

Interview with Reverend Maiziee Lennan

Interviewer:

Interviewee(s): Reverend Maiziee Lennan

Year of Birth:

Location of Interview: Panama

Language of Interview: English

**INTERVIEWER:** Reverend Maiziee Lennan, August 19, 2008. Well thank you so much for agreeing to participate again on this project and answering even more questions. As you know the goal of the questionnaire is to get a complete version of your story—your own narrative of your story. And feel free to make your answers as long or as short as you would like them to be and later on if you want to tell us something you forgot, you can also call us and let us know. We know that you have already signed a consent for us from time from the previous time we interviewed at the school. However, if there is anything you'd like to change feel free to contact me and we can take care of that as well.

The purpose of the project is actually to get materials for exhibitions, educational purposes and so forth so this will definitely benefit the community both here and abroad. The first questions are background questions. Tell me about your place of birth and what was going on there when you were growing up. So where were you born?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I was born in the city of Panama in an area called Caledonia. The area was a mixed area because one street divided Baya Vista from the street where I lived in Caledonia. And... me and my friends play music in Caledonia. But it wasn't a very poor neighborhood, very mixed, many native Panamanians, many Mexicans, Indians, which my parents were West Indian. We had just about everything, almost all the different heritages represented. We went to day school, what we called private school. One teacher who gathered the children from all over the city who were not attending the regular schools in Spanish. And my parents wanted me to know English and we were brought into this one classroom with as many children as you can think of. Grades kindergarten through sixth in a day school situations in the area where I lived and in the very same building where I lived. And I remember that teacher with much appreciation and gratitude because she was a teacher already on the island of Jamaica and she really wanted to help us learn and it was almost like a day school or daycare center because there were very small children there along with big ones. ...I should have been in Panama public school which I didn't... It was not dilapidated as I said one street divided us from Baya Vista and this large beautiful park where we would always go and play and pick around the tree and have fun, right next to it was a secondary school and poor neighborhoods.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was your childhood like? What are your fondest memories growing up as a kid?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** ...I attended grade school and elementary school...and all of this was within two blocks of where I lived and the high school was on the next block and my mom could always see what I was doing in the playground or wherever it was and the

secondary school was close by also. I remember it was only the reward on Saturday mornings, on how we behaved and if we were good my mother would take us to the beach and that was exactly where the Intercontinental Hotel and...that was our beach area...rock and grass ..... And the prize would always go hiking from the area that we lived to an area called Planta ..., which is now where the tire station is and we would hike going and then take the bus back. And every Sunday we went to Sunday school and in the afternoon and sometimes attending three times a day. We would go for mass in the morning and then go back for church school and then go back for the night service.

**INTERVIEWER:** So who were your best friends and where were their parents from?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Pretty much like my parents, from the island of Jamaica or from the island of Barbados. My best friend then is still my best friend now, after all these years. I live in one building and she lives in the next and when we are not allowed to visit each other our buildings join from her balcony to my balcony... There were friends in the neighborhood, there were friends in school, friends in church and there was a wide variety...Spanish speaking and English speaking and French speaking so it was a real mixture of languages and cultures. I think it provided for a strong variety, a lot of conversations going on between the families hometown and we learned the common struggle.

**INTERVIEWER:** Tell me about your parents and grandparents. Where were they from and how did they come to be in Panama? I'm going to ask you to specifically tell me, from what you remember, where your father is, where your mother is, and where your paternal grandparents are from.

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Oh boy, well I will begin with my father. My father was born in British Guiana and...and he grew up in Trinidad and his mother brought him here as a young man, 21—his mother brought him to the Panama Canal so that he could have a better life. He had already completed secondary school and he was a tailor by trade, so he came here, his mother brought him here... And he went to look for work on the Canal Zone at that time. And that was his first trip and maybe I would say his last trip to look for work because when he saw the conditions of the auxiliary road and the services or plans for colored people and the services—and the discrimination was very, very evident in that town. And he didn't want to work under those conditions; he wanted to work in a tailor shop because of the condition of the avenue...because we used to go by that store and...walking from their home back down to ours. And my father never gave up on his education, and he always had a book under his arm and he would preach to us about Shakespeare and he always said don't believe everything that Shakespeare say, they blame him for everything. (laughs) You make sure you know what Shakespeare said, so us at the age of 13, 14 reading Shakespeare because they wanted us to be learned and my brothers and my sister. My mother—she came with her mother when she was two years old from the island of Jamaica. And...but I don't know what you call it and my grandfather was from Panama and my grandmother was from the Panama Canal. And my mother came early because of a storm on the bridge that came from Caledonia where the train used to come in because the bridge there and there were stores and... And she

