

LEFT IN AN UNMARKED GRAVE: UNEARTHING THE CIVIL RIGHTS AND
BLACK POWER MOVEMENTS IN DALLAS, TEXAS

A Thesis
Submitted to
the Temple University Graduate Board

in Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
MASTER'S OF ART

by
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August, 2010

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ABSTRACT

Left in an Unmarked Grave: Unearthing the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements in

Dallas, Texas

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Temple University, 2010

Dr. Nathaniel Norment

This thesis is an ethnographically-informed case study that uncovers the history of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements in the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s in Dallas, Texas and surrounding cities. These movements were said to have been non-existent. This study utilizes the methods of conducting interviews conducted with integral participants of both movements and the researching of archived newspaper articles, court records, and cultural media (flyers, posters, leaflets, etc) to provide a concise, critical view of this period in Dallas.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis was a labor of love and devotion. Over the past year, I have become indebted to several individuals whose cooperation, involvement in the struggle, guidance, wisdom, and support have proven to be invaluable sources of inspiration and sanity for me while completing graduate school at Temple University. How can I take ownership or expertise over a struggle that I was not there to witness and that is yet unfolding before our eyes?

To all of the heroes of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements in Dallas, Texas thank you for sharing this information not only with me, but with the world. Your legacy and our history has been richly added to because you all decided to breathe new life into over forty decades of memories. Thank you for reliving the joys, triumphs, and even the painful moments. Eva “Mama Mack” McMillan, the matriarch, you are one wondrous woman! I am so glad to have your DNA pumping through my veins. You are my rock. Can I be like you when I grow up? Not only do I acknowledge the knowledge of Donald Lister, the bravely radical spirit whose life is a testament to the love he has for his people, but I thank him for sharing his life with me and this project in general. Edward “Black-Ed” Harris please publish your book! You will provide us with the missing pages of history. Dallas needs it; we need it.

Marion Ernest “Ernie” McMillan, Jr., thank you for your time and patience. You are the reason I chose to pick up this mantle. I thank you for sharing not only your story, but your lessons learned. I admire your ability and power to adapt the struggle to contemporary times. As you say, “A luta continua.” Marilyn Clark, my cuz! It is always a joy to be in your presence. Your light shines so bright that you made my dark and

gloomy experiences fade away with the brilliant rays of your smile. I love you. Reverend Peter Johnson your candor and resolve is unmatched. Sir, I was in awe of you. Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to allow me to interview you. Reverend Mark Herbener, what a kind and gentle soul! Thank you for opening up your home and donating your archival information to this thesis. It was an absolute joy interviewing you. Reverend B. L. “Smitty” Smith, you are an inspiration and a great motivator. Thank you for the laughs and the quiet moments where your repose and demeanor encouraged me to go forward and be great. The Honorable Diane Ragsdale, I am because you are. When I was a little girl I had the honor of spending time with you and seeing the fruits of your good deeds ripen and go on to nourish a hungry community. Your work is your life and I am so blessed to have witnessed greatness at such a young age. Thank you for sharing.

Jacqueline McMillan Hill, my Auntie, “How do I love thee?” I don’t have enough fingers to count! Thank you for sharing your story. Your humility and beauty are two characteristics that go unmatched. You have continued to be my Mama Number Two. Thank you for treading a path less traveled and making a deep enough footprint for others to find their way to truth, justice, and love of self. James “Skip” Shockley, it was a joy to interview you. You added a richness that is unmatched to this study. Thank you also for the treasure that is your book, *Mother’s Son*. This text has definitely left an indelible mark on the history of the Dallas Black Power Movement. Odinga Kambui, our chief Black Power archivist. It is my prayer that our community in Dallas will be able to view all of the priceless artifacts and history that you have from this time period within the

four walls of your home, which is a national treasure to our community. Thank you for your time.

To my mother, Katherine McMillan, my source of nurturing support, I thank you for giving me calm words of wisdom and encouragement through the days and nights filled with tears. Thank you also for putting fire under me when I questioned my reasons for attempting to complete the thesis. This thesis would not have been completed without a mother's knowing spirit and loving heart. It, like me, came to life because of you. I have surely exhausted the phrase "thank you," but only the respect and love I have for you can illumine a better instance of gratitude. My love for you knows no end.

The committee members who agreed to review this thesis and employ their intellectual prowess and fortitude upon me are a group of scholarly giants and I am so fortunate to have gotten to know you all individually. Thank you, Dr. Gregory Carr, for presenting me with the foundation of a truly invaluable mode of thought. Your brilliance is something so rare and genuine that sometimes it can give a junior scholar like myself unbelievably huge shoes to fill. However, thank you for giving me the confidence to tread my own path in shoes that give me room to grow. Keep inspiring, enlightening, and illuminating minds.

Dr. Nathaniel "Pop" Norment, thank you for always being there no matter what the circumstances were. Your thoughtful words, your listening ear, and most of all your presence have not only aided me in the thesis-writing process, but throughout my time as a student here at Temple University. Thank you for bestowing upon me the rite of an honorary family member. You are greatly admired and appreciated.

Dr. Sonja Peterson-Lewis, you are a jewel and a joy to know. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to get to know you outside of the classroom this past year. You are a wonderful and kind person. I have the utmost gratitude for your patience and keen eye when spending many tedious hours drumming up a perfect IRB Protocol. I pray that more students seek your counsel as you are not only a source of a vast amount of information, but most importantly, an abundant source of inspiration.

Dr. Muhammad Ahmad, perhaps our most notable exchange will forever be the time I stood up in your class, banged my hands vehemently upon my desk, and defiantly proclaimed that your assumptions were wrong about any number of things upon which I thought I was an expert. Thank you, first and foremost, for not throwing me out of class. Thank you, secondly, and most importantly, for imparting on me a comprehensive understanding of this time period as well as your prayers over the course of this year.

Anyika McMillan-Herod, my inspiration and motivator, thank you for letting me stand in your shadow and walk a few steps behind. I love you so much, Yika. Thank you for being the beautiful person you are. Thank you for teaching me how to talk, perform, and be great. I get it all from your poise, elegance, grace, and humility.

Alexandria Brady, my little sister, thank you for the late night Skype calls of encouragement. Thanks for listening to all of my fears, doubts, and worries about this process. We are in this thing together and we'll finish strong. I love you so much and I am so thankful to call you both sister and friend. You are an invaluable source of positivity and optimism. Remember to have that same outlook when forging ahead to do your own great deeds!

Gala Goodwin, how can I truly do justice to this heaven-sent friendship? You have been not only a friend, but you have been a teacher, an advisor, a witness, and a voice of reason. There is no way I can repay the way your mere presence has blessed me. I truly appreciate the clarity and sanity your friendship has brought to my life. Thank you.

Edward G. Smith, thank you for being you! I am so glad I have gotten to know you, Daddy-O. You are such a joy and treasure. Thank you for being there always. You are loved and respected, sir.

Victoria “Mama Vicki” Meek, I have said it once, and I will pen it now, I do not possess words adequate enough to express the thanks that I have for the woman you are, the example your very essence provides, and for your understanding. Ever since I was but a little one, I have thought you to be one of the strongest women I knew. I still think that today. Thank you for preserving our illustrious institution, the South Dallas Cultural Center, and for being you.

Thanks are due to my wonderful cadre of spiritual advisors. Much love and light must be given to Bahati Omitola Isoke, my twin cousin, for the many occasions that you have bestowed your wisdom upon me. Many blessings are also due to Dr. Autumn McGinn for the life coaching, the listening ear and knowing, healing words. Also, my love and respect must be given to Iya Sabande. Thank you for your teachings and all of your nurturing support!

Reginald Joseph, Jr. you are my love and light. If not for your physical presence and presence of mind where would I be? Thank you for always being available and willing to work with me, assist me, support me, encourage me, and love me.

Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, thank you for not only keeping me gainfully employed at Temple, but thank are also due to you all for providing me with examples of excellence in the work and drive of so many undergraduate students. Each of you in both the 2009 Cohort and 2010 Cohort provide me with hope for the future of academic research. Our stores of knowledge are in good hands.

Kwame Ture Society, you make me proud, not only to be me, but you make me proud to do this work, as we say. I love you all. Josh, keep smiling and shine. You are a genius and I am glad that I got to witness that brilliance. Jaminnia, thank you for giving me the courage to be true to myself and thank you for leading by example. You, little one, are one graceful bird in flight. Soar on! Sawdayah, thank you for letting me stow away in your room nearly every weekend when I needed to escape. Thank you for being there all of the time. You don't know how many times you anchored me. Our organization keeps Howard University strong! Keep inspiring. Talk, but also listen.

Dr. Harry Robinson and the African American Museum Staff, thank you for inviting me to give my very first lecture. Thank you for believing in me enough to support this research. Dallas is blessed by your institution.

Curtis King and The Black Academy of Arts and Letters Staff, thank you for believing in me and making me into the perfectionist I am today (it's all your fault, Uncle Curtis). Your institution is one of the strongholds in our community and I cannot wait to archive your history in the not so distant future. To my aunties, Gwen Hardgrove and Nora Wilson, I appreciate your light and love and, in my best New Orleans accent, "Thank you, babies!"

Temple University's African American Studies Department, thank you for giving me the opportunity to expand my academic boundaries through the writing of this thesis. As stated on an earlier page, this was a labor of love and thank you for allowing me to discover my passion and what will be my life's work. These past two years have not been all for naught.

To my ancestors, those both blood related and those related to me through shared experience and heritage, I thank you for being the source of my strength and my reason for being. This thesis is dedicated to your memory, as well as those unnamed members of these movements who will be, but have yet to be, uncovered. Your deeds and lives are not forgotten. Thank you.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I would like for it to go down in history as saying a lot of people claim that Dallas had no Civil Rights Movement, but we have evidence to show you there was a great Civil Rights Movement in Dallas. However, it was crushed by the Dallas news media and the Dallas criminal justice system, who were against the Black Power Movement and who did not hesitate to criticize every move...it was a great struggle and I would do it again.¹

Purpose and Pertinence of the Study

The Civil Rights and Black Power Movements in the Southwestern United States have been chronicled, if at all, in short. As reflected in the epigraph of this thesis, historians and citizens often neglect or carelessly look outside of the normative narrative of the roles of Alabama, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, and Georgia during the era of the said movements. The Southeastern United States' Civil Rights and Black Power Movements' narratives have been ironically accepted into the American historical corpus in a tactical manner by the very forces that first opposed them in efforts to rewrite history.

Vincent Harding explicates the presence of one aspect of the process of incorporating aspects of the Civil Rights Movement into American history in *Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero*. Harding suggests that “King [becomes] a

¹ Eva McMillan, interview by Ava Wilson. 16 December 2009. Mrs. McMillan is the mother of Dallas Civil Rights and Black Power leader, Ernest McMillan.

‘convenient hero,’ to try to tailor him to the shape and mood of mainstream, liberal/moderate America.”² This “amnesiac and ironic”³ acceptance of King, Harding explains, is in direct contrast with the realities of King’s day when whites and middle-class Blacks alike considered him a threat.⁴ Instead, the marauders of history “focus on the 1963 March on Washington, the never-ending repetition of the great speech and its dream metaphor...boxing...King into relatively safe categories.”⁵

This revisionist process makes these movements and their leaders conducive to America’s aims of shifting the political, social, and cultural implications of the quest for Civil Rights and Black Power into a pseudo-reality, malleable to the American governmental infrastructure in order to curtail negative sentiments about the status quo.⁶ These actions—from the J. Edgar Hoover FBI profiles, to the Counter Intelligence Program, also known as COINTELPRO, to revisionist history projects—in theory, saved the American nation-state from the rising tide of dissent that threatened to tear and destroy its very fabric during the 1950s through 1970s.

This point is more succinctly communicated in Nikhil Pal Singh’s text *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy*:

This [normative Civil Rights] narrative is built on a number of misleading representations of modern U.S. racial history. It relies on an abbreviated periodization of the civil rights

² Vincent Harding, *Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero* [Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996] pp. 56.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid, 60.

⁵ Ibid, 56.

⁶ Kim Lacy Rogers, “Oral History and the History of the Civil Rights Movement,” *Journal of American History*. Vol. 75, No. 2 (September 1988): pp. 567.

era, as well as fallacies about the South as an exception to national racial norms. It fails to recognize the historical depth and heterogeneity of black struggles against racism, narrowing the political scope of black agency and reinforcing a formal, legalistic view of black equality.⁷

This “abbreviated periodization” sought to disjoin the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements from the larger African American quests for freedom prior to and after the designated temporal markers that the era was given by the nationally sanctioned narrative. By “failing to recognize the historical depth of black struggles”⁸ through the previous means, the nation also intentionally failed to acknowledge that these movements were not carbon copies of one another, though their aims and strategies may have been similar. Through the employment of a “legalistic view of black equality,”⁹ the government sought to appropriate and redirect the masses of Black people’s historical narratives and realities by emphasizing court cases and constitutional amendments in attempts to vindicate America as the perpetrator of racism and oppression, attempting to convey the successes of the judicial process.

Singh continues to elaborate on the appropriation of the movement, integral events, and key leaders:

Civic myths about the triumph over racial injustice have become central to the resuscitation of a vigorous and

⁷ Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* [Cambridge: Harvard University, 2004]: pp. 6.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

strident form of American exceptionalism—the idea of the United States as both a unique and universal nation... This has involved a mostly successful appropriation of Martin Luther King, Jr. as a figure affirming the accomplishments of color-blind nationalism, along with sharp and sustained attacks on any form of race-conscious advocacy, from campus-based identity politics to urban black nationalism to the legacies of black power politics.¹⁰

America highlights an individual leader in hopes that, in the leader's absence—whether from assassination, imprisonment, infiltration, assimilation, or other means—the movement itself will cease to exist. The national project to nullify the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements make the movements a stagnant and stationary moment in time relegated to the 1950s through the 1970s; this is a macrocosm of the way in which historians, the local government, and media chose to record, or more accurately to manage and ignore Dallas history.

Data Collection Method, Methodology, and Outline of the Study

This thesis is an ethnographically-informed, qualitative study based on scholarly literature from national and local Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, cultural documents, and archived local newspapers, and this study is comprised of interviews with members of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements in Dallas, Texas. As established in Kim Lacy Roger's article "Oral History and the History of the Civil Rights Movement" the cataloging of oral histories such as these is what ultimately set this thesis

¹⁰ Ibid 17.

apart from other literature on these movements¹¹ in Dallas and is important for filling in the necessary gaps that many noted works primarily formed.

Utilizing Singh's theory and methodological approach of demystifying the "civic myth" of the normative Civil Rights and Black Power Movements' narrative, a guiding assumption in this work is that it is important to find the initial sources of African American resistance in the Dallas metroplex from periods prior to the city's 1841 founding to directly before the 1956 Montgomery Bus Boycott. This study will allow the researcher to gauge the nature and tensions of life in the Southwest in comparison to those in the cities normally included in the national conversation regarding Civil Rights and Black Power.

This thesis also aims to unearth the shift from Civil Rights to the Black Power Movement in Dallas, Texas in order to pinpoint how the two periods overlapped and diverged from one another. The study will also uncover gaps in the existing research concerning this historic period and to locate methods of recording the uncharted history of this era in an effort to a history that has been misinterpreted, purposefully erased, and kept from public knowledge. Through the review of critical literature and interviews, this thesis also seeks to provide a holistic view of the period of 1965 through 1975 in Dallas history. Finally, this study will attempt to depict a semblance of the political happenings in the Southwestern United States by comparing and contrasting the characteristics in strategy, methods of organizing, geographic issues, and local particulars of the Southwestern movement with that of the Southeast. In this way the study will serve as a

¹¹ Kim Lacy Rogers, *Ibid*, 569.

template for conducting research on other cities whose similar movements have yet to be chronicled.

It must be made clear that it is not this study's intention to only analyze the phenomena that existed elsewhere and super-impose the goings on in those places on to Dallas's experiences. An error such as this is committed in several texts that unknowingly brush aside Dallas's level of involvement in the two movements. W. Marvin Dulaney commits one such error in the article "Whatever Happened to the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas, Texas?" He generalizes a comparison of Dallas's movement with that of other cities:

In the 1960s, African Americans in that city never used tactics of direct action or violence to win the more substantial gains of political and economic power that the movement brought to African Americans in cities such as Atlanta, New Orleans, and Birmingham.¹²

Though this assumption would seemingly appear to be true after having consulted other scholarly publications, upon interviewing participants in the movement, which Dulaney did not do, one finds that this statement is a blatant hasty generalization. The comparing and contrasting of events in other states movements with that of Dallas will be utilized only to show differences and similarities in the practices of those places' movements. Unlike Brian Behnken's article "The 'Dallas Way': Protest, Response, and the Civil Rights Experience in Big D and Beyond," a more recent scholarly article on specifically

¹² W. Marvin Dulaney, "Whatever Happened to the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas, Texas?" in *Essays on the American Civil Rights Movement*. W. Marvin Dulaney and Kathleen Underwood Eds. [College Station: Texas A & M Press, 1993]: pp. 66.

the Dallas Civil Rights movement that does not consult the movement's key participants and that highlights prominent Black ministers in Dallas as vital leaders in the movement, this thesis consults the purveyors of the movement to more correctly uncover Dallas's unique reality. Also, unlike Jim Schutze's iconic book on Dallas race relations entitled *The Accommodation: The Politics of Race in an American City*—a text that does not cite the sources of its information or consult the communities in which it focuses its lens, this thesis seeks to properly detail resources of the stratified time period from the voices of those that lived through and organized in Dallas during the years of 1965 through 1975.

Because this is a thesis and not a dissertation, reaching a consensus of what should be included in the history of the said movements had to be strategically considered. This called for a heavy reliance on several data collection methods, the most pertinent being triangulation. In order to determine which moments warranted inclusion, a primary literature review of the *Dallas Morning News* (major white conservative paper), the *Dallas Express* (major African American paper), the *Dallas Times Herald* (major white "liberal" paper), as well as several of the books and scholarly articles detailed previously had to be conducted to proctor the significant events of the time period in question. In order to validate that certain events, organizations, and people were in fact central to the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, subjects were asked to detail the happenings of the movements for social justice in Dallas, Texas as well as their involvement within those movements. This thesis addresses events that could be validated by its coverage in the local papers, as well as those that had not yet been

uncovered, or had been misinterpreted by the scholarly texts. Through this type of triangulation, the major events and key players therein quickly surfaced.

The review of various sources of literature was also central to pinpointing necessary parties to interview. Once these parties were identified, securing telephone numbers and/or e-mail addresses by which to contact those individuals. However, reviewing literature was not the only means by which subjects were selected for the study. The use of snowball sampling proved to be beneficial in finding several unsung and unmentioned subjects. Several interviewees passed along telephone numbers and other contact information of people who were appropriate to consult to validate and uncover aspects of the movements in which they were involved. The snowballing technique proved to be an invaluable source of information for obtaining the names of persons who, although deceased, played viable roles in the movements. This allowed for yet another review of literature to find materials on those deceased subjects, some of whose roles in the movements will be detailed within this thesis. Several subjects passed along information in the form of cultural documents from the time period—i.e. flyers, posters, leaflets, personal papers, etc.—as well as personal clipping files and copies from various newspapers from the time period.

Summary of Chapters

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One, this chapter, is followed by Chapter Two, entitled “Strategic Forgetfulness: Uncovering Dallas’s Past to Unearth the Present,” presents a concise description of Dallas, Texas’s history and the reasons for its city leaders’ apparent desire to suppress the history of the movements for social justice within the city. Dallas’s founding and its political and economic geography are critically

considered in the chapter to provide a fundamental explanation of the omission of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements' histories. "Back Mapping the Movement: History and the Black Response to Oppression in Texas," Chapter Three, focuses on Texas's history from the period of enslavement to 1964. This chapter revisits critical moments in Black Texans' history to convey their centuries long fight against oppression prior to Dallas's Civil Rights and Black Power Movement. Chapter Four, "Left in an Unmarked Grave: Unearthing the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements in Dallas, Texas," pinpoints the shift from the *de jure* Civil Rights Movement to the Black Power Movement in Dallas and surrounding cities and highlights major events that were central to the Dallas movement. Chapter Five, "A Conclusion," rounds off the thesis and offers a final prognosis of the Dallas Civil Rights and Black Power phenomena. The chapter provides recommendations for future activists and community organizers and proposes some potential areas of study that were not fully developed in the contents of this thesis with implications for future study.

CHAPTER TWO

STRATEGIC FORGETFULNESS: UNCOVERING DALLAS'S PAST TO UNEARTH THE PRESENT

It is not uncommon for citizens of Dallas to question why there were seemingly no Civil Rights or Black Power Movements in the city. It is also not unordinary for citizens to be wholly unaware that such movements existed or that the progenitors of those movements are still alive and continue to live and even organize in the city. Why is this so? As shall be explained in this thesis, the Dallas experience is quite unique from the formal narratives written about the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements.

Historian Stefanie Decker posits one reason for such a noticeable gap in the research: "...the civil rights movement in Dallas...appeared to lack the deep segregation of other Southern cities."¹³ The Southeastern states were thought to have a more immediate need for the services that Civil Rights organizations could provide at the time. The rationale amongst Civil Rights organizations at the time of the movements was that if African Americans in the Southeastern United States could achieve freedom, then the situations in other states in the South would surely follow suit. Though this approach was logical, in the case of Dallas, it could not have been farther from the reality of the situation. In his work, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821-1865*, Randolph B. Campbell posits that

¹³ Stefanie Decker, "Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Juanita Craft versus the Dallas Elite," in *Blacks in East Texas History*, Glassrud and MacDonald Eds. [College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008]. pp. 133. A similar sentiment shared by historians is detailed in W. Marvin Dulaney's, "Whatever Happened to the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas, Texas?" in *Essays on the American Civil Rights Movement*.

So long as Texas is not seen as a Southern state, its [white] people do not have to face the great moral evil of slavery and the bitter heritage of black-white relations that followed the defeat of the Confederacy in 1865. [White] Texans are thus permitted to escape a major part of...the burden of Southern History.¹⁴

It is important to revisit local history in order to thoroughly understand why the Dallas Civil Rights and Black Power Movements were not in the public eye, as were other movements. Many contemporary citizens of Dallas have no knowledge of the struggles for social justice that took place in the city. Michael Phillips reasons that

Academic neglect of Dallas...represents amnesia by design. In this obsessively image-conscious city, elites feared that a conflict-marred past filled with class and racial strife represented a dangerous model for the future. City leaders transformed the community into a laboratory of forgetfulness.¹⁵

A close appraisal of Dallas history is required to understand the “amnesia by design”¹⁶ that was strategically implemented by the Dallas city planners and local government even at the impetus of the city’s founding.

¹⁴ Randolph B. Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821-1865* [Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989].

¹⁵ Michael Phillips, *White Metropolis: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Dallas, 1841-2001* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006]: pp. 3.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Though founded by John Neely Bryan in 1841—the origin of the name is still a matter of antiquarian controversy¹⁷—Dallas takes much of its spirit from La Reunion, the French socialist community established in 1855 a few miles west of [Dallas] Bryan’s site. Organized by Victor Considérant and a group of French, Swiss, and Belgian utopian socialists, the colony sought to create an earthly heaven on the Texas prairie, where man’s physical and intellectual needs would be fully satisfied through a system of cooperation. For a variety of reasons, the experiment failed; but the ideal of a perfect city, though considerably altered by time and circumstances, nonetheless remained.¹⁸

The illusion of Dallas as a proverbial *City-Upon-a-Hill* was part of an intended structural “process of myth-making [that] marks the key moments of Dallas history from its founding.”¹⁹ This process, known as the “origin myth,” is detailed in several texts about the Dallas phenomenon and is closely linked to Singh’s iteration of “civic myth” referenced on previous pages. Gervase Rosser asserts that city myths do well to give “people a shared urban identity, located on common ground.”²⁰ He goes on to assert

¹⁷ There is a local wise-tale that the city of Dallas was named after the Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan at the time of its founding. However, the city was said to have actually been named after 1845 vice-presidential candidate George Mifflin Dallas. See, Sam Acheson, *Dallas Yesterday* [Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1977]: pp. 3-4.

¹⁸ *Ibid* xv.

¹⁹ Harvey J. Graff, *The Dallas Myth: The Making and Unmaking of an American City* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008]: pp. 49.

²⁰ Gervase Rosser, “Myth Image and Social Process in the English Medieval Town,” *Urban History* Vol. 23 (1996): pp. 25.

that, “the effect of these urban myths was not merely to reflect the cultural and social *status quo*, but to transform it.”²¹ Jim Schutze’s *The Accommodation: The Politics of Race in an American City* illuminates the inner-workings of the Sunbelt, cosmopolitan Southern city known as Dallas:

It’s almost as if Dallas, deprived of recourse to the full mythological traditions of with East or West, is determined to invent its own mythology. Dallas clings stubbornly to a particular myth of the city’s origin that has been soundly disproved by historians but whose persistent retelling tells volumes about the city’s psyche. It is a sacred article of municipal faith that Dallas is a city that has no ‘reason for being’ and the city’s lack of a reason for being is invoked as one of its proudest traditions. The contention is that Dallas was founded in the middle of nowhere, with no great navigable river or port or other feature of the planet on which to fix its purpose. The end of the story, as it is told in Dallas, is that Dallas became a great city anyway, in spite of its purposelessness, because of the zeal and grit and determination of its people.²²

²¹ Ibid.

²² Jim Schutze, *The Accommodation: The Politics of Race in an American City*. [Secaucus: Citadel Press, 1986]. pp. 52.

Schutze maintains that Dallas was relatively an anomaly “until after the Civil War, when the arrival of the railroads made it a terminal town [and] because it was the intersection of major trails and trade routes.”²³

The metamorphosis of the historical record in Dallas from truth to civic and/or origin myth extended to the Civil Rights era. Decker affirms this phenomenon and details how this myth was strategically implemented.

After the violence that erupted in Little Rock, Arkansas, Birmingham and Selma, Alabama, and Jackson, Mississippi, Dallas’ elites decided to begin the process of integration and control it before others launched the civil rights movement on a path they did not wish to tread...Known as the ‘Dallas Way,’ these men governed the social, economic, and political structure of the city.²⁴

However, it is important to note “Many southern cities also promoted a version of the Dallas way. In Greensboro [North Carolina] it was called civility. Atlanta [Georgia] was the ‘city too busy to hate.’ Tampa [Florida] had the Tampa Technique.”²⁵ After the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas* decision in 1954, the Dallas news media

warned this was the first step in the NAACP’s effort to promote social intercourse between blacks and unwilling whites, something the [city officials] did not like...When

²³ Ibid, 51.

²⁴ Decker, 134.

²⁵ Brian D. Behnken, “The ‘Dallas Way’: Protest, Response, and the Civil Rights Experience in the Big D and Beyond.” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 109, No. 1 (2007): pp. 4.

local school officials refused to allow twenty-eight African American students into white schools in 1955, the Dallas chapter of the NAACP sued [with the help of Hon. Thurgood Marshall]...Fearful of the violence that occurred in some southern cities such as Little Rock and New Orleans, the Dallas Chamber of Commerce worked out a plan to promote peaceful integration...[and to] sell integration to the city.²⁶

In many ways, Dallas city leaders attempted to anticipate the movements made by African Americans involved in the fight for Civil Rights and eventually Black Power in other cities in order to prevent rioting and unfavorable activity within Dallas itself. In the words of interviewee Mark Herbener,

Dallas had the problem in that it never had the meanness of Birmingham...when Black folks walked down the street...they were greeted with ‘Good morning.’ They weren’t treated uncivilly...[The city government] learned that you don’t fight. You just use a pillow...It was a strategy. It was a great strategy...‘We’ll give. You can come in. You can today, but you can’t tomorrow,’ and people think it’s integrated.²⁷

²⁶ Robert B. Fairbanks, *For the City as a Whole: Planning, Politics, and the Public Interest in Dallas, Texas, 1900-1965* [Columbus: Ohio State University, 1998]: pp. 238.

²⁷ Mark Herbener, Interview by Ava Wilson, 16 March 2010.

The city leaders' need to take preemptive strikes against African Americans' movements was often referred to as the for "Dallas as a whole" ideology, "which was the emblematic phrasing the Citizens Council always used in its heyday to signal its own authority, wisdom, and concern for the greater good of the city."²⁸ In 1961, Dallas city officials petitioned filmmaker and advertising executive Sam R. Bloom to create the film *Dallas at the Crossroads*.²⁹ This twenty-one minute film, narrated by Walter Cronkite, showed eager white Dallasites successfully participating in the integration project.³⁰ This film was not shown only in Dallas, but all over the South in order to bolster economic and business interests, as well as to attract whites from other cities that were "troubled" by Civil Rights movements. In that same year the Dallas Chamber of Commerce was

fearful that black-initiated efforts to integrate downtown Dallas might lead to violence and thwart efforts by chamber to recruit more business, civic leaders formulated a program of managed integration, although not before certain blacks started picketing downtown stores that would not serve them. Under this growing pressure, the [Dallas Chamber of Commerce] arranged for blacks to walk into forty-nine downtown restaurants and be served on July 26, 1961, without incident. The action brought the city good national publicity. For instance, the *New York Times*

²⁸ Schutze, 8.

²⁹ <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/BB/fblvh.html>

³⁰ Sam Bloom, *Dallas at the Crossroads*. [Dallas, 1961].

observed that ‘there seems to be today a dominant spirit of moderation and goodwill [in Dallas].’³¹

To do their bidding, the white ruling class of Dallas, hand picked several African Americans, mostly businessmen and clergy with a large population of African American congregants, to serve on an integrated council of fourteen members—seven Blacks and seven whites—³² to facilitate desegregation to the city planners liking.³³ This fact was confirmed by the election of Dr. Emmett Conrad to the school board, the first African American to hold the position. Dr. Conrad held that, “The majority of Negro people in Dallas want to bring about change in the same way we have always done it in the past—through discussions with the white leadership, and, if necessary, through the courts.”³⁴ Albert Lipscomb, an African American community leader prior to the *de jure* Civil Rights Movement, who turned to Black Nationalism during the 1960s, also confirmed the presence of accommodating Black leaders appointed by the Dallas elite:

We’d go downtown with our hats in our hands and talk to the establishment. The establishment would appoint some super spook leader. You’d see the same names on all the

³¹ Fairbanks, *Ibid.*

³² Fairbanks, *Ibid.*

³³ Though the African American committee members would change, two texts did provide the names of some of the members of this committee; however, no dates were given. A. Maceo Smith, prominent NAACP Chapter President and a founding member of the Negro, now Black, Chamber of Commerce, W. J. Durham NAACP attorney, C. Jack Clark of the prominent African American funeral home Black and Clark, local businessmen Ed Reed, Henry Lenoir, George Allen, and Reverend B. E. Joshua. See Dulaney’s aforementioned article for this information. Schutze’s *The Accommodation* highlights these members of the bi-racial committee: Reverend Robert L. Parish and Reverend Bezaleel R. Riley.

³⁴ Gary Cartwright, “A Bad Brother,” *Texas Monthly* Vol. 11 No. 5 (1983): pp. 202

boards and commissions—the more responsible Negroes as
[Mayor] Erik Jonsson used to call them.³⁵

In August of 1960, the Dallas Community Committee (DCC), another racially mixed committee, was assembled to “carry out the activities for improving race relations and desegregating public life that resulted from the negotiations of the Committee of 14.”³⁶ The DCC was headed by Reverend E. C. Estell whose Saint John Missionary Baptist Church had one of the largest congregations in the city at the time. He and his close colleague S. M. Wright, pastor of People’s Baptist Church, gravely disapproved of the duplication of Civil Rights tactics like boycotting and picketing in the city.³⁷ The committee of fourteen and the DCC were both supported by the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance (IMA), which was made up of the who’s who of Black clergy, and was influential in swaying the minds and deeds of their African American congregants. As will be conveyed in following pages, the actions that Reverend Estell and his colleagues—especially his contemporary S. M. Wright— took against the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements were infamous and duplicitous to those movements and their participants.

Meanwhile, a local Black newspaper, the *Dallas Express*, consented to censor itself at the behest of the Dallas government and did not cover stories that dealt with local protests or violent demonstrations in the mid 1960s.³⁸ A *Dallas Morning News* article

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Dulaney, Ibid, 79.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid. This would explain why an initial review of materials published by the *Dallas Express*—namely the years of 1960-1963—did not have any information about city or state Civil Rights activity. Instead, all that was publicized that could remotely be

entitled “Activities of Dallas FBI Outlined,” details that a similar tactic was forced upon the white media’s information channels as well: “...the Dallas [FBI] office’s major suggestion was to encourage ‘trusted and reliable’ news media representatives to withhold coverage of the New Left events.”³⁹ Phillips, Decker, and Graff’s individual works all concur that John F. Kennedy’s assassination, the assault of United Nations Ambassador Adlai Stevenson, and the mobbing of Lyndon B. Johnson and his wife all tarnished Dallas’s image nationally and prompted local officials to tactically quarantine what they deemed to be negative press, which might slow down a growing local economy.⁴⁰

juxtaposed with Civil Rights were editorials from the *Crisis Magazine*. It must also be noted that Decker’s text explains that white newspapers were not censored.

³⁹ John Geddie, “Activities of Dallas FBI Outline.” *Dallas Morning News*: 14 December 1977.

⁴⁰ Decker 134, Graff 134-35, and Phillips 5. All of these incidents that led to negative press were not carried out by any African American Dallasites.

CHAPTER THREE

BACK MAPPING THE MOVEMENT: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BLACK RESPONSE TO OPPRESSION IN TEXAS

Michael Phillips explains that Dallas should be included in the historical discourse regarding Civil Rights and beyond because,

For much of the twentieth century, Dallas represented the second-largest metropolis in the former Confederacy. The city claimed one of the largest African American populations in the United States.⁴¹

The previous fact notwithstanding, it is important to gauge the thoughts of African Texans regarding racial and class-based politics prior to the dates usually allocated to the Civil Rights Movement to convey the continuum of thought and struggle from one generation to the next. It is also important to understand the larger implications for African people's involvement in both the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements.

The Periods of Enslavement and Reconstruction through the Turn of the Twentieth Century

The peculiar institution referred to as slavery was even that more peculiar in Texas because of the territory's constant seizure by different governing bodies. The boundary lines that now demarcate Texas were not fashioned as such in the state's beginnings. After wresting much of Texas's land from the Comanche, Lipa, and Caddo peoples, among thousands of others who had lived upon that region of the earth for centuries, the land mass known as Texas came under Spanish (1527-1821) and French colonial rule (1687-1803), Mexican rule (1821-1836), became its own country, the

⁴¹ Phillips, *Ibid*, 2.

Republic of Texas (1836-1846), became a state in the union (1846-1861), was a part of the confederacy (1861-1865), and was readmitted into the union in 1870.⁴² Because of its various statuses as territory, nation, or lawless land, Texas offered a myriad of opportunities for enslaved Africans to negotiate their freedom. Many would travel on the Underground Railroad south, typically during years of the first Mexican Revolution (1810-1821), the years of Mexican rule (1821-1836), and even up until 1850, when the acting Mexican president, General Santa Anna, abolished slavery.⁴³

Texas's unstable status made it, more often than not, a lawless space. In the so-called neutral zone, which was

an ill-defined, anarchic, ungovernable area [in East Texas]...It became known as the Badlands. The boundaries of the Neutral Territory were vague [due to its various owners] and constantly subject to renegotiation. The area soon attracted criminals on the run, horse thieves, land speculators, and pirates like Jean Lafitte who smuggled African slaves into Louisiana through Galveston, Texas...Given that this was to have been a no-man's land, there weren't laws to be administered and upheld...To say that you had 'gone to Texas' meant that you had gone

⁴² Randolph B. Campbell, *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State*. [New York: Oxford University Press, 2003].

⁴³ John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1999]: pp. 115.

beyond the law, to a foreign country where the laws of the United States did not apply.⁴⁴

Anna Irene Sandbo's article entitled "The First Session of the Secession Convention of Texas" also grounds the marred Texas past. "Turbulence and violence were greater in 1860 than at any time during the last few preceding years. During this eventful year the newspapers were full of stories of crimes committed within its borders [*sic*]."⁴⁵

This relative "lawlessness" notwithstanding, Africans who found themselves in Texas resisted the institution of slavery with the same fervor as those in "law abiding" states. The year 1860 did prove to be one of tumult for the citizens of the area. On the eighth of July, a fire, thought to be the work of abolitionist-arsonists spread throughout North, East, and West Dallas causing between \$300,000⁴⁶ and \$400,000 worth of damage.⁴⁷

Reports were circulated, often unfounded, of negro uprisings and wholesale poisonings. Incendiary fires occurred in many parts of the state...The arrest of suspects led to the detection of a plot to perpetuate such acts on a larger scale....the Dallas fire...plot was conceived by certain abolition preachers...the plan was to demoralize by fire and assassination the whole of northern Texas, and

⁴⁴ China Galland, *Love Cemetery: Unburying the Secret History of Slaves*. [New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007].

⁴⁵ Anna Irene Sandbo, "The First Session of the Secession Convention of Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly Journal*. Vol. 18 (1915): pp. 162.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 163.

⁴⁷ Julia Kathryn Garrett, *Fort Worth: A Frontier Triumph*. [Austin: El Chino Press, 1972]: pp. 176.

then, when the country should have been reduced to a helpless condition, a general revolt of the slaves...⁴⁸

An elderly African man known as Old Cato or Uncle Cato Miller, who was said to have made mention of setting the city aflame, and who was also deemed troublesome, “implicated two other Negroes, [Reverend Samuel] Smith and Patrick Jennings as his accomplices.”⁴⁹ The men maintained that they had been coerced into giving their testimony and that they had been under the influence of white northern abolitionist preachers.⁵⁰ The preachers were allegedly whipped and told to leave the Dallas county.⁵¹ “...A mass meeting of Dallas citizens held on Monday following Sunday’s fire...[agreed] to hang the three Negroes and appoint a committee to whip every Negro in the county.”⁵²

Though the Emancipation Proclamation did not free any enslaved Africans outside of the union, the stronghold of the Confederacy and the vestiges of the Republic of Texas did not abolish slavery in the state until June 19, 1865, a celebrated holiday known as Juneteenth. While it is commonly thought that the Juneteenth celebration rejoices in the “freeing” of enslaved Africans, it must be stated that this day is often set aside for family reunions in Texas because it marked the beginning of families being able to search and successfully locate their members.⁵³

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ John William Rogers, *The Lusty Texans of Dallas*, [Dallas: Dutton, 1960]: pp. 93.

⁵⁰ Kevin Shay and Roy H. Williams, *And Justice for Alls: The Untold History of Dallas*. [Dallas: CGS Communications, 2000].

⁵¹ Garret, Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ James M. Smallwood, “Black Texans During Reconstruction” in *Blacks in East Texas History*. Bruce A. Glassrud and Archie McDonald Eds. [College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008]: pp. 52.

The period known as Reconstruction proved to be just as tumultuous for persons of African descent as the previous years had been. When the newly freed men and women learned of their status, their response to the news was undoubtedly mixed. Some stayed on the plantations on which they had been forced to live on in previous years. Others left to find their families. Some moved to the larger urban centers to secure employment. Others sought to make lives for themselves on vacant grounds by developing settlements and living directly from the land.⁵⁴ Many who traveled to urban centers did not become employed due to the fact that whites in those areas felt the freedmen would undercut their wages and obtain jobs and therefore refused the freedmen's services. The Ku Klux Klan began a large campaign against Blacks in the state. Blacks who had been involved in the Civil War who had weapons were able to defend themselves from the masses of whites who wished to do them harm.⁵⁵

...Nearly two thousand African Americans were murdered between 1865 and 1868 through random violence, vigilantism, and attempts by former Texas slaveholders to keep them in slavery. Of the homicide victims in that period, 97 percent were African-American males (1 percent of the African-American male population in Texas [was] between the ages of fifteen and forty-nine).⁵⁶

Reconstruction led to the establishment of Black institutions such as schools, formal church edifices, and businesses. In Dallas specifically, a Black newspaper, the

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Smallwood, Ibid.

⁵⁶ Dulaney , Ibid, 67.

Dallas Express, emerged in 1892.⁵⁷ According to Merline Pitre’s article “The Evolution of Black Political Participation in Reconstruction Texas,” African Texans did not begin to involve themselves in the American political arena “until the passage of the Reconstruction Acts of 1867.”⁵⁸ Though Texas

had the smallest number of blacks of any Confederate state.

[However, the newly freedmen went] to the polls on February 10, 1868 and not only cast 35,952 votes favor of the constitutional convention, but elected nine blacks to serve as constitutional delegates.⁵⁹

Those nine men elected to the constitutional convention were George T. Ruby, James McWashington, Charles W. Bryant, Benjamin Franklin Williams, Benjamin O. Watrous (formerly Benjamin O. Carter), Mitchell Kendall, Ralph Long, Stephen Curtis, and Wiley Johnson. From 1868 to 1898, forty-one men of African descent served in the Texas legislature in some capacity.⁶⁰

The 1900s through the 1920s

African people began to settle on the borders of Dallas in residences like Freedman’s Town, Queen City, Elm Thicket, and Deep Elm⁶¹ toward the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. Dallas city planners had to address the burgeoning population growth due to westward expansionists.

⁵⁷ Gower, *Ibid*, 51.

⁵⁸ Merline Pitre “The Evolution of Black Political Participation in Reconstruction Texas,” in *Blacks in East Texas History*. Bruce A. Glasrud and Archie McDonald Eds. [College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008]: pp. 69.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 79.

⁶¹ This area is now formally known as Deep Ellum. “Ellum” is how African Americans pronounced Elm during the time.

The demands for electricity, sewers, and water service, and paved streets placed huge burdens on cities. In particular, the newer cities of the South and Southwest face rapid growth and increasing demands for all kinds of services.⁶²

The African population during this time did not adequately receive the services the city was supposed to provide.

The extension of services, development of subdivisions, and placement of city limits intertwined with racial issues. A persistent aspect in Southern city plans was the effort to create restricted neighborhoods and limit the annexation of minority populations [to] outside the city limits.⁶³

This explains why Black settlements were relegated to the outskirts or borders of Dallas.

At the turn of the century, African Texans sought to procure rights for themselves and their communities at-large through political means, as they had done toward the end of the period of enslavement. With the growing number of Africans participating in the electoral process, both voting and running for office, "...the city of Dallas systematically and deliberately circumscribed the social and political lives of the African-American population. In 1907, the city of Dallas revised its charter to establish segregation of the races in all aspects of city life."⁶⁴ In 1918, George F. Porter, a Dallas educator, and Ammon S. Wells, chartered the Dallas chapter of the National Association for the

⁶² Gower, *Ibid*, 45.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 44.

⁶⁴ Dulaney, *Ibid*, 68.

Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to combat the stated injustices prevalent in the city and state at-large.

In the early 1920s, however, the Klan-dominated police department intimidated the Dallas NAACP virtually out of existence by mandating that a Dallas police officer be allowed to attend all NAACP meetings to observe activities.⁶⁵

This governmentally sanctioned intrusion halted the productivity of the NAACP until its eventual resurgence in the 1930s. However, African Dallasites continued to build autonomous communities and institutions that thrived in spite of the city's instituted laws to undermine the Black community.

The African American church was undoubtedly the institution that anchored the complexities of Black life and the initiatives that the community at-large sought to buttress. Within the first two decades of the twentieth century, the Pentecostal Church and her leaders and congregants endeavored to voids created by their enslavement. The first bishop of the Church of God in Christ in Texas, Bishop E. M. Page, prided himself on instilling the importance of education in his congregants. Seen as too “otherworldly”⁶⁶ by the Black Dallas Protestant elites, the

Black Pentecostals in Texas, however, showed a dual commitment to spiritual and intellectual growth; in their

⁶⁵ Ibid, 69.

⁶⁶ Karen Kossie-Chernyshev, “Constructing Good Success: The Church of God in Christ and Social Uplift in East, Texas, 1910-1935,” in *Blacks in East Texas History*, Bruce A. Glasrud and Archie P. McDonald, Eds. [College Station: Texas A&M University, 2008]. pp. 109.

view, ‘holiness’ was the spiritual foundation for success. By becoming upstanding members of the community, students [of the Page Normal and Industrial Bible Institute, a Church of God in Christ Educational facility,] were better positioned to address social problems.⁶⁷

The Pentecostal movement attracted the masses of Blacks in Dallas in a way that the older Protestant denominations did not. Through the incorporation of “come-as-you-are” worship fused with social uplift, the Pentecostal Church gave those who otherwise would not have educational opportunities the venue for formal learning.⁶⁸ Though they encountered much backlash from the existing Black middle-class in Dallas specifically,⁶⁹ the Pentecostal Church’s population continued to rise into the 1930s.

The 1930s through the 1950s

Due to the lack governmental assistance in Black communities, Dallas’s African American leaders and businessmen sought to fix the innumerable societal ills in the community themselves as was the pattern from decades before. One such organization that proved to be at the forefront of creating positive outlets for African Americans was the Progressive Voters League (PVL). The PVL, established in 1934, was originally the Progressive Citizens League that formed “to encourage involvement in the political process and the positive use of the ballot to secure the needs of their community,”⁷⁰ much

⁶⁷ Ibid, 113.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ See Kossie’s aforementioned text pp. 111. “Protesters of COGIC presence allegedly doused the tent where the early church met with kerosene and ‘set it afire’ in a futile effort to destroy ‘the very symbol’ of the COGIC. Petitions were circulated to have the church declared a public nuisance.”

⁷⁰ Dulaney, Ibid, 71.

like the NAACP. In fact many members of the PVL had been actively involved in the formation of Dallas's NAACP. In 1936, the Progressive Citizens League formally changed the name of the organization to the Progressive Voters League, which members felt more correctly attested to the vision and new direction of the organization.⁷¹

Civil Rights and Black Power grassroots organizer Eva "Mama Mack" McMillan, credits the PVL with causing her involvement in the beginnings of the Civil Rights movement. As will be conveyed later in the thesis, McMillan became the so-called surrogate mother of the movement, particularly to the students involved in the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee. McMillan recounts her involvement in the PVL and the early stages of the Civil Rights Movement:

My brother, Clifton Partee, got involved in politics and...accepted a job with the prestigious Progressive Voters League where they hired him to be the executive secretary of the organization...He worked hard at that and enrolled his siblings into the same ventures...So we registered to vote and he immediately gave us a list of numbers and people to call on the phone and we became phone bank callers to the voters in our precinct and also walked the street distributin' literature and on election day, my brother secured a position for me as a clerk at a polling place, which I worked for many, many years...So, it was really an effort that we really put forth to make clear our

⁷¹ Ibid 70.

intentions and to define what we felt was important in those times and encouragin' Blacks to vote and gettin' out and see that they vote.⁷²

The integral nature of the NAACP in Texas, and more specifically, Dallas, surfaced heavily in the review of literature. One integral player in the Civil Rights Movement prior to the nationalized movement during the 1930s was the unrivaled organizer, fieldworker, and essentially one of the mothers of the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas, Ms. Juanita Jewel Craft. Ms. Craft was asked to join the organization by Mrs. Minnie Flanagan. Flanagan became president of the Dallas chapter in 1959 and began to involve the organization in sit-ins a few years later.⁷³ When Ms. Craft joined the organization in 1935, the Texas consortium had three principal objectives: (1) shifting the race and class dimensions of the Texas Democratic primary election, (2) providing more educational opportunities for Blacks, and (3) impelling statewide courts to include Blacks on juries that tried African Americans for the specific purposes of safeguarding African American men from lynchings.⁷⁴

In 1937, within two years of her joining the NAACP, Craft, then a field worker, suggested that the Texas branches of the NAACP standardize the organizing methods of the organization, a great feat considering the size of the state and the length of time it took to travel from city to city. Ms. Craft then began to work closely with the Houston branch of the NAACP, which was equally as large as Dallas's branch and with as much potential to grow. Reading about the executive secretary and acting president of the

⁷² Eva McMillan, *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁷⁴ Decker, *Ibid.*

Houston branch, Mrs. Lulu B. White, an integral organizer and strong arm of the Civil Rights Movement, Juanita Craft traveled to Houston to strategize ways to consolidate the Texas movement. Fusing the learned leadership of White with her own experience as a fieldworker, Ms. Craft's procedure for organizing was

To write to individuals interested in establishing an NAACP chapter in their community. She structured them to organize a nucleus of prospective members and discuss the objectives of the Association. When fifty people had agreed to join, the group applied for an NAACP charter. They launched the organization with a well-publicized mass meeting, at which Craft was the main speaker. She then traveled to the next community to organize to or reactivate another branch. Her visit was [according to member Donald Jones] 'like a blood transfusion to a very weak patient.'⁷⁵

Between the years of 1943 and 1945, Craft lead a massive organizing mission expanding the NAACP's membership by 7,000 people. In late 1946, White had been appointed to Director of Branches and Craft was elected as State Organizer. These were both unpaid positions that they held for over a decade. In 1958, Craft established one hundred and eighty-two branches of the NAACP, was reportedly the first Black woman to legally

⁷⁵ Michelle L. Gillette, "The Rise of the NAACP in Texas," in *The African American Experience in Texas: An Anthology*, Bruce Glasrud and James Smallwood Eds. [Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2008]: pp. 371.

collect poll tax payment, and was reportedly the first Black woman to vote in Dallas County.⁷⁶

Craft did not have any children of her own and established the youth wing of the Dallas NAACP Branch, referred to as “Craft’s Kids.” In 1955, Craft organized a major protest of the State Fair of Texas with the help of the youth wing of the Dallas NAACP. Craft’s aims were to have African Americans boycott the State Fair’s “Negro Achievement Day,” the one day that Black people could attend the State Fair due to Jim Crow laws and segregation in the city. The protest garnered the support of Lulu White and the Houston branch of the NAACP as well as other branches statewide. In total, approximately 1,300 people boycotted the “Negro Achievement Day” at the Fair calling it “Negro Appeasement Day.”⁷⁷ With the growing population of African Americans in South Dallas, Craft and the youth alike felt that more concessions should have been made to include the people whose residential property was within walking distance of the fair grounds. The city refused to integrate the Texas State Fair, and the next year, in 1956, the students circulated a petition to ban segregation at the State Fair and an even larger protest. However, “The Dallas NAACP...called off the protest when the state’s attorney general and a group of East Texas legislators attempted to destroy the [NAACP] in Texas...”⁷⁸ “and it took the NAACP more than three years to recover.”⁷⁹

After their return from World War II and the Korean Theater of the 1950s, several African American veterans returned to Dallas looking to secure homes for themselves and their families, as well as establish and support service organizations within the Black

⁷⁶ Dulaney, *Ibid*, 76.

⁷⁷ Behnken, *Ibid*, 7.

⁷⁸ Behnken, *Ibid*, *fn* 18.

