

***Transcription of Cecil Brooks - Our Voices Matter Interview***

Interviewer - Graham Hooper

**GH-** Hello this is the Our Voice Matter Project today is May 25, 2011, were at the Belmont House my name is Graham Hooper and we have Cecil Brooks here who were interviewing. Umm how are you doing?

**CB-** Not to bad and how are you Graham?

**GH-** I am good actually, no rain right now. Umm maybe we could start with you just telling me where you born and what your childhood, school and family was like?

**CB-** Yeah well I was born in East Preston, well in Halifax, but I lived and grew up in East Preston, school was interesting because there elementary phase, the school was like not even a block from my house so I couldn't go home for lunch it was great and you got to meet all the other kids in the community type of deal, and so the community was sort of knitted like that

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** And then after that, we went to junior high and that is even we start inter mixing with the other kids right, like the white community type of thing, which was an interesting experience right, but growing up was interesting. And it was dealing with later in life finding out that you have an illness bipolar for example right you live your whole life a certain way with the illness and then you just people just learn to accept you a certain ways right, so you found yourself changing for each person you met just accommodated them, but at the same time dealing with illness, you don't consider it an illness cause your just thinking everybody like is. So along you go through life, I found life very interesting and entertaining and went through high school and

stuff, meet a lot of interesting people and when coming from a black community, now when you, now I didn't discover this until later, like this thing called racisms. Now because of this thing called racism in the black community it creates a whole different type of illness, let's say for example you get the guy who goes to work every day out in the community, like the white community type of deal but comes home every night and beats his wife because he you know what I mean, cause he can't deal with the racism, so he blames it all on her, or they become alcoholics or which is like they self- medicate type of dealing with the illness, now that's ok for them if that's their choice but what if your kids see this and your kids take a whole different view and there like I don't want to end up like daddy, so they become against that community, the white community, so instead of advancing in school they quit school early they get into the drug community and that's where they, that's where they identify like for example look at all the shootings and stuff that's going on lately.

**GH-** Did your, umm, umm you mentioned school on at an early age, did you have a good relationship with your parents, you mentioning parents

**CB-** There were seven of us in the family and I was the second oldest so it was sort of like, mom, dad both worked and so as you got older you became like the babysitter for the other kids. So it's not that resented your childhood, we all lived in a small community right I lived on Brooks Drive right, that gives you an indication of large the Brooks family is in Preston but on the particular street its all of us. So we had like an extended family so you would be either up at your uncles place or over at this aunts house, or this aunts babysitting you while this aunt is babysitting it was like a big community, it was one large family, so when you ask me did I get along with my parents, it's an interesting question because I really didn't get to see much of them until later in life,

**GH-** Right, so you were sort of, you were with your parents but were raised by the community,

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** So when it's good it's really good, but when it's bad not so much,

**CB-** Yeah, yeah,

**GH-** Gotcha so back to umm to the umm illness umm high school an stuff and you mention that felt different and stuff did you think anything was wrong or just simply you thought everyone was like this?

**CB-** I just though everyone was like this, so when people would ask me things like you become really insightful though in manic phase so when people would ask you stuff and you would give them answers they were like oh you were looking at them like how come you didn't know this,

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** Or, you see people go into relationships and your warning them not to type of deal cause it's not going to be good for them, and they do it and then all of a sudden they want to come back to you to ask for a way out and it's like I can't help you

**GH-** Understood, yeah. Umm when did you think I mean life is pretty good, and then obviously inter mixing with Cole Harbour an such like that

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** When you discovered you know the cultures, the white culture, the black culture, and you had said how if had effected and changed things, people dropping out how it had a negative effect on your culture or, or community.

**CB-** Mm-hmm

**GH-** Umm What, way did you go when this, when you sort of had this revelation, you know where you resentful of the white community, like you mention some people were or did you took to a higher road or were you more concerned with your illness and what was going on with you? Like when did you start really thinking things were a bit off?

**CB-** Well sees I noticed things became a bit off when I was twenty-eight. That, that was when I was in a manic episode, where I was hospitalized and all that stuff, and I was like at that time there was no you're bipolar, it was your psychotic take this drug, so you found yourself laying around staring at the ceiling tiles, the holes in the ceiling tiles and you're like this isn't healthy.

**GH-** No,

**CB** And it's like coming from the black community who accept you as you were, it was easy to get away from that so like when doctor Huing, said after a week and a half your gonna be here a long, long time I left that day cause I had the community, my parents and family come get me.

**GH-** So they had a sort of unconditional love for you however you were.

**CB-** However I was.

**GH-** When you brought up umm well you say the psychotic episodes, or the hospital or you're bipolar, umm finally using these sort of medical terms and the medical history umm were your family still accepting of you?

**CB-** They became

**GH-** Or did they not want to talk about it.

**CB-** Well let's see, especially going into a manic phase, when you go into a manic phase you would tell people about themselves, because you becomes so insightful you would and that started scaring people, and then all of sudden it became, ok, maybe there is something wrong with him, maybe we better get him back to the hospital

**GH-** They sort of drew their own conclusions

**CB-** And then you end up back in the hospital trying to explain to the hospital what's going on and there like listening to everybody but you

**GH-** Gotcha

**CB-** And then all of a sudden the next thing you know have to do seven days.

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** Cause you been certified for seven days, so you sit there and do the seven days. And the second time in was like hold on, I aint taking any medication, you know I not doing anything to endanger anybody, and I am not hurting anybody. Or myself so I don't have to take any medication.