had a beautiful voice and she developed that voice and she did many concerts. Many people would audition at that time every Sunday afternoon for something for the community. So lodges were formed, clubs were formed and each one of them would have something played on Sunday afternoon, that they would call it. And it would be the people who have talent would get up and sing songs or recite or play an instrument like the saxophone or the violin. And of course that motivated the parents of those days to teach their children an instrument. Every child grew up learning to play an instrument of some kind—all are trained on some kind so they can play something. So when we went to school in the Republic of Panama, where we had a three month vacation but we never had a three month vacation because we were sent to a private school, or sent to cooking school or sent to dress-making school. And the boys went to or whatever it was but everybody was doing something. With private school and open school and the teachers were always making or whatever it was called but everybody had something to do and they said that three months was too much time to waste. We would get one week before—as soon as school ended and you would go spend time with your godparents or with the community and we had one week before school began so again you had that opportunity to be away from home but the rest of the time was getting instructions. For me, I have very fond memories of Caledonia. We were poor. My father worked but mother didn't work. Of course with the tailor, people want their pants or their suit and they forget they have to pay for it and my father put all his money in buying the buttons and the trimmings and the threads and when they came to pick it up, oh oh oh (feigning shock)... and so where is the money for the food? So it was very interesting, but we never had a day where we wanted for food and we never wanted, no matter what it was. I had a very happy childhood and my mother and father protected us from that discrimination area, so we were not exposed to it in order to protect our feelings, I guess, but we read about it and we saw what was happening to all the people.

**INTERVIEWER:** Now you mentioned your paternal grandfather was also from Jamaica?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** And your father's mother was from...correct?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** My grandfather was.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. What about your mother's father and mother?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I don't know too much about my grandfather but my grandmother is the one that brought my mother here, and my mother never returned to—well I wouldn't say never but she did not return to Jamaica until I was 19. And she took me to the place where she was born where she learned she was born but she never changed her Jamaican nationality because she was very proud of that area. And so was my father. They had a lot of pride in who they were and they were proud of themselves and friendship wise and everything else and that is the way we were born.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you remember where in Jamaica she went?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Oh my stars...when I get through talking to you. I know it was way up in the hills and one of her Aunt's, her grandmother's sister, has 16 children...

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, so you mentioned your father was a tailor and your mom was a homemaker.

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Yes a homemaker and she did dress making and they both made sure their children had something they could earn their living by. She didn't do it on a large scale but you could always find a neighbor that would need a dress you know.

**INTERVIEWER:** And what about your paternal grandfather and grandmother? What did they do?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Nothing much. I think I've met my grandfather...depending on what my father and he had twin sisters and we only had communication by mail but I never met them.

**INTERVIEWER:** And the grandmother—your mother's mother was she never went back?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** No she never went back when she came here.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay.

**REVEREND LENNAN:** And my mother did have a sister over there and eventually they got together, and after that first visit she came to Panama and my mother would go there and eventually my aunt ended up in England.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, so when you were 19 you got to visit Jamaica with your mother. Okay, do you know the professions of your maternal grandfather or grandmother? Not really. All right, now who were your parents and grandparents friends and do you have any memories of visiting those friends? And what sorts of things were they doing, eating, drinking or talking about during visits?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** (laughs) Okay. Well with my mother and father, my mother was the live wire of the family and father...and my father would say; don't let your mother see you doing that. That was the scolding we got from Daddy because he was the good guy but Mommy would be all over you. But my mother, she was a society, she moved with the upper crust of the west Indian society, They were teachers, those were the people who would visit over and over, then the secretary of the British embassy, consulate at that time, Mr. Warner, and I recall his name because he did something very good he did for the family, it was a West Indian way, if they were good at something they would pick a child from the family they thought would benefit from it and teach it to them. So he taught my brother how to use a typewriter. Mr. Warner teaching him how to use it. And those were friends of my mothers and they watched what you did and what

you read and they provided, especially me, adequate reading materials and they would tell you stories and quote writers and they would scold my mother for it. So we always had padrinos even though they were not actually padrinos and we could always complain to them and they would be like, what and (mimics hysteria). They were all mothers and they were all fathers. Sometime I enjoyed it but sometimes I felt they were pretty nosey when they brought complaints to my father and I would complain to my mother but of course if you would be rude to them they would complain. But they meant well. And our community should not be a disgrace to anyone, no member of the community. So whatever they could do to help the community, to uplift the community, this is what they would do.