⁷⁹ Dulaney, *Ibid*, 77.

community. Because the neighborhoods currently occupied by African Americans were either city-owned or privately-owned, the only opportunities veterans had to secure land for themselves and their families was to move into predominately white neighborhoods like that of the Jewish-occupied South Dallas.⁸⁰

Located near the African American communities of Deep Elm and Freedman's town, South Dallas provided returning veterans and their families with more livable conditions than the shanties and condemned housing in West Dallas and Queen City sanctioned by the city. It also allowed these veterans the ability to own their own property and not have to board or rent rooms in the homes of well-to-do African Americans in Freedman's town. Also, the freedom of owning their homes freed them from having to live in the houses of employers.

African Americans began to move into South Dallas not without resistance from not only the Jewish residents, but from white citizens from other parts of the city.⁸¹ In the midst of Jewish flight from South Dallas into East and North Dallas due to the new African American residents moving in, between the mid to late 1940s through the 1950s, nightly bombings of Black residents' homes were not uncommon. Several African American veterans and their families retaliated against whites bombing of their homes both with individual force⁸² and through the founding of the Fair Park Homeowners' Organization. After several city-supported investigations of the bombings and an all-out manhunt for perpetrators, a seemingly unlikely paper trail led to the door of the Dallas Citizens Council. Schutze uncovered the identity of the president of the South Dallas

⁸⁰ Schutze, *Ibid*, 6.

⁸¹ Schutze, *Ibid*, 18.

⁸² *Ibid*, 23.

Bank and Trust Company, a member of the DCC, as having paid members of two white South Dallas community organizations to dynamite Black residents' homes. To squelch the incessant violence against the growing Black neighborhood in South Dallas by white citizens, the city chartered a special neighborhood toward the northern border of Dallas near the Richardson city limits. This all-African American development, known as Hamilton Park, was created to provide housing for Dallas's growing African American middle-class without encroaching on white property or white neighborhoods.⁸³

1960 through 1964

During the early 1960s, the Dallas Citizens Council's African American affiliates on the committee of fourteen, in the IMA, and on the board of the DCC sought to halt the direct action strategies of the Civil Rights Movement. These clergyman and businessmen wished to "go along with the established way of doing things in the city's political culture...[for they had] realized some benefits...for themselves...for years."⁸⁴ However, not all members of the IMA and DCC were compliant with the so-called way of doing things in Dallas. New Hope Baptist Church pastor, Reverend Rhett James, was vehemently unsatisfied with the way prominent African American preachers complied to a wholesale agreement with the white city leaders and the status quo.

In October of 1960, James led the first organized picket of downtown stores, a great feat, lasting almost two months to utilize various arms of the community—from beauticians to business owners—to man the picket lines each day.⁸⁵ James received heated backlash from the DCC and resigned from his post later that year. At the time, the

⁸³ William H. Wilson, *Hamilton Park: A Planned Black Community in Dallas*, [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998].

⁸⁴ Dulaney, *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

DCC was under the strict order of S. M. Wright to stop all protests, boycotts, picketing and other forms of Civil Rights demonstrations.

After his resignation, James continued to pressure the seven African American members of the committee of fourteen to begin desegregating the city. On January 1, 1961, “he sent the DCC a telegram...with the ultimatum that downtown lunch counters be desegregated by January 14, or he would begin immediate-direct-action tactics.”⁸⁶ When the DCC did not adhere to James’s wishes, he began sit-in demonstrations at lunch counters in downtown Dallas.⁸⁷ James led several other demonstrations in the city throughout the year. His actions pressured the biracial committee to begin the desegregation process and in July of 1961, several businesses in the downtown area removed white-only signs and began to serve African American customers. “To dramatize this achievement, the Committee arranged for 159 African Americans to walk into 49 downtown lunch counters and restaurants and be served without incident.”⁸⁸ This staged act of desegregation was seen as a triumph for Dallas and heightened its image in national media, as well as in current scholarship regarding Dallas’s timely efforts to desegregate the city.⁸⁹ Needless to say, the events that occurred that day in July were tactical ploys to restore order in the city and pacify Civil Rights leaders.

Martin Luther King, Jr.’s experience with the elite group of Dallas African American ministers was overwhelmingly negative. In 1963, Reverend Rhett James invited King to speak at a rally for the United Political Organization. Members of the IMA, the committee of fourteen, and the DCC sought to bar King from speaking;

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Behnken, Ibid. pp. 15.

however their attempt was unsuccessful.⁹⁰ In 1964 the ministers on both the biracial committee of fourteen and the IMA silently boycotted King, who was this time, in Dallas to speak to students at Southern Methodist University and to hold a special meeting with Dallas Civil Rights leaders at the Fair Park in South Dallas.

Reverend Mark Herbener, a white pastor appointed to the all African American parish of Mount Olive Lutheran Church in South Dallas and who struggled alongside the members of his congregation and participants in the Civil Rights Movement, stated in an interview that less than fifty people came to the King event in South Dallas at the Fair Park. Herbener holds that when he notified Reverend Wright about the anticipated King visit, Wright agreed wholeheartedly to inform his parishioners as well as other ministers; however, none were in attendance. Herberner recalls that this act upset King, who had never experienced such large-scale, organized avoidance from his peers.⁹¹

I remember a time when Rhett asked me to be on stage at the State Fair Music Hall when Dr. King was coming to town. And I will tell you that I got phone calls from some well-meaning friends saying, ‘Do not go. It is far too dangerous’...So I came. I, as I remember it...ah, the Black ministers had boycotted Martin Luther King. And Martin Luther King came home crying...⁹²

Herbener’s involvement in the movement, as will be conveyed, was extensive and significant. He gave members of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements the

⁹⁰ Dulaney, *Ibid*, *fn.* 32.

⁹¹ Reverend Mark Herbener, *Ibid*.

⁹² *Ibid*.

support of his church and the use of its facilities. His involvement was in grave contrast to the elite ministerial Black “leadership” of the day.⁹³ This fact, when compared to other cities, particularly those in the Southeast, it is eerily unique, especially when Civil Rights and even Black Power Movement figures could look to the church for leadership, guidance, and support, if not at the beginning of the movements then certainly toward the latter portions of those movements.

Moving toward the mid to late 1960s, the youth and college student movement began to be more instrumental in defining the dimensions of the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas though protests and sit-ins continued to be facilitated by older Civil Rights veterans in Dallas. In 1964, Reverend Earl Allen, pastor of the small all-African American Highland Hills United Methodist Church parish in Oak Cliff, chairman of Dallas’s Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), and Dallas’s Coordinating Committee on Civil Rights (DCCCR), led several sit-ins and peaceful protests in the city. One of two very prominent events that Allen organized was the twenty-eight day picketing of a segregated, franchised, Louisiana-based restaurant named Piccadilly Cafeteria in downtown Dallas that served a whites-only clientele. Allen’s rationale for such direct action was the city’s unwillingness to legally enforce the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The picketing lasted from May 30-July 2, 1964.

Another such event that Allen organized was the protest and picketing of the Dallas Independent School District after being barred from a hearing with the

⁹³ Ibid. Such Black ministers like Reverend Ira B. Loud (St. Paul United Methodist Church), Reverend S. M. Wright (People’s Missionary Baptist Church), Reverend Bezaleel R. Riley, Reverend Robert Lawrence Parish, and Reverend E. C. Estell, Sr. (St. John Missionary Baptist Church) boasted that they had the largest Black congregations in the city; however, all were found to have been on the payroll of the city government during the years of the said movements.

superintendent and nine-member school board in which he and his organization attempted to call for the acceleration of desegregation in city public schools. Allen and DCCCR then staged a seventy-person protest outside the school district's administration building and rallied the participants behind "[exhausting] every legal method—including additional demonstrations—to achieve our goal."⁹⁴ After Reverend Allen's successful execution of direct action tactics, "he challenged the city council to enforce the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or face the possibility of racial unrest and violence. He also stated that if the city attempted to treat civil rights demonstrations as 'criminal acts'⁹⁵... 'blood would flow in the streets'."⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Dallas Morning News "Pickets March at Building of School Administration." *Dallas Morning News*: 28 April 1964.

⁹⁵ Allen had been sued by the Piccadilly Cafeteria for his incitement of the pickets, which caused the franchise to lose a substantial amount of money during the twenty-eight day demonstrations. See, "Dallas Cafeteria Picketing Halts." *The Victoria Advocate*: 28 June 1964.

⁹⁶ Dulaney, *Ibid*, 85.

CHAPTER FOUR

LEFT IN AN UNMARKED GRAVE: UNEARTHING THE CIVIL RIGHTS AND BLACK POWER MOVEMENTS IN DALLAS, TEXAS

1965 through 1969

The *de jure* Civil Rights Movement in Dallas, as conveyed in previous chapters, was a visibly active aspect of city life. The resistance and autonomous nature of the Black community was integral to the community's survival. During the mid-to-late sixties, radical changes and shifts in the national movement for Civil Rights trickled down to Dallas as a result of certain students' exposure to the Civil Rights Movement in the so-called Deep South. The later years of this decade were marked by a shift from Civil Rights to Black Power and a more international focus. The student movement became more prominent and organized its approach without the consultation or assistance from elder Civil Rights veterans, which was a far cry from the goings on in previous years. The students' movement began to shift and transform and was greatly impacted by the return of Ernest McMillan,⁹⁷ a Dallas native who had gone to college in another state.

Ernest McMillan and the Formation of SNCC in Dallas

An initial review of the literature on the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas indicates that Marion Ernest "Ernie" McMillan, Jr. introduced the student movement in Dallas in 1965. In 1965, Ernest McMillan and some twenty-five students staged a protest against the Arlington State College's pro-confederate atmosphere, including its use of the confederate flag, rebel mascot, and Jim Crow policies. The students entered into a stand-off with the administration to have the confederate flag as well as the mascot, "The

⁹⁷ This pronouncement of McMillan as one of the progenitors of the students' movement was made clear in several interviews. See transcribed interviews featuring Marilyn Clark, Edward Harris, Mark Herbener, Jacqueline Hill, and Eva McMillan.

Rebel,” removed from the institution.⁹⁸ Ernest McMillan holds that the youth during that day acted on instinct about what they felt was right to combat civil injustices and from what they had read about earlier movements and the history of America. They had no leadership and no guidance because, as has been and will be detailed later in this paper, the roles that prominent Black ministers and leaders held in other cities were almost non-existent in Dallas.⁹⁹ Ernest McMillan traveled from his native Dallas, Texas to Newman, Georgia to live with his father, then a United Methodist preacher, in the summer of 1963 prior to enrolling into Morehouse College. McMillan maintains that

Plans were to hang out with him until time to enroll in college that September. Those plans were cut short because the local police threatened my father with the fact that I was ‘stirring up trouble’ trying to get people there to support the [March on Washington after learning that Dr. King would be coming to speak on Morehouse’s campus]. I was sent back to Dallas by my Dad and told to return in September for school only.¹⁰⁰

Upon beginning his collegiate career, McMillan continued to be involved in politics in greater Georgia by organizing a companion demonstration for the March on Washington in Noonan, Georgia with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

⁹⁸ “25 Arlington Students Protest ‘Rebel’ Theme.” *Dallas Morning News*: 28 October 1965. It must be noted that the electronic archives of the University of Texas, Arlington only have information on related protests and rallies from 1968-1971, see <http://library.uta.edu/guideToArchives/guideUniv.jsp>

⁹⁹ *A Call to Action*, Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ “SNCC 1964-1969: Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi,” <<http://www.crmvet.org/vet/mcmille.htm> > (July 2009).

(SNCC). He detested the class hegemony at Morehouse, a hegemony he felt was that was projected onto the Atlanta community. He recalls, “the college was only a few blocks from the ghetto, but students wouldn’t go down there. They felt superior. Who your parents were and what kind of linens you had were the important things.”¹⁰¹

McMillan decided to organize in the movement full-time and left Morehouse in the spring of 1964, his second semester in college. He recalls that,

What led me to make that change was my initial involvement with the twenty-four hour demonstrations taking place at Maddox's Restaurant in downtown Atlanta. The first persons I met were Ruby Doris, Jim Foreman and Bob Mants.¹⁰²

At the age of nineteen, after securing his father’s permission to work as a full-time staff member of SNCC, McMillan began his work in voter registration programs and demonstrations in Fort Valley and Lee County, Georgia with Willie Ricks. McMillan was later appointed to the position of field officer in Thomasville, Georgia where he “registered voters, ran Blacks for local offices, and supported the meat workers at the Sunny Side plant, among others.”¹⁰³ He was also at the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey and leading and participating in debates and protests while there.

Shortly after the Democratic National Convention, McMillan decided to return to Dallas. He recalls that, “After almost two years of fighting racism in the Deep South, it

¹⁰¹ Cartwright, 198.

¹⁰² <http://www.crmvet.org/vet/mcmille.htm>

¹⁰³ Ibid.

was a shock to come back to Dallas and realize that things were just like I had left them. Nothing had changed. Nobody in the Black community was doing anything.”¹⁰⁴ At that time, the National Council of Negro Women provided many SNCC field workers with scholarships allowing them to return to school. McMillan then enrolled in school at Arlington State College, now University of Texas at Arlington, outside of Dallas. McMillan formed the Student Congress on Racial Equality (SCORE), which protested the racist mores of the institution and was soon expelled from the university for an insufficient grade point average.

McMillan then left Dallas, “the inland city [that was kind of conservative that] didn’t have a tradition for struggle”¹⁰⁵ and hitchhiked to Houston, which was “more of an international city, [a] blue collar town with a lot of labor organizing [with a greater respect or tradition for that [struggle].”¹⁰⁶ McMillan continues to explain his reasons for leaving Dallas and travelling to Houston:

For me personally, it was a help to me because I came from a background of working in rural or semi-rural areas working in Southwest Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi...walking door to door...riding a mule to work [or] walk to somebody’s house to register them to vote or organizing in small towns...but the big metroplex like Dallas and various communities and the traditions in the

¹⁰⁴ Cartwright, 200.

¹⁰⁵ Marion Ernest “Ernie” McMillan, Interview by Ava Wilson, 14 December 2009.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

urban setting were something I had kind of lost a sense of.

So I actually hitchhiked from Dallas to Houston.¹⁰⁷

He left Dallas to stay with, learn from, and organize alongside Lee Otis Johnson who possessed, according to McMillan, a greater sense of organizing and had lead several successful organizing missions in Houston, Texas. McMillan continues:

Coming to Fifth Ward, [the predominantly Black section in Northern Houston] Texas, and staying at the home of Lee Otis Johnson; he [Johnson] spent at least seventy-two hours [talking] and he just practically unloaded his whole brain from the history of Africa to the experiences of young people in the inner city...in those days. [He was] just capturing all of that, because I never really had just...really read, in-depth, the rich history of Africa or even began to connect it in the way he had with the history of Black people in this country...just the whole perspective he [Johnson] used, which was down down-to-earth, lively, grass roots talking. Not just high, pie-in-the-sky intellectualism, but really something you could grasp and put your hands on. [This] really helped me to return home to Dallas feeling I was better armed and better prepared to immerse myself in the struggle for Black Power.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

Dallas SNCC and the Texas Black Youth Conference

Ernest McMillan then travelled back to Dallas decided to form the Dallas arm of SNCC in 1966 and to organize youth efforts. The first major order of business that Dallas SNCC organized was the Texas Black Youth Conference, held in March of 1968, as well as information meetings and rallies around the tenets of Black Power. Earlier that year when the conference was in its planning stages, FBI COINTELPRO files indicated that “Contacts throughout the South Dallas, Texas area indicated there is no evidence of any plans to hold a Texas Black Youth Conference in Dallas in January, 1968.”¹⁰⁹

The Dallas arm of SNCC penned a Black Youth Conference Manifesto, which outlined the purposes of the event:

- (1) To establish a statewide black communication system that would be tied-in to the national system.
- (2) To create awareness and promote activity in Texas.
- (3) To establish operational unity with inner-city groups.
- (4) To define and present new meaningful alternatives as to how to cast off the oppression as imposed on black and oppressed people.¹¹⁰

McMillan remembers these efforts:

And then, we felt that the emphasis needed to be on getting together people who were free to operate more so than others and that was the university students. So we began to pull together, by the spring of ‘67, a Texas-wide state youth

¹⁰⁹ Dallas SNCC FBI Files: 28 January 1968.

¹¹⁰ FBI Files, Ibid.

conference, which I was able to pull together by taking several weeks and months hitchhiking and traveling around the state meeting people to find what people were doing in their respective cities. So I visited Houston, San Antonio, and Austin...visiting Huston-Tillotson College, University of Texas, Texas Southern University, University of Houston, East Texas State University, don't let me forget them...I can't remember who was in San Antonio. But we began to see that there was a commonality. It was time for it because now Black Power was announced that people were beginning to build how we can make Black Power apply to our lives and to our community. So, people agreed with the proposal I had. We needed to form a state-wide Texas Youth Conference to see, if nothing else, to bring ah, a storehouse of information together. To share, build, network, and then be able to go back to our respective communities armed with some, some ah confidence with some knowledge and with some network and with some resources that we could share to be able to be again in our own cities. And so, that was called and that took place in Dallas and I believe it was at the Bethlehem Center in South Dallas where we held it. And we found out through reading the freedom of information files that the police

were well-surveying these gatherings. So it was a lot of quotations and even mentioning of, of diaries from police following different people from San Antonio, Houston, and other places here.¹¹¹

Marilyn Clark remembers securing funding and accommodations for the Texas Black Youth Conference through her employment with the Urban League and involvement at the Bethlehem Center, where the conference was to be held:

One of the big things I was involved in was organizing the Texas Statewide Black Youth Conference...with Lee Otis Johnson. I think that's where it came from. That's my recollection and he came to Dallas and said we needed to have a statewide conference. Then, I took more responsibility locally in trying to organize kids to come to the conference...And so, my next effort was to try to talk to ah, I guess, the director [of the Bethlehem Center]. You know, instead of organizing, it became this internal fight like a lot of times I got derailed off of my, what my major responsibilities were, but ah, we planned ah, to have...our big thing, as I was looking at some materials here, like Stokely Carmichael was gonna come and we were gonna have some workshops for students. And then, because I had a job, I was also the focal point for people to call,

¹¹¹ Ernest McMillan, *Ibid.*

which was really...and all of this was really important, because we didn't have cell phones then and very few pay phones that I remember. And so, for people to have a central phone number that they could call was really critical and ah, I don't think we had any answering machines then...but because I was at my job eight and nine o'clock at night, ah people could always call there. And so, that was the big deal about...I guess that was one of the other reasons why I had such a central role in the conference is because other people would call from El Paso, from Austin...¹¹²

The Black press did cover the Texas Black Youth Conference, but reported that the event was not well-attended and conveyed a cynical and overly critical tone when reporting on the conference:

Last week the local leaders of SNCC were having difficulty finding a place to hold their black youth conference this past weekend, but as things turned out a phone booth would have probably been sufficient...Saturday morning near noon there were only six present. An atmosphere of aloofness prevailed...¹¹³

¹¹² Marilyn Clark, Interview by Ava Wilson,

¹¹³ "Black Youth Conference: A Slow Drag," *The Dallas Post Tribune*: 28 March 1968.

Despite the negative reports by the *Dallas Post Tribune*, both Clark and Ernie McMillan's interviews attest to the success and the reach in scope of the Texas Black Youth Conference.

Dallas SNCC and its Members

Upon the formation of this arm of SNCC, the Dallas media began to disseminate propaganda that the principal organizer of SNCC, McMillan, was an outside agitator from Georgia sent to stir up trouble in Dallas. McMillan's mother Eva "Mama Mack" McMillan remembers this occurrence:¹¹⁴

For instance, when my son first notified [the public] that he would set up a SNCC chapter in Dallas, the news media immediately jumped in and said that he was not a citizen of Dallas...that he was from Alabama and that he was here only to cause trouble.¹¹⁵

Eva McMillan also became an integral organizer, leader, and community fixture. She credits her brothers with urging her to become involved in the Progressive Voters' League, and credits her son for involving her in the political discourse for power and liberation in Dallas. She also stated that when her son began to get involved in the movement in Dallas she was at first reluctant; however, once her son began to get arrested she became a champion of the movement. She became known as "Mama Mack" by the young people in the movement. Her home was a safe house, or a safe place for the young people in the movement to congregate and find refuge from law enforcement or people opposed to the movement who could have done them harm.

¹¹⁴ Eva McMillan, Ibid

¹¹⁵ Eva McMillan, Ibid.

There were other safe houses where youth in the movement could seek refuge. One such house was located in the 2500 block of Oakland (now Malcolm X Blvd) and South Blvd in South Dallas. Another was located on Peabody Street also in South Dallas and another was located in the West Dallas Housing Projects.¹¹⁶ In the filmed panel discussion *Call to Action: The SNCC Experience in Dallas*, Reverend Mark Herbener relayed that he knew that he had to service his congregation for their benefit and not his own. He also allowed his church to also be used by organizations that were not directly affiliated with Mount Olive.¹¹⁷

Dallas SNCC began to make a name for itself both in the Black community as well as with the white community. One event that occurred early in 1968 that brought both SNCC and Ernie McMillan to the fore of the more radical phase of the movement was a televised panel on race relations in Dallas entitled “One Nation Indivisible.” The panel began with the then mayor, J. Erik Jonnson, and other wealthy members of the Citizen’s Council affirming the fact that Dallas was a premiere city on the road to change.¹¹⁸ While the white business elites were reporting a one-sided, perjured view of race relations in Dallas, the SNCC field secretary stood up and began a debate with the mayor about what he perceived as falsehoods being espoused on the panel. Jacqueline Hill, McMillan’s younger sister who was a member of SNCC recalls seeing this impromptu debate on live television:

¹¹⁶ *Call to Action*, Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Carolyn Barta, “Dallas –Fort Worth Panelists See Hope in Racial Situation,” *Dallas Morning News*: February 1968.

Also, at the same time, one of the leaders spoke against one of the big companies in Dallas. It's a micro-chip company. They were hiring mainly women at that time, which was good. They were overlooking the man—our Black men—to work at those assembly lines. So there was another one of our leaders in our group on a panel discussion one night spoke against the person who owned that company, which just so happened to be the mayor of Dallas and while watchin' that on television, the camera went right onto the mayor who owned that micro-chip company and that person had turned red and was just beside himself because everybody on the panel, including a lot of the Blacks, were sayin' how great the city of Dallas was, how great it was to live here. At the same time, that other voice from a young leader of the SNCC movement said, 'No, that's not true. We have problems in our community, in our neighborhoods and one of those deals with the fact that your company is not hiring our Black men. Our Black men are going to jail and prisons and bein' overlooked and that was causing a, a disunity in the community.'¹¹⁹

McMillan's mother, Mama Mack, also recalled this incident being the watershed moment in her son's SNCC career, for this time brought with it daily harassment from

¹¹⁹ Jacqueline Hill, Interview by Ava Wilson, 10 January 2010.

local law enforcement.¹²⁰ However, McMillan's pronouncements at this panel did not bring only negative exposure to SNCC. Through this television exposure, several young people became aware of Dallas SNCC and joined the organization as a result. Edward "Black Ed" Harris and his twin Eddie "Nigger Ed" Harris were intrigued by the sentiments Ernest McMillan conveyed during the "One Nation Indivisible" broadcast. Edward "Black Ed" Harris remembers his feelings after viewing the televised panel discussion:

...I was at one of my girlfriend's house lookin' at TV and a TV program came on and there was a young man on a panel that was kinda givin' the local law enforcement, you know, hell about how they were treatin' our African Americans. Well, back then, we would call each other Black. That's when, you know, I first got introduced to Ernest, on TV. So I tole some of my family members, 'I need to meet this guy.' I said, 'Black Power is comin' to Dallas and I want to see what this is all about.'¹²¹

Harris became a voter education and registration specialist in South and West Dallas. He also became a draft counselor at the height of the Viet Nam War drafts.¹²² His major responsibilities were to educate young men about their rights prior to their going before the draft board.¹²³

¹²⁰ Eva McMillan, *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Edward Harris, Interviewed by Ava Wilson, 16 March 2010.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

SNCC members continued to be active in the community on different fronts. On Monday, June 17, 1968,

Matthew Johnson, Ernest McMillan, Mike Dodd, and other representatives of the SNCC chapter of Dallas, Texas were in the process of handing out leaflets announcing the scheduling of a 'Black Community Meeting.' The purpose of the meeting was to let the black community know the meaning of SNCC and about the possible organizing of rent strikes in order to rid homes of rates and roaches and to improve housing facilities for people in the community.¹²⁴

Upon entering the Good Luck Restaurant Drive-Thru, a local food dive, the SNCC representatives were approached by Willie Linthicum, the owner of Linthicum Security Service, and were told to vacate the premises. Because Linthicum did not reveal his identity when he was asked who he was, the SNCC cadre remained on site. After being forcefully told to get out, co-SNCC leader, Matthew Johnson, said to Linthicum, "Okay, we know how to handle people like you," before leaving the dive without harm done to anyone.¹²⁵

Supposedly feeling threatened by Johnson's remark, Linthicum pressed charges against SNCC members and on June 26, 1969, "Fred Bell and Ernest McMillan were arrested on charges of threatening the life of Willie Linthicum...They were held on bonds totaling \$40,000,"¹²⁶ which was later reduced to a peace bond totaling \$2,500.¹²⁷ Other

¹²⁴ SNCC Field Notes, November 1968.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

such harassment charges were brought upon SNCC. In December of 1968, a complaint was filed against McMillan at the district attorney's office for having allegedly assaulted L. A. Jones after McMillan had come to Jones's home to escort Jones's wife to a SNCC meeting. According to the *Dallas Morning News* article, "Assault Laid to McMillan in Complaint," "Jones attempted to persuade his wife not to attend the meeting...and McMillan struck him with [a] pistol. After a struggle, he complained and two other men held him as McMillan struck him."¹²⁸ These were but two of many instances where charges were brought against the members of Dallas SNCC chapter.

The Dallas chapter of SNCC faced the same opposition that many other SNCC chapters and other such organizations experienced. They also received support in many of the same ways as their comrades elsewhere. With the unofficial help of local Black law enforcement, SNCC was able to anticipate the city government's attempts to squelch their rallies, protests, and demonstrations.¹²⁹ Dallas SNCC also organized the veterans who returned from Viet Nam and created a military and security wing of their organization, which was given the duty of patrolling the police. These police patrols would protect citizens who were harassed and unjustly detained or questioned by police. SNCC police watchers patrolled with thirty-eight caliber guns, M-1s, and twelve-gauge shotguns. There was an instance in which a nine-year-old boy was arrested by police for stealing candy from a store and the SNCC patrolmen were notified. The police cars' tires were slashed and the young man was released.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ "Harassment, Dallasite Says," *Dallas Morning News*: 28 June 1968.

¹²⁸ "Assault Laid to McMillan in Complaint," *Dallas Morning News*: 10 December 1968.

¹²⁹ Johnson and Geddie, *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

Other cities erupted in riots; Dallas, however, did not. In fact, police attempted to incite a riot after a SNCC meeting in West Dallas. SNCC leaders, who were surrounded and outnumbered by police, called Mama Mack, seeking her counsel since the police had encircled their meeting place and were already brandishing their weapons. Mama Mack told to stay put and not to move. She frantically began calling Dallas Police Headquarters, local governmental, FBI offices ordering them to make the police retreat from the West Dallas SNCC site.¹³¹ She reminded them about the Kerner Report,¹³² a report issued that proved that the majority of riots were incited by police, not the people. She relayed to them that she knew they were trying to sequester SNCC and that SNCC would not fall for these sordid to breakup the organization. Her phone rang incessantly as she received calls from SNCC members' families. They all called the local government. The police were contacted by their governmental superiors and disbursed, leaving the SNCC members unharmed. While many cities burned and allowed grassroots movement to wrest power from the city officials, the Dallas Black Movement, was small and was drastically outnumbered. Mama Mack, along with other families, felt that the police would have surely killed all of the SNCC organizers had the families not been vigilant in making the police leave.¹³³

Things Came to a Head: The OK Supermarket Protest and Boycott

The community-based activities that Dallas SNCC was instrumental in organizing all came to a head with the boycotting of OK Supermarket. The OK Supermarket chain consisted of ten grocery stores stationed in an area densely populated with African

¹³¹ Eva McMillan, Ibid.

¹³² The Kerner report was released by Lyndon Johnson's National Advisory Committee in 1968 in response to riots after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s death.

¹³³ *Call to Action*, Ibid.

Americans located in Dallas's Southern sector. OK Supermarket sold ungraded meat, rotten fruits and vegetables, and charged prices sometimes two times more than their market value.¹³⁴ Using his SNCC training from his time in areas in the Deep South like Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia, McMillan and his comrades surveyed the people in the South Dallas community, asking them about the most pertinent problems that plagued their community. The overwhelming majority of the community members indicated that they were tired of being economically exploited through stores owned by people alien to their neighborhood. McMillan recounts:

We organized a boycott [and protest] against a chain of stores (OK Supermarkets) that was exploiting and disrespecting the community where it relied on its profits. After we mounted a boycott (that was reported 85% effective by the racist *Dallas Morning News*) we organized a campaign to purchase that chain.¹³⁵

Reverend Mark Herbener remembers an exchange he had at the OK Supermarket in his neighborhood, which was the site of the protests on the chain:

There was a grocery store across the street from the church. Later on they had a very decent man working there, running it, but at first when it went there, we used to go and shop there. We came home and Donna [his wife] said, "These hot dogs are bad." So I said, "Okay, I'll take 'em back." So I went back to the store and said, "These hot

¹³⁴ SNCC Field Notes, Ibid.

¹³⁵ <http://www.crmvet.org/vet/mcmille.htm>

dogs are bad. We just bought them this afternoon and they're no good. They stink." And someone said, "Shhh, shhh. Don't say anything." Why? Because they would wash them off and put them back on the shelf. They wouldn't do it to me, but they would do it to the other customers. So, you know, there was a reason that the OK Supermarkets was...they had to be boycotted.¹³⁶

Earlier in the year, the Black United Front was formed to serve as an umbrella organization for all of the smaller Black organizations' major organizers to meet with another and brainstorm mass events for Dallas. The OK Supermarket boycott and protest was one such event that the Black United Front was integral in organizing. McMillan's mother, Mama Mack, remembers being in attendance at the meetings to organize the boycott and protest in the summer of 1968:

The community in South Dallas, where one of the OK Supermarkets was stationed. By the way, there were about ten OK Supermarkets in Dallas and all of them were in the poorest communities. And on the days when the women would receive their welfare check and when the elderly would receive their checks the prices would go up. They were treated so poorly that the people in the community decided they would do something about it. So they held a meeting and they called SNCC and asked SNCC to support

¹³⁶ Mark Herbener, *Ibid.*

them with a picket of the store. And I went to the meeting where the picket was organized.¹³⁷

The officials in the Black United Front decided to adopt a two-fold boycott and protest. One aspect of the two-fold plan was an internal boycott which was to consist of a basket boycott—“filling shopping carts with large amounts of foodstuffs, carrying these goods to the checkout counter, unloading them at the counter and them being unable to pay for them.”¹³⁸ This tactic was to hold up business, cause inconvenience in the stores, and to negatively affect the store’s revenue. The internal boycott would also consist of

accidents on purpose. In carrying goods from shelves to carts or checkout counters there would occur occasional accidents. On the request of any store employee that payment...be made, such payments were...given.¹³⁹

This was done because members of SNCC, aware of the law, did not want the store to seek legal action against protestors because damage to private property was a felonious act. SNCC members merely wanted to inconvenience the store management, and did not want to create too much chaos in the store]. The second aspect of the two-fold plan was an external boycott with pickets “by the black community with the organizational advice and counsel of the Dallas Chapter of SNCC.”¹⁴⁰ Mama Mack sheds light on how the internal boycott was to take place:

So, here in Dallas it was said that the day they decided to have the picket, the young men and women went in. They

¹³⁷ Eva McMillan, *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ SNCC Field Notes, *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

each filled a cart to the level with a lot of small items, too and they let the store authorities there know that they were protesting the sale of goods, [and] the way they treated the community, especially their customers. They would fill their carts and for instance, one woman would drive up to the counter and she would say, ‘Oh, look at that clock! It says five o’clock. I promised my babysitter I’d be back’ and she just walked outta the store and leave the cart there. The next person would stand there then he would say, ‘I’m late to work’ and he would run off and leave his cart. The next person might get his food tallied and then reach for his checkbook and said, ‘Oh, I left my checkbook at home! I’ll have to go get it’ and he’d depart. So, as a result, the store was full of carts of food that the employees at the store would have to replace back like frozen foods, small food, a package of noodles and whatever. And some of the people in the community got really excited and somebody dropped a watermelon and broke it. Somebody dropped a bottle of prune juice and broke it. About three items were broken and the people at OK Supermarket did not complain. I guess they were a little afraid of what was gonna happen.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Eva McMillan, *Ibid.*

“Witnesses at the grocery told police that 30-40 men and women entered the store about 10:40 p.m. and, at a signal, began breaking merchandise.”¹⁴² They ordered meat from the butcher and declined it upon receiving it, left perishable food items like milk and eggs out to rot, and stocked grocery carts full of groceries that they did not intend on buying.¹⁴³ Ernest McMillan and SNCC co-leader, Matthew Johnson, were arrested and were charged with the malicious destruction of private property, a felony and was “punishable by a prison term of from 2 to 10 years.”¹⁴⁴ McMillan recounts that the total damages were no more than \$300.¹⁴⁵ The two were released on bond and were given a trial start date of Monday, August 19, 1968.¹⁴⁶ On day two of the trial, “Mark Elston, 15-year-old son of a co-owner of OK Supermarkets testified...that he saw Marion Ernest McMillan and Matthew Johnson destroy store merchandise.”¹⁴⁷ The store manager, E. D. Tallas, gave a similar testimony. An African American attendant at the store testified that “he witnessed the smashing but did not see McMillan or Johnson break anything.”¹⁴⁸ In an anonymous letter to the judge on behalf of Ernest McMillan, the unnamed character referee gave his or her testimony as to what happened on the fateful day of the OK Supermarket protest—a testimony that differed from some accounts in newspapers and interviews:

As the story goes, personnel of the store suddenly appeared
and a scuffle ensued where goods began to fall. McMillan

¹⁴² Marc Powe, “SNCC Leaders Charged in Raid on Store” *Dallas Morning News*: 12 July 1968. This article mentions that the damage was estimated at \$211.

¹⁴³ Eva McMillan, *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Ernest McMillan, *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ “Trial Set Aug. 19 For SNCC Pair,” *Dallas Morning News*: 6 August 1968.

¹⁴⁷ “Youth Says He Saw Two Destroy Goods,” *Dallas Morning News*: 22 August 1968.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

and some onlookers claim they fell accidentally but the persecutors claimed it was deliberate. No one saw McMillan or Johnson drop or break anything...When McMillan learned there was damage, he attempted rectify it on the spot by paying for it but was refused and arrested instead.¹⁴⁹

While McMillan and Johnson awaited trial, the boycotts and pickets continued. Finally, “OK Supermarkets...agreed...to sell all of part of its 10-store chain to an all-Negro group represented by black militant Ernest McMillan.”¹⁵⁰ According to a report in the *Dallas Morning News*, “The supermarket owners gave McMillan’s group 60 days to raise the money to complete the transaction. In exchange, McMillan agreed to halt the boycott and call off the pickets.”¹⁵¹ Meanwhile, before this compromise between SNCC and the OK Supermarket chain, the district attorney’s office considered issuing criminal charges against five picketers.

Dallas police furnished the district attorney’s office affidavits saying one picket [*sic*] threatened to kill a store manager and burn down the store if the employe [*sic*] didn’t join SNCC. Other allegations included harassment of customers not observing the boycott and prevention of employes [*sic*] from engaging in their lawful vocation.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Anonymous Character Letter, 25 September 1968.

¹⁵⁰ James Ewell, “Store Chain to Sell,” *Dallas Morning News*: 26 July 1968.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Carolyn Barta, “Store Threats Under Study,” *Dallas Morning News*: 27 July 1968.

No criminal charges could be drafted against the people who allegedly threatened the store employees and non-participants because the police could not produce their names.¹⁵³ SNCC petitioned the Small Business Administration to finance a loan to aid SNCC in purchasing the OK Supermarket stores, however, officials refused SNCC's petition. SNCC then enlisted Black business owners to provide the loan to buy the stores.¹⁵⁴

SNCC Leaders Face Sentencing

In August of 1968, McMillan and Johnson were sentenced to serve the full ten-year prison term for the property damage done to the OK Supermarket. During this time, McMillan was charged with draft-evasion after having reported to the draft board, but not swearing to the oath.¹⁵⁵ McMillan tells of his reasons for evading the draft into the Viet Nam War:

The draft evasion charge was my refusal to just passively submit to their desires to put me in a uniform and send me to Viet Nam. So, while I participated in the draft induction thing, it was not a without some resistance and questions and maybe even some belligerence on my part. So, instead of lockin' me up and throwin' away the key and sayin', 'You are committin' a crime!' They said, 'Go home McMillan and we'll re-induct you, we'll try to re-induct you again on a better day.' So while I was locked up on

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ "U.S. to Aid SNCC in Store Buy," *Dallas Morning News*: 8 August 1968.

¹⁵⁵ "McMillan Delinquent, Board Says," *Dallas Morning News*: 30 July 1968.

one charge, I learned about the draft evasion charge bein'
an indictment against me by the federal grand jury...¹⁵⁶

Concurrently, McMillan and Johnson were awaiting trial and sentencing for their damage to private property during the OK Supermarket boycott and protests. Their trial date was set for August 19, 1968. On August 24, 1968, the two were sentenced to serve ten years in prison for the destruction of food items during the protests. The judge ruled that McMillan's passport be confiscated to stop him from fleeing the country, after which, he and Johnson's bail was reduced from \$10,000 to \$5,000.¹⁵⁷

SNCC Members Take Matters into Their Own Hands

The year 1968 was very tumultuous for members of SNCC. During the time that Johnson and McMillan were awaiting their sentencing, Fred Louis Bell and Charles Lavern Beasley, both active members of SNCC, robbed the Farmers and Merchants State Bank a few hundred miles outside of Dallas in Ladonia, Texas.¹⁵⁸ Bell, Beasley, and an unidentified third member fled with approximately \$14,000.¹⁵⁹ A few days later, Charles Beasley fled the United States for the Canadian borders, hijacked a plane mid-flight at gunpoint in Saint John, New Brunswick Canada. Beasley told the flight crew to fly the plane to Cuba.¹⁶⁰ Beasley referred to himself as "Mr. Garvey,"¹⁶¹ and did not disclose his

¹⁵⁶ Ernest McMillan, *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Bill Hunter, "Judge Reduces Bail, If Passport Yielded," *Dallas Morning News*: 14 November 1968.

¹⁵⁸ United States of America, Plaintiff—Appellee Versus Fred Louis Bell and Charles Lavern Beasley, Defendants—Appellants, United States Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit, 23 March 1972.

¹⁵⁹ "Dallas Man Araigned in Airliner Hijacking," *Dallas Morning News*: 13 September 1968.

¹⁶⁰ William Tucker, "Passengers Freed in Canadian Drama," *Dallas Morning News*: 10 September 1968.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

nationality. His reasoning for hijacking the plane was because the Counter Intelligence Agency was after him.¹⁶² He could not have been more right.¹⁶³

He reportedly allowed the plane to stop and refuel in Montreal, at which point he allowed the two flight attendants and seventeen passengers leave the plane. The pilot, under the behest of Beasley rescheduled a flight plan for Cuba.¹⁶⁴ “While the medium-range plane was being refueled, a Royal Canadian Mounted Police assistant commissioner talked to Beasley by radio for about 20 minutes and convinced him to surrender.”¹⁶⁵ Charles Beasley surrendered to Canadian Mounties only after being informed by the Cuban consul that the country would not allow him political asylum;¹⁶⁶ Canada, however, agreed to grant him asylum.¹⁶⁷ Beasley was not, in fact, granted asylum in Canada and was arraigned in the Canadian courts on September 20, 1968.¹⁶⁸

The Community At-Large Supports SNCC: The Formation of the BCJLO

While the two SNCC leaders waited to report to prison for the property damage charges brought against them and the other two SNCC members were arraigned, Black citizens were not stagnant. Several Black attorneys, professionals, and concerned citizens formed the Black Citizens for Justice, Law, and Order (BCJLO) to raise awareness of the city’s growing population of young political prisoners. The BCJLO organized one such event to raise money for the defense funds of Johnson and McMillan. Renowned actor, Ossie Davis traveled to Dallas from the set of his film “The Slave” in Shreveport,

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Dallas SNCC FBI Files: 4 November 1969, Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ “Dallas Man Arraigned...”, Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Bob Hayes, “Air Canada Plane Hijacked,” *Montreal Gazette*: 12 September 1968.

¹⁶⁸ “Dallas Man Arraigned...”, Ibid.

Louisiana to host a political awareness fundraiser for SNCC in 1968. The *Dallas Times Herald* reported Davis as saying, “I think it’s about time we started getting together and doing for ourselves what we’ve been asking others to do for us for too long.”¹⁶⁹ Mrs. McMillan, Ernest McMillan’s mother, recounts how this event came about:

I had a sister named Faye Wells, who had moved to California, and Faye was lookin’ for work. She couldn’t find a job. Finally someone recommended her to work at the house of this wealthy Jewish woman. She was a concert pianist and Faye went there as a cook. And the lady was interested in her, she said, ‘Where are you from.’ She said, ‘Dallas’ and she said, “Tell me about the political situation in Dallas.” So, Faye explained to her what was goin’ on in Dallas, about the people, mainly in SNCC, and that her nephew had gone to prison behind his work. So, she said, ‘Well, I’m going to tell my friend Ruby Dee, the famous actress.’ Well, Ruby Dee was the wife of Ossie Davis and at that time, Ossie Davis was in New Orleans filmin’ a movie, one of his famous movies and when the pianist informed Ruby about what was goin’ on in Dallas, she called Ossie Davis in New Orleans and said, ‘Honey, go to Dallas. Dallas SNCC is in trouble.’ So, he immediately dropped everything he was doin’ and he came

¹⁶⁹ “Legal Funds for Negroes to be Sought,” *Dallas Times Herald*: 9 September 1968.

that weekend and stayed in Dallas...he really turned the town around because the African Americans respect Ossie Davis so well. And when it was announced that he would be here, he sealed Warren Avenue United Methodist Church full and Ossie Davis delivered a sermon. He delivered a wonderful sermon. He portrayed an old slave preacher. He would stand in the pulpit, watchin' and makin' sure that no whites were comin' on to listenin' at him. He was tellin' the slaves how to be revolutionary and how to, you know, kill the master, or whatever and when he would see white people in the church he would say, 'Obey your massa! Work hard! 'Cause yo' massa is good to you.' So Ossie Davis really...really—the people looked to Ossie Davis and said, 'If he can come to Dallas and pull for SNCC and give SNCC a good hand, we in Dallas should do that, too.' So we gained a lot of friends from that,¹⁷⁰

SNCC Houses Get Raided

Toward the beginning of 1969, police raided the homes of Ernest McMillan, Edward “Black Ed” Harris, Matthew Johnson, Donald “Kwesi” Williams, Ruth Jefferson, and other members of SNCC. A warrant was issued by the court for the arrest of these and other SNCC members due to “violating federal firearms laws...[and] falsifying

¹⁷⁰ Eva McMillan, *Ibid.*

federal firearms registration records...rifles were seized during the raids.”¹⁷¹ Edward “Black Ed” Harris remembers the night of the raids:

They came after that rifle ‘cause Ernest had bought the rifle. We were at a medallion store. We were actually goin’ to the store for your grandmother and we stopped by the medallion store. They didn’t have what we needed, we were gettin’ ready to leave and so one of the merchants came up and said, “Hey ah, can I help you?” And Ernest said, “Yeah, I’d like to look at rifles.” They recognized him and then Ernest said, “Well, we betta go ‘cause it looks like it’s gonna be a problem.” And ah, so the rest of us said, “Screw that. We can look at these.” And so everything that we pointed out, they were outta stock. So then we started puttin’ the fool on then, “Well, can a nigga buy a axe handle?” You know, that’s what Luster Mattocks would say, “Can a nigga buy a axe handle? A club? A hatchet?” You know...and they were gettin’ ready to call the law then. So we went on and left, but that was the same rifle they was comin’ after that mornin’. And I called out to Ruth Jefferson. They raided her at the same time and raided Matthew Johnson’s daddy’s house at the

¹⁷¹ Robert Finklea, “2 SNCC Leaders Arrested in Dallas,” *Dallas Morning News*: 29 April 1969.

same time. And ah, like I say, brought us out at gun point.¹⁷²

McMillan also gives his personal account of the police raids and the purchase of the firearm:

So, the firearms charge was to retrieve a thirty-caliber carbine rifle that I had purchased, what I thought legally, at a legal store, a supermarket or one of these discount stores like Wal-Mart. And so ah, I was told that I was illegally purchasin' a gun because I had been convicted of a felony. Being convicted of a felony means you're not out on the streets; you are in prison. And so, I was not ever finally convicted of any felony all my cases where either on appeal or hadn't been formally gone to trial. So, that was erroneous, but all these things were thinly disguised ways to remove us from the streets...Then a raid on my house and two other homes that were basis of SNCC operations—one in Oak Cliff, another one in West Dallas, and another one in Lancaster area near Bishop College, which is deeper Oak Cliff—were all raided at the same time. Well, these were homes where families lived and where children were livin'. The police used helicopters, armed men with

¹⁷² Edward Harris, *Ibid.*

helmets and guns and helicopters and all kinda devices simultaneously attacked those three places at once.¹⁷³

McMillan Awaits Additional Sentencing

McMillan was not arraigned on draft evasion charges until May¹⁷⁴ and June¹⁷⁵ of the next year and remained free on bond until further sentencing. On June 20, 1969, McMillan was sentenced to serve five years of prison for his infraction with the draft board—the maximum amount of years in prison for draft evasion—as well as ten years for the prior conviction for property damage—the maximum sentence.

McMillan still continued to organize locally while awaiting the date of his prison sentence to commence. Though he was restricted to the northern district of Texas, McMillan remembers that,

...during the period of time that I was under the stipulations of this bond release, I traveled outside of the district of Texas several times and always with the procedure of contactin' a lawyer, who would contact a U. S. attorney, who would then check with the judge, who made sure they had all the information about where I was goin', the purpose of my goin', where I could be reached at and when I was due back. So, we did this for about two or three

¹⁷³ Ernest McMillan, *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ "SNCC Official to be Arraigned On Draft Charge," *Dallas Morning News*: 28 May 1969.

¹⁷⁵ "Arraignment For McMillan Is Postponed," *Dallas Morning News*: 29 May 1969.

times—trips to University of Pennsylvania, trips to Atlanta, places like that far outside the northern district of Texas.¹⁷⁶

He recalls further,

While out on \$10,000 bond, awaiting my appeal of that sentence. I was told by my court-appointed attorney that my speaking engagement at the National council of Churches gathering (in Greenwich, Connecticut, June 1969)¹⁷⁷ was illegal because I had violated the bond agreement by leaving North Texas.¹⁷⁸

He continues,

And so my lawyer said, ‘Look, there’s a warrant out for your arrest. Try to sneak back into town. Don’t use the airport. Don’t use the bus station because they will, more than likely, attack you and arrest you. They’re lookin’ for you all over.’ So, the person who was travelin’ with me was also under a charge for possession of marijuana, which held a two-year to life sentence. That was Kwesi Williams. So we put our heads together and said, ‘Look, this is a trap. This is an ambush for us, so we need to find away to hide and seek to safety.’¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Ernest McMillan, *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ The article uses the parentheses found in this quote. The parentheses are not the thesis writer’s.

¹⁷⁸ Cartwright, *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Ernest McMillan, *Ibid.*

In a letter to the drafted to the judge, McMillan informed the court officials that:

Part of my bail bond stipulation on my draft case was to restrict my travel to the North Texas area. Due to the nature of my work, it was necessary to travel outside that stipulated area. It scarcely needs proof that an agreement between my attorneys and the U. S. attorney at that time allowed for my travels. In all instances of my departure, it was necessary procedure to inform the U. S. Attorney's office of the trip...It was clear to me, as it is now, that I was the victim of a perfect set-up. Therefore, faced with new charges, certain arrest, and possible assassination, I decided that it was in the best interests of my survival to completely withdraw from these direct attacks...¹⁸⁰

McMillan and Williams decided at that moment to flee to Canada using the underground network of associates from churches and educational institutions that volunteered to keep Civil Rights and Black Power organizers safe. From Canada, the two attempted to enter Mali, Africa from Ghana because political asylum had been granted to several Black political prisoners who fled to the country.¹⁸¹ However, they were unsuccessful in seeking asylum in Mali and Ghana and lived in Liberia for a year-and-a-half.¹⁸² In 1969, the Federal Bureau of Investigation reported that, "The SNCC group in Dallas has been

¹⁸⁰ Ernest McMillan, Unaddressed letter to the judge. July 1969.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

discontinued. Marion Ernest McMillan, former leader of the organization, and Donald Ray Williams left Dallas in July, 1969 and have not returned.”¹⁸³

Ruth Jefferson and the Dallas Chapter of the National Welfare Rights Organization

The Dallas chapter of the National Welfare Rights Organization brought to fore one integral leader who spearheaded a movement for the rights of women and children in need of governmental assistance. The name, Ruth Jefferson, was mentioned in several interviews regarding the movements in Dallas. She was characterized as a formidable leader who mobilized mothers and stopped at nothing to secure their justice and rights. She and the other women in the organization became affiliates of SNCC, yet still maintained their autonomy as leaders. Jefferson and her counterparts were not formally trained organizers nor had they had the extended exposure to post-secondary institutions that most of the members of other organizations had. These home-grown heroines were, depicted by Ruth Jefferson’s long-time friend and comrade, Marilyn Clark, as

Black women who were taking a very aggressive, very assertive approach to organizing welfare mothers to demand respect and to demand, you know, the resources for their organization. I think their national director was somebody named Wiley¹⁸⁴, but Ruth Jefferson was the local coordinator...¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Dallas SNCC FBI Files, 4 November 1969.

¹⁸⁴ The executive director of the National Welfare Rights Organization was Dr. George Wiley.

¹⁸⁵ Marilyn Clark, Interview by Ava Wilson. 17 February 2010.

Clark continues to relay the reach Ruth Jefferson and the National Welfare Rights Organization:

When they went to the welfare office, they would have a list of things they wanted to discuss with them, particular cases of individual women who may not be in the Welfare Rights Organization. So they took the approach...[with welfare mothers]...that, 'We will represent you. We will show you we have no fear. We will solve your problem and then you need to get your card and join us and stop, you know, doin' all these other unethical things that you're doing to make money. This is the way to confront the system and get what you want at the same time.' Now, some women did join them, but by and large, they just represented folks and just took on their cases and they were very relentless. There was a lot of training for them.¹⁸⁶

Dallas SNCC supported these mothers who sought government aid for income and for the care of their children and occupied the local welfare office in downtown Dallas for three days demanding just and equal services for African Americans. The group of women began their sit-in in the welfare offices at eight o'clock on the morning of Monday, November 25, 1968.

