

Interview with
BRIELL BLANCHART

December 28, 2019

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INDEX

9/11	27
adoption	38, 39
Alta Academy	8, 9, 10, 11, 19, 21, 28
appointed marriage	6, 13, 36
arranged marriage	30
Black people	34, 35, 36
bullying	6, 10, 17, 18, 32
career	41, 43
Chatwins	5, 27
chore	8
clothing	21
Colorado City [Arizona]	8, 19, 20
Crick [Short Creek, Utah]	19, 32, 33, 37, 38, 39, 40
crisis house	39
cult	16, 38, 39
culture shock	26
doctrine	19, 34, 36
Dream Center	29, 36, 40
dresses	22, 23
eighth grade	19, 20
fifth grade	11, 12, 13, 25
first grade	8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 20, 25
FLDS	5, 6, 27, 34, 35, 36, 39
fundraiser	41, 43
garments	22
homeschool	8, 11, 19, 21
husband	33, 40
Jeffs Academy	21
Jeffs, Leroy [Warren Jeffs' brother]	20
Jeffs, Rulon	6, 23, 24, 31
Jeffs, Warren	8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 21, 23, 25, 26, 28, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37, 39
jobs	14, 28, 29
Johnson, Leroy [Uncle Roy]	6, 22, 24

“Keep Sweet”	15, 24
kicked out	6, 7, 10, 27, 38
Lamanites	35, 36
LDS church [the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints]	33, 34
locked up	38
married	6, 21, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 31, 36, 40
Mormons	34, 35, 36
ninth grade	20
polygamy	14, 19, 35, 36, 39, 42
PTSD	34, 38, 41
racist	34, 36, 42
Sandy [Utah]	5, 7, 15, 20, 21
school	7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 26, 29, 32
second mother	7
Short Creek [Utah]	19, 21, 25, 26, 33, 40
sixth grade	8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19
study	28, 30
tattled	16
temporary commandment	35
Tennessee	38, 39
test	8, 9, 35
Texas	23, 29, 31, 37
third grade	11, 13, 22
UEP [United Effort Plan Trust]	26, 39
Warner, Lynette [birth name]	5
Warner, Nelda Smith [grandmother]	6
Zittings	5, 27

BRIELL BLANCHART

Content Warning: Contains words that are inherently offensive, insensitive and harmful.

Content Warning: Sexual Abuse.

Briell (Decker) Blanchart was interviewed by Stephanie Griswold on December 28, 2019 in Hildale, Utah. She related her experience of growing up in and later leaving the FLDS community.

SG: It is December 28, 2019. We are in Hildale, Utah. I'm Stephanie Griswold and I'm with Briell Decker Blanchart. Briell, could you spell your name and tell us where and when you were born?

BB: Yes. My name spelling is B-R-I-E-L-L, and then Decker is D-E-C-K-E-R, then Blanchart is B-L-A-N-C-H-A-R-T; and I was born November 8, 1985.

SG: Where?

BB: In Sandy, Utah.

SG: Cool. Can you tell us a little bit about your family, parents, grandparents, that kind of thing?

BB: Yes. So, my father was born and raised in the FLDS, his parents were also born and raised in the FLDS. My grandfather, Warner— because my name wasn't always Decker— but my grandfather Warner, he was an only child, I believe. And his parents, I don't know their whole history, about when they joined or if they were born in, I don't know. But I know that he was born and raised into it.

SG: So your paternal grandfather was also born and raised into it.

BB: As an only child, a Warner.

SG: Okay. And you mentioned that your current name was not your birth name. Can you tell us what that was?

BB: So my birth name was Lynette Warner. And I changed it after I escaped out of the FLDS.

SG: Okay. Yeah, so you were talking about your grandfather.

BB: Yeah. So then my grandmother was actually a Smith. But I don't believe she was related to Joseph Smith. She was a different line, as far as I understand. I never did genealogy, but my sisters, brothers, some of them did and they couldn't trace it to Joseph Smith. She had three sisters and then her mother had three sisters, so I get kinda mixed up in which

sisters were the great-grandmother, and which sisters were the grandmother. But, I believe that I'm related to the Zittings and the Chatwins through my grandmother. Her name was Nelda, Nelda Smith Warner. They were kicked out of the church when I was about thirteen years old, because—

SG: Both of your grandparents?

BB: Both my grandparents, because they wouldn't quit watchin' TV and they only went to Priesthood meeting, and y'know, they didn't take it serious and so they were kinda kicked out. They were told, I believe, as far as I understand, they were told to show up at Uncle Rulon's office and report in. And they just didn't ever do it.

SG: Okay.

BB: They weren't very serious. Most of my uncles and aunts were sealed by people before the split. Before the Centennial Split-off. My parents were actually sealed by Uncle Roy, Leroy Johnson who was the Prophet at the time. My grandfather worked at Kennecott, which is even on Sunday, all day. So for a long time, years, he never made it to church. And so his children couldn't be advanced in the ordinances without him. So a lot of 'em just dropped out when they got too old because they're in the same twelve-year-old group or whatever, and so they just couldn't handle the bullying and the pressure from the advanced. And that was kind of the beginning of a lot of my aunts and uncles leaving the church generally.

So my mother's side. My Grandmother and my Grandfather Keat, they joined when my mother was four years old. The story is that my Grandfather Keat fought in World War II, he never heard of God, and he ended up surviving so many things and every time he went to shoot his gun, his gun wouldn't work. So he couldn't figure out why, and he had a nervous breakdown because he had never heard of God. And when he did hear about God for the first time, he accepted, wholeheartedly, the FLDS 'cause that was the first person who taught him about God. Some person in the FLDS, I can't remember his name. So my grandmother and him, I guess had already met, and my mother was four years old when they joined the FLDS.

SG: Okay.

BB: So, they believed in appointed marriage, even in Uncle Roy's day, Leroy Johnson's day. My mother told me the story of their marriage, where the church always taught me that it was choice to say yes or no at the wedding. If you say yes, you chose this. But what's interesting to me, that I thought was really interesting when my mom was telling her story, she had never met my father. So they were going through after church, shaking hands with the leaders, and they pulled my father aside and they pulled my mother aside and told them that they were getting married. And they had the choice to say yes or no and they had never met. I don't think that's really a choice, but anyway, they got married [laughter]. They said yes 'cause they didn't know or have any way of educating themselves that fast.

SG: Right.

BB: And so I was a product of appointed, arranged, marriage. I was the eleventh child. I have three more siblings younger than me. My father eventually had two wives, and my second mother never had any children.

SG: What role in your childhood, or, like, when did the second mother come along?

BB: When I was about thirteen. Around the same time as when my grandparents were kicked out of the church.

SG: And what kind of role did she play in your life?

BB: She didn't play very much of a role except for, she worked with my father and she was kind of my get away. When she would get home from work I would like to sneak in her room because I couldn't get in trouble. [Laughter] My mother couldn't get after me for, y'know, she couldn't cross the other mother, so it was like my secret place of not gettin' in trouble. [Laughter]

SG: And was she, like, supportive of that?

BB: She was nice to me.

SG: That's good. What are your earliest memories, like say preschool age, like in your household?

BB: Okay. So when I was probably five, I remember my sister going to school and I felt really bad because I wasn't old enough. And I remember my mother explaining to me that I was gonna be the oldest child at home and her big helper and all that. I remember cleaning up the house, sweeping the floor. And hearing the school children coming home, and I just thought, y'know, after a little bit of time I would get annoyed when they'd come home because I wasn't the big helper anymore. I also remember my little brother, he was born when I was five years old. So five is about the age that I remember the most. My mother came to me and said, "Do you want me to have my baby on your birthday?" because she was due around that time. And I said, "No, you won't be there for my birthday if you do that." And she did have the baby the next day after my birthday. So my youngest brother is almost exactly five years younger than me [laughter]. And then I remember goin' in after she had the baby and staying in the school room, because it was a midwife, y'know, situation. It was at the school where they were havin' the babies in the section of the same house/building. And I remember just staying with her all day in the room for one day and then the school children comin' and gettin' me after school.

SG: And was your family still in Sandy at this time?

BB: Yes.

SG: And where did your siblings go to school?

BB: They all went to school at Alta Academy which was the Jeffs' school. Where Warren Jeffs was the principal from the very beginning of Alta Academy. He was seventeen at the time and they made him the principal, and so all of my siblings went to school there at one time. I only went to sixth grade there before everybody moved to Colorado City [Arizona].

SG: So you went kindergarten through sixth grade—

BB: My youngest brother was first grade so that was— My oldest brother was the first class that went to twelfth grade.

SG: Okay. What were your responsibilities when you were the big kid before you started school?

BB: Basically my mother had a system where she liked to tell people the next chore. So she would hardly ever make job charts. So her rule was that as soon as you get done with your chore, then you come and ask her, and then if you do a certain amount during the day then she'll give you a break. But she never gave me a break [laughter]! Because the problem was is that she would get on the phone, she'd talk for a while and we couldn't ask her the next job. So she would get off the phone and come get after us for not asking for the next job which we couldn't do because she was on the phone. So we were always in trouble. And so that was kinda the system. And I was just one of those children that wanted to be, like, the special one to her, so I was really, and I enjoyed working, so even like, I would, I even had sisters or brothers tell me, "Why do you do that?" Y'know they'd bully me for continuing this, the program all day long. They're like, "Nobody does that!" Y'know. [Laughter] But I liked it. So I was one of the ones that was her helper.

SG: What are your first memories of going into school?

BB: The very first memory I have is the test. I was a little bit older because my birthday is in November. I was like seven. And I didn't have any preschool. At all. And my older sisters and brothers surrounded the table and told me everything they were gonna ask me and told me all the answers before I went to the test. They would stack up the blocks and put 'em back down, say, "Stack it back up! They're gonna tell you this! You have to know this! Your mother's name is this," and they told me all the answers to all the tests. And I went and did the test and I passed. But there was one question that they didn't ask. [Laughter] I remember comin' home and sayin', "You guys forgot one of 'em!" [laughter]. But I passed.

SG: Can you kind of explain what the, like, what the test was, who was testing you, like, what it was for?

BB: Oh, it was Alta Academy, so it was homeschool, but they did have somebody test. It was Leona Steed at the time. She did all the testing for all the first graders to see if they were capable of entering school and taking on the curriculum. I remember the question they missed was that I needed to toss a bean bag back and forth. I think it's similar to, I don't know what real schools do, but I think it's similar. Like, they just test your coordination, and your memory, and yeah—

SG: So there wasn't anything like overtly religious about the test? It was just kind of—

BB: Basic.

SG: — basic.

BB: Yeah.

SG: Was there anything that they were expecting you to know before starting school? Like, alphabet, colors, numbers?

BB: I didn't know the alphabet, I don't think, but they didn't ask me that. I don't remember being asked that. I remember my little sister when she took the test the first time, she forgot Mother's name and she just called her "Mom," and she didn't pass.

SG: Oh no.

BB: Yeah.

SG: What was your daily routine once you started school?

