “I,” myself. But I spelled it e-y-e. That’s my publishing company I’m working on setting up. I’ve got representation of the poet organizations I’m trying to join or am a member of, currently. I call myself a documentarian. And MicUS, MicUS is the internet community of poets and storytellers; Griots. That’s what I want to get into, that’s my culture. My grandmother tells some very good stories back in the day, she was very good at it. Anyway, I got my book titles in here, the book I want to get published; I want to get the studio going. I want online radio, as part of my web development. I want to go to the patent office. Those are things I need to get done. I’m putting them in focus. This poster’s been on the top of my head, in my office. Every time I look up I see “Do this, do this, do this!” You’ve got to get that drive and keep it going. So, MicUS is Media Internet Community United Selves. Whoops! (Microphone slides off table, crashes.) I thought I saw that coming. United Selves, and that’s what we do. I need self-actuated individuals to start up a community, as artists, writers, to do a self-publishing company. It’s entrepreneurial.

Currently, I serve as Acting Chief Editor, which I consider a temporary job. I’m really looking for somebody who has that talent, that editorial talent. And the objective is to write, well one of the things I’ve been doing lately is to look at blog postings and comments on different news articles. What people say, their expressions to situations, and the emotions in the comments. I write a story about that. And of course, it has elements of the actual article itself. I have to give credit to the folks in some kind of way; it’s a legal thing that I’ve got to figure out. So that’s what I’m saying to people. You know, you can do blog postings, you can have followers; it’s important. I have 7 million followers on LinkedIn, on my 3rd level. Only 130 on the top level, but those top people, create 60,000 on my 2nd level and 7 million on my 3rd level. I got an organization that I can appeal to, when I structure and start talking about my Smart Installation. That’s all I talked about, was my green business. And it boomed in no time! So it’s growing fast like that, that’s what attracted me to other major people. I’m doing the endorsement sort of thing for the group.

1:32:54 So that's a viral growth. If I could take that into the commercial world, that's viral. That's how you become successful. That's what I think is hot right now. So I defined the Freedom of Media Activism Advocacy, I defined it as: Freedom of: servitude-leadership initiated vibrations to actualize. The media itself is a physical medium, as in artworks, writing poetry and other creations, and the conceptual ideas, some types of ideas are illusive imaging to energize. *Systemic* distributive processes. *Objective* duplicative viral growth. *Logical* configurations and powerful change, that's "media."

There's another Michael Brown that I know, he's an artist. He was at Duke Ellington, and graduated from school. He's renowned and he's tough. I was at his studio and I saw, he put a picture in front of me. And he said, "How many faces do you see in there?" Alright, one, I focused my eyes and there are NINE faces in this one! Some side faces running, and it looked like a tress, but it was a massage of faces looking back at you. It was incredible work. So that's the power of media, it can be very, very exciting.

But then activism itself is planned teamwork. Its action-targeting, and productive movements. And advocacy, of course, is analyze and understand situations of the human compassion and solution wisdom. That's how I define what I do. And that's the Freedom of Media Activism Advocacy. So, I've put a lot of thought into this stuff, a lot of work.

MB: Yeah, yeah.

DE: You've got to have some drive; you've got to hatch a plan to move forward. And so the bucket list is really tasks along the way, and products along the way. So, again, working with Michael Brown, the at-large councilmember, which entered into another dialogue. The dialogue about the creation of the seven million dollars for homelessness. Now, the outcome is they have \$140 million surplus. But, three months ago the town hall budget meeting, the mayor said, if he ever found the seven million he'd put it back. What creates a seven million dollar figure? Seven million dollars and seven thousand homeless people—is there a correlation there? (Laughs) is he taxing a thousand dollars per homeless person? That's what it sounds like to me. And I began to bring these comments to him and other councilmembers, because I toured most of the offices of a specific day.

And just recently, the storm [Hurricane Sandy] washed out the town hall meeting for SHARC. It was supposed to be on the 29th [of October, 2012]. I showed up! I'm fanatical or something, I don't know. (Shows cell phone video of himself.) That's me right there.