**INTERVIEWER:** I think you're remembering a lot of it.

**REVEREND LENNAN:** We had a teacher who would become mother when mother wasn't there and we called her Yaya—Yaya I'm stepping out for a minute and we got away with more things with my mother than when Yaya was watching. But we were in good hands and everybody was related and the relationship in most places was layered and you would get up in the morning and they were there watching “did you see Nyasha today?” and “No” or “She went out” and if not they would go knock on the door and see. We checked on each other because anything could happen during the night. So we had many good friends and we lived better off, in the better position, in our own homes and you come in your own car and you get out and come in. And if you come in one day and happen to see a neighbor sitting on the porch you would say, hi how are you doing, you know? It was all about community. The way you live, it is so different than the way we live and a good pastor would go visit other people and transmitted each other. So many times too when mother's friends came to visit it was get away time for us and momma said no one should visit your house unless you offering them something. At least a bottle of Carnation Milk with sugar and a little vanilla or little cookies or whatever it was but she always offered that person—they never went home without being offered something. Iced tea or whatever it was but they were always offered something.

**INTERVIEWER:** Now, what was school like? How were your teachers and what do you remember about your time at school? You spoke about the day school teachers – what was her full name? Do you remember?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Bridget Aird and her husband was a tailor, like my dad. and they didn't have any children. It was an excellent situation, and with the situation of having all the kids in the same room and you heard what was being taught to the sixth graders and you heard what was being taught to the fourth graders. But you would be makin' second grade and you learned to multiply and the babies had to be fed by a... everyday. And you...(does multiplication tables) but you could put a dance with it but you learned it and that was my first teacher so I had ample background for all that—for what they liked to do. I was kind of one of the bigger girls and my first grade class...they used to tease me in school and my mom would say, you go there and don't come back until you're done with the class, and they called me a lion and I did not know. And in first grade they came up to me and said, your name is not on the list and were you

matriculated? Oh yes and one of the teachers and she said, all right come here and she wrote it in the back. And then I went to primary school and then professional school...

**INTERVIEWER:** Were there any teachers at the public school that stood out? Do you remember if they did anything special?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I remember on the very first day, one of the things I remember about her was that her husband went home for lunch everyday when she went back to school. And that before he went back to work he would come by the school and every day oh my god they would kiss, you know and her name was Carmella. She was very lovely. And Carmella was always smiling, walking along with a ruler in her hand which she never used. Most of my teachers liked me and I had mostly good experiences in school. And when I got to secondary school. And one of the teachers decided to send for my mother because she thought I was being rude to her. And my mother, of course, when I got home was like you have to look at the teacher at school and listen to what the teacher says Listen to what she told my mother, Maiziee has an air of superiority and I will not teach her because she is looking at me with an air of superiority like I don't know what I am saying. (laughs) But that was all she could tell her. And my mother, of course when I get home, "I did not send you to school to look at the teacher like that!" (feigns yelling) I had a good experience in school. There was some other discrimination in school, but I don't think it bothered me.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was the cultural or racial background of your classmates and your teacher's? At day school and then after.

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I think we were all very much mostly Spanish speaking and Latin... very much the same people from where we went to school to where we lived. The biggest thing about the secondary school was that we remained, integrated 50 years of generations, it was a girls school and then two years before we graduated they brought in the boys who were studying commerce so it became a mixed school where co-ed. And when...but when the boys came over it became one big college. Another name, they changed it.

