



**Sacramento Ethnic Communities Survey -  
Black Oral Histories  
1983/146**

Oral interview of  
Vincent "Ted" Thompson

January 19, 1984

**Conducted by Clarence Caesar**

**Transcribed by Lee Ann McMeans**

Center for Sacramento History  
551 Sequoia Pacific Blvd  
Sacramento, CA 95811-0229  
(916) 264-7072

[csh@cityofsacramento.org](mailto:csh@cityofsacramento.org)  
[www.centerforsacramentohistory.org](http://www.centerforsacramentohistory.org)

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The following interview was taped January 19, 1984, in the offices of Vincent “Ted” Thompson on 3601 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Sacramento, California. Mr. Thompson has been a resident of Sacramento since 1940, and since 1948, has owned and operated the Thompson Funeral Home and Rose Chapel in Sacramento. Mr. Thompson’s insights into the development of Black businesses in the 1950s and the effects of Redevelopment on Black businessmen in the 1960s form the crux of this interview. Mr. Thompson also offers insights into the jazz music scene in Sacramento in the 1940s and the early 1950s.

**Clarence:** Good evening Mr. Thompson, would you tell us something about yourself and how you came to arrive in Sacramento?

**Mr. Thompson:** Well, I came to Sacramento, I wanted to come to California and I decided to come out here with some friends of mine, but they left before I could leave so I came by myself and I got here in about 1940, played a little music and worked at McClellan Field for a while until I decided to go to school and study mortuary science.

**Clarence:** Where was the school that you studied?

**Mr. Thompson:** San Francisco.

**Clarence:** San Francisco. The San Francisco School of Mortuary Science?

**Mr. Thompson:** It’s called the San Francisco College of Mortuary Science.

**Clarence:** And after your completion of the course, what happened then?

**Mr. Thompson:** Well I came back to Sacramento and served an internship and then after which I went into business for myself.

**Clarence:** How long has your business been established?

**Mr. Thompson:** Well right now, 36 years.

**Clarence:** Where was your first establishment? Where was your first business location in Sacramento?

**Mr. Thompson:** At 7<sup>th</sup> and N Street.

**Clarence:** In downtown Sacramento?

**Mr. Thompson:** Yes.

**Clarence:** When did you move to your present location?

**Mr. Thompson:** In 1957.

**Clarence:** Was that a result of Redevelopment?

**Mr. Thompson:** Well, not Redevelopment, no, it was the result of the State of California putting up a building between 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Street on Capitol Avenue, which was the Department of Employment and since the government very seldom obeys their own rules, when they put it up without adequate parking according to their rules and regulations and without adequate parking according to the rules of the County or the City, and two years later they decided that they needed more parking so they came after the block I was in for additional parking and, of course, there again, they used unfair means, because they used the Law of Eminent Domain to purchase the property. So I was forced to fight them myself without an attorney because the way the thing was set up, why if I'd used an attorney, his fees would have eaten up the profits and I would have been out of business, so I was, I took a chance and fought for myself, and fortunately, I won the case and relocated here at my present address.

**Clarence:** So you feel that you were fairly compensated for your old location and the move here?

**Mr. Thompson:** No, not really, because under Eminent Domain and under fair market value and under the purchase of property and all those things that I mentioned, they base most of the purchase of property on what they call the, if you have a willing buyer and a willing seller and then if you have a fair market, if you have a market established, but in, there are certain businesses that the government recognizes that does not have an established market because there are so few of those businesses sold, such as funeral homes, art galleries, museums,

churches, cemeteries, and they fall into another category where they don't have what they call real, they have, I forgot the terminology now, but they have a different type of value which is known as the value to the owner, where I think it's called real value, which is value to the owner and the value is established by the cost of replacement in kind. I certainly did not receive a replacement in kind.

