

LINDA – Fieldnotes – Thursday, January 31, 2008

Subject: Meeting with Captain Brian Glasco
 Location: Harlem Temple Corps, 540 Lenox Ave (at 136th St)
 Time: 3:30 – about 5pm

[VARENNE ADDITIONS IN BLUE]

John Nelson, Varenne, and I have a long stretch of time in between the appointments. After staying at the restaurant as long as we can, until about 2:45, we walk slowly towards the Salvation Army church along Striver's Row and down Lenox. When we reach the corner across the church Varenne remarks on the differences between churches that present themselves as European churches, and the Mormon church and this one, which are brick buildings.

It is 3:15, and we decide it is better to wait inside, where it is warm, than to continue walking. We cross the street. John goes to try the church door, but it is gated and locked. He tells us we need to go in through the main door.

We go in through the first set of doors. There is a plastic window with a small circle cut out to communicate with the receptionist. Presumably the second set of doors is locked, since a young lady has to open one for us from the inside. John tells her we're here to see the pastor. I did not catch exactly what happened, but we were let inside.

We troop into the hallway. The receptionist told us that the pastor would be with us in five minutes (although our appointment is not until 4:00). A man came out [assistant pastor?] and shook each of our hands. I didn't catch his name, but he was tall, thin, and foreign-looking. He told us that the pastor could meet with us in about 3-5 minutes. We said that was fine and apologized for being early. We told him we would continue chatting. John Nelson asked him the pastor's name.

The receptionist shooed two young people, including the girl who opened the door for us, off the couch. The girl was wearing a sweatshirt with a lavender hood and sleeves with a multicolored bodice over jeans. The other was wearing a black hooded sweatshirt and jeans. They had been sitting and talking with an older man behind a computer, whom we later learned was the security guard, Jim. Apparently Lavender Girl also works there.

Varenne finds Glasco's name on a posted board, repeats it aloud: Christine Glasco. John jokes that Varenne better not call the pastor Christine. Varenne finds Brian's name on the board, and also that Captain is explained in parentheses as (PASTORS). He comments that it's good to have multiple pairs of eyes.

The pastor came out around 3:30, shook our hands, and led us down a hallway to his office where there were two chairs facing a desk and chair. He went to fetch a third chair

167P
12P

629
218
630
103

611
631
632

633
441
634

635
636
637

638
104

from “the boardroom” across the hall. The hallways were warmly painted “ochre and burgundy,” the names of which I learned later along with their Biblical import. His office furniture including the desk and shelves on the walls behind and facing him were a warm mahogany color. John immediately remarked on a drawing [charcoal?] of what looked like an adult’s dark-skinned hand holding a child’s light-skinned one, saying that it was quite fitting. Of what, I waited to hear. Brian Glasco responds that he was with his son at the time. His son has lighter skin, he tells us, looking at a photograph of what is presumably himself, his wife, and son on the shelf behind us. [His and his wife’s skin is milk chocolate, his son’s is more caramel.] The picture reminds him of him and his son. John Nelson responds, oh, so there’s a story behind it!

At some point Captain Glasco comments self-deprecatingly that he doesn’t know *why* the Salvation Army insists on military titles. [Maybe after we give him the description of our research and he gives us cards? He has written the hours for services on the back of the card he gives to HV.] He is wearing a navy blue sweater zipped to about mid-chest, revealing a white shirt and a thin black or dark navy tie. “The Salvation Army” is embroidered in red on the left side of the sweater, with the t embroidered as a large gold cross. He also says at some point that he is finishing his thesis. He looks to be in his thirties. Later he says that he had his son soon after getting married.

Varenne gives an opening spiel after Glasco asks how we define education. Glasco tells us he’s only been here [at the Harlem location] for six months. He says this is one of the most celebrated Salvation Armies because of its heritage. It was founded in 1898, the first work in Harlem. It developed and grew through a lot of “what I call blood, sweat, and tears.” He says that people know the Salvation army for its brass band. This is the “premier black salvation congregation,” and it’s “much more diverse today.”

Following notes written on February 1, 2008

[at beginning he mentioned that there are flyers that aren’t ready, but we don’t get them at all]

[on his desk: candle, phone, nameplate, desk mat. On the shelving behind him: large candy bowl with candy, photos, eagle sculpture on top.]