A group of 21 protesting Negro mothers began an all-night sit-in in the state welfare offices...and vowed to stay 'until

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

we receive help for our starving children...[A]t closing time—5 p.m.—they refused to leave even after welfare authorities told them they would be arrested if they didn't.¹⁸⁷

Six SNCC members accompanied the mothers and offered the support and protection of the organization.¹⁸⁸

A core of about 20 of the protesters, led by Miss Ruth Jefferson and members of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, told sheriff's deputies, Texas Rangers and reporters they were not prepared to leave the welfare department's quarters at 3306 Main until they received more welfare money.¹⁸⁹

Ruth Jefferson read a list of demands and proclaimed, "Before we leave this place these things are going to be done."¹⁹⁰ Ernest McMillan remembers being present at the sit-in:

¹⁸⁷ Maryln Schwartz, "All-Night Sit-In: Negro Mothers Protest At Welfare Offices," *Dallas Morning News*: 26 November 1968.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. According to Schwartz article, "The women said current maximum welfare payments of \$123 a month is expected to keep 'as many as 14 members of a family going. We've got a lady here who hasn't received her check in two months. Nobody did anything to help her. She and her children are about to be evicted from their apartment. There's a blind lady whose husband and six children are trying to survive on \$170 a month. The welfare people say they've got enough money. We're not asking for a give-away; we're asking for what we are entitled to—we want justice, dignity and democracy."

¹⁸⁹ Tom Johnson and John Geddie, "Orders Served Welfare Sit-In" *Dallas Morning News*: 27 November 1968.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. Some of the demands, as detailed by the article included "\$100 per month per child. More black case workers on welfare staffs. Special winter grant of \$50 per child for clothing. At least half of the welfare members to be black."

[T]here were plenty of welfare, not welfare, but plenty of War on Poverty pimps around who were more concerned about makin' there own dollars and the trickle down theory was at work and so we had a system that several Blacks who'd been very vocal and were shakin' the trees to make a difference were being hired to become counselors and vocational therapists or vocational, occupational specialists and forget the struggle. So, that was a shift takin' place right under our very noses. And so, we decided that something wasn't working with this War on Poverty program because people were still, you know, getting blocks of cheese that was twenty years old delivered to 'em and being paid quote/unquote eighty-eight dollars a month for a family of four to live on and be suffered...be subject to degrading treatment and instant removal from the welfare roles for any slight subjective infraction. So, we learned those things by visiting...[We] already had some ideas because many of our people have experienced that directly, but actually going to the welfare office and meeting people there and talking about how they were being treated, we couldn't just walk away from that. We decided that we needed to hole up right there—H-O-L-E up—right there in that place and not come out until

somebody made some changes. There was a blind gentleman there, for example, who they were denyin' aid for. There was women who were African American and Latino who were being threatened with being cut-off for...of welfare when they were in more need for resources than ever, who were being denied educational opportunities to better themselves. In fact, it was more of an incentive to stay on welfare and sit on your butt and wait for the check every month than to go away. It was more penalizing for you to do so. I think one of the examples we learned was that by taking a job somewhere, you would be...your welfare check would be cut, you know...And so, we found these things out and we decided to stay. And we were very blessed to find people like ah, Ruth Jefferson from West Dallas and many, many other women down there who said, 'Look, we wit' you brothas. We glad to see you here.' And they made dramatic changes in instants.¹⁹¹

When local informants, many of whom were Black ministers, came to talk the women out of occupying the welfare office, they asked the women to write down their names so that the ministers could inform their families—who were the ministers' congregants—that their daughters, wives, and sisters were doing well during this three-day takeover. Anticipating that they ministers had ulterior motives, Ruth Jefferson gave the ministers

¹⁹¹ Ernest McMillan, *Ibid.*

false names. Soon after the ministers left the welfare office, the police returned with warrants bearing the false names that the minister were given.¹⁹²

The sit-in at the welfare office ended after Ruth Jefferson made a phone call to the director of the Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) Office in Washington, DC, read the mothers' grievances, and received word from HEW that their offices would send a four member team to investigate the practices of the states' welfare office located in Dallas.¹⁹³ The sit-in gained the supportive presence of not only local civil rights workers, but the executive director of the National Welfare Rights Organization, Dr. George Wiley as well as the civil rights attorney Carl Rachlin of New York. During the mothers' occupation of the office, the state sought to move daily operations temporarily to the city's Old Red Courthouse. After the said occupation, the women and the SNCC supporters were "given suspended jail sentences...for their refusal to leave the regional welfare office."¹⁹⁴ The protesters spent seventy-two hours in jail after which the District Judge Hoyet Armstrong released all participants under the conditions that they cease all sit-ins at the welfare office for six months.¹⁹⁵

Jefferson's no-nonsense attitude was not just reserved for her organizing strategies and abilities with the Welfare Rights Organization. After her boyfriend had been arrested after leading a rally against the Trinity River Valley Association that threatened to level housing projects located in West Dallas near the Trinity River for the

¹⁹² Ibid. The names were as arbitrary as "Minnie Mouse" and that of other fictional characters.

¹⁹³ Maryln Schwartz and John Geddie, "'Victory' Claimed: Welfare Sit-in Ends in 3 Days," *Dallas Morning News*: 28 November 1968.

¹⁹⁴ John Geddie, "Welfare Protesters Get Suspended Sentences," *Dallas Morning News*: 7 December 1968.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

sake of tourist expansion, Jefferson stopped at nothing to free him.¹⁹⁶ The police took him to the precinct and had him handcuffed to the jail bars and began to beat him. According to Edward “Black-Ed” Harris, she rushed into the precinct and told the police officers, “open that door! If you don’t open that door or I’mma bust your head!” Marilyn Clark remembers this situation and offers her understanding of the Jefferson incident. Jefferson told the police, “‘Stick ‘em up. I come for my man and I want him right now, or I will knock you out ‘cause he hasn’t done anything and he needs to be home. He needs to go to work. We need some money and you need to let him outta jail,’ and it was just that straight up.”¹⁹⁷ After a brief altercation between the police and Jefferson, Donald Ray “Kwesi” Williams was released from jail.¹⁹⁸

The powers that be in Dallas treated Jefferson’s very presence as infamous and even ominous so much so that the Dallas Housing Authority evicted her from her home in the West Dallas Housing Projects. Two tenants in Jefferson’s complex began a petition campaign to evict her on the claim that she was “preaching hate.”¹⁹⁹ According to the *Dallas Morning News* article, “Judge Orders Protester Evicted,” the Justice of the Peace, W. E. Richburg, hired a detective to monitor Jefferson’s activity. The detective, Charles Dellinger reported that he found “eight barrels, apparently sawed from shotguns, at her apartment.”²⁰⁰ Other tenants were reportedly afraid because of her activity with the Welfare Rights Organization and the organizers of the SNCC OK Supermarket protests.

¹⁹⁶ Ernest McMillan, *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Marilyn Clark, *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ Johnson and Geddie, *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ “Judge Orders Protester Evicted,” *Dallas Morning News*: 2 August 1969.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Despite several appeals to the court by her attorney and much support from SNCC on the ground, Jefferson was eventually evicted from her West Dallas home.²⁰¹

Ironically, three months later, Mrs. Jefferson was appointed as a community organizer position by the local War on Poverty Committee, a city branch of a national committee. Several members of the city government and other citizens were no doubt appalled by the appointment of Jefferson to this post. Three council members attempted to eject her from her post soon after she was appointed and contacted the Texas Senate regarding the matter.²⁰² However, because Jefferson was a local not a federal employee, the Texas Senate had no jurisdiction on the matter. Latino community organizer, Robert Medrano, who was also director of the West Dallas Center where the War on Poverty Committee was located, stated that in spite of the controversy surrounding Ruth Jefferson, she was sought after by the director of the West Dallas Center because of her ability to lead the West Dallas community.²⁰³

That November, Dallas County Commissioners Court “issued a strongly worded resolution...in which the Dallas County Community Action Committee was reprimanded for including the appointment of Mrs. Ruth Jefferson.”²⁰⁴ Drafters of this resolution uncovered that Jefferson “had been convicted of a felony in California, but the offense was not listed on her employment record.”²⁰⁵ In addition to this infraction, concerned citizens drafted letters, called the War on Poverty’s office, and sent telegrams “opposing

²⁰¹ Henry Tatum, “Welfare Protester Gets Poverty Post,” *Dallas Morning News*: 4 November 1969.

²⁰² “Mayor Says DCA Hiring None of City’s Business,” *Dallas Morning News*: 7 November 1969.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ “DCA Blasted by Commissioners,” *Dallas Morning News*: 13 November 1969.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

Mrs. Jefferson's employment."²⁰⁶ Citizens and city officials opposed to Ruth Jefferson's appointment were later outraged when County Commissioner Jim Tyson retained Jefferson's employment in spite of their opposing actions. Due to the shortsightedness of the city on the matter, Tyson later resigned from his post on the War on Poverty Committee at the height of the commotion concerning Ruth Jefferson.²⁰⁷

The Dallas Chapter of the Urban League

The Dallas city government created buffer organizations to absorb radicalism and dissent among African Americans. One such organization chartered to originally be a mechanism of the Citizens Council was the Urban League, which was a prominent fixture in most southern cities. SNCC member and organizer Marilyn Clark was employed as a receptionist by the Urban League and offers primary insight on the history of the organization and her interactions therein:

I was employed at the Dallas Urban League. They just organized the first chapter...Now, the powers that be, which would have been the Dallas Citizens Council, was principally responsible for raisin' the money to get them here and they envisioned that the Urban League would quiet the Negroes and be a buffer between the Black community and the white power structure or those radical Negroes who wanted to stir up trouble and the Urban League would keep everybody quiet and we'd give 'em

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ John Geddie, "Commissioner Tyson Quits Antipoverty Posts," *Dallas Morning News*: 15 November 1969.

some jobs and some educational scholarships. So I think my official title was like receptionist or something of that matter, but anyhow, it was a good position 'cause it allowed me to have first contact with whoever called on the phone, and if I didn't like them, their stuff went into the trash...Or if I decided that they were not good for the neighborhood [in essence,] I was really a gatekeeper...²⁰⁸

Her employer, Felton Alexander, who served as the executive director of the Dallas Urban League, further solidified Clark's position as gatekeeper. Clark remembers:

...[T]he director, Felton Alexander allowed me to do just about anything I wanted to do to be involved in the community. He thought the Urban League needed to establish a good relationship as a grassroots organization instead of a middle class social service organization...and so when people from the ah, from the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee or ah, the Progressive Voters' League or the South Dallas Civic Improvement League ah, community-based organizations that I was familiar with and wanted to support, whenever they came into the office to see what we were doing or how we could help them, I went far beyond the call of duty in terms of my official responsibility. And so, I just made serving ah, the

²⁰⁸ Clark, Ibid.

community a critical part of my job and while other office people at the Urban League really resented it and it caused friction. The executive director affirmed me at all times.²⁰⁹

Felton Alexander's willingness to provide resources for grassroots programs and organizations allowed Clark to prompt the eager executive director to attend to the causes with which she, Clark, was directly involved. Clark recalls members of various organizations seeking out the Urban League for support. One organization in particular that the Urban League aided was the National Welfare Rights Organization's programs, which needed materials for their summer enrichment programs which included camping and baseball for the children of Dallas's sprawling West Dallas Housing Projects. Clark attests to Alexander aiding the Welfare Rights Organization:

And so, we were always requisitioning my boss, Felton, to buy stuff, you know, like baseballs. You know, and he kept sayin, 'Now, my boards gonna wonder what this is,' and we said, 'Well, put it under furniture.' We had more stuff under furniture comin' outta his budget to support those kinda things.²¹⁰

Clark also recollects the use of Urban League's mimeograph machine for duplicating flyers, agendas, and newsletters for both SNCC and the National Welfare Rights Organization.²¹¹

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

Alexander no doubt took on many battles with the city government officials who were outraged by his involvement in issues that they deemed unsavory especially with his outward support of SNCC.²¹² On one account, as reported in a *Dallas Morning News* article, Alexander made a bold and brash statement against the local government on television: "...[M]any of the problems in Dallas lie at the foot of the white power structure."²¹³ This statement had been the result of numerous "philosophical breaches [and] personality clashes"²¹⁴ namely with Dallas Mayor, J. Erik Jonnson. After several disagreements with city leaders and the Urban League's advisory board, Alexander resigned as executive director after seventeen months in that capacity. In an interview with the *Dallas Morning News*, Alexander relayed his reasons for resigning: "I think I would have liked to be more relevant to the community. I don't think everyone really understood the Urban League's programs and the nature of how it operates."²¹⁵ Alexander went on to become the assistant to the regional director of the National Urban League's Southern Regional Office in Atlanta, Georgia due to the limitations put on his leadership of and initiatives for the Urban League in Dallas.²¹⁶

The Dallas Chapter of SCLC

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) had been a mainstay in several southern cities, primarily those in the southeast, since its founding by Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; however, the tensions between and the reactionary practices

²¹² David Morgan and Carolyn Barta, "Alexander Quits as UL Director," *Dallas Morning News*. 1 February 1969.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ "60 Meet to Discuss Alexander's Resignation" *Dallas Morning News*: 3 February 1969.

of Dallas's prominent ministers and King delayed the formation of an SCLC chapter in Dallas until 1969. SCLC representative Reverend Peter Johnson, a veteran Civil Rights worker, brought SNCC to Dallas. He explains the mission he was given by SCLC administrators:

I came here in 1969 reluctantly and against my will. I did not want to come. But, Reverend Abernathy, who in 1969 was president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference—Dr. King was already in his grave—assigned me here. This was the second time I was given an assignment to come here, and [Abernathy], imposed his will on me—he and Andy Young—to get me to come. I was gonna only be here for three months in 1969 and ah, I...my mission was to the premiere showing of the movie, *King: Montgomery to Memphis*. It was gonna premiere in 800 cities all over the world and I got stuck with the southwestern cities primarily because ah, Louisiana is my home state...ah, and the assumption was, if I grew up in Louisiana, I should know something about Texas, which I really did not. I used to come to Houston, ah when I was going to college for Texas Southern football, basketball, and then there was a baseball team 'round there called, ah Colt .45. The movie was going to premiere in 800 cities around the world, Dallas was gonna be the base for my

operations because, primarily not because of Dallas, but because of Lovefield [Airport].²¹⁷

Johnson goes on to explain his initial hesitations about coming to Dallas and the reputation that the city had with Civil Rights workers and organizations, namely SCLC.

A part of the problem with the Civil Rights Movement in the city of Dallas in particular was that Black preachers in the Black community had officially boycotted Dr. King when he came here, maybe in 1966 or '65. And the ministers had asked their members not to and go hear Dr. Martin Luther King. And ah, that had a lasting affect on people like Reverend Abernathy and C.T. Vivian and Dwight Walker and Andy and Fred Shuttlesworth, the senior men in the Civil Rights Movement...that had a lasting affect 'cause that impacted Dr. King. It...that had never happened before where Black people had decided to boycott him, so there was some bitterness and some hostility toward the Negro community in Dallas by the decision-makers in the Civil Rights Movement.²¹⁸

The Emergence of the Black Panther Party in Dallas

At this stage in the Civil Rights Movement, young men and women had already begun grappling with Black Power and expressing themselves in a way that affirmed Black culture and pride. As SNCC's leaders were imprisoned, many members began to

²¹⁷ Peter Johnson, Interview by Ava Wilson, 15 March 2010.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

shift their focus to the larger call for Black Power and sought to charter a chapter of the Black Panther Party in Dallas. In an interview with Dr. Leroy Haynes on www.itsabouttimebbp.com, Haynes explains that in 1969 former SNCC members were in consultation with students in the Black Student Union known as Student Organization for United Liberation (SOUL) at El Centro College Community College and organized the Dallas chapter of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP). Donald Lister, then a young and committed student, remembers his involvement in SOUL and subsequent involvement in the BPP.

We were attempting to get black studies at the school, get the black student body involved in that did succeed in getting a Black History class this was '69 and '70. Only went to El Centro one year. Afterwards, the Black Panther Party came to town. I always said if an organization such as that came to town, I was going to join it and they sent a representative of the Party, Elmer "Geronimo" Pratt to town. Prior to that I think some former members of SNCC went to California to meet with the Black Panther Party to get authorization to get set up in Dallas.²¹⁹

Haynes remembers traveling to Los Angeles to secure a charter to begin a chapter of the BPP: "In 1969, we went down to Los Angeles, California and met with chief of staff, David Hilliard and Masai Hewitt...At that time, Geronimo Pratt was over the Los

²¹⁹ Donald Lister, Interview by Ava Wilson, 20 February 2010.

Angeles Chapter.”²²⁰ SNCC was placed under the supervision of Geronimo Pratt, as confirmed in the interview with former Dallas Panther member, Odinga Kambui:

The person in California more than anybody else that was responsible for getting the NCCF chapter was none other than Geronimo Pratt. G had given the okay and approval for that after several members had gone out there and attended a People’s Tribunal in L. A.²²¹

Haynes goes on to recount the general happenings in the Dallas Black Panther Party. After being placed under Pratt’s supervision,

...we actually went back to Dallas and began to organize and develop the various survival programs. We were confronted with many of the challenges of all Panther chapters: struggles with infiltration, with the police department and struggles within the community itself. We were infiltrated at an early stage of the Party and that was a major hindrance to our development.²²² From Dallas, we eventually began to spread and organize into Texas and we became a central point for the organization. We were able to develop cadres as far away as Abilene and West Texas and Tyler, Texas and Southeast and Beaumont, Texas. The

²²⁰ “Interview with Dr. Leroy Haynes—2003: A History of the Development of the BPP in Texas,” <http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com> (August 2009).

²²¹ Odinga Kambui, Interview by Ava Wilson, 15 February 2010

²²² The organization was infiltrated by a one, Curtis Gaines, who was an administrator in the Party.

People's Party in Houston was in the process of developing and moving toward eventually becoming a chapter itself.²²³

James "Skip" Shockley, a leading member of the Dallas chapter of the Party and a founding member of the Black Panther Party in Denton, Texas, a small rural college town forty-five minutes away from Dallas, recalls the history of the founding of the Dallas chapter of the Black Panther Party:

What happened was before I joined the Party, Charlie Paul [Henderson, now Hasan Khalif], Curtis Gaines, Leroy Haynes and a group of other sistas and brothas went to Los Angeles to meet with the leadership there. In Los Angeles, Geronimo Pratt...David Hilliard and some of the Central Committee... 'cause they was having a rally for George Jackson and Angela Davis was there and all that. So, they went up there to ask for a chapter, and...through...David Hilliard, he gave the okay...and his command was for Geronimo Pratt to be our supervisor. So, after that, when they came back here then I joined.²²⁴

Because Huey P. Newton, the co-founder of the BPP, was in prison at the end of the 1960s, the Central Committee was hesitant to charter new chapters of the Party. The Party hosted a three-day conference in July of 1969 in Oakland, California to rally those

²²³ Haynes, *Ibid.*

²²⁴ James Shockley, Interview by Ava Wilson, 16 February 2010.

seeking to become affiliated with the BPP.²²⁵ At the conference, it was resolved that all new Parties chartered that year and all other non-Black groups²²⁶ who wished to align themselves with the BPP would be known as factions of the National Committee to Combat Fascism (NCCF).²²⁷ Odinga Kambui attests to this fact:

...[E]arly on what Dallas had was the National Committee to Combat Fascism. Ah, that was an organizin' bureau of the Panther Party 'cause what had happened was that the summer of '70 that summer...because of the infiltration and repression that was goin' on in the Party, durin' the time leadin' up to Huey P. Newton bein' released from prison...a directive had been issued to where—even if people were sincere around the country—to minimize and cut down on infiltration and that type of activity that was goin' on, they were not allowin' any new, new chapters to be established. People that were wantin' to work in that vein were bein' allowed to set up what was called the National Committee to Combat Fascism, which grew out of an anti-fascism conference in California—Berkeley.²²⁸

²²⁵ Floyd W. Hayes, III and Francis A. Kiene, III, “‘All Power to the People’: The Political Thought of Huey P. Newton and the Black Panther Party” in *The Black Panther Party (Reconsidered)*. Charles E. Jones, Ed. [Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998]: pp. 167.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ “Black Panthers Forming Under Two New Fronts” *Rome News-Tribune*: 1 June 1970.

²²⁸ Odinga Kambui, Ibid.

The first Dallas chapter of the Black Panther Party was chartered as a chapter of the NCCF. “Skip” Shockley remembers that the NCCF was

one of Eldridge’s [Cleaver] ideas because Huey [Newton] was in prison and...the Panthers were growing so fast nationwide because of Black guys with guns and they were really standing up to the oppressor and Huey felt that we need to slow that down, but with the influence of Eldridge, he organized the National Committee to Combat Fascism to kind of build a coalition with white²²⁹ radicals.²³⁰

Donald Lister confirms similar details on the Dallas chapter’s beginnings:

Anyway Curtis [Gaines] came back with the authorization to set up the NCCF, which was the National Coalition²³¹ to Combat Fascism. That’s basically what our organization was and from what I understand, there was really no separation between the NCCF and the Black Panther Party, but there was some reason why you would have one and then you would have the other, but we had the same tenets and we had to understand and we had to know the Ten-Point Party Platform, we had to establish Free Breakfast for kids Program, Free Clothing Program...²³²

²²⁹ Hayes and Kiene, Ibid.

²³⁰ Shockley, Ibid.

²³¹ Lister accidentally misstated the name of the temporary organization, as can be witness by the other interviewees’ statements regarding the matter.

²³² Lister, Ibid.

Shockley remembers the reasons why the Dallas chapter disassociated themselves from the NCCF title:

Not long because the NCCF didn't wash well with part of the leadership because we felt that as you see in old movies and documentaries most of the white so-called revolutionaries didn't seem serious. They seemed like they wanted to dance out in the streets and do antics and Huey always said 'Look, this is for real. We're stepping out here and we're saying we're anti-government and that we want to change the system. Don't you think the system takes that seriously?' So, you've got a group of people over here who are white that is pulling all kind of antics. You know, flower children, which is fine...but hey, you're gonna get killed 'cause you wanna act like a clown? You know, and if we are true revolutionaries and are gonna get killed then we gotta stand up for what we believe in, we can't be no clowns. In fact, when things come down...the white far left did not support us. And some of those riots could have been avoided in the first place...and so that's why that NCCF did not stand pat because we said that we need to go 'head and start doing things in the community.'²³³

²³³ Shockley, Ibid.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation still had the former SNCC members under surveillance and knew of the formation of a Black Panther Party in Dallas: “Curtis Gaines, Eddie Harris and Charles Paul Henderson have recently become active in a group calling themselves the Black Panther Party (BPP) in Dallas.”²³⁴

1970 through 1975

The Bishop College Incident

From Howard University to South Carolina State, historically Black colleges and universities’ students erupted across the country demanding areas of study that would eventually come to be called Africana Studies as a discipline on campuses. They also demanded tenure-track positions for Black professors, an end to the Viet Nam War, and better services for students. Such was the case at Dallas’s premiere historically Black, Bishop College located in South Oak Cliff. Three hundred and fifty-one students took over the chapel at Bishop College and remained within the edifice for six days.²³⁵ Students resisted paying their money to an institution that outlawed the outward expression of Black cultural mores associated with Black Power like Afro hairstyles, dashikis, and sandals. Students wrote a list of demands and ordered that the president of the college adhere to their stipulations.²³⁶

Administrators, faced with these resistant students and their demands, quickly telephoned police who were all too eager to encircle the chapel building wearing helmets, batons, rifles, and riot gear. The Texas Rangers also arrived on horseback to squelch the

²³⁴ Dallas SNCC FBI Files: 22 October 1969.

²³⁵ “Students Remain Defiant During Booking at Jail,” *Dallas Times Herald*: 12 February 1970.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

protest.²³⁷ SCLC representative to Texas, Peter Johnson, called from a meeting in Chicago to aid in peacefully diffusing the unrest,²³⁸ recalls that period of turmoil on Bishop College's campus:

I got a call that the students at Bishop College had taken over the chapel and they had called the Texas Rangers and the students was trapped in that chapel. And ah, we were back and forth on the phone with our people down here, wanting them to get into the chapel, telling them, 'You've gotta figure out a way to slip into the chapel and tell the students to go to jail peacefully and we'll get them out. We'll raise the money and get them out.' But we had had Black students killed at Southern, Jackson State, so we didn't need no more blood shed on Black college campuses. And I wanted to get them the message that, 'If y'all go to jail peacefully, no rocks, no bricks, no bottles at the police, these people will kill you, we'll make sure that we get you out of jail.'²³⁹

The students did as Johnson requested and went to jail peacefully.²⁴⁰ Johnson flew back to Dallas from Chicago to assess the situation with the Bishop College students and quickly went to work trying to secure bail for the students. He was able to secure bail

²³⁷ Warner Bosworth, "Dyson Moved Carefully: Chapel Raid Well Planned," *Dallas Times Herald*: 12 February 1970.

²³⁸ Johnson, *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ Dick Shaffer and Paul Hankins, "Six-Day Protest Ends as Students Go Quietly to Jail," *Dallas Times Herald*: 12 February 1970.

money from several Black professionals in Dallas, but the students soon learned that Bishop College had expelled them indefinitely from school.²⁴¹ Johnson immediately called the administrative arm of SCLC in Atlanta and received a grant over night to hire students to work for SCLC's voter registration and political education initiatives.²⁴² Several of the students had to return home because of demands from parents and lack of funds, but many remained in Dallas for much the same reason. Some students even became involved in other factions of the movement.

The Black Panther Party at a Glance

The beginning of the 1970s also marked the emergence of the Black Panther Party in Dallas. The Dallas Black Panther Party went through four different, but significant shifts, three of which will be detailed within this thesis. This thesis will detail the major events and people associated with the first two shifts in the Party. It will also detail minor points about the third shift, though no one from that era in the Party agreed to be interviewed at the time this research was conducted. The fourth shift was the supposed revitalization of the Black Panther Party in the 1980s, known specifically as the New Black Panther Party. However, the founding of the New Black Panther Party lies just outside the parameters of this study.

After being infiltrated by the local FBI with the help of an integral member of the Party, BPP Dallas was first put under the supervision of the Houston Chapter. Shockley explains the atmosphere in the Dallas chapter of the BPP and how the duplicity of one of the members led to a fracture in the Party:

²⁴¹ Johnson, Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

For some reason we didn't have that 'great bond.' Our leadership with Curtis Gaines was kinda like a hierarchy. He was up here and we was down here and we always wondered why there's a difference between...what we saw in other cities. The rumor was that Curtis was an agent that was feeding information to authorities—the FBI. Something happened in Dallas where...Geronimo Pratt was in exile. He was in hiding. He left LA because the LA shooting and when he left LA he went underground. So he was going to various cities and he ended up here in Dallas and one night...all hell broke loose...this was back in '71...Geronimo was arrested put in Dallas County Jail...half our chapter was saying Curtis is working with the police. We [Smith, Shockley, and Haynes] pulled back and some of the good brothers went with him and some of us went in another direction. At the same time there was a split between Eldridge [Cleaver] and Huey Newton, so that fed fuel to the fire. We followed the philosophy of Huey. They said they followed the philosophy of Eldridge. To me, they were mostly tryna act like gangsters. What happened in that couple years later, 'bout a year later, a couple of guys said Curtis Gaines—we called them the Renegades...got busted, sent to prison, and come to find

out that Curtis testified against them, so that's how that whole thing came about.²⁴³

Cleavages within the NCCF

An article in *The Black Panther* also exposed the cleavages within the NCCF in Dallas and the division surrounding one faction's loyalty to Newton and one faction's loyalty to Pratt and Cleaver.²⁴⁴ Lister, a member of the so-called Renegades and a mentee of Gaines recalls discovering the purge of Dallas's chapter of the BPP:

I was a member of the Party up until we were purged this is when the schism came down between those who followed the line of Huey P. Newton and those who followed the line of Eldridge Cleaver. These schisms really were initiated by agent provocateurs who were working for the government's COINTELPRO...at the time we didn't know it, but these were people whose job was to ferment dissent and distrust by any means that they could. And I don't know the number of the branches that were affected, but it was like split down the middle. You had some that were saying, 'Yeah, Huey is doing the right thing.' And you had some that said 'Nah, Huey's not doing the right thing' and Geronimo, who was really responsible for our being setup, he had been purged. In fact, Geronimo was captured here in Dallas. Where it came out that Geronimo was here and

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ "Dallas NCCF Disbanded," *The Black Panther*: 20 February 1971.

that we had been supporting him, then we were purged. Geronimo was taken back to California by an organization called CCS, Criminal Conspiracy Section, this was an elite force in the police department that had more power than the average person. They had [powers] akin to the Texas Rangers here and they took Geronimo back, I don't even think Geronimo had the choice to waive extradition but he and the guys who were with him were taken back to California.²⁴⁵

In February of 1971, Geronimo Pratt, member of the Los Angeles Central Committee, who had been given the charge of supervising the Dallas chapter of the Black Panther Party was apprehended by Dallas police from one of the Party's safe houses in South Oak Cliff.²⁴⁶ As can be gathered from the information given by Shockley, Pratt was in Dallas in hiding. However, Jack Olsen's biography on Pratt provides more explanation for Pratt's reasons for coming to Dallas specifically:

Pratt was contacted by his fellow Panther Melvin 'Cotton' Smith and advised that Huey Newton had ordered both of them to a meeting in Marshall, Texas, 150 miles east of Dallas. The theme would be unity...When Newton failed to appear at the Texas rendezvous, Geronimo was puzzled...But Cotton Smith urged him to stay put...Three more days passed before Cotton Smith said he'd finally

²⁴⁵ Lister, Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

reached Newton and had been ordered to deliver Geronimo to a BPP safe house in Dallas. As soon as they arrived, Dallas police arrested them on a federal...unlawful flight to avoid prosecution warrants.²⁴⁷

Because the Dallas faction of the BPP aided Pratt, and had given him refuge at a safe house, the Dallas chapter was officially purged from the Party by the Central Committee in Oakland, California.²⁴⁸

Shockley remembers that he, Kambui, Haynes, and Smith, along with other members of the Party reasoned that they would continue on with Party practices within the city:

After the purge we tried to transform ourselves. Leroy, Bernard and myself we said “Let’s try to take the party a little bit further...” and we started recruiting statewide... So we were tyrna figure out what we were gonna do. So I went to El Centro [Community College] full-time and I recruited new recruits: Paula Ransom, Malik, Anice and Janice Lewis, Carl Foster, Odinga... [Marvin Walton]...me and Odinga kinda organized that together. We ran a chapter out of El Centro College. We just took over the whole Black Student Union. That’s where we ran Panther programs. We had a Free Clothing Program and we did

²⁴⁷ Jack Olsen, *Last Man Standing: The Tragedy and Triumph of Geronimo Pratt*. [New York: Doubleday, 2000]: pp. 71-2.

²⁴⁸ See Olsen, for mention of there being suspicions within the Party that Pratt was an informant and for tensions between Newton and Pratt. pp. 53-73.

some Free Breakfast Programs outside in the community and we did Voter's Registration...we got good support from some of the professors there. At the same time Leroy went to North Texas and at North Texas in Denton there was a strong Pan-Africanist organization there. So he said 'Man, I need some help up here.' I said, 'No we're going to stay down here in Dallas to kinda feel it out.' People like Al Lipscomb was getting strong...Eddie Bernice [Johnson] was getting strong in politics. But what Leroy managed to do was, he managed to organize a small group of people with Bernie Smith. So, the summer of '72, we left and went to Denton with Leroy. So that's that whole Dallas scenario. That's how we started with the purge and ended up in Denton. We stayed in Denton probably about two years.²⁴⁹

The faction of the BPP that supported the philosophies of Huey P. Newton maintained several Survival Programs that were central to the Black Panther Party nationally. Shockley details the nature of some of the programs that the Dallas, and eventually, the Denton chapter maintained:

In this city what we had was the Free Breakfast Program. It was very instrumental I think because most of the kids we had from Denton [and] Dallas, we went into the projects

²⁴⁹ Shockley, *Ibid.*

and what came out of that was that most of the kids would come over and we would feed them before they went to school that morning. We would organize, not only us, but we would organize different fraternities, especially sororities, they came on board and the sisters helped us cook, they helped us feed the kids, and in Denton we had a chapter in Denton, Eastside of Denton called 'Dreamland'. And we actually took over the whole projects and the sorority sisters would come over from TWU and North Texas and help us feed the kids that morning. After school we had what we called a tutoring program. In that...people loved us because we decreased crime. Because we moved the thugs out because we confronted them. We said, 'Look, this is people liberated territory. In fact, this is our territory, so if you wanna be a bad guy you join us. If you don't want to join us, you move out.' So we moved them out. In fact, during that time we had fire power so most of the guys would say, 'Hey man, I don't wanna mess with y'all guys 'cause you crazy anyway.' So we didn't have any problems with that. We began to develop good...coalitions with organizations [like] The Links [a distinguished group of working women in the city] and older lady organizations. When Huey came out of prison

we started to form another relationship with the church ‘cause we pushed the church away, that’s where the people are, that’s where are people are. We began to form a relationship with the church especially in supporting candidates for offices...in this city, but we did a lot in Denton....We recruited all over Texas, especially out of high school and we sent a lot of young people to college and a lot of times we would just take them because we had a recruiter, Bernie “Smitty” Smith and his...talent, his skill was young people and we’d go to Beaumont and recruit young people and we’d go to Abilene and recruit young people.²⁵⁰

Haynes continues to elaborate on the nature of Dallas and Denton Survival Programs:

At our height in the 70s, we ran a slate for the City Council and I was one of the candidates who ran in 1973. The Party in Texas began to decline between 1973-1975. The Party [had] some very strong programs. We were feeding several hundred kids in the Free Breakfast Program. We had a Liberation School, we had a Free Grocery Program and a Sickle Cell Anemia Program. There were some very strong survival programs that were taking place...We were able to have an impact in the various communities throughout

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

Texas and set stuff in motion, especially on police community control.²⁵¹

While the faction of the Black Panther Party that followed the political views of Huey Newton continued their progress in Denton, the remaining purged members of Dallas's NCCF known as the Renegades by the Denton faction of the Party, developed an organization that also continued the programs implemented by the Party like the Free Breakfast Program, the Free Clothing Program, the Prisoner Program, and the Pest Control Program—of which Lister specifically was in charge.²⁵² The purged wing of the BPP changed its name to Grassroots, Incorporated at the behest of Curtis Gaines. Gaines was given a large sum of money by a wealthy white woman from the well-to-do Highland Park section of town to put towards the Survival Programs. According to Kambui, “they had moved and set-up shop in the fancy house they had built with the money that a donor had given them that was to go to community uplift...the rich white woman I understand who lived in Highland Park.”²⁵³ Once in the house, several members allegedly began to engage in illegal activity that was mentioned, but not fully detailed by Lister. In April of 1973, “Curtis had precipitated a bust on the house and [Lister] was the only one that ended up goin’ to prison.”²⁵⁴ Lister recalls the day that caused Grassroots, Incorporated to be terminated:

...I think some of the guys had robbed a drug dealer and had some bricks of marijuana. Either they had robbed him, or they had got it from somewhere...We were gonna start

²⁵¹ Haynes, Ibid.

²⁵² Lister, Ibid.

²⁵³ Kambui, Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

selling grass, selling dope. ‘Cause you couldn’t smoke all that grass, and I saw it. It was about three bricks. John Woods had run into the house saying, ‘The pigs! They vampin’! They vampin’!’ Vamping mean, you know, they runnin’ down on you. And ah I don’t think we had a phone or something. He had gone up the hill to a store and was using the pay phone and comin’ home, I think they followed him, and they kept on following him. They didn’t turn off like they would usually do. Sometimes they would follow you and then they would turn on off and go. But, he ran in screamin’, ‘They vampin’! They vampin’!’²⁵⁵

Rushing downstairs from his room with his gun in hand, Lister thought the police were shooting when they in fact were not according to Donald Lister’s interview.²⁵⁶ Because a woman and child were in the house with the members of the Party, Lister wanted to protect them at all costs. Thinking that he heard gunshots, he immediately began firing on the officers. He shot and wounded one officer, which would lead to a brutal attack by the other police officers and a minimum of sentence of fifty years in prison.²⁵⁷ A citizen’s independently published newspaper *The Ghetto Eye* recounted the events of the Grassroots, Incorporated bust:

First, I shall deal with the initial contradiction, and that is, the purpose for the search warrant. It was stated in the

²⁵⁵ Lister, Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Lister, Ibid. Lister served only eleven years in federal and state prisons due to a reversible error in his case, which he researched and appealed.

white folks press that a search warrant was granted so that the officers might check for narcotics. Having been a member of the Grassroots Org,²⁵⁸ I can readily recall that narcotics were a no no for all members of the organization...Secondly, I shall deal with the problems of eight officers being sent to serve one search warrant from the rear of the house [in civilian clothes]. ‘Red Dog’ is being held under \$150,000 bond for shooting a person who was not identifiable as an officer...In conclusion, I see two basic possibilities: One, Republic Bank really issued the warrant...due to past dealings based on a substantial donation made to the Org....Two, some conniving individual, either within or closely attached to the Org. set the whole thing up and planted the dope—if the cops didn’t bring it...²⁵⁹

While awaiting trial, Lister happened to thumb through his files and that of other members involved in the Grassroots, Incorporated police raid. It was then that he “...learned that [Curtis’s] goal was—and this is from a letter—from his file...to...either turn us into informants or to get us busted.”²⁶⁰ When asked, “at what point was Curtis

²⁵⁸ Though Grassroots is referred to as Org. here, it is referred to as Inc. in Kambui’s interview.

²⁵⁹ “Curtis Gaines, Red Dog, Grassroots Org, Busted! The Contradictions,” *The Ghetto Eye*. May 1973.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

Gaines disclosed as the informant?” Kambui recounts a the story Lister told him several years ago:

...[Donald Lister]²⁶¹ was one of the victims of that whole fiasco and didn't learn until later on that Curtis was that agent provocateur and had been on the government payroll in the capacity from the document he gleaned from the defense table durin' recess, durin' the trial one day. I talked to him about this over the years and got more details on it. Of course, [Lister] ended up doin' a considerable amount of time in the Texas Department of Corrections.²⁶²

This was substantial evidence for pinpointing Gaines as the chief informant or agent provocateur of this phase of the movement. Reverend Mark Herbener recalls Grassroots, Incorporated member James “Doo-Doo” Woods telling surprising information about Gaines:

One day I got a phone call from someone that said...that told me that Doo-Doo wanted to talk to me...Okay, Doo-Doo's in jail and he said talk to him. So I went to talk to Doo-Doo. When I tell people this they say, ‘What's his name?’ ‘I don't know!’ I never knew. Um, but they, but what he told me was, ‘Curtis gettin' paid by the man.’ And I said, ‘what kind of information is that?’ I didn't know

²⁶¹ Kambui, Ibid. Lister is referred to as ‘Red Dog’ in Kambui's interview; however, he does not answer to that moniker any longer sense it was given to him by Gaines.

²⁶² Kambui, Ibid.

what to make of that kind of information. ‘Why is Doo-Doo telling me this? Is he telling me this so that I go and tell somebody and then it comes back to me that I’m a snitch? What’s goin’ on?’ And I really didn’t tell anybody until it came out that Doo-Doo was right, that [some of] the Black Panthers were being paid by the FBI. And they were running a protection racket.²⁶³

While in prison Lister too harkened back to an instance that blatantly would have conveyed Curtis Gaines’s early role as an FBI informant:

‘[C]ause I remember Curtis and I went up to DC. They had another Revolutionary Tribunal where ah, Curtis...Geronimo had sent Curtis up there to tell Huey to either sent...do what the, do what the instructions were or do what the plan was supposed to be when they went underground, or just leave it alone because he wasn’t getting any of the support that he was supposed to be getting. Curtis and I, it was me, Curtis, Beverly...about five of us went up there. But ah, when we got to [there], Curtis...they left me in the room with the bodyguards...But, Huey was in the next room, I remember Jane Fonda was there, and when he...he got a chance to talk with Huey, now this is Curtis saying what Huey had

²⁶³ Herbener, *Ibid.*

told him to do, and I don't know who to believe, but some of it falls into place, some of it doesn't, but Curtis said Huey told him to poison Geronimo and the others. He said, 'Buy them a lot of food and put poison in it.' And when we're back in Texas and when Curtis told Geronimo, 'You know I was given the mission to assassinate y'all.' Said, 'They told me to buy y'all a bunch of food and lace it with poison.' And Geronimo said, 'That sounds about like what them cowards would do.' And ah, I don't know if this was...but again, Curtis being an agent provocateur, this is what they do...²⁶⁴

Because of the 1973 raid of Grassroots, Incorporated's headquarters, several members brought their involvement in this arm of the movement to an end; however, the members of Dreamland in Denton continued to organize toward the northern border of Dallas. In the summer of 1973, Fred Bell, the former SNCC member who robbed a bank in Ladonia, Texas, was absolved of his charges by the United States Court of Appeals after appealing his case several times.²⁶⁵ Returning to Dallas, he changed his name to Fahim Minkah and decided to charter what he deemed would be the first official Black Panther Party in Dallas since the other two had been but affiliates that were purged.²⁶⁶ Bell, now Minkah, traveled to Oakland, California with former NCCF member Charlie Paul Henderson, now Hasan Khalif, to ask for an official charter from the BPP's Central

²⁶⁴ Lister, Ibid.

²⁶⁵ See, United States of America...May 1973, Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Kambui, Ibid.

Committee. They were granted a charter by the Central Committee of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California and returned to Dallas to continue organizing the movement. SCLC organizer Peter Johnson remembers how Minkah and his comrades secured picket lines, rallies, and marches and guard organizers to ensure the safety of non-violent leaders:

...I had a good relationship with them...They didn't like the non-violence, but they knew that we knew best how to mobilize our people and to organize the masses of our people into large demonstrations in the street...and we didn't feel that we was in competition with them...and we had a good relationship with them...²⁶⁷.

SNCC Revisited

Returning from Africa to the United States after unsuccessfully attempting to achieve political asylum in Ghana, Mali, Liberia, and the Ivory Coast, former SNCC members Ernest McMillan and Kwesi Williams reentered the United States and settled in Cincinnati, Ohio where both SNCC members were watched under surveillance by the FBI from the impetus of their return to the states.²⁶⁸ McMillan relives his time in Cincinnati:

...I was arrested in Cincinnati, Ohio because there was a paid agent who gave me even a plan and the directions and address to go to find a particular job, one of these war on poverty jobs, but the whole route I was takin' was known

²⁶⁷ Peter Johnson, Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ernest McMillan, Ibid.

by the police so they knew exactly the best point to ambush us where there would be no way to exit left. You know, we had the wall of the freeway here [demonstrating with his hands] and we were on a one way street and they could just pull us off from the back and the side and the front where we were jam packed, you know. They had our pictures in their hands and...said, "That's Ernie McMillan. That's Kwesi,' you know, that kinda thing. So, they knew who they were looking for and they had help getting us arrested from paid African American so-called activists, you know."²⁶⁹

The *Dallas Morning News* did not hesitate to report the impending and eventual capture of McMillan and Williams. There were reports of a man having McMillan's birth certificate, being captured in Mount Gilead, Ohio, but the man was released when the match for fingerprints rendered inconclusive results.²⁷⁰ Meanwhile, SNCC co-leader Matthew Johnson, after appealing his case for three years, began serving his ten-year sentence in August of 1971.²⁷¹ In December of 1971, authorities caught McMillan in Cincinnati,²⁷² as the above testimony depicted. After his lawyer Ed Polk made several attempts to transfer his charges of draft evasion charges to Cincinnati because "so great a

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ John Geddie, "Man Believed to be Ernie McMillan Captured in Ohio," *Dallas Morning News*: 9 February 1971. Henry Tatum, "Suspect Held in Ohio Reported Not McMillan," *Dallas Morning News*: 11 February 1971.

²⁷¹ "Ex-Leader of SNCC Ordered to Prison," *Dallas Morning News*: 18 August 1971.

²⁷² John Geddie, "Fugitive Militant Captured," *Dallas Morning News*: 9 December 1971.

prejudice exists against him [in Dallas]”²⁷³, his request was vehemently denied by the judge. McMillan returned to Dallas by court order to face trial on the draft evasion, property damage, and illegal gun charges.²⁷⁴ McMillan was sentenced to serve ten years in prison, which he began fulfill later that year.

Because of his mother’s activity with SNCC students, her early role as surrogate mother to several of the youth in the movement, and because she already worked closely with the Black Citizens for Justice, Law, and Order, she, family members of political prisoners, and other concerned citizens formed the organization People United for Justice for Prisoners.²⁷⁵ Mrs. McMillan comments on the inner-workings of the organization:

I think our main thrust was against the prison system, the Texas prison system. We organized the People United for Justice for Prisoners and I believe that was the main area which we where involved because so many people were in prison. So many families were in such dilemmas because their loved ones were in prison and we formed steps for which to help people get out of prison. We had like ten steps. I can’t remember what order, but I knew the first was to write a letter to Judge William Justice who was a regional, district judge and stationed in Tyler, Texas and that was the first step to write him and let him know why your loved one was in prison and the charges about the

²⁷³ “Polk Asks Trial Transfer,” *Dallas Morning News*: 24 December 1971.

²⁷⁴ Earl Golz, “McMillan Returned to Dallas, Faces Trial Feb. 22,” *Dallas Morning News*: 29 January 1972.

²⁷⁵ Eva McMillan, *Ibid*.

trial—everything—and the support he had at home and give details of that person’s life and show him what a great citizen he had been and how he was in prison unjustly and we helped many people to get out of prison. And I was extremely prod, especially when the younger ones were released. My phone kept ringin’. Each day when I walked in my door from work my phone was ringin’. Someone was wonderin’, ‘Would you please help me get my son outta prison?’ or ‘Help get him out of solitary confinement?’ And that was a wonderful feelin’ ‘cause we accomplished much doin’ that.²⁷⁶

She goes on to remember that

We could only visit [the prisoners] every other weekend, Saturday or Sunday and we never failed because what we had learned and what we tried to preach to the people who have family members in prison was, ‘Never miss a visit because once they think you don’t care, they treat [the prisoners] any [kind of] way.’ So, we were there every other week to support Ernie and we would pass out literature while we were there. We would go into the yard and say, ‘People United for Justice for Prisoners have ten points. Call us. This is our number’ and people began to

²⁷⁶ Eva McMillan, *Ibid.*

call us and wait for us and when people would come to visit
their loved ones they would say, ‘Would you help me?’²⁷⁷

The then Texas State Representatives Eddie Bernice Johnson and Mickey Leland formed a joint committee that partnered with the People United for Justice for Prisoners and held hearings regarding illegal practices in Texas state penitentiaries. Mrs. McMillan remembers that “...about once a month, we’d go to some town where a prison was to have a hearing on [a] wrong thing that the authorities would be doin’ to the inmates and it gained a lot of purpose.”²⁷⁸ Though the joint committee ended due to an unruly inmate’s infraction,²⁷⁹ the joint committee was able to move Ernest McMillan from state to federal prison where he filed several writs on his case and was eventually freed from prison in 1974.²⁸⁰ Upon being freed from prison, McMillan was given an opportunity to work in the office of State Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson on her prison reform committee.²⁸¹

The Creation and Reach of the BWUF

The Black Women’s United Front (BWUF) emerged in Dallas in the mid 1970s for the sole purpose of mobilizing women to not rely upon Dallas government to meet their needs. The BWUF, Pan-African in its principles, was comprised of women hailing from various aspects of the movement. Diane Ragsdale, a former Craft Kid, student organizer, and eventual City Councilwoman, organized a food cooperative called People

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ernest McMillan, Ibid.

²⁸¹ Juila Scott Reed, “Ms. Johnson Looks Back,” *Dallas Morning News*: 5 January 1975.

Buying Together²⁸² with the objective of feeding women and their hungry children for free. Ragsdale's vision for BWUF was to create an institution-building organization that could sustain any number of needs that the Black community had.²⁸³ Ragsdale also coordinated "workshops and seminars to address the issue of economic exploitation and to elevate the issue of sexism."²⁸⁴ As a registered nurse by trade, Ragsdale educated women on the importance of staying healthy and even provided health services for people in need through BWUF.

Jacqueline Hill, former SNCC member who became a member of Black Women's United Front, stated that even in light of elevating the issue of sexism

At the time we knew Black women had to be lifted up,
[but] we didn't feel it was right to destroy our Black men.
[And even though we had our own organization,] we were
still shoulder-to-shoulder with the Black male leadership.²⁸⁵

Eva McMillan was an integral leader in BWUF and was co-coordinator of the food co-op. She secured storage space for the food items donated to BWUF as well as leading political education forums on the necessity of women in the Black Power struggle.²⁸⁶ Though the Black Women's United Front eventually dissolved in the 1980s, it left behind a strong legacy that influenced several other women's and Black Power group's in Dallas.

²⁸² Diane Ragsdale, Interview by Ava Wilson, 17 February 2010.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Hill, Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER FIVE

A CONCLUSION

Just in the sterile, gray shadows of Dallas's Central Expressway—the highway that connects Dallas's southern sector to outlying, northern suburbs by bisecting through the once thriving all-African American section known as Freedman's Town—there is a wrought iron gate that would go unnoticed by busy drivers or customers hastily rushing into the Wal-Mart next door, if not for the two proud African statues cast in brilliant onyx situated to the left and right of the gate. Perhaps this wrought iron gate with its African protectors on either side—one male and one female—still goes unnoticed by the average, unknowing Dallasite.

It was there within the walls of that gate that the expressway's burgeoning expansion was made to halt some thirty years ago.²⁸⁷ Construction workers discovered were bones, chipped bits of shell and glass, and other human remains. In the midst of forklifts and cement trucks were the unmarked resting places of tens of thousands of Africans who had been paved over by a manifest destiny-obsessed oligarchy that sought to replace Freedman's Town with Wal-Marts, condominiums, expressways, and contemporary markers of gentrified-colonialism.

This space, now a consecrated historic landmark, was the site of the place of rest of both enslaved and freed Africans. This space, after having been condemned by the city of Dallas almost a century ago²⁸⁸ was one of the only memorials that stood as a testament to those early Africans who settled or were forced to settled in Texas.

²⁸⁷ Facing the Rising Sun. African American Museum, Dallas (September 2001)

²⁸⁸ Galland, *Ibid*, 180. "Freedman's Cemetery reportedly grew into the 1920s, when the City of Dallas Sanitation Department forced its closure, supposedly because of overcrowding, a claim later proven false."