BB: So, they had a morning class, the Alta Academy had a church service. And when you're in first grade, we just colored during it in the classroom. We didn't go up to the meeting room or anything. So my teacher was actually Warren Jeffs' first wife. My first-grade teacher was Warren Jeffs' first wife. And we did math after that, because they wanted to, they always told us that if you do math first thing in the morning, you have a better, it's a harder subject for most people and your brain is more, has more energy and alert in the mornings. So most of the classes all through did math right after morning class. I remember doing the Kumon things, I don't know if you know what those are, but they're like drills. And it depended on your level, like you'd start out with add— they teach you simple things— you're still being timed to see if you can get it, and then they tell you if you're gettin' it right. Then it goes up, subtract, y'know, as you pass levels, and you just did one a day.

And then, we did English, I believe. I don't remember all the first grade schedule, but I remember one thing they did was teach us to read and I didn't read very good for a long, long time. Because I'd start to read, I believe, you know, starting in first grade is okay, but I still struggled a lot. And they had these drill things, they had homemade reading books because they didn't like the material outside of the school. And they'd have these

timers, like you'd have to read two paragraphs if you didn't get any mistakes, then you could go on. It was so frustrating. The whole class was so mad at you if you made a mistake because then they had to start over on the two paragraphs. And the whole hour or so that we're reading, sometimes we didn't get past the two first paragraphs depending on who was reading. Some people are better readers, and I was not a good reader. So I wasn't very liked in that area [laughter]. It was horrible. I think our class was the last class that did some make-believe stuff that helped you understand the alphabet and stuff. I think after that they took it out of the curriculum completely because it had some make-believe talking apples and stuff, y'know?

SG: Right.

BB: But our class did get some of that and I enjoyed that, like the teacher playing the recording and acting it out and stuff like that was really fun.

SG: And did you have different teachers for each subject or was it just like—

BB: We had one teacher and then we had an assistant who corrected everything, and that was actually my sister. One of my sisters was my assistant. It was cool.

SG: What was your first grade teacher like?

BB: I remember she was nice. She wasn't there, like, a whole lot that I remember. I don't remember a whole lot about her, but I do remember one day our class— Our class was really noisy, we had a big class for one teacher. It was like twenty students or somethin'. — Warren Jeffs showed up and he just walked in the classroom and he looked around and he says, "Next year, you're all gonna be split up because you're so noisy."

SG: Yeah.

BB: But I don't remember a lot about Annette. I do remember her bringin', a few times, her children that were younger, that weren't in school yet, and we loved them because we got to be the big, y'know, the big brother or big sister or whatever. It was cool.

You couldn't bully very well in Alta Academy because if you did you'd just get kicked out of school. It was really a different structure than regular schools. They kind of go into, like, tattle a lot. A lot of tattling. If anybody's bullying you, go tell the teacher. Y'know like a lot of that was really enforced in their morning class, be the nice person. I'm sure some people did get bullied, but probably by the teachers. [Laughter] Probably by Warren himself. Yeah, it wasn't, my experience with school was not the same as public school, I don't think.

SG: Right. So how did the different classes— Well, actually, let's go back 'cause I kinda deviated from your daily routine. So you kind of do the standard, in the morning you're doing morning class and then kind of standard subjects. What other subjects, it doesn't have to be in order or anything, but—

BB: What other subjects did we have?

SG: Yeah.

BB: I know we had handwriting, cursive, in first grade. That was a really big thing that our homeschool did, was they didn't wait until third grade to teach cursive. And I don't remember it bein' hard, but I actually liked handwriting. I don't remember the rest. It was, y'know—

SG: How did it change over the several grades that you did at Alta Academy, like before—

BB: So there was hardly ever science. In third grade we started just a little bit of science. We always had books but we just didn't have time in the day.

SG: And what kind of "little bit of science"?

BB: So like I remember, maybe, every three months or so we'd have a lesson on science.

SG: And what kind of—?

BB: In third grade we started that. It was first about sound, I remember one lesson on sound. I remember one lesson on rocks; I remember one on weather. I loved it. Science was really cool, 'cause we never got it.

SG: Right.

BB: We did have recess. Especially in first grade, we had quite a few recesses where we got to go out and physically play hopscotch or jump rope or— You can't sit still very long when you're in first grade. So, and then in second grade you get PE where you go like an hour of physical activity. In third grade, I think, we had math, English.

I know we didn't start Priesthood History until fourth grade. priesthood history was another lesson from Warren Jeffs that taught us about the church history. And the first year they did that they taught ancient history, about the Bible and stuff. And I missed that because I was in third grade that year. But he recorded it all. The second year I was in fourth grade I got to go and it was— I'm tryin' to remember— Brigham Young history? I know I went to Brigham Young history. And there was another one, it was somethin' about from Brigham Young till now or something. Joseph Smith history, and then Brigham Young until now. Yeah, I went to both of those in fourth and fifth grade. Then we just had to listen to recordings. In sixth grade, sixth grade I can't remember. I just think we listened to recordings after that, I don't think he repeated any of the classes. He just recorded 'em and then we had to listen to recordings. So I felt really bad that I missed the ancient history year. But it was fine. I just didn't realize the difference between regular history and priesthood history, which was only church history. We didn't get any history of the earth and stuff like that.

SG: Not even like United States history, or—

BB: Uh-uh. Nothing like that. Every once in a while they'd talk about, like, one little pamphlet of the Civil War or somethin' because it went along with what was happening in the church at the time. But it wasn't anything like history.

SG: Right.

BB: And then spelling was a big deal in second grade. I don't remember it in first grade, it probably was in first grade, I don't remember. I remember grades didn't really affect me. That I registered until like fourth grade. I had a teacher that I really loved in fourth grade. So I started to, like, really care and realize things. Before that I was just like in a fog kind of. I remember things but I didn't really take grades serious.

SG: Interesting. Okay. So they weren't really like—

BB: We had attitude, attitude behavior.

SG: Sure.

BB: But it was easy. If you weren't a bad child, it was pretty easy to get A's. I remember in sixth grade and fifth grade I had a teacher who was told by Warren just to grade us, even on our regular work, according to our behavior. According to our abilities and behavior. So every person had their own record like if they were a little bit better, they got a little bit better grade. But then compare it to me. Because he hated competition, supposedly. So, like, I hated that system because my teachers always expected a lot of me and somebody else could scribble on their paper and get an A, and I'm over there doin' all this fantastic work and I get a B. You know, it was really frustrating. And then in sixth grade, the same thing, same structure. And I remember I got straight A's. Like if I was unprepared— like, I had a math teacher in sixth grade that only came to math, and he promised us that if we got perfect attendance, and prepared every day he would buy us a soccer ball at the end of the year. I really had to fight for that. Because this teacher was a sister and she didn't want me to get it. So she would find any reason to make me unprepared. And I'd fight with her on that because I wanted that soccer ball. I wanted to be prepared all year, I was just really fought her by that time, straight A's. What's interesting was that I got A's on every single paper because we were allowed to fix your papers. So even if I got a bad grade I could go in and fix it and get an A. And on days that we would fix our papers, then I would fix every paper, and I got A's on everything. And on the attitude I never got anything bad. When I got my report card, which came at the end of the quarter, I got like a B in attitude and behavior. And everything else was straight A's. And I was like, "Well, why did I get this B?" My mother told me, "Well, Warren Jeffs said that you'd be too prideful if they gave you an A on that." And I'm like, "I never got a B on any of my things!" [Laughter] It was just weird. Y'know Warren Jeffs said, "Don't give her an A, even if she deserves it because she'll be too prideful." Take it in like, I had to be humble. [Laughter]

SG: I guess that's one way to do it.

BB: [Laughter.] It was different. It was very church. And then when you even did graduate, which I didn't because I quit at sixth grade, they gave you a diploma, but it wasn't recognized by the state so you still had to get your GED.

SG: Right. Was it always split up by boys and girls, or—?

BB: Fourth grade.

SG: Okay.

BB: Well, I think ours started fifth grade. And the grade after they started fourth grade. Yeah.

SG: How did that work out? Because you're going through first, second, and third grade making friends with everybody and then you have to, like, not—

BB: We were never friends with the boys.

SG: Okay.

BB: Even when we were in first and second grade. Because we were so taught in morning class, which was everybody was being taught the same lesson, we were just not always in the big conference room with everyone. We still heard the same rules that the sixth graders were hearing. Which was boys are like snakes, appointed marriage is the only way, if you even cross this line you'll be cursed for life, y'know.

SG: So, do you know ways that the school was different for boys and girls once you guys got—

BB: Separated?

SG: Yep. Like, were there different classes, were there different rules—?

BB: There were different classes. So in fifth grade, oh, actually in fifth grade we still had mixture. We separated in sixth grade, was the only year I had in school that separated; they started getting younger and younger. But in sixth grade they had a junior high building, it was a separate building, smaller, across the parking lot. And it was only for boys, I think. I can't remember. But the year I, our sixth-grade boys class was in that building, and the girls were in the other building. And that year, our classes were really small, because they separated the boys and girls. So the girls class was like eight people. And they had two of 'em, like, eight and eight. And the boys was like, probably bigger, but I dunno. I think all the boys were in the same class because they had a smaller building. So they usually had like three classes per grade.

SG: And were there any subjects that were different between boys and girls?

BB: We didn't get to compare; we didn't get to talk to 'em at all. If we were seen talkin' to 'em we would get, like, severe punishments.

SG: Even in comparison to like getting that information from like a brother or?

BB: We talked to our brothers and sisters but they were all in different grades than us.

SG: Okay. And so, —

BB: Maybe some people had polygamy families, but my mother was the only one who had children in my family.

SG: Right. And then—

BB: It mostly ranged from teacher to teacher as far as I understand.

SG: Okay.

BB: The teachers had a lot of say and a lot of favoritism and stuff like that. That's why I liked the fourth-grade teacher, 'cause I was her favorite at the time.

SG: Were the teachers mostly women? Or men?

BB: They were mixed.

SG: And the gender of the teacher didn't affect, once the children got split up?

BB: Mm-mm. Like, when sixth grade, we were split up, but we had a sister and a brother that were teaching us different classes.

SG: And then were there any, like, Home Ec, or Mechanics, or like any kind of classes like that?

BB: I think in fifth and sixth grade we did like cooking periodically, it depended on if they could, it was like a hobby type thing. They didn't take it serious. It didn't always work out.

SG: And so during your first through sixth grade time, what was it like at home as far as your responsibilities—

BB: At home our family just was the same. We would come home, start the routine of doing jobs and we would do homework if we had homework. Most of us really tried hard in school to get our homework done before the end of the day. We'd even skip lunch if we had to because we didn't want homework at home. Our family, we didn't get time to

play, but we always had time to play because we made time to play. So when our mother was on the phone and stuff we would always just go and play. We played so much together. We got in trouble, but we still did it.

SG: Yeah. What were some of the subjects in the morning classes that you remember?

BB: They were on any type of moral issue, like, truth, a whole lesson on truth, and he'd tell stories and stuff and he'd use the *Book of Mormon* most of the time. Or love, or righteousness, or any kind of word like, integrity, kindness—

[Paused to quiet the dog.]