**GH-** Exactly

**CB-** My favourite line to them was always you can go get your male staff and you all can come down and give me a needle but when I get out I have friends that sell drugs too and I will come and give you a needle too. So you better send the psychiatrist down.

**GH-** Absolutely, umm

**CB-** Because I found that so invasive like I spent half my time trying to stay away from the illegal drug trade and now I'm being forced into (laughter) right again.

**GH-** Yeah prescription drugs, umm now you said you were first hospitalized at twenty-eight and I remember when we were talking earlier umm when talking before you had said you had always worked. So when you finished school or got through school did you start working in your early twenties or your teens?

**CB-** Yeah I started, I was in, I graduated at eighteen, took a two year business course, then went to work for a company called Way-Jax they sold cranes and forklifts and stuff like that, material handling equipment. And then, when I was working for them it became apparent that there, that I wasn't going anywhere so after a couple years I had to ask them. And they said this type of industry is not meant for a black man. So I quit, and I went back to school and I took up nursing cause I said the government can't be that, the government, if anybody's is gonna be straight its gonna be the government, boy was I wrong. (Laughter)

**GH-** So umm, I may have this out of line but you had said there was ah, ah, a human rights thing. Was that involving the, the government situation or was later, should we wait till we get to that. Is that a little

**CB-** That depends where you want to go, because we can go there then go revisit other areas as or do you want to keep it in a line

**GH-** Ok, I think if we keep it in a line and then talk about it when you get to that point. So at this point you have been hospitalize twice,

**CB-** Yeah, yup

**GH-** You're not liking the medication, umm you're aware this stuff in the community, people quiet don't know how to take you as they did before

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** So after you get out of the hospital the second time what?

**CB-** What happened was that I sort of lazed around and did nothing cause I, I'm that, it must be that depression that they talk about with bipolar cause I never really did get depressed I would get to a point where it's like ok, now I got to start from scratch and do whatever, what am I going to do, right. And so anyway I ended up getting a job working with the Coast Guard

**GH-** Ok

**CB-** And but in the mean time you're getting drawn into the drug community at the same time because you're at the bottom and all of a sudden it's their looking at you saying see your education has done you no good. Look at what we've got, we've got cars, we've got houses, and you've got nothing.

**GH-**All the temptation in the world, yeah umm did ...., did you yield to the temptation of getting involved in that or did you pretty well stick to work

**CB-** No, I dabbled in it

**GH-** Dabbled in it.

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** Knew a lot of people in it,

**CB-** Yeah, and sort of benefit let's say I could go to you, you're in the trade let's say "listen I need a lawnmower"

**GH-** Gotcha

**CB-** Then all of a sudden two days later you show up at my place with a lawnmower and charge me forty bucks

**GH-** Right

**CB-** So it was, I always maintained that type of connection with them because I understand where they're coming from much or more so now after the Coast Guard case and stuff right than I did to begin with right,

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** Because in the beginning it was like it's your fault because you didn't get an education so I was almost at the point where I was not so much hateful at them but ah but the blame would be all on them so the things they would tell me was happening to them like racism-wise I wouldn't believe because it's like, it's because you don't have or you went, or you shouldn't of been, you know what I mean,

**GH-** Mm-hmm, I know exactly what you mean umm ah I told you when talking earlier I, I was diagnosed when I was twenty-eight as well so we have a bit in common, and there's, and I look at it as what happened before, and sort what happens afterwards as you starting to figure this stuff out

**CB-** Yeah



**GH-** Everything sort of starts for me, started to fall in place, was that sort of what you were doing in your thirties, trying to piece together the illness, and work, and everyday **living**

**CB-** Well you see, what ended up happening in my thirties, it was sort of lot, it was trying to figure out what was wrong with me, like why did they do that to me, why would you, why would you institutionalize me, what did I do wrong? And so a lot of it was ok, I won't do nursing anymore, I won't ah, I'll just find something totally different

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** At that same time you're dabbling with the guys in the drug community, and they're saying "why aint you just come with us?", and I'm like "NO", cause I'll never have nothing, right.

(Laughter)

**GH-** Not the best store to open.

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** Did you umm, ah, if you don't mind me asking umm, did you feel, did you ever self medicate with

**CB-** Oh yeah

**GH-** Drugs and alcohol, did it ever become a problem?

**CB-** I never self medica, medicated with alcohol, but I did self medicate with marijuana right. But in alcohol it really scared me, because in our family, during our family tree, I have aunts and uncles and stuff that are alcoholics, both my grandfathers were alcoholics so we have that addictive gene

**GH-**Mm-hmm

**CB-** So in, my brother's an alcoholic type of thing right. An so I stayed away from alcohol because alcohol was really addictive

**GH-** There were some early warning signs

**CB-** Sigh. Yeah, yeah and so it was sort of like I knew if I did that then no,

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** So and then that was back when you got caught drinking and driving it was acceptable type of thing.

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** Like you, you get pulled over and they tell you to go home. (Laughter)

**GH-** So but you, would you say, you, yours marijuana, recreationally or was it a form of self medicating, feeling better, feeling more yourself,

**CB-** The closets you come to a manic episode I found anyway, this is after experiencing a manic episode, an you'll understand this, like in a manic episode it is, it is no drug can touch it. It is a feeling beyond feelings right. And it is, so marijuana would take you to the edge of that

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** Where you're just right there but you can't get over

**GH-** I understand

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** So you, like me, I umm I tend to have more highs then the depressions.

**CB-** Yeah, yeah

**GH-** Umm it for me it's either been normal or manic, with very few depressions.

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** As I grown older the depressions have gotten worse.