Freedman's Cemetery now serves as an example of Dallas's *modus operandus* with the African inhabitants of the city. The history of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements in Dallas, not coincidentally, fell a victim to a similar fate.

Keeping the movement and its history alive in Dallas today is of utmost importance. Including the entire history of Dallas in a public curriculum is important. In particular, teaching Dallas's Black citizens their history could be utilized as a point of departure for reinvigorating larger movements within the city. The points that should ultimately be gained from this thesis are the lessons about coping with successes and failures of the movements and the key players in the struggle to bring dignity and rights—both human and civil—to the Black community in Dallas. The unique organizing tactics and methods employed to mobilize the masses could be the subject of critical study in Civics, History, and Social Studies classes—given that these feats were developed organically centered around genuine care and concern for the struggle, the community, and its inhabitants. As a principle organizer in the movement, Ernest McMillan shares his final thoughts on the importance of a study of this caliber.

I wish [this study] could help discover, [teach, and revitalize] what were some of the methods that may have been used and that might be applicable to today [for youth interested in championing human rights], so [that there can be a] kind of like passing the baton on this historical piece—can be a way if serving the future as well as by

clarifying [past] acts and deeds and providing a sense of what we can and could do.²⁸⁹

He stresses the need for youth to play an active and central role in the movement. He says that feels that the youth of today are ostracized by the people in the Dallas movement who ironically also did not have the support of elders to guide their endeavors. He states that the veterans of the movement had to

resist being a ‘sage on the stage’ and listen to youth [because] the youth have their own roles as co-creators in this [new] leg of the movement. There has to be a dynamic of side-by-side struggle and giving and taking. Vets have to learn that we don’t know the dimensions of their struggle.²⁹⁰

It is the hope of the researcher that this paper could be a catalyst for reenergizing the struggle in Dallas, giving key organizers their rightful place in history, and inspiring the research of similar movements elsewhere.

Implications for Future Study

Just as the periods of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements did not occur in a vacuum and were not solitary movements born of themselves, this study also is not alone in its efforts to correctly record the history of these movements in Dallas. To date, there are three projects currently being undertaken to catalogue the histories of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements in Dallas. One study involves research compiled at the University of Texas at Arlington. Another is an oral history project funded by the

²⁸⁹ Ernest McMillan Interview, Ibid.

²⁹⁰ *A Call to Action*, Ibid.

Library of Congress and the National Museum of African American History and Culture, which is slated to begin a national Civil Rights Movement oral history project.²⁹¹

After reviewing literature and compiling the data for this thesis, a wealth of other possible studies emerged that future scholars may seek to undertake and extend. One such study could research the Civil Rights Movement in America prior to the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the role and treatment of women before and after the boycott, which received media attention as was more visible and tangible to white America. Another researcher's study may even examine of the organizing prowess of Juanita Craft and Lulu White, the two field workers in the Texas NAACP. It is important to research the ways in which later Civil Rights and Black Power Movements in Texas closed their ranks and worked together in spite of the distance of their geographic proximity.

Among those aspects of the Civil Rights Movements that are left to be researched are the interpersonal strategies White, Craft, as well as other women used on the individual levels to gain support for movements and to garner confidence in programs of the NAACP. The implications of the movements these women forged reveal the integral role that women leaders played in the formative and sustaining years of the Civil Rights Movement. Women's roles were ignored in the normative telling of the history of the Civil Rights Movement—much in the same way that Texas's movements were left out of the national discourse. Considering the roles of such female leaders as Ella Baker, Septima Clark, and Fannie Lou Hamer, the aforementioned research uncovered information about Lulu White and Juanita Craft—information that causes this researcher

²⁹¹ Laura Isensee, "Oral History Project Would Collect Civil Rights Pioneers Stories," *Dallas Morning News*: 11 May 2009.

to posit that many women have yet to be credited for their roles in the Civil Rights Movement. These women's roles deserve to not only be included in the narrative, but critically considered.

In terms of understanding how the Black Power Movement spread throughout the state of Texas, it is of utmost importance to analyze the relationship that Lee Otis Johnson developed with the masses of Black people in Houston and the ways in which he dispersed knowledge about Black history and human rights and organized. Future researchers' studies on the Dallas Movements should secure interviews with members of the third shift of the Black Panther Party in Dallas, namely Fred Bell, known now as Fahim Minkah, in order to accurately depict the history of the period. Panel discussions and forums featuring Dallas's leaders from the 1965 through the 1975 period should be organized so that all can witness a living history.

Now, the charge for those interested in this period of Dallas's history is to actively educate the Dallas populous about these movements so that the silence that has befallen them to date will not mute the past or the future. I am in the process of drafting a proposed curriculum to be submitted to the African American Museum in Dallas, Texas as well as to the South Dallas Cultural Center to teach young and old alike about the history of the not so distant past. The curriculum fuses the history of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements with the ancient histories of Egypt and West African as well as with the history of the period of enslavement. The purpose of fusing the ancient past with the more recent past is to show students the continuum of African people's intellectual and social discourse over the course of centuries and even millennia.

As an example of this fusion, the principles of the Kemetic (Egyptian) deity Seshat who, in essence, archived the stores of knowledge and writing²⁹² authored by her male-counterpart Djehuty, will be used to educate Dallas students about the importance of archiving history. Using Seshat will provide students with a physical manifestation of the act of preservation in order to introduce them to advanced, ancient ideas and concepts that may be new to them. The use of ancient models to teach historical facts is not anachronistic. I anticipate that the use of ancient models as points of reference will expand the students' worldview, allowing them to see that their culture is not restricted to local instances native only to Dallas, Texas.²⁹³ It is through the use of an educational model such as this that Dallasites will restore the history of not only 1965 through 1975, but the ancient history of African fore parents that was ripped from our grasp, but that the progenitors of this movement worked so diligently to restore.

²⁹² G. A. Wainwright, "Seshat and the Pharaoh," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*. Vol. 26 (February 1941). pp. 39. Here Seshat is quoted as having the title, "The Original One who originated writing at the beginning."

²⁹³ Ava Wilson, "Left in an Unmarked Grave: Unearthing the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements in Dallas, Texas, A Lecture Tool for Teaching Youth." African American Museum, Dallas: 27 March 2010.

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APPENDIX A:
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD PROTOCOL
&
CONSENT FORM

Title: Left in an Unmarked Grave: Unearthing the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements in Dallas Texas

Principal Investigator

Dr. Nathaniel Norment
Chair, African American Studies Department
Temple University
Nnorme01@temple.edu
(215) 204-5073

Student Investigator

Ava Wilson
Tub70319
Master's Candidate
Temple University
Ava.wilson@temple.edu
(214) 546-0468

Purpose and Relevance of Study

The history of the Black Power/Liberation Movements in the Southwestern United States (specifically Texas) has not been catalogued in the degree that movements elsewhere have. Many Texas citizens do not have any knowledge of the struggle for power that was waged by the African communities in the state. Why was this so? Perhaps circumstances arose that made the recording of this history difficult. Or were there other factors at play? It must be stated that the works of these diligent and dedicated parties will be researched for the sole purpose of giving them their proverbial fifteen minutes of fame. Instead, the purpose of this research is to unearth the history of Black Power/Liberation Movements in Dallas, Texas in order to provide a collection of data for citizens and residents of the said city, that their local history might be preserved and understood. Through the reading of scholarly publications, local periodicals, and interviewing those who were involved in and/or witnessed the height of the struggle for Black Power in Dallas, Texas and surrounding cities, the researcher hopes to give the state, nation, and world a better understanding of the quest for self-determination in its many facets during this revolutionary period.

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF POTENTIAL SUBJECTS

A. About how many subjects will you need? Please include the number of females and males you wish to recruit.

50 subjects (25 males and 25 females) will be used for this study. Should I need to interview more subjects, as this is an ethnographically-informed study, I will formally appeal to the IRB.

B. Describe the potential subjects in terms of gender, age range, ethnic group, and any other significant descriptors.

The majority of potential subjects will be African American women and men who are in their fifties and older and were integral participants or experts on the Black Power Movement in Dallas, Texas. Other subjects to be consulted are members of other ethnic groups who worked in tandem with the Black Power Movement such as Chicano Movement leaders, and other minority groups, as well as members of Dallas government.

C. Indicate any special subject characteristics, such as persons with mental handicaps, physical handicaps, prisoners, pregnant women, etc.

Because of the dynamics of the Black Power Movement, some subjects may be ex-convicts, prisoners, or coping with physical or mental handicaps. While there may be subjects who belong in these categories, they are unknown at the present time.

D. Are you aware of any special health problems with the subject pool?

No.

E. Describe how you will gain access to these potential subjects.

I will gain access to the potential subjects through snowball sampling (i.e., from references made by the key informants) and through a review of literature.

F. How will subjects be selected or excluded from the study?

Subjects will be selected for this study through the use of the snowball sampling method, i.e., principal informants will introduce me to key subjects, who may, introduce the researcher to other such subjects. Once the appropriate literature is reviewed, I will make contact with those individuals and/or groups who are therein detailed. Likewise, subjects will be excluded in much the same way.

G. If subjects are from an institution other than Temple University, please indicate the name of the officer responsible for granting access to the subjects.

Not applicable.

H. If the subjects are children, anyone suffering from a known psychiatric condition, or legally restricted, please explain why it is necessary to use these persons as subjects.

The use of children as subjects is not necessary. Those subjects with psychiatric conditions will not be interviewed. If during the research process I find that

subjects with this type of condition were integral to the Black Power and Liberation Movement in Dallas, Texas, I will interview others about the said individuals' involvement. Should there be a need to interview persons who are legally restricted, telephone and/or e-mail interviews will be conducted.

II. EXPERIMENTAL OR RESEARCH PROCEDURE

A. Describe the objectives and/or goals of your research.

The objectives and/or goals of this research are to accurately answer the following questions regarding the Black Power and Liberation Movement in Dallas, Texas:

Grand Tour Question: What led to the quest for Civil Rights and Black Power in Dallas, Texas?

Petit Tour Questions: Who were the major figures in the Black Power and Liberation Movement in Dallas, Texas? Why has the Dallas Black Power Movement not received national attention? Why has this movement been left out of the historical memory of the city and state? How, if at all, might the knowledge of this information change the Dallas African American community's understanding of themselves?

B. Please describe the intended experimental or research procedure. This should include a description of what the subject will experience or be required to do. Please attach a copy of all questionnaires or instruments to be used.

The following script will be read to potential subjects prior to their agreeing to be interviewed.

Hello, I am Ava Wilson, a graduate student conducting research for my master's thesis at Temple University. As a native of Dallas, Texas and as a member of one of the families who were integral organizers of the Black Power Movement in the city, it is my intention to record and preserve the history of that historic time period. With that being said, I am contacting you because you have been mentioned as a key witness, observer, and/or participant in the said movement and I would like to schedule a time to sit down and interview you for this study because of your expertise and knowledge on this subject. Would you be willing to be interviewed?

If the subject does not want to be interviewed:

Thank you for your time and have a nice day.

If the subject agrees to be interviewed:

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this study. What date and time will you be available to meet?

Wait for response.

May we meet at a central location to conduct your interview?

Wait for a response.

Thank you (subject's name). I look forward to our meeting on (date) at (time).

Upon meeting with the subject the general consent form as well as the audio consent form—located on pages seven through thirteen will be read aloud by the researcher and then signed by the subject. After the said proceedings have occurred the following questions will be asked.

In your opinion, what would a completed study such as this cover?

Please tell me about the quest for Civil Rights and Black Power in Dallas, Texas?

What were the official years of the BPLM in Dallas?

How many years were you involved in this movement?

From what time to what time?

What organizations were you affiliated with?

How did you get started in the movement?

Has this region's movement received local attention?

In your opinion, why or why not?

- *Probe for:*
 - Organizational strategies*
 - Names of government officials*
 - Regionally specific circumstances*
 - Other reasons given by the interviewee*

Has this region's movement received national attention?

In your opinion, why or why not?

- *Probe for:*
 - Organizational strategies*
 - Names of government officials*
 - Regionally specific circumstances*
 - Other reasons given by the interviewee*

Why did you become involved in this movement?

Who, in your opinion, were the major organizers of this movement?

What was your role?

Did Dallas's movement differ from other regions' movements?

Why or why not?

Where there any specific meeting places that people went to develop programs?

Is there anything else that you want me to know?

Depending upon the respondents' answers to each question, the researcher may create spontaneous probes with which to obtain more information.

C. Will the subjects be deceived in any way? If yes, please describe below.

The use of deception is not necessary for this undertaking.

D. To what extent will the routine activities of the subject be interrupted during the course of the study?

Because the subjects' routine activities will be interrupted during the course of the interviewing process, I will meet the subjects at a central location that at a time conducive to their schedules.

E. Indicate any compensation for the subjects.

The subjects will be given complimentary copies of the completed research, a note of appreciation, as well as a small gift basket.

PART III. DATA CONFIDENTIALITY

A. What procedures will you use to insure confidentiality of the data? How will you preserve subject anonymity?

Should the subjects wish to remain anonymous, they will be allowed to do so. In the attached consent forms on pages seven through thirteen are different options they may choose from regarding the type of interview that can be conducted. They may wish to have their faces and names disassociated with the information given during their interviews. In cases such as these, the researcher will oblige the subject and will not disclose their identities.

IV. CONSENT PROCEDURES

- A. Attach copy of consent form to be used (Please note that if consent form is more than one (1) page, the title of the study must be on the signature page.)**

Attached on pages seven through thirteen.

- B. Describe how you will handle consent procedure for minors, mentally challenged persons, and persons with significant emotional disturbances.**

I will not interview minors, the mentally challenged, or persons with significant emotional disturbances. Minors are not needed for this study. Should mentally challenged or persons with emotional disturbances be integral to this study, others who can attest to their importance in movement will be contacted instead.

V. BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

- A. How will any one subject benefit from participation in this study?**

No one subject will monetarily benefit from participating in this study.

- B. How will society, in general, benefit from the conduct of this study**

Society will benefit from this study, in Dallas, Texas specifically, by learning about the history of the city and its citizens' involvement in shifting normative assumptions and paradigms. Society at-large will benefit from the research conducted in this study through the addition of another narrative to history.

VI. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS TO SUBJECTS

- A. Describe any aspects of the research project that might cause discomfort, inconvenience, or physical danger to the subjects.**

The subjects will not be exposed to any physical danger. The subjects may be exposed to discomfort in recounting their memories during the interview process in which they may discontinue their participation as they see fit. Subjects may be inconvenienced by the researcher's timetable. To circumvent this inconvenience, she will conduct telephone interviews with the subjects and/or give them audio devices that will allow them to tape record themselves as they deem necessary.

B. Describe any long-range risks to the subjects.

There are no foreseeable long-range risks that the subjects could experience as a result of this study.

C. What is the rationale for exposing subjects to these risks?

Not applicable.

RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM
for
Non-Recorded or Recorded Participation Options

TITLE: Left in an Unmarked Grave: Resurrecting the Black Power Movements in Dallas, Texas

PROTOCOL NO.: 12839

SPONSOR: African American Studies Department
Temple University
Philadelphia, PA 19122

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Nathaniel Norment
Chair, African American Studies Department
Temple University

STUDENT INVESTIGATOR: Ava Wilson
Tub70319
Master's Candidate
Temple University

STUDY-RELATED

PHONE NUMBER(S): (214) 546-0468

A consent form gives you information about the study and seeks your agreement to participate in a study. I will read the form aloud to you as you follow along. Please ask me to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand. If you prefer to take this consent form home before signing to think about or discuss with family or friends before making your decision you may do so. After a week's time, I will contact you to find out your decision, and if necessary, set up an interview. If you prefer to sign the consent form now, you will take with you a copy of this consent form. Temple University is not being paid or compensated for performing this study. Therefore, I can offer no payment to persons who participate in this study.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

I am Ava Wilson, a current Master's candidate at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This study is being undertaken to investigate the events in Dallas, Texas that led to, were representative of, and emerged from the life's work of those individuals involved in the struggle for Civil Rights and Black Power. This study is crucial for a full understanding of the accurate history of the state and the period being researched. As a participant in this study, you will be able to recount the past in your own words and therefore allow me to capture a more accurate portrayal of this historic time from your point of view. Because this period is largely unknown or ignored by the by many in the city, state and nation, the overarching purpose of this study is to educate and enlighten all

about the struggle for power and self-determination in Dallas, Texas and surrounding cities.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked a series of questions about your observation of and/or involvement in the movement in Dallas, Texas and surrounding areas. As a participant in this study, you may choose to have your interview written, tape-recorded, or video-taped. In later pages of this consent form, you will be told in detail about those options. Please know that there is no time limit for your responses and are no there right or wrong answers. Feel free to speak as openly and as long as possible regarding your personal testimony. If the interview ends and you or the researcher have additional items to add or questions to ask, subsequent interviews can be scheduled as your time permits. Please contact me anytime at (214) 546-0468.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

For some people, it is possible that risks and discomforts may directly result from remembering and recounting events that occurred. If you feel uncomfortable talking about a certain subject or that your recounting a particular incident or event may be putting yourself, your family and/or loved ones in danger, you may elect not to answer. You may also skip questions, and come back to them later, or not at all, if you wish. You may take breaks or even end the interview at your will. Should you want to participate in this historical project without giving your name, that option is available to you and will be discussed further on later pages.

BENEFITS

There are no direct material benefits for your participation in this study. Thus, you will receive no form of payment for your participation. However, in giving your testimony, you will be adding to the historical record of the history of African people in America and shedding light on this historic time in Dallas, Texas.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

Although there will be no payment for your participation in the study, I, the researcher, plan to show my gratitude by providing each participant with a copy of the completed master's thesis as well as a small gift of appreciation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All documents and information pertaining to this research study will be kept confidential in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Because this project is aimed at contributing to the history of Dallas and the legacy of the movement, this researcher, like all historical researchers, plans to use participants' names in recording their stories. However, should you wish to not have your name used, you

may elect this option. This would mean that when the results of this study are presented publicly or published, the researcher would not identify you by name. The results may also be kept confidential in that, when the results of this study are presented publicly or published, the researcher would not give your name, or any other information that would allow anyone to associate that information with you—if you wish.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You may discontinue your participation at any time by telling the researcher you will not participate.

SELECTING YOUR AUDIO, VIDEO, OR WRITTEN INTERVIEW AGREEMENT OPTIONS

Before starting your interview, I want to tell you about your various options. You may choose whichever option you are most comfortable. You can choose to have your interview video-taped, tape recorded, or handwritten. I will now go over what each type of interview involves. If you have any questions, please feel free to stop me and I will answer them before moving forward.

1. ____ Video-Taped Interview

This option means that in public presentations of this study both your face and your voice will be captured on film and viewed by the public—just like on television. However, with this option you can also choose to be shown only in shadow. Thus, an audience viewing the film would be able to see you, but would not be able to identify you.

Section optional. Read only if video-taped interview is selected.

- A. ____ I consent to be filmed facing the camera with no identity concealing
- B. ____ I want to be filmed with my back facing the camera.
- C. ____ I want to be filmed facing the camera, but to have my face and body concealed through shadowing or silhouette during the editing process.
- D. ____ I want to be filmed facing the camera, but I want to have researchers use computer technology during the tape editing stage to conceal my face only.

____ I give the researcher permission to play sections of my video-recorded interview in public presentations of this study. If the researcher should play sections of my videotape in public, the researcher will use a false name for me and will not tell my true name or neighborhood location. I understand that if I consent to a video-taped interview, I can

have the researchers conceal my identity depending upon which option I select above.

2. ____ **Tape Recorded Interview**

The second option you may choose is the tape recorded option. The benefit of a tape recorded conversation is that it will allow you to tell your experiences in your own voice so that others can hear your story directly from you. Even if I tape record your interview, you get to decide how I use that tape and whether it is ever heard in public beyond the interview.

If you permit me to replay your taped interview in public, you may tell me if your name may or may not be used. If you choose not to reveal your name, I will use a false name that you may choose from a list.

If you choose not to be identified by name, I ask that you try not to use real names in reference to yourself or others, and I will do the same. If you should happen to use your name or the name of someone else who you do not want to have included in the study, I can dub it out of the final presentation.

If you wish to tell your story in your voice but do not wish to have your voice played in public, I can also use technology to distort your voice. I can also write out your story from your tape, and then use someone else's voice to narrate your story and your voice would not be used at any point in the documentary.

Section optional. Read only if tape recorded interview is selected.

- A. ____ I give the researcher permission to audio-tape me without concealing my true name or distorting my voice.
- B. ____ I give the researcher permission to play sections of my audio-recorded interview in public presentations of this study; however, the interviewer must distort my voice with computer technology in any public presentation. If the researcher should play sections of my tape in public, the researcher will use a false name for me and will not tell my true name.
- C. ____ I give the researcher permission to audio-tape me. However, the researcher may not play the audiotape of my voice in public. The researcher may obtain actors to read my interview information for the study.
- D. ____ I give the researcher permission to play sections of my audio-recorded interview in public presentations of this study. If the researcher should play sections of my tape in public, the researcher will use a false name for me and will not tell my true name or neighborhood location.

3. ____ Written Interview

The third option is that you can tell me your story and I can write it with pen or paper and/or type it into a laptop computer. With this option neither your face nor voice will be recorded. Although this option may require more time, it is the best way of completely concealing your identity if you feel the need to do so. This option also used when conducting telephone interviews.

Do you have any questions about the interview options?

Now have heard the three interviewing options, please place a check mark in the space next to the option you prefer.

I. DATE OF INTERVIEW AND DECISION ABOUT TAPING

This section allows you to decide how, when and where I can interview you. Please initial the options you prefer and fill in the space(s) with the appropriate information:

I agree to allow the researcher to interview me on the following date(s)/location(s):

Date _____ Time _____ Location _____
Date _____ Time _____ Location _____
Date _____ Time _____ Location _____

If additional interviews dates are needed, we will schedule them as necessary.

II. STORAGE OF THE TAPES, DISCS, AND WRITTEN DOCUMENTS

The original tapes, discs or documents will be locked in a secure file in my home of the researcher who interviewed you. After the study is finished, the researcher will make copies available to all persons who participated in the study. Copies will also be on file in public institutions sensitive to maintaining African American history.

If You Change Your Mind about Participating in the Study

If within a year of your interview, you decide that you do not want to have you video-taped, audio-taped, or written interview used in this study, you may withdraw permission by writing to the Ava Wilson by any of the contact means listed on the front page of the consent form, and requesting that your interview no longer be used. Likewise, if within a year you decide to change your options as to whether and how your tape(s) may be used, you may contact the researcher in writing to notify him/her of the options you want to change. Withdrawal from the study or changing your options for use of your interview

will not in any way affect your relationship with the researcher and will not in any way affect any relationships you may have with Temple University.

Review of Options

Please review the options you have chosen under parts I and II of the AUDIO, VIDEO, OR WRITTEN INTERVIEW AGREEMENT OPTIONS to be sure that you have initialed the options you intended. Signing the consent form below means that you have reviewed your choices and that they reflect what you intend.

SIGNATURE AFFIRMING SELECTION OF INTERVIEW OPTIONS

My signature below indicates that I have read, reviewed and agreed to the AUDIO, VIDEO, OR WRITTEN INTERVIEW AGREEMENT OPTIONS that I have initialed on the previous pages. These options I have selected are: [Interviewer: Slowly read aloud the content of the Options 1-3 with the participant. Answer all questions and make any requested changes.]

Participant's Name: _____ Date _____
Please Print

Participant's Signature: _____

Telephone Number: _____
(Fill-in only if consented to telephone interview)

Student Researcher's Name: _____ Date _____
Please Print

Student Researcher's Signature: _____ Date _____

Department Telephone: (215) 204-8491

For questions or further information, please contact:

Student Researcher's Name: Ava Wilson

Affiliation: African American Studies Department,
Temple University, Philadelphia PA 19122

Interviewer's Contact Information: (214) 546-0468

QUESTIONS

The subject must be informed of who to contact for additional information for their research rights and must be provided a number that is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to contact the principal investigator regarding research related injuries. Suggested statements are given below.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Institutional Review Board Coordinator, Richard Throm at (215) 707-8757.

Do not sign this consent form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers to all of your questions.

CONSENT

I have read this consent form (or it has been read to me) and the study has been explained to me. All my questions about the study and my participation in it have been answered. I freely consent to participate in this research study.

By signing this consent form to participate in the study, I understand that I have **not** waived (given up) any of the legal rights that I would have as a subject in a research study.

Subject Name

Signature of Subject

If Applicable

Date

Signature of Legally Authorized Representative

Date

Authority of Subject's Legally Authorized Representative or Relationship to Subject

Signature of Person Conducting Informed
Consent Discussion

Date

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

----- **Use the following only if applicable** -----
If this consent form (addendum) is read to the subject because the subject (or legally authorized representative) is unable to read the form, an impartial witness not affiliated with the research or investigator must be present for the consent and sign the following statement:

I confirm that the information in the consent form (addendum) and any other written information was accurately explained to, and apparently understood by, the subject (or the subject's legally authorized representative). The subject (or the subject's legally authorized representative) freely consented to participate in the research study.

Signature of Impartial Witness

Date

APPENDIX B:
TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEWS

Interview with Marilyn Clark

Marilyn Clark (MC): Hopefully, this will be informing and not just one of my rants. (Whispers) Stop me.

Ava Wilson (AW): Okay, would you state your name for the camera?

MC: Marilyn Clark.

AW: Okay and can you tell us about your role in the Black Power and/or Civil Rights Movements in Dallas?

MC: Well, I think, Ava, it started back in 1968 or somewhere in that neighborhood or near that era and principally, I was employed at the Dallas Urban League. Um, they just organized the first chapter and sense it was the beginning of the Urban League, which was a social service organization, the director, Felton Alexander allowed me to do just about anything I wanted to do to be involved in the community. He thought the Urban League needed to establish a good relationship as a grassroots organization instead of a middle class social service organization. Now, the powers that be, which would have been the Dallas Citizens Council, was principally responsible for raisin' the money to get them here and they envisioned that the Urban League would quiet the Negroes and be a buffer between the Black community and the white power structure or those radical Negroes who wanted to stir up trouble and the Urban League would keep everybody quiet and we'd give 'em some jobs and some educational scholarships. So I think my official title was like receptionist or something of that matter, but anyhoo, it was a good position 'cause it allowed me to have first contact with whoever called on the phone, and if I didn't like them, (Laughs) their stuff went into the trash. (Laughs) Whoo! Or if I decided that they were not good for the neighborhood. Ah, if it was a corporate person that had the wrong vocabulary or the wrong buzzwords or whatever. So, I was really a gatekeeper and soon recognized that my job as receptionist and the man who was the maintenance man in the building, that we were the two most important people. That was the first thing that early on, I can remember that I thought was important. Also, when people came into the office, the first contact and so I got to decide, "Yes, you're a lumpen. You're working-class. You should have an opportunity to go in and interview for a job" and unfortunately, I also made decisions that if you were properly dressed in your corporate outfit and they "way you were supposed to be," I more than likely delayed them or gave them a piece of paper. I don't know; I just rerouted them. So, I had preference for poor people and ah, that was the beginning of my role in the Urban League and the director would admonish me and say, "We have to serve everybody. Including Black people because Miss So-and-So sent her daughter over here and she just graduated from college and she said that you would not set-up an appointment for her" and I'd go, "I don't remember her." Isn't that pitiful? But anyway that was basically—and so when people from the ah, from the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee or ah, the Progressive Voters' League or the South Dallas Civic Improvement League ah, community-based organizations that I was familiar with and wanted to support, whenever they came into the office to see what we were doing or how we could help them, I went

far beyond the call of duty in terms of my official responsibility. And so, I just made serving ah, the community a critical part of my job and while other office people at the Urban League really resented it and it caused friction. The executive director affirmed me at all times. So, I could leave my job and go to a rally or go and deliver a check or go do whatever it is that I wanted to do and as long as I came back and typed up the notes, you know, gave support to the employment division, and to the education division and, you know, did the regular kind of job responsibilities, but I really wasn't restricted. So, that was, that was my initial involvement. Understandin' that I could be of greater service and it was also my awakening ah, to that there was something better than just bein' a buffer, takin' notes, and makin' sure the major corporations had an entry into the Negro neighborhood, which was one of the things that we were supposed to do. So, after I ah, realized that there were some hell-raisers out there, and in '68, emotionally, physically, and every other way, you know, I was ready to get into something. I don't know what, but it was just some action and I think that that was the critical thing about the Civil Rights Movement. For those people who were rebellious, you know, as I said, we're just genetically hard-wired from sixteen or fifteen on up, you're just ready for some action. That just goes with the territory and so the Civil Rights Movement, and SNCC in particular was on the ground sayin', "Come on join us. We don't have a script, but we're gonna make a plan. It's gonna be collective and you don't have to be sittin' there all prim and proper. You can get out and serve and ah, you know, change the neighborhood, really make a difference" and that was the critical part for me.

AW: Okay, I just have a few follow-up questions for you.

MC: Okay.

AW: What brought you to Dallas?

MC: My relatives lived here. So, I was born in Quitman, Texas ah, on a farm and so, you know, like the farm economy is just not the place to stay or be. Unfortunately, my father stayed there because there was nothing else, but actually, I came to go to school at Bishop College, and ah, after I left Bishop and went to East Texas State, I came back to Dallas and lived with my aunts and they all left the farm. So, you either came to Dallas, or you went to California. And so, they came to Dallas. So there was a base of family support, a place to live, people who were terrified by what I was doin'. Ah, you know, my Aintee would always say when they were picketing downtown, ah CORE, Congress of Racial Equality, I think lead some of the first official pickets of businesses. And my Aintee was so upset. "They need to eat at home! They don't need to be down there eatin' those white people's food! That food is nasty! They spit in it!" She just did not understand it and I would go, "But, Aintee, we need to be able to go down there and eat if we're hungry." "We have businesses right here on Thomas Avenue. We need to support our own business." But at the time, I didn't really understand that position. You know, I thought, you know, "She's really retrograde; she's really backward. It's integration. Demand that these white people let us in 'cause it was action and we were confronting them." Not realizing that at the same time, we were destroying our own business by not supporting them. I was down there, "Open this door! We're comin' in!" And not ever

going to any Papadad's or any of the other businesses that have struggled to feed us and to serve us that we were abandoning them. So, I don't think I ever just apologized to her before she died that you know, while I thought that she was just a high-yellow, middle-class, Saint Paul United Methodist Church Negro singing a cantata in the choir. That's how I, you know, even though she provided food for me and a place for me, but philosophically and politically, I just thought she was really backward and not really understanding self-determination and understanding that we did need to support our own. Now she was just sayin', "Leave the white people alone" 'cause she had worked in their kitchens and saw how nasty they were and that the food was nasty. Plus, she also thought it was important for me to learn how to cook and as long as I was going to go eat at the white people's kitchen, I was never going to learn how to cook and she was right unfortunately. (Laughs) But that's what brought me to Dallas—just leaving college and comin' to say with relatives and needing to do somethin' wantin' to get into somethin'. And so, that's what was available at that time.

AW: Uh, after you left Urban League or maybe while you were in the Urban League, did you become involved in any other community organizations?

MC: Um, yeah. Um, so during my tenure at the Urban League, we were kind of the focal point of...we had resources we had an office, we had a phone, we had coffee, we had paper, and we had a mimeograph machine and one of the principal responsibilities I had was to make flyers as a way for everybody. So, not only was it the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, there was the National Welfare Rights Organization, which were Black women who were taking very aggressive, very assertive approach to organizing welfare mothers to demand respect and to demand, you know, the resources for their organization. I think their national director was somebody named Wylie, but Ruth Jefferson was the local coordinator and she would always come by the office just say, "What y'all doin'? What y'all got goin' on in here?" And it would always terrify the staff because she had a short, nappy afro and she was dark and had a gorgeous smile and would just walk in and would just make herself...and you know, everybody was in their office having a meeting and doing all, you know, really professional kinda things and she would just bust in and I said, "Come on in, girl!"

(Both laugh)

MC: And we'd get some coffee and she'd say, "Well, I need five hundred copies of this flyer 'cause I gotta get out here and go to Roseland Homes Housing Project or Dixon Circle" and I'd stop whatever I was doing, go in, and type up a stencil because we didn't have a copier machine back in those...back in '68, and, you know, prepare her stencil and then I would say, "I've got to do this right now; I'll run it later" or either I'd run it right then and there, but I remember giving lots of support to ah, that organization and going to their meetings. You know, just listening to what was happening in women's lives who had children to feed, and how they were abused and...but at the same time, the fact that someone was comin' and sayin', "You know, we don't have to take this. There are things we can do for ourselves" and then they did some real traditional stuff like organizing a baseball team for girls. I mean, you know, it was goin' like, "Hmm..."

because those types of services really didn't exist. And so, you know, our children need to have this kinda relationship and we need to do this 'cause we are sitting around all day with not a whole lotta things to do and they would have picnics and they would have camping. They would take 'em camping. Ah, you know, just basic kinds of stuff that they would do with their kids. And so, we were always requisitioning my boss, Felton, to buy stuff, you know, like baseballs. You know, and he kept sayin, "Now, my boards gonna wonder what this is," and we said, "Well, put it under furniture." (Laughs) We had more stuff under furniture comin' outta his budget to support those kinda things. And then, there was another organization that um, I was really involved in. It was called ah, BCJLO, Black Citizens for Justice, Law, and Order, ah, which came out of um, some draconian city ordinance that said something about...something like, "Black men could not stand on street corners..."

AW: Yeah!

MC: Without their shovels...without their tools or something.

AW: Somebody was talkin' about that yesterday. I forget if it was Aunt Jackie or Uncle Ernie, but continue.

MC: Yeah, but it was just the worst. Whatever it was, it basically said that you could not be on the street. It was a law basically targeting ah, the revolutionary people and Black men in particular, but the gist of it was that you could not be on the street unless you had the tools of your trade. And so, we go, "Oh, well that's only Negroes with briefcases who legitimately..." and they would say, "Well, if you were a construction worker, you had to have your tools. You could not be on the street." I mean, there was something about "the tools of your trade" to say that you were gainfully employed or that you were somebody, but just idle Negroes, just walking or picketing, or just standing and talking, you know because you don't wanna be at the house that you may or may not own or rooming house. You just couldn't be out in the sunshine on a day because you're either plotting a crime spree and...I mean, it was just the worst piece of nothing. And so, it was actually in the *Dallas Morning News* and ah, I cannot for the life of me remember who actually said, "We need to respond to this madness." It might have been this other organization called Block Partnership ah, which was organized by the Dallas Council of Churches as their response to poverty and lack of organization in the Black community and they were also located in our building. And I think ah, maybe Randy Ratcliff and the guy, the director of the Urban League, Felton Alexander, and Zan Holmes, Reverend Zan Holmes, who would have been the district superintendent for the United Methodist Church, along with SNCC and other progressive forces, I think that was the first...and maybe even the NAACP, Mr. Dockery, ah 'cause it was so outrageous. In terms of, "You know, this is a way to clamp down. We need to, you know, quarantine this community." And ah, you couldn't be out there. So, when that referendum, or whatever it was, came up I don't know if we put out a flyer or made phone calls. Oh, I think somebody was on the radio. I think somebody went on the radio and said we needed to respond to this and all of a sudden...oh, no! So, whoever wrote the newspaper article came to interview Mr. Alexander, Felton Alexander, and he was sayin' that this was

really an insult to Black people and that we needed to, you know, speak to our councilpersons and get rid of this piece of madness. And so, after that article came out, the phone began to ring. I mean, people all over, Black people all over the city were really upset. And so, it actually helped mobilize Black folks to, “No! We are not going to just idly let them tell who can walk the street and who could not be on the street.” And I remember people just stoppin’ by the Urban League office and ah, I would just engage in the most inflammatory conversations that could possibly come outta my lil’...you know, I am truly revolutionary. I had been hangin’ around SNCC people so I had me some language. I was just saying whatever came up and whatever came out. I remember that and I remember Mr. Alexander comin’ out and sayin’, “Well, just take their names and their address and we’re gonna handle this,” but he’d said, “Don’t say all that because some of the people who come in might be the police, you know, since this has been in...some of them might go back and tell our board of directors,” which was, the board of directors of the Urban League was, like I said, the Citizens Council and the more respectable Negroes: the A. Maceo Smiths, the Ms. Juanita Crafts, and the S. M. Wrights, and we don’t really want them to know everything that we’re doing and will clamp down on us and stop us from doing the work we need to do. So, just take their information. And I remember a lady came in and she sat and she said—okay the meeting was gonna be in our building—so she came in and she says, “Is this where the BCJLO meeting is gonna be?” And she was very, very fair, high-yellow and I could not determine if she was Black or white because some whites had responded favorable. You know, that we needed to be mobilized and I wanted to say, “You know, it’s for Black people only,” but I really couldn’t and they had told me, you know, “Calm down.” And so, I really couldn’t tell her and I said, “Yeah, this is where it’s going to be.” I remember she had on a really pretty pink dress and she was very pink and very upper-middle-class and manners. So, she sat there, very proper, with her purse and I’m going, “God, I need to ask this woman, ‘Are you Black?’” But I couldn’t. So, when the meeting was started, she got up and said, “Thank you,” and went back there in our boardroom or whatever room that was called for the meeting. And so, she turns out to be this woman named, Ruth Sanders, who was very...turned out to be my best runnin’ buddy and, you know, I don’t ever think I told Ruth that story about I couldn’t tell if she was Black or not.

AW: She has the best voice.

MC: Baby! She would just, “Oh, yes, yes and da-da-da-da,” and I’d go, “Oh, my God! What is this?” But BCJLO was a real factor.

AW: And what year was this?

MC: It had to be ‘68, ‘69. It might have been ‘69, but it was when, one of the few efforts that genuinely brought the middle-class and the working-class together to work against. And, of course, the approaches, I think I stopped going to meetings ‘cause I really began to see myself more as an organizer of getting things going and makin’ sure the proper language was said and, you know, that kind of stuff. But the different kinds of approaches—because it did involve working people and as well as the ah, gatekeepers at the time. You know, the Black Chamber of Commerce and the NAACP and some of

those folks. The different approaches were much different. A lotta people just wanted to go and sit and talk to the mayor and to show him, to enlighten him how draconian this was, how really terrible this was for the community. Whereas, you know, others wanted to say, “No. We need to use this as one more example of how this community will be locked down and they’ll go door-to-door sayin’, ‘Do you have any tools? Are you a worker?’” You know, but they really didn’t envision that. They really just thought, “If we could just appeal to their intelligence and show them that we’re intelligent and have done the correct analysis...” and they didn’t really realize how bad, how retarded they were. We’d always go, “Oh, he don’t know he that retarded,” but the organization ah, I think did go to the City Council a coupla times and there were meetings. Eventually there were just meetings between the leadership, the Black leadership and the white people, but the organization continues today and after that particular issue. I did not stay involved in it, but it was one of the few organizations that kept a revolutionary spirit all the way through the seventies and then in the eighties, I think they started doin’ more ah, discrimination cases because the NAACP, while that was one of their functions, legal redress—dependin’ on who was president and what kinda staff and if you could find a phone number...so they really weren’t accessible. And so the BCJLO really took on that responsibility and ah, Ed Washington, was the person and I think Mister Ed Washington is still around and would have all their early records. Ah, I really took on the job of redress for discrimination and issues of social justice, issues that needed to go before the justice department. Ah, you know, he really worked that whole Civil Rights the machinery that was done there at the Earl Cabell Building and calling community meetings. I mean, he was just very consistent, whereas, you know, a lot of times, it’s just the passion of the moment, but whatever redress needed to happen, he would find lawyers for people and just keep encouraged and not to take an accommodating mode. I mean, that was what BCJLO was about under his leadership. He kept people in a very assertive mode, you know, “Not to back down in terms of your redress and once we resolve your problem, you need to become a member of BCJLO and then fight for somebody else’s issues because what happened a lot of times, we get our problem solved and then we go on back to our happy home, sittin’ in front of our T. V. sayin’, “Oh, how lovely it is to be in America.” And ah, he really had a deep and good analysis of role and responsibility and I think he was an engineer who worked for L T. V. or Bell Helicopter some military something. And, you would think with that kind of job that he would not—that he would be fearful, “I’m gonna lose my good job and, my children won’t have milk to eat, ”but he never did. He was a very brilliant man and stayed really focused with BCJLO and it’s still in existence now. Joe, Arthur Fred Joe and his wife, ah, and they aren’t so much involved in issues of discrimination. They handle a lot of issues of Black people in the rural communities. Like when there were church burnings down in East Texas, they got all involved in that. Ah, but anyway, that was an organization that I really sharpened my chops on, I think because instead of just writing the flyers, I remember actually getting into the street and distributing flyers, going on Forest Avenue and Oakland, and handing out stuff. I mean, that’s so exhilarating. I mean, just talking and getting a response from people who normally, folks go, “Ohhh. That’s just those brain-dead Black people, who are on their way to their menial job or whatever,” but people really are waiting for somebody to say, “Yeah, this is in your interest and we can stand collectively on this because to stand alone and you, not really having a real understanding of what can

happen, you just won't make that step." But what I found out just on that particular issue, getting into the street and passin' stuff out...seems to me there used to be a labor hall. There was a labor hall, yeah, a labor hall. I don't know if it was AFL-CIO or Communication Workers or something on Martin Luther King and ah, God, I just loved the energy of those guys. You know, when I'd go up there and sit and wait for work and ah, I can't remember which one it was. Maybe it was all of them and maybe it wasn't all union. But anyway, it was a gathering place for working Black men and ah, it would be amazing the kind of knowledge and just in talking in general, where normally, if you just passed by on the street, "That's just another Negro with nothing going on in their brains or knowing anything." But we never did, to my knowledge, collectively pull all of those folks in 'cause after we had the organizing meeting with the middle-class leadership and some of the working people, finally you acquiesce to negotiating or let those people who full-time can go and meet with the white people. So, but anyway BCJLO was one of them and, of course, SNCC, and ah...let's see, did I write down anything that I did or that I remember? Nah. I was tryna think was I in church then. I don't think I had started goin' to church in 1968.

AW: You ain't go to Saint Paul?

MC: I did not go to Saint Paul! I could not touch Saint Paul! I would not be up there those anthems. Ooh, no! I was much too radical to go to Saint Paul. Although, our whole family, that was our church and all my aunts went, but I don't know what I did on Sundays. I know that they were very concerned about me 'cause I wasn't in church 'cause church was critical with I. B. Loud and if they did not have the Word on Sunday, they really could not go and face those crazy white people that they worked for on Monday. At the time, I didn't understand that, but now, I, you know, I have a better understanding that that fortified them to get up and endure. Not to kick ass, but to endure. It helped them just to survive and endure and make some money and come home and be respectable in their homes and alotta good stuff. But ah, no I was not involved in the church in the sixties. Only to the degree that ah, churches were places where we would have community meetings. And so, I was probably at Warren United Methodist, which was the movement church at that time with J. D. Mooring. And so, anytime that SNCC or CORE, I think CORE even had a few meetings there and Welfare Rights that was the place to go. And so, we could have meetings in the basement or we could have meetings in the church sanctuary, where we cursed. That was the thing I remember, you know. Going, "Damn!" I thought that was sooo revolutionary. That was so freein'; I could cuss in church. Isn't that ridiculous? So, yeah, Warren United Methodist Church was—in those early days—was a sanctuary for, for ah, activists and then, later on Mark Herbener's church, Mount Olive.

AW: What year would you say you all were at Warren?

MC: Ah, that would still be '68, '69, that was our banner year. And ah, that year I think Reverend Holmes had—Zan Holmes at that time—was the district superintendent and he had an office at Warren. And so, that was also...he would come up and give council and guidance and affirmation, basically to go forth with whatever you're doing and J. D.

Mooring, you know, that congregation. I don't know who went to church there, but that congregation had to have been a quote, unquote progressive Black congregation to allow ah, the kind of political forums. I mean we had all kinds of forums on issues of ah, equity in pay or what was that? Minimum wage or living wage. I mean, I remember when we were talkin' about living wage even back then ah, or police brutality. We could always have a forum in the church sanctuary and then we'd have our little community meetings and other stuff: strategies, strategy meetings down there in the basement or ah...and eventually, out of that came Methodism Breadbasket, 'cause we dealt a lot with issues of poverty, ah, Welfare Rights Organization. So, eventually and I don't remember how it came into being, but I'm sure somebody put pressure on the United Methodist Conference. And so, then that program developed probably right before the Poor People's March, but I'm not sure about that. But it was eventually housed there and then the other place was Mount Olive Lutheran Church, which had a white progressive minister, Mark Herbener. And I don't really remember a lot of activities there. SCLC that was there basic headquarters at Mark Herbener's Church and what other church would I have gone to or been involved in? Ah, Earl Allen, Reverend Earl Allen had a church ah, Highland Park United Methodist Church. And Reverend Earl Allen...

AW: In Highland Park?

MC: No, not Highland Park!

AW: Hamilton Park?

MC: Highland Hills!

AW: Highland Hills, oh okay.

MC: Oh, help me! Thank you!

AW: I was about to say, "Lord, y'all was?"

MC: Lord, girl no! No, no, no, no! Highland Hills United Methodist Church and Earl Allen came here from Houston and he formed CORE and I was just kinda on the peripheral. I didn't remember going to any of their meetings, but I think he was able to organize some Bishop College students and some of his, a few of his members and he led the first pickets, that I remember, on Picadilly's Café and some other restaurants downtown. And so, I remember going to his little church out there by Bishop College. So, which is how I kind of remained involved in the church anyway. So, whenever the church had some action item or program...

AW: You were there?

MC: ...yeah, I was at church and 'cause that's how I kinda see the responsibility of the church is to mobilize and for people to take control and to get their blessings, but just to worship (Shakes her head) I've never been able. When I go to church just to worship,

I'm sittin' up in there takin' notes, "This is wrong. This is wrong. God don't like this. Oh, what a backward...That's an expansionist, that's a capitalist hymn." Isn't that awful? And so, I decided, "It's best for me not to go to church." Ah, in terms of church service, but ah, so when we're serving or something like that, that was the most I can remember bein' involved in church. So, I think that was about all I can remember right now that I spent a lot of time, organizationally with. Um, what else?

AW: You were gonna say something?

MC: I don't know what. Girl, this fleeting brain of mine.

AW: I have been writing down some things. So, I have a few questions. If you remember, how did the community receive churches like Mount Olive and Warren UMC and Highland Hills? Not just the community that they were in, but the Black community at-large.

MC: You know, I really can't comment on that because during that year, those couple years, I had really limited my involvement. My scope was very narrow. I only dealt with people who thought like I did, who acted like I did, and everybody else was the enemy. I mean, I was really...as I think back, it's because of youth and I really wasn't grounded. I hadn't started reading. I was just full of action and I was ready to get it on and I just thought, "If you weren't in the street, you were basically the enemy" and at that time many of us had that thought that, "Many of us have to die." (Laughs) We were just so, so serious. Now, my immediate family, as I said, I know they were very disgruntled. They thought that the status quo was best and they had realized how to use the church to solve any problems. If we had a relative who came to Dallas, came up to Dallas for something and got in jail, ah, I can't remember what it was, some infraction that amounted to nothin', but rather than confront the issue that the police were profiling or, you know, harassing, my aunt just called I. B. Loud. And so the church and the minister would resolve it and he would either take some money from the church coffeers and go get him out on bail or would call somebody. I kinda remember SNCC and the Panthers, I remember that was the analysis we had of People's Baptist Church with Reverent S. M. Wright, who was the leader, who was the buffer, who was the Negro that the white people most recommended. He's the one. So, our analysis of People's Baptist Church was that ah, "Reverend Wright, you know, could handle any problem that his members had. And so, if you wanted to be safe from the white people, then you needed to be a member of his church." So, if something came up, but you know, I really don't remember how the Black community in general thought about them. Probably they were highly suspect and wondered, "why the minister would allow those nappy-headed, unkempt" (Laughs) folks to be in and out of this sacred buildin' because I do remember, you know, Black folks do believe their institutions, their buildins are sacred spaces and that there's a proper way to approach and a proper way to behave and ah, I know that we did not follow that protocol. And ah, to have, but that was the reason we supported those churches was because we did have ah, the ability to go in and be ourselves and to test and to push ah, any limits of what can and what can't. "What can I get out of here? What will you do? What does the Lord say about this?" And, you know, more than likely, it

would be fine. I don't remember any point and time where any church member ever confronted us about what we were doin' and how we were doin' it. 'Cause probably, you know, if the minister said it was okay, these things, at that time were so focused on if the minister said that it was okay, then, it was okay. They might not like it, but...

AW: They went along with it.

MC: ...they just puckered up and went on, uh huh.

AW: Ah, I wanted you to tell us about your time in the National Welfare Rights Organization.

MC: Okay. Uh, now let's see. Principally, I was a ally, a supporter, I really wasn't a member, 'cause it was basically women who had children and ah, whose husbands were either being profiled or brutalized or harassed, ah, and they took...they were very, very, aggressive. They did not play. I mean, you know, I just kinda sat in awe. I remember Ruth, in particular, her boyfriend had gotten arrested. He was in SNCC and she went down to the jail, with this other girl named Jackie-somebody and stepped off in there and basically said what Huey said, "Stick 'em up. I come for my man and I want him right now, or I will knock you out 'cause he hasn't done anything and he needs to be home. He needs to go to work. We need some money and you need to let him outta jail," and it was just that straight up and they took that approach with just about any issue of workin' with social workers in particular. I mean, they would say, "Now, what's your name? What's your address? Where do you live?" I mean they would just be really intimidating if a social worker came for a visit or if they went to ah...oh gosh, what was the welfare office called? When they went to the welfare office, they would have a list of things they wanted to discuss with them, particular cases of individual women who may not be in the Welfare Rights Organization. So they took the approach is that, "We will represent you. We will show you we have no fear. We will solve your problem and then you need to get your card and join us and stop, you know, doin' all these other unethical things that you're doing to make money. This is the way to confront the system and get what you want at the same time." Now, some women did join them, but by and large, they just ah, you know, represented folks and just took on their cases and they were very relentless. There was a lot of training for them. I don't know what training 'cause I never did go to any 'cause I didn't qualify, but they had a lot of training in terms of organizing strategies, which was very helpful and which was also kept them sharp so they didn't back down. So, you know, you'd go away and the War on Poverty would have training: "how to raise hell," "how to be disruptive for the sake of disruptive. You know, have strategies and tactics. And they were just completely...they just completely understood all that stuff and came back and applied it and had a ball, had...a...ball. There were some white churches...well at least one white church I know that supported them was Casa View United Methodist Church. Now, they had a regular financial commitment to the National Welfare Rights Organization and ah, I can't remember what it was, but it was some consistent—whenever they took up their tithes or whatever they did at this United Methodist Church. They were also supportive of SNCC, too. And they did, you know, financially they did a lot of money: helping get people outta jail. If somebody got, you

know, busted for whatever reason, ah, they did this whole piece with sensitizing their church members, you know, to be progressive in their thinking and giving. And ah, I remember Ernie and others would go out and make presentations at Casa View United Methodist Church and what we want an ah, one of the things that was said was, we had...they had a program at one point, I guess supporting Black businesses because this whole piece of integration was really causing us to stop to support...so I remember people at this white church started coming to South Dallas to buy barbeque, you know, or whatever and this guy named Dee-something...but anyway, he would come to Graham's Barbershop and get his haircut and I thought—I had just started my afro because I had my afro—this woman Miss Kimberly cut my hair and I remember saying, “Y'all cuttin' white people's hair now?” (Laughs) “What is this?” And he said, “Oh I'm Dee Roth and I'm from Castlevue United Methodist Church and Ernie was at our church and he said that we need to support Black businesses so, I'm comin' over here and I'm givin' 'em my money” and I go, “What? This ain't right!” (Laughs)

AW: Just write a check, you ain't gotta come.”