**INTERVIEWER:** What kind of music did you grow up hearing and what were your favorite singers and favorite songs?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I heard everything. Just about everything, because we had the classical programs and the African, and the Brazilian had formed their own classical program, the symphony...and they would have groups, string groups especially...also the organist at Christ Church. Classical music or religious music. And all the other modern songs... (laughs)

**INTERVIEWER:** Is there any song you would like to sing for us? One of your favorites?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** (laughs) My mother loved this dance, my mother loved dancing. Every member of the family except my father, my father dance with my mother when they were courting and she would not after. After they got married she refused to do it but she did for every other member of the family and dance but we were dancing with them because we all just love to dance. Dancing is part of our tradition—we love to dance and singing together. My brother sang in the choir and then he would come home and teach us what he learned after choir rehearsal. And then...I can remember Uncle Bobby and my dad would stay home every Tuesday because that was family night, they had a bridge club other nights, he was singing and he would tell us stories and we would all sit at the dining room table and play card games mostly or dominoes. But what brought that on? (laughs)

**INTERVIEWER:** Is there any new music you like to listen to today?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I like the beat but my fingers are not in tune with what they are playing but my when my ears not in tune with what I'm hearing and sometimes I see my granddaughter react and look at me but if I can dance to it and I know what they are saying but if I don't understand what they are saying. And I know it's something that I should not hear and she doesn't want me to hear...The beat is good but I don't know about the message. I like the songs that have a message, love songs. You don't know about songs with—you do!? I don't know if the songs today have a message, very few of them do. If it's a love message or whatever kind of message it is.

**INTERVIEWER:** What do you like to eat? And what are your favorite foods?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Yes I like to eat. I'm not picky, but I grew up eating rice and beans and chicken. Vegetables and salad. Turkey. I am the only person in my family that eats turkey or codfish, my children won't touch it (laughs) my husband neither he doesn't want that. I don't cook it. But they all come over...but my mother would buy whatever she was going to cook and then boil them and put it in front of you with a little piece of meat. And my father, like I told you, Mr. nice guy would sit and the rule was you don't get up from the table until you clean your plate and my father would set with me and she would watch to make sure my father didn't eat it for me. (laughs) I would have tears coming out and my father would coaching me saying "It's good for you! Good job honey. It'll give you muscles!" And I don't eat couscous, and that's because of the okra. It has a touch of the American flavor. But I don't have any outlandish likes or dislikes but I do have my dislikes and likes. But everything I love is either immoral, illegal or fattening. I love pork a lot—

**INTERVIEWER:** What I wanted to ask you was if you would be willing to share one of your favorite recipes with us?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I begin with—I don't soak my codfish much because I like the salt in it—soak it a little—and put it in a little olive oil and boiling water, half hour boil, and then shred, then boil it with onions and tomatoes. Then with some lime or anything like that—one thing I didn't mention was I use soy sauce. That's the way I do it and then

mix it all up and, oh, I begin with bacon fat, if the onions and tomatoes, I ground them, not ground them, hard boil them also in the bacon fat, and they can be mixed with—oh but—not to much of it because it will dry it out...

**INTERVIEWER:** Thank you.

**REVEREND LENNAN:** You're welcome—now you have my secret. If you like bacon...

**INTERVIEWER:** What are your favorite sayings and where did you hear or learn them? So these are sayings that you said to some of your kids, or maybe your parents are grandparents said to you.

**REVEREND LENNAN:** The first one I have is from my daughter because she had to learn all of the things my mother said to me and I use them to her and she writes them down and she throws them back at me every once in a while. But I am very fond of using sayings like ...if I could find one I...

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you remember one that you want to share with us?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** It's not one day... twice.

**INTERVIEWER:** What does that saying mean?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Don't get fresh with me or anything like that and you think you don't need me but one of these days you'll be right back. And if it's not one day you're gonna come another day for a favor you drop back. It has a sexual connotation to it but it's very amusing...

**INTERVIEWER:** Have you ever heard of Louise Bennett or The Mighty Sparrow, and what thoughts if any come to mind when you hear the names and have you ever seen them perform? And if so, what do you remember about the performances?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I have not seen Mighty Sparrow but I heard it is very good, but after I got married my husband go to Jamaica for a while and we almost went to Jamaica every year or every other year and so I bought a Mighty Sparrow record but in Panama I have never been. Louise Bennett, I saw her on the TV when I was in Jamaica. And a version of her singing Happy Birthday on her program is one that our family used to sing and birthdays are a big thing in my family, and we just have to get together. There might not be much food but there's ice cream and there's cake and there's a lot of singing and laughter for birthdays. They do not go unnoticed in my family and every body gets together and we know this, and we sing happy birthday in three languages—we sing the Spanish version, we sing the English version or we sing the church version and then we sing the Louise Bennett version and Calypso song. Don't ask me to sing it.