He tells us that people know us primarily for the social service aspect: soup kitchens, pantries, give out clothes. He says they are “trendsetters.” They are “perceived to be a social service organization that happens to do church. But in fact we are a church that does social services. John Nelson mentions William Booth, and Glasco responds warmly. He says the church is growing in Kenya, South Africa, Liberia, Zimbabwe, Nigeria. It was founded in England.

<http://www1.salvationarmy.org/heritage.nsf/36c107e27b0ba7a98025692e0032abaa/1df82004fb142d5480256ac5003ba9b7!OpenDocument>

We are reasserting our evangelical roots while asserting what we do because we do it in the name of Christ.

We have a number of ministries

- women's ministry
- men's group
- 2 distinct Bible study classes: children and adults
- Worship
- Discipleship training programs for youth

I'm big on books, that's just me. He tells us that he and his wife "scour the (Bible?) bookstores." [I know he didn't say 'Christian bookstores.'] He moves to a shelf behind him to show us a book that he gave to a particular woman, entitled, "Angry Men and the Women Who Love Them" Varenne laughs and he starts talking about domestic violence (but not in those words).

Military style [can't remember if somebody asked a question]. "Being a pastor they give me a rank, I don't know why," he says again. He mentions that there are senior and junior soldiers, the junior being ages 6 to 13. He says that there are lessons, "I don't want to say infantile," but "doctrinal lessons reduced to a simplistic level" for the young ones. There are membership classes, a 13 week course, "to learn the doctrines of the Salvation Army." Varenne asks if this is for new members, and Glasco confirms.

He describes "our Bible study" as "how to operate the Christian life." He mentions something about overcoming "the culture of the church, and that's in *every* church." He continues that "when people are called into ministry" they go to seminary school as cadets. At the local level there is also a "core cadet program," teaching teens. This includes "how to adjust your faith to your circumstances."

Also available to young people are opportunities to participate in the band, to learn "sacred dance," "how to play an instrument from scratch," dramas and mimes.

Programs include the women's ministries, men's group, which includes "how to be proper husbands and fathers," Sunday school. "A big part of teaching people what to do," he tells us, is "heart to God, hand to man." "Faith without works is dead, put your faith in practice." This includes "prayer walking." He says something about "four walls of the church." [I think, religious activity is not confined to within the 4 walls of the church.]

The women's activities include arts and crafts. They "do *cra-a-zy* things," he tells us. I'm not sure what the three of us look like [I probably smiled], and he quickly says, "well not crazy." He starts telling us something, then calls it a "retro trend," a crocheting class. He expresses surprise that it's mostly younger women. I am nodding vigorously. He mentions "how to be godly women in the household." "Two things you don't talk about," he says, are sex and money. He says his wife talked about women as sexual beings within a marriage, and offers this as an account for why "marriages are falling apart." There is some joking about Glasco not wanting to be in that room.

Of the men's group, one activity is taking them to a gathering in March, to address "father wounds," or wounds inflicted by fathers or lack of one.

Also a parenting class, for people who have "lost their children," or are "being denied access to their children." It is taught by a social worker, and includes nutrition and "how to put your child first." Varenne asks something about whether it will help people get their children back, and Glasco says something pretty that I can't remember, with a sentiment like, "to help them become better parents."

He also mentions senior groups, game rooms, and sports, like basketball. He says, "My baby has been my after-school program," including technology and the arts, sacred dance and drama. He mentions that there are "27 computers accessible to the community," that they teach website design. Varenne [or John?] asks if this includes sending emails. Glasco mentions an internet radio station, SAR FM. Also an Assistant Pastor from Zimbabwe. Teaching children how to communicate through radio broadcasting, mass media. [not sure if Asst. Pastor is doing this]

Teaching them how to do volunteer work, community service

V: quite a staff that you have

BG: maneuvering [can't remember]

Flea markets, biggest thing we are doing

A lot of people don't have financial means

What I call a "mentality of poverty," the government and social services agencies are here to provide

Starting with our own staff [to do workshops on finances]

"It blew my mind" how many people "don't have bank accounts"

15 staff members [a few didn't have bank accounts]

we had a Chase representative come and talk to us

a lot of distrust about investments, banking

[distrust of investing in stock market]

we called it treasure principles

managing debt, managing life

"the other big push that is my baby is adoption and foster care"

"I do a lot of counseling" for people not to have abortions

V: [exactly what we want: what is to be learned] not in school

BG: cash-checking places, wages being garnished [and people not noticing], outstanding bills

Checking account

Savings account, IMG or e-trade, and "people are looking at me and saying, what is that?"