SG: As you were growing up, how did you see those things kind of playing out in your life, or was it just something—

BB: Different than out here. Because you can feel out here. Even though in the church we weren't allowed to feel. "Keep Sweet" no matter what, it's a matter of life and death, with every breath, you know. It was really stressed that you stuff all your feelings in and become numb and never express it. But, jealousy, like if you were to talk about somethin' bad like jealousy, the descriptions they gave us of jealousy was really dramatic [laughter] compared to what is out here. Y'know, it's not a good thing. Still out here it's not a good thing, but it's not, like, the worst thing in the world. In there they taught that, like, it was the worst thing you could ever do in your life. Or, y'know, it leads to this and this, which it doesn't always. You can figure it out and stop, y'know. The descriptions they gave of those things and what would be expected and what, it's different, it's just different for every person. But they kind of put it on the standard.

SG: Obviously all this time, up to sixth grade, you're in Sandy, you're at Alta. Your family seems, like from what you said, to be pretty standard—

BB: I didn't know how—

SG: Well, there wasn't a different, like, instability, in your home at that point.

BB: Well, there was a little, but it just was smoothed over. And because it was smoothed over, and the next day was better, y'know or whatever. I didn't recognize it as a problem until after I got older. After I got older, it became a Warren Jeffs family, it became like really, really, really, intensified. And I've had to calm down from that now.

SG: So what kind of challenges did—

BB: Did I have in my childhood?

SG: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BB: I actually, I had really interesting situations. But when I was about eight, I believe I was eight because every time it was brought up later the people involved would say, you were eight! Y'know, I had a really sad experience at eight years old where my brother got too close to me. And he was twelve or so, so he was, like, in a curious age. And I wasn't the only one involved, I was the middle of three girls, myself. And so I was the middle girl, I had an older sister and a younger sister and they were all involved too. So it couldn't really be kept secret, like if it was a one-on-one. If it's a one-on-one, it's harder, it's my word against yours. In this situation, it was like, this is gonna be found out. So I tattled, and my parents— My father was always accused by my mother of never talking to the leaders of the church, so our family was kind of protected in a way, where my father had the authority to talk to 'em and he never did. So he kinda just made his own decisions. And that stemmed from probably his history of his parents and stuff. My mother was always wanting to talk more, but she wouldn't, so it never got to the leaders very fast. But it was still a risk eventually.

So when they found out about it, they talked to us all individually, and when I went in on my turn to talk to my mother, the thing on my mind, being eight years old, was, "Is God gonna forgive me?" I remember thinking that. I was worried about God, because I really was trying to be good all the time. [Inaudible] "Is God gonna forgive us?" And my mother was really cold, and she just looked at me and she said, "You're gonna have to ask Him." And at that time I didn't register, all I registered was that there was somethin' wrong with my mother. But now I believe that my oldest brother blamed a lot of stuff on me and that she bought into it. My father never has bought into it, I don't think, because we've always had a close relationship. So when I tattled, they were mad at me, so of course I get the blame, and my mother buying into it for whatever reason, it was her choice. And so I got like this really cold feeling, I went and prayed. I remember thinkin', "Well, why would God not forgive me? I didn't do anything." I wasn't the youngest in the situation, but I was young, y'know like I was the, yeah.

SG: Yeah.

BB: So I walked out, then my older sister came to me later and she's like, "It's not gonna stop. He already got caught. He's already done it before you were ever involved. He's just gonna come back when Mother doesn't watch us." And it was really hard on me to hear that, and I remember goin', "Really?" And she's, like, tellin' me that the neighbors, who were not in the church, because we lived in Salt Lake [City, Utah], had caught the brother and called my parents over. And I remembered my parents going over there, which was really rare for a cult situation, to go see neighbors that aren't part of the church. I remember them coming back, and they never told us what was talked about. They just said, "Oh yeah, they were nice." Y'know. But my sister told me that they told my parents and they got in trouble at that time. Which led me to believe, now, that I can think it through, that my mother knew about it already and knew that he was struggling and didn't watch us, which didn't make any sense at the time. I was like, y'know that made me really angry toward her. Because I— yeah, it still is a little confusing.

But what I did at the time, was I took my little sister and I walked to my brother's room, and I was so furious at him. I don't even remember havin' an idea what I was going to say to him. But I remember turning the corner, and he was mad. He was really, really angry, and I recognized that and I just kinda went, melted, and I said, "Let's do it again." And he turned to me and his anger went away and he just looked at me and he says, "You will be the one to blame for the rest of your life. Because you want to do it again." And I remember that a heightened awareness came to mind and I thought, "Well, that's the real reason why I'm here." And I just swallowed all my feelings and I said, "Okay, you can blame me." Because I already knew the real story, that he had already been caught before me, but what it did, I believe it was a divine intervention, now I believe that, because when I left, he quit. Like, if you add up the things I saw and stuff, then my mother probably was mad at him, blamed everything on him, because he was twelve, the oldest one. And in the church, at eight years old, you're baptized. And so I was in a prime position to carry the blame because I had barely been baptized or whatever. And so, my mother didn't want to take the blame, because if she takes the blame as a mother, she loses her kids and she wasn't gonna take that risk. So she blames it on the brother, and he's angry because he woke up to right and wrong, y'know, and he doesn't wanna be in this position anymore. And when I gave him an out, he took it. But the result of that was, he stopped, which was a good thing, but my entire life I was bullied because he was afraid. And the sister couldn't figure out, the older sister who told me about it, told me he was gonna come back, couldn't figure out what happened. And I never told her until after I got out, you know, I tell my story. But she never could figure out why it stopped. So she was jealous or something.

It always causes a ripple effect when things like that happen. But in my family it was a really bad ripple effect. For me especially. Because I walked around without a care in the world, I didn't even consider that I would really be blamed for it. But I didn't also consider that it mattered that much. Y'know. I just relied on God, like God knows the whole story, he can tell the leaders, y'know I don't need to worry about it. So I just really was loyal to God, and because I was so lack of guilt, I think it caused more bullying. They were more afraid. At the time, being a child without all the brain, knowing all the things, I didn't register that I was never gonna be liked, until way later, I didn't realize that. I never realized that the bullying wasn't gonna quit. I always just thought, the better I am, the more they're gonna like me. The better I am, when I get older they're gonna treat me like an adult. I was always excluded, I was never treated like the adult. When I went to Warren Jeffs' family, y'know I got older and learned things and I started to register. And they still don't like me. [Laughter] They never will, and I'm okay with that now.

SG: So out of your, out of the fourteen children, only three were girls.

BB: No.

SG: Oh, so it was just—

BB: It was the younger generation.

SG: Okay.

BB: Later, when I went back to the house after, because Warren Jeffs sent me back to the house eventually when I was a lot older, I found out through research, like I started studying the whole case because I had been so harassed, tortured, whatever, about my family dynamics. And I discovered that my mother must have had a disconnect of some sort, because she came to me one day, sobbing, and telling me that she never heard the voice of God in her life. And the church taught that God will tell you when to check on your children. She prayed more than anybody I know. She prayed for days, y'know. She would always be sneaking into her room to pray. And that was a really big wake-up call to me, that she had never heard the voice of God. And so I think she was praying to know when to check on me, and missed checking on me. And I found out from my older sister similar things, in the same, I don't know the whole story there, she just said, "I want you to know it's already happened, and it happened in three generations." My nieces and nephews were living at her house. And so what I did to solve the cycle, because it's a really bad cycle, was, I talked to my lawyer after I got out and he told me, "Go write a note to your family, somebody that will maybe read it, and tell them that if your mother's around children and that if your nieces and nephews come out telling the same story, that you will prosecute your mother for neglect." Even though, y'know, yeah. So I went and wrote the note and she hasn't been around kids since. As far as I know she's been living just with one of my sisters. She may now, I don't know, but I don't think it's the same, like it's too big of a risk, y'know, for them.

SG: Right. But how did that play into, as far as you know, your brother as he grew up, because, I mean it stopped with—

BB: He stopped, he's not—, If you're curious, because you're curious age, they say if you stop, you're not a pedophile.

SG: Right because you're both children.

BB: Yeah, so if he was really out in the world, not being judged as an adult at eight years old. He maybe would've gone juvenile, but he, y'know, that can be solved. So I don't judge him the same. But it did play really hard into the structure of the church. Because he's the one that was, in the end, the same brother who locked me up. And I believe they sent me to his house, because of the story. We were both being threatened, and it was horrible, because we were both being judged as adults. If they had just said, "Oh, he was twelve and he's done. And she was eight and it wasn't her fault. Y'know, and she's done." Y'know, like somebody out here would have done. It wouldn't have escalated like it did in the church. The church really escalated it.

SG: So it sounds like a lot of your younger age and everything, say sixth grade and younger, like there was a lot of bullying because of—

- BB: In my family.
- SG: In your family, but it sounded a little bit at school too, just because, “Oh, we don’t want you to be prideful,” or “We don’t want you to be—”
- BB: Oh, well, I didn’t recognize that, ever, y’know it wasn’t ever, like, it was minor at school. At home I didn’t recognize it either until I got into a position where I was forced to. But, yeah, it was just a different lifestyle.
- SG: How did it work, you said that at sixth grade you stopped going to Alta Academy because everybody had moved. Like, you wanna start—
- BB: Yeah, so the Jeffs Academy started down here in the “Crick” [Short Creek, Utah], so that’s when the Jeffs moved. So when I was in seventh grade, I was now in homeschool. I had three younger sisters and brothers, so my older sister had now already completed eighth grade. And eighth grade is really the only required even though it’s nicer to get more. So I was the oldest one in homeschool. [Crosstalk.] And we hadn’t moved, we hadn’t moved to Colorado City yet. The Jeffs had moved, the school had moved, but we were required to just teach at home. So I had three younger than me, three siblings younger than me. So I was now basically my own teacher. Because my mother couldn’t teach all of us, ‘cause we were all in different grades. And I remember practicing spelling, I would read the word, I’d memorize it, and I’d get out one of those tape recorders, y’know how they had tapes that you could record, and I would say the word and I’d wait for a little while, say the next word wait for a little while, and I’d do that whole thing. Then I would play it back to myself, when I said the word, I’d write it, and then I would correct it all. What’s interesting enough was when I turned— So my family was kind of dysfunctional. It wasn’t severe, but it was kind of severe [laughter]. Y’know it was pretty dysfunctional, but—
- SG: What you’re saying is it wasn’t the worst one that you’ve heard.
- BB: Yeah. But it was, like, there was a lot of dysfunction.
- SG: Do you feel at all like it was just kind of the dynamics like between your parents, or polygamy, or the church in general? Like, what do you attribute to the dysfunction in your home?
- BB: The interpretations of mostly my mother. My mother’s interpretations of how the doctrine was. It wasn’t structure. It was more like, love, love, love, love, love, which was, y’know, everybody likes some degree of love. But also part of love is structure. But she didn’t really understand that, she just thought [inaudible] all the time. So, that’s why it didn’t feel like pain, because we were always being smothered with love. She’d buy us birthday presents. she’d, y’know, we went on lots of ice cream trips. And y’know we weren’t neglected all the time. She really did care, I believe, but probably overworked. Because when things would be talked about, hard things, she would tear up and blame herself every time; she’d say, “It’s all my fault, it’s all my fault.” I feel like she was

miserable. She didn't have, like, the structure part of it, and so it didn't feel like all the time pain. It felt more like smothering with love all the time, where it kind of washes the pain away, but there's still pain because there's no rules, there's no structure. The church put the rules in, but our family smothered 'em and, y'know, like washed 'em away kind of. We did, like when they stopped TV, we didn't stop immediately, but we did eventually. Because the church put in the rule, we eventually felt guilty enough that we had to. But it took a while.

