Transcript of **An interview with Guy Bailey, UTRGV President and**

**Author of *Inheritance and Innovation in the Evolution of Rural African American English,***

**co-written with Patricia Cukor-Avila and Juan Salinas**

I'd like to talk to you a little bit today about our new publication in the Cambridge Elements series. It is called *Inheritance and Innovation in the Evolution of Rural African American English*. And this is really the product of about 30 years of research. We started work on something called the Springville Project in 1988, and that project is still ongoing. The pandemic has delayed field work for a while, but it’s still an ongoing project. And the data in this element comes from that project. And what we do is we look at the evolution of two iconic forms of African American English: invariant be (most often called derivative habitual be) and zero copula, and we look at their evolution over the course of the 20th century. During that time, these two forms became something very different from what they were at the beginning of the century.

The durative habitual be, for example, was simply an alternative form of copula auxiliary be. Over the course of the century, it evolves into a durative habitual marker, and many people are aware of that, but we show exactly how that happens. We talk about the linguistic trigger for that, ambiguity, grammatical ambiguity that is, a lack of transparency, and you see it evolve. Now, most people are not aware that zero copula auxiliary has evolved in a similar way.

Again, it was mostly associated with the verbness of the predicate. It occurred most often before gonna, verb+ing, participial adjectives. Over the course of the century, it evolves as well. And it really becomes a marker of nonstativity, and you see this if you’re able to separate out adjective subcategories, and that’s because we have a large database, that’s what we’re able to do here. Now, we frame all of this within a social demographic context as well. So, we talk about the linguistic triggers for this, and we show you the linguistic triggers. And then, we provide the social demographic context, which is a Great Migration. And as you know, that’s one of the most important social demographic contexts in the history of African American English.

I invite you to read this, and I’d love to hear your feedback.