

CHANGE

TIME: 5:50

ELANTRA¹:

And she [referring to her grandmother] told me that when she was younger it didn't used to be like that. You could just about, like, trust anybody with your kids, like if your children acted up then anybody could whoop them because there were like the neighborhood children or whatever.

ROSA BEARD:

I knew everybody in South Rome. I knew their mamas, their daddies, their grandmamas, their granddaddies, their cousins. I knew everyone in South Rome. [Laughs] I knew everyone in South Rome. Sure did.

ELANTRA

I just wish that our neighborhood and how they acted then could still be now so that, like, parents would trust their children and, you know, if they let them go to a party they wouldn't think that something bad was going to happen. And that's the story that I hear a lot. And I don't like it.

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REVEREND CAREY INGRAM:

If I could describe the difference between how South Rome is today as opposed to when I was in high school and growing up as a teenager, I would say that it was, in those days, it was simply more community oriented, and that is to say there were more homeowners; there were more people involved in community-oriented things -- the church, local associations.

ALVIN JACKSON, SR.

It's changed over the years. I feel as though it was neglected.

RONNIE WALLACE:

I think the biggest change that I've seen occur over the years has been I guess the absence of home ownership. I think that's been the biggest impact.

REVEREND WARREN JONES:

It has gone down tremendously since 1995.

KAREN MOORE:

The biggest problem that we really have to deal with here in South Rome are the absentee landlords and the percentage of the property that is rental. That is our biggest challenge.

WARREN JONES

. . . more houses became abandoned. . .

¹ People under 18 are referred to by first name only.

JUDY INGRAM:

And now they're run-down homes on the pretty street of Branham Avenue and run-down apartments.

PASTOR FANNIE LOU JACKSON

It was so many houses went down after a lot of those people died out, and the families, even if they own it, they didn't try to fix them.

A. JACKSON

If you look at housing over there you'll see that the average renter pays around \$250 or \$300 per month or maybe a little more for dilapidated housing,

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CAREY INGRAM:

They had more grocery stores. Even though they were local grocery stores, they were nonetheless they served a purpose.

A. JACKSON.

There's not one over there now, there's not a store, there's not a pharmacy so those seniors can't get their medication, they either have to go to Maple Street in East Rome or K-Mart way across town on Turner McCall.

INGRAM:

I think life today in South Rome is just simply harder. That is to say, it's a community with a lot more problems, and I think our neighborhood has some problems to some degree, but I'm talking about some drug problems, some crimes in the street, sometimes gambling in the street.

F.L. JACKSON

And it's been a lot of change from what I've heard about how the boys stand around you know, and the drug-infested places over there in South Rome.

SHIRLEY DENMON:

We have some young men that stand on our streets, and some people say they are afraid, but it doesn't bother me because I get out there and work with those young men, because I would like to see them change their lives and make better fathers and husbands, and I just get out there and work with them and talk to them and tell them what they need to do and what they don't need to do.

BISHOP ALEX ALLEN, JR.:

A lot of the old houses that were in South Rome have been torn down and new houses have been built. That's improvement, and I think they're still improving it, you know, to a certain extent by getting rid of some of the old buildings and building new buildings.

F.L. JACKSON

And now, as I pass the streets, I notice—I never would have dreamed to see sidewalks and nice roads, streets.

J.L. VAUGHN, JR.

It's better. At least the housing is better.

A. JACKSON

You look now and you have the South Rome Redevelopment Association who's trying to spruce up that neighborhood and there has to be a reason.

DANIEL BROWN:

It seems that they're getting more grants coming in. They're making a big change—you know, putting up new housing, trying to clean it up, and which it needs that.

A. JACKSON

All of a sudden you just seeing our city and county governments coming together and trying to put together a plan, a twenty million dollar plan to revitalize that area in partnership with Darlington School and the Coosa Country Club.

VAUGHN

When you look at it, since they got this project going in South Rome, Hardy looks a whole lot different. When you go down Wilson, they got sidewalks on each side now. So, they're trying to make a difference over there now.

A. JACKSON

What really puzzles me is why all of a sudden there's such an interested in that location, it's the largest black voting precinct and the only one that we have left in Rime and Floyd county.

If they were doing their job in the first place it wouldn't be in this condition, they let it run down over the years, it seemed like a place to where they just didn't care about developing it.

F.L. JACKSON

So it's gradually coming back, but a lot of things was there that'll never be back.

DANIEL BROWN

They are taking South Rome away. They're coming in and doing what they want to do, what the city want to do.

C. INGRAM:

South Rome I going to be a model place. When people come to Rome, they're going to say, "Well, take me to South Rome." That's what they're going to want to see. That's what I believe in, believe in God for.

DENMON:

I think it has been a nice place, and it will be a nice place again. That's how I feel about it.