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** Still there very short compared to a lot of people. So did you ah, did you do things that you look back and said that was just insane, like get on an airplane and go somewhere. I did things that, did you ever do anything that, or buy a car on a whim or

**CB-** (Laughter) I, I, I did things that umm, things that umm ah, come back to haunt me later type of deal. Like I got involved in a lot of different deals, and it all hinged on, now see we got to go the Coast Guard case, but it all hinged on that coming **through** right.

**GH-** Ok, the, the, the Coast Guard case.

**CB-** Yeah so you ended up with a lot of weird people in the middle of your manic episodes and you're like this is fun. And they be, and they really believed in you

**GH-** Oh

**CB-** You know what I mean. And it was like, manic episodes is something that is like, and to live with that without any medication, which means you can come and go anytime you want, but the other end of **15:14** the coming down, like the anger side of it, there's the happy side of it

where's everything is great but when you hit something that bothers you, you switch and change so quickly

**GH-** Short tempered and

**CB-** Yup and just like that, people go and can't figure that out.

**GH-** Mm-hmm now you mentioned the Coast Guard, I'm just trying to keep a time line umm, so you've been hospitalized twice, you had umm obviously been experiencing the manic episodes, what after you said you picking up from scratch and you decided on the Coast Guard, the work there what age, like how long between that

**CB-** I was about thirty-one, thirty, I started with them in eighty-eight.

**GH-** After a few years in hospital (15:38)

**CB-** I started with them in eighty-eight

**GH-** Ok

**CB-** Yeah and what ended up happening wasn't so much me choosing them, they called me and they said listen, we need a, you know another guy, this was a guy who was in charge of hiring minorities, I need another guy to make up this competition do you want the job? And at first I told him no, and then I called him back and said ok I'll do it, right. So I go down to the interview, and I'm sitting here with another black guy, him and I are chatting and stuff right and then he goes in first for his interview right and it's like he comes out and says about five minutes later and says no I can't do it. I said what's going on, he says because they want me to work longer than seven days and I don't think I can do that cause I already have a job. I said ok, so

then I go into the interview and I'm sitting there, and there asking me these questions and stuff like how do you mop a floor, and it's like ok (Laughter)

**GH-** What sort of job was it

**CB-** It was a steward job on the ship right. At this time I had no idea what a steward did right, it was just they called me to do it. And because the other guy walked out I got the job, so it was ok. Now at this time, unbeknownst to me is the only reason I am getting hired is because now I am a statistic they had to hire so many this year and I am a statistic, I didn't know this. So anyway I go through the routine and stuff

**GH-** You live and learn right

**CB-** Yeah your right, so it was like ok you work for six months then you're laid off for six months, then they call you back so we do a competition. Another competition, now white guys are involved, unbeknownst to me I'm just a statistic in this, so I place something like number six and I'm quite pleased with it considering I've only been working a year right. Now I'm going through the system and as I'm going through the system I'm teaching guys stuff like how to make a bed, how to strip and wax a floor and stuff like this because they never did it before. They were always doing it with a poll and a scrub pad and the machine was a total no don't touch that you'll break your back, what are you talking about? (Laughter) So I teach them all this stuff thinking next competition at some point I will you know move on

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** It's like that chance never came and then at the last competition that I did and I did with them right, and at the last competition the girl that placed number one never did the job before in

her life and she places number one. I mean she worked in the office, apparently she was sleeping with, now don't quote me on this, but the guy who ran the competition. So I had to grieve it

**GH-** So there was bias

**CB-** I had to grieve it right. So I ended up grieving it, knowing that like I talked to other black guys there before I done it, there's only like five of them, so we all talked and we knew then that I was going to lose my job no matter what, if I say it I'm going to lose my job, and I looked at them and said if don't say it I'm not, I don't have a job anyway.

**GH-** And what was the, cause you were obviously on the ship and you were away for, for days am I correct?

**CB-** Yup

**GH-** Umm what was the culture on the ship, like umm the culture between ah different race, the white, the black, the men and the women, was it a good culture or was it a sort of a toxic culture

**CB-** Well you see in, in that type of environment and especially like you're going away for like fifteen week stretches and stuff like that, if you're not mentally stable to start with right then that comes out later so you get let's say woman that are in that environment because this is their way of getting attention from men

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** All of sudden if they work with you all of sudden they get away with stuff that you can't away with. Ok and you're dealing with a crew that is let's say one, one black, me,

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** So it's sort of like ok you just, this is my job, this is what I will do for fifteen weeks and then that's it. But when I come home I want to immerse myself into something different

**GH-** Simple. Mm-hmm

**CB-** Better, it was like when I went to church when I was sixteen, wait this is when I started high school, I met these white guys and we hung out together and stuff and we started going to church and it was interesting to see the black person view of god and the white person view of god because the black persons view of god is like he's there and he has to be there cause we're here (Laughter) you know what I mean because before my great-great-grand parents and stuff could read or write they believed in god, and because they believed in god we are here, I am here type of deal right. So it's like when I went to the white **view of** god it was sort of like all you have to do is say you're accepted and it's like what. (Laughter) Wow, wow, wow, it's a little more complicated than that no, no, no you guys got it all and then I started going to church with them so from about sixteen to twenty, I hung with them I went to bible camps with them, and I got really

**GH-** The white community or,

**CB-** Yeah, the white community so I got a really good understanding of what it, white community was all about and as long as I went to church things would happen. Like you get summer jobs and stuff like this cool guys in the church and all this

**GH-** The community

**CB-** The church, you're in that little clique. Alright then there was something wrong, there was something seriously wrong because things started happening right,

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** Like you know, the guy that was in charge of the young people was now fooling around with young girl's type of deal, you know what I mean. And there were alcoholics there and drug addicts and it was like they weren't having any fun with their god. So ok, I go back to the black community and say ok guys what's up?