**[Counter 50]**

**Mr. Thompson:** As a matter of fact, even though I came out better than I would have if I had had an attorney, it took me 18 years to establish this building in it's entirety which would be comparable to the space I had in the other building where I came from, and that meant that this building was built in five separate stages in order to accomplish that, and it took 18 years to do it.

**Clarence:** So that includes the funeral home which is on the first floor and I assume that you live on the second level?

**Mr. Thompson:** Yes.

**Clarence:** Can you give me an idea of, let me backtrack a little bit. Can you tell me what motivated you to go into the mortuary science business? Was it the need, do you think, of a Black mortician in Sacramento? Or was it another motivation?

**Mr. Thompson:** Well there weren't any Black morticians here. As a matter of fact for 16 years I was the only Black licensed embalmer in Sacramento County. No, it came from something else, as a child, my parents wanted me to become a doctor, and I didn't, couldn't, I didn't make it in premed school because of the language barrier. In New York they required German as well as Latin, and I had an awful time trying to learn German. So I had to drop out from premed and I went into to pharmacy and I, oh I worked quite a while in New York pursuing a pharmaceutical license and then when I came here I decided that I just didn't want to take inventory like they have it in these drug stores here in places like Payless and Walgreen's and so forth and so on. Well, you can just imagine very few drug stores when I came here were established as drug stores, there were some small part of a big complex like Payless and they occupied a little back corner, all the Paylesses called Payless Drug Store, they sold, the least of what they sold was drugs or anything related to it. I just didn't feel that I wanted to become involved with that again. So I didn't pursue it here any further.

**Clarence:** Before your business opened, what types of funerary services were available to Blacks in Sacramento?

**Mr. Thompson:** Well, the White funeral homes they serviced the Blacks that were here, and that's about the only way that Blacks could be buried because they were the only ones here.

**Clarence:** Were there any in particular that Blacks went to more than others? That they trusted more than others? Or they got better service from than others?

**Mr. Thompson:** Well, in the funeral business in those days it wasn't so much who the Blacks' trusted, it's who the businessman decided he wanted as a customer. It was not uncommon to find White funeral homes like White anything else that steered away from Black business. But there were two especially when I started here that were doing Black business, and they had gone after it so to speak. And they were the main two.

**Clarence:** Can you remember the names of them?

**Mr. Thompson:** Yes, there was Klump's and Daggett. Those two.

**Clarence:** After you opened your shop, was business, I mean the funeral business is probably good anyway, but I mean, did you have any difficulty getting started as far as the amount of business you got or?

**Mr. Thompson:** Oh yes, well, first of all the average person doesn't realize that the funeral business has been traditional for a long time just like politics and religion. If the mother and father or the grandparents belonged to the Democratic Party most likely the children and the grandchildren will belong to the same party. If the grandparents belong to the Methodist Church, most likely the children and their children after them will belong to the Methodist Church. The same way with the funeral business, if somebody in the family is buried by a certain funeral director, and the services were satisfactory, chances are that family continued to go to that funeral director, and so this makes it very hard for a new funeral director to establish himself.

**[Counter 100]**

**Mr. Thompson:** Especially one from some other place because he's an outsider to begin with and secondly, they have already selected the person they want to go to, so it makes it pretty tough.

**Clarence:** So there wasn't just a cut and dried, "ok we have a Black funeral director and now we will start going to him" sight unseen, there was nothing like that?

**Mr. Thompson:** Well no. As a matter of fact I can recall being told about from the first Black doctor that they claim that was here in Sacramento, Dr. Kenneth Johnson, that he came here all, with all the credentials and everything and opened an office down in an area where he should have done business and it seemed like everybody just looked at him wide-eyed and passed by the door. Even though he had let them know that he was in town by visiting the churches and all of the organizations, and having it announced that we have a doctor here, he found it very hard to get business in the door. The irony of it was that, he said, when he'd started getting business, it wasn't Black business, it was usually Mexican or something else. He remembered that when the Blacks began to come, they resented the fact that they had one Black doctor and they couldn't get into his office because of the "foreigners" they said. {Mr. Thompson laughs} So it, you know, it was about the same thing and even today, we were still having problems because now we find that at one time when there were funeral homes that didn't cater to Blacks that now on a financial situation they are, in fact, there are funeral homes Sacramento and other places that are



hiring Blacks now for the sole purpose of attracting Blacks and this of course poses a problem with the Black funeral director.