MC: Right, baby! Gettin' his hair cut girl and so, you know, they thought it was cool. And so, every week he would come and get his haircut and even after he got bald on top he was still comin' over there. I went, “Sheesh, what have we unleashed, Ernie besides y'all's money?” But anyway, yeah ah, but the other thing that I remember with SNCC was—one of the big things I was involved in—was organizing the Texas Statewide Black Youth Conference and I think you said Ernie has already talked about that.

AW: I want you to talk about what you did.

MC: Okay, but ah, so that was one of the things and, you know, I really can't remember ah, how it is that I came to, in my opinion, take a leadership responsibility with that if it came out of one of our strategy meetings or if I just decided to ah...that this was something that I needed to do. And I need to think about this, too. Where was the jumpin' off part for me? But, principally...oh maybe it was because I was already involved with the...the Urban League had an education...Mary Green was the education director and so one of the major things that she was supposed to do was scholarships. And so, as part of my job with the Urban League—outside of being the receptionist—I went to recreation...not recreation, but neighborhood centers to talk about ah, “Black is beautiful and to be more beautiful, we need an education” and I remember I had some kinda line like that. I can't remember, but I remember goin' to the Harwood Community Center, which was run by the Presbyterian church, and they had a lot of young people playing...seems like they were playing pool, but they had other kinds of table games, and they also had a ah, daycare center, and then for the lack of a better word, they had some kind of Freedom School. They were actually trying to teach kids about their history and culture and that was pretty foreign to me at that point and time, in an organized manner. And so ah, I went probably two or three times a week to the Harwood Community Center and I'd go to Bethlehem Center, which was another South Dallas community center, where they had programs and there is one more sports-oriented...and in my high school days I played basketball, so ah, you know, I would ah, I would play basketball with the

kids at Bethlehem Center and, seems to me I went to one other center in East Dallas, but I can't remember what it was, but anyway, I think it was because of my ah, responsibility of teaching, I mean, tellin' the kids about scholarships and an education that I already had some relationship. And so, when we decided—when SNCC decided that we needed to have a statewide conference, which I think came out of Houston with Lee Otis...Lee Otis...

AW: Johnson?

MC: Johnson, thank you. With Lee Otis Johnson, I think that's where it came from. That's my recollection and he came to Dallas and said we needed to have a statewide conference. Then, I took more responsibility locally in ah, trying to organize kids to come to the conference and I remember there being a little push-back from ah, the people at the Harwood Community Center because, now I don't know about this analysis. I think maybe because they were Presbyterian or because...anyway, there was a push-back from the Harwood Center because we were gonna have the conference at Bethlehem Center and we were havin' it at the Bethlehem Center because nobody else would allow...(Pause) the way we had conceptualized it was that it would be a statewide conference of Black students that would be mobilized because students, you know, have no fear and it was students that we really need to grasp and capture their minds, and ah, imagination...that they need to, you know, not buy into bein' the status quo. So, at Bethlehem Center, while the kids were really interested, the director, whose name I cannot remember, you know, was ah, very reluctant and you need to have the transportation of the center to get students 'cause they were like on Harwood near downtown and Bethlehem Center is all the way up, not that they couldn't catch the bus or something, but I remember there being some serious push-back from him ah, about the, the students comin' to participate. And ah, so, my next effort was to try to talk to ah, I guess, the director. There was another staff person there and I remember it got to be a real source of friction and I put entirely too much energy, you what I'm saying. You know, instead of organizing, it became this internal fight like a lot of times I got derailed off of my, what my major responsibilities were, but ah, we planned ah, to have...our big thing, as I was looking at some materials here, like Stokely Carmichael was gonna come and we were gonna have ah, some workshops for students. We were gonna show some films for students ah, and I don't remember what films we would have shown. But, Bethlehem Center, I did remember, had a sixty-millimeter projector 'cause later on in some other activities I showed films. Ah, we were to have some food for them and ah, this white church was gonna provide the food, I remember that—Casa View Untied Methodist Church was gonna do that. And then, because I had a job, I was also the focal point for people to call, which was really...and all of this was really important, because we didn't have cell phones then and very few pay phones that I remember. And so, for people to have a central phone number that they could call was really critical and ah, I don't think we had any answering machines then. I don't think we had answering machines, but because I was at my job eight and nine o'clock at night, ah people could always call there. And so, that was the big deal about—I guess that was one of the other reasons why I had such a central role in the conference is because other people would call from El Paso, from Austin, from...did we have anybody—I don't ever remember

anybody from East Texas coming, which is really interesting because East Texas is where most of the Black folks were livin', but it was probably too conservative down there. But anyway, it was Austin, maybe Waco, ah, I don't remember anybody from San Antonio, and ah, of course, Bishop College ah, and why we had people from El Paso coming, I don't know. I guess people in...and that is so interesting because the first chapter of the NAACP was organized either in El Paso or Amarillo. And the only thing I could think of, "People must have been really catchin' hell that they said, 'Oh, we need some protection.'" And so, we had students from El Paso, if I remember correctly and a few from Austin. Ah, and so, I worked with the staff at Bethlehem Center, which would have been Billy Richardson, in getting, you know, the place cleaned, you know, just those real functional kinds of responsibilities that make things...chairs, ah kitchen stuff...and now all this stuff seems to be so insignificant because now you just have paper plates all the time and cups and stuff and I remember that being a really difficult thing for us to do, just get those meager supplies together for all these folks and places for people to sleep.

AW: How did y'all do that not havin' a cell phone, Texas bein' such a huge state?

MC: Well, one, I remember Ernie and this guy named Jesse Arreola drove. I think they drove to Austin. We had some people in Austin already. I can't remember the guy's name, but he was a little short Black guy and I think Ernie and Jesse went to Austin and took flyers. There had to have already been someone in El Paso ah, that we sent information to. I don't any of these phone calls, but I do remember people coming from those places and ah, it was pretty difficult. But, you know, when I think about when they were saying for the Montgomery Bus Boycott, how they mobilized people just through flyers and they were running and delivering flyers, but then they would just place ah, flyers at certain places and the wind would just blow them all. As a matter of fact, yesterday I was listening to the radio to Michelle Moore and this guy had just done a major book on the Communist Party in Alabama. And so, these were like white Russians who had come from Russia in 1930 to mobilize workers. But anyway, they used that particular tactic, they said they would make flyers and because people were fearful and, you know, Communist were ungodly, but here were Black people who were Communist, but they would always begin their meetings with prayer, scripture, and a song and then they'd get down to the business of organizing. And they said the way that got people to come to meetings—and again they did not have telephones and you couldn't be caught with some of this literature in your hand—so what he said they would go and just drop it at certain places knowin' that the wind, now these are Black folks, and the wind would blow the flyers and people would know about them. I thought, "Yes!"

AW: So y'all did that?

MC: Oh no, no, no, no. We delivered ours, but see, if I would have read my history I could've done that and you would reach people you don't even know. But ah, no, I think we just took them to these particular centers. We probably took them to Graham's Barber Shop because that was a friendly establishment. Places like Bacchus Cleaner's was anti-nappy-headed-Negro activities.

AW: It's still up and running to this day.

MC: Yeah child they would not take it. So we knew the places where we could take 'em. And then, SNCC, Ed Harris, and all of them, they were crazy. I mean they would just bust in and say, "We puttin' this shit in here and don't you take it out" and threaten 'em. I was not that bold. I was still pretty mild-mannered and I sure I still probably said, "Yes ma'am. No ma'am" and that kinda stuff and if they looked at me crazy, I'd probably cuss. My rebellion was to cuss, but ah, they probably put out flyers, too because that was one of the things they did. Ed Harris and the other members of, ah...after they joined SNCC and of course after they moved on to the Panther Party, a lot of things. But I remember just the fact that the students showed up and I remember Ernie, you know, talkin' to them. I remember Lee Otis, ah doing...Lee Otis was really kind of funny. I can't remember anything he said, but I remember his presentation was always one to go for the humor in the situation and ah, you know, drawing analogies that they would really understand. I remember the center director, Billy Richards, came in and spoke to the students about how important it was for them to be involved in what we were doing. I don't remember anybody's house, maybe my apartment because that was the main thing to provide housing for students and I remember I spent a lot of time doing that, but I don't remember where anybody slept right now...probably as I said...I had three other roommates and they were all school teachers and, you know, they were all really terrified, but all very excited that all these people were coming. So we had a two bedroom apartment with four people, I had three other roommates and so it was two of us in each room, but there were always people from the movement at our house sleepin' on the floor and it was always so bizarre because they would have to get up at six o'clock in the morning to dress to go to school, you know, to prepare. And Frankie Louise always had false eyelashes and she was sayin', "Could you please move, I need to get my..." and it would be all these wooly-headed people on the floor it was just so bizarre. But that was one of my other responsibilities was to find housing for the delegates to ah, to sleep and to come back to. And, I guess, there were people with cars. Some of the Bishop College people had cars. I did not have a car and I remember Mary Green had an old Chevrolet and she brought some students from somewhere because, you know, they were so amazed. You know, here come this white woman with the car on the passenger's side wouldn't close, and so you had to take a rope and tie it to keep it secure while she drove back and forth to pick up students somewhere. But anyway, but the mere fact that in 1969 or '68, whichever year it was, that we had a Statewide Black Student Conference was amazing.

AW: That is amazing.

MC: It was really amazing. That we really and we just said, "Can we pull people together throughout the state?" And we did. We'd probably have to find somebody that's memory is clearer than mine to see if we came out with some resolutions of things that we were gonna do when we got back ah, to our home cities. Ah, but just to put that together was ah, Lee Otis...I can't remember if we had people from Texas Southern. We probably did because college students—I was really working most with high school

students, but college students at Texas Southern were the most organized. They had a riot ah, yeah they really did confront the status quo and that was because of Lee Otis's organizing and he was unrelentless all the time and I just assume he was SNCC. Did Ernie say he was SNCC.

AW: Yeah, he was SNCC.

MC: Okay, because I hadn't remembered. I just remember he was very good looking because he was so sexy, you know, just to be a revolutionary was sexy anyway and all that power and all that shit-talking and I would just go, "Oh yes!" And I remember talking to some of the women who finally...and that was a part of the whole attraction of the movement. It's because the guys were so free and they didn't mind kickin' butt. And so, power was the ultimate aphrodisiac and, you know, it was a good place to meet guys and the probably felt the same way. And so, the sexual revolution was definitely a part of the revolution. I mean, God, so much unsafe sex. It's amazing that we survived, but it was kind of like, it was so really bizarre. That was a main attraction. "Let's go over to this church meeting on Saturday morning" when SCLC would have their Saturday morning rallies. This was in the seventies probably when they came to town and that was very much part of the attraction of going to church meetings to see who was going to be there and to scope out the brothas and everybody was, you know, from that point, short dress, arm pit hair, hair on your legs, you know, all the things that said, "We are natural. We are resisting America's idea of what is beautiful and of course, everybody had their afro." And women's afros were very well-groomed and the guys' were almost like locks or something. The nappier the better and the more virile, the sexier he was and the more revolutionary. He could kick more butt or something. I don't know; we made those kind of analogies, but it was a fun time, but it was also an intense and scary time. I mean, you kinda just operated under fear and lots of adrenaline. Now, some people, Diane can talk to you about this, had study groups, but I don't ever remember, during that period of time in the early sixties and seventies, participating in any kind of organized study or ideology or philosophy. The most you got that was when you had your strategy meetings, someone was always quotin' Mao or Stokely or, you know, whomever you could possibly dig up as the most revolutionary thing you could say and "Right on!" And you'd have discussion around the circle or table and, you know, everybody was supposed to participate. And so, even if you didn't have an opinion or analysis, tryna to make sure that you did have some political education and our rule was, if you didn't know...if you didn't have anything, you had to say something. Even if it was to say, "Black Power." And so it was so funny, you go around the room and at least four or five people didn't have any understanding, but they would have to say something. "Well, brotha what do you have to say?" "Black Power." But it did make for participation. You had to participate, but Diane and the Black Women's Political Congress, they had organized ah political education, which I don't know how I missed up on that. I guess I was doing something else, but every Saturday morning, they had big, black binders, three-ring black binders, and somebody had prepared information for analysis and discussion. I think Mama Mack was a part of Black Women's Political Congress and ah, so they had political education. And then, out of their political education, they had a number of projects, and one of their big projects that came out of

their analysis of what we needed was ah, cooperative economics. And so, they started a food co-op. And ah, I think I tried to participate, but that as a lot of work. I did not hang into the food co-op, because, one, you had to find out what people wanted and then it was going to farmer's market to buy it and that was some serious work, but they had a large group of women. It was for women only and ah, so they brought it back and we bought it. And ah, we were supposed to go to the next level because Diane was a nurse. And so, we were gonna get into the preparation of food and the nourishment of the body, but we never did get that. But, they had the most—that I know—the serious political education going on, of study that was required and was consistent. Ah, and I'm not sure how long the Black Women's Political Congress went on, but you need to ask her about that, 'cause I think that was one the few women's organizations that ah, that said, "We have a specific responsibility and we are on the front line and that we're soldiers, but we need to study. I don't ever remember any serious organized studyin' in SNCC. I don't know, did Ernie ever mention anything about that?"

AW: He said that required reading was *The Nigger Bible*.

MC: Oh that book? My God, you're lyin'! Really?

AW: That's what he said. He said it got a lot of attention in California and so, some member was from California who went to school down here and he was saying, "Oh, we gotta read this! Everybody gotta read this!" So it became the thing that people read.

MC: The thing...the Bible. Only thing I remember was Mao Tse Tung's *Little Red Book*. We all had one. I don't ever remember reading it, but we all had one. We all (Mocks a revolutionary holding up the book) "Chairman Mao!" (Laughs) Lord, we were silly and wonderful all at the same time. Alright, well that's all I remember. You got any more questions?

AW: I do. Highlight any other times in SNCC that you remember.

MC: Ah, times...ah, highlight any times I remember, SNCC?

AW: Any other times other than the conference?

MC: Oh, well, probably my relationship with SNCC was just the day-to-day struggle. Ah, any particular campaigns, I need to...I'm sure there were some, but I don't remember. I'll try to go back and...

AW: But, as I said, my remembrance of SNCC was the day-to-day action and a lot of times I really didn't go to whatever it is that I was participating and organizing. And I don't know if that was out of fear or I kinda remember one. My position was that everybody didn't need to go because somebody needed to stay out of jail and I kinda always really saw myself as being a person who could get the resources to make whatever you do happen. and so, when Matthew Johnson or Ed or somebody got busted for speeding—because that was one of the things: the few people who had cars, the police

always followed them, and when you look through this FBI report, you can see they're always sayin' "Ernie McMillan left his house at 2404 South Boulevard in a 1960 Thunderbird." I remember going, "Who had a convertible Thunderbird? Damn! Who was ridin' that high." I mean, you always see them trailing and they would always pull you over for guns or dope and I remember. I go, "I will never smoke weed" because that was one of the things I remember they talked about. Even if you're not smokin' weed, they'll plant weed on you. That always happened and so, that was one of my...I remember that being my understanding of my role. That I was going to...I was always gonna be available to either get people out of jail, to raise money, to ah, get resources: flyers, make phone calls, receive phone calls—a runner, almost in a support kind of thing. But, I thought it was the most critical because I didn't know anybody else, you know, who could do it consistently and, maybe I just kinda carved it out for myself, that, "I have access to stuff that nobody else has." So, if there were night meetings or rallies, I might have gone to some and I did go to some, ain't no "might" to it, but just consistently every time there was something happening, I don't remember going to all the stuff. And I was trying to remember...and I don't ever remember going out of town to any conventions because SNCC had stuff all the time. There was always something going on in Houston and Austin was just a hot-bed of revolution because they had, Austin had a real serious, well University of Texas and SDS...and so those white people were just crazy. They were just rebellin' against everything. And so, they had an army. And so, when the Panthers or SNCC did something, they would say—I can't remember this Black guy's name—call him and he can get his army and those white people would just go crazy. And then they'd go into East Austin and do some action and I remember people from Dallas going down there, but I don't ever remember going. I might have gone once and I think I was terrified. There was this woman named Miss Deminelle a white philosophy major—teacher—real involved in the prisons...aww shit! I was involved in the prisons. I remember that. Okay, she was really involved in the prison industrial—at that time, it was mostly about getting political prisoners—we didn't call it the prison industrial complex at that time. She was with political prisoners and ah, conscientious objectors. And so, she moved to Texas from Oakland. She was at...what's the all-women's college in Oakland? I can't think of it. But anyway, so this was her conscious movement was to move to Texas. This forgotten place on earth. You know, nobody wants to come to Texas, but we also had a federal prison, Segoville FCI and so they sent a lot of conscientious objectors over there. And then, so, Miss Deminelle wanted me to go to Austin. So, and I mean it was really terrifying. It was about five or six thousand long-haired, crazy white people with no shirts on, callin' for revolution. I go, "What is this?" And Bob Dylan, people smokin' peyote and not goin' to bed all night and I mean, you know, it was just too foreign for me. I just could not get caught up in that. "Uh uh! This is not the kind of revolution I'm lookin' for." So, I never did go outta town no mo'! That was my last time. Do you hear what I'm sayin'? Uh uh, I am not gonna be around all these drug smokin' crackas. It was really too mass. I was really small-town, come to think about it, but I had never just been a part of a mass movement and not seein' any of my friends and it was much too white. There were Black people there, so somebody must have come to town, but it was a big deal, you know. It wasn't like Angela Davis, but it was somebody like that, so we went down there. But, it always triggers the fact that one of the other things I was involved with was building a prison library at Segoville.

And so, this had to have been in '70 and '71. 'Cause she was still around. Probably, I started going out to the prisons with her. Ernie was doing draft resisting. Kept a draft council. It was that conscientious objectors counseling. That was one of the big things SNCC did; I didn't do any of that. But ah, there were a lot of COs in Segoville, because it was a ah, what do they call it? A prison that wasn't really restrictive.

AW: Low—minimum security?

MC: Minimum security. And so, people, COs from other parts of the country would be sent here. And so, I started going out there with her because she was talking about political prisoners, and of course in the tradition, she fell in love with this Black man, and he could talk mush political shit, and she loved him 'cause he could quote Fanon, every radical philosopher known. But, he was a major, big-time drug dealer. But, you know, there was possibilities for everybody! There's redemption for everybody. And so, you know, I had never heard of any of these people or understood, and I was enamored, too. And so, we would go and listen to him and then I began to meet other inmates. We were out there and they really just wanted to learn about African American history and culture. And so, one of the things I did do was come back...God, who helped me? There was this guy who was doin' his student teachin'. I can't remember his name. But anyway, (Remembering) Oh! Bob Ray Sanders, believe it or not!

AW: Oh, wow!

MC: Yeah, Bob Ray Sanders. He was just getting out of college or first-year job, or something. But I think Bob Ray Sanders helped. But so anyway, we built, we collected books. I remember we had boxes on street corners and we asked people for Black books. And so, we built the library at Segoville, and then it kinda morphed into legal books, but I don't remember getting a law library. But, they did have a law library and I don't remember doing that part. That must have been Mary McFall or somebody else who got involved in that. But ah, that was a really, really good experience. Takin' books out to Segoville and I remember we out the date in them. We wrote it in there with a Marks-A-Lot. I don't know why that was important...paperback and hardback and the prison did not object to it at that time. Somebody else started doin' poetry from that. We used to have lil' poetry sets out there. I think reading poetry. I don't remember anybody writing their own poetry. But anyway, yeah and then, I remember just talkin' to these other people from...another guy from Baton Rouge, the only Black guy I knew who was a conscientious objector. I don't remember his name. I remember just talking and listening to him, you know, talk about the... 'cause I really didn't understand bein' a conscientious objector. I knew I was against the war, but philosophically, I didn't really understand to be a pacifist and any of that kinda stuff or non-violence. I just realized when Ernie brought Dr. Lawson here, "I really don't know anything about non-violence" because we didn't do any study and God-forbid, you know, non-violence was to be a wimp and all that. So, I never have really studied...but anyway, so yeah, I went to prisons. God, I can't say weekly, but on a regular basis to just to go and rap. We had rap sessions; that's what we did. We had rap sessions and I remember talking to this Black guy a lot. He talked about his family. He had chained himself to a bridge in the lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans. He had gone down there to...I don't remember the issue

and I remember, “Damn!” No! He handcuffed himself to a bridge when the police came and I go, “Ooh, shit! That’s serious!” You know, I was like, I have not done any serious, you know, resistance. You know what I’m sayin’? And then, Dr. Deminelle and her philosopher and he finally got out of jail, right. Girl! And then, that was the end of my involvement in the prisons until I got another job in Sesame Street. But that was in like 1977. Oh! I am going on and on.

AW: No that’s fine.

MC: Well, that’s all I have and here is a copy of the files.

AW: Thank you. I appreciate everything.

MC: Oh chile, you’re welcome.

Interview Ends

Interview with Edward “Black Ed” Harris

Ava Wilson (AW): Can you state your name?

Edward “Black Ed” Harris (EH): Edward Harris.

AW: Mr. Harris could you tell us about your experience with the movement in Dallas, Texas?

EH: Where would you like for me to start?

AW: I want you to start at the beginning of your story, like how you came into the movement...

EH: Okay, probably about 1967, '68 I had an opportunity to ah, sittin' at...I was at one of my girlfriend's house lookin' at TV and a TV program came on and there was ah, a young man on a panel that was kinda givin' the local law enforcement, you know, hell about how they were treatin' our African Americans. Well, back then, we would call each other Black. That's when, you know, I first got introduced to Ernest, on TV. So I tole some of my family members, "I need to meet this guy." I said, "Black Power is comin' to Dallas and I want to see what this is all about." So I went and ah, talked to some of my family members and no one wanted to go with me because they didn't want to be associated. You know, back then, sometimes we would put that distance between us and the people in the movement because of fear of retaliation, you know, by whites and things like that. But I was seekin' him out and tryin' to find him, you know, goin' around the neighborhood, askin' people if they knew him. And so I called my cousin Charles Beasley and I hope we get a chance to talk about Charles. He was a character-and-a-half. But ah, Charles went with me. We found the SNCC house.

AW: Which was where?

EH: At the corner of South Boulevard, and back then it was Oakland Avenue, now it's Malcolm X...a big two-story house and ah, we went by there and we met ah, met Ernest and some of the brothas and sistas that were there, you know, in the movement...just all the memorabilia that was on the wall...a lot of the conversations were kinda new to me...kinda scary, too because it was something that I really had no experience of. As a student, I was goin' El Centro College at the time and ah, my cousin, you know, he was...he was workin' and he went over there with me and that's when I first met him. I used to go by in the evenin' after school or before and after work and listen to 'em talk and share readings and stuff like that. I think alotta times in the ah, academic world, you know, when you're goin' to school, you just gettin' what you can get outta that book, but to talked to some people who experienced some of this stuff first-hand created a situation where you can compare what you're gettin' in terms of classroom knowledge to a what's actually goin' on in the world and I think that experience was good for me 'cause I wasn't identifiyin' with dashikis and radical, you know, thought. I was readin' about it, but didn't really have a handle on it. And ah I eventually began to do a lot of the reading

and, I guess, some of my favorites that stood out back then were Frantz Fanon and some other authors that I really enjoyed, you know. Um, the more I read, the more I wanted to read and it seemed like I wanna say that Ernest used to...that SNCC had a lil' readin' list, you know books that we had to, you know be familiar with. Ah, then I got a chance to start attendin' a few of the meetins and rallies. Ah, I was constantly bein' asked if I wanted to become a member. I was still hesitant because I said, "You Black folk goin' to jail. I'm tryna go to school." You know that was a problem then, but it was a lot of people there who had...who were still in school and some, you know, who had dropped out of school to be involved in the movement and I was gradually movin' toward that. But, just bein' at that SNCC house, that was an experience and meetin' all those characters there and...young men and women.

AW: So, when did you officially join SNCC and what position did you hold?

EH: In 1968. Um, kinda neophyte and dumb at first. Ah, you know, a lot of times in a situation like that, what you wanna do is just emulate whoever's in charge, you know, and that's what I was doin' emulatin' Ernest and some of the other guys at the SNCC house and the women, too. Then I started to develop my own self-confidence, you know, just bein' knowledgeable. I started off with the most of my action was around voting rights, you know 'cause back then in the sixties, you know, in Dallas it was kinda unique in the sense that we had one of the strongest ah, third parties. It was called the American Party. That was George Wallace's party. If you know anything about George Wallace back then, the American Party was challengin' a lot of political races especially in Dallas school board, local elections, state elections. And so ah, gettin' involved with voter registration was big stuff to me and to allow people ah...I don't think Black people in Dallas really took it seriously because we'd just been denied and we'd just wait on the majority of society to just issue ah, you know pass laws and have lil' ah, I guess, lil' mandates for school integration, for lunch counter integration and stuff like that. You know, where they would just be handin' out privilege. That's about how I would describe it, but the voter registration work was my primary duties at the time and part of what I had to do was get out and recruit, you know, other young people and ah, older folk, too and get them involved with voter registration. That went okay. People were still very hesitant to participate because all this was very new to them. We had some voter registration goin' on with other organizations like the NAACP and stuff like that, but I think at SNCC we were takin' a more radical stance that, you know, "This American Party is serious about takin' over politics, takin' over the school system and we needed to have a kinda balance to that conservatism." And ah, I wont say that I was by myself, but I got an opportunity to ah, work a lot of public housing, knocking on a lot of doors. You know, gettin' called some harsh and bitter names by African Americans for that work and I would go to the door and knock on the door and talk to them about voter registration and sometime they'd slam the door in my face or call me a, "Black fool" or a "Troublemaker." But, persistence ah, one lady in particular that I talk about in the publication that I'm gettin' ready to do, about the third time I got around to her house I would just kinda go back and forth. And ah, she said she was gone do it. (Begins to tear up) And that was my first...excuse me.

AW: That's okay. You want me to turn off the camera?

EH: Yeah, that would be fine.

(Interviewer turns camera off)

EH: But anyway, she ah, finally said she would register and as I was gettin' her card out, she said, "Why don't you fill it out for me." Then I realized, she couldn't write. And so, we were out there tryna help, and the issue wasn't whether or not they wanted to vote...illiterate. So, we had a dual situation where we'd try to get 'em registered to vote and also ah, help them find some kinda resource to deal with illiteracy. So anybody's ever done any community organizin', ah, you know, when you knock on those doors and when they open 'em up, and you get 'em to talking, then you realize ah, what a deficit it is and that's why, you know, I was makin' some of the comments I was makin' prior to the taping about the educational piece and we had to be adamant and I don't think we had time to play. We don't have time for nonsense, you know, as a group of people and I think we're losin' ground. But ah, that was a good experience 'cause I got a chance to work Washington Place, worked Roseland Homes, Rose Terrace, Turner Courts, West Dallas Projects, I worked 'em all, door-to-door. I didn't get the chance to get to every unit, but probably 'bout at least sixty to seventy percent and that's how I got started, you know. And really ah, 'cause every door that opened had a different issue other than registerin' to vote. And then that's when I made the decision to drop out of school and start doin' this stuff full-time, just bein' able to access the gravity of the need and it was great...I...all kinda instances where one day I lef the SNCC house and there was a little boy on the corner and he was gettin' ready to catch the bus and one bus passed him by and I saw him and the next bus passed him by and I couldn't figure out why he didn't get on the bus. So I walked over and asked him. Legally blind! So he really couldn't tell what bus he was catchin' and I guess the driver at the time, you know, it wasn't any Black drivers back then, you know, since he couldn't tell the drive, you know, um, what he actually wanted, because he couldn't read, because he couldn't see and that's when we made the referral to, we used to have what we called the Black Lions Club that did eye, you know, they did used glasses. So...and I think that's when you start volunteering, whether it's voter registration or workin' with students ah, you gone always have, you know, you workin' with young people then, you know, follow 'em home, 'cause if you follow 'em home then you gone find out where the real problem is and sometimes it doesn't have anything to do with the kid, you know. So that's where your volunteer work and your commitment to it will allow you to create some ways for people to start communicatin' with you and one thing I like about people in public housing, they talked to each other all the time. Ah, I call it a "project mentality": borrowin' a slice of bread. They don't really want the bread, they just to know that you will let them have it and then they kinda develop that rapport because they share. So that borrowin' a cup of sugar ain't about a cup of sugar, it's about whether or not you're gonna share with me and we'll develop that rapport and that's been my experience as far as community organization. Now, I have a lot of educational background, but that door-to-door and that interaction is what makes the difference between a, a organizer and a great organizer. Ah, Ernest McMillan is a great organizer. I consider myself a great organizer because you utilize that (Put finger to ear as if to imply he listens) If you listen, people I the community will

tell you everything that's buggin' 'em, you know, and they might have some ideas for resolutions to the kinda problems they may be havin'.

AW: That's actually one of my next questions. Um, in you all being young and ah, you know, younger than probably some of the people that you were servicing, how was it that you were able to really get the help of older people in the community? Not only organizers, but, I mean those individuals that you would go and knock on the door. How would you engage them and let them, let their voices be heard?

EH: That's a good question because they were very resistant. Because they were older the assumption was, "You're young and ambitious, fool-hardy. Stop stirrin' up trouble with these white folks in this town 'cause you gone get us in trouble. You might get us put out of public housing," etcetera. We had to go in and ah, you know, run little errands for 'em, you know. So how do you establish where they put the trust in you and stuff like that? We were pretty broke and poor ourselves so we didn't have too much to offer them other than, you know, maybe go to the market for them or to...you know, just sit there and talk with 'em. You know, I used to sit on front porches, you know and in public housin', if you have any experience with it at all, especially the older units, a lot of it is outdoor sittin' around on the porch and on the stoops. And ah, some people, you just find out ah, in every buildin' in every block, is that maybe one or two people in there, they kinda take the lead and you try to, I won't say furrow it out, but just try to identify who that person is. I would describe it like a gatekeeper, okay, and once you determine who that gatekeeper is, you know, you just work on tryna recruit them, but I think if you can get them recruited...

AW: Then you got the whole neighborhood...

EH: Yeah, that lowers the barriers and resistance on the part of the other people.

AW: and y'all were successful in gettin' those gatekeepers in the organization?

EH: Ah, some of 'em. You know, most of 'em still very standoffish. Ah, we used to get treated pretty hard by local law enforcement and stuff like that so and people used to see police stoppin' ya then they don't necessarily wanna be around you, okay. And ah, they'll talk to you, but they don't wanna get chummy with you because of fear of retaliation, maybe by their landlord or retaliation by the patrolman on the beat. You know, "Wh you're hangin' or talkin' with this troublemaker?" We got accused of bein' communist. We got accused of bein' all kind of troublemakers and, you know, back then if you identified or talkin' about Malcolm X or Doctor King, or any of the people involved in the movement, you were a troublemaker and they would do about everything they could to make it difficult for you. Ah, they used to have a process called "preventative detention" and I probably been arrested over twenty or thirty times, but two-thirds of those, never was booked. They used to get us off the street. If you not on the street, can't register voters, can't register voters, you're not challengin'...

AW: The status quo.

EH: ...Authority, that's correct. And so, they knew exactly what they were doin', you know, and it was...they were very organized at what they were doin', you know, to arrest us and pick us up, sometimes not even take us downtown and book us, but just keep us out of the mix and then we'd get back and ah, you know, sometimes people would see us comin' and go inside because they didn't wanna be harassed themselves by affiliation with, with us, but, but yeah, the voter registration was my first piece and the more I got involved then that kind of ah, elevated to ah, bein' a draft counselor for SNCC.

AW: And what is that exactly?

EH: Ah, during the sixties the United States had what they called the military draft and ah, the ah, program in SNCC, you know every SNCC chapter had a draft council. And that draft counselor's job was to inform the potential draftee of their rights under the law and I used to distribute and even used to go down to Selected Service that was the agency whose responsibility it was to ah, you know, send out draft notices and if you were eighteen years of age and not a full-time college student you were eligible. I didn't worry about that because I had a classification that was called 1-Y, which was for like juvenile delinquents or anybody who's ever been arrested. If you had what the military considered to be character issues, then you weren't drafted. About 1967 or '68 President Lyndon Johnson passed a new...had a...signed a new law and kinda legislation approved a situation where all 1-Ys, if they were not enrolled in school, you know, during the regular school year—not summer, but the regular school year, you know the fall and the spring—if they were not enrolled, then they automatically became 1-A, which is draft eligible, regardless of what your classification was prior to and that's how I got caught up, you know, in that. If I had remained in school, then that wouldn't have been an issue, but since I dropped out, I was not a full-time student and I was over eighteen, even though I was a 1-Y, I automatically became 1-A and draft eligible. Most of the counselors back then were drafted because they knew that most of us were gonna resist and then they'd have grounds to the start prosecution process. That was pretty interesting and in my case because I was a draft counselor and I was studyin' all the draft laws, and the book that I was usin' was actually issued by the government. It wasn't anything that SNCC produced. It was their own guidelines and I went to guys and told them, "If you're a soul-survivin' son, you're exempt. Ah, if you came from a rural area, and you're family produced either livestock or grew some type of products that was used in the defense industry, you could be exempt." And so that was the kinda information that I was providin' for these guys. You know, just different lil' bowls, what the law was. They put me out of the center several times and I'd go back the next day and continue with that process...the ah...in my book I apologize to the director of the Selected Service here for givin' her such a hard time. She was just a civil servant, doin' her job, but her job was draftin' young men to...no women were in the military, not bein' drafted, but mostly young men and I refused to draft. And ah, they began the process of tyrna prosecute me. Ah so, when they sent me a notice, I would move, but the key was within ninety days you had to give them a new address, so they could send you a new notice. Well, about the eightieth day, in every place that I gave 'em for a new address, I found another one. I did that for a year. They ah, they were aware, but what I was doin' was perfectly legal and ah, they eventually got tired of playin' the cat and mouse game with

me and ah, went on and ah...I didn't step forward and so it was about ah, maybe a hundred and twenty days after that they ah, wanted to arrest me. We were out doin' a campaign for a local politician and everybody got outta jail...get down and everybody who was with us that day campaignin' got outta jail, except me and I knew then that, you know the feds had drew a warrant and ah, they ah kept me locked up for a lil' while. And ah, then they ah...I made bond. It was kinda funny, I was at the federal buildin' downtown the marshal brought me out and I looked around and ah, Ruth Jefferson and Mickey McGuire and alotta people, they were out in the hallway. And ah, that made me feel pretty good, you know. They made my lil' bond and I got out and I had to...eventually because I was in Austin...the SNCC office in Austin, I don't know if you know Larry Jackson or not...Larry was the Field Director in Austin, like Ernest was up here and so ah, we went to the ah, ah...would you cut it off for just a second?

AW: Okay.

(Interviewer turns off camera. After a second the tape resumes)

EH: So, I ah, they eventually got me to the point where I had to go to the induction center and I...I didn't cooperate at all and they asked me if I was gonna cooperate and I didn't answer them and I didn't cooperate. So it took them about a year-and-a-half to make up their made and go 'head and take me to court and ah, when I did end up goin' to court, I showed up with a "Free Ernie" button, "Free Huey," and "Off the Pig" button and the federal judge explained to me that decorum in the federal court required that I have on a coat and tie. Since I didn't have one, he would excuse that, but otherwise they gotta hold me in contempt. And then they told me they would, "Lock my Black ass up" if, you know, I didn't comply. So I got a coat and tie, took off my buttons, and ah, they ah, gave us a lil'...and the judge was tryna help me because the guy he appointed was a Hispanic lawyer in San Antonio and since I was in Austin, I had the SNCC address as my home address. And so, even my military records say 1311 Rosewood. Well, everybody down there know that's the SNCC office and ah, the ah, and I was ah, married at the time...just got married, too to a young lady. She was a radical out of UT Austin, pretty popular and her daddy was a big-time veterinarian in the state of Texas and her brother, too. He's deceased now. He's in the state Agricultural Hall of Fame, but he didn't like the idea that his daughter was hangin' out with some radical and was against the war. I guess I was havin' a hard time, not only from law enforcement, but also on the personal side, too. So I was tryna deal with alla that, you know. They ah, I left here and I was instrumental in gettin' across the border and so, and had a lil' network all the way up, from Dallas all the way up to Detroit and from Detroit to Canada and I ended up in Montreal. I gotta chance to go to Beasley and his court. So, I'm sittin' up there. It was a French court in a province in Montreal...Quebec, that's what it was and the FBI was there in the courtroom, but they couldn't do anything to me because they were in a foreign country. So I kinda smiled at 'em and nodded and they knew who I was, you know, 'cause they had a lil' clipboard and ah, got a chance to talk to Charles. He turned me onto some people there that was involved with the war resistance in ah, in Montreal and I stayed there for a lil' while, but very much like a friend of mine that don't like the cold weather, I had to remove myself from there. And ah, I came back to Texas and called the attorney Ed Polk and before I could ask him anything, he says ah, "The feds know you back in

town. They want you to come down and turn yourself in.” And ah, I told him, “Tell ‘em to come out to South Dallas and get me. I ain’t comin’ down there” because to voluntarily help them prosecute me that’s a bull to me. So, the ah (Pauses) pardon me. They put me back in court and San Antonio and I got down there and the judge said ah, he wanted to send me to ah, Springfield Federal Prison for observation because it must be somethin’ mentally wrong with me ‘cause I didn’t wanna go and defend my country. So they ah, had me to go and meet ah, this colonel who was over Selected Service in the state of Texas. This guy tole me ah, that when he was a student at UT that he and other students had helped get Marian Anderson an opportunity to sing to the students in the music hall at UT and I shouldn’t be so negative and harsh toward, you know, servin’ my country. And I had explained to him that, “I had a great idea” and he wanted to know what that idea was and I said to him that since he was so fond of someone Black singin’ in the music hall that I would go sing and he could send Marian Anderson ass to Southeast Asia. (Laughs) That didn’t go over real well. He sent my ass out to Mental Hygiene out at Fort Sam. That’s when it really started escalatin’ then. Sent my ass to Mental Hygiene at Fort Sam Houston and this guy was askin’ me questions and I used one of Malcolm’s old...that’s when they really...you know, back in the SNCC house days...I asked the guy, “You like steak?” He said, “Oh yeah.” I said, “How you like it?” He said, “Rare.” Then I told him, “You guys are pretty bloodthirsty. Mayhem all around the world and pickin’ on the lesser guy,” you know, in Southeast Asia. And ah, when I told him he liked that rare meat, “See there, bloody!” He threw down his clipboard and ah, had me ordered back to Bexar County Jail. And so, I told the U.S. marshal, “Put me in a single cell. This is just too much for me.” So these local sheriffs took me down two flights of stairs. I looked down this hallway and ‘bout ten-foot ceilin’, lil’ light bulbs every twenty feet. No bars, just all these metal lil’ doors and they opened up this lil’ room and I looked inside and I said, “There’s no mattress in here. There’s no face basin. There’s no commode. Where do you use the bathroom?” And stuff like that. I said, “Hey man, I just wanna single cell” and they laughed and they said, “Well, in Bexar County jail this is a single cell.” So I had this, I would say about a five by eight, ten foot ceilin’, ceilin’ fan runnin’ twenty-four/seven, light on twenty-four/seven and they flushed this lil’ drain in the floor from outside that box. So, it took a lil’ practice. You know, you defecate and you miss the hole, you gotta problem. So, I asked them, I says, “When is somebody gonna come and clean this shit up?” They said, “We’ll get around to it.” So, me havin’ to eat with my own defecation lasted for a lil’ while and they did alotta that to kinda mentally ah, mess wit’ cha and they flushed it from outside and I had a blanket, a pillow, but no mattress, just that metal deal. It was the hole and I stayed ther for about forty-five days and they took me to the federal prison and ah, when I got there I saw those zombies lined up and they just, they medicate the hell out of ya to the point that you just eatin’ and goin’ to the restroom and eatin’ and goin’ to the restroom all day long. I tole ‘em, “I don’t want any medication. I don’t want anything.” So I’d go to the learnin’ center everyday and right before I got ready to leave there, I was playin’ basketball on the lil’ basketball team and we were playin’ Southwest Missouri and I got hit right around this eye socket (Points to his left eye) so they had shaved the side of my head. I had about ten sutures that went across my head so they could reach down inside and reset the bone inside my eye. So when I got back to federal court that’s when my hundred and eighty days were up. I got back to federal court and I still had a lil’ hair on this side and

you could imagine what it looked like, all this was shaved with about maybe ten sutures across there. And I told the...my attorney, "Tell the judge I wanna volunteer for the draft" because the attorney came to me and tole me...he asked me what did I do to the U. S. attorney. I was was sendin' him stuff from prison and jail: letters, magazines. One issue in particular was in August of '68, Huey P. Newton was on the cover of *Ebony Magazine*. You've seen that picture where he's settin' in that wicker chair with that shotgun? That's what I sent to him. Bad move. He took it real personal. And so, he had it on his stack of briefs when he got to court and he was just starrin' me down 'cause he told my attorney, "I'm gonna give him ten years. He's gettin' ten years." I was sayin' to myself, "That's what you think!" And so, what eventually happened was ah, I volunteered for the draft and, you know, he was diametrically opposed to that, but I had a vistin' judge and the visitin' judge just says ah, "That's what it's about, him not goin' to the draft. He volunteered." I said, "I'm ready to serve my country" and he said, "Fine." So he told the U.S. marshals to take me to the induction center and turn me over to the United States military. I was sposed to go into the army. They could've put me in the marshals' car and drove, this is downtown San Antonio, and drove me down to the induction center. Uh uh, they manacled me, belly chain...(Begins to tear up)

(Interviewer turns off the camera)

AW: Okay.

EH: But yeah, like I was sayin' they put manacles on me with a belly chain around your waist, you know, and chains up to your ankle and handcuffed me and took me down the streets. They could've put me in the car, but they chose not to. They wanted to parade me out in the streets. And so when I got to the induction center, they unhooked the chains and the manacles and stuff and they just let it hit the floor, you know, makin' that loud noise to get the attention of the guys who was there for induction. Well, that scared the hell out of them and I had that big scar on the side of my head and all them chains and their attitude was like, "Do I have to go somewhere with this animal?" And this ah, this white, the sergeant...and in front of everybody in line he was goin', "Army, army, marine, army," playin' with these guys lives. And that son-of-a-bitch got to me and said, "Marine" and it seems like my whole deal just went into rewind when I really started actin' a fool and I said, "Well, I'm goin' in the U. S. Army that was the order of the judge" and I'm not in the army. I haven't taken the oath yet and I said, "You call that goddamn U.S. marshal 'cause I'm goin' back to Bexar County Jail to that hole." And ah, they had a lil' conference. Then he turned around and he said, "U. S. Army" and I said, "That's what I said you son-of-a-bitch" and then they marched me on through and ah, I ended up goin' to Fort Lewis, Washington. It was me, about three other Black guys, five white guys, and thirty-five Hispanics and ah, when I was there the ah...ah I thought about some of the things that Ernest had said, "You not in the movement; the movement's in you." And ah, I tried to deal with that the best I could. I just made the best of a bad situation. I was terrified by the fact that I might end up goin' to Southeast Asia, but I did know the regulations. I had to have twelve months of active duty left before they could send me to Southeast Asia. While there, when the training was over with, they had ah, a warrant for my arrest outta Fort Worth, Texas. But as maybe you don't know, I have a

twin brother and it was him, not me, but I didn't tell them. So that just added some more time on there. So I said, "Ah! Okay, I see how this is workin'." So that tie got knocked off and I got to another place and they said, "We need volunteers to train warring officers and blah, blah, blah" and I volunteered and that was another month-and-a-half, two months. And I said, "Hell, before I ended up finishin' my trainin' I only had thirteen months to do." So, I said, "if I can knock down two more that would be eleven and" (Kisses is hand) you know, they couldn't send me to combat zone and that happened. Ah, I usta stay in alotta trouble. I started ceasin' a few buildins while I was in there ah, tryna stop them from just forcin' guys out. They come back from Southeast Asia and ah, a lot of 'em really wasn't ready to be back, you know, with the rest of the general population. They were pretty wound up. Comin' straight outta Viet Nam and they takin' 'em to Germany, where I was stationed at and I was tryna help them save their benefits, you know, 'cause they was gettin' less than honorable conditions, general discharges and we started fightin' that and we scheduled a meetin' to meet wit the judge advocate general in Swineford, Germany. And ah, the colonel let us use the orderly room and when he went to lunch, my barrack commander had the place surrounded by MPs and said we had ceased the buildin' and the lawyer was in there with us and he was a young guy. He was terrified, you know, I mean, they were locked and loaded. They were gettin' ready to come in and start kickin' somebody's ass. And so, we finally got that situation diffused and ah, the company I was in, these white guys, put these rebel flags up, you know, on their doors and stuff like that. So, I just created the Sons of Shaka and had about fourteen brothas and they had the signs on their door. They said, "Who is Shaka?" I said, "It says the Sons of Shaka, so it must mean that he's my daddy." And so they didn't like that so they were tryna figure out how they were gonna get me locked up, but ah I went to Troy State University when I was in there. I took U. S. Army -Europe ah, college education courses and maxed out on alla them. Had some of the highest scores in the United States Army in Europe and I applied for early out for UTA. They didn't wanna give it to me. Lady came down who was the head of education center for Swineford, Germany and said I had the highest scores of anybody in their unit. And why couldn't I get an early out to go to school? And so she went to the colonel and the colonel allowed ah, you know, went on and signed the paperwork so I could get out early and gone ahead and come back and ah, and go to school. So that was the extent of it and when I got out and came back, I started hangin' with ah...they were tryna get me...lotta those guys were still tryna get me involved in the movement with a Curtis Gaines.

AW: What year was this that you came back?

EH: Seventy ah... '72. January.

AW: Now, my uncle was in jail at this time?

EH: Uhhhh...I tryna remember.

AW: Or he was outta the country.

EH: Yeah, yeah, he was outta the country. I was one of the guys...he said he didn't get the ten thousand dollars. Curtis said he did give it to him, but I was the guy who had Curtis to send that ten thousand dollars 'cause he was in Ohio or somewhere and they were tryna expedite him here, but he had the secure legal council and I asked Curtis to send that money to help Ernest. He said he did. Ernest said he didn't know anything about it. So I didn't question any of that and I hung around messin' with Curtis and them for a lil' while and that was, you know, a buncha scam and b.s.

AW: Were you involved in the Black Panther Party?

EH: Naw, not the Party. By then they had already purged Gaines from the Panther Party and he had formed a new ah, organization that was called Grassroots, Incorporated. Me, my twin brotha, Cornelius Jackson, I don't know if you met Don Lister or not—Red Dog. Red Dog was my partna in the streets. I violated his trust over a woman. So, that was ah, kinda sad and...we still speak but we usta ride everyday and ah, I got a real close relationship...he actually saved my sister-in-laws life when the police raided that house, 'cause they came in shootin' and they didn't come in bullshittin'. That's what I was tellin' you earlier. People can talk that shit, but when they come, they comin' and ah, if you not prepared to ah, fight or maybe die, then you need to, you know, stay out the mix. You just in the way. You really are. You know, and I've had my door kicked in, been brought out, you now, I was tellin' you all about the young lady I was married to when Ernest and I were roommates. 'Bout four somethin' in the mornin' there was a knock on the door and ah, Felicia went to the door.

AW: Felicia his wife?

EH: Uh huh.

AW: My Aunt Felicia?