**INTERVIEWER:** Are you sure?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Happy birthday, happy birthday, all your friends and your family wish you happy birthday and now have cake!

**INTERVIEWER:** Thank you so much. Now this question is about religion. What religion are you and what denomination are you?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I am Episcopalian. Part of the Anglican communion.

**INTERVIEWER:** And what is the role of religion in your life?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I'm a priest.

**INTERVIEWER:** What would you say is your favorite part of the worship service?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I know what I'm supposed to say but it's not what you expected, but I will tell you what I like, I like the singing of the hymns. And you can find one that fits every situation in your life and for what mood you're in—hope, support, comfort or whatever you are looking for because you want to praise God and I can do it best in my singing more than anything else. Did I tell you that I was a member of the junior choir at my church—okay—and then the senior choir? And when I was about 13 they had me directing the junior choir and they had people 16 years old in the junior choir under my direction. And when they get out of line and I say, “just stop it.” So I would say music because of my mother and her background in music. So then I became organist in the senior choir, organist for the church, and I made sure the singing was a big activity during the service, the hymns are chosen with much care so everyone could find something to hum when they go back home. I can't think of a better way to praise the Lord than through singing and to sign together.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you play sports as a child? And if so, which sport?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Yes, basketball. That's it.

**INTERVIEWER:** (laughs) Did you like it?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** And I wasn't very good at it. My mother, again, always said that I had to be a lady—always be a lady and they just don't do those things. As a result, I never learned to ride a bike, I never learned to roller skate but my brother did because he was a boy and he could do that but girls don't do certain things. We could play the piano and things like singing and sewing and we would crochet and do all the things that would make me a lady. I don't know how satisfied my mother is with me now but that being a lady part is not really me and now I'm always looking at sports on the TV. Basketball season and that's it and it can be 11:00 or 12:00 and I'm watching the game. Baseball again and my mother also taught me that because she would take me to the stadium when we had the basketball game, seven, eight years and we were going to the game. But my mother was a diverse person, very much so, well rounded. She was a fun loving person

for picnics or organizing—she was always organizing something to get certain people together.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you have any contact with US culture and what do you remember about that? I know you did not live in the states but what contact, if any, did you have with American culture?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** When I worked in the Canal Zone and in the schools and teaching Panamanian kids, West Indian, and then in later years when that law was passed about no discrimination in the United States and the schools had to teach one language only. All schools had to be alike so they had to blend the schools and that's a part of my life I wish I could just sit down and write about because very interesting things happened then because I ended up teaching the American kids all mixed together and I was exposed to the American culture because the schools were under the American administration.

**INTERVIEWER:** So teaching the American kids—that came about as the change of the laws as well? You were teaching—you were already teaching the West Indian, or Panamanian kids who lived in the area. So teaching American kids, why was that?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Because of the law. In one school system there was Latin American and American and it started out being the colored ones. Then it became Latin American and U.S. citizens. Then it became department of defense in schools.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, now I think we've pretty much talked a little bit about this but I will go ahead and ask again. Tell me about your view of your West Indian ancestry and what is the first word that comes to mind with the term West Indian?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** The first word that comes to mind... I use it so often that I don't really refer to it as the first word that comes to mind.

**INTERVIEWER:** Or not really even a word but a thought—maybe a thought that comes to mind.

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Somehow, it depends on who says the word West Indian – if it's one of us then no problem but if it is a non West Indian person then it is offensive—"what are you coming with?"—and I become very suspicious of this. And I become suspicious of any person, but I'm proud of my heritage offered a lot to the republican Panama and we take it wherever we go, and I'm not perfect, but as I rule I would say we are productive where ever we go. We are hard working people, we know how to be respectable, and we respect others for what they are. I don't know.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you believe that the people of Panama view or treat you differently based on your race or being a western Indian?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** No. No.

**INTERVIEWER:** How so?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I live it. And everybody will keep talking to who they are talking to or ignore you or whatever it is and if someone comes up to you and says (speaking Spanish) and then everybody continues to look like, who is this? And then (speaking Spanish) and then all of a sudden you are accepted into the group. Right? That's what I'm talking about—you are accepted if you are in a certain standing, a certain group like educational, financial, or whatever it may be. Or if you are connected to somebody at that time, but you have to work on your own for them to recognize you otherwise you are just ignored or they just consider you a person and such. I would say that it is totally generalized but still very frivolous. Very much so.