**Clarence:** What was your earliest impression of Sacramento, of one, the Black community, and two, Sacramento as a city? You came here you said in the 1940s, what were your impressions of the Black community and Sacramento at that time?

**Mr. Thompson:** Well, as a fellow, one of the first fellows that I meet down at the SP Station, answered when I asked him, “Where the Colored neighborhood was”, he said, and he was also Black, he said “You know, I’ve been here for a long time and I know there is one, but where it is I don’t know.” There was no Colored or Black community.

**Clarence:** Now by the guy saying that there was no Black community does that mean there was no central location where Blacks could be found in town at that time?

**Mr. Thompson:** That’s right, Blacks, there were very few Blacks here in those days, and you could find them scattered quite a bit. For instances, over in East Sacramento right now where Folsom Boulevard goes out in the area where Corti Brothers is, that big market and so forth, there in those days, there was one or two Black families that lived on 55<sup>th</sup> or 56<sup>th</sup> Street. The Nash family, they still live there. There’s in this area here, in the Oak Park area, you had oh three or four families on 38<sup>th</sup> Street between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, you had three or four families on Bigler Way, one or two families on 36<sup>th</sup> Street, here the Whitfields, you had the one or two families on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, there was the Dunlap family, these are all families that people knew.

There was the Turner family and I don't know exactly where they lived, but they weren't in any one central location. You found some Black families downtown in the downtown area. Out there near where the Sacramento Army Depot is now, even though that was farmland, there were a couple of Black families out there, and they were pretty well spread out.

**[Counter 150]**

**Clarence:** But the heart and soul of whatever Black community there was seems to have been the downtown area? [someone knocks on the door and taping stops] I'll repeat my question, as far as you know though, it seems to me that the central core of the Black community was the downtown area where most of the institutions that were part of the Black community were located?

**Mr. Thompson:** Well there were perhaps maybe a few more Black families living down in the West End as we used to call it, then there were in other places, but there was no, there was no solid front on even any one street, because they were interspersed with Japanese, Filipinos, Mexicans, Whites, you name it. It was sort of a melting pot down there. You saw more Blacks inhabit the West End when Blacks began to come in here during World War Two, when they came in to do defense work and so forth, and they came in to rent property, and where they rented what few apartments there were down there and a few houses for rent and then as soon as, of course, they got their feet on the ground many of them moved to other places where they were able to buy. But like any other community, the hub is where most people came to in the

beginning, but it wasn't a community that they stayed in, they stayed there until, it was a sort of a jumping off point, until they could do better.

**Clarence:** What was the state of Black business, Black economic enterprise in those days? Was there much of it to your recollection?

**Mr. Thompson:** Yes, well, as far as for the population, I guess there was a good share. As I told you about Dunlap's Restaurant, Dunlap, like some of the other businesses, Black businesses, didn't cater to Blacks. Of necessity, because there wasn't enough Black business to support them. So they had to do a segregated business where they catered to Whites and Dunlap's did reserve Monday nights for Blacks that wanted to use their facilities or whatever it was. There used to be a Black barber shop down I believe it was on California Street, which is the short street that runs between, let's see, I think it runs parallel to J and K, between 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, somewhere in that area, and they too, although the barbers were Black and the owner was Black they of course catered to White business of necessity. There were several other little businesses, Black business, none of them that I can recall that catered to Blacks because the Black population was so small that I don't think it could support anything at that time.

**[Counter 200]**

**Mr. Thompson:** Then of course, later on, we had a Black drug store, Dan Taylor, well before Dan Taylor came in, Nix Jackson, who was one of the pioneers in the nightclub business, he and a woman by the name of Anderson, what is her first name?