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** You know what I mean, what's going on (Laughter)

**GH-** Absolutely

**CB-** And that is when I got into the club scene and started partying and it was a real riot, especially being manic cause you could read people. So you could go into a club and say ok that girl over there I'm going to talk to her but I want her friend. (Laughter) And you do, and you go through the motions and it would happen. It would happen to the point that it would scare me but cause I couldn't tell anybody, if I tell you you're gonna hospitalize me (Laughter)

**GH-** Right, yes, I know very much as when we talked before you know that we've had a lot of similarities.

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** Umm, back to the Coast Guard did you have any manic episodes while at sea, and imagine you have to keep that pretty much under wraps that's not a party environment.

**CB-** See the thing was, it was dealing, you were dealing with a bunch of people that had issues of their own, so your issues, like your issues were sort of a, a relief to them type of deal. So you



were funny, you were, you were all the things they wanted. But it took them from their problems, but it made you all of a sudden when you your working your, you have to be on all the time. So you have to be on the edge of mania all the time anyway. You get off work, you go to your room have a couple beer and go to sleep. (Laughter)

**GH-** Yeah

**CB-** Yeah, so it was like you never noticed the manic episodes causes you never; you were always in dealing with other people so

**GH-** So you lived in the environment and that was part of it

**CB-** Yeah, yeah

**GH-** So, umm I know you wanted to talk about this, umm human rights issue that was while you were at the Coast Guard?

**CB-** Yeah, see this is after the human rights issue, now once I brought it up to the Coast Guard it was you know, and they were like hold it were not racist.

**GH-** Is this about the grievance?

**CB-** Yup, yup so then it was like no, no we're not, we're not racist and how dare you say that. And it was like no, no but listen to what I am saying here. You what I mean (Laughter) and they're like no, no you're that's it.

**GH-** No trouble with your work or anything

**CB-** No, no, no and then and so anyway we ended up taking it first to the Public Service Commission and as were going through the case they're starting to listen to me then and all of a

sudden they're realizing they're in a bit deeper than they thought. So they tell the Public Service Commission you can't handle a racism issue, that's not what we wanted you to do. So it was like when I was told this it was like hold it how can you say that, how can you just stop an investigation like that. So I filed with the Human Rights Commission thinking ok now we don't have to deal with it, mean while the Public Service Commission because they broke it all down and stuff it wasn't even making any sense anymore.

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** It was like they were trying to make it me against you and that was is not the issue that I'm presenting. I'm showing you what happens because of the conditions that are laid out. I'm not blaming you for them. I'm just trying to show you it to you so that way there hopefully there you'll correct it. So anyway they fought on,

**GH-** They fought on and you had to do a very long tribunal didn't you

**CB-** Yeah it took about eight years or something like this, we file in 96 and it was in 2004 what's it now 2012, 11

**GH-** Yeah

**CB-** Yeah it's probably about 2007 or something it finally came 2006 it finally came to a head where we got it to a tribunal and like even trying to get it there like their arguments against our arguments were utterly ridiculous like they would say something like I am only after the money

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** And it's like where did you get that from you still don't want to deal with the issue so all

**GH-** So it's the system right

**CB-** Yeah it's the system

**GH-** The process, how did you feel when well, how did this whole process because it's long, long past the incident you've moved on in your life did this incident cause stress, and trigger mania or

**CB-** Well see

**GH-** Or other health conditions

**CB-** When you moved on this time because now this time, this is the federal government you can't run from them, so you went through a stage of ok I'm not going to do anything, I'm not going to do anything. I'm just going to do to whatever and I will go do odd jobs for you Grahame, I will go do odd jobs because I own my house, I didn't have a mortgage and stuff so all I had to pay was the bills, and I could get money from here and I could money from there but all of this time I kept telling people I will pay you back when they pay me, and it's like once you understand the case you understand they have to pay me right because they're not going to give me the job because to give me back the job would've meant ok now I'm in your face and you have to advance me

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** Unfortunately some of the black people they hired were incapable of advancement because of their attitude of hiring they wanted subservient so what's end up happening they tried to advance those people to prove I was wrong, and it fell flat.

**GH-** I see, it was very complicated,

**CB-** It is, but

**GH-** A long situation

**CB-** To fight the situation you have to because especially if you have kids, because what ends up happening is you have black people that would look at this type of situation when I, when I was doing it and say racism doesn't exist and it's like ok now I know you have a problem it's like how are you going to deal with it because you obviously denying it. And that denial is causing problems with feeding your relationship

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** With your kids, and see the kids all looked at

**GH-** Did you have a family by this point in time

**CB-** Oh I had a son,

**GH-** You had a son,

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** Yeah

**CB-** So looking at it was like if I didn't fight then what was his future, somebody's gonna have do it right, and so it got to the point where when we went through the tribunal phase, and during the tribunal phase I, I was definitely manic but it didn't seem to matter at me at the moment, because I, they were like you were just asking me questions and I would answer

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** If you're not lying, it doesn't take any effort to stay manic right

**GH-** No

**CB-** (Laughter)

**GH-** (Laughter) Umm so know you had said when we last talked about hospitalization you left the second time without medication

**CB-** Mm

**GH-** Did you go back to the hospital

**CB-** I was back now at the beginning of the umm Coast Guard case thing right, that was when I went back again. I ended up back in the hospital, this time they had to come and get me with the cops and drag me out of the house, take me down to the hospital. So when I get there now I am pissed (Laughter)

**GH-** Oh

**CB-** You know so that was when all of sudden the needle thing started happening, and it was like do it again I dare ya. (Laughter)

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** And so, it, I didn't have to take any medication cause I wasn't bothering anybody so basically after six days this time they told me I could go and it was like if you certified me for seven days and you're looking at me right now telling me I can go you better give me some medication

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** Because there better be an excuse for me being here. And so they ended up giving me medication, I never took the medication, go back to see the psychiatrist twelve days later and he's more mad at me because I didn't take the medication and I'm trying to ask him why would you want me to that like what am I doing.