SG: And there was no, like other than someone maybe tattling, like there was really no way for the church to know, was there?

BB: Right. Because my father didn't tell and our mother felt like it had to be my father who told. So the church didn't know.

SG: So, at what point do you guys leave Sandy?

BB: So, I was talkin' about school, in eighth grade I taught myself and I also had a preschooler to teach. And then in ninth grade my family literally joined with some of my relatives and there was more students. And they put me over preschool and seventh and eighth grade.

SG: Oh man.

BB: And I had only taught myself seventh and eighth grade. So we had a divider in the room with one eighth grader and two seventh graders, and then like six preschoolers. And I had, my older sister was supposed to help me, but she was also working. And she was terrible. I would try to do school, and when she would walk in she would read novels to 'em, she played plays; it was really a disaster that year. And then the next year I started school with half—the whole Salt Lake [group] just kind of joined again. Half the Salt Lake was in one school and the bishop was in charge of both schools, kind of. I was a seventh—

SG: Who was the bishop?

BB: It was Leroy Jeffs, who was Warren's brother. I was the seventh-grade boys assistant. And then, after one month, then my older brother was asked to be the teacher of the seventh-grade boys. My mother became the assistant and I became the assistant to first grade. So after two quarters, that was during the second quarter that we found out that we were all moving to Colorado City. And my father—

SG: So this was like tenth grade for you.

BB: Yeah. My father got a stead-, like his house was stud walls. So they had to quickly build it before February before the Olympics were gonna be here or whatever. And my father was also in charge of moving the machinery shop that he was working in down here to west [inaudible]. He was the one in Salt Lake that had to stay to the very end to make

sure every machine in Salt Lake was sent. And my older sister was still housecleaning and didn't wanna move that fast because she was tryin' to pay off a sewing machine. And so she stayed with my father up here while my mother came to me and said, "I need to go. Will you help your sister house-clean?" Because I was, and now she needed somebody else. So I ended up staying until the very end. All my siblings started school, they all came down with my mother and they started school in the Jeffs Academy. Then my father called me one day and said, "When you get down there, you're going to school, in high school." And so I did. I went to tenth grade, which was technically ninth grade for me. And then I went to eleventh grade, and Father wanted me to go to— So I went to ninth and tenth; Father still wanted me to go to eleventh and they said—

SG: So ninth and tenth were at a school-school not a homeschool or a private or—

BB: It was a homeschool. It was at Jeffs Academy down here.

SG: Oh, okay.

BB: And so I was sixteen when I moved, I had my driver's license, I'd barely gotten my driver's license in November, and it was February. And I went to school for the rest of that year and then the next year I went to school the whole year. By this time I was seventeen? And so, November I turned eighteen and I was an assistant at school because they didn't have eleventh grade anymore in the school down here. That year I was assistant to fourth grade with my little sister. So it was January, so after two quarters that year, no it was after one quarter, I found out I was getting married.

SG: So before we get to your marriage, maybe we can rewind a little bit and sit and talk about like, what was the clothing like, and how did it change, like in your early years at Alta Academy in Sandy and then, like, as it progressed once everyone started moving to Short Creek.

BB: So, it mostly started with the schools as far as I understand. Warren Jeffs started it with the school rules. I remember it got stricter and stricter. I remember my sister buying this necklace one day and Warren Jeffs saw her in the hall and took it off, told her, "We don't do that here in school." And so my mother took it really strict. She always took everything, like, to the extreme when it was the church, not immediately, but at that time she was like, "Okay. Well, we aren't going to do that at home either, if he doesn't like it." She always applied school rules to home. And most people started doing that because Warren Jeffs kind of brought— he started the school and then he started teaching in the church. And he approves, if the prophet approves in school, why would he not want you to do it at home, y'know? So it just kinda went like that. And then I—

SG: Do you think—

BB: It started before I was— What?

SG: Oh, do you think that some of your mother's interpretations and how she enforced some of these things, like, how you said, the school rules enforced at home, had to do just with her faith and with what the church was saying or—

BB: Yeah.

SG: — or with her parents, because you said her parents were converts, correct?

BB: Yeah, but her parents, they, it was more the church. She liked her parents, but, her parents, they were learning too. So she never really talked much about her father and mother, even though we went to their Sunday school and stuff. They were more loving too. But I think a lot of it was my mother's interpretations. Just random. She didn't even realize how random they were. It was really interesting to me.

SG: So he started with no jewelry, at school, but at this point—

BB: He started with the length of the dresses—

SG: Oh, okay.

BB: Actually, it started before when they stopped the hair, like way before, they stopped all the boys couldn't have hair on their faces, beards, or mustaches. They started that clear in Uncle Roy's day. So it was just gettin' stricter and stricter, but by the time I was in school, it was like the length that they have now, the dresses had to be. Girls all wore dresses, boys wore jeans. The length of the skirts were pretty long, but not clear to your ankle. So you could run and play. They stopped the jewelry while I was in school. And then I remember underwear came when I was like nine or somethin', like third grade. My parents started it before it was actually commanded. And I remember I didn't like it at first, but then I got used to it.

SG: And was it the same, were the garments the same the whole time, like from when it got commanded to when you left, or did they change?

BB: They told us that it would be the same as a practice standard basic long underwear until you get in the temple and then you're supposed to be really strict with them, they're gonna be different. I never went to the temple, which was a blessing [laughter].

SG: [Laughter] So, your experience was that the changes were mostly—

BB: Some people probably had them, the long underwear before, but I remember my mother tellin' me that we were gonna start and that it wasn't really required yet in the school, but she suspected it would be, and it was eventually commanded.

SG: And then as far as like, say, the dresses, y'know if you look at pictures there's like people, like—

BB: Pastel?

SG: Yeah, like so while you'd have like dresses that were kind of normal for the early nineties let's say. But they were just, were like y'know maybe in the outside world they were more like, "Oh, we wear this for like church." But for you guys it was like every day. But then they started taking away patterns, and colors and stuff like that. Is that correct?

BB: I remember, like, my baby pictures I had red dresses on, and they all had red when I wasn't very old. Because Jesus wears red. They let you do almost anything you wanted clear up until Warren Jeffs. I mean, they had basic, like, really small minor changes. So you can wear jumpers or skirts, blouses or anything, really, until Warren Jeffs just really got strict. He went strict really fast.

SG: When was that? Do you about what year it was?

BB: That was when he went and made Texas.

SG: Okay, so this was once he had already taken over after Rulon's death, not—

BB: He got so strict fast. When I married, he told me to pack my clothes. So I pack my clothes, I go to this place in Texas, far away from everybody. And he pulls me aside the very first day that I got there and he says, "You're wearing a V-waist." So my waist was going down to be and my collars were going to be at on my dress. And he's like, "We don't do that here. And you need to go and change your dress." And I was like, "What makes you think I have another dress that I could change into that doesn't have any—?" y'know [laughter]. I didn't have any more clothes that matched the standard because it was a new standard and I'm far away from my family, no fabric, no sewing machine. And it just happened that some of the other ladies that were there loaned me like three dresses. It was horrible for laundry because I remember I had a solid full day at work and I was running from job to job, and I had to wash my laundry every single day almost. At least every three days and I remember there was no time to wash laundry at all. And I had to wash it often. So there was a time that I pulled a dress out of my hamper, it was all crinkled up and everything. I put it on, went to the morning class, 'cause I was exhausted by the end of the day. Plus, my whole diet changed overnight. I didn't have any sugar or anything like I was used to, and I couldn't go to the store. It was like a major shock to me. I go to the class and my sister that was married to Warren was talking to me, was like, "That looks like you pulled that out of the hamper. You didn't even iron it!" She was so mad at me because she was so embarrassed. But, yeah—

SG: There's fourteen children total, right?

BB: Yes.

SG: How many boys and how many girls?

BB: Six boys and eight girls.

SG: Okay. And you just mentioned one of your sisters was also married to Warren. How many of you, total, ended up married to him?

BB: Oh, just two.

SG: Just the two. Okay, so let's rewind. How did you end up married to Warren and we'll keep kind of that more brief since it's kind of out there, but more just like the general—

BB: Appointed marriage. He kinda has the ultimate say in the end. No matter what route they teach you and what route you take, he has the say in the end. He can say yes or no.

SG: And he was already the prophet at the time, obviously.

BB: Yes, and he asked me if I had any impressions from God. And it was like a total cornering of me because he groomed me. He taught me everything. And he told me if I, in his trainings, that if I lie to God then I'd get a punishment. So I was like sitting there going, "This is really awkward, because I don't wanna lie to you and tell you that you didn't groom me [laughter] and I also don't wanna tell you." So I just sat there and I went, I wondered if I was supposed to go with my family and my sister. He just piped up immediately and goes, "You're right! You're right! God watched, you have a strong testimony of God." So I could've said no, but I didn't. And then I went in shock, and then I didn't respond very good the rest of the evening. Because of that, he sent me home on my wedding night, to my father's house, and we never did consummate the marriage. But a lot of it had to do with I was eighteen. Like he wasn't the leader very long before I turned eighteen. So I had a little more brain when I started to come out of the shock. I started to resist it. Which was a blessing for me, I believe. Made it so I fought it more and more and more. We never consummated the marriage.

SG: Obviously, you were born shortly before Leroy Johnson passed away.

BB: Yeah, like one year old when he passed away.

SG: But you went to the Jeffs' school so Rulon must have been at least somewhat in the periphery of your life.

BB: Most of my life Rulon was the leader.

SG: And so, what were your impressions and interactions with him, if you had any?

BB: I only went and saw him a few times. Like I said, my father didn't really communicate with him, so I don't have a lot of interaction with him. But when we did a few times go see him, I remember he would put his feet up, and he had the "Keep Sweet" on the bottom of his feet, on the soles of his shoes. There wasn't a lot of interaction with him, but was because of my family dynamic.

SG: Like, was he, did you see him up at the pulpit very often or—

BB: Yeah, we saw him at the pulpit.

SG: And what was your impression?

BB: He didn't talk usually.

SG: He didn't?

BB: Every once in a while at the end he would pipe up. Actually, mostly at the end, he would say something like, "Hey, man" or something. It wasn't like he talked.

SG: There weren't like full sermons, let's say, like how—

BB: He was too old. I think he had a stroke when I was like fifth grade or something. It was, I don't really know what year. If we figured out the exact year, we could figure out my age, but —

SG: You were probably about ten or eleven.

BB: — it was really early on. So I only knew him when he was old, basically.