**Clarence:** Louise Anderson?

**Mr. Thompson:** Louise Anderson, they and I think some other people had some parts of that business, they opened up the Zanzibar. And Nix Jackson and Mrs. Anderson also opened the A & J Liquor Store which was Anderson and Jackson Liquor Store, and Nix took over one of the old Japanese drug stores when the Japanese were relocated from here. So he actually had the first Black drug store in Sacramento. There was a fellow by the name of Twig, his name was, that had a taxicab company, Twig's Taxi, his wife is still here in Sacramento, at least the woman he was married to at that time, and she is still in Sacramento. She is not in that business, she is in the hairdressing business. There was the Mo Mo Club which came along some time after that. There was some, in the early days there were a couple of clubs that, where Blacks frequented, quite a bit, but I don't believe they were owned by Blacks, there was, the Jitterbug was one of them and I forgot the name of the other one. Now –

**Clarence:** Was it the Eureka Club?

**Mr. Thompson:** Was it the Eureka? It might have been.

**Clarence:** Harold Wiley mentioned the Eureka Club.

**Mr. Thompson:** Then there were two businesses that I do know that were Black. There was the Green Front, which is a pool hall; and what was the other one? The other one was taken over by

Mr. Moore. It was the same Moore that owned the Mo Mo Club, but this is before the Mo Mo Club, I can't remember his first name, oh Alex Moore. Then of course there were some of the rooming houses in the West End that were, I don't believe that any of them really were owned by Blacks, I think they either rented or leased the, or and some of them that were just working there. That's about all I can recall.

**Clarence:** Were there any Black professionals working in civil service positions at that time that you can recall?

**Mr. Thompson:** It seems, I used to have that information at hand, it seems that in the early 40s we had one Chiropodist, that's a foot doctor, but his mainstay was working for the state and so he, his office was only open by appointment. There was one M.D., Ken Johnson; there was one dentist, Roscoe Brewer; there was, I think there was one R.N., and I don't remember who that was, there was a Black woman that worked for the telephone company, but she was not known to be Black generally. But it seemed that the people that were in power in those days, they knew she was Black and it sort of a means of saying "well, we don't discriminate, why we have a Black woman working here."

**[Counter 250]**

**Mr. Thompson:** There were a few, a handful of Blacks in the post office, like Nix Jackson's brother, Roger Jackson, who is still alive and still an assistant to the Pastor of St. Andrews Church. He's retired, but he's an assistant to the Pastor there. He worked in the Post Office.

There was Aaron Jenkins that was a postal carrier, I think he was about the only Black carrier in those days.

**Clarence:** I had the opportunity to interview the Jenkins about that.

**Mr. Thompson:** Uh huh.

**Clarence:** They said he had “quite a route”.

**Mr. Thompson:** Yeah, Well, things are getting away from me. [Mr. Thompson and Clarence laugh] But that generally was it, I don't think we had any, I know we didn't have any Black lawyers because Nat Colley was the first Black lawyer to come to Sacramento, and there have been several that have come and gone. There was a fellow by the name of James which was, I forgot his first name, but he was in the office with Colley for a while and then he left here. I think he's in Africa now. Then there were others. It is interesting to note that some of our professionals now used to be musicians. Attorney Greer used to be a trumpet player, and he and Ray Jenkins, well Ray Jenkins was the best Black trumpet player in town. There was Brown, Dick Brown, who is I understand is still around, he played trombone and he was a professional photographer for years. Dr. James Morris, he, I don't believe Dr. Morris was here in the 40s, but he served his internship under Dr. Brewer and he was a trumpeter at one time.