**GH-** What's the purpose

**CB-** Yeah and there was no answer right, so all during the Coast Guard thing once that started it was sort of like once my eyes opened up and I saw the racism and I saw the damage it was causing not only in the black community but in the white community too. Because it's sort of like when we went to school all we learned was white history

**GH-**Mm-hmm

**CB-** Now they have what they call transitional program where they teach that but it's at the community college. And it's given to kids who have dropped out of school and stuff like that. It should be in the high schools

**GH-** In the regular curriculum

**CB-** Yup because then all of a sudden now both the blacks and the whites get an understanding of each other. It's like when I, when I talk to kids about going to school when, earlier like growing up, I would tell them when you're going to school remember one thing you are learning about the white man, that is all your there for. You're just learning how to speak like him, in his several different languages, like math being one, reading being another. You're just

**GH-** French

**CB-** Yeah you know, so once you mastered that and you step out in grade twelve those that you step out of grade twelve with will be those you will be out in the workforce with. But at least they know or have some idea of your understanding of things. My philosophy in life is not what you know, it's who know. Right, especially in our age group now cause we came up that way and we had jobs and stuff. The Trudeau era you could quit a job on Friday and be working on Monday.

**GH-** Yeah we were kind of Generation X, it was sort of after the gold rush kind of thing

**CB-** Yeah, yeah

**GH-** You knows, I agree you, that's where I grew up too. Umm how do you feel it's been what five years since the tribunal or whatever

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** And you said that you, you work every day you know I, I can't remember what job you have now but, you, you work a steady job

**CB-** Mm-hmm

**GH-** Umm and do you work with doctors and medication now

**CB-** Yes umm I've worked umm with a group called RRSS Regional Residential Services Society and what they do they deal with people with intellectual disabilities

**GH-** OK

**CB-** And they run a bunch of group homes and I work in one of their group homes, and so you're dealing with the psychiatrist, medications being given and all that and stuff. It's, it's an interesting feeling to work in because like now you have let's say we have one guy there Andy

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** Andy, Andy and I started off with like Andy playing me (Laughter) Andy would sneak my drinks and stuff like that but once I caught on to Andy, now Andy and I understand each other so I can say things to Andy like Andy take that glass and go put it in the sink, and he will do it. The girls will say it to him and he'll be yeah right (Laughter)

**GH-** So you do enjoy your work

**CB-** I do enjoy my work

**GH-** Umm and umm cause I look at it as sort of as this, this time line I've always thought of it there's, there's the symptoms of a illness right, then a diagnosis

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** Which you were around twenty-eight, and then this intellectual understanding what is it,

**CB-** Yup

**GH-** And then there's finally acceptance

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** And moving on and



**CB-** Well see looking at it from that point of view I didn't diagnosis until later and then they diagnosed me and I'm looking at them like ok I had to go see therapists and Janine (31:31) Janine passed away a few years back Janine was really good about it, like Janine would sit down and listen to me. Now your coming you just did seven days, you're on the edge of a manic episode cause the medication isn't quite taking hold yet so you could talk to her like that right,

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** And Janine would explain stuff and she would try and show you all things I was presenting to her about how the black community verse the white community, she would show me things like books and stuff which (31:58) trying to understand right and it's like I'm saying Janine but your running late like right now it is to late the black community it's over.

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** They, it's just over.

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** It's, it's, just over we don't have anybody coming behind us, the kids are either hooked on drugs, done time, umm or selling drugs. You know what I mean

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** So they don't want to have to go through what, what we went through

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** So they creating a whole other path (32:24)

**GH-** A different set of responsibilities or priorities

**CB-** It's a different set of mental health

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** A whole different set right and the deal with that mental health you have to deal with this mental health.

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** Like for example, myself because I went through all and stuff my son would not hesitate to ask for help, because he knows

**GH-** It normalized it

**CB-** Exactly

**GH-** Its accepted

**CB-** Right it's accepted

**GH-** It's accepted but you're not saying that is the case with the community

**CB-** Nope that's not the case with the community.

**GH-** And our addictions and drug addicts, or addictions or alcoholism when you say that is rampant in the community

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** Umm I'm gonna ask a few more questions what I was thinking was maybe now as you sit here today looking back at what you described umm and where you are today is there anything along the way that would of been helpful to you that should of shown up earlier a certain, like you mention Janine this therapist if you've met her when you were a teenager or something or when you first started feeling

**CB-** Mm-hmm

**GH-** Cause she was more accessible to you.

**CB-** If she had of been more like (33:36)

**GH-** Cause I'm like that

**CB-**.... hospital if there had of been a Janine there type of deal I would of gotten a better understanding, I would have been diagnosed as opposed to ok were taking off the anti-psychotics and see you later, good luck with that.