SG: Right. What were the Sunday meetings like as you were growing up? In regard to other people speaking and—

BB: They didn't make, it was like my grades, like first grade second grade, when it was foggy. It didn't really apply to me. I didn't really take it serious. I would sit there and listen and try to be good, take in— like, I just remember being a little foggy, because it wasn't like it mattered that much in my life because my family wasn't gonna do anything different. So I didn't really listen that good. I mean, I did, I took notes, I can write. I mostly learned most of my stuff after I went to Warren's family because he was [inaudible]. It was so different. It was just like, his interpretations compared to my mother's interpretations are polar opposites. So, Warren Jeffs, he was like no mercy. Like, judgment, judgment, judgment. And I was used to persuasion through love all the time. So I started studying, and I started really goin', "Why didn't I get this, why didn't I get this, why didn't I get this?" The only thing that I can think of is that it didn't apply to me. It's kinda like your health, y'know? When you're young, you just eat sugar all the time. You don't register that someday you're gonna turn thirty and it's gonna affect you, y'know [laughter].

SG: That's fair. [Laughter] Did Short Creek ever play any role in your life up until you had to move here?

BB: I had some cousins. My mother's older sister lived down here and so I had a lot of cousins that I stayed with. We would come down and see 'em at least twice a year. We usually went on camping trips in Beaver, Utah together because it's more in the middle.

SG: And growing up, whether it was in school, church, or at home, especially with having some of your mom's family down here in Short Creek, did you ever get taught about the Centennial Split?

BB: Yes. Warren Jeffs' version, of course. But, yeah, he told us that—

SG: Is that when you were in his family or in school or—?

BB: In school.

SG: Okay.

BB: He told us that they rejected the one man rule, basically. He had a long version, y'know, of yeah.

SG: So, like religiously, Short Creek hadn't played any sort of role up until you had to move here.

BB: My family, I think it came from my brother actually, one of my brothers, he always thought that our family was special. Y'know, how the church teaches that you have a birthright and all this stuff. And he took it to a heightened degree, where I felt like he was always saying things like, "We're special. We're better." Y'know, and stuff like that. Then you get to the school and it's the same story. It's like, "We're Salt Lakers. We're better." Y'know. But I think it was the same down here. They did the same thing. They're "Crickers!" They're better, y'know. It's just the same thing. No matter where you went, you thought that your situation was the best, y'know. Till you get older, when you get old enough, then you start to go, y'know— if you're a normal person — you go, y'know, we're all human. But some people never get over it. Some people never do. I think the biggest wake-up call to me was when we moved down here. Because I was always told that everybody liked Salt Lakers, because Warren Jeffs was up there, the prophet was up there and all these things. They didn't know. When we got down here, it didn't feel like that to me. And that was like a big wake-up call to me. I was like, "Y'know what, I think you're kind of inflating our situation, [laughter] because these guys don't like us. Y'know, we're not Crickers."

SG: Right. Other than feeling like you weren't liked, what was the main culture shock of having moved down here?

BB: It still is, to this day, somewhat of a culture shock, because even the UEP favors and puts in the categories of people who lived here versus people who sold their house and gave everything to this area. Which, to me, my father did that, so I really get his point of view. But people that aren't put in that situation don't wanna get it. He sold his house and he built another house here that was connected to somebody else. Why does the first person get say over him, when he put, — it was stud walls! So I get my father's situation. But if you're not in that situation, almost everybody in this area treats us like we're second class

because we weren't originally from here. It doesn't make sense to me because I know the other side of the story. I'm like, "If you were in my shoes, you would get what I'm thinkin'." And who knows what I would do on your side, but right now I'm in these shoes so I get it, y'know?

SG: Yeah. What was going on— Like, obviously, you left Warren's family when you left the church. What was going on with your parents and siblings as far as their relationship with the church, and staying or leaving?

BB: After I married Warren, or—

SG: Just like whenever. Like, are your parents still in the church?

BB: Well, my father got kicked out like a week after I escaped. And they blamed something else on it. So he doesn't think it was because of me, but I do. They told him that he could never come back, and he lost his family. And my mother stayed and they are still in the church. I haven't talked to 'em for eight years.

SG: Are any of your siblings out of the church?

BB: I have three brothers now, and no sisters and no nieces, and about five nephews.

SG: And since it's all boys that have left the church, were they kicked out or did they leave?

BB: Most of 'em get, like, bullied. I think the church doesn't want the boys. Like, it's just like the Lost Boys. So many people say, "We were Lost Boys, we—,y'know. I'm tellin ya, the church heightens the rules and it's actually standard because they hold the priesthood and taught that it is okay to heighten it for the boys. Because they are the priesthood bearers, it's normal for them to have higher requirements. But, really? You know if you think about that, that's really a way to make it too hard for the boys. I think that's the main reason why they leave. Most of my brothers just left. They weren't kicked out. Because it was just too hard. They weren't ever liked, y'know, very much. I mean, I can't say by everybody, but yeah. It was just one of those things that is really sad to me. Y'know, our family wasn't seven generations. Y'know, maybe my grandmother, y'know? Some of the Chatwins, some of the Newsoms maybe, y'know. Some of the Zittings. That's just not thick like the Barlows and Jessops. We didn't have a chance. Y'know, it's like tryin' to serve an abuser your whole life. It feels like that. Where you're just never gonna be good enough. We just quit. Like that's how I feel about it. My family doesn't, by how it just keeps. Y'know? I don't—

SG: So, you and I are kinda close to the same age, so I wanted to ask you about how the church and your family and your recollections of things like, say 9/11, that's something that is really common that most Americans can tell you, to this day, can tell you where they were when they found out about it or when they saw it. And there's little bits and pieces out there about how FLDS people, some onesies and twosies learned about it and experienced it. Do you have any recollection of that, 'cause you would have been—

BB: Sixteen.

SG: Okay.

BB: I was in Drivers' Ed and the guy was a regular teacher of the world and he turned on the radio and I was driving and I was like, "What! The world's ending!" I was sitting there freaked out the whole time while we listened to the over and over repeat the Twin Towers.

SG: Y'know, we have documentation of when Warren was principal of Alta Academy that he would talk about like, when Waco happened in 1993 or when, y'know, different major news events were happening that he would predict things or talk about it, in like, "Oh you see that this is being done—

BB: Yeah. Even like, 2000, "It'll be the end of the world." Millennium.

SG: Yeah. So did that come up during that time?

BB: In my brain it did. But he wasn't around when I heard about it. But yeah, everything like that eventually was related to the end of the world. Especially after I married him. Like, he would talk about how, y'know— I knew that he was dressing down, because I was in his family. Most people, it was a shock to them when he got caught and they found a red car and all this stuff. It wasn't a shock to me, we knew, we saw it. He told us that the heavens were crying because he had to do that. He was goin' around to, y'know, cursing the world. We all knew that in the elite groups. So he was cursing the world for the destructions.

SG: Right. He didn't take all of you though, did he?

BB: He didn't. He took, like, if you, I've seen some of the pictures, some of the ones he took, and I knew he had been taking people. But in my story, I was more determined to figure out if there was even a way to make it to heaven. So when I went into his family and started to wake up to the strictness and the differences between me and my mother, I mean my mother and Warren Jeffs' interpretations, I was directly like a magnet to his trainings and just glued to him until I figured out if there was even a way to make it. Because he was so strict. And I just felt like if I went the route that everybody else was going that I wouldn't ever know. So the route he required everybody to go was just pray. Pray, pray, pray. God will tell you, God will tell you. And he actually hated people to study like I was. He wouldn't even allow it. I literally had to just steal time to do it. So, because he was always trying to give me more and more jobs so that I wouldn't be able to add up. And the only thing I could do— I didn't wanna pray and rely on God. What was happening to all these people that were leaders, y'know, they did that. They're getting corrected every day, losing their families. That's not a safe way out. So I just decided, I'm gonna study. Y'know, that was the only other solution I had. I'm not gonna go the same route that he's telling everybody, requiring everybody to go.

So what happened with my story is I went to a house in hiding, which is a middle ground after I went to Texas and figured out how strict it was. I went to, y'know, I went to the Dream Center before it was the Dream Center, for four months. Then I went to the house in hiding. And during that time I just told him I wasn't going to pray. I told him, "I'm not praying at all." Make sure that I don't go back to those lands before I feel like I can't. And I stayed for two years in these middle ground houses. And he got caught. And then I went back. By that time I had figured out that he wasn't the leader [laughter]. I said it so much, and I was so vocal. That's what you usually come to. And that's why they don't like you to do that. But that's what I figured out. So when I went back to research routes to escape, or find a place in there where I could help somebody. Yeah, so that's my story. I wasn't involved in a lot of the things that went on in Texas because I was gone for two years. Literally studying.

SG: Well, and I feel like he probably had more than enough wives that he just kinda kept to the same group, yeah.

BB: He always had the same ones.

SG: When you found out that you were gonna get married, what were the expectations that you had versus like the responsibilities that you had? Because you mentioned that you were going from job to job to job, like what were your day-to-day, like activities? Before you started having to like go to the different houses—

BB: Yeah, so when I went there, he immediately recognized I was different. Because we didn't consummate the marriage, y'know I was just like resisting him right out and I was mad at him for correcting me so much. It was just like weird to me, y'know, there was no persuasion through love. So I was already recognizing the signs and he was recognizing that I was different. So he put me on jobs like every hour, like, "I want you to be gardening for an hour, I want you to be sewing for an hour, I want you to be correcting homework for an hour." Like, I was literally running from job, to job, to job. Well, that wasn't normal. Most of his ladies had one job that they did all day. And then they would do that for a month and then he'd rotate 'em to the next job. So he purposely did that to keep me busy so that I wouldn't have time to do anything else. I would crash at night and I would just be so exhausted. I changed my meal, like I said, my diet, like completely.

I remember morning class would come in the morning, every morning you were supposed to have a training with the family even before school and in school you'd have another one, y'know. But I remember I couldn't wake up. Like we lived in a trailer when I first went to Texas, 'cause I went there when there was no houses. There was just trailers. And mud, tons of mud. All the people that were there were in sleeping bags laying on the trailer floor. I would sleep in and my sister would wake me up and the whole room was empty. Everybody had gotten up, everybody had gotten dressed, lights were on, like everything, and I didn't hear anything. I was so tired from running and working and all this stuff.

So when I figured out a little bit more about his family and that I was the only one on that schedule, it made me wanna leave. Y'know, I didn't wanna stick around. Because I could see it was so I wouldn't study. Because I had already started that when he set me that schedule. I wanted to study. 'Cause he was gettin' up in church, and I'd be racing all week, he'd get up in church and correct five guys tell 'em that they were cast out forever because they broke a commandment. And I was just so confused. I can't even wrap my head around that. There isn't a person in this room who has ever hated a commandment. I knew enough about the scriptures to know in Brigham Young's day they were commanded to have silk trees. Like, we aren't doing that. Where did that change? There isn't a person here who's not breaking a commandment, so how can you kick out this guy for doing it? It didn't make any sense to me. And so, he kept adding on rules like, "You guys are the elite people that are supposed to have higher trainings than anybody else." And he kept saying, "Another commandment, you'll have many commandments." Sweep all the sidewalks, empty the garbages every day. You can't have chiropractic work. He's just always adding on and then if we didn't get a training that day, it was like a punishment. I was just like, this is so hellish. It felt just like hell. We couldn't even keep up. And then he's correcting the adults so strictly and so much. Because it didn't start with the kids. He was more lenient to the kids. But the adults were constantly, there wasn't even enough to do any of that stuff.