[well-off people] don't work for their money, their money works for them

[himself and wife as example] “yearly we get hundreds of dollars, not pennies” on their investments

Retirement accounts

We already know that social security [won't be around]

Varenne says, well,

BG: even with older people, 403(b), 401(k) is for corporations, 403(b) nonprofit, they have it with IMG, I ask, have you diversified your portfolio lately?

[they respond] Well I get my statement every month at this stage, should be cash equities and bonds

debt consolidation

Varenne: [we want to know how and what people learn] later in life

BG: eyes were being opened. I actually have choices. Stock market, if you're not taught, how many banking seminars do people go to? [Especially if people are worrying about,] How can I make ends meet?

Varenne: How do you get your members?

BG: The bulk of our members came through our soup kitchens

Bankers, professionals

In this building right now there are 3 people with Master's degrees

And five people with Bachelor's degrees

That says a lot

Masters in organizational psychology, masters in counseling, masters in education

[repeats that a number of people have Bachelor's]

so what happened is that you had in essence a strange amalgam

Caucasian, Native American, Hispanic, and even some Middle Eastern [in the congregation]

3 figure salaries through welfare [six figure?]

V: [long-time members]

BG: people who, a lady has been here, 60 years? [And another woman here for 6 months]

She's been taking classes. She'll be a member when we do a public enrollment in March.

Adherents, members somewhere else [but come to services]

A really diverse mix, which is Harlem

H: [this is what we're finding, vs. colleagues who think, low-income]

BG: I ran the Salvation Army for boys in Bushwick, Queens. My natural opinion was that everyone was []. Poor, underclass. Being so close, I came to visit. I [mistakenly] got off at 125th street. After walking around [what is] a shopping district, [I saw] lots of professional people. I hadn't been to Harlem [except to bring people to a program or workshop, in and out]. I walked from 125th to 13th street. “My eyes were just opened.” You can run into PhDs, medical doctors since we're close to the hospital, to people on welfare. Police officers, parole officers, social workers [long list]. Everybody goes to Jimbo's.

What I found interesting, wealth of experience, gradient of socioeconomic

[more on the changes he and his wife are bringing to the church]
 If you don't see a working marriage, [how can you do it yourself?]
 [We tell people] we have arguments [they are surprised to hear this]
 Yes, we like to have sex too.
 Then we talked to them from a spiritual perspective, holy act

HV: When you have children that's when it becomes real
 BG: finding childcare, dealing with health care
 [someone suggested having a] tax seminar, IRS, tax code, you *really* don't know
 [repeats how people with Master's degrees don't know]
 people buying their children's uniforms, you know that's tax deductible!
 People were like [he frowns]

The other thing we really have to teach
 using an article I think it's called Memo to God
 Nelson Mandela and F. W. de Klerk
 How de Klerk had to navigate through many different transformations
 [how Mandela had to navigate through]
 how mindsets have to be changed

[he pushes beeping buttons]
 Harlem is a changing community
 It's 6:00, not just African American
 People walking into their homes!
 We have to remain flexible and remain relevant
 What happens when there's not 100 people walking into the soup kitchen,
 Not 100 per day,
 But 10 people a day?
 People coming off work, [come] not to play basketball, they want recreational space

HV: the plant. What's the financial aspect of running the plant?
 BG: renting space [primary means of raising money]
 Me, I'm Mr. Grant Writer
 OSD, 21st century [?]
 Christmastime fundraising – red buckets

A lot of the funding is done at the city level with the SA then distributing money to the local churches. It is also easy to raise money from corporations given the SA's reputation as a social service agency. {this probably explains why the plant is so large for such a small congregation}. They also rent out some of the space.

Corporate partnerships, e.g. Disney. Their help allowed holiday help from food basket to event. Facepainting, greeters taking people into a room with snacks, kids could go see making balloon animals while their parents stand in lines. "I remember being in the food

line,” he tells us, and wondering why, feeling embarrassed. Disney made this possible through volunteers and monetary donation.

Also fundraising. Flea markets are a major source of income. [something about people not having a lot of means] “We rent spaces and tables to vendors.”

And of course our congregation gives tithes.