**Clarence:** So music was kind of like a magnet then?

**Mr. Thompson:** Yeah.

**Clarence:** It drew people here and maybe they stayed and established themselves later on?

**Mr. Thompson:** Yes. I'm still a saxophonist. I don't know if you heard that or not. Let me see, who else? There's a man that's in the cleaning business that has been here much longer than I have, his name is Willie Credic, and he still has the Sacramento Dye Works I think it's called at 4<sup>th</sup> and T Street, and he was one of the exponents of the art of playing the piano in those days around here.

**Clarence:** All these people met at the Mo Mo and Zanzibar Clubs, back in the old days to play?

**Mr. Thompson:** No, those kind of places were not the places where the people went to play, except those musicians who wanted to get into a jam session, and jam sessions we usually held on Sunday. More of them played together at things like the ODES Hall which was known in those days as Portuguese Hall and was at 6<sup>th</sup> and W Street. In fact there are some photographs floating around with some of the old musicians out there.

**[Counter 300]**

**Mr. Thompson:** I'm recalling one with Harold Wiley, and myself on it, and a fellow by the name of Larry Burnett, I think was on that one, and a few other musicians –

**Clarence:** I might have that one.

**[Tape One, Side One Ends, Counter 308]**

**[Tape One, Side Two Begins, Counter 308]**

**Mr. Thompson:** They used to have quite a few dances down there and that's I think one of the places that the musicians used to go. Then, of course, I believe in every community there are people who are not necessarily musicians, sometimes they know nothing of music at all, but they just appreciate certain types of music and they will make places available where it can be played. There used to be a fellow, I think his name is Dave and he lived on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, and at the drop of a hat, why you could get Dave to open his house for a jam session or anything along that line and you'd find Harold Wiley and myself and oh, gee, Ray Jenkins, and there used to be some, there was a couple of Mexican fellows that used to play quite well they would enter in these sessions. There used to be a fellow by the name of, oh heck, he played guitar around here and he was, he was quite a figure in some of these sessions.

**Clarence:** Was his last name Cruz?

**Mr. Thompson:** No, no, this fellow was what was his name now, and I buried him too. Drake! Snuffy Drake they called him.

**Clarence:** Snuffy Drake [laughs]



**Mr. Thompson:** He played a four string guitar, boy I'll tell you he was the greatest, he could play, and then there was Julius Harris was a bass player. Of course the best bass player we had was gone most of the time during those days, he was playing in the U. S. Navy Band and that was John Hebert, who is still playing. In fact I played, he and I played together just last Saturday.

**Clarence:** So you are saying basically that music was kind of a thing that kind of fostered a togetherness among people that came from different parts of the country and came to Sacramento to –

**Mr. Thompson:** Yeah, well music has always been that type of thing, it has always attracted music lovers and then people who were able to play music and it was a, it's been a kind of thing that there's togetherness and yet there is the urge to show everybody else just what you can do. And so a person can show how good they are, or like one fellow that they have here in town that's still here that's been trying to play the trumpet for 50 years I guess or better, and still can't play {Clarence laughs} and I've seen musicians in some of these jam sessions I've seen when this fellow would get on the bandstand, I've seen them one by one they would leave the bandstand and probably nobody left up there but him and the drummer. [Mr. Thompson and Clarence laugh] That used to go on all the time. Then we had some people who passed through and stayed. There's Edith Griffin, she's famous, she's out of Kansas City. She's a famous pianist. She's about my age and she's still here and she's still tops in her field, plays a very fine piano. There's, one of the people that's come here and not too many years ago, not as long as, he hasn't been here as long as the others, but there's George Walker, who is a fine drummer, and

there are a few of them. But now as far as Black musicians are concerned especially from the old school playing what we called the old standard music, there are very, very few of them left. Peter Rabbit is still here. I don't know if you ever heard of him?

**Clarence:** I've heard of him.

**Mr. Thompson:** Same as Walter Graham, and he is a jazz organist. I think he is presently playing at the Riverbank Country Club in Broderick. As I said, Edith Griffin is still here, John Hebert is still here, and myself. I understand Harold Wiley has retired from music. Burnett, Larry Burnett, used to be a good guitarist, he's retired from music. Let's see, all the rest of them like Willie Credic, if they haven't retired they're dead! There are just a handful of the old timers left. There is a relatively old timer, but not too old, is Frank Myers, a bass player, he's still here.