SG: Oh, man. So many questions [laughter]. Growing up, what were you taught to expect in a marriage? Because, obviously, this is not a common—

BB: It was persuasion through love, especially in the beginning. You shouldn't be correcting them right off. You should be inviting them and helping them see that this is okay, especially in an arranged marriage when you have never dated. You can't marry somebody and then all the sudden say, "You idiot!" Because it's like an abuser and they run. But this was the prophet, this was like the most perfect person in the world, and he's doing it the wrong way in my mind. Against everything I'd ever been told. What he did on my, like I went home to my father's house and he commanded that, he told my father that he wanted my whole family at the work project meeting in the morning. So I go to the work project meeting in the morning and we didn't usually do that. Some families did, but we didn't. The girls didn't usually go. And when we were sittin' in the audience, and he walks down the aisles and passes out corrections to men and they lost their families and all this stuff. And he gets up there and has this big power speech and I was just like in shock. I'm like, "If you did this and didn't tell me to be here, it would be okay. But because you told me to be here to watch you have this power strike and correct all these people," it was just counteractive to what I'd been told, that it was supposed to be persuasion through love.

SG: What were you taught as far as, like, what your responsibilities were going to be as a wife and mother?

BB: It depended on the family that you joined. Like, if you're a first wife, you'd have all the responsibilities of a wife. Which is babies, cooking, cleaning, sewing, you'd have all of it. If you were a second wife, you would share. You would tend sometimes, you would

cook sometimes. It depended on the family. But in Warren Jeffs' family, that was supposed to be top secret. But we knew more because of my sister, but we still didn't know to the degree that I learned.

SG: Two questions come to mind from there. One, how did your sister end up marrying Warren? I'm assuming she married him first.

BB: She was married to Rulon first. And then after Warren became the leader, she got married to him before I did.

SG: And then how was she, like, I mean, you were both raised together, and obviously siblings frequently are different when they grow up, but she seems to not have had as many problems accepting his interpretations and how different they were to your mother's than you did.

BB: Yeah. Well, for one thing, I don't think she had the childhood experience that I had. And another thing is, so she didn't have any fears when she went into it. She's older than the brother and below all the other sisters. And then another thing is she was in Rulon Jeffs family, he was old by the time she married him, so she had, like at least five years of understanding of the family in a loving way, because Warren was there, but he didn't have full control over her until later. So she was more used to it by the time she married Warren. She didn't get like polar shock.

SG: Right.

BB: Texas, out of town, change your dress, y'know? She didn't get polar shock like I did. She didn't change her diet overnight, she could go to the store any time, she had accepted a lot of the beliefs by the time she married Warren. Because he was teaching her, he was just teaching her slower.

SG: And is she still part of his family, as far as you know?

BB: I don't think so. She lives with my mother, so I don't think.

SG: And then my other—

BB: She still believes, but I don't think she's married to him anymore.

SG: As far as your life with family, what was your role with, say, like Warren's children and besides doing, like, y'know, the gardening and the sewing and that kind of stuff? Like—

BB: It's a higher—

SG: — did you ever have to be a mother?

BB: — a higher trust position to look over his children. I didn't really want to. Because they're so, like, so advanced in being able to like repeat the stories. Y'know, they always get bedtime story, they always get to— They know the system better than you do, especially when you're new to the family. And so it's not a fun thing. There's very few of them that you really want to be fun around [laughter] or I felt like. I mean, like, Roy was amazing ever since I knew him. Like, even in there, I saw him gettin' bullied. I knew he was gettin' bullied, and there was nothing I could do about it. I wasn't his parent, y'know, and he was older. But I did know. It didn't take rocket science, y'know? It was easy to tell.

SG: So there weren't any like little, little ones that would have needed, like—

BB: Love.

SG: Yeah. Or, just, "Hey, can you just watch the children because you're here?"

BB: Well all of them need that. But they weren't very receptive to it. Most of them weren't. It would take bullying to get them to be receptive to it because, like, Roy was. He was the first one that ever came to me and shook my hand and just said, "Hi" to me, and it was here in the Crick. I would turn around and wouldn't know, I wouldn't recognize him, because I'd only seen him from a distance. So I was lookin' at him like, okay, and I went around and asked everybody and they were like, "Oh, that's your son!" And I was like, "Oh, really?" He was always nice. But it's because he'd been bullied, I think. So he understood how it felt. Most of 'em don't get how it feels. And they don't have any receptors to it, so even if you were to say, "Hi" in the hall or anything, it wasn't like a gift. It was like, "Oh, you're sayin', 'Hi' 'cause I'm special. Y'know, it wasn't the same. Most of them, like, Ray is pretty nice, there's, y'know Ray's talked to me since. There's more that are nicer now that Warren Jeffs' has been put in prison and they had gotten older. But when I knew 'em, I was an oddball in the family. I was low class, so maybe they treated me more like that. Maybe some of 'em like, I don't think Vicky always had that experience. Because she was immediately put over children, she had her own kids, y'know. I don't think she had the same experience that I did. I was always the rebellious one.

SG: Can you tell us who Vicky is?

BB: Vicky is another sister-wife that's out now.

SG: Sorry. Like, I started thinking of stuff and I should probably be writing it down so that I remember to ask you. So, you were never put in a position where you—

BB: Watched over his kids. Except for in school a few times. But, see, I didn't wanna be over his kids. I felt like I needed to prepare to have my own kids if that ever happened.... For one thing, I didn't think I would have kids with Warren Jeffs. I didn't wanna have kids with Warren Jeffs. But I felt like he was too weird. I didn't know his intentions all the time. And so I was scared. Because we never consummated the marriage, and so I was

always on his radar not as a good thing. I didn't know what he was gonna do, so I just wanted to be prepared. Because he would pull me aside and say things like, "Do you ever think of having kids?" Y'know, it was creepy. Because I wasn't in love with him. I didn't even know what love was. Y'know, I was just like, "Okay, this is weird." And I think if I was in love with him it would've been way harder because you'd only be seeing your husband that you were madly in love with every six months, it's probably pretty tough. And I saw a lot of people like that. Some of 'em were put in these houses for years and they were never rebellious, they were praying the whole time and they were doing all this stuff and I was like, "Okay. Well, you can have him." [Laughter]

SG: [Laughter]

BB: "I'm like just fine here." It caused that I went back faster a lot of times, because I was resisting him and he hates that. He doesn't like people outsmarting him. And that's kinda what I did. [Laughter] That was my only survival, because I didn't love him. I didn't wanna be there.

SG: And so, obviously by the time you got down here to Short Creek, y'know, all of the community celebrations and all that kind of stuff was already gone, I imagine. But did you experience it ever, when you came to visit your cousins?

BB: Yeah. We came a lot around October 5th, about the holidays, about during the celebrations. Yeah, we came mostly at those times.

SG: And what were those like?

BB: I remember they were fun. They were fun with my cousins. No cares. There was one time we stayed late at the park and it got dark on us because we were on a hayride and it took way longer than we thought. And when we got back to the park, I was crying 'cause I didn't know the way home. Like, I was probably ten, and she knew the way home because she lived here. So we're runnin' down the road and some car pulls up from somebody in the Crick and they say, "You guys okay? Do you want me to take you home?" [inaudible] know who they were, and I didn't know who they were. And I'm like, "Yeah sure!" [Laughter] At least they did drop us off. She was like, "Don't do that! That's so bad. Like, what if they kidnapped us? You can't just hop in somebody's car!" We didn't stay out after dark anymore [laughter].

SG: Growing up in this religion, what were you taught about the LDS church? In relationship to—

BB: It was, they weren't living the true faith.

SG: —what you were living?

BB: They also taught that if they— So, we originally came from the LDS faith. But they said there could be some faithful people in there somewhere. But ever since they accepted the

Black people, ever since the LDS church became less racist, then there was less people that were worthy of being FLDS.

SG: And what were you taught as far as, I guess, what society would call like racist theology or doctrine?

BB: Well they, they pretty much knew they were racist, I think. But they didn't care because it was God's commandment.

SG: In what ways were you taught these things? And how did they kind of play into your upbringing?

BB: So, they taught that Brigham Young was an early, early leader who was there in the time of the Civil War and all that, they taught that he taught about the war in heaven where the white people accepted God for who he was, the Black people sat on the fence, and the people that followed the devil didn't get bodies. Which is weird, really, if you think about it. But that's what they taught. So they taught everybody to be racist, because it was a commandment from God, because it came from a leader. They never changed that. The LDS church changed that. They got new revelation and now they're accepted. But they still believe in the war in heaven. It's just less racist. But in this FLDS and all of the branches off the LDS church, I don't know any of 'em that aren't racist, maybe you do, but I don't know that any of 'em aren't racist.

SG: Like, probably the Community of Christ are—

BB: Less?

SG: Yeah. They used to be called the RLDS.

BB: That was my turning factor, in my life, was about racists. When I left the church, when I escaped, I didn't date anybody for a long time because I was confused. I didn't know what I wanted. And it was not really a possibility because I wanted to change my name so bad and it took two years to do that. I didn't want to be caught in another abusive cycle without having any way of eliminating the old cycle. So I needed to get adopted before I could date, I felt like.

And then when I did start to date, I was in Salt Lake and it was somebody who was not white, y'know, and I didn't care. I was never racist, even though I was told all my life. In my mind I always felt like something was wrong. But the thing that really turned me was I went into what I call, like, I have PTSD really bad. Warren Jeffs taught parables, he taught all these things. So when I met this boy, he wanted to date me. I was thinking about it and I thought, y'know what— it was just like my PTSD came back, but I was thinkin' y'know— Warren Jeffs taught parables, why would they think— Christ is the only one that's perfect. Even the Mormons think that. What makes them think that they sat on the fence? What if they were trying the whole time like I had been trying the whole time in Warren's group. And I was gaslighted and all kinds of things. What if that

happened? Like, if Christ is the only one who passed all the tests, wouldn't he understand that? And wouldn't the people— so I don't really believe in all this now, but at the time I was, that was what crossed the ridge. I was like, I don't care. Because I thought, if that was a parable that they sat on the fence, and it makes sense that it would be, because Warren Jeffs' teachings, and also that's all I knew, that it doesn't really make sense that they just sat there. It doesn't. In my mind it doesn't. I think they actually were trying, and they were gaslighted or somethin'. That makes way more sense to me than just sitting there and watching everybody suffer. I'm like, "What if they were gaslighted, and Jesus didn't know how to explain this to the people that fought valiantly and could see? So he set up, like, a temporary requirement." Maybe he said, "Okay, I can't explain this to you, you need to experience it for yourself. When you're gaslighted and you go through all that stuff, then maybe you'll realize that these people were too." Y'know? And so he gave 'em the opportunity, gave 'em a body because they really were trying, they just couldn't see. It wouldn't be fair to not give 'em that.