HV: [size of congregation]

BG: on the books, 193, average attendance 120

HV: I don’t know if it’s a delicate question. One of the things that struck me is the number of churches [in the area]

BG: yes

HV: competition

BG: [I wouldn’t say competition] The Salvation Army has always had a niche. We always started out with people who were drunks. We take the ones the others don’t want. Dirty, smelly. We say the 3 s’s: soup, soap, salvation. [We say something about a man who’s hungry, dirty] We feed them, clean them, and save them.

[partners with] Union Congregational and St. Marks, on 138th.

[call these three the 138th st. churches]

[started with his predecessor]

an abolitionist

I should know my African American history

There’s enough ills that all of our churches can be of benefit

Luncheon that he just came back from, welcoming a new pastor at Grace Congregational church, invited a lot of pastors

He said, there’s enough degrees and intelligence and enough connections to resources in this room to take care of every ill in the ?

We just got a grant, after-school program

The YMCA had to close theirs [their after-school program, and sent people to Salvation Army]

No competition

Lots of strengths

Find partners to compensate for your weaknesses

BG makes positive comments about our project, praises Varenne

You’re doing the right thing

You are walking through the community

I’m maybe sort of jaded

We live in Long Island. The commute here is treacherous! [what happens?]

Get here at 6:30, leave at 6:30

financial seminar

3rd Thursday of every month, a community meeting held by the police department in our building

cross section of people who are interested

HV: do you attend?

BG: not every one

Police presence has really changed the dynamics

[His wife being worried when he left at 1am, but police presence strong. She asks, are there people on the street? As a matter of fact, he tells her, there's two police officers behind me, and two walking in front of me. He's met all the rookies. Tells them to come in for coffee, to use the bathroom.]

Wednesday [services?]

Romans 12, Christian code of ethics

People were like, why do we need a code of ethics? [isn't that for corporations?]

Honoring people

[kindness with] ulterior motives [vs. love?]

difference between social hospitality and Christian hospitality

Seder meal. [People surprised at a Christian church having a Jewish meal, but Jewishness the foundation of Christianity. Jews for Jesus coming in to organize the Seder meal.]

HV asks for a tour

When he gets up I notice how large his backside is, which is not evident from his face and upper body. He has a pear shape. [interesting how attractive both Glasco and Pinckney are, in different ways, Glasco a boyish, enthusiastic charisma with lots of sound bites and Pinckney with a dignified charisma commanding respect]

He takes us to the "boardroom" across the hall which is where he got the chair

Repeats that they are doing wiring in there, have meetings in there

Takes us to the back where there are two rows of stacks of books

[I see the Angry Men and the Women who Love Them title]

BG picks up a bit of debris and remarks that they are *really* rewiring in there

Tells us each of the offices down the corridor [can't remember, one belongs to assistant pastor]

A mislabeled pantry [storage?]

Multipurpose room with TV, rather dingy, he says people like to hang out there, he seems surprised as he says this. "Generationally they all separate, I don't know why," he says.

Game room with ping pong table, pool table with a couple of young people playing,

Foosball, and a TV

Gym with kitchen and bleachers, they use to feed people

Substantial bleachers [at least 8 rows high]

We are impressed by the size [basketball court plus bleachers, high ceiling]

HV remarks on the heating {I was thinking at the time of the contrast with the unheated gym at Salem Methodist: the contrast in apparent resources is interesting: genteel poverty vs. appealing poor?}

He introduces us to Jim the security guard and the receptionist [didn't catch her name] The receptionist tells him not to run up the stairs, and he does, saying there's no other way

Upstairs he shows us 2 computer labs, one for young people, one for adults. The adult computer lab has chalkboards, set up as a classroom. He tells us the adult computer lab has the newer computers [all flat screen LCD monitors, vs. a few clunkers in the youth room]

3 big classes

one room is the after-school program. A young, thin, tall man with a beard, curly hair, and light skin [glasses?] stands at the head [or foot] of a set of tables arranged in a large rectangle. Maybe 10-15 small children? Didn't get a good look.

BG takes us down another hallway, HV compliments decorating. BG says he repainted and that these are the colors in his house. We turn the corner and HV asks to use the restroom. BG continues to take me and John Nelson down the hall, explaining the color scheme of burgundy and ochre as colors sited in the Bible to decorate a house of worship (my paraphrase). He indicates that half of the length of the hallway is the assistant pastor's apartment, and apologizes for not being able to show it to us.