**[Counter 358]**

**Clarence:** What were your impressions of Sacramento after World War Two as compared to before World War Two, with the increase of population?

**Mr. Thompson:** Well, it was typical of any community where Blacks are concerned, when there's few Blacks in the community, the Blacks don't have much problem. When the population of the Blacks begins to increase it seems that the Whites become intimidated, and then all of the barriers start going up and you find that the Blacks that lived here prior to the influx of the people that came here during World War Two had little or no difficulty in living,

whether it was earning a living, even though that the jobs were more or less menial, with the biggest job among Blacks was being in the garbage department, and at one time, as far as women were concerned, I guess it was domestic work. But after the influx of Blacks began to get great, you find it became, it began to get hard and harder and harder to rent property or to buy property and it came to the point where they did try to corral the Blacks into staying in the West End, which they made a very good effort of doing it, by redlining property east of 9<sup>th</sup> Street. You could get help from the banks west of 9<sup>th</sup> Street for a certain period of time, and then when they decided that they were going to redevelop the West End, and then it was just the other way around, you couldn't get a quarter from the bank if the property was west of 9<sup>th</sup> Street. You could probably get a little help if it was in Oak Park or when Glen Elders was built, you could get a little help out there, or maybe a small token of help in Del Paso Heights. But, these things, these problems didn't exist before the larger number of Blacks came here because the people, the Whites were not intimidated by a small number of Blacks, as is usually the case in almost any community.

**Clarence:** So it seems that when the population increased it created kind of a pressure cooker effect on the residential patterns of Sacramento, they had to have some place for Blacks to live, but in selected areas that were open for Blacks at the time. Which included, I guess, Oak Park and as you said Glen Elders, so at this point you said you moved here in 1957, at the time that you moved here, were there many Blacks already in the community in 1957?

**Mr. Thompson:** Well now, I lived in Oak Park before 57, but I moved to this location where my business is in 57. I remember that the first house that I bought after looking for a long time

for property, the first house that I bought was on Santa Cruz Way, between 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. There were only two Black families living in that block and one of them was buying and the other one was renting. There was still that disbursed thing, because that was, I bought property in 42, I guess it was. There wasn't too much of a problem then, if you could find a place where, that was for sale, there wasn't too much of a problem. You couldn't go into, there were neighborhoods where they didn't have Blacks for whatever reason, but in the neighborhoods that did have Blacks, you didn't have too much trouble. There was no congregating or anything like that.

**[Counter 408]**

Afterwards, though, it became pretty hard to buy property and I was a, what do they call it now, let me see what my title was. I served on the Human Relations Commission in 1963 until 1967 and this was during the time when Brookley Air Force Base down in Mobile, Alabama, was being phased out and we were alerted that many of the people had decided they would come to McClellan Air Force Base, and we, and the Human Relations Commission took a survey to find out what areas the incoming people from Mobile would find most receptive and you would be surprised what we came up with. It was in most of the areas that we looked in there was no Blacks wanted, and I think the largest percentage we ever came across was about 10% and I don't remember or recall which area that was in. But it was very, very hard and very discouraging to note that people just were putting up barriers against them coming in. The, of course the greatest turn around was when Proposition 14 passed, and people were able to break down some of the laws. But when I came here they had restricted covenant laws so that it

actually stated in the law that you, if you were a certain color you couldn't, you couldn't buy a house or, I don't know about renting, but you couldn't buy a house in certain areas. They had laws against intermarriage in those days. I don't know if you came across those or not?