MB: Oh!

DE: I was soaked, in the wind, it was outrageous! I did that in the pouring rain, I read "The Missing Book of Homelessness." It was wind-blown, and the whole drama of the background, the Wilson Center there is empty, all the people are missing. (Plays video of Edwards reading poetry in hurricane.)

1:36:37 I'm telling you, things are getting very exciting lately. So, I feel movement, I feel I'm still sort of a lone wolf at this specific point in time. But, I'm beginning to join forces. My objective is to go to college campuses. There's a half million students within 25 miles of DC. Maybe 10 or 12 college campuses. I intend on setting up on those campuses in a business type style and showing the webpage and saying, "If you look at your blogging, look at your followers, you can gel with their emotions or situations and their expressions in articles, I'll publish them. As we draw advertising revenue, then you get paid for your articles." That's the objective. That's what any

magazine does. I'll create writers and editors. Hopefully two layers of labor in the organization. I think it will just go viral. I think students are looking at tuition costs—I mentioned how I got a default judgment, and I only owe about (pauses) less than \$20,000 in student loans. One of the lenders got a default judgment and tried to get \$30,000 but only got \$9,000 because that was the real figure. But they shouldn't have gotten that. They should have seen I had a deferment from Sallie Mae and given the judgment to another lender. That's weird. I think that's fallback from being a whistleblower, I don't know. I can't really figure where it comes from. So, those are the things, I mentioned earlier, the unions calling the credit bureau, the credit bureau denouncing you a few points so you won't qualify for basic things. You can't get commercial credit to get capital that earns other capital. So that's what we need.

I watched the one Ethiopian rent a cab, three years later; they own 30 cabs and a gas station. Now, they got access to commercial capital. As a matter of fact, with the water business, I was also approaching the 14th Street corridor block grants. And some African ran away with the money, they said. Somebody stole the money or whatever. It was another deal approached. So it was those sorts of things that have been happening. So it's like, political influences, economic influences that just override the potential of African American men specifically, I think we're targeted to be marginalized in that fashion. I don't really see the economic advantage of that. So, we are now the population with the highest percent in the prison, and thus the prison industrial complex is making money off us. We're also a major portion of the Welfare system. And the Welfare system, I call it a safety net; again, that's an industrial complex. It hires people. So they need attrition. Who's going to be the attrition? In Appalachia, there are a lot of poor white folks there, there's attrition around them. But I think it's very different for the inner city, where jobs are very lucrative and facilities like education and public education are readily available to us, and then we still fail. At the same time, we have to fill in the gap and just say, "That's us, that's exclusively our own individual persons being trifling, or lackadaisical or without potential." I don't think that's the case at all. I think it's something else, other factors going on. And it's really related to having medicine that's designed for Europeans' dietary systems, and not for other people. And now the slave diet thing, from the Southern diet, coming out of the slave trade—hypertension, heart disease, liver disease—all these, my allergies, affecting us. We make babies from an early age. (Pauses) I don't want to say we're sexually promiscuous, but something along those lines. So, we see a lot of these -isms affecting us now in a way that they shouldn't be in the proportions that they are.

1:40:41 So, I'm trying to do something about it as an individual. For instance, I'm a failed father. I failed my three kids. They grew up with their mom. And it was a long struggle, but economics have played a major portion of it. Then my health factor got involved. And the dysfunction, the fights. When she [Edward's ex-wife] and I started off, we were entrepreneurial. We went out and we were running a business. And I guess when she got pregnant; she got a different concept of what is stability. (Laughs) That started Welfare. I did not sign Welfare, and she came home with a Welfare check. I don't know how she took my utility bills, my tax stubs, and came home with a (pauses) with Welfare benefits! And my name—and on the title, it says, "Father not in the home." (Sighs) And I'm right there! (Laughs) I don't think she did it on her own; she had to have some help. So of course, I blew the whistle on that thing. And there was an audit done, and they flipped the Welfare benefits to my name. And when she re-certified, she re-certified in my name, which I didn't really care about. I was in the middle of technology school, working for the DC government and working for myself. The Welfare-to-Work program initiating me to the interfaith conference of Washington, DC. Dr. Clark Rubinstein, we got to be pretty good friends. Instead of three months, it was six years. Instead of three hours a week of volunteerism, it was 10,000 hours. (Laughs) I said, "Whoa, sir!" I earned that Welfare check two, three times over. I earned no Welfare dollars some days, but anyway.