EH: Yeah. Ernest had...back then you had, if you opened the door, you had to push it closed to get the chain off. When she went to push that door, they thought she was tryna lock it and whenthey hit it, the door facin' and everything else, you know, came tumblin' in and when she screamed, that's when Ernest came out with that thirty caliber carbine. And when they heard that metal on metal they wasn't so fuckin' bad. So they went from bein' real tough guys kickin' yo' do' in and when they heard that chamber, shit, you thought they was doin' that Michael Jackson Moonwalk backin' the hell up outta there. And so, I woke up ah, my wife. She was up, but... 'cause back then we only had one door, that was just the front door entry where they had busted in, but they wasn't comin' any further. When they heard that bolt on that carbine, they stopped, screamed, "That nigger got a gun!" And so we were tryna look at the back window maybe we could try to get out through the back, but they were already there with they shotgun waitin' on us to come out the back. And so ah, they got on the P. A. and said, "Either you come out or we killin' every nigger in there." And Ernest, when Ernest threw the rifle out, they ah...wasn't any shots fired by them or us and when Ernie threw the rifle out, they got bad again. Punks! (Chuckles) And ah, I had on my underwear and ah, my wife just had on a

pair of panties no bra or nothin' and that's the way they brought us out, you know, shotguns to our head. You know, punchin' me upside the head with a shotgun. You know, "Which one of 'em is this?" You know, just tearin' the house up. They didn't kow what they were lookin' for. They came after that rifle 'cause Ernest had bought the rifle. We were at a medallion store. We were actually goin' to the store for your grandmother and we stopped by the medallion store. They didn't have what we needed, we were gettin' ready to leave and so one of the merchants came up and said, "Hey ah, can I help you?" And Ernest said, "Yeah, I'd like to look at rifles." They recognized him and then Ernest said, "Well, we betta go 'cause it looks like it's gonna be a problem." And ah, so the rest of us said, "Screw that. We can look at these." And so everything that we pointed out, they were outta stock. (Chuckles) So then we started puttin' the fool on then, "Well, can a nigga buy a axe handle?" You know, that's what Luster Mattocks would say, "Can a nigga buy a axe handle? A club? A hatchet?" You know...and they were gettin' ready to call the law then. So we went on and left, but that was the same rifle they was comin' after that mornin'. And ah, I called out to Ruth Jefferson. They raided her at the same time and raided Matthew Johnson's daddy's house at the same time. And ah, like I say, brought us out at gun point. And ah, you know, shortly after that I went to court and federal prison and ah, Mack, when I got back with Curtis and them, Mack was outta the country, him and ah, Don Williams—Kwesi. You know Kwesi is deceased now. It's kinda funny, in '68, before I actually got drafted, 'cause I knew they were gone come pretty soon a guy was at City Hall and they had passed a Riot Ordinance. I couldn't drive back then, but I got a copy of that ordinance and I walked all the way back to South Dallas. They were kinda tough on me. They said, "Well, at least you involved in the revolution man. You can't drive, but you walked all the way back." I said, "Yeah." And ah, that was when the Black Citizens for Justice, Law, and Order was formed from that and ah, alotta people here locally have made alotta political mileage offa our efforts. And they don't think it was ah, you know, people say, "Ah, nothin' happened in Dallas." Ah, 'til you on the other end of that shotgun, it's easy to say... 'til they done chained yo' ass up and beat you and make you eat with you own shit, you know, it's tough. So they can all talk all the shit they want about Dallas, about me, Mack, Ruth Jefferson, Mike Morris...and Michael Morris was one of the first African Americans to win a Blue Key Award from Southern Methodist University, but the treatment for the Black students was so bad out there that they called us in and when we got here, we stopped all that shit. They was settin' fire to the doors of Black students' dorms. That didn't come out in the press. You know, Black students would go in the library at night, especially the girls and they'd be drivin' their cars up on the sidewalk, puttin' their lights on bright, you know, like they gone run 'em over. We broke that shit up and whopped some asses out there, too. Yeah, we eliminated that shit and in return, they helped me in public housing, you remember, with voter registration. You know, it was kind of a give and take situation and not too long ago, Mike said he went back out there, and he's disabled now at home, bitter. I think we all suffer from some kinda post-traumatic stress...bein' up all night, watchin', lookin', peekin' out the window, you know. We caught people in the trash near the SNCC house, all kinda shit like that and Mack might not talk about it; I don't know. But ah, that's why I'm a pretty nice guy. I attend the A. M. E. Church, try to be prayerful about alotta things, but if you have a death wish, I'm the person you need to see and anybody who was there with me'll tell you and

I used to think I was a bad actor, but Charles Beasley takes the cake on that one. He ah, he's the real deal. When Ernest first got locked up, some guys came up to the SNCC office in Houston. They said, "Man, yo' brotha's in jail. You need to be out there stealin' trains and robbin' banks. You know, creatin' havoc." They came out on a Saturday and ah, woke Charles up talkin' loud in the SNCC house. He heard 'em. He came downstairs and said, "C'mon. Let's go." I don't know where he took 'em, but the next mornin' one of 'em came back and the first thing he wanted to know was Beasley there. I said, "Naw, he ain't here." He said, "Which way is the Houston highway?" 'Cause wherever he took 'em, whatever he did, they didn't want no more part of that. So nobody else came to the Dallas SNCC office talkin' 'bout they wanna be out doin' somethin' radical 'cause we just wasn't in the, you know, mindset for that bullshit, you know. We know what we were bein' confronted with on a daily basis. I don't mean every other month: daily arrests, daily harassment. You know, shit, I'mma say at least for nine to twelve months, just everyday, everyday. So that got to be pretty stressful on us, you know what I mean, where it created some problems. After the deal with Curtis, they raided the house over at Curtis's. I was already gone.

AW: What even are you talkin' about?

EH: What?

AW: You said, "After they raided Curtis's" house, what event, what situation?

EH: Oh, um, they were comin' after my brother Eddie and Cornelius Jackson for murder and they were comin' after Curtis for ah—at the time we didn't know that Curtis was an FBI informant and that there was some more added to the stuff that was already goin' down, but Curtis was on the payroll with the county and with the feds and we didn't know it. I was already gone, but Eddie and Cornelius got themselves into a lil' trouble, you know. They both got convicted of murder, robbery. Ah, Curtis, they arrested him for possession of marijuana. He made bond and they were...and, you know, they kept the other guys. Don Lister got beat pretty bad. He ah, when they came in and raided, and they came in shootin', you know. They didn't come in talkin' 'bout no warrants or nothin'. They came in shootin' 'cause they know that everybody in that house was armed and ah, Red Dog—ah, he doesn't like to be called Red Dog now, that's what somebody tole me—but he put my niece and my brother's wife in the bathtub to protect them, you know, from the gunfire and ah, he used to ah, had a riot twelve, which was an automatic shotgun and ah, he was a bad man. Eh took 'em down, too and he injured a couple officers pretty bad and they, they beat him real bad, you know, behind that. And my brother wasn't there. They took Cornelius in. A few days later, they ah, caught my brother and arrested him and it was a undercover guy, came to the house bringin' a pound of weed and left it there and, you know, we just had a standin' rule, "No drugs in the house" but for some reason, Curtis accepted this money...this...drugs from this guy and the next mornin' they raided. And they came heavy and hard. But ah, and that was about the end of that lil' saga. But Eddie and Cornelius stayed in prison. My brother won his on appeal. Cornelius had to do, I don't know, I wanna say about eight years. Red Dog did ten flat. John Henry Woods did about two, three years, and I missed it by a few days

'cause I had left. I was upset with Curtis with some stuff they were puttin' down. So I said, "I'm outta here" and I just missed it by two or three days. I'm pretty sure they made they missed me in the mix, but kinda like the situation with the military, everywhere I went in the military, I signed up for school, I volunteered. So all the other guys, they were sayin', "Man, I ain't even wanna draft. I ain't volunteerin' for shit." So I said, "Well," to myself, "You can't count. So if you can't count, that's your problem." You know, "I can. So I know if I get passed this twelve months, I don't give a damn what they're talkin' about. I know what the rules are and I just use regulations against 'em day in and day out." You know, if they put food out and the menu's not posted, I'd file on 'em. If they were sposed to have somebody with some rank in charge of a detail and that person...like if they said they sposed to have a sergeant and they have PFC there, I'd file on 'em. And so, that's the type of soldier I was. I didn't give...you know, they usta put me on guard duty and I'd make the colonel's orderly. That means I was the sharpest guy on guard duty and I didn't have to pull a guard duty. Then they started givin' me KP, which is like kitchen police and I'd say, "Can I have the grease trap?" That's the nastiest part, but I could be outside, plug in my radio and then I started chargin' the other servers who wanted to go home or go downtown on the weekend. I said, "Gimme fifty dollars. I'll pull your KP for you." And so they got ah...every time they attempted to punish me, I'd take that and make a money-makin' venture out of it and that used to just piss them the hell off. One day myself...and I made alotta friends in the military, too...and a lot of 'em were just as radical as the guys I left in SNCC. And we were in the mess hall one day and my buddy from Chicago who happened to be a member of—you ever heard of the Black Keystone Rangers?

AW: That sounds familiar.

EH: Black Stone Rangers?

AW: From Chicago?

EH: Yep! Eddie Lee! All these are, you know, Viet Nam era vets. They were grunt, you know. I was stationed in Fort Rutgers, Alabama, which was the ah, aviation center for the military, you know, that's where all the Cobra and Huey gunships were down there, and the bigots. But anyway, one of the...Eddie Lee's homeboys came over to us and his eye was all puffy because a guy doin' the count in the mess hall had hit him in the eye about a meal card, ain't even know him, in the same unit. And so, I said, "Hey man, that can't go down because if they get away with hittin' this guy, then somebody else is gonna be a target." So we just got together and talked about it and I said, "Hey let's light his ass up." And we went and lit him up and it escalated in probably about thirty seconds the whole mess hall...I'm sayin' about fifty guys deep into it. So me and my buddy and about three or four others in my unit, we ran out the back door. So the next mornin' our commander was sayin', "I'm glad nobody in this unit was involved in the mêlée in the mess hall." I said, "That's right, we stayed clear of that, sir." You know what I mean and so I played that role with they ass. I said, "I'd love to volunteer." And so one mornin', an officer who was a pilot he said, "You just gettin' over on us" and nobody else was around, 'cause if you don't have a witness, you ain't got shit to say. You need

somebody to support, you know, if you got some kinda complaint or somethin', you better have somebody who can say, "Yep he said it" or "She said it," otherwise it don't fly. He said I was gettin' over on this man, 'cause he knew what I was doin' with that time. I said, "You're in reserves. When you get through with this trainin', your ass is goin' back home with your mama or your wife. I don't have a choice. So if you wanan go to Southeast Asia that bad, hell I'll trade places with yo' ass, otherwise shut the" (Mouths the expletive that begins with "f") "up and that's the reality of it. Anything else, sir?" And so they just...so that handle about bein' ah, kinda short-tempered, goin' off the deep end and I have at church, at work, at school, at the house 'cause enough is enough. I've been through enough wouldn't you say?

AW: After hearin' this I would say yes.

EH: And so has your uncle. He handles it a lil' better than me.

AW: I have a few questions for you.

EH: But I, I, I, ah, I had weapons all over my house because until they kick your door in, and when they come in they comin' to do some serious bodily harm. Nobody quite gets it until it happens to them or they're there to witness it. Then, they clearly understand that we live in a violent country and sometimes ah, you know, you have to decide when you have a family, like my wife and these kids and stuff like that, I'm just kinda ole school and these guys...if you're not prepared to protect them, then you don't need 'em. I protect my wife and my family and kids and when I tell 'em to stop, they stop 'cause if they don't then my frustrations get directed towards them, you know. I know I've experienced enough to know when a bad situation is developing. And so, when I can see it, when you kinda see stuff beginning to build, and you know this verbal is gone get physical, and might even escalate to more than that. I had the sense to be able to pick up on that. So I remove myself and I remove my wife and my daughters and say (Puts index finger over mouth and makes a motion to "shush" someone) "Let's go." 'Cause we live in a society where when they run across a—when I say they, I mean law enforcement or people in authority—when they run across a Black male that they feel is gone be hostile towards them, it's gone happen if you don't diffuse it and I always try to diffuse it 'cause I know what my ultimate end is gonna be 'cause I've seen a very extreme...I've experienced them at the extreme and t don't take long for 'em to get there because the assumption is it's imbedded that I'm not supposed to resist or, you know, challenge your authority. And as long as they feel like that, you just have to be very—and maybe that's bein' paranoid on my part but it's kept me, you know, from gettin' shot or, you know, 'cause I almost got shot at Fort Lewis, Washington on the rifle range. Fifty guys on the range and I had a bad target on the range about two hundred meters, held up my red flag and went down range. And ah, that's when they was holdin' me over and I say they was holdin' me over because they had a warrant for my arrest in Fort Worth, Texas for robbery, but it was my twin brother, but I didn't tell 'em. They put me on this detail on the range and I heard 'em say, "Lock and load one ten-round magazine!" You know, you hear it on the P. A. I said, "Maybe that's just down range" where they got what they call alibi fire and if they're on the range shooting and they got left over ammunition—say if

you got ah, ten rounds and maybe you only use up eight of ‘em, you fire those other two off. That’s alibi fire. I thought that’s what it was. Then he said, “Watch your lanes.” I said, “That’s not the right command” and then, those targets popped up. So when the targets popped up, that meant that everybody was gettin’ ready to start firin’ and they did and I was two hundred meters down range. That’s when I began to think that, “Are these son-of-a-bithches tryna kill me?” And I didn’t know because if you’ve ever been in that situation, when...you ever seen a hot-air popcorn popper? You know, where the popcorn kernels are...

AW: Put into the kettle or the thing up top?

EH: Yeah and you see it just rollin’ around? That’s what it’s like. That’s exactly what it’s like. And so, it seemed like it took me forever to hit the ground, but it was just a few seconds. I wet my pants and everything and you know, on the shoulder there, on the jacket where one of the rounds went through, but when it first started happenin’ it sounded like a wasp or a bee that flies by your ear. So, I been to that rodeo. So, it’s a lot of things that scare me, but not a whole lot. But anyway, your question?

AW: I wanted to know, you talked about—just tryna get the timeline straight. So, you talked about bein’ involved in SNCC and then going to prison and then going into the military, coming back you went to UTA?

EH: Correct.

AW: And you were involved with the ah, the movement again?

EH: Grassroots, Incorporated, yeah, with Curtis and nem.

AW: About how long and what years that was?

EH: Ah, that was 1972 and ‘73 and I left there. When I left Grassroots, Incorporated, I went on and enrolled in school full-time and didn’t look back. I worked for the postal service about seven, eight years, formed my own business, formed my own entertainment promotions company, traveled around the country: Kool and the Gang, Ohio Players, James Brown, Gil Scott-Heron. I enjoyed all that, but I was tryna parent at the same time. Not good. So I eventually stopped all that and finished up my undergrad and then went on to ah, graduate school and I, when I finished up my undergrad I ran down to my daddy’s business and was showin’ him my bachelor’s degree and ah such an indifferent individual, my daddy, and he said, “Yeah, that’s good, but what you gone do? Go to school all your life? Get back there and get changed and tear this mortar block down.” I went back there and I worked for about fifteen minutes in that grease and I said, “Nah!” Changed clothes, he said, “Where you goin’?” I said, “Back to school.” And ah, when I left school that fall, I mean that spring and I graduated, I got to the yard in enough time to get to the summer sessions. I went through both summer sessions, the fall, spring, two more summer sessions, and then guess what? I was through! Took a full-time load—straight through. And I went on to be selected by the Clinton Administration in the

Community Building Program in the first five hundred selected nationwide. And ah, then got hired by HUD and ah, won the internship of Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School for the Executive Management Program.

AW: I have a few more questions. I wanted to go back to the beginnin' of your time in the movement. Can you tell us about those beginning days, you know, you were in high school—no you said you were at El Centro?

EH: Right at El Centro in junior college.

AW: Where you a member of the SOUL group there?

EH: No.

AW: Okay, that's one question.

EH: No involvement at all at El Centro. When I got over to the SNCC house that was pretty much it and that fascinated me so much and...

AW: Where you a member of Reverend Herbener's church prior to bein'...

EH: Not a member, I used to attend there as a youngster. We had a basketball team. We got denied ah...we...our team...within the Lutheran, if you're familiar with the Lutheran Church, like the Catholic Church, they don't really need what the rest of society has to offer in terms of school and church and education because they have their own system set up, the Lutheran Church does. And so ah, they had this extensive league and it was like this Concordia University, that's apart of their...and as kids, we were in high school, that's who we had to compete with, which we thought was terribly unfair, but as kids, we were not even...the Automobile Building in Fair Park durin' the summer months was park and rec., but we couldn't go. We weren't allowed in there. And so, when got in this league and had our team, the championship was at this facility, the Fair Park Automobile Building. And so, when we got to the door, they wouldn't let us in and ah, they called us a few choice names. That's when Mark Herbener came up to me, 'cause you know, we just lived across the street, and here we got all this facility, most have six or seven gym floors, but we couldn't participate. And so, when we got to the door and we got denied, Mark Herbener came up and made 'em open that door and we went in and we whopped that ass. All of 'em and then we went to West Texas and whopped some more ass and then we went to the finals in Austin and they ah, you know how they do the brackets. They bracketed us with Concordia Junior College and we were like sophomores and juniors and college, but they bracketed us with the junior college. Why would they do something like that? You know the answer to that. And we lost. But that's the kind of subtle racism and bigotry that as African Americans in this country, we had to deal with. But all white people are not bad and I have white friends, but they're real, genuine type of people. I don't know if you've gotten the chance to talk to Mary Green or meet her, but she's a real warrior, Anglo female who worked with Children's Television Workshop, Sesame Street. There are people like Mark Herbener and people who make

sacrifices doin' what's right. Every time I start feelin' real good about Anglos we have a Jasper, Texas happens, a Duke University incident. We still have quite a long ways to go to talk about doin' any healin' in this country and I just happen to be one of those brothas that ah, I welcome it, but ah, my trust level that I—been treated pretty bad, but ah, I get along with my neighbors and stuff like that and sometimes when they come with those attitudes, me I'm not surprised. Appalled, but not surprised. I'm also one of the guys that says, "It's stops at my front door." So it doesn't matter. If it's bein' disrespectful or bein' hateful, I'm opposed to that. I don't hate anyone. I've seen our country and sometimes our society can be hateful to African Americans just because of who we are. Even now, as resources begin to dry up, in terms of jobs, access to money, etcetera, scarcity really brings out the worst in people. I've seen it happen. If everything else is even and you're still being denied, dig a little deeper and you'll find out that it's somebody in the process who is either sexist or some bigot and I'm in the housing industry, so I see it happen all the time. I just happen to be one of those Black men that if I catch you in the act, you got some explainin' to do. Either that or you gotta be the fastest person in the state of Texas tryna get to Oklahoma, 'cause I'mma be on your ass. Make no mistake.

AW: Now, I have another question for you.

EH: Sure.

AW: Knowing that a lot of this history hasn't been written down, taught to our children in schools, as such. You know, we take Texas History classes, we don't hear about this movement, especially in our native city. So what would a study like this look like successfully? What would a successful study like this teach, say, etcetera.

EH: Ah, I think it would give—and I can only speak about the African American experience—it would them, give the younger people, some insight as to who and what they're really dealing with and it has a lot to do with ah, privilege that's what we talk a lot about at Harvard: privilege. Are you familiar with an educator by the name of Andrew Hacker?

AW: No.

EH: Hacker is a sociologist. You can look him up or research him. He did a study with his students and asked the white students primarily, what would it take for them to be Black. And they said to have all the privileges of whites plus a million dollars and then they wasn't sure then. That's how much disdain they had for even assumin' the role that you, you know, the life you have to live everyday. In terms of what I think young people need to get along with that traditional education piece as it deals with History...see, you ever heard of the TSU riots?

AW: Ah no.

EH: It was a group called the TSU Five. Texas Southern University. Your uncle ever talk about Lee Otis Johnson?

AW: Uh huh.

EH: Well Lee Otis was involved in the TSU Five. So when you research the TSU Five, you'll find out that it was two officers that was shot down there. There was a riot on campus, but they were shot with friendly fire, which means that the other police officers shot them, but they put them on trial. Ah, I don't if they had any, I don't think they had any convictions, but stuff like that. You know, the Jasper, Texas and stuff like that that got alotta notoriety in the national press. It's just a different timeframe, but back then the TSU Five, you know, was a big deal around the state 'cause students came from all over the state and the first change of venue was in Victoria, Texas. So we all went down there. The Houston Police Department, Texas Rangers, FBI, had they cameras, movie cameras and everything else and mug books and mug shots. Back then they were identifying students, singlin' them out and I've seen them do that in the military. They pulled me outta class at Fort Benjamin Harrison and had me report to the other side of the post and they took me, when I went to the upstairs room in a builidin' that had no name on it and it was ah, army intelligence and they had on hippie clothing and dashikis, you know, and they were out, Indiana State, ah, University of Indiana, you know, posin' as students gatherin' information. And so, they asked me about Ernest, they asked me about my ex-wife and all the other people involved in the movement here in Dallas. I was over there—they questioned me for a whole week. And they sent me back to my unit and everybody was actin' like nothin' ever happened—United States Army. So, when you hear about these deals like the Contras, this stuff with the Taliban and opium and drugs and how that's involved with this fight we got over there in Afghanistan, it's real and they killin' folk, literally, civilians. You know, nobody likes to talk about it 'cause we all feel nice and safe, you know, I just wanna get in my SUV and take my kid to ballet and just have a nice day, but it's people literally losin' their lives and I think that young people need to...I always say that, and that's somethin' I picked up from you uncle, if America is on foreign soil, be it military, corporations, or whatever, find out what the natural resource is. When you find out what the natural resource is, then see what our connection is to that resource. The rice bowl of the world was Southeast Asia. The rice cup of the world is southern Arkansas and northern Louisiana. Wilbert D. Mills was...that was his district. So I'm droppin' napalm and other chemicals destroyin' the rice crops in the rice bowl and I'm sellin' 'em rice from the rice cup. You know, through the government. And ah, tongston, which is used as a filament—largest deposits in the world? Southeast Asia! And I try to explain this to my wife, but I think as African Americans we're more concerned with rent and food and transportation. We're not concerned with high tax reform and No Child Left Behind. I'm sendin' my kids to charter school over here, you know, private school. So, I think we have to learn to kinda look, and I don't if that's a certain kinda paranoia. Dr. DuBois said, "We are a bit schizophrenic." We have to be to deal with the people in power here, 'cause if they feel that you are too, kinda like your friends in Philly, if they feel like you're a lil' bit too articulate, you know, or not articulate enough, then they wanna, you know, drop you in this deep, lil' box. I think that's the way America looks at African Americans, but this

might sound kinda bias, but it's a new nigga in town. It's called a Latino and once they get through exploitin' that group, I don't know who's gonna be next, but I base that on precedence with Native Americans. When you read about the history of the Buffalo Soldiers, we help corral those people and decimate them for the United States government, but we celebrate the Buffalo Soldiers and in reality, they just another puppet 'cause soon as the war was over...you know, where are all those forts? Get a map and you look at that map 'cause that's what I do. Those forts are in the southwest: Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona, Fort Wachuka in Arizona, Fort Concho in San Angelo...I been there. But the Buffalo Soldiers were there protection between them and the Native Americans. So I guess when we stop bein' puppets and start really participatin' in the process...So in reference to your question, get involved in the political race. I don't care what it is! I'm not concerned. It can be education. It can be health care. It can be stuff with kids. It can be stuff for single mamas, drug addicts. I don't care. It don't matter, but all of us have a responsibility, I think to get involved in something. So when these kids in my family come around with this do-nothin' attitude...I don't care about your saggin'. Hell, we used to wear bell-bottom pants and it was the same argument then. Don't hate the genre; it's you and your vote. Okay? All this self-hatred for lookin' Black, talkin' Black, actin' Black, we have to get passed that, you know. I used to cry durin' the SNCC days about the wigs and the, you know. That's so much self-hatred. How can you hate yourself and turn around and say you love your kids? And they lookin' up and they Black, too. How we doin'?

AW: Great! I wanted to know what other things you'd like to add to this ah...

EH: Encouragement to students ah, especially African American students. Find you a project or a group that you wanna identify with and support that. If you can't attend a meetin', send some money. If you ain't got no money, volunteer, but just ah, have somethin' that you're committed to. Ah, I don't think we're productive enough. I think that we're gonna lose out as a people because of our lack of productivity. You might be aware of this, the high school dropout rate is sixty percent, but don't feel bad, in the rural communities, it's forty, and that's the majority of society...so that we have this large cohort that's droppin' out in the inner-city. Not quite as large, but just as many folk, not percentage-wise, but just as many that are illiterate, that are rural, and Anglo...you got all these illiterate folks, who's gone runt he country? Who's gone organize the leadership? So, I don't know what the answer is to that...I think that ah even though I came out of a segregated school situation that my teachers lived in the same neighborhoods that I lived in and ah, I was gettin' the same education that her kids was gettin' 'casue they were my classmates and ah, I'm in housing and economic development. That's why I believe in a sense of neighborhood very much like Philadelphia. Not the mindset that goes with it, but the sense of neighborhood. I guess it's a poor example, but it's a good one is the neighborhood bar. They don't have to drive across town worryin' 'bout drivin' drunk just to keep from hurtin' somebody, you know after happy hour. You know, they can just walk to the corner and have a sandwich and a beer. We have to get a design or redesign neighborhoods. We can't wait on the majority of society to see what they doin'. They sprawlin'...you know, you can go north or where we are now and just see the wealth, access to goods and services, and if we don't begin to be very self-sufficient and aware of

that, we gone get minted for a new coin. I don't know, what would you like to be a nickel or a dime? Because that's where we're headed. That's what happens with every extinct race. That's the way they did Native Americans. You know, we pay homage to your destruction by making a coin in your likeness. But ah, commitment, and it doesn't necessarily have to be public service. It can be your church. It can be your school. It doesn't matter. But, "I don't think this is goin' to work." Oh! I've always had a job and school, a job and a part-time job. That's what I've learned in the streets of South Dallas—how to hustle. What I've learned at UTA and Harvard and these other educational institutions is how to deal with that on a, on another level. That's the same thing you do when you go in a board meeting, you know...staff meeting. Look, I don't talk about it. I go out and show you. I house Katrina victims. I can take you over to Texas College and show you graduates who the year before they were floatin' on top of a rooftop in the Lower Ninth. I can! I challenge the rest of them HUD employees to do that and that's just the type of individual I am. And that's why I take it all so serious. (Begins to tear up and motions with his hands that he is done)

AW: I appreciate hearing you speak. Thank you so much.

Interview ends

Interview with Reverend Mark Herbener

Ava Wilson (AW): Okay, for the record could you just state your name for the camera?

Reverend Mark Herbener (RMH): Yes, my name is Mark Herbener.

AW: Okay, and Reverend Herbener, if you would tell us about the movement in Dallas, Texas and your involvement therein.

RMH: Oh my goodness, okay. Ah, movement, let's talk about it. I was...I have to begin by saying ah, it was so ah, unfamiliar to me. It was beyond imagination. I was raised in the most segregated section of Chicago and ah, and I was...went to school in extremely...all...almost all German-speaking community. So, I had that kind of a background. I came to Dallas. I was pastor of a very, of a church in Richardson, Texas ah, in the Lutheran Church, Missouri Senate, which is the most conservative of the ah, Lutheran churches, but I, I had this...we had ah let's say the Lutheran Church at the same time had done a number of what were called Negro missions and ah, there was a church in South Dallas, Mount Olive Lutheran Church and they had had, so help me, the most bigoted pastor you could ever have as their pastor and had him, had him for fourteen years. He was now retiring and he was looking for someone to succeed him. I was approached by him and I said, "Absolutely not. I'm not interested in this." Then I was approached another time and that's a longer story that I won't go into. And I said, "Okay, I'll do it." I came to South Dallas with not the slightest knowledge of the Black community or Civil Rights Movements. Nothing! Zero, zip, zilch! So I was really neophyte and it was a little scary and I didn't know how to handle things and all I could do was say to the members, "What do you think?" But, I was enough of a ah, racist yet, and still am, you know, all of us are, whether we like it or not. Ah, we were...that I was still enough of it that I really had no idea what to do, how to do. I'd say, "Tell me what to do." So that's how I got started. Okay, first thing that happened that I got acquainted with the movement was that there was ah, Bishop College out in deep Oak Cliff and there were meetings out there of a group that were borning the Opportunities Industrialization Center. You're in Philadelphia, you know OIC.

AW: I don't.

RMH: Oh, you don't? Oh...well, you know Reverend Leon Sullivan?

AW: Yes!

RMH: Okay!

AW: Okay!

RMH: Yeah, he founded the OIC Movment...

AW: Okay.

RMH: ...and I was on his national board for a while and I got to Philadelphia. Those were the only times I got to Philadelphia. But anyway, I know the OIC and I knew Reverend Sullivan. Anyway, ah, but in the midst of that there was another young man and I can't...his was an Ernie, too, but I don't remember his name. And ah...last name. And he came to me one day and he asked me whether I would participate in the sit-ins at the Picadilly Restaurant. And I didn't know what to tell him, I really didn't. And so, I asked some of the members of the church, "What do you think?" And they said, "Absolutely not. Do not do it." Ah, he said, "You're living here in this community, ah, you've got a lovely wife and a, and a little boy and a baby daughter, you don't wanna do that. No, it's too dangerous." I was scared, you know. I didn't want to do that. I've regretted it ever since, but that was really what happened. And ah, that was my first contact with the movement and all I could do was keep up with it in the news. Then I...gosh knows these different things and when they happen. How they happen. This was the early sixties. That was nearly a century ago. Wasn't it? Ah..God!

AW: Half a century ago.

RMH: It was half a century ago, yeah right. And I know that I became a...at the same meeting at Bishop College I had become acquainted with Rhett James, pastor of New Hope Baptist Church and ah, and that...I remember a time when Rhett asked me to be on stage at the State Fair Music Hall when Dr. King was coming to town. And I will tell you that I got phone calls from some well-meaning friends saying, "Do not go. It is far too dangerous." And I called Maceo Smith. That name ought to be familiar.

AW: Uh huh.

RMH: And asked him and he said, "Absolutely not. Get there." So I came. I, as I remember it, and I don't know if my memory's faulty; I think it's absolutely right, but I've had other people correct me for various reasons. I said, at the time, that the place was virtually empty and ah, that there were more people on stage than there were in the audience. That's hard to image, but later on, talking with Peter Johnson, and others, my memory is not faulty, ah, the Black ministers had boycotted Martin Luther King. And Martin Luther King came home crying and I can say the same thing, too ah, 'cause years later when I was working with the OIC, ah, Reverend Sullivan asked me whether I could get together a group of Black ministers to meet with him when the OIC had a meeting in Dallas. I said, "I will do my best." I called up the—you had to do it this way. There was no other way. I talked and I called up S. M. Wright and I said, "We've got Reverend Sullivan's going to be in town and ah, it's an important meeting. He wants to meet with the Black ministers of Dallas." "Oh, yas suh. I'll take cah uv dat!" If there was any man that ever talked like the man on a minstrel show, it was S. M. Wright. Listen, that was a good imitation of him. I'm sorry, but "Oh yas, I'll get 'um theyyah!" You know who came? S. M. Wright. He brought not another soul. And that is a snub of Leon Sullivan, who is one of the great leaders ah, in Black America. He just is and to do that gives you some of the character of what the Black ministry was like in Dallas. So, then I recall...see I'm pulling out memories and these, these are not necessarily in order.

They're coming as they pop up in my memory. Ah, I had a group of young men come to visit me, now...oh yeah! We had had a church basketball team um, which was ah, made up of—I convince a couple of these—Ed Harris and Edward Harris and Charles Beasley and I...was Peter? I don't know ah, who all was on it, but anyway, we had this team and they played basketball and they had a ball. We didn't have a gym or anything, but we had got a coach and ah, we had...we have a picture that's somewhere of our little boy, who was the mascot, who was just three years old.

AW: That's cute.

RMH: But anyway ah, so anyway, this...one of the guys called me and said, "Can we have a meeting with you?" "Sure." So who came in this group? The only ones that I remember being there were Ed Harris and Ernie McMillan and they wanted to talk with me about the movement. And I don't, again, I didn't know squat about the movement. And at the time, I knew that the Black Stone Rangers were, were up in Chicago and ah, and they were sort of causing all kinds of difficulty and so forth and the church up there was blaming them. And Ernie was really asking is...the church was being blamed for what some of the stuff that the Black Stone Rangers were doing. So ah, they...that the church was asked, "Have you ever given these people a Bible?" I remember at our meeting I said, "Well, I probably have to offer you a Bible anyway if you're going to meet at our church." And he said, "Oh yeah, that's not a problem. These are all guys that were going to church already, you know. But they wanted to meet in the church basement and they met. That was, I think, the start of the church basement at Mount Olive and ah, it became the place to meet. Ah, now ah, Fred Bell was...Fahim Minkah now...did you know him as Fred or Fahim?"

AW: Well, I don't know him at all, but I've been tryna get in contact with him since I started this project. It's been hard tryna track him down.

RMH: Yeah, it's hard. I remember that he said, I remember him telling me, "Some of the brothers don't know how to spell," and they were writing protest signs and they misspelled them. But, that was had to do with the OK Supermarkets and I'm sure you got plenty on the OK Supermarkets. I don't know enough about it, but I know that ah, your uncle, Ernest, was head and oh gosh... who was his? Matthew?

AW: Matthew Johnson.

RMH: Matthew Johnson, ahhh! Ahh!

AW: Why'd you make that sound?

RMH: Because of Matthew Johnson?

AW: What? Was he kinda infamous?

RMH: Yeah he was infamous! He was! He was terrible. And ah, and I remember that when Ernest went to jail, Matthew was driving around in a sports car. He didn't get that sports car by earning it. Oh yeah, he *earned* it. No, I didn't trust him for anything, no. And what did he name his kids? Matthew Johnson. Everyone of them.

AW: Matthew Johnson the second, third, and fourth.

RMH: Oh yeah, I think the fifth one killed him. Ah, no, no he was mean. He was just plain mean and ah, I don't know enough about the OK Supermarkets because that was what Ernest and them...but that was what the meetings were being, began to be held in the church basement and then they would go out and make the picket signs and go out and picket.

AW: So there would be members of your congregation...(Clears throat) members of your church and members SNCC meeting at your church?

RMH: Yeah, mostly it was just SNCC.

AW: SNCC, okay.

RMH: Yeah our church didn't really meet. Yeah, we had a very small congregation and they just...I...they weren't meeting at that time, not with SNCC. Although one of the people who met with them later on ah, who was very active in leading stuff was Edwin Washington. And I...do you know Ed Washington?

AW: Uh uh.

RMH: Okay. Ah, Ed Washington had been the staff member for the NAACP ah, I know that he had been an acquaintance, a friend of Medgar Evers. So, but he was already at that time when I came to South Dallas...I came in 1961. Ah, at that time he had already left the NAACP or they had terminated him. Ah, Edwin had problems, still does. I saw him not too long ago and he's, really his mind is fading. Ah, but one time there was a time...one of the people in the church said, because Edwin was a member of the church and one of the members said, "Wash is just not at hisself" and another man said, "Wash never been at hisself." So ah, but Edwin was a leader in the community in the Civil Rights Movement and did his utmost to become a leader. Ah, I don't know where I'd take that one, but I don't think he did anything with OK Supermarkets. We have to remember the other piece that got into this was Kennedy's assassination and when Kennedy was assassinated, nobody knew what to do. You never had anything like this happen. We didn't know what to do at the church and said, we said, "Should we have a memorial service?" We did. We had a memorial. I think we were one of the few churches that had one because it was so terrible, nobody knew what to do, but why didn't the Black churches jump up and have memorial services? I remember Ed coming to me and saying, "We ought to have one." My problem was that I was a very conservative Lutheran and Lutherans never had worshiped with any other denominations. That was the problem and Ed said, "No we gotta do this" and I said, "I agree" and we had a

memorial service for Kennedy and was one of the very few in Dallas who did. Okay, where do we go from there?

AW: When you were talking about Edwin Washington, would you say he was mentoring the younger people because he was older?

RMH: He was. He was older. Yeah, he was older. Ah, I can...the only date I can really give is ah, his...the time back in the early sixties when he mentioned that he and his wife were celebrating their seventeenth wedding anniversary.

AW: Oh my. Okay. That kind of gives me a gauge.

RMH: That gives you a gauge. You're right. Ah, his daughter, by the way, oh gosh, is Ashira Tosiwa.

AW: Oh! Ms. Tosiwe from Black Images!

RMH: Yeah.

AW: Really?! It is a small world.

RMH: Yeah. Her name was Shirley Washington.

AW: It's a small world. It is a small world.

RMH: It is and of course you know Emma don't you?

AW: I do. I worked very closely with her and grew up with her daughter.

RMH: Oh did you? Okay good.

AW: I have a question for you. Um, you know I didn't know how conservative your denomination was. So I guess my question for you is what was, what was the climate like, not in your particular congregation, but I guess when you...I don't know exactly how your denomination ah, answers to, you know, your hierarchical structure, but what was that climate like, knowing that you were becoming more involved in the Black community and in the Civil Rights struggles with your peers and your colleagues and those people up higher than you? What was that, what was that exchange like?

RMH: This, that's funny because...let me go back a little about the denomination. Ah, early on in the early 1900s there was a woman by the name of, oh God, there goes my brain again. Ah, a wonderful Black woman. Ah...anyway she had asked the Lutheran Church Missouri Senate—and I'm going to make a note: that was a conservative wing of the Lutheran Churches— whether they would support a ah, the teaching...they were getting teachers for the poor Black communities in Alabama and they said yes. And they did it apart for the church they had a group called the ah, Senautical Conference and they

were the ones who poured money into this, even established a college in Selma. What used to be Alabama Lutheran Academy and College and is now the Concordia University in Selma. Ah, at any rate, there had been that start of ministry even though the Lutheran Church, Missouri Senate ah, as I've told you, I was pretty German. Every one of my teachers in grade school were bilingual: German, English and I had a man teacher for first grade. So that tells you, it was really German. So for them to do this...they had no idea about German. Ah, if you were gonna be a Lutheran, you had to speak German. So "c'mon you Black folks speak German." It was almost like that. Any rate, ah, from that group, ah, that was a, that was a...they always elevated that group as being very special and so there was a strong support for the Black community. When I went from Richardson to South Dallas, that was considered, "Wow! Nobody ever does that." And so, I had a lot of support from my buddies and I had... in fact, every pastor of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Senate in Dallas came to my installation. Every one. They were telling me, "We support you." Now, I got to the point where I started to do the other stuff. They still supported me. They really did. They gave strong support, and I have to say another piece there about that. Oh yeah! I sat one time...the guys went to jail in Dallas jail and I don't remember now who it all was, but it was the SNCC brothers and I sat with my...and they came to me and they said, "We gotta have sixteen hundred dollars."

AW: Okay.

RMH: And I was...whew! Where do I come up...and I was poor. I didn't have any money, but I sat one day with ah, with our mission director for the Texas district of the Missouri Senate and the social ministry director. They were both from Austin, both white. And I said, "I need sixteen hundred dollars." I didn't know how I was gonna get sixteen hundred dollars to bail these guys out of jail. And Jim Cross said to me, he said, "I think I can help you" and he said, "It has to be done the way I wanna do it or we can't get it, but I can do it." My mission's director, Gene Gruel, was sitting next to him. He said, "Can we get in on that, too?" And what they did is they...there was a group called the Lutheran Human Relations Association, it was at the Valpraiso University. They funded them with the sixteen hundred dollars from Texas, they gave them sixteen...no, out of St. Louis...out of the main headquarters with sixteen hundred dollars and they sent me the sixteen hundred dollars. That's how I got it. So we got church support.

AW: How long did that take to get everything?

RMH: It only took a few weeks 'cause I got the brothers out of jail. You know it didn't take long. And I remember at the time I was meeting, there was a group called the Clergy Coalition and I was meeting with Will Bailey, me, and Bill McIlhinney and all of these guys and I said, "Hey look, I got it out of the Missouri Senate, can you Methodists, who you claim are liberals, you can surely do something." It was astounding that we ever got it.

AW: I have a few questions for you.

RMH: Sure.

AW: Knowing that, you know, my grandfather, my uncle Ernest's father, was a pastor and was a Methodist, uh, I know coming to you probably was what he had to do. So, without me asking a leading question, why do you think he came to you and didn't go to St. Paul where he was a member?

RMH: (Sighs) It was the denomination...was not originally called the United Methodist Church. They were the Southern Methodists. Okay, when you talk about Methodists, you're talking about all Methodists, Black, white, and everything that was a piece of it. You couldn't do too much without getting sat on by some folks. Ah, I'm gonna guess that that might have been the reason. But they couldn't...but none...and none of the Black...there was a, there was a thing about the Black clergy that just blocked out the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas. God knows why.

AW: I've been reading up on it and a lot of them were involved in a bi-racial council with the Citizens Council and ah, you know, I think money was tied up in that, status was tied up in that, and everything.

RMH: I'll tell a back story, then. Now, and that was that a friend of mine was Milton Tobian. Milton's gone now, God bless him. He was a wonderful Jewish man and ah, in fact the Temple Emmanuel, Tobian Hall is named after his father and after Milton as well. Milton was in a meeting. He had worked originally with Bob Strauss. Famous name. Of course a politician and he...and he told me that in the early day they had a meeting. They said, "Okay, we made the decision. What's next?" "What's next," one man said, "is that we pay off the nigger preachers." It was that blatant and I know that Milton told me that he took money to Black preachers. That was one of his first jobs when he was twenty-seven years old. So yeah, money was a big piece of it. I mean, I know there was a man from our church by the name of Jones and I won't be bad. He's still living and he pretended to be a preacher and could and we'd have a job done or something, they'd pay off the preacher first. That was such a normal thing and I remember seeing in the local paper, uh what's his name? Price, who was our city councilman for Pleasant Grove and South Dallas.

AW: Ron Price?

RMH: Who?

AW: Ron Price?

RMH: No, no. He was a white guy.

AW: Okay.

RMH: No, no, no. He was really...they have pictures of him going around town giving money to people before the election. They were published in the paper. Ahh!! No! Not Ron Price (Laughs)

AW: I'm thinking in the future, huh?

RMH: Oh yeah.

AW: Umm...

RMH: Other questions?

AW: Yeah, actually that answered that question. Um, I wanted to know what ministers, or who was in attendance when Dr. King came to the...

RMH: I know that Rhett James was. That's the one that I remember and later on, when I talked with Rhett, he said, "What are you talking about, 'nobody was there'? The place was packed!" Then Peter said, you know, about Reverend King sobbing when he got back to ah, Birmingham and Atlanta because of the way the preachers had treated him. So that's...so I know that he was treated badly. The only one I can remember is Rhett. Now, there were...but there were fifty people on stage. I can't remember and it was too long ago. Believe me. I suspect that ah, possibly, the pastor at Warren Methodist, oh gosh, what was his name? What a gentleman. I can't think of it now. I'll think about it. But those were the two churches Warren Methodist and Mount Olive, where all the stuff was going to happen and it eventually got to St. Luke's community.

AW: Right, because of Zan Holmes. You know, it's very telling, not even telling, but actually it's very convenient that you all were located in South Dallas and willing to work. You know so, that in and of itself, you really don't have to go much further, you know, because you're right in the heart of the Black community, being in South Dallas.

RMH: You're right. We had space and it was there and ah, I mean that basement got beat the daylight out of it. Our mimeograph machine—oh my God—that poor mimeograph machine. Ah, Bill Stoner used to run that mimeograph machine. Thousands of copies! He was cranking out stuff.

AW: I wanted to know, and moving forward, so we're talking about the sixties. Tell us what it was like, I guess, when, um, when the youth started to request Black Power. How was that...how did that affect the church and how did that affect the involvement in...

RMH: Yeah, I think the stuff really began...as far as...you know, I'm trying to remember. It's going to smear me up a little bit. Um, the War on Poverty was one thing. I just remembered that. The Black Panthers was another thing. Um, Martin Luther King's assassination was another thing and that brought SCLC to Dallas. So you had different movements going on there. Ah, the ah, Mooring, Reverend J. D. Mooring was the pastor at the Methodist Church.

AW: At Warren?

RMH: At Warren, yeah. J. D. Mooring: a wonderful man, just a grand man! At any rate, ah, the War on Poverty...no, let's start with Black Panthers because that was Fred Bell and Fred Bell was working to have a Black Panthers chapter here, but it was then...there was Fred Bell's thing...you need to talk to Fred about that, but, or Fahim. Ah, there was this other group and was Ed a part of it? Ed Harris?

AW: The...yeah.

RMH: Yeah he was. I was trying to remember who was there...and Curtis Gaines and they would come around, getting support and we'd give 'em some support. They came to the church, I remember and asked whether we would ah, support the Black Panther Breakfast and the, it was voted down by a five to four vote by the council. That's how close it was. And there were, they were all African Americans voting at the time and there was a fear. The idea was to have the Panther Breakfast at Mount Olive and they just didn't want to go that far. Um, but one day I got a phone call from...that said...that told me that Doo-Doo wanted to talk to me. You'll have to ask somebody else who Doo-Doo was, okay.

AW: I think I asked my uncle who Doo-Doo was.

RMH: Did you?

AW: Well, he told me.

RMH: He told you who Doo-Doo was? Okay, Doo-Doo's in jail and he said talk to him. So I went to talk to Doo-Doo. When I tell people this they say, "What's his name?" "I don't know!" I never knew. Um, but they, but what he told me was, "Curtis gettin' paid by the man." And I said, "What kind of information is that?"

AW: Hmmm....what year was that?

RMH: I don't know. I wish I knew. I told you this was...it's in the middle of the stuff...I...I'll give a few...

AW: It has to be around seventy....one, two.

RMH: Probably something in there. Ah, I'm going to turn up the heat a bit. It's chilly isn't it? My wife didn't turn up the heat this morning. Well, it's up. I just got a little chilly. Ah, the ah, I didn't know what to make of that kind of information. "Why is Doo-Doo telling me this? Is he telling me this so that I go and tell somebody and then it comes back to me that I'm a snitch? What's goin' on?" And I really didn't tell anybody until it came out that Doo-Doo was right, that the Black Panthers were being paid by the FBI. And they were running a protection racket. There was no doubt that they were and

there were strange sides to what...they had a woman from Highland Park...I don't remember her name...

AW: That name has surfaced in a lot of interviews, too.

RMH: The guys took some cars out there and parked them on her lawn just to make it look like South Dallas, but they were, you know...Curtis was driving around in a vintage Mercedes...okay, where were we? Anyway, so that was Black Panthers. Um, I don't know what else to say about them now. I wasn't that closely connected with the...I got on the board of War on Poverty and the leader of the community section—there were three. There was a community section, a business, and the governmental. I don't have the names right on that, but those were the three divisions, and I was on the middle group, the business—er the, yeah the career group. But, the community group was led by Stanley Gaines, who was Curtis Gaines brother and he was complete opposite of Curtis. He was an activist. He was a really activist, but there was a really ah, ah, sense of commitment on the part of Stanley for the good of the neighborhood, the good of the community, and the good of the whole, you know, the city. Ah, Stanley, later on, became a deacon in the Catholic Church, which was kind of interesting, and I met him at some other rally where they were protesting something else within the Catholic Church and I couldn't believe it was Stanley because he seemed like he was on the other side, but that's another story. He's dead now. I think both Curtis and Stanley have passed away. Ah, but at any rate, when I was on the, on the War on Poverty, I would get into the community groups because I was trusted and it was just astounding to me. It was just incredible for me to be a part of that. I think...and I think it was about that time that with the welfare rights began to emerge with Ruth Jefferson and I got this word that the welfare women were having a sit-in at the welfare office and I went down there. It had to be about the same time because I too my friend Will Bailey with me, and he was the one who succeeded me on the War on Poverty and we both went there and talk to the folk...to the women and got the support of Ruth and the others. And ah, we also went out and went to Park Cities Baptist Church. You can't get more uptown than Park Cities and got Herb Howard, who was the pastor at Park Cities to come down and meet with the folks.

AW: Really?

RMH: Yeah and later on he met with Ruth and somebody else, I don't know who the other person was, but, he met her and ah, it was, it was really quite a stretch to get Herb Howard's support, but we got it. Ah, Herb's gone, Will Bailey's gone, but I'm still alive. I'm sorry you can't pick their brains. It would be great to get that and Ruth Jefferson's gone. Ah, welfare rights, ah, you'll have to figure out the date on this, welfare rights and I guess SNCC, too, had Thanksgiving Dinner in the church basement. Have to ask Ernie about that and the problem was, we were living next door. This was in the sixties yet because the parsonage was torn down in '69, so that's how I can date that. We had, ever since I was in Richardson, we had, I had enough family; my wife had enough family; so we had a family Thanksgiving. So we said, "We can't get over there. You're welcome to use the basement. We won't disturb you. You won't disturb us." We still did share

pots and pans, you know. But ah, we were, we had the family at our house, most of whom, I have to tell you, had no real desire to be in a Black community at all, but, that's okay. They were there and then we went on the front porch and sat and watched as the parade went down the street. Who was it? All the welfare rights and everybody to go and picket the Cotton Bowl.

AW: Oh, okay.

RMH: The ah, the Cowboy game. That was...I remember when that happened.

AW: Was that the same time?

RMH: That was that Thanksgiving Day when the picketed the Cowboy game. They picketed the Cotton Bowl.

AW: Really?

RMH: I would say it was probably around '67, '68 something like that. I'm sort of throwing stuff around here.

AW: No, that's fine. That's fine.

RMH: My memory has to dredge up that way.

AW: I wanted to ask you what year was it that you took over as pastor at Mount Olive?

RMH: I came here in '61.

AW: '61?

RMH: Yeah.

AW: So, you were able to see, I guess, the formative stages of the, the youth movement?

RMH: Yeah...

AW: So to say?

RMH: To some degree, not being that involved, remember. I have to say, I was just...I was too much being a Lutheran minister ah, to do that. Ah, it really began to blossom the first time when Ernie came around, and then particularly with SCLC coming into town that we got even more involved. I was not that close with the youth movement as such.

AW: Okay. How ah...you said that many of your congregants weren't very active?

RMH: No.

AW: Well, how did they look at you being active?

RMH: Best story for that...one man who lives over...family lives over in Penelope. You know where that is?

AW: That's in South Dallas.

RMH: That's in East...yeah, South Dallas, over there off of Leggo and ah, Jim Surls, he's gone now, too. His wife stil lives there, but ah, Jim was getting on me, "Hanging around those SNCCs. You know people don't want you to hang around those SNCCs." He would always call them "the SNCCs." And he says...and I said, "Jim, what are you talking about?" He said, "Well, that's why people don't come to church. You'll find that Mary Smith doesn't come to church. It's because you're with those SNCCs." "Okay." So I said, "I'm going to go find out from Mary Smith." So, I went over to talk to Mary. She lives out in North Dallas, far North Dallas, up in Hamilton Park and I said ah...so, I talked to her and I told her I'd been missing her in church and I was so sorry that she wasn't there. She said, "I've been having some terrible personal problems and I just...I need to deal with those problems and that's my way of doing it right now. I'm not going to come to church." She said, "I want you to know that I'm so proud of you with the way you've been doing things with these folk in SNCC and sit-ins and everything." It was the exact opposite of Jim! You never heard anything, you know. Just that way; however, his wife, Helen, still around as I say. Would be very, very supportive of what we were doing. We actually formed a ah, ah, neighborhood...no (Sighs while trying to remember) these were NRWs...Neighborhood Resident Workers. And ah, we had five or six of them from our church: ah Ruby Fullsome, Barbara Johnson, Helen Surls, Zearlene Fuller, ah those are the ones I remember. They weren't all from the church, but those four were and ah, and they worked with people in their little blocks and organized them to get things done and they got together. All the groups got together and formed the Neighborhood Action Group, which was called NAG and ah, and ah, among other things, there was a traffic light at the end of the corner. They were very happy about that. There was a traffic light at the corner of ah, Martin Luther King and Meadows Street, right by the church 'cause we'd seen a kid get hurt there, get kil—get hit by a car. So they got a traffic light put in there and NAG did it. I didn't do it. They did it. Ah, I was...remembering some other stuff, but that was...that's okay.

AW: What other things were you remembering?

RMH: Well, I was remembering going back to the early sixties when we, we had a man by the name of Mel Brown come to our church and work there as a social outreach worker and it had to do with just, "What did the neighborhood need to work with it." So he wasn't really involved in Civil Rights as such, but he was working...that's were the church had its outreach, you know, and it was being supported...we had no funding for him at all. That came from the national church.

AW: That's very practical and pragmatic.