While HV is still in the restroom, BG takes John Nelson and I to see the broadcast room. He interrupts a young man inside and says to us in an aside that this a radio station broadcast over the internet. He tells us the young man's name is Milo. I wave and Milo waves back. BG swings the door nearly shut again. HV joins us shortly and BG opens the door to the room again. Milo is dark-skinned, dark chocolate, with thick dreadlocks.

Next we go to the library where he tells us that a woman who was a librarian (or was trained as a librarian) is rearranging the books in the Dewey decimal system. The library has bookshelves lining three walls and partially lines the fourth where a door opens into a closet, which is also full of books. A large stack of books sits on the floor.

As we head back towards the stairs, he tells us that the 3rd floor is for storage and mechanicals. He tells us that a lot of Salvation Army's done have storage, that this building was designed with storage in mind. HV comments to me again on the size of the facility.

As we go down the stairs, I ask BG about the after school program and he mentions OST DYCD [?]. The program is called GAINS: Greater Academic Incentives to Nurture Success. Again, he mentions arts and sciences and I say all that's been cut from schools. They also have high school students work as mentors. This may be their first job learning how to work, how to apply SAT prep. As we settle back into his office, he says that they do a college tour to the historically black colleges. He says we call it GAINS and it's all over New York. We have one here, and the Salvation Army at 125th Street. He reports four in Brooklyn and thinking, proposes White Plains and Westchester.

On the after school program, once the license is approved, and he complains, “That process takes MONTHS.” He explains that you can’t apply for a license unless you have a start date which you need the funding for. HV asks about this. He says you can start a program without a license. For a license you need the staff to be fingerprinted, the building declared as safe, and inspections. HV asks if this is NYC and he confirms. Multi activity status.

The benefits of a license include when the kids are “on leave” (vacation from school), you can remain operational from 8-6, not 3-6.

There’s apparent advisory board that is “very involved”. There was a father son weekend that was “phenomenal”. A camping trip. For children who didn’t have fathers, men in the community, brothers, uncles [served as their fathers].

Children need to join the band, the choir, or sacred dance [all children that participate in the after school program?] BG says they perform at least six times. This is a way for people to come to church. One parent didn’t know her child could sing. When she saw her child perform, she said, “I didn’t know my baby could sing.” BG says that children are shy in the home and outside they’re a bit more free. “I remember being that way.”

Teenage boys

Add teenage component, life skill classes.

Another pastor gave a presentation that was “phenomenal,” called “The Detriments of Hip Hop Music.” He asks the teenagers, “If you’re a dog who’s holding the leash?” [This really made the boys think] BG says he’s going to have to get this pastor as a guest speaker. “We believe in life skills”

HV: youth

BG “my diabolical plan” [recruitment? Salvation?]

[I know there’s supposed to be] separation of church and state

Thanksgiving: we served them

Not standing in a buffet line, ate family-style

Families loved that

Someone wrote a “beautiful letter,” thank you for that

One of the women’s classes, people wanted to learn about etiquette [he says this in a surprised tone]

My wife is from the Caribbean, British ?

When you go to a restaurant, how do you know which piece of silverware to use?

You’ve got to be kidding me

[talking about how “we,” then makes fun of himself for including himself in the “we” by which he means the British, push food onto the back of the fork.]

HV says something

John Nelson recommends *Successful Failure*, praises it
HV explains it is a book to other researchers obsessed with failure, and failing kids
BG is suitably impressed

BG recommends *Amish Grace*, when the Amish school shooting happened, and the Amish responded with forgiveness, this helped people a great deal. John Nelson asks for the author. BG says it's easy to find online, but as John doesn't agree, he obligingly opens his computer. I remark to HV that I didn't learn to use a fork and knife until junior high. John Nelson is delighted with the explanation: chopsticks. BG comes up with a name for the author, which John writes down. [I didn't see John open his fancy folder before then.]

Thanks all around, from BG for us coming by, us for his time, receiving us early, giving a great interview. [he had asked several times throughout if he answered the question adequately] He lets us out the gated doors that John had tried to enter earlier.

We walk south. I thank John again for 2 great interviews in one day, and he says he chose them for contrast. John takes his leave at the corner to get his car, which is parked at Salem.