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** And your sort of like whatever, (Laughter) Catcha later. (Laughter)

**GH-** Yeah and umm is there anything, this is really a tough question, is there anything you would of done differently knowing what you know now.

**CB-** Oh yeah, well see the thing that I have begun to realize and, and I end up, up doing this like through my, when I started the Coast Guard case everybody kept there where different opinions about racism and stuff and I said to them ok if I can prove this racism I can prove to you there is a god because you don't see racism but you feel it, it has an effect, and so does god. You can feel

him and he has an effect. So after coming to that realization I began to understand my illness a little better because I became more insightful into what was going on around me there were things that were happening that you could see happening but you were thinking ok somebody's gotta be listening because

**GH-** Spirituality

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** Regardless of where you go to church whatever place

**CB-** Yup

**GH-** Plays a role in your recovery and

**CB-** Yeah a big role right, yeah and having that and then all of sudden ok I not the one with the problem society is. So I must go out there and deal with it in such a way that, that I don't interfere that I am a feeling fulfilled when I am doing it and I am doing something useful. So going back into the workforce it wasn't going to be ok I not going back in to nursing I, I refuse to be subservient to somebody in that especially in this environment right

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** You know what I mean it, it just no, I'm not gonna be a statistic again right. So I waited it out, I'm working with Nancy and those guys at Cole Harbour Mental Health we ended up getting me into this program that got me into this which is a, because of the life they lead I have a life. Like you know there are days when you go to work on the weekends let go, Andy let's go for a drive, you'll tour around town where ever have ice cream and stuff take him to movies and

things like that things that I alone would not do, let's say (Laughter) You know what I mean. So we went to Florida one time.

**GH-** But you get back from your work, it's not just getting a pay check but you get back emotionally or spiritually from your work. So your work helps you.

**CB-** Yup it does and you're working with individuals that need your help

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** And there, it's not their fault

**GH-** Its actual disabilities

**CB-** Yeah and it's not their fault you know what I mean it's not their fault. It's not because they OD on drugs they were born this way. So that, that attitudes the rest of society have they don't have, they cannot have.

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** You know they never interacted in society that way right.

**GH-** Gotcha, umm before we go one to another thing is there any other points sort of chronological in your childhood or in your early you know in your twenties when you were a younger man are there any other sorts of critical points of your life that you sort of said aha and your eyes were opened like you talked about when the communities mixed for school, you talked about your work experience, was there any other particular big incidence in your life that from the perspective of your mental health anything else that really changed your understanding of it like in your thirties

**CB-** Well see

**GH-** Or earlier

**CB-** Well see in, in the twenties when you started to realize it first off you realized it something different here but at this point your in the white community and your thinking ok it must be because I'm black so when you go back to the black community then all of sudden it's like guys what's up (Laughter) you know, why do I feel this way. And they would like by this time my cousin had gone to jail and stuff for things he hadn't even done so him and I had got together and started hanging around together and stuff right so we would both work all day and stuff and every Friday we would get together and take a hit of acid (Laughter) We'd take a hit of acid

**GH-** Make it through another week

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** Yup umm ah well that's great umm I'm gonna ask you just a couple of questions that aren't so much chronological it's just like with your experience umm and you mentioned you know people like Janine the positive parts of your experience umm life now how is it

**CB-** Life now is umm is interesting you umm you, your living a life that, it was like when I was on fifteen milligrams of my medication right I was at a point where I was like where there was no point in living like I mine as well be dead I mean it's like I know there's a god type of thing so I mine as well cash in but killing is a sin (Laughter) So it's sort of like I had to go to them and say listen this isn't working

**GH-** You were over medicated

**CB-** Yeah and it was like now when they cut it back to ten I am what you see right

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** With a cup a coffee or two (Laughter)

**GH-** (Laughter) (SKIP IN DISK 1 SECOND) ... a relationship with your psychiatrist or your doctor

**CB-** Umm Moodoo and I have an understanding now our understanding is now I'm not quite sure of this bi-polar thing because we all can end up bi-polar it's just a victim of circumstance

**GH-** 38:55

**CB-** Yeah or some of us get to a point in life where we don't grow any further because we, we saw something we don't want to see.

**GH-** Or experienced something

**CB-** But experienced something, but it's sort of like its ok to go see a marriage counsellor so why isn't it ok to go see psychiatrist right.

**GH-** Umm yes stigma umm do you feel yourself I mean because there, there's stigma within society whi, which is getting talked about and slowly getting addressed the stigma within families I mean communities do, do you feel a self stigma like why is this wrong with me like were you hard on yourself you said you often had to act for different people

**CB-**Mmm

**GH-** You couldn't be your real self did you see that as a kind of sort of self stigma

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** Umm

**CB-** But see what I ended up doing was like the last go around it was like now when I go home I tell people it's like if my outside light is off don't bother me you know what I mean if the lights on you can drop in or whatever don't drop in with your problems I don't want to hear them right  
(Laughter)

**GH-** So you have ways of staying well you got

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** You needs your sleep

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** You need

**CB-** And you need to have that time where it's like it's you can be you and I, have you ever played hearts?

**GH-** Oh yeah

**CB-** Well I play hearts on the internet a lot

**GH-** Yeah

**CB-** (Laughter)

**GH-** You just need umm just umm my wife calls it goofing around time she'll do something mindless for, I do the same thing.