1:42:20 This landed me right back to an old whistleblowing scenario. It was the year 1977, was a very busy year. There was a group of black computer programmers. They started an organization called "Training Opportunities for Programmers." TOP. And we used the, on 77th and Florida Avenue is the Welfare office. And in the evenings after they closed, three days a week, we joined a support group. And we learned Four Tran, assembly language, Cobalt, (laughs) and we did a punch card environment. Remember those days? So off we went to DC share, an underground facility right here in DC. It's bombproof, they say. It's like four or five stories down in the ground, a supercomputer technologically that does the entire computer work for the government and other corporations. Nevertheless, I put my punch card in. I meticulously put July the 17th, 1977. It spit it out: "Invalid date specification." I put it back in, it spit it back out: "Invalid date specification." Don't put the 19 on the 1977, the lesson plan went. "What happens in 2000?" I asked them that. I really, literally asked them. "Uh, um, uh," I forgot the lady's name, but she went to talk to her founders, and there was some gentleman who worked at NIH who was the director for this entire thing. He came back and said, "They got to fix this." This is 1977. I was asking the Y2K question. For some reason, within a week, the whole program was defunded. Shut down. (Laughs)

1:44:03 MB: Whistleblower.

DE: So now, it's 2000. I'm getting paid hand over heels fixing people's Y2K problems, which in newer computers; the imbedded chip technology has been upgraded to new hardware. But the federal government was not. That part of the federal government, the department of interior regulates monies owed to veterans. In the year 2000, all that became cash in their mind. They had no hard proof that they were entitled to the VA's insurance. It's not closure. It's not foreclosure. You're bill is going to have nothing to do with it. Put this money into this government program, it's an insurance program. You're entitled to 60% back. So, yeah, I had forgotten all about it. Because the realtor had nothing to do with it, they're not bringing it up. You're not going to know that you put it, that your father or whoever put that money in that account. That money is still there. But they turn it into cash. And now we got a 16 trillion dollar deficit. All of a sudden, Bill Clinton had a balanced budget, and in 2000 he had a balanced budget. Out of nowhere!

1:45:15 MB: Well that might be another story for another day.

DE: That's me. I took you into something I could probably never prove. But in 1977, I raised the Y2K question and that question was defunded. I mean, we were successfully doing our homework and learning Four Tran and Cobalt, and assembly language. We were getting what Bill Gates and they got at Stanford. ARPA came out of the Department of Defense. They created the internet. Tax money created the internet. But yet, a handful of guys become the richest men in the world off this technology that was handed to them. Second year at Stanford University, Bill Gates says, "Forget this." Got into a garage, took that technology and is one of the richest men in the world today. They were given this technology. White boys. (Laughs) That's why we should tax them more today. They know they founded this stuff on tax dollars. Every research dollars they give the government started off as improvement programs. Tax dollars. Space race, NASA—tax dollars. And all of this technology spin offs that rich people get off new technologies are founded on this grant money, free money, tax money. And now they don't want to be taxed more. Tax them! I'm really diversifying.

MB: Yeah! This is all good, but unfortunately, the book club is coming in soon. But I do want to thank you for coming in and talking to us.

DE: I don't know, guys, because I was going to—

1:47:00 MB: I think this is really going to help out people to understand, you know, and change their perceptions about homelessness in Washington. So this is the end of interview one.

End of interview