**INTERVIEWER:** Have you ever lived outside of Panama? Besides travel have you ever lived anywhere else for a period of time?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I went to school in the US—in San Francisco and I went to San Francisco State for a year, and later we vacationed a whole lot and been to a number of conferences, church related and otherwise.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you feel people in the US treated you differently because you were Panamanian?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Oh yes. If you are Panamanian they look at you differently from than if you a regular American black. In some cases they don't consider you black and you are in a different bracket—why I don't know but they do think so. And in other countries I have found them to be suspicious of me just because they have heard of witchcraft or what West Indian and they think that everybody goes around with voodoo and does whatever they want. But I have been exposed to all of that and I've been exposed to people accepting me just as I am. Especially when it comes to the church but in the church you find something different but on the other side they recognize you by your enunciation and the way you speak. One black can recognize another. I went to a wedding and I read a lesson at the wedding. And, uh, and it was a high falutin wedding, it was a college professor's daughter who was getting married and with all due respect they were all that kind and that's a different category and that was where I read. And so one of the doctors there came up to me and said, that was excellent reading but of course you do have an accent, where are you from? And I said from home and I never—the reading was excellent, from Peter you understood it so that's it. But it was like, where do you come from that you can read like that? Back to my first grade of school—back to Yaya—so it shouldn't matter.

**INTERVIEWER:** What did you think the people you encountered there knew about Panamanians or Panama?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** In the United States? Well, the first thing when I got to school was, Panama where's that? And I would have to go though the, "You seen a map, ya? Well there's a big part up there and down there there's South American and in between

there's a little teeny teeny land, that's where Panama is." Or they would say the Panama Canal and that's it and then others would say Zone Eight—we used to have that Zone Eight business but ignorance of Panama is prevalent. Prevalent.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay and how do you think your experience living abroad has affected your view of yourself as a Panamanian or Panamanians views of you since you went away and your relationship with African Americans?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I don't have any idea.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, first how do you think being abroad affected your views of yourself as a Panamanian?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I don't think it has. I am who I am wherever I go.

**INTERVIEWER:** Then how have other Panamanian's view you because you went to the states and then came back?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Most people admire people who have—most people go to the states now but when you came back from the states you are expected to be different than the way you left and they expect that. And they are anxious to get information from you about how do they do this up there or how did they do that up there and everybody wants to imitate what they do up there. But what we have here is just as good. Just as good.

**INTERVIEWER:** And then the last one was your relationship with African Americans.

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I have some good friends who are African American. They are religious, they take on me.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, then how has knowing English affected you positively or negatively?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Positively, I think so.

**INTERVIEWER:** And how so? Can you give me specific examples where knowing English was really positive? And are there many different aspects?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I feel like the more languages you know the better it is for you wherever you go and English being one of the languages that is most spoken with anyone it can really place you in a special position and if you can help people out who are not familiar with English because you can be helpful. And sometimes you find that your English is necessary for people around who are not being understood and they can't understand and you're able to help them now.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay and the last few questions will have to do with your family. Are you married and how did you meet your husband?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Oh my gosh—yes I am married. How did I meet him? I went—the first time I saw him, if you want to call that meeting him, was at his mother’s house, and I was learning to sew, one of those vacations where I learned to sew because my mother would send me to the dress maker. And he was sitting there listening to the radio, on the radio, the first time I saw him. You want more? His mother is—no let me change that, my mother is my husband’s god mother. My mother was the chief bridesmaid at my mother-in-law’s wedding. So they were friends from girls and they went to the same church together and there’s a story about that. My mother was a Baptist and so was my husband’s mother and they went to the same church together and they sang in the choir together. They were friends. And they were not supposed to dance, and one night they got together and went dancing at one of these places to keep the young people out of trouble and someone told the pastor. So the pastor called all of them and they said they were sorry and they would not do it again and everybody that went started crying and saying they were sorry. But when they called my mother she said I’m not going to say I’m sorry because the Lord knows I’m not sorry and I had a good time. It shocked everybody to death so they said she was suspended from the choir for six months. My mother was a singer. So she couldn’t sing in the choir for six months and she went to church every Sunday even though the choir would ruin the song because she was not there to lead them and she would laugh at everything. My mother’s awful, ya know? And the Sunday before she was to be allowed back into the choir she told them that she wasn’t coming back because by that time she had met a certain young man that was an Anglican. And she went into the Anglican church. So that’s the story of how I met my husband and my mother loves him and let he tell him you where he studied and we were married when he came back from studying in Jamaica. I had heard of him but I’d never met him. Are you gonna pay me for all these hours?