**CB-** Yeah



**GH-** You know just something mindless, I, I clean the house at time like that or sort out my, my old records or something

**CB-** Something

**GH-** Just something mundane or I will play a game like solitaire on the computer.

**CB-** On the computer, yeah

**GH-** Just some quiet time

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** Kind of like meditation time

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** I do Chi Cong which is like a moving mediation it's not complicated like Tia Chi but that's what they call it and it just brings you back in to who you are

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** And I often find that's great but mindless task I'm going to go weed the yard for the afternoon it doesn't matter really if the yard weeded or not, but I find that those quiet times means balance for me do, do you find that.

**CB-** I find that my home life now has become my balance like when I go outside the door I'll go out for coffee with girls and go to movies and stuff but when it comes to going back to my place it's no (Laughter)

**GH-** That's Cecil's place

**CB-** Yeah and to have somebody invade my space like for example I have to do some painting right now I have to paint the inside of the house and I'm trying to chose new colors and the different girls are saying I know what I would do, and different people are saying I'd paint but guys you don't understand I'm looking at it from a totally different point of view,

**GH-** So you sort of empowered yourself to take charge of your own life and the illness is part of it

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** When you need to take care

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** Of yourself umm well that's a really positive thing do you have people, I know when we talked on the phone we had a great talk do you have other peers or people who suffer from bipolar do you ever go to support groups

**CB-** No

**GH-** Or have any other people umm

**CB-** No the, the one that I see my therapist ah Nancy, Nancy every two weeks. And Nancy and I sit down and have a great chats and stuff but Nancy is a person where I can dump on she's like that surrogate relationship

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** Where it's like it doesn't matter, I can come here and say whatever and even if it scares you it doesn't matter (Laughter)

**GH-** It's good to have those Nancy's, yup

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** Ah is there anything cause I think I really got a good grasp and I'm sure there is lots more and we may get together again it's umm, but is there anything that you would like to say to people who have gone through say mental illness umm within a community umm that they could learn from umm say mistakes you made or things that you didn't know that you wished, like if you wanted to hand this on to your son you know say, say you didn't see your son again and he wanted to know say when he was twenty eight is there any sort of thing you would wanna say what to do

**CB-** I would say all people when you reach the age twenty five that you should see a psychiatrist just to have, air out your thoughts and stuff, to see because there's no such thing as normal we don't have a bench mark to start with you know

**GH-** Some people call it a mental health continuum

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** Or somewhere along that lines

**CB-** Cause it like if you were never diagnosed then you'll suffer it's like taking a pill because of an illness and then suffering more from the side effects then you were from the illness so it's like you know you'll go through life having these illnesses right these episodes whatever but you won't understand it. At twenty five is when your I'm all that (Laughter) and then it's the best time to go because that, that's usually catch you before you get married and it helps give you an understanding of where you're going of what you want and all of that

**GH-** And what you're dealing with

**CB-** And what you're dealing with.

**GH-** Yup

**CB-** But it's like nope, people won't do that, they rather take their daughter for three abortions then take her to see a psychiatrist

**GH-** That's weird isn't it

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** That's, it weird thing, I have gotten a lot more involved in the mental health community and that helps me

**CB-** Mmm

**GH-** Because doing things like this umm and trying to work on things are you involved in the community at all regarding mental health I know, not your job which is dealing with intellectual disabilities but umm how for example did you know Susan, who I Susan Roper who

**CB-** Well see I knew her through Nancy

**GH-** Oh ok

**CB-** See Nancy and I get together all time and Nancy ... (44:24) and when we get together it's more like ok like for example the tax break do you know about the tax break you get, well I didn't know about that right. So I'm working away and stuff like this and then Nancy says listen to me and she explains it to me and we fill out the forms and send them off and the next thing

you get this huge tax break every year that everybody's wondering where you get it from because it's like

**GH-** The disabilities forms or

**CB-** Yeah because it's like umm the people at work don't know about my disability so I don't tell them, it sort of like now it's been going on three years for them to find out type of deal I would have to look at them and say well what they

**GH-** It's a question whether to disclose cause some people say if you have an illness for example if you had diabetic you employees should know or if you're epileptic you're employees for safety should know for safety mental health is very different then that

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** You know because for safety reasons they may need to know that

**CB-** Mm-hmm

**GH-** But your right to privacy over, trumps that, so for me that was a difficult balance and I'm sure your going through the same thing

**CB-** Yup, yup

**GH-** And I call it making it a visible minority an invisible minority because mental health is invisible and its everywhere

**CB-** Same as god

**GH-** Yeah same as god, exactly. So umm just I think we're doing really well here umm are there any last thoughts you'd like to say umm you can think about it for a minute umm about mental health and about your life and about what's available to people umm who need that help I like what you said about everyone seeing a psychiatrist to know where there at twenty-five is your an adult

**CB-** Mmm

**GH-** Umm it would of been nice to know earlier for me

**CB-** Yup

**GH-** Umm but is there anything you would like to say to pass along to let's say to, to, to your grandkids about what you've gone through someone whose not yet born you know

**CB-** Ok grandkids I do have grandkids (Laughter)

**GH-** Ok alright the grandkids that are alive yeah

**CB-** Well it's sort of like I would have to look back and say guys I did it all for you, I did what I had to do even in my mental health issues it has all been because somebody had to. Because in the black community there was no such thing as a mental illness so they thought so they dealt with all of this internally you have the guys that come home and become alcoholics and beat their wives like they do you have the guys that come home and just be become depressed and nobody can figure out why right and then we did have a couple of suicides in the community so when you look back at all this remember everybody has a mental health issue weather it's physical or not right so we all deal with a handicap right and being black we deal with even more. So it's like you can get help or help will have to come get you.