To me, I just thought it was this amazing idea because after I thought about that, I thought, y'know, it would solve a lot of problems. Maybe there were more temporary requirements; maybe polygamy was a temporary requirement. Maybe polygamy was commanded so that we could come to this conclusion and then we don't have to live it anymore. I don't know. There's endless possibilities. Maybe Joseph Smith had underage brides to come to this conclusion and now we don't need that. That would be amazing [laughter] to eliminate! Right, because that would be awesome to completely eliminate. Maybe incest, y'know, all these things, like it just exploded later in my brain, I'm like, okay. And then I found out through talking to people that the manifesto in some, there's different versions of it, but in some versions it actually says it's a temporary commandment, polygamy. And so that made a lot of sense, too. And then you listen to what they say on the internet website that's not Mormons, y'know not really clear, if you research it says that polygamy was a test like Abraham. Which is the same concept! We have a temporary commandment, we figured out that it feels like hell, and it is hell sometimes. 'Cause polygamy is way harder, they teach that even in the Mormons, polygamy is harder. It's not impossible, but it's harder than what monogamists do.

SG: Right.

BB: So, it doesn't make sense to me why they wouldn't have domestic violence shelters and stuff just for polygamy, if they believe that it's harder. It's just, it's an oxymoron to push 'em away and say, "You're an apostate." If they're working for the state, they should have more resources for people that they know are going through more hell.

SG: Okay. That would make a lot of sense. What were you taught, if anything, growing up in the FLDS, about, not just the Lamanites in the *Book of Mormon*, but the people that are considered the descendants of the Lamanites now? In comparison to what you were taught about Black people.

BB: So the Lamanites were just rebellious. And they were harder to convince but they were still accepted and they can still advance. The Black people couldn't advance very high.

They could join, but they could only go up to baptism or something, they could never have children, they could never get married, never go in the temple. But the Lamanites could. They were the pure blood, they were just rebellious, they were cursed with red skin.

SG: And so how were you, in the FLDS, how were you taught to treat, I guess what we would call brown people, versus how you were taught to treat Black people. If you ever encountered them, especially since you were living amongst, y'know, gentiles and LDS people?

BB: We were just taught to be nice to everybody because God is the real judge. But you weren't supposed to date 'em, like Black people. Lamanites, you weren't really supposed to date either because it had to be an arranged appointed marriage. So none of 'em were just like dating material. But if you chose to work with them or something, it would be fine. You just be nice to everybody. But dating was— o when I crossed that line, it was a no return. But I didn't care. Because at that point I was like, "Okay, this makes sense to me." And now I've just grown in that. I'm Christian now. My faith is basic Christian. And they're not racist, and they've never been racist and they don't even believe in the war in heaven. It's totally different and has a lot of solutions, I think in there. And I love to believe in God, so it just, y'know. And I've done, like, the Dream Center and y'know I've done a lot with Christianity and I fit. Y'know, it's not like I feel like I would even if I was a Mormon. And Mormons, I don't think are bad people. I think, my opinion when I talk about in my talks is, if you have, like Christianity believes that no one's perfect, only God is. So if nobody's perfect, which I kind of agree with, and you're going through a man, which Mormons do, they can't really guarantee that every single leader is gonna be good. Just like Warren Jeffs, he, y'know there was some good leaders, then Warren Jeffs is a bad one. So they can't guarantee, they can branch off and say that leader was really bad, and do something else. But they can't guarantee that there's not somebody gonna come along that is a bad leader.

SG: Right.

BB: And so, if you can change the doctrine, if you can update the doctrine and change the doctrine, that is a huge solution, I think. Like, the racism, like, they updated the doctrine. Or, figure out a way to add something new in, just like with me talking about the parable, temporary requirement, and update the doctrine to take out pedophilia, y'know, that would be huge! [Laughter] But, if they can figure out how to change things like Mormons have in some ways, and it's not pretty, like the LGBT children and y'know all these things. It causes more branches off. But if you could figure out a way to change doctrine, that's actually more of a blessing than being in an extremist group, that they can put in pedophilia in the doctrine like Warren Jeffs did among the elite, and you don't have an option to change it. And the next leader who follows that leader, puts in, we start over. Finding the leader, finding the evidence that they continued on the pedophilia or the polygamy, or the incest. Like, there's two groups right now that believe in incest, like they teach it in their doctrine. So if you can take things out of the doctrine, it's actually more of an upgrade, if you're gonna believe in a man. But that's my opinion on it.

SG: Okay. Briefly, again, since a lot of your story about leaving is out there, can you give us, like, a quick summary of, like the leadup and the leaving?

BB: Yeah. So, I went away for those two years. Warren Jeffs got caught. I went back to Texas looking for a way out. And he was mad at me, he sent these people to torture me psychologically, but because I had studied so much, I knew a lot of answers, had a lot of counteractions. I fought with them for three years. And I looked crazy, like I really did look crazy. Because if you're focused on this one group for survival, it doesn't matter what anybody else thinks. It doesn't matter if they understand what you're saying or not. Because you literally can't deviate from this single pattern. Because if you do, you're gonna die. So I stayed in that route for three years, and was getting worse and worse and worse, there was gaslighting, purposeful, hurtful, acts, versus mistakes. And they told me that I would have four choices: I would either join the group, I would die, I would somehow escape and become public, or I would become so crazy that nobody would believe anything I said anyway. And that's the pattern. So they just keep harassing you until you do one of those things, or until one of those things happens. So I did that for three years and then I found an exit route to this town. They told me, because of a scripture, they said, "If you don't understand the scriptures by the time you're eight years old, the sin goes on the head of the parent," in the Doctrine and Covenants. So they told me, "If we send you to the Crick, where your father is, who hasn't heard from Warren Jeffs for five years, you can blame everything on him and you can come back and join our group. Like, we're giving you this opportunity." I took the opportunity to come to the Crick, but I didn't do anything to my father. I'm like, "No, that's so backwards." Like, he doesn't know, so I mean, how can you really judge him? His father is gone, y'know, why don't we blame it on him [laughter]? It's a crazy cycle. So I came back to the Crick and I stayed for two years, and the reason why I stayed is because I wanted to help the children. Because if you have this group of people in this trapped situation where the adults are threatening each other to do certain things and you're arguing all the time and you're threatening each other, who do you think takes the weight of the whole group?

SG: Right.

BB: It's the children. Because they put the children on the front lines to save themselves. So what I did was I went and after two years, because I knew that if I immediately turned in everybody who did it to me instead of my father, I would die. I probably wouldn't escape. So I knew that if I waited sometime there would be a higher chance of me being able to escape, but not a guarantee. I decided to wait two years and then I turned in everybody who did it to me. And what happened, I knew they wouldn't die, I knew, if anything happened, they would lose their positions as these authority figures. And it would give time to, like, while they trained other adults, they would, the kids would have some breath. They would have some years, maybe, waiting while these people— It took me three years to learn as much as I did. So it would take a while to teach these adults. I knew if I left immediately, I'd go through the court system, which isn't that great as far as we're talking, y'know, which I don't know everything about, but I would have to learn it, it would probably take longer, and has taken longer.

So, what I did is, turn ‘em in, and then within a week, almost every single person who was in my case showed up here in the Crick, and some of ‘em lost their families. Some of ‘em were kicked out of the church, some of ‘em just lost their positions. But I was in danger. Like, serious danger. And from that point on I was fighting my way out. And I eventually got locked up in my brother’s house, with the same brother who had history with me. And his family was there and he was trying to protect them and he was being threatened. I believe he was being threatened. And I knew that if I, like, in this case, when he has little kids that he’s trying to protect, sisters don’t come first. And so,[there was] a high risk of me not surviving it. In the end I was locked up with two screws in the window and the doorknob was turned around with the lock on the outside. And what was sad to me was that if he didn’t wake up in his mind before I died, if I died, then he would probably be charged for it. They were gonna frame him for it. And he couldn’t see that. He still doesn’t understand that because it never happened. If I survive, there’s a chance that he won’t go to jail for life, y’know, and then I live. So, I can see this, I’ve been through way more, so I knew way more about what was goin’ on than he did. And he was trying to protect his little kids at all cost, and they were staging it that way to make it look like different things, and I was like, “I’ve been through this, like this is really how it is. You don’t wanna go to jail.”

So what I did is I found some scissors and I unscrewed one side and then I planned on the other side— this is out there quite a bit— but I escaped out the window. I didn’t open any drawers. I made sure that the family that was home didn’t think that I left. They told me to lay there and read, so when it became quiet, they didn’t notice for like two hours that I had actually left. They didn’t know I had one screw already undone. So I escaped out the window, I took back roads. By this time I had learned not to travel on the main roads because people were calling my brother and telling ‘im that they saw me. They had security out lookin’ so I went through the crick and I found a family, well there was a lady who helped me call the organizations, the family I was running to was all ex-FLDS and they drove me halfway and then I met a lady from an organization on the other half and stayed at her house that night. [I had] never met her in my life, she’s from a different group. Heard about her sisters and stuff, but didn’t really know her.

And it became a really big chase, like, a long chase for three months. I was put on the missing list, my family searched for me, my mother, it’s just a long history. I ended up in Tennessee ‘cause, what they’re trying to say is that I was crazy and that I had signed away my rights, which I hadn’t. They had cult doctors drugging me and the cult doctors, I believe, were giving my records to the police, to different people, and you can only get records in a regular hospital if I signed for them. So the police were believing their side of the story for the most part at the time. But in reality I hadn’t signed for them, the cult just gave them the records. So the organizations kind of recognized this, one of them didn’t pass, but all the other ones did. And I ended up in Tennessee and I wanted to have some security, which I felt needed to come through my name change, my social change, my adoption. I needed that because I had PTSD and I didn’t wanna end up in a hospital for too long, which could happen. Nobody knows if they’re gonna go to the hospital for too long, especially if they have PTSD. It’s triggers, and triggers are not predictable all

the time. You have to learn and learn and learn and try to avoid ‘em and try to do things to help.

Well, the first time I left, I definitely didn’t have a lot of an understanding of even therapy, so I needed a solution for security. If I was gonna be in the hospital, I didn’t want, if I was there too long, I didn’t want to default to my parents’ way in the cult. So I did the whole adoption and the whole— The lady who actually picked me up halfway, Kristen Decker, adopted me and I changed my social and all that took two years in Tennessee. And then I came back to Utah because when they changed over my social, they didn’t change my SSI and it would take a month to go through and I couldn’t pay my rent, and my attorney happened to have a free plane ticket to fly me back. So I came back to the Salt Lake area, I didn’t come straight back to the Crick, and stayed with some people that had left, ex-FLDS people, for about a year.