**Clarence:** Uh, huh.

**Mr. Thompson:** Of course, you could go up to Reno and get married, but then again in Reno the whole State of Nevada was so discriminatory it was like, they tell me it was like being in Mississippi. So [they both laugh] for a long time until Attorney Greer and somebody else boarded a Greyhound Bus to go up to Reno one Sunday morning because you weren't even, they didn't even welcome you on the Greyhound Bus to go up to gamble. They had one place up there called the New China Café in Reno and they would send, they would charter their own busses to bring the Blacks in. And that was the only place you could go to gamble in Reno. And this particular Sunday morning, why, Greer and somebody else got on the bus and they were asked to leave, but they refused to leave so they cancelled the bus. They were out to change things and it was changed that very day, because that whole incident that took place that day opened up the free movement of Blacks to Reno and to the other clubs.

**Clarence:** I'm sure they haven't regretted it ever since. [They both laugh.]

**Mr. Thompson:** Yeah, it brought in a lot of money up there to them.

**Clarence:** So at the time, your business opened in Oak Park there was no, not even a hint that Oak Park was headed in the direction that it eventually became famous for, as a Black community in Sacramento?

**Mr. Thompson:** Uh, the direction of Oak Park in my opinion, the direction that it has taken was a, the result of a design to, as a place to send Blacks, the most likely place to send Blacks. Yeah, because they, when they started redeveloping the West End, there were only three main directions that they were sending Blacks to and that was Oak Park, Del Paso Heights, and Glen Elders. Up until then, of course, Oak Park was a family community and ironically enough, the most of the city fathers that have, people that have come through City Hall that have held jobs down there, and so forth, in high places were born and raised in Oak Park.

**[Counter 458]**

**Mr. Thompson:** Oak Park at one time in fact, it was a separate community, it was about the first annexation to the City that there was, and the attraction out here was Joyland, it was where McClatchy Park is now, it was the end of the car line. That's where people went on holidays and Sundays to have picnics and so forth and so on. And, but in every community and this I guess has been as old as time, in every community there comes a time when they find various means to change that community because in the words in the terms of economics a point of diminishing returns has been reached and properties are not bringing in enough revenue, tax wise, and otherwise, so they find ways of getting rid of the property and replacing it for more modern structures which tend to bring in more money.

**Clarence:** So that in a nutshell is basically what the West End Redevelopment project was all about?

**Mr. Thompson:** Yeah, of course these things are done in such a way that even though we, the unsuspecting public, are unable to see what's going on, it is done in such a way that, it's like moving checkers on a checkerboard, or chess, although I shouldn't say chess because I don't know anything about the game. But checkers on a checkerboard, a good checker player, the moves that he's making now will, are not necessarily the moves that he, his greatest moves. These are just getting things set up for his greatest moves later on, and the same thing with getting, with moving the Black population to places like Oak Park and Del Paso Heights and other areas, is just a sort of set up move for the real move which would be later on, which we saw here in Oak Park later on, when they brought the sort of the movement to Oak Park where they were moving the Blacks down to Florin Road and this was just a stop measure or a temporary campground so to speak, until they could move the people down to Florin Road. Many things about the changes that have taken place here have definitely been proven to be planned and they just didn't happen because the people moved in that direction. But they were planned pretty much like you, they treat cattle when they, when they want to get them into a corral they narrow down and pretty soon they get them in the chute and there is no other place to go, no other direction to go.

**Clarence:** And often these are economics and redlining and preferential buying in certain neighborhoods, block busting?

**Mr. Thompson:** Yeah, all of those things were used. So, now you see Oak Park itself tends to be on a the rise again. You'll find in many instances those families, especially I'm speaking of White families that some of them that moved out because of the changing times, some of them are now either reclaiming property by buying it or if they had still had claim to it, they are moving back in, fixing it up and so forth and so on. Because the side effects of moving out to the new districts were the gasoline prices and the cost of transportation and so forth and so on. And when you move out to the suburbs and your job is here in the hub, it comes to a point why, you have to take a long look at this thing and see whether it is worth it or not.