RMH: Yeah...oh, there were things...street lights and...I don't remember all of the things Mel was doing, but he would work with people. That was the big thing. Ah, in the...with...SCLC came to town, but that's a story by itself. There were also other things. I'm talking about the later time now...we were talking about the Cotton Bowl Parade, okay, and I can talk a little bit about that. Even though I was...what I did, I would always say, "The basement is open for you and if you need me, okay, I'm there, but that's you meeting." But that's the...you know, I didn't want some white folks telling Black folks what to do. They had had that for far too long. You know, I'd be there, I'd be sort of like the backdrop and the scenery and I remember telling Lipscomb...the biggest event goin' on in Dallas that gets televised everywhere is the Cotton Bowl Parade. Yes! And Dallas was so worried about its image after the Kennedy assassination. If we could touch that Cotton Bowl! So there was the meeting in the church basement, which unfortunately, never stopped the Cotton Bowl. I really thought that folks just stopped shirt. Had I been there, I might have been a little more of a rabble-rouser or encouraging, "Go on down. Stop the parade, 'cause you want to get it national." But they were so...they were getting concessions from Erik Jonnson, they thought, who was mayor at the time. So, they were very satisfied that Billy Bell...was it Billy Bell? Yeah. Billy was Fred Bell's brother and ah, I think he was...he was picketing...ah! I'm lost with who was there and who was doing what, but I know that someone was riding in the car with the mayor—one of the brothers. Ah, Elsie Faye Higgins had this friend, the real estate guy. I don't remember his name. They had a ah, he gave Lipscomb a house on Pennsylvania down by Oakland, just two doors off and that was his place, but Lip could use it. Ah, anyway, he was the one, I'm pretty sure, who was riding in the car, I can't remember his name. You're gonna notice something Ava, that as you get older, your memory begins to flip a little bit.

AW: I understand...a short story: my grandmother calls me Granny because I act so old and I tell you, I must have...we must be switched, 'cause she acts so young and I act so old. So, my brain is...

RMH: She's a great lady, a great lady. She's a beautiful person.

AW: She is. I was wondering if you could tell me the SCLC story. You said it was a long story, but I'd really like to get...

RMH: Well, SCLC ah, a few things about it: SCLC came to town to push the Martin Luther King movie. They'd never had a chapter here at all. Peter Johnson wanted the chapter to be here ah, and he was going to see Dr. King back before...this was before...obviously before the movie because the movie came after his death and well maybe, I don't know, maybe he didn't see Dr. King because he had worked with Dr. King one time and ah, at any rate, Bobby Norman was the one who told Peter, as they were going up the elevator to appeal for this, he said, "You know they're only gonna give it to a minister. You got to be a minister in SCLC." Peter walked off the elevator and said, "Hi, I'm Reverend Peter Johnson." That was how he became Reverend Peter Johnson.

AW: Really?

RMH: He's no more Reverend Peter Johnson than the man in the moon.

AW: Really?

RMH: Really.

AW: Wow.

RMH: (Laughs) And he tries to tell people now that he is not Reverend Johnson that he is Peter Johnson, but hey, if it works, it works. Um, and for a while I tried to get Peter to become a Lutheran pastor and he was at the point of doing it and he could have been the pastor at Mount Olive, and he backed out of it.

AW: Really?

RMH: Yeah. Well, he had to get some schooling. Well, he didn't want to do that. He was working with kids and everyone was begging him to do it because they wanted him to have a regular job. Okay, SCLC did come to town. Ah, they began to do the organizing in different churches. That's when churches began to get little bit involved, but there weren't that many of them. There was still J. D. Moorings and that was really the center for SCLC and of course, Mount Olive that came on. We had meetings in the basement and so forth. Ah, and then they had their offices as well and they began to draw more local support. Ah, there was a little bit...talk with Peter about the Operation Breadbasket, but when they would use Mount Olive for...we had a mimeograph machine and ah, that mimeograph machine was old and ragged, but it was electric and it would crank out more stuff and...I forgot the guy's name, but he would come over and...if you had run that machine...he was the nicest, sweetest man, and Peter told me that he was the one that was most afraid of white folks.

AW: Really?

RMH: Yeah and one time they flew out to East Texas, out to Lufkin or Nagadoches or somewhere and ah, he was carrying the Bible with him and Peter said he never saw a Bible in his hand, and when he got there, found out that he had the inside cut out that he had a little hand gun in there. That was before the days of any kind of security. Ah, Herb Croner. No, Bill Croner...I'm messing up names, but he'd dead, too. Excuse me. I have to go to the bathroom. Shut it off.

AW: Okay.

(Turns camera off)

AW: Okay we're back on.

RMH: Back on. One thing that I remember...I've been remembering it ah, there was a time in Dallas when the City Council probably Citizens Council met and gave ah, ah, authority to the mayor Erik Jonnson in case of a riot...that he had the authority to call the National Guard and stuff. It was outrageous. There never'd been threat of a riot in Dallas. There was no reason...there was...they'd tried...they had that committee, you remember? That committee of seven and I didn't even mention at the time that people who were on there were really, really people who would take the money downtown...ah, St. John Missionary Baptist Church pastor was on there. The other pastors were not the kind you really wanted, but anyway, when that anti-riot ordinance was passed by the City Council, there was a...a uproar in the Black community and a group called Black Citizens for Justice Law and Order were formed, BCJLO and that was the, the...this was all the leaders of the Black community. I mean the...sort of...let's call them the respected leaders: the attorneys, the doctors, and all of these were on BCJLO, met in the church basement and then went to the City Hall to confront the mayor and the City Council and of course the TV cameras were there and there was speaker, after speaker, after speaker and ah, Edwin Washington was one of the people who was one of the speakers and he quoted from the Declaration of Independence. The part, "When in the course of human events..." and so forth, didn't quote it exactly, but talked about when the government fails to do what it's supposed to do, then the people have the right, you know, and they stopped him. They said, 'We don't want to have language like that in this place, Mr. Washington.' He said, "It's the Declaration of Independence!" Ah, they...it was that kind of a thing that was going on. I recall that Rhett James had spoken and ah, "You're the kind of...you're the kind of Negro we can talk to." Ah, then some of the others got up...would get up to speak. I remember the Council saying, "Tell you what, we've got business that needs to be taken care of. Ah, y'all can go into another room and the television cameras will go with you and you can do your speeches there." It was absolutely wicked and I remember that a lot of people went. Maybe it was then that Ed Washington spoke, but it was just...that, without a doubt, was the sorriest thing. After that, Black Citizens for Justice Law and Order essentially disbanded. They had about two or three meetings left and then they broke down to a half a dozen, ten people and they continued to meet at the church. They tried to establish a, what did they call it? A police... They were gonna look at the police...the police abuses and they established a center. Still...

AW: Is it the Dallas Police Review Board?

RMH: It was...that was not it. It was independent. It was just there own thing. Ah, and they had an office on Martin Luther King, just off of Oakland. I...and the building's gone now. You need to talk with Edwin if you can talk with him or Arthur Fred Joe, if you want any information on that. I don't know if you have Arthur Fred's name.

AW: No.

RMH: They just observed the fortieth anniversary of BCJLO.

AW: Really?

RMH: They're still, apparently, active. What they're doing, I don't know because I don't hear anything from them, but they have...they had a meeting over at the Double Tree and ah, they most have had about fifty people there, yeah.

AW: I haven't heard the name Arthur Fred Joe.

RMH: Yeah. You see, it was one of those off, off groups. That's the only...best thing I could say.

AW: Where ah, I know my aunt was involved in the BCJLO.

RMH: Oh was she? Your aunt who was?

AW: Jacqueline Hill.

RMH: Okay! Was she there at the anniversary? She might have been.

AW: I'm not sure. I'm not sure.

RMH: She might have been. You might want to check with that.

AW: I know when I interviewed her, she didn't speak of the...of the reunion. So I'm not sure that she went.

RMH: Probably didn't go.

AW: What ah...in understanding that the history of Dallas's movement hasn't really been not necessarily record, but charted and taught, what would you want a study like this to look like?

(Long pause)

RMH: You know, I think that there are...there are leaders and heroes and Ernie...I hold him...he would be the lead. You know, he went to jail for this ah, this business. I mean not just jail, but prison. There ought to be that kind of an awareness of the kind of leadership that was offered by people like Ernie. Ah, that recognition I suppose. You know, it's very hard to do it, but I'm thinking. It's what I've been trying to do in my own mind is write a history. How can you write a history? Because it's so disjointed. There are so many different facets coming in and out and my own...our own memories are, are ah distancing themselves one thing from the other. So I could talk about Leon Sullivan at one time and Martin Luther King and then I could talk about, you know...and Leon Sullivan, that goes up to 1980 as far as I was concerned because I, I was in Philadelphia and at a meeting in 1980 just before the Reagan election and it was dread. So anyway, it's so...you get disjointed. There's too many different directions that you could go in.

It's hard to write a straightforward history: this happened, then that happened, then that happened that linear kind of thing. You know, it has to be one of these almost like skyrocketed or something. Ah, and there were so many different things that different people did. Ah, you know, it was...that were...that were not mentioned at all and shouldn't really be mentioned because they were ordinary folks doing ordinary things. Ah, and I say this, not for my wife's credit, but ah, she and...was one of the leaders of the youth group at our church. And so, they said, "We want to go swimming." She said, "Well, let's go to the swimming pool." So, where did they go? They went to the swimming pool over at ah, Samuel Grand. Well, they didn't even think about it that the pools hadn't been integrated. They just went to the swimming pool. My wife took the kids and they went to the swimming pool. She said people were saying, "Are they coming in here?" "Yes." Okay, so took 'em in and they went. Before awhile Donna looked up and she said she saw several police cars over the hill overlooking this thing. It was the first day that the pools had been integrated. She didn't know it. Ah, nobody knew it, you know. It was just...she went there because they were going to go swimming. It was so incons...ah, inconsequential and yet it was one of those many millions, thousands of things that, that had to be down in order for human rights to be accepted and they're still going on. They have to.

AW: Thank you for that. Um, what would you say to people who were of my generation and younger, about the movement? And I ask this question because when we think about the sixties, the seventies, I think we have grandiose ideas and, you know, the past is so...the past is the past, it's like a vacuum. We have no idea of what happened ten years ago, fifteen years ago, much less to say before we were born. So what would you say to us to keep in mind, when reading about this time, when studying this time?

RMH: Well, I have to say...what would we say about Dallas or what would we say about...?

AW: Well, let's do Dallas first and then, I guess nationally.

RMH: Yeah, 'cause Dallas didn't do much. Dallas was the tail end. Ah, it was always the last one to achieve its ends. Ah, one time a, a woman who had been on the City Council and was a professor at Bishop College said, "Dallas had a problem in that it never had the meanness of Birmingham, because when Black folks walked down the street, they were greeted with, 'Good morning.' They weren't treated uncivilly" and because of that, Black folks were fairly ah, you know, peaceful, calm. "Okay so we used to being second-class, so we gone keep on being second-class." And ah, the part of racism is everybody's racist, even those who are the oppressed are racist because they think, "Our place is back here, not up there." And ah, Dallas was one of those places where, "Our place is back here." Ah, when I came to Richardson, we talked in Richardson about Black folks coming to church there and this is in 1958, you know, and they said, "Well, they're," the members would say, "It's fine as long as they keep their place." Well, what is there place, you know? Ah, but that was a very common understanding, but they didn't mind it. I did invite Jesse Arnold to come to church and he came to church, but he was a Baptist and he wouldn't stay with the Lutheran Church

anyway. At least he came to the church and it was helpful for me. Ah, but it was always that...it was that, "As long as they keep their place" and Blacks would say, "As long as we keep our place everything is fine." Ah, so Dallas never did get to cutting edge kind of stuff and it took the people with the real courage like, Ernie, to, to take the stands that they did. OK Supermarket...let me tell you that one, because I think it's interesting. There was a grocery store across the street from the church. Ah, later on they had a very decent man working there, running it, but at first when it went there, we used to go and shop there. We came home and Donna said, "These hot dogs are bad." So I said, "Okay, I'll take 'em back." So I went back to the store and said, "These hot dogs are bad. We just bought them this afternoon and they're no good. They stink." And someone said, "Shhh, shhh. Don't say anything." Why? Because they would wash them off and put them back on the shelf. They wouldn't do it to me, but they would do it to the other customers. So, you know, there was a reason that the OK Supermarkets was...they had to be boycotted. There had to be a strike against them. Ah, they should have boycotted some of the other stores, too. We had a, had a man in our church who was a butcher and he told about what they would do at the end of the day when they would gather up all the meat scraps and grind 'em up. It didn't make any difference: chicken, whatever. And then they would grind 'em up and put it in a jar with some kind of food or something they would put with them and the next day it would look like some beautiful ground beef. It was called hamburger and it was cheap. It was all legal, but that was...so the stores, they were bad. They need that kind of thing. It was...they grabbed the...Ernie grabbed the right thing. I understand that when the Zodiac Room at ah, Neiman Marcus was integrated that people at Neiman Marcus heard that, "They're coming" and immediately said, "You're welcome" and people could walk in and then they would walk out and the doors would close again. And there was, you know, they had this kind of a...that was how it worked. That they had learned that you don't fight, you just use a pillow.

AW: And why is that?

RMH: Huh?

AW: Why, why do you think that is?

RMH: It was a strategy. It was a great strategy. Ah, give...ah, you know, "We'll give. You can come in. You can today, but you can't tomorrow" and people think it's integrated. Or, take Bishop College, I once was in, I so help me, was in a debate with S. M. Wright in Jerusalem or in Hypha...I'm sorry, it was in Hypha. He was at one end of the table and I was on the other and we had a group of pastors from Dallas that were in between. Paul Stouffer was the director of the Greater Dallas Community of Churches at the time and he said, "I felt like I was watching a ping pong match, the two of you arguing." Because Bishop College was brought to where it is, or where it was specifically so Black students wouldn't go to SMU. That was the idea and ah, Bishop College didn't wanna move. They wanted to stay there and the people in Marshall wanted them to stay there and so it burned down. So now what would Bishop College do? They moved here and who supported them? Ahhh, the white power structure of Dallas supported them. Why? Because the folks out at SMU...that was the intention and

the minute that SMU began to accept students on the basis of studies, Bishop lost its money and then Paul Quinn came in. I understand they're failing and probably won't make it, but that was all a part of a strategy. Out of, "How do we do this to achieve our ends in the way that's going to fool those folks?" And I think we all got hoodwinked, we really did, but that's Dallas.

AW: One thing you said um, a few, a few minutes ago was that after Kennedy was assassinated, you know, Dallas wanted to save its image and in reading some literature about Dallas, at the time, ah, it seems to me that they wanted to really...well, the powers that be wanted to really um, I guess, put on this front that there wasn't any problem in Dallas and so you had that, that film that came out narrated by Walter Cronkite—*Dallas at the Crossroads*—do you think that they were attempting to...

RMH: That actually happened earlier.

AW: Earlier, right...

RMH: That actually happened in...see I was...I had just come to Dallas. That was either in...probably 1961 or '62. It was before Kennedy, *Dallas at the Crossroads* and it was a...you ought to get the film. It should still be available somewhere, just to watch it.

AW: Right and I have seen it before in the past. Um, it's about twenty minutes long. It's not long at all, but ah, the question I wanted to ask you was with all these things ah, happening nationwide, like all of these protests, riots, what have you—and I'm talking throughout the decade of the sixties—do you think Dallas wanted to maintain ah, it's composure, so to say, to bring in money, to bring in business, to bring in even, you know, people from other states that might not want to deal with what was going on in the nation?

RMH: Absolutely, absolutely. That's why I'm, you know...why was Martin Luther King boycotted? Why boycott Leon Sullivan? We had...the only way that S. M. Wright would ever meet Martin Luther King is to have the highway get up to the, get up to the boulevard. Ah...

AW: (Chuckles) That was funny.

RMH: (Chuckles) S...S. M. Wright, they said he was a Civil Rights pioneer. He was no more of a Civil Rights pioneer than the man in the moon. I have to tell this story. They did a...I don't know, I guess it was the *Morning News* was running programs on profiles on the leaders in Dallas and they did one on S. M. Wright and I wouldn't believe the accolades that were being given to this man by people who knew better. "Oh, what a wonderful man. What a great man," you know, and so forth. And then they had interviewed me and I said he was...I said, "He was one of the most powerful men in Dallas, not because of what he'd done, but because of all the good things he had stopped." And I did not give a very good word on S. M. Wright. Milton Tobian, my Jewish friend, said that...he said, "When...I thought I had died and something happened

in the world until I saw no, no they quoted Mark Herbener, so I knew I wasn't crazy!" But, all these people were applauding him, trying to make it look nice.

AW: And that's the story of Dallas.

RMH: That's the story of Dallas.

AW: That's the "Dallas Way," as it's coined in the literature.

RMH: Oh yes, yes. It is the "Dallas Way." There was one night when it was anticipated that there would be a riot. Why? People were having a good time. That's what was going on.

AW: What was happening?

RMH: Ah, I...can only say I was...we went out shopping along Lancaster-Kiest Shopping Center. I wanted to get a lantern for camping and went in there and they were trying to close the store and the man...ah, I said, "I want a lantern; there's two different ones here. This one is so much; this one is so much. What's the difference? Can you tell me?" And he said, "Take whichever one you want. I'll give you the price." So I took the best one and got the cheap price and got out of there 'cause they were scared there was gonna be a riot. Peter told about some guy was sitting in the back of his store with a shotgun waiting to get broken into, you know, and if he'd got...if he'd been broken into, he probably would have been killed because of his stupid shotgun, but it was that kind of fear on the part of the business white community and on the other side, it was the Blacks laughing. And, you know, getting bargain-stuff like we did. We had a party in our kitchen that night. One of the kids came over and we just...we were...that was...as a matter of fact it must be before 1969 because it was in our kitchen in the parsonage and we had, I don't know, a bunch of people there sitting there talking, drinking coffee and ah, and stuff so...yeah, there was...there was a lightness to it. We went...there was a, a, the War on Poverty...that's the kind of a thing. War on Poverty met out in West Dallas one time because I was on the War on Poverty Board and I was sitting across from Sister Carol Lee. They were, people were having so much fun. They were just exploding with delight. Ah, there was one minister who was preaching and boy he was getting ah, shouts of affirmation...ah, Othal Lakey and Othal Lakey wasn't...I mean he was as straight as you could get and he was on national television for a number of years as a part of the Religious Town Hall. It may still be on, I don't know. He became a bishop with the C. M. E. and ah, anyway, everybody was having such a good time and later on I heard ah, the ah, City Councilwoman from the Mexican American community, I don't know who, she is very well-known and she said she was terrified of what was going on. I said, "What? Terrified? Sister Carol Lee and I were sitting across from each other having a ball laughing. It was...It was that kind of a thing when Black folks celebrate, they celebrate. And there was a celebration and Martinez, she didn't understand it and they didn't understand that of a, of a...the laughter, laughter is one of the ways that you can defeat the enemy. And that was going on. I gotta go again.

AW: Okay. (Turns off camera)

RMH: You see, I'm thinking of Birmingham. What do you remember about Birmingham? The bombing and fire hoses. That's what you remember. That's what you ought to remember 'cause it's the pictures of it. One of the things I remember, I was asked to put together a panel on housing for the Lutheran Church, Missouri Senate. They were gonna bring leaders from the church to Dallas and we would have a mini-conference on the situation of housing in the poverty community. So, I asked Arthur Fullsome, Don Johnson, ah, I can't remember everybody. I know one was Harold Jacobs-Meyer, a Lutheran pastor. Oh yeah, Jim Surls, whom I've mentioned to you. He...Jim did a lot of rental and stuff. He was sort of a landlord person, and Albert Lipscomb. "Would you come in and talk about housing?" Sort of a tell-it-like-it-is panel that's what we wanted. Back in the days we used tell-it-like-it-is. Well, everybody showed up except Lip. He came in late and ah, he sat down and everybody else had really spoken their peace, and so the chair, who was Pastor Harold Jacobs-Meyer, who was a pastor in Oak Cliff and he said ah, "Mr. Lipscomb, we've all had our part, to...we want...we're talking about housing as we see it from our viewpoint, and ah, we'd like to have you now take your turn and say what you think you can say about housing." Well I can tell you, a lot of these upper-story clergy were going to sleep and so, Albert just stood up and he had, you know, he was wearing labels all over himself and he had a briefcase and it was covered with labels, you know, and ah he said, "It's a bunch of goddamn bullshit! That's all I gotta say!" (Laughs) And Jim Surls just, "How can you do...? You're talkin' in my church! We're not gonna have language like that!" And Lipscomb says, "All I gotta say is it's goddamn bullshit! If you don't believe it, it's goddamn bullshit! It's goddamn bullshit! That's all it is! I'm not gonna say anymore!" And he walked out. Every one of these preachers was sitting upright. (Laughs) Okay, there were times when ah, that day I remember that Matthew Johnson had walked through and almost everybody leaned away from him when he walked through.

AW: What...what...what was goin' on?

RMH: Just this conference, but people would come and go, you know, and it would be that he just happened to be there. Lip came in later in the day. I talked with Lip a lot. He's a very devout person, you know. He's hardly unkind and I know he can use language, but I asked him later on, I said, "Lip, whatever happened? You came in and all you could do was holler." He said, "You know I got up there, I couldn't think of a thing to say." (Laughs) I think that's one of the...that's a great memory. But when he said this, he carried that bag. The prob—the thing about it was what he said was stronger than what every—anybody else had said. Even though he said nothing. He articulated that cutting edge. Well, so...those are the vignettes, the war stories that you remember more than the whole thing.

AW: And, you know, the task for me is writing a sixty-page, writing a sixty-page paper, which sixty pages is nothing when you have twenty-some-odd-years to cover. It's picking out those moments that are the most important thing to highlight and the things

that so many people in the interviews have talked about that, I guess, need to be reiterated, restated, and recorded.

RMH: Can you get a hold of the old newspapers?

AW: Uh huh. I went to the archives...

RMH: Oh, did you?

AW: ...downtown, at the library...

RMH: *Dallas Express*...

AW: *Dallas Express*, ah the *Times Herald*

RMH: They have...

AW: And that in and of itself is a study: how, how the Black community reported news and how the white community reported news.

RMH: That's right.

AW: And it's a task, but it's been...and, you know, they don't really have a lot of the *Dallas Express* archived.

RMH: Is that right?

AW: Well, from that time period, from the sixties. They only go...I think they skip two or three years, like '65, '66, '67 they don't have.

RMH: If...I tell you what, I will look and see what I've got.

AW: Okay.

RMH: And I'll be happy to just give it to you.

AW: Thank you.

RMH: There's no sense in me having it because I'm not doing anything with it. It's been in boxes for...I'll just have to go through boxes is all.

AW: Well, thank you.

RMH: And I don't know what's there, but you're welcome to it. How long are you going to be here?

AW: Well, I'll be here until Thursday, but I'll...I mean my family is here so...

RMH: So I can get it to them. One of the things...this will give you...the *Dallas Times Herald* ah, did an article on...I don't know if it was the front page or one of the lead pages: "Militants Right and Left Fail to Move Dallas" and they had, that was the headline and there were four picture on it: Ed Polk, Ruth Jefferson, Mark Herbener, and Abby Hoffman. What was Abby Hoffman doing on there? He wasn't in Dallas. Abby Hoffman was Chicago, wasn't he?

AW: I'm not sure.

RMH: You don't know. Yeah, he was, yeah I think he was in Chicago. Never been to Dallas. Never had a bit of influence in Dallas. Ah, the ah, and the other part of it, if they sort of said, "These are right, these are left..." Anyway, I called them up and I said, "So which am I, right or left?" "Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah." I said, "I think I need a retraction because you, you're really slurring our names." And so they said, "Okay, we can't do a retraction." What they did was write an article on ah, "An Average Day in the Life of a Parrish Pastor." It was a joke, you know, because they couldn't do a retraction. They couldn't do...it was so bad that thy put Abby Hoffman on there? Well, if I've still got that clipping, you're welcome to it.

AW: Thank you.

RMH: And you can have the other one, too really. It's really...it tells you more about the *Times Herald* than it does about us and the *Times Herald* was the more liberal of the papers.

AW: That's crazy.

RMH: Yeah...so...

AW: You know, one interesting thing that I found in the literature and, you know, one of the few things that has been written on Dallas, ah is that the *Dallas Express* was approached by, I don't even...I don't know if it was the Citizen's Council or the committee that they created to censor itself and it voluntarily did.

RMH: Yeah, yeah. The *Dallas Express*, now I'm trying to remember...there were several papers, of course ah, probably ah, the one who could get sharpest was Tony Davis's paper the *Dallas Weekly* and I think that's still being published.

AW: It is.

RMH: But then there was another one. Was it Russell Fagan that edited that paper? Ah but it was...

AW: Was it the *Post Tribune*?

RMH: Was it? That was the *Post Tribune* wasn't it? I think it was, yeah.

AW: Or the *Examiner*?

RMH: Yeah, I don't remember. It's been a while since I've seen it and it's just been a long time since I've walked those sidewalks, but there were some articles in there that were positively good. By the way, the man's name was Jesse Price.

AW: Okay...Okay.

RMH: (Laughs) But as someone told me, "If you want to get elected into any office in Dallas, just make sure your name is Price."

AW: Well...

RMH: Yeah, it works. Yeah, I think that whatever I have, I'll surely give it to you.

AW: I appreciate that. I appreciate that.

RMH: Whatever is there, if I can find it, but it ought to be put somewhere where someone can archive it appropriately, and if you're doing it, what sixty page?

AW: It's not...well, I have twenty pages of a lit review written and I still have more literature to read. So, I know that it's coming, but the hardest thing is picking out those things that need to be—that have to be included.

RMH: Yes.

AW: Especially when so many people have passed away that would be integral to the study. You know, everybody has talked about Ruth Jefferson. Nearly everyone.

RMH: Sure, she's gone.

AW: And it would just be great to have her story. Um...

RMH: You have the books *The Accommodation*...

AW: Uh huh. I have *The Accommodation*, I have um, *Dallas Public and Private*, ah, I have so many...

RMH: Do you have *White Metropolis*?

AW: Yes, that one just came out.

RMH: Yes, it's been out only two years.

AW: It's excellent, actually.

RMH: It is excellent.

AW: I really appreciated his viewpoint.

RMH: Have you talked to Harry Robinson at all?

AW: Not on this project, but you know I used to work for him.

RMH: Oh, did you really?

AW: Uh huh.

RMH: He's a character. One time I took Lip for a, a ah, I picked him up after a meeting of the, you know, War on Poverty and he told me how he had dismantled some Molotov cocktails that some kids had made. I think he poured out the gas and put in water or something like that...the idea being, you know, somebody was going to really make terrible, you know, and here was Lip, who was always charged as being, ah...

AW: Militant and radical.

RMH: ...militant and radical and here he was a real peacemaker. That was never understood that the people who wanted justice are the ones who wanted peace.

AW: Because a lot of times it would be our own communities that would be destroyed. You know?

RMH: Absolutely.

AW: So you didn't want that, especially when people owned their homes, you know, and their businesses. You know?

RMH: Yeah. They had a general come to town to protect us from the riots and he said, "You know, they've got businesses with people living upstairs." And I said, "You're talking about Detroit and Chicago, not Dallas." Just maybe two or three, but not very many. It just doesn't happen in Dallas. So you've got an ignorant man coming in to control a city that he knows nothing about. Oh! Dallas's way of doing things!

AW: Backwards.

RMH: So what else do we now need?

AW: I would like you to speak about—you've answered all of my questions—so anything else that you think should be included, said, reiterated to people?

RMH: You know, I...you know we haven't even talked about the schools.

AW: Let's talk about that.

RMH: And I don't, I don't know much about the schools. Back in the seventies, ah, there were three of us: Gilbert Hernandez, Rosie Stromburg, and me. As you can tell, one Latino, one white, one Jew. We went to the different media in Dallas from channel eleven, channel four, channel five, channel eight, ah *Morning News*, the *Times Herald* was around then and talked to the editors and said, "What can you do to bring justice, peace, and reconciliation into this city?" This was all committee for the smooth transition. I said, "Oh, okay, well the smooth transition has to be a transition to." The Germans have, here's your German lesson for the day, they've got a word for Happy New Year. They wish you *Guten Roche*. A *roche* is a slide. So if you have a *Guten Roche*, you have a "good slide" into the New Year. And so, that's what Dallas was looking for, a *Guten Roche* into the ah, absolute commitment of what it was supposed to do. And we knew that the kind of stuff that could come through the media could do the exact opposite and so we approached all of them and, you know, that took sometime. You know, we drove to Fort Worth to meet with folks over there as well because their news got into Dallas: channel four, channel five, channel eleven. But ah, that was my connection with the schools. Then we did a program...my...the thing that I was involved in with the schools had to do with religious task force that was in the schools where we said, "We must acknowledge the ah, the rights, on the one hand, of the churches and the religions to be what they are." So if you have Muslim kids in your school, those Muslims dare not be trampled on when they're having their holy days. Nor, at the same time, other folks, and of all of the things we ended up defending the Worldwide Church of God with Garner Ted Armstrong, used to be on the radio. He was just a fool, but anyway, every year they have a week where they would take their children away and Dallas was going to flunk them and we said, "No, you can't do that." Anyway ah, we were concerned. I was concerned because at James Madison, they'd have church services over there. I said, "You can't do that. It's public schools. Because, look at the kids you've got. They're not all Baptist. They're Methodist, Muslim. They're Lutheran. They're Catholic and you go on here because you've got Reverend What's-His-Name from the 'Greater Mount Everything Baptist Church.'" But that was hard to do that. Hard to speak against schools in the Black community. I didn't even talk about Juanita Craft either.

AW: Oh, please do.

RMH: 'Cause when I got into the schools, I was thinking about Madison and Juanita Craft and how there was a, there was a early on, the one preacher that the city of Dallas had problems with was Father Javon Brown. Now, you've got to do a little way back to think about Javon Brown with the Lighted Church of Prayer. I know the father died and they had him at Black and Clark and they moved him over to, on Martin Luther King ah, the other funeral home...

AW: Is it Lott's?

RMH: Lott's Funeral Home and ah, they had him over there with the full-length coffin. They said, "Look, he walked over because his shoes had been scratched." He had people convinced he was going to rise from the dead on the third day. Oh, God, but he protested against the city of Dallas. They didn't like him and my, you know, early meeting of him was people laughing about Father Javon Brown. But we held him in that ridicule, but then I went to vote with ah, at our precinct across the street and Juanita Craft was precinct chair and Javon Brown was there and she treated him with the utmost respect, I think because of the leadership that he had offered. I don't know what it was, but it was something. She also used to be furious because the Republicans would send poll watchers into the Black precincts, Black elections and she thought, "Just imagine what it would be like if we sent some Black workers up north to check on them. How can you do this? We're not cheating up here. Their the ones doing the cheating, not us." That's some of the...Juanita Craft was in that respect a gem. She had used her badly when she was serving on the City Council because the City Council would treat her...they would say, (Condescending tone) "Well, what do you have to say about that Juanita? Okay, let us have it!" And ah, I think that's why when Elsie Faye Higgins, when she got there, she was tough and she should have been. But ah, one time I listened, I have to say this that Stark Taylor was the mayor. Elsie Faye Higgins had been, was on the council and some man had come in and he was complaining because the city had done something to him and the ah, Stark Taylor just chewed him out, up and down. "Shame on you for...what do you expect when you come to Dallas?" Elsie Faye Higgins said, "Welcome to Dallas." And here was the woman who had been the screaming, shouting person as they would always assume. She was the kind, gentle one and it was Stark Taylor who was doing the yelling, but she was the one who was remembered as the Black woman who was so mean and Juanita was remembered as the peaceful lady who never had anything really worthwhile to say except sweet words and she was tough. She took a lot of abuse, she really did. Ah, somebody, but she was the one who worked with youth and maybe some of those youth that worked with Juanita Craft...

AW: I know I talked to Diane Ragsdale and she spoke about being a Craft Kid.

RMH: Yeah. But see, there was, there was a...this is later stuff. This is in the last years now. I got a call from a woman and she was, she was one of the people who had been down at the Juanita Craft Home and I met her there one time. I don't remember...you know, I'm just sorry that I know names

AW: It's okay because when I watch...when I go down to the library or when I read I can fill-in the blanks.

RMH: Was it Mamie McKnight? It might have been Mamie McKnight. I got a call, "We're putting together a group of people to talk about the Civil Rights in Dallas." I said, "Okay, who's coming? It's kinda interesting." I said, "You got Ernie McMillan?" They said, "No, he's not coming." I said, "You got Peter Johnson?" They said, "No, no, we wouldn't want to have that kind in there." I said, "What are you talking about?" I never went. I maybe should have gone...it would have been curiosity, but I think there is

that...bourgeoisie that thought they were doing Civil Rights and weren't and that's...might have been what that was. I can only guess. Who wouldn't want to have Ernie and Peter at a meeting that had to deal with Civil Rights in Dallas? It just doesn't...didn't make sense. But there was that McShann Road. You know McShann? That was the place that everybody moved to before they opened up South Boulevard and Park Row and then Cedar Crest and then everything else. I've been wandering all over the place...

AW: I appreciate it.

RMH: This is really just storytelling is all that it is. That is what it is! It is storytelling.

AW: It is. To get you on film and to get your perspective, to me is the most important thing. It really is.

RMH: Okay, are we done now?

AW: I think we are. I think we've come to a good stopping point. If I should have any questions, I'll call you, 'cause I'm gonna re-watch the film.

RMH: Sure.

AW: Thank you for allowing me to come into your home.

RMH: You're more than welcome dear. You really are.

AW: Thank you so much for sharing with us and giving us your perspective. So when I come...

RMH: You really need more because I...somebody said they wanted to...and this would really get...would really, really be worthwhile is to do more than an interview with one person. Do two people, because then...

AW: Then you could fill-in the gaps.

RMH: You fill-in gaps. You start remembering and it makes a difference because, especially if you got ah...let's say you wanted to interview me. Interview me with Peter, 'cause I was really close with Peter and then we talk about SCLC...

AW: That is a good point.

Interview Ends

Interview with Jacqueline Hill

Jacqueline Hill (JH): My name is Jacqueline McMillan Hill.

Ava Wilson (AW): Thank you, Jacqueline Hill, for agreeing to be a part of this study.

JH: You're welcome.

AW: In your opinion, what would a completed study about the Black Power and Civil Rights Movements in Dallas look like?

JH: It would look like a birth of a group of people—men, women—African American men and women, mainly young people getting together in the mid-1960s, probably between 1966 through 1980, is what I would say. That would be the time frame, and it would look as if someone, comin' in who had very good experience in organizing would come into a community and get interested people together to study the issues and the Black community, and from that point, the group would elect their leaders, their leadership, and they would venture out and decide on how best to take care of those issues, resolve those issues by any means necessary, and move forward with dignity and knowing that the people were young with young...with young idealists and realist also. So, that's how it would look to me. It would be ah, there would be happy moments. There would be sad moments. There would be organizing moments and moments with the media, moments or times wit the city officials: the police, the revolutionary side of the community, and then the Black community who were more conservative, more set in their ways and back then we would call them Uncle Toms. That's to me how it would look in a little snapshot.

AW: Thank you.

JH: You're welcome.

AW: Okay, so would you mind telling me, in-depth, whatever comes to your mind about the quest for Civil Rights and Black Power in Dallas, Texas?

JH: Yes, what comes to my mind is, first of all, that external force and most of us were comin' out of college—either droppin' out of college or still in college working and we would read in the paper and see on the news and hear on the radio about Malcolm X, about Martin Luther King, about the Black Panther movement, the SNCC movement, the freedom fighters. We'd hear about the racists in the whole world. We would hear about the things that were going on: the murders in the south. We would hear about all those tragedies and at the same time, there was no fear in our hearts because we knew what we were going to do was going to be the right thing to do, to bring about change. We felt thid was all a part of evolution, makin' it a revolutionary moment or moments to bring about a great change in Dallas, which was right in the heart of the Bible Belt. Right in the heart of powerful, rich white men called the Dallas Citizens Council who, by any means necessary would attack us. They were afraid of us, so they would not openly

attack us, but we knew their ideas were bein' fed to agents: city, federal, county agents to do whatever necessary to discredit our movement, but we moved on. What else? What was the other part of that question? Did I leave out something? You want me to continue just...

AW: No, you're doing very well.

JH: Okay, my initial part with the movement was more of a supportive part, helping our men that would get put in jail, but for walking down the street, just because they were revolutionaries, just because they had this idea to make a change. They would get arrested for just anything whatsoever, just made-up trumped-up charges. So, my main focus at that time was, I was working at a company downtown. A lot of times, my paycheck would go to helping get one of our members out of jail, helping to buy paper to run the copy machine—the mimeograph machine with that purple ink. We would produce our newsletters and our flyers, pass 'em out at churches. We were just...my job, what I thought I could do, which I thought at the time was helpful, was to be a resource, a support person, not so much in the forefront at that time, but standing, not shoulder-to-shoulder with our male counter-parts, but standing kind of behind them to give them a push and to let them know that, "Hey, the women in the community are behind you." That lasted for probably a half a year and then at that point we realized that, "Hey, we can be in the forefront, too, as women. We are makin' a impact on makin' a change, so let's step upfront, too." So at that point, the men, our leaders we all stood shoulder-to-shoulder and we forged ahead and made our changes. They were, I know when Dr. King passed, when he was assassinated in April of 1968, the company that I worked for at the time, I organized, it seemed really minute, but I told all the Black people in the company that, "Tomorrow, when you come to work, come to work dressed in black." That was gonna be our Black Power, pourin' out our hearts in sympathy to a great leader in Dr. King. And the following day when we all reported to work, all dressed in our black, the managers, the co-workers, the business owners at the company where I worked, they were just outraged. They called us into the office and wondered, "What are you doing?" And we explained to them that we were payin' tribute to a fallen hero in Dr. King and that was one of the first organized efforts that I did at work. It seemed really minute, but it really was a great impact in helping the Blacks understand that, "You might not be a member of SNCC, you might not be a member of the Panther Party, you are a working person, but you can do things to let your voice be heard. So, that was one of the first ah, little activities or little sit-ins that we made as employees at this particular company. And ah, later, in Dallas there was the convergence of—of course, SNCC was here first—no the NAACP, of course, was here first. Some of the members of SNCC had received their training as elementary school students from the NAACP, but a lot of them had gone off to college, in particular, Ernest McMillan had gone off to Morehouse and in working with Dr. King's group, learned and studied non-violent confrontation and organizing of that nature. So, we had good training among our young leaders at that time and we did have some support from the elders in our community that really supported us. And then, there was that other segment, the more conservative Blacks and some of the conservative ministers, not all, who kinda frowned on the fact that we were not studying our books, staying in school, and not trying to be a so-called threat to the establishment. So, with

SNCC, the Black Panther Party and ah, there was an organization one night, the community and the poor communities in Dallas—South Dallas—told the SNCC leadership that one change that they felt could be taken care of was one of the stores in the community would sell inferior goods to people in that neighborhood at accelerated prices and there were no Blacks working in that grocery store. So, the community asked us to go in and demonstrate and do what we could to make that change where they would start hiring Blacks for that supermarket, they would no longer sell the inferior meats and products. So, that particular night, leaving the church after that organizing, we went into this grocery store in South Dallas and did our organization and tryna make a statement on, “Stop what you’re doing, look at the neighborhood that you’re in, and do the right thing for this community. We’re payin’, they’re payin’ their money for goods and in return, you’re disrespectin’ that community by sellin’ inferior goods.” So, during that demonstration, there were some items that were broken and, of course, the police were called in and there was a whole criminal lawsuit that came about in Dallas at that time. The two members of that group were arrested and put in jail and had to stand trial for destruction of private property. So, out of that attack on our leadership, that brought on a whole different movement in the fact of a defense fund or defense movement to defend those two leaders, keepin’ the movement goin’ on at the same time, and educatin’ the community on, “Why were these two people taken from our group, put in jail, and tried for a felony charge such as that?” So, that caused another movement as I said and we were able to raise funds to hire attorneys. We were able to recruit other members of the group. So, that’s what it looked like. Probably other cities, the same thing was happening such as that wherein you make a statement against the establishment, you do an action against the establishment, a call to action and then it gets turned around and you’re placed—leadership is placed—arrested and placed in jail—and this was, the establishment thought would quiet, would bring about disorganization in our group, would make it quiet and that everybody would learn a lesson and not speak out against the establishment. Also, at the same time, one of the leaders spoke against one of the big companies in Dallas, it’s a micro-chip company. They were hiring mainly women at that time, which was good. They were over looking the man, our Black man to work at those assembly lines. So there was another one of our leaders in our group on a panel discussion one night spoke against the person who owned that company, which just so happened to be the mayor of Dallas and while watchin’ that on television, the camera went right onto the mayor who owned that micro-chip company and that person had turned red and was just beside himself because everybody on the panel, including a lot of the Blacks, were sayin’ how great the city of Dallas was, how great it was to live here. At the same time, that other voice from a young leader of the SNCC movement said, “No, that’s not true. We have problems in our community, in our neighborhoods and one of those deals with the fact that your company is not hiring our Black men. Our Black men are going to jail and prisons and bein’ overlooked and that was causing a, a disunity in the community.” At the time, we knew Black women had to be lifted up, but at the time, we didn’t feel it was right to destroy our Black men at the same time and not hire our Black men, but later on, the company did begin to hire Black men as well as Black women, white women, Hispanic, Asian, of course. The company became very diverse, but in the beginning, in order to make money, they hired just a certain group and that was a slap in the face to our African American, our Black man. So, movin’ on with our Black

Power Movement, which also involved getting involved with a lot of our campuses: North Texas University in Denton, Southern Methodist University, right in the heart of Dallas, Bishop College, right in the heart of Oak Cliff. So there were a lot of lil' pockets of more college students gettin' involved in the movement and tryna bring about the change. The educational system in Dallas was still segregated, pretty much the way it is now. There has been some change, but there has always been in this city that wanted to be the international city, there has always been that arm from the white establishment to put down the African American community. Anyone who would speak out with the truth would be (Puts hand over mouth) Their mouth would be covered. They would be lynched. They would be placed in jail, but let's hear from our Black, and we called 'em Uncle Toms, they were Black business men and some Black ministers and at the same time there were some great business owners who were African American and ministers who were very supportive of the Civil Rights Movement. So, moving right along with the Black Movement and that era also included a movement of Black women in that organization of SNCC and the Black Panther group and the college groups. About that time, everybody knew that there was a Women's Liberation Movement goin' on. So, because most of the Black women in the group, we were very outspoken. In fact, we had welfare women in our group, too who were very outspoken. That's a whole 'nother story about our Civil Rights Movement. Ah, getting welfare rights, getting more dignity into that state of Texas human development, or human welfare system, getting them to lift up the recipients of welfare. It was always degrading. So, we had women who were members, who were actually welfare recipients and a handful who came and joined the movement and were very outspoken, and did bring about change and welfare organization. And ah, I mention that too because later on, that group of women had to come out and speak before senate committees who were looking at making a lot of changes in welfare reform, changes that would be detrimental to the recipients. So, we would be able to go and let our voice be heard there and speak out regarding keeping that dignity among women, not letting them have to suffer unnecessarily just to get that welfare check on a monthly basis. So, out of that spun the Black women's movement, also. We have to look at that when we look at the Black Power Movement. We have to look at the fact that in Dallas, too there was a group that came out of that Civil Rights Movement: Black Women United for Justice. I think I've got the name incorrectly. I'm sorry I'm havin' a senior moment. But, it was a Black women's power group that came out of that. It was not a slap in the face to our Black men, but at that time, with the women's liberation movement moving about, the women in that group felt that, "Hey, we can also show our leadership." So, we had a little spin-off in that group where we had a Black women's unit where we had our leaders there, but we were still shoulder-to-shoulder with the Black male leadership and members of that group, but we also felt that we needed to lift ourselves up, too. So, we did that with our Black women's movement that came across. It was politically...political movement and was also a movement that we had ah, organized a health and a food co-op. So, we would band together and organized under that aspect to going to food co-ops and health co-ops and educating women on that particular area.

AW: I have a few questions. Um, first, if you could tell me the names of the members of SNCC who were indicted in the supermarket, I don't know, event.

JH: Okay, Matthew Johnson and Ernest McMillan.

AW: And which leader spoke against the micro-chip company?

JH: That was Ernest McMillan.

AW: And who was the mayor at the time?

JH: Erik Jonnson.

AW: And what happened to that leader when he spoke out against that company?

JH: That was really the beginning of Ernest McMillan being terrorized or harassed more by the police and the establishment and also where undercover agents were actually put into the group, where, we didn't know at the time, but new members were comin' in and some of those who really got close to Ernest were actually—we found out later—were actually agent provocateurs and they were there to—as a FBI agent, CIA agent—to discredit the group, to lie, you know, to snitch on what the plans were on organizing whatever kinda organization we were doing and what we were doing to recruit other members. So that's what really started that harassment on McMillan. It was just...it was just...you couldn't go anywhere without looking back or looking in front of you and seeing the police in uniform. And then, alongside you to, we didn't know at the time, there were actually spies in the group.

AW: And what is your relationship to Ernest McMillan?

JH: That's my brother, my big brother. I admire him still because of his conviction and he's still holds on to that conviction to and he's doing more community organizing even now. We're both, of course, over sixty, but he's still out there in the forefront.

AW: I have a few, a few more questions if you don't mind.

JH: Okay. Sure, I don't mind.

AW: If you could just tell me what organizations you were affiliated with and like the approximate years of your affiliation. I know that you were probably involved in more than one organization, so if you could just tell me like around what time it was.

JH: Like from 1967 to maybe 1969, SNCC, Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee. Prior to that I would say a coupla years with the NAACP, maybe like from when I was in high school, probably '58 to 1960. And then, People United for Justice for Prisoners and from 1969 to perhaps, 1976. And then the Black women's coalition that came about in 1970, 1970 to probably...no, no, no, 1974 to maybe 1976 or 1978.

AW: And what was your role in any of those groups?

JH: Um, secretary in the Black women's group. I was secretary in that group and Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee I didn't really have a title, but I was like a secretary or clerk 'cause we were, I would say, communications supporter, if I could think of a title—communications assistant because we were busy typing the flyers and typing the newsletters and distributing those in communities or at churches.

AW: Okay, I have a few more. If you could tell me how you...you said so much and it's invaluable...how did you specifically, if you could remember, the moment you specifically got started in the movement.

JH: Hmm, let's see. Let me kinds back up so I can try to make everything fit with the right answer.

AW: There is no right or wrong answer.

JH: Because I went off to college in 1964 to California and I came back in 1966 and at that time, my brother Ernest was coming back to in the city and we were both out there trying to have a job, a legitimate job, working and trying to save money. I was savin' money to go back to college and ah, Ernest was workin' everyday and he was going to University of Texas at Arlington. I think it was Arlington State College at that time. He was goin' to school there. And then, I think the moment...it all has to do with my brother, following his lead. I was always a follower and I always like followin' him around even as a child. But when he joined with the Students for a Democratic Society at Southern Methodist University—these were young white kids who were very, very liberal—he joined with them around the draft and organizing against the Viet Nam War, except it was like a peace movement. So I believe at that moment that he embraced another group of people to move forward on his agenda of peace, I think that's kinda what sparked my ah, my desire to want to be part of that group. But then after while, we broke off from the Students for a Democratic Society, because we thought, we felt Black Power was the answer and we really couldn't associate with the white groups. We know at that time we thought that was the right decision. So, all of that. And then when Dr. King was assassinated, I think that's when I made a three hundred and sixty degree change and felt that because all the time I was doling out money to get our people out of jail and doing that kind of thing and at the same time working and dating and trying to have a social life, and then at that point, when Dr. King was assassinated, and because we always felt that Dr. King was not revolutionary enough because we were young. So, when he was assassinated that gave us a whole new outlook. So, I think at that moment that's what triggered my desire to be in the forefront, my idea of the forefront, and doing more to move...to be part of the movement and move forward and march on and to raise your fist and to hold your picket sign and speak out against injustices. I think that's what really did it for me, and then also seeing my brother unjustly criticized and unjustly harassed by the so-called justice system. I think that's what really opened my eyes to, "Hey, a change has got to come. We're tryna birth this change, but all these little ah, things bein' put in front of us." So I think that's what really triggered it was really just

that external...the external forces of hate that you could see eye to eye that this country brought about. I think that's really what did it for me.

AW: Has the Dallas region's movement received any national attention?

JH: Has what?

AW: Has the Dallas region's movement received any national attention?

JH: Yes they have. SNCC has, Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, SCLC has. I don't think I talked enough about SCLC, but they were also a part of that group, the Black Panther Party. There was a national media that came about in Dallas, and we felt Dallas was finally being put on the map as far being part of the Civil Rights movement. A lot of our comrades on the east coast and the west coast, they were probably moving at a different speed than we were, but because we were in the South, in this Bible Belt with the Dallas Citizens Council right on top of us, we finally were able to break that stronghold. So, yes there was a national movement in spite of the fact that Dallas didn't want it to be heard. Dallas wanted to be the international city for fashion and merchandising and banking and finance and all of that, but Dallas did, because of the SNCC movement, the Black Panther Movement and we did have such and you can look on the internet and pull up a lot of the archives and radio stations and T.V. networks and newspaper articles that will testify to that fact and it came in different forms because when Ernest was indicted and he was put on...he was able to make his bond and ah, he was not to leave the city by any means necessary, but the World Council of Churches wanted Ernest to come to, I think it was New York. They wanted him to come to New York to speak to their group and Ernest got permission from the courts and he was able to do that so he flew and went to New York to make his speech with that World Council of Churches. And once he got there, he got a call from the courts sayin' that they hadn't granted him approval. So, he knew this was a set up. They had actually approved him to leave for that day or two. So, that sparked another movement because Ernest became a fugitive for several years because he knew that ah, he would be killed...killed, castrated, or just really discredited because Dallas hated him so. The establishment in Dallas hated him because of his activities and because of his organization and his voice that he had in this community. That sparked another movement for defending our Civil Rights leaders. So those are all type of movements that spun out and one was People United for Justice for Prisoners. That came about and Black Citizens for Justice, Law, and Order, that was another one that I was member of. I didn't hold an office in that, but ah, we had membership in that. That came about in supporting our leaders, our fallen leaders in the movement. And also, just to assist working people in their daily lives. Those who might have had law suits or needed to file a grievance against a landlord or against an employer or something going on incorrectly in the school system. So that group, Black Citizens for Justice, Law, and Order, that was another group that kind of spun off and came out of the Civil Right Movement. So, yes to answer your question. I hope that did answer your question about the national impact.

AW: It did. It did. I was wondering if you could speak more on the defense movement for the Civil Rights workers. How was this movement within a movement composed? If you could tell us like some of the intricacies of it and anything else you want us to know about it.