I figured out that I had an opportunity to go and apply for Warren Jeffs’ house. Warren Jeffs had two houses built for him in the Crick. One of them was built after he was in prison, one of them he actually lived in. The one that he built after he went to prison was taken over by somebody that didn’t have an affiliation with Warren Jeffs’ particular family, closely. He was part of the cult, but he wasn’t— And I felt like if I didn’t go after his other house, then that same thing would happen, which is fine, but we do need a crisis house. Like, I knew we needed a crisis house. Because it was hard for me to get domestic violence shelters because they have specific criteria and polygamy is not really on their criteria and doesn’t qualify in their grants, and so I was taught to lie to the domestic violence shelter. Which is what you do when you’re in survival mode and you need a place to stay and you can’t be on the roads, which is a homeless shelter. They put you out during the day. So I chose to lie at the time, and then I chose to do something different later, try to build a crisis house. Or else I get put on a list. A lot of people get put on a list and they can’t do that when you’re in crisis. “I need to leave now, I’m ready to go.” “Okay, we’ll put you on this list, we’ll get you a family out in the world that wants to take you in,” y’know, it doesn’t really work. So I wanted a crisis house and I knew that would help Warren Jeffs’ family if they— I’m number sixty-five, why would I need a house, why should I get benefits from the house? But if I make a crisis house and they choose to go there, which they can or cannot, if they are able to go there, they could benefit from it. At least I’m giving them something, y’know. Which is more than anybody in this community gives anybody. They know that when all the houses are gone, they’re gone. Most people don’t consider that. But I wanted to.

So I had a dream, I was working with some other people that had dreams. When we went and applied, we asked for the dream, we called it the dream house at the time. I didn’t know what an appraisal was, I didn’t have all this history. When they finally granted it to me they told me that I had to pay for quite a bit and most of my crew was mad at me about that. Because we had a friend in the back who had donated four houses to the cause, and we should have got it probably free if it was the regular way, but it wasn’t. The whole idea going and applying from the UEP [United Effort Plan Trust] was not the regular way. And the UEP was created by, you probably talked about that in some things, by Warren Jeffs pretty much, y’know, and the titles being donated to the charitable trust,

so I could apply. Well, when I was sitting with my crew and they were telling me, “Well, you need to sue, because—” Not everybody was in my crew, but the people that were in my crew were telling me, “You need to sue, because you should’ve got it this way.” And I just thought I could sue or I could have an opportunity. It’s not a very big opportunity because they gave me three months, but I chose to take the opportunity. I was like, “I’m not in this for myself, so why would I go sue and get something for myself?” So what I did is I just went and got the opportunity and it was hard. I didn’t have a lot of support through it. I did media and free tours through the house. I didn’t have blueprints, they were all burned. I learned a lot of stuff, I was cramming to figure it out in three months. It did get extended a few times, like twice. And then, during that process of doing free tours and the media, the Dream Center became aware of what was goin’ on here, because they were in Phoenix [Arizona] and that was not very far away. Three days before I found out I was supposed to get an eviction notice. So we went in and sat down, three days before the next meeting. They’re like, “Oh, we’re supposed to give you an eviction notice, but because we didn’t we’re gonna go in the next meeting and tell ‘em that we had a potential buyer.”

So they did. And now it’s the Dream Center. Y’know, they have, it is a dream. They are helping people transition. And they can’t do everything, but they do more than what we had. They’ve been working on their licensing, they’re very professional, they want the big licensing, they had to put sprinklers in, and they have a few things, but they got the title. Most of the things are, they’ve gone through a lot of stuff. And it’s really exciting every time I go up there to see the new people, the new progress, the new everything. It’s definitely been a beautiful journey for me. I was hired after they got the house. And we’ve got a house since then. My husband and I.

So I met my husband after I applied for the house. He’s from Mexico. And he, through the whole process of doing the Dream Center, he supported me the best he knew how. And he paid a lot of the bills, y’know. And that’s amazing ‘cause it’s a forty-five-room house that has huge bills for power and water and things. And we got married right before the Dream Center, right before the meeting. It was like two days before we had our meeting that we found out that we were supposed to have an eviction notice and they would ask for a potential buyer. By October we had the paperwork complete and we signed over the lease to own. But in the plan it was that we would have an opportunity to get our own house, because we didn’t get it for free. So we did, like a year and a half later, we were able to secure a loan on our new house here in the Crick. And it’s a fix up, because all of them are here. And we’ve been fixin’ it up, and livin’ our lives.

SG: What has encouraged you to wanna have a home in Short Creek considering, y’know, A) Your history here, but also that, y’know, you’re not from here and, y’know, people around here always ask—

BB: Why would I wanna—

SG: “Why would you wanna live here?”

BB: Well, one thing, I face my fears, all the time. That's helped my PTSD. And another thing is, it is an opportunity that we could actually consider. Like, it's an investment. Most of the opportunities out in the world right now in Utah are so scary [inaudible] We would rather, but there's no way for us, especially with my mental illness, and things that I went through living in the same culture these people did. To even have a home is, like, remarkable. Usually, they're on SSI for the rest of their lives, they barely can survive paying as a rent that's even hard to find. They don't get houses. And the fact that we have gotten this far, considering my situation, and whatever else, y'know, we're actually doing better than what people most of the time give us credit for. But it doesn't matter, y'know. If I'm a speaker, which I wanna be, and I am, I do a lot of speaking, but my career looks like it's going to be more and more that way. So the more I go focus and stay in my career and fundraise or whatever I need to do, the more hope there is for us. If I do a little bit of good every day, that's all I really want. That's all I'm askin' for. I don't want to be one of those people that does everything. All I wanna do is be capable of doing a little bit of good every day.

It's hard with my mental, y'know the drugs and things that they gave me, the PTSD, like I really have to be self-aware all the time. And if I figure out that something's too hard, I walk away from it because that's what I need to do for myself. It's not because, it's not, even if it's the right thing to do, like, for instance, like, in a situation where you're the director of a facility or something, I've learned that when you take on a new client, who's had been abused a lot and has a lot of history and has things they have to work through, they need extra love. But it hurts really, really bad to the person who is required to give them the extra love because sometimes they don't deserve it, but they need it. Every case is different. So that hurts really bad when they're in a bad day and they're doing bad things, y'know. But the rewards are just as great, but I can't handle that pressure of the hurt. I think it will make, because I've been told by some professionals that if you sandbag, which means that you work and work and work and work yourself to death and then you rest, and work and work and work yourself to death and then you rest, actually makes it so someday you won't be able to do it anymore. If you pace yourself the whole time, you can do a little bit of good every day. I'm not in the same program that I was when they taught me that. But now I feel like it hurts worse for me to be the one required to give them the extra love. So I equate it to being more possible than sandbagging, to make it so someday I would be able to do it. So in my case, I feel justified in not being the director, but being a fundraiser, y'know, something that I can do that doesn't have that extreme of pain. Because I only want to do a little bit of good every day. If I was in a position where I could handle more, it'd probably be different. If I hadn't been through so much already. So yeah, it's just one of those things. I feel totally fine.

Well, the house we got also isn't in an area that anybody was fighting for. I mean, it's foundation issues and things. But we don't care, like it's perfect for us. We weren't trying to be the competition for everybody. The builder came over and saw, y'know, they're totally nice to us, y'know. We weren't trying for something that was gonna make everybody mad. It might make some people mad, but it's not as bad. Y'know what I'm sayin'? We did the best we knew how under our circumstances. And I totally feel like we

are justified, like, we may not have been originally from this area, but we contributed. And that's fine with me to just live my life.

SG: Do you want to talk about what it's like being adopted as an adult?

BB: Oh yeah! So I actually love being adopted as an adult. Because I could talk about my family was dysfunctional and sometimes they'd do things, even all families, sometimes do things that are cruel. Y'know, you don't always, like, families generally expect things, I don't know, especially my family. They expect things, like, they think like they own you. Like, "You should just do it because you're family." My family is a lot like that. And I can't handle that all the time either. So having a backup plan for me is so relieving. Like, I always find myself less stressed. If I was tryin' to please this family that, it feels like an abuser. It feels like somebody that I'm never gonna be good enough for. If I was really always trying to please them, it gets really, really overwhelming. But I'm not. I have another family. So if they completely disown me because I'm not racist anymore or because I, y'know, there's so many reasons. I don't believe, now that I've fallen in love, that polygamy is really hard to think that I ever tried to live it. But I wasn't in love so it makes more sense. But, some of these people, I'm like, that would be so tough. Like, I can't even, now that I'm in love, I don't think I could go back.

So, I'm not really against polygamy, but, I also think it's harder to live. I think it's more like Stockholm Syndrome. Which just means there's two parts to it. One part is that you are captive by the belief system and the other part is that you identify with your captors for survival. And that happened generation after generation and became a lifestyle. Because you're always identifying with them, for your children, for your food, for whatever. I think it's Stockholm Syndrome. Which is still, y'know, it's not something you're born with, like LGBT, but it definitely is a lifestyle for some people. Which, y'know, is totally understandable. It's still Stockholm Syndrome to me. So polygamy, like if I changed my lifestyle, I learn more, and I apply it. Some people get offended here and some of my family gets offended, not all of 'em, but some of 'em do. And in order for me to not be so hyper-, because I love my family regardless of if they accept me or not. But I, most of the time expect that something is not gonna be accepted by them, for most of 'em. My father, I've always had a good relationship, he doesn't really get into the drama, which is nice. But, like me coming out with my book, there's been people talkin' about how they didn't reconnect with their family for ten years after a book. I might come out with another book after this, y'know, I don't know! But I'm not gonna gauge my life on if they get offended. I have a new family, I have a backup plan, I have friends, I can go create a new family if I need to. Y'know what I'm sayin'? I don't rely on tryin' to please an abuser.

I think it is abusive to be so hard-headed that you won't at least collaborate on if you have something that you don't agree with. Y'know, I mean like, racism. So many people get so offended over racism that they just disown you. But if you can accept that they're different, then you can accept, like my adoptive mom always has this policy, it says can you agree to disagree? And it's hard, but I don't think it's, it's like political; why would you disown somebody for liking a different candidate, y'know? You try to cope

regardless of these differences sometimes, there are some things that you have to separate, like, beating, and stuff like that, you really can't join those very easy. There's some people that are hurting people too much, they have to be in jail for life, y'know? But, most topics are if you can agree to disagree, you can move on. You don't have to always feel like you're alone, always feel like you're the only one like you, y'know? We are unique, but we aren't built to just isolate ourselves, I think. I think there's ways to actually build relationships.

Like, in my career, being a fundraiser, I'm not gonna get away from relationships, good or bad. I'm gonna meet lots of people and I'm gonna have to decide which ones, y'know, all the time. But that's fine with me. I know I'm not gonna get away from doing that work. But it's not the same as somebody who's hurting or like that, y'know, I equate 'em as different. I'm not gonna be completely away from it, but I will get away from a lot of it.

SG: Well, thank you. I wanna give a quick chance to, like, see if there's anything else that you wanted to, like, end with, but thank you so much for taking the time to do this interview.

BB: I hope it was not too explanatory—

SG: No, it's good.

BB: Okay. Yeah, I just, I talk all the time because I believe that awareness will lead to action, and action will lead to change. So that's the reason why I'm talking. because if I don't spread awareness, then I can't expect action, and I can't expect change.

SG: Right. Well, thanks again, and we'll be done.

[END OF RECORDING. END OF INTERVIEW.]