**[Counter 508]**

**Mr. Thompson:** And I guess a lot of people found that they, whether it was worth it or not, they just couldn't afford it, and they are coming back into the fold. As well as the fact, you will find, that things like McGeorge School of Law is taking its place in Oak Park and UCD Medical Center and a few other places [hard to hear] to where, if you can look far enough into the future you'll find that Oak Park will be in the next 20 years perhaps an altogether different community and I doubt very much whether you will see many of our people, of many Black people in this community when it takes that change.

**Clarence:** So you are saying that Oak Park is undergoing a process of gentrification? Basically like some of the cities on the East Coast where –



**Mr. Thompson:** I think so.

**Clarence:** Where middle-aged, or excuse me, middle class younger couples taking old properties and renovating them and restoring them?

**Mr. Thompson:** Yes.

**Clarence:** What do you see basically as the future of Sacramento's Black community, given the changes that it has gone through? A new professional class has arisen, and it seems to be somewhat of a motivation for Blacks to move to better times and better positions within the city or the county or whatever. Do you see that as an ongoing trend or do you find that there have been some maybe negative changes or negative processes also taking place?

**Mr. Thompson:** Well, you must realize that for quite a number of years, it didn't make any difference how much money the Black man had, he was just not welcome in certain communities and he wasn't welcome, that is other than in a servitude position. So he was very, very much corralled and very much limited as far as movement was concerned. That Black man was moved around again, like checkers on a checkerboard and wherever the property was below the standards or had worn itself out or been worn out by the people that had bought it and owned it or rented it before, and by design it was passed on or made available to the Black man to rent, and in so many instances if he didn't have the money it was maneuvered to where he could rent there anyway, because that's where his place was going to be. There was no class distinction. If you were Black you were thrown into one bucket. But we see quite a different thing happen

now, that the Black man has come into the position where his dollars are longer than they used to be. He is able to purchase bigger and better, and more expensive places and automobiles and clothing than he used to be. And people are now more conscious of that dollar than they used to be, and they are not so much restrictive because of his color. The restriction will be in a great sense on how far or how long his dollar is. Your imagination can take you because I, you see this as far as the movie stars and basketball players and so forth and so on. They've got the money, they can get the places. And that same thing is handed down to the small community and the people that have the money can get the places. I see that as a major factor in what the Black community will look like in the future. If you have a large number of people that have not been able to get the money, then you are going to have a space where you find quite a few of these Blacks.

**[Counter 558]**

**Mr. Thompson:** Now whether or not they're going to be interspersed with others, I can't foresee that, but if you're, if you've got the money, you are going to be almost anywhere.

**Clarence:** Has this been a personal experience of yours judging by your observations of local Blacks in Sacramento and if so, what areas do you find this happening most?

**Mr. Thompson:** Well I find that, of course, as far as Sacramento is concerned when a man gets a job or he gets into a profession where he is able to have more money than he has had before under other conditions, then he more or less picks out the neighborhood that seems to be

attractive to him and maybe it might be attractive to him because he was not able to live there before, or it might be attractive to him because his business associates put a high value on it, or it may be that it just has better surroundings for his children, such as schools, and so forth and so on, and he's able to make that choice and does make that choice. The person that is in the category of still making minimum wage and that has nothing to take him out of that category will still be pushed around like checkers on the checkerboard. It has been happening and it will continue to happen as far as I can see.

**Clarence:** So you see race as becoming less and less of a factor as far as the ability of say a well-to-do middle class Black, or upper middle class Black to determine where he wants to live within Sacramento?

**Mr. Thompson:** Yeah that's, yeah that's becoming less and less of a factor, quite quickly.

**Clarence:** Mr. Thompson, I would like to thank you for your time and I hope that the interview will be of use, not only to the History Center where it is going, but also to the general community that is going study it and try to get something out of it. Thank you very much, sir.

**Mr. Thompson:** Okay, you take care.

**Clarence:** Thank you.

**[Tape One, Side Two Over, Interview Ends, Counter 586]**