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** You know what I mean because it's like a lot of good kids end up in crime and stuff like that and it's not necessarily their fault but once they go off to jail and you don't get them the help, the mental help that they need they just come back and become a worse criminal I have friends my own age who have become institutionalized

**GH-** Would you, would you see like if education in the schools in your community

**CB-** Mm-hmm

**GH-** Up to I like the term normalize, which means make it acceptable but we talk about the kids when there, I have a seven year old but and she knows my situation I talk about it in seven year old terms

**CB-** Mmm

**GH-** But would you like to see an introduction to mental health in the school systems umm

**CB-** Well see

**GH-** Or education just like we educate on safety

**CB-** Yeah but you see the only thing about bringing in to the high schools type of thing you're dealing with hormones

**GH-** There's a lot going on

**CB-** Yeah and it's like so you may be seeing symptoms of an illness that doesn't exist because of the hormones

**GH-** Your hormones or your thyroid or whatever

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** What about junior high before those hormones kick in?

**CB-** (Laughter) Well see now they tried that now you get kids that are going to school on Ritalin

**GH-** Mm-hmm

**CB-** Now it's like my attitude towards that is any species that decides to drug their young doesn't deserve to exist if you're not gonna let them become whatever. So instead of trying

**GH-** Let them grow

**CB-** Yeah, see instead of trying to say ok we have somebody here ok now we must develop a new teaching method we got this sixty year old teaching method and were sticking to it. Well unfortunately the kids aren't growing up like there developing a lot faster their understanding a lot quicker and their understanding a lot more and so it's like when you're trying to teach a kid one and one is two its like now explain to that kid why one and one is two when you made it up years ago like now explain it, (Laughter)

**GH-** Why, why, why, yes umm with, with that do in your community it's difficult for anybody to navigate the system of mental health

**CB-** Mmm

**GH-** And as you said you entered the system through hospitalization

**CB-** Mmm



**GH-** As, as I did umm other people enter through the justice system when they get arrested

**CB-**Mmm

**GH-** Umm do you wish there was more access to services in your area that people could go

**CB** Yeah

**GH-** See someone like the people you now have in your life like Nancy or the person that Janine was. Do you wish there more available or

**CB-** Yeah, yeah

**GH-** Or that there was more information

**CB-**Yeah

**GH-** If you're feeling different

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** Come talk to me you know

**CB-** And it's like each of the communities has a community center, these are the perfect places to set up these shops and instead there setting up police stations (Laughter) yeah, which is sort of like come on now

**GH-** Absolutely yeah, no I think the whole education umm and awareness of it would of helped me probably the same as you

**CB-** Yup

**GH-** You wouldn't of gone through certain things

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** That set yeah back

**CB-** Yeah I would of been aware more aware of I'm going manic I better step back but they you weren't diagnosed you were just called delusions and when your called delusions its sort of like that's scary because you saw stuff that's real (Laughter) That is real, real.

**GH-** Through your lens there's no delusions

**CB-** (Laughter) No not all right

**GH-** Right, right ok just one last question note to say anything you want and then well, well cause this has been great

**GH-** No I found this whole experience to rather therapeutic cause to have somebody especially to have somebody like Grahame to talk to type of deal it really helps to bring it all out because it's like I do talk to Nancy but I don't talk to Nancy like this I don't talk anybody like this I just talk.

**GH-** It's kind of peer support

**CB-** Yeah, yeah it was like a one point when I was in the hospital and we were making toast and there was all of us having our snack and stuff and I said you know guys we are all inside here suffering from the same thing mental illness and we are the only ones not talking about it. So we sat down and we had a great chat about it right

**GH-** That's excellent

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** That's excellent

**CB-** Then this girl's father comes up to me later I was leaving to go or something and this comes to me and says your Cecil right, and I go yeah, I want to thank you for talking to my daughter about the voices, I'm looking at him like '*what voices*' (Laughter)

**GH-**(Laughter)

**CB-** It's often good to hear to have people that you can talk to like that; unfortunately my time was like seven days here go type of thing

**GH-** Yup

**CB-** Because most people don't accept mental illness they accept bipolar

**GH-** Nope, what do you do you say your work is therapeutic for you what else do you do to try and stay well so that you're not hospitalized again there's always an up and down but just to stay well I, I noticed you, you said you control your home environment it, it has order to it

**CB-** Yeah

**GH-** Your work environment you find is there anything else you do

**CB-** You see what I do now is I travel a lot right and when you go to another place you can be, nobody knows you, you can be, so if you feel like being this guy who gonna have a good time and stuff you can go be that guy, and because you're being that guy and you have that infectious personality type of thing every people join in so you meet people but you get to leave them there they don't follow you home

**GH-** So you never have to procure it

**CB-**(Laughter) Good one

**GH-** (Laughter) Yup, nope umm but you know you've done a lot to stay well and your working and contributing and your helping other people with intellectual disabilities I mean a lot people are very crippled by their mental illnesses

**CB-** Mmm

**GH-** Obviously you know it's inspiring to see that despite this somehow despite where your moods go you've kept your feet on the ground with working and with community and one and with god and spirituality I think that's really commendable and that grounding I think is obviously working with you we all have good days and bad days

**CB-** Yeah we do

**GH-** But I think it seems it it's really good would you agree

**CB-** At this with the medication re-touch I would say it's great right now I'm enjoying it going to Hawaii in September going to Florida in September everything is just like wow like look what's going on here right, and it's like I look at people who look at me as your handicap cousin with a mental illness who never traveled who never left the community and I say whose crippled  
(Laughter)

**GH-** (Laughter) Alright thanks Cecil umm it's good to ... thanks again.

**CB-** Ok