**INTERVIEWER:** We have a surprise for you.

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I have a surprise for you too—you can’t repeat any of this.

**INTERVIEWER:** How about your children? Do you have children and tell me about them and their lives and their jobs?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I have two children—grown children and four grandchildren. And the youngest child is [Tepeka] and has a number of years of education, went to the episcopal school and graduated there and went off to college and graduated there. She works at Hospital at one time, and she got married while she was working there in the United States. And she works also for the American Red Cross in an administrative position there. And when they were closing out there, that’s when she came back to Panama and works for the American Red Cross and she’s the one that closed out all the business, and writes all the documents when the treaty was signed. And they relocated to the United States and she got her masters degree while there and then returned to live in Panama and works with Bristol Myers company and they lived there while she was employed there. And they have one daughter. Edmund stated at the school like his sister and then he was sent of to military school in Florida and that went very well and then he

came back. He had had a lot of different jobs on and off but right now he is employed as a Panama Canal fire fighter. He works for the fire department.

**INTERVIEWER:** And he has three children?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Yes three children.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do they consider themselves Panamanian or West Indian or both or something else?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** She is an American citizen now, but she says she's West Indian but it doesn't matter either way but I think what she likes to be called least is a Panamanian. I don't know why. But she was the only black in her class, in the school and they all love her and they will call her, they get on the internet and talk for hours and... she has so many Panamanian friends.

**INTERVIEWER:** Is that something that happened after she went away for college or even before?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I think it has always been like that. She doesn't want to be Panamanian but she gets along very well with all the Spanish people.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do they all speak English and your grandchildren as well—do they speak English?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I think they do. Maybe. She was born American. Panamanian, but they have all been exposed to the English language and they do speak English very periodically but their mother speaks mainly Panamanian. For some reason they are not enforced to speak both languages.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you have any other family that lives overseas?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** No all my family is... My husband is employed by an American company over there...

**INTERVIEWER:** Do they come to visit Panama often and do they consider themselves Panamanian or something else?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Like my niece? They speak Spanish and they are Panamanian.

**INTERVIEWER:** Have you ever been abroad and lived overseas and you said yes and you went to a university in San Francisco and the trips you've taken.

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Did you say abroad or US?

**INTERVIEWER:** Abroad.

**REVEREND LENNAN:** In Africa.

**INTERVIEWER:** Where in Africa?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** What were the choices?

**INTERVIEWER:** Well we have Cape Town—

**REVEREND LENNAN:** It was Cape Town, because we had a conference there.

**INTERVIEWER:** And how was your experience there overall? And in terms of how people tend to think about Panamanians.

**REVEREND LENNAN:** There was not too much contrast there in Africa with the conference, with the clothes and the cultures...in preparing the place and making it very hospitable and everything and they treated us well. There was not too much contact unless you were on your own for a few days to go out and meet people.

**INTERVIEWER:** Now, is there anything specific you would like to communicate to the other people of the community?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** Related to accepting themselves as who they are?

**INTERVIEWER:** Anything you would like to say.

**REVEREND LENNAN:** I would like to say, give the advice my mother gave me, that in this world you need to pray a lot and you need to do the best that you can and you can do no more after you have done the best you can. Also remember that you are not an island unto yourself. Yes, always remember who will come after you and what are you leaving for those others, and always be honest with your children and your friends, and you don't know, because they have to live with whatever you have left.

**INTERVIEWER:** And in addition to the leadership role you have played here at the church, are you involved in other community groups or organizations and what role do you play in that?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** None that I can think of.

**INTERVIEWER:** Anything else you would like to add before we finish?

**REVEREND LENNAN:** No, that's too much talking already. (laughs)

**INTERVIEWER:** In that case we do thank you again for participating and please feel free to contact me for anything and we will be in contact with you one way or another.