JH: That came about and I have to attribute my mom, I haven't even mentioned her until now, her name shudda came up a long time ago. My mom, Eva McMillan, affectionately called by all the Civil Rights workers as Mama Mack—once Ernest and others, whenever they would be put in jail, my mother would call all of her friends, her community, even her PTA counterparts or cohorts, call them to, "Please call the jailer and tell them not to do anything to hurt our Civil Rights workers or anybody in that jail" 'cause we knew how things of that nature would go on. So that kinda of grassroots organized the People United for Justice for Prisoners and the Black Citizens for Justice, Law, and Order. They came about because of that need to have some kind of organized method to protect our Civil Rights, our advocates that were in prison, those who we called political prisoners—some way to protect them and to have funds in order to pay legal council to pay those attorneys and at the same time, to educate people, educate the community, educated other people in other places about what was going on in Dallas. So those two organizations spun out of that need from grassroots to really a national or well-organized faction, organized group of people that would meet in churches on a regular basis, once a week and ah, publish newsletters, flyers. In fact, the Black Citizens for Justice, Law, and Order group, they still exist. I think they even have a charter. That's a chartered group now. So, they're still on the books and I don't have any association with them now, but I do hear about them every now and then when they have a banquet to lift up a member or to do a fundraiser, we get notified. But, back to Eva McMillan, our mother, we kind of refer to her as the mother of the Civil Rights Movement here, especially at the grassroots level. When we were younger, on election days she would always be working at the polls and she extended herself because of her son's political activities that sparked her energy, being energized to ah, helping those ah, activists and the groups and then to organize those defense funds, which were very much needed to continue to support them even when they were in jail and their families, even when they went off to prison and then to pay for those attorneys. I don't know if you need to know the attorneys' names.

AW: Yes.

JH: Vincent Perini, P-E-R-I-N-I and then the other ones...oh my God, a senior moment! Last name is Hernandez. I want to say Michael Hernandez, but I know that's not his first name, but I can get it for you. Those were the two main attorneys that were involved in those defense groups. And ah, then there were other professional people. There was a doctor from Fort Worth, Dr. Brooks. He was very supportive of the political activities going on in Dallas and he would help fund the ah, trips to the different committee meetings and travel. And then, Reverend Zan Holmes later became state representative, he was then and always has been a great supporter and organizer for Black liberation during the movement days, probably even before because I think he was one of the first Black students at Southern Methodist University in their theology seminary. That was in the 1950s. So that's another force...person that helped bring about change n Dallas

during that period. I was tryna think of some more either incidents or activities. There are so many to think about, but some of those moments, it was frightening because the police would pull guns on our leaders and break down their door in the middle of the night to harass and wake them up and just threaten them and take them to jail for no reason. So, it was some scary moments during that time, but ah, that just made everybody really stronger and changes did come about and they're still comin' about now as...in relationship to the Civil Rights struggle and movement during that time in Dallas. We now have our first Black district attorney, Craig Watkins because for many years, the district attorney's office was held by Henry Wade, attorney Henry Wade and his name was just synonymous with hate and "Let me protect the capitalists here in this town." The Black Movement, there was one in Dallas, just like in all the other major cities. Although we were in the heart of the south. So, it's been an evolution in the midst of, you know, organizing a revolution and organizing great change in Dallas, Texas.

AW: Do you know if there were any specific meeting places that people went to develop programs and organize?

JH: In Dallas? Some were just like at, I know a coupla times we actually went to White Rock Lake and ah, we would go there, I guess because we didn't think there would be any bugs, any cameras or anybody eavesdropping with their electronics. So, White Rock Lake with that flagpole and that little covered area, we would do a lot of organizing there and meeting there. Also, at the Lutheran church next door to Madison High School, we did a lot of organizing in that church. J. B. Jackson had an office. He was a Black businessman and he had an office on Second Avenue. He would let SNCC utilize his office for crankin' out the newspapers and newsletters and those sorts of things in his office and even having meetings there. Also, in homes, in some of the homes of some of the parents of the members, we'd meet there. I'm tryna think of some of the other churches, but that was the main church and he was a great white minister who sympathized with the community and offered his church all the time to have meetings. Okay, and then Al Lipscomb had an office right across from what is now the Martin Luther King Learning Center on Pennsylvania. One of the houses there had been turned into the office space to be used for organizing and also in South Dallas at Warren Avenue Methodist Church, they had an Operation Breadbasket there. There would be a lot of meetings held there also. Don Johnson, who was one of the organizers of the Operation Breadbasket, he would open his door to us. And them, of course, Zan Holmes, Reverend Zan Holmes church, Saint Luke. Saint Luke would open its doors for meetings, for panel discussions, for, you know, raising money and funds. Those are the only ones I can think of right now. There might have been one or two places in West Dallas where a lot of the welfare reform members were. There might have been some places in West Dallas also. And, I know Ernest probably did some organizing on the campus of UT in Arlington because I think they did organize a Black movement at that college campus. So, it might have been some meetings being held at that college campus, too.

AW: Before, about just a little while ago, you were saying there were a lot of incidents running through your mind, we don't have to talk about them all today, if you don't want

to, but can you tell us of a specific incident that really struck you or maybe involved you that you'd want just to share with us?

JH: Ah, let me see. Let me think. I don't think there's any one that I want to share that I was personally involved in, but I can certainly tell you about some that I wasn't involved in. Nah, I don't know if that's fair or not, but I'd rather speak on those if that's okay. Well, I can tell you. This is kind of light-hearted, but it's still kinda frightening at the same time with my brother's wife, leaving Oak Cliff one evening. There were two unmarked cars following us, but we just continued to drive around about, I know an hour. We just took them on a tour and they just followed us until they got tired of following us. We drove through Oak Cliff, to downtown, and we just kinda made a u-turn. Go back to Oak Cliff in a circle. At the time, we were so upset with them. We could call them, "You pigs! You pigs! Why were you following us?" That was another way of letting us know that "Big brother is watching you. You're not gonna get away with anything. We know you know something and whatever meeting you're going to right now, just know that we've got somebody on your tail." I can think of some other really sad incidents where...and this is the welfare mothers were holed up in the welfare office in West Dallas.

AW: Can you tell us how that came about?

JH: Uh huh and I know Ruth Jefferson befriended the members of SNCC and she asked for help because the welfare office was just really comin' down negative on that community of recipients of that little area of West Dallas and those housing projects. So, she went into the welfare office one day looking for her check, she and some of the other welfare recipients and they called some of the SNCC members to come and help them. Well, they came there and the welfare director wanted everyone to leave and they refused to leave. So they just, I think all the staff people left, but the welfare mothers and the SNCC members remained in that welfare office. I know overnight until probably that following afternoon. They had the police lined up in their cars surrounding the welfare office in West Dallas with bullhorns and people were calling our house saying, "Can you talk some sense into Ernest and Ruth Jefferson and Kwesi and all them? They need to get out of there. We don't want them to shoot up the welfare office." So, finally, Ruth Jefferson, who really was another force to be reckoned with, she was...no one ever believed that she was actually a professional woman who had been a secretary, but was down on her luck. She couldn't work for a while, but she managed to get an audience with the people in the welfare office and let them know that, "Hey, our checks need to be mailed and delivered to us on time. Don't degrade us." So a lot of change came about during that probably sixteen hours of being surrounded by the police because they refused to come out of that office until their grievances had been heard and I think it had something to do, too with better housing and that ah, project area. Larger, you know, if you have three children, "Why are you gonna put me in a one-bedroom apartment. Please listen to my grievance. I need at least a two-bedroom or a three-bedroom." So those things are now, that's automatic if you're a welfare recipient, you know, that's part of the rules. But at that time, back in the late sixties, early seventies, that was not part of the regulations. So, those kinda changes came about, you know, just more dignity.

Treating the people who came in the office with more dignity and not treating them like they were trash or treating them negatively. So, that was one event.

AW: Is Ruth Jefferson still alive?

JH: No, she passed away, probably maybe two or three years ago.

AW: I've heard a lot of stories about her. Uncle Ernie was talking about her and then for my research I was watching that panel that Uncle Ernie had at the museum and Black Ed and Uncle Ernie were talking about Ruth Jefferson. So, I said, "Oh, I gotta interview Ruth Jefferson!" I can't even interview here, but I'm glad that you were able to speak on her being a force to be reckoned with, 'cause they spoke of her even different...they spoke of different incidents where she was instrumental with Kwesi being in jail.

JH: That did become her man. But, she was really good for that. It was a good thing that she was there although it was bad things that were happening to she and her family, but, you know, good ended up comin' out of those grievances. People had to hear the voice, you know. We need to talk about when Angela Davis came to Dallas.

AW: Oh, if you would like to talk about that, please tell us. When was this?

JH: This was in the 80s. I'm sayin' that Civil Rights had ended, but Angela Davis came to SMU and she came to the Bethlehem Foundation, Bethlehem Center rather, in South Dallas. We, the Black community, at that time I was at that time a member of the Black Women's United Front. So ah, that group and then there was another group and I think it was actually some of the postal workers union people. We all got together and we provided her a place to rest her head, to eat and we were also her security while she was here. So she came and spoke at the Bethlehem Center and this was after her incarceration. So she talked about growin' up in the south and the Birmingham church bombing, how she knew those young girls. They were all her neighbors and friends. She talked about that and she talked about her being a professor and then she talked about the time she spent when she tried...when she was gonna help free the member of the Black Panther Party. That's another story. But anyway, her main talk was on unemployment. When she got to SMU was talkin' about the Black Movement, but she interfaced it with human rights and she interfaced it with the economy at the time and about the unemployment rate and how we could change that and what we needed to do and it was just amazing that Southern Methodist University had her speaking right there in that big auditorium. It might have been a peace movement group that brought her here. But ah, so when we got to the Lovefield Airport, she...we had to go into the restroom with her to make sure that everything was clear and safe and she talked to us like she was just out long, lost friend, which she really was because she was so admired because of all the things she had gone through. And then at that time she had maintained or retained her professorship at that college. To my knowledge, there were no negative incidents. There were no demonstrations against her. She came in and everything just went just a smoothly. She talked to the community, talked to the Black community in South Dallas. And then, she made sure that she stopped and talked to the Black community on her way

to Southern Methodist University. But, there were some Black people there that were not a part of the movement, but they were there because they were students there. So, it was a very good evening, good day...probably a good coupla days with her. It was just so amazing and physically she was...we always put her on a pedestal, but physically she was a tall woman with a big ole afro. So physically, she looked like she was seven feet tall to us. Very powerful woman. That was one of the highlights, to me, of just bein' her in Dallas and seein' her come through Dallas and everything was just so beautiful. Another eye opening experience meeting Angela Davis. I'm gonna think about some of the Black Panther Party people, too, because there was one left Dallas and went to Oakland and was really in the heart of the Huey Newton and all of them and he came back to Dallas later and ah, that's a whole 'nother story. I wasn't part of that in California, but we heard a lot of that about what was goin' on because there was a Black Panther chapter here in Dallas that was quite different from the Black Panther chapter in Oakland. In what way were they different? Their philosophy, although it was supposed to be the same rules and regulations whatever their code of conduct was, but they were more militant. Now, we thought they were militant in Dallas, but they were really...some of the things that you heard that happened in Oakland under that leadership and how they raised money. They raised money legitimately, but they would have...they had Ike and Tina Turner comin' into raise money.

AW: Really? In Oakland?

JH: In Oakland, California.

AW: I was abut to say, "In Dallas?"

JH: Not in Dallas, in Oakland. So, that's another part of the movement although that was Oakland, there was a faction here. It was so much excitement going on at that period. Ossie Davis, the great actor, came offa one of his sets he was doing. He was filming in Louisiana. Well, he came through Dallas to help raise money for our defense fund for Ernest and for all the SNCC members for that People United for Justice for Prisoners. It was either that group or another group, but anyway, he was here to help us raise funds and that was amazing meeting Ossie Davis and we did the fundraiser ah, at my mother's house in Oak Cliff on Glenn Avenue and then we left there and the next day we finished the fundraiser at Warren Avenue Methodist Church on what is now Malcolm X Boulevard. It was Oakland Avenue at the time. But eh came and finished the fundraiser there at the church and that was the first time seein' African drummers. This was probably 1971 I bet. 1970 or 1971, early seventies. That was amazing seeing that everything is connected and it was just amazing the outpouring of support that you didn't think you had and you looked around and they might not have been from Dallas, but they were from somewhere else and they would come to the aid because they knew how the system nationally would react anytime a people is trying to gain their freedom.

AW: You are being very modest on your role in the movement. So, if you feel like talking more about what you specifically did.

(Ms. Hill looks confused)

AW: You are being modest and you know it.

JH: No, I think I'm telling the truth.

AW: You are telling the truth, but you know, if you care to elaborate more on what you specifically did, you can feel free to do that.

JH: I was just there to support and I just did what I can. I probably could have done more, but I was tryna maintain a job and maintain food on the table.

AW: Because you had children.

JH: Yeah, I had my first child in 1971 and the baby in 1976 and they would go places with us to...when we would do our freedom marches or our demonstrations, our marches they would be right along there with us marchin'. Yeah, but I just did what I could to just to help and be supportive, but and ah, I know one role...I thought...as far as the women's movement, which it doesn't take anything, subtract anything from the Black Power Movement but ah, back in...this can later on this was probably 1980...like I said this was post. A group of us organized the First International Women's Day in Dallas and the YWCA on Ross Avenue allowed us to have it there. That was really a wonderful event that we kept it going for a while and I think it still goes on, but on a different level. But it really started out as a grassroots...it was a recognition of...“Women Hold Up Half the Sky and the Men Hold Up the Other Half.” So that was another, I hate to use the word spin-off, but the Black Movement really gave birth to so many other movements necessary to evolve to where we are now because without the Black Movement there was no farmer's, migrant worker's movement, no Hispanic movement, you know liberation groups—Viva La Raza and all that, and women's rights and all that, to me, all happened because there was a Black Movement. That's all I can think of at this point. Something else might spark me.

AW: Okay, Ms. Hill, off-camera, we were talking about your involvement in some other, um, organizations. So, I'd like you to inform the audience about um, (a) your involvement in those organizations and (b) just like a rough timeline of dates that that happened and any stories that you can remember.

JH: Okay...Well yes, a few weeks ago, we did talk about my involvement in the Civil Rights Movement that led to my involvement in Women's Rights Movements and that was from nineteen...sixty...sixty-seven through about 1974. Or the nineteen...yeah, 1974...maybe a little bit later. And those involvement in those Civil Right Movement did lead me to be involved in other groups and the one I particular that we talked about was from 1975 to about 1981 and, uh, my husband at the...my husband and I joined the Communist Party—Marxist/Leninist Movement here in Dallas, a Dallas chapter was formed. Ah, a friend from New York and some other friends around the state of Texas brought to my husband and my attention of this organization, which that organization,

and I will refer to as CPML, Communist Party—Marxist/Leninist, came about through another student movement. So, it grew out of the ah SDS, the Students for a Democratic Society, and they had other organizations so it was a...it came out of...it was born out of conflicts between the Student Non-Violent...I mean the Students for a Democratic Society and the Communist Party—USA. So, we joined the Communist Party—Marxist/Leninist Party since uh, I was married and I had children at home, my husband and I, we first said, “the Communist Party?”, which of course there was always so much negativeness around that word. We knew that we had a Constitutional right under the freedom to express ourselves and the freedom to ah, speak out, we knew we had a right and a Constitutional right to be a member of that organization. So we did. And that organization allowed us to join other groups in our community or either on our work force or our work place that would allow us to ensure that that there...that the struggle of the working-class people would continue on through this group. At the time, I was working at a poverty law office and I left that law office to go work at the United States Postal Service. That was where I was targeted to make my focus to assist the workers there at the postal...post office because they were having a lot of issues with management as far as unlawful...ah...unhealthy work environment, overtime, excessive overtime, and just workplace negativeness. So once I became a member of that Party and I became an employee of the Postal Service, ah the organization was to make sure that ah, we would join the union, and this was to ah, to bring about employers’ rights and union rights and ah, after, ah, and I worked for the post office for actually two years, a little over two years...at which at that time, we worked...we joined the Postal Workers’ Union and because the union was tied more to management than it was to the workers, we organized, although we were union members and we were happy to be union members, we also started a new organization called Postal Workers for a Fighting Union, because we wanted the union to be tough with management and not just be a “yes union” and to really lift up the workers. So, I did that for over two years at the Postal Service, but continued my membership in that organization for five or six years, from 1975 to 1981. And ah, the CPML allowed us to, well, there was a newspaper that we had to sell on a weekly basis and we had membership dues...it was a bonafied organization and we sold the newspaper called...it was *The Call* and ah, we were tied with Mao Tse Tung and his beliefs that in order for a country to flourish and in order for an organization to flourish that the working-class people had to be heard, not misused and that their rights had to be lifted up. So and , we ah, that organization because...was had a membership, not a big membership, it was a national-known organization, but it was only about 500 members, so it didn’t last as long as some of the other, Communist Party—USA and Communist Party organizations, but um...I was trying to get...I’m sorry, Ava—

AW: That’s okay. Take your time.

JH: I was trying get at my point that being a member of that organization really allowed us to really read about the history of not only African Americans, about that history, but also the history of the working-class internationally and nationwide. So, one person, and I don’t know if you’ve ever heard of a Black man named called Harry Haywood, he came to one of our first organizational conferences and he was just a joy to behold...he was...he had written a book entitled, *The Black Bolsheviks*, and it was the autobiography

of a African...the African...African...Afro-American Communist man. So, if you have opportunity to, that might be a good book for you to read on down the road. Um, so, just hearing about his struggles in the Midwest really helped push the organization. The main leader of that group was and I can't remember, recall his name right now, but he was a white man in New York and he was very liberal, because one of the goals of the CPML was to, was not only the worker and the union rights, was also to voter registration and getting individuals elected into offices...officials, so they could help rewrite laws. And, I don't know where all the other CPMLs are now, but they could be members of tea parties now or they could be members of some of the independent other like Republicans, Democrats, and some of those other electoral organizations...memberships. I'm trying to think of some other events that we did. Our organization grew and it was really a diverse group. It was not...it was, of course we had Anglo members, Hispanic members, Asian members, so it was almost like a so-called Rainbow Coalition. And we studied all the time. We had to really keep our heads in books and read our...*The Class Struggle*, *The Red Book*, and you know, with the main goal being with the CPML...the CPML would be the vanguard party of the working class and other organizations spun out of that groups and some you might be aware of: The National Fight-Back Organization, you might have heard...you might have heard some other people you interviewed talk about that group, ah some of the Communist youth organizations, and other national organizations have grown out of that group. There were contradictions in that group and I think that was one of the reasons the organization finally disbanded after...in fact it disbanded about 1981 or 1982 because their views on women's rights, they said it was really a petit bourgeoisie idea...not an idea that we should even...the women in the organization should even be concerned about. So we start...some of the women in the group, which most of the leaders in that group were women, so we began to look at that organization as not one that's really going to promote the idea that women needed to be liberated. Now it was okay...they were alright for the Equal Rights Amendment, but as far as women talking about their equal...their equal rights or the fact that...they felt that we shouldn't be distracted by other type of women's liberation ideas or movements. So, that organization disbanded and I never heard anymore about it, and I still have some of those books that we used to read and with my having a husband and having two children at home, I knew this would, in the long-run help them throughout their life because that's just another evolvement...evolution from the civil rights struggle to the human rights struggle because this group really did talk just like the civil rights group. It talked about peace, liberation, ah, equality, and justice, ah, but that part about women rights kinda made us rethink it because we kept saying, "Well, most of us are women. Most of the leadership in the group," not the majority, but there were a lot of women leaders in that group. So, that organization went away and ah, so, I just kept doing what I could in the community—voters' education—and ah, on an annual basis, as a member of the Black women's group and some of the other umbrella groups, such as the People United for Justice for Prisoners and the Black Citizens for Justice, Law, and Order, those Dallas groups, we would always go back to our not thinking just locally, but we would spread that thought to be an international thought. So, we also organized events around International Women's Day, and ah, bringing the struggle of women to the forefront, and their rights to be employed and treated equally and equal pay for equal work and just

allowing our activities in unions to not be a sell out...to...ah...to move forward to do the correct and right things as far as equal rights for the working-class.

AW: I had, ah, one question. I know at the beginning of this interview, you were saying how it grew out of...how CPML grew out of a clash between SDS and the CPUSA kind of conflicting on their goals and their ideals...

JH: Yes, yes...

AW: How did you in particular move from...I wouldn't say, well, let me not go say more than I should, but, how did you move from being in the civil rights environment to coming into a Communist mode of thought or way of thinking?

JH: I guess it's probably like the company that you keep and the other leaders in some of the other groups, um, they started thinking more globally that in order for ah, in order for everybody to be free...in order for freedom to happen and everybody to be liberated, it was not just gonna be for a Black thing, it had to be everyone...one and...more of an international global look at the struggle. So that's, that's how that came about. And, I guess at that point I was in my early thirties and wanting to do more to keep the environment, you know, now we have all the people wanting to be green, you know, just trying to think, just not continuing to think at the local level of Dallas alone, because there were some victories in Dallas as far as civil rights. Ah, there were some victories. Some of the leaders that had been put in prison or had been harassed by officials were now being listened to. Doors were opening; barriers were being...had been torn down, or broken down and there was a little more equality there although the struggle still continues, that goal and that mission had been accomplished. So, now let's look on a global level and freeing everybody, and at that time, we felt that the working people, the working-class, the people who really made the country rich and who really built the country to where it was in its labor state, that there was always that contradiction between wage and labor and we felt that working people, that the so-called...the word we would use was "proletariat"... that the proletariat had to be heard in order for everybody to be free. So hopefully that answered that question.

AW: That's really...no, that's really good. Um, what would you advise that I highlight? Because I'm gonna tell you what I'm thinking in my mind...as I continue to do interviews and I see, you know, the shifts between um, going from...you know Granny talked about in the forties she was a proponent for voting and uh, then how it shifted to Uncle Ernie being more uh, civil rights minded and really getting the youth involved, really making people accountable in the city for ah, the way things were happening, the injustice that was happening, and then, you know, you have the shift to Black Power...

JH: Yes...

AW: ...and then at the same time you have the shift to Communism and women, so in order for us in this generation to really understand and crystallize that time, what would you suggest, like a final product look like?

JH: Okay...

AW: Like...a...does that make sense, that question? Like because I think we over...we...eh...not only they exalt the period, but I don't think we understand how fluid those thoughts were. We think that, "Oh, from 1950 to 1960, y'all were thinking like this, and then y'all were thinking like this from 1960 to 1975...so, how would you explain that progression of thought?"

JH: I think that progression of thought, that's an excellent question, Ava, and hopefully I can give...I mean... have...I mean justify...my answer is thoughtfully thought-provoking or...because we're just gonna kinda brainstorm right now with that question, because my idea is that once, if you sat down with a member of the Black Panther Party, if you sat down with someone of the Women's Movement, if you sat down with someone with the Peace Movement, if you sat down with someone with the Chicano or the Hispanic Movement, we're gonna all sit down there and all...we're gonna name a goal. Our vision is to be free, to be respected, to have equal rights and the enemy, at that time, to us, was corporate corporations...was ah, the rich people who were running the country, the rich people...the wealthy people who were really in control, so I think once we all sat down and looked at, "Hey, the oppressor is...are the corporations. The oppressors are those families, are those groups who are taking advantage of this whole situation. So I think it grew from, just like from birth to a baby and you see the baby grows and the baby evolves, that was just another springboard to a bigger picture and we had to, we had to and our minds had to think beyond what we could really see at that point and, ah, keep in mind to that a lot of the, a lot of the people who were in the Peace Movement, the people that were going through the Peace Movement were getting beaten up, ah, the students, the white students, or whoever the students were with the Student Non-Violent...the ah, Students for a Democratic Society at Kent State, because the war had come on then...the war, people were protesting against the war in Viet Nam on their campuses, etcetera...so, then you looked at "Hey, who the enemy really is," and then, "Hey, let's all get together." So, to me that was just a natural, really a natural course. It may be okay to get stuck into, "Hey, I'm just for Black liberation." It may be okay for some people to say, "Hey, I'm just gonna look at liberating my own people." But then you have another group of people that say, "Hey, it's not...I do want my freedom, but it's not...my freedom is going to have to be everybody's freedom. In order for one group to be free, we all had to be free." So that was a stepping stone; to say, "Hey, with this group let's look at—the CPML in particular—let's look at workers' rights because they're the ones...the basis of this country, as far as, you know, where all your money and funds are generated from, basically," because without the working people—the so-called "blue collar" people—postal workers, you know, General Motors, we even had people at some of the little local factories, like at Purex Company, and just trying to educate the working people that, "You had a history, too. Black people had a...have a history...African Americans have their history. Working-class people, you have your history, too," because that was a big struggle.

AW: Right, and that's what the back of America...well, that's what America is built upon: industry and capital...

JH: And that was one of the...one of the ideas...one of the discussions that came out of that CPML group was, "Once we are free, hey, we look at, you know, where are you gonna be?" You look at the size of the south, who built the south, really? The Black people built the south and made the south ah, you know, as part of the stock, so-called New York Stock Exchange because, back then, that's all, you know the blood, sweat, and tears of our ancestors who built this nation called "The Nation of the South," so...that's my thought on that, Ava and that still might be still more dialogue. I hope that answered your question.

AW: That was good. I really wanted your perspective on that. That's something that in some way, shape or form, that's sort of a nuance of that question that I ask to everybody. Another thing I wanted to ask you was just to...you were telling me that...now feel free to tell me that you don't want to talk about this...

JH: Okay...

AW: You were telling me that you, you know, solicited leaflets and papers for the CPML and I just wanted you to kinda shed light on that. I feel like...I really wanna focus on your role in particular in that organization.

JH: Okay, okay...

AW: Well, before I...after I became a member of CPML, I was working at this poverty law office, but the CPML said, "Hey, well, that's already a very liberal group of people, so we want you to..." because at that time in the seventies, the postal...the United States Postal Service was really going through same major changes and some really bad things happened to the postal workers, so what we did, before I even became a member, we would stand outside of the postal...the post offices and sell our newspaper called, *The Call*. It was like the "call to arms," like, "Here's an article that tells you about what this...this particular union's doing or about what people in unions should do," so although it was pro-union, it was pro-union being more on the for your members, not so much for management. So my role, initially was selling that newspaper, and then again, my role was to go take the test for the post office, hopefully you'll pass that test, which I did, and then you can work for the post office. So that's what I did, so once I got in as a post office clerk or actually, working, sorting mail, which paid really good money at that time, but it was really hard work. My goal was to become a member of the Postal Workers Union and try to become an officer of that union and then have that caucus building on that union to really remember to be a union that didn't just settle for what management, "Hey, management says, hey, no raises this year, or if someone goes on strike, they're gonna get fired or have temps come in." So, my goal was to really ah, go to those union meeting and to really be, you know, a voice heard, and I didn't become an officer of the union, but we...I did become an officer of that caucus: The Postal Workers for a Fighting Union. And then, out of that group our...we had a pretty good

membership within that group. They were all members of the union, so out of that caucus group, we decided on people in that group to have them run for office in the union and some of our people did get elected. So that was beginning of...once you get an officer in there, you can begin to really have a conversation with management and say, "You know, it's...it's the conditions here at this post office are terrible, you need to really do better," ah, as far as somebody, like an employee would work from 3:30 in the afternoon to midnight. Well, you knew you were gonna be getting off at midnight and you could go home. Well, management would wait 'til five minutes before midnight and say, "Hey you've gotta work over-time." That's, that's not showing any integrity or respect to that worker who's probably wants to go ahead and get home and get ready for another day especially be with their family and be at home so they can be available to get their children ready for school the next day or whatever. So, it was just a disrespect, and then there were sometimes when you didn't get your pay on a particular day you were supposed to get your work...get your check. So, there were a lot of struggles and I'm sure now, the workers at the post office they don't suffer like they did in the seventies...that there is more respect and more equality and pay to...the pay schedules were for...if a woman was standing right next to a man doing the same work, "Hey, you need to pay that woman at that same high rate of pay that you're paying that male employee."

AW: Um...you made the...the caucus was made because, uh, to make sure that the demands were met by management and the um...the union?

JH: Yes. What...to make sure that the union listened to the workers and that the union not be a sell-out. We used to call them, "you're gonna sell out to management? We're paying you our union dues and we want you, when you get to sit at the table..." because a lot of times, there was not only big issues dealing with federal law. There might be an issue, "Hey somebody didn't do their quota of mail-sorting that day. They didn't do a hundred per ten minutes, they did ninety." Well, you want that union rep, when he's gonna sit there with management and ah, defend you, you want that union rep to be on your side, not on management's side. So it was that push, that push to say, "Union, your history of the union, you were created to help the workers. Now, don't, because, don't sell us out and become an extension of management. Be...still remember who you are and where you came from and represent us." So that's what we were always doing. It was constantly, everyday. It was either a personal struggle, if not a personal struggle, with individuals you're trying to help win their cases, but there would be, you know, some big, ah, local safety issue or what have you. Umm hmm...

AW: That's really all I have. Sis you want to list some things that were on your paper?

JH: I think I might have covered, but let me scan this right quickly.

(There is a brief, but significant pause in speech)

JH: Let's see...I think that was it. One thing I had on here that I think I said it, but I just want to say it here the way I wrote it. One of the main goals of that CPML was for the

members to build on coalitions and strengthen unions. That was, you know, some of our main goals. And, thank you very much for asking that question.

AW: Thank you. We appreciate you.

JH: You're welcome. Hoping that's helpful. Hopefully I was able to communicate that, that ah, it just seems like the struggle continues, but there was a purpose for all these other dual memberships in these other organizations, because ah, there's still this constant struggle, you know, where people in that movement they're fighting for peace now. They're focusing on Peace Movements, you know, and although we have an African American president now, that's a good thing, but like someone said recently, that was not their organization or individual goal in life. They voted for that person, but that everybody needs to continue to struggle and make sure that everyone is treated justly and I would just like to encourage you and other young people to, you know, make that college...get that college degrees or degrees and make sure you get people elected in office that's gonna help change things because you can legally now. I mean, we were making changes legally then, but you can actually be a lawmaker at the state-level, the local-level, the national-level, in Congress. You know, you can, you know, be a lawmaker and help make things better in this world for everybody.

AW: Um... I remember one other thing that I wanted you to talk about. And, it's not necessarily just to get, "Oh! The dirt," but I did wanna state the cleavages that you may have had with other organizations, and maybe like your critique of what they were doing and their critique of what you were doing. Like I know you were talking about Juanita Simmons and Diane Ragsdale...

JH: Oh yeah...

AW: ...kinda being leary of some of the things that you were saying at the time when, you know, you were a Communist.

JH: Right...

AW: if you wanna talk about that. We don't have to.

JH: Um...uh, that Black women's local group. What we were doing, we were doing some good things. We had a food co-op. Ah, we were participating in Harambe Festivals. We would raise funds through little, whatever we...you know, fundraisers like the people auctions, but then there were members, a few of us who were members of CPML. When it came time to re-write our by-laws and Constitution for our group, we were trying to make that group, and we can go...that can go back to that mission to strengthen it...we wanted to make that Black woman's local group a stronger group and we wanted, I think one of the things we wanted that group to embrace other, other types of Black women and even women that didn't look like us, like maybe even some Anglo women or Hispanic women. We were looking at a more international Women's Movement. So, some of the members of the original group ah, felt that that...they were

not ready for us to change that local group to be international, to be more globally recognized or to even look at a national mission. So I dropped out of that women's group.

AW: What was the name of that group?

JH: Ah, Black Women...Oh I'm trying to remember...

AW: Black Women's United Front?

JH: Yeah. That's right...I'm...you know more...Black Women's united Front. And it was a united front for, you know, as long as we were looking at local issues, which nothing was wrong with that, but the minute we wanted to look at more on a national-level or strengthen that goal, or including, not just, you didn't have to be just a professional teacher, you could be a plain working-woman, a welfare mother or someone to be a member of that group. So, once I dropped out of that organization, I really forged ahead in the CPML in doing what I thought was necessary at the time to bring about liberation, to bring about a better world, a better country, better laws.

AW: Anything else?

JH: I think that's it.

AW: Unless I think of another question.

JH: Yeah.

AW: That one just came up to me just now.

JH: I mean to write some more notes, but I didn't.

(There is another brief, but significant pause).

AW: We appreciate it.

JH: Oh, you're welcome.

Interview Ends.

Interview with Reverend Peter Johnson

Ava Wilson (AW): ...And whenever you're ready, if you could just state your name for the camera.

Reverend Peter Johnson (RPJ): My name is Peter Johnson.

AW: Okay and Reverend Johnson, if you would, please detail to us your, your involvement in the Movement in Dallas, Texas.

RPJ: Okay, ah...I came here in 1969 reluctantly and against my will. I did not want to come. But, Reverend Abernathy, who in 1969 was president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference—Dr. King was already in his grave, ah—assigned me here. This is the...this was the second time I was given an assignment to come here, and kind of ah, imposed his will on me—he and Andy Young—to get me to come. I was gonna only be here for three months in 1969 and ah, I...my mission was to the premiere showing of the movie, *King: Montgomery to Memphis*. It was gonna premiere in 800 cities all over the world and I got stuck with the southwestern cities primarily because ah, Louisiana is my home state...

AW: Okay.

RPJ: ...ah, and the assumption was, if I grew up in Louisiana, I should know something about Texas, which I really did not. I used to come to Houston, ah when I was going to college for Texas Southern football, basketball, and then there was a baseball team 'round there called, ah Colt .45. (To another person in the room) Wadn't it, Fred that usta...? And then I would go down there for baseball games with my father. 'Cause I really didn't have no knowledge of the, the, the culture and the social politics of the state of Texas, but that's what I basically did, I got sent here. Ah, couldn't talk my way out of it, you know. Reverend Abernathy used a deal on me, "Y'all can't do me like y'all've done Martin. I need y'all to cooperate with me." And then there were other complications that kinda forced me to come to this part of the country. The movie was going to premiere in 800 cities around the world, Dallas was gonna be the base for my operations because, primarily not because of Dallas, but because of Lovefield.

(Cell phone rings. Speaking to another person in the room).

RPJ: That's Joe, if he calls back would you tell him that I'm doing an interview and that I'll call him later? Ah, the challenges here were tremendous when I first came here. This is 1969, and for all practical purposes, the modern-day Civil Rights Movement that had...was raging all over the southern states, for all practical purposes, in 1969, that was about over. But, it really had not touched the state of Texas the way it had touched other southern states. The night I flew to Dallas, Andy drove me to the airport in Atlanta to come to Texas. What I remember about that night is that Andy said, you know, for me to understand that my assignment was a simple assignment to develop the premiere showing of the movie. "Don't get into no fights with the white people in Texas." Only do my

assignment and come back to Atlanta. Ah, the night I arrived here I was met at the airport by Albert Lipscomb, J.B. Jackson, and ah, I think, Ms. Higgins and they talked to me about the Fair Park Homeowners whose property was being condemned by the city and being taken under the ah, eminent domain laws. And of course I listened and explained to them that ah, I was on an assignment and had been told in no uncertain terms not to get involved in problems in Dallas or in Texas. A part of the problem with the Civil Rights Movement in the city of Dallas in particular was that Black preachers in the Black community had officially boycotted Dr. King when he came here, maybe in 1966 or '65. And the ministers had asked their members not to and go hear Dr. Martin Luther King. And ah, that had a lasting affect on people like Reverend Abernathy and C.T. Vivian and Dwight Walker and Andy and Fred Shuttlesworth, the senior men in the Civil Rights Movement...that had a lasting affect 'cause that impacted Dr. King. It...that had never happened before where Black people had decided to boycott him, so there was some bitterness and some hostility toward the Negro community in Dallas by the decision-makers in the Civil Rights Movement.

AW: And is that why they told you “in no uncertain terms...”?

RPJ: ...That's a part of it.

AW: Okay.

RPJ: ...That's definitely a part of it. There were some hostile feelings toward the Negro community in this part of the country. You know, Reverend Abernathy just fundamentally could not stand the Black preachers here because of what they had done. So, alla that came into play with my coming here. I had to work in the southern/southwestern state, which was Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. And the movie was coming rapidly upon us...800 cities around the world. 799 cities in the world welcomed the Martin Luther King movie. There was only one city to reject it. You're sitting in that city right now. It's the only city in the world, out of 800 cities to reject Dr. King's movie. I was awfully frustrated about the fact that we could not show the movie in Dallas. Theaters were closed to us. And ah, we were having a real, real problem. Nowhere else were we having this problem but here. Then there were other kinds of...childish...inner-staff problems that existed with me. Because of my youth, I was young and there were always people saying, “You...they shouldn't give Peter major assignments because he is too young and immature and volatile and unpredictable,” and so for me, I did not wanna fail on nothing on anything I was assigned to do because...I don't want to use the word jealous or envious...people who thought that I got special kinda treatment from Dr. Abernathy, who was like a big brother to me, and from Andy—who was my homeboy growing up under and had even known he and his family all my life—and even from Dr. King. There were some people in the staff who were a little older than me who thought that, “You know, they let Peter get away with stuff nobody else gets away with.” So, a failure here would have given them legitimacy in terms of criticizing the assignments that I was given. So, I was determined for this assignment to be successful and ah, we had identified and organized a local staff and trained them in the non-violent techniques that I had been trained in, to help me develop

this premiere showing. Ah, I guess maybe a week before the movie was to be shown, we still did not have a theater here, a theater that would allow us to show the movie. And we had decided that what we were gonna do was hand a sheet alongside a house in South Dallas on ah...

(The interviewer and interviewee had to relocate to another room due to double booking).

RPJ: We cut a deal with a homeowner over there off of what was Forest Avenue at the time, it is now Martin Luther King Boulevard, now. And what we were gonna do was we were gonna go to the Black radio stations and announce that people could come and see the movie free and we were gonna block off the streets ourselves and hang a sheet on the side of this house and show the movie. And Mrs. King was very, very uncomfortable with me doing that. (Laughs) She told me that ah, there was a kind of promotional version that was a thirty-minute version of the movie, kind of a condensed concept of the movie and that I could have access to that. There were only one or two copies of it. They were up in New York City. Jack Lowe, Sr., who's dead now, who was a white businessman here that was a part of the oligarchy, the powerful, white businessmen who ran this part of the country, came to my office, which was on Forest Avenue, which is MLK, now...and I didn't know this man, and he came in, and what I remember about him is that he was tall and he wore khaki pants and plaid shirts and he came to my office and he told me he said that if I could allow the citizens charter white men to view the movie and if they was comfortable with it, they would open up the doors—and this is maybe four days before the movie premiered around the world. Not only couldn't I...didn't do that, Mrs. King wasn't gonna give me a copy of that movie. Because it was gonna premiere and nobody had access to it. Even we had not seen the complete movie. We had been allowed to see portions of it and to give input on it, but we...none of us had seen it and Coretta wasn't gonna go for that deal, especially from me. I had just turned twenty-three years old, so there wasn't anyway in the world Mrs. King was gonna trust me with that kinda deal. So, I explained to Jack, Sr. that, "Even if I wanted to do that, I don't have access to the movie. And they aren't gonna...the people in Hollywood...Sam Livingston and Belafonte and them old boys, they're not gonna let me do that." But I told him that, "There was this thirty-minute, kind of, condensed version of the movie and if...I could get that and then we...". And then he agreed that he would assemble the Dallas leaders if I could get this thirty-minute version and let them see it. So, the movie was up in New York City and I had a friend who was a Jewish man who flew for a airlines called Brandith Airlines at the time, which was a Texas-based airlines, and ah, his route was, he flew from Dallas to, which was Idlewild Airport at the time. It's Kennedy Airport now. This fellow flew back and fourth from Idle...from Lovefield to Idlewild, and from Idlewild, back to Dallas. And he told me that if I could get some people to bring it to the airport, this film, he would fly it back down here for me. It was up in Harlem, at our Harlem office. So, I arranged for, I don't remember who it was, it's been so long ago, to drive out to Idlewild and hand deliver this thirty-minute version to this fellow, who'd name I don't remember. He and his wife both are dead now, but he was a very close friend of mine, a good human being, an he flew it down here in the cockpit of his plane. And Jack, Sr., Jack Lowe, Sr., Jack owned, and his son owns it now, in fact, Jack, Jr. is on the Dallas school board and he's just like my brother, very close friend of

mine, but his father arranged for the movie, this thirty-minute version to be shown at Park Cities Baptist Church and he invited Dallas's elite and business elites...I call 'em the oligarchy...the...so, this is two days before the movie is to premiere. We've got this thing out at Park Cities Baptist Church out in Park Cities and I go out there and I had a bodyguard 'cause I was scared of Dallas and I had began to get real, real threats on my life, and, you know, John Kennedy had been killed in the streets of this city, and we had lost Dr. King, so I very, very scared of this city and scared of the threats that was constantly coming on my life. So, I had a bodyguard, so when I got to the church and all these white men were there, they wouldn't let my bodyguard in the deal—George, he's dead now, too...tremendous man. But, nevertheless, we went in, they set up the film and I sat on the front row and I was very uncomfortable with all these white men sitting behind me in the dark. Jack, Sr. sat right next to me, put his arms around my shoulders, and told me, "...not to worry. Everything's gonna be alright." So when the lights went out and the movie started, I was constantly looking over my shoulder, you know, ah, and thirty-something-minutes later, when they turned the lights back on, there wasn't a dry-eye in that building. Dr. King had 'em all in tears. All of those powerful, powerful white men...I mean there wasn't a dry-eye in the building, Martin had 'em all in tears and they immediately agreed that Gordon McClendon, who owned the chain of movie houses here, would open up his theaters to the movie. A part of what else we had done was, Sam Livingston and Sidney, Sidney Poitier and Belafonte, they had put pressure on the theater owners down here, and the pressure was simple, if the movie, the King movie wasn't shown here, the distributors of new movies out in Hollywood was gonna boycott Dallas theater owners. So, we had alotta pressure on them by my friends in Hollywood. But, they capitulated and we were able to get that done, but we had only one day to promote the movie and to sell tickets, which was impossible. It was just, ah, impossible to do. The whole time this was goin' on people from the...homeowners from the Fair Park homeowners was comin' to me askin' for help and I was livin' in a hotel in downtown Dallas and ah, I went to a meeting with the home owners in South Dallas, and ah, it was a meeting where these homeowners jump all over me, "Why are you livin' in the white people hotel? Why don't you live in the community? And, you can live in the community," so what they were saying was basically right. And this one, this kinda elderly gentleman, Mr. Gideon Johnson, said, you can come live at my house and I was reluctant to give up my downtown hotel, but they were right, and ah, I agreed that I would, at some point move into the South Dallas community, but I still couldn't commit to helping them. But, because of what the city of Dallas was doing, I was real, real pissed off at these white people down here and ah, kinda planning that once this movie was over, you know, there were some lessons that I was gonna teach these white power structure people.

AW: What were those lessons?

RPJ: Ah, that power comes from the people, not from the rich and the powerful, but from the masses of the people. That ah, low-income people and middle-income people, according to Dr. King, was the salt of the earth and those were the people we were supposed to help. Dr. King had died fighting for garbage workers and I knew that at some point, we needed to help these people. Before I moved into this community, a

fellow, whose name at that time was Charlie Paul—Charlie Paul is Muslim now...I think his name is Khalif Hasan, but Charlie Paul came to me one day, he said he was working with SNCC, which was a, kinda loosely-knit group of young people that had been a part of the SNCC Movement here and he thought that I ought to at least visit the Fair Park and he set up a tour, which was called a “ghetto tour”, for me to visit door-to-door, house-to-house, Fair Park homeowners. And I did, with some of the SNCC and the emerging Black Panther Party. And the press came and we visited these people, and they made me cry. It was kinda a sad occasion for me because these were people who had been in these homes thirty and forty years. They had bought these homes with their GI Bills. They had raised their families in these homes. So, it was not houses to them these were these people’s homes that the city was taking. And visiting them brought tears to my eyes, listening to what those homes meant to these people and I knew then that I really wanted to figure out how to help them, but I had...see Andy was my boss and I had strict orders to keep outta fights in this part of the country. “Don’t commit SCLC to no fights,” do my assignment and come on back to Atlanta for another assignment. The evening, two days before the movie was to be shown, we had the theaters, but we had not sold one ticket, ‘cause we couldn’t sell tickets not knowing where the movie was gonna be shown. Ah, each staff member had a quota of money they were supposed to raise out of each area, and this money was being raised for Mrs. King and the King family, and Mrs. King eventually used this money to build a Martin Luther King Center. Ah, the last thing I wanted to do was not raise my quota. So, I was very disturbed about how in the hell I was gonna sell tickets in one day to this movie. Frank Clark, who was a Dallas Cowboy football player, came to my office, and I knew Frank, good man, came to my office. He had called and tell me that he had...and this is at night ‘cause we were working long hours, so this was about seven or eight o’clock at night. Frank called me and said, “I wanna bring somebody by that wanna meet you.” And he came down to my office, which was at Forest Avenue, and brought this white man with him and this white man’s name was Peter McGuire. And Peter McGuire came into my office with dark sunshades, on with his shirt open, his collar turned up, walking like he was Black—that offended me...ah, I can’t explain why it did, but I didn’t like that deal, you know. Frank told me that he just wanted me to meet this man and listen to him. He had a proposal. So this man, Peter McGuire, he owned all the Burger King franchises everywhere, he said, “I wanna buy all the tickets for the Martin Luther King movie and give them away.” That didn’t set well with me, ‘cause first, I didn’t think nobody would...see you talkin’ ‘bout thirty, forty thousand dollars and he had just pulled his checkbook out and said, “Just tell me how much.” Well, first, I didn’t think nobody would keep that kinda money in a checking account. You kow, who would keep that kinda money in a checking account? So, it would...I kinda scolded him ‘cause I thought he was playing with me. I also let him know that I’d fix it so I could get him run out of this community, ‘cause I had developed a relationship with what I called the street people and SCLC staff people said...I knew all the hustlers and the pimps and the hookers on the street, slick people up and down Oakland Avenue and Forest Avenue and all those streets and had developed a good relationship wit them ‘cause that was part of...what the pool shooters...we called that “our kinda people,” you know. And he assured me that he was sincere and Frank assured me that this was not nothin’ that...that this was a sincere offer. And ah, Brenda, who was my secretary, I asked her the next morning to call and check Republic Bank...to

call Republic Bank and see whether or not this check is good, and she did and the Republic Bank said, "It's a good check. It's sound." And, so we were able to...he also gave us funding to buy time immediately on the radio stations. So, we were able to buy time on the radio stations, whites, Blacks, and Hispanics, and let people know that anybody who wanted to come to the movie, the tickets were free. And he also helped us fund to pay for the buses to take low-income people from West Dallas and from other areas of Dallas to the movie. So, through the grace of God, and this generous man, and my friend, Frank Clark, the movie was a...very successful here...and made my quota of the money.

AW: That's a blessing. Right on time.

RPJ: Yeah, right on time. 'Cause it saved me from having to explain why I wasn't able to achieve my challenge and my mission here, but I was supposed to leave and go back to Atlanta, the next day, and ah, I came up with little excuses for why I wasn't comin' back to Atlanta. Reverend Abernathy called me and said, "You know, Peter, you were supposed to be back here. You wasn't on that plane this mornin'." So, I came up with, you know, little Mickey Mouse excuses as to why I wasn't on the plane. And I said, "All be there tomorrow." Met with my friends out here, we had organized and trained the staff...

(Telephone rings)

RPJ: I met with them...

(Interview stops tape stops briefly so that Reverend Johnson can answers phone).

RPJ: ...and decided that ah, we needed to challenge this city in it's way of dealing with the Black community. This was maybe in October or November, and ah, made some decisions that we would do this. Ah, and publicly said, to the mayor and to the city power structure here, that ah, "Takin' these people's home was wrong," but we understood that eminent domain...that's absolute, that you can't win that. Because, you know, we had fought the State versus Carr. So, we had been involved in struggles and knew that. But, my issue was fair market value for their property. We had done enough research on...with the Fair Park homeowners but we had found that—and this is one of the things that really, really offended and pissed me off—that if you was a Black family and you owned your own home...let's say your address was 1400 Fourth Street...Fourth Avenue, and you owned your own...your family lived right there...right next to you, at 1402, was a Black family that was rentin' from a white family that lived, let's say, in Highland Park, your property was accessed at fifty cents a square foot. The property right next door to you that was owned by the owned by the white people was two dollars per square foot. So, we had the evidence that the value of Black property was determined...property in South Dallas...was determined by what color the owner was. White peoples property was worth more than Black people's property, in spite of the fact that the proximity was, you know, in the same little wood frame shot gun houses. Ah, and I knew that we had that data that we could use in a fight and it wasn't gonna win the

eminent domain fight, but we could win the fight of lettin' these people get fair market value for their property and they could get legitimate relocation money. And ah, so, ah, I asked permission to stay and help these people, and I was denied. Andy said, "you know, if you stay one more day I'm gonna fire you." But first, getting fired was not a new experience for me, you know, and I kinda got fired every...two or three times every year. (Laughing) But, you know, Reverend Abernathy would hire me back, or Dr. King, when he was alive, would hire me back. So, getting fired was not something that scared me because I got fired all the time. And ah, I just didn't end it...so, so... Andy did fire me. And the way I found out that I was fired was that I was listenin' to the right radio station one day and a news bulletin came up explainin' that I'd been fired from SCLC. But, I appealed to Coretta, Mrs. King, and I appealed to her based on the fact that Mr. Gideon Johnson, in a meeting at the Fair Park Homeowners, shook his finger in my face one day, one night and told me, "If Martin Luther King was alive, he would help us. And you represent his organization and your weren't helpin' us?" And he was right. If Dr. King woulda been alive, he would have helped those people. They were poor. They were struggling to keep their homes and they were our kinda people, the people we had fought all those years for, you know. Everyday kinda people. And, of course, I appealed to Coretta, and ah, got her to literally intervene with the, with the board, with Reverend Abernathy, with Andy, and they gave me six months. If I would...and their agreement was that, "We're not gonna spend one dime in Dallas. We'll continue to pay your salary, but you've got to raise money if you're gonna have an office. We're not gonna pay for it. If you're gonna have a staff you're gonna have to raise the money. We're not gonna pay for it." And ah, I knew that I couldn't do this without a staff and without an office space. There were African American business and professional people here that I knew. Dr. Robert Prince had been Andy Young's roommate in college. So, I knew about Robert real well.

AW: Wow...

RPJ: And I had stuff on him and Andy that I could blackmail him about.

AW: It's a small world.

RPJ: There was another Black doctor here, Doctor Eugene Dorsey...who is also dead...Dr. Dorsey...his father and my father were friends. Doctor Dorsey's father had been run out of Louisiana by the Ku Klux Klan and my father and some of his friends had hid Dr. Dorsey's daddy in the swamps to keep the Klan from killin' him and they would bring him fresh water and food while they hid him in the swamp. So, I knew all this history so I had this kinda unique ties with certain people here—Dr. Dorsey, Bob Prince...So there were a number of people here that were...tryna think of the minister was at New Hope, he's dead now, but he had been Chauncey's roommate...

AW: Rhett James?

RPJ: Rhett...Rhett had been Chauncey's roommate in college...yeah, Rhett...Chauncey was Dr. King's lawyer out of Chicago. Chauncey is the Black lawyer that got

Muhammad Ali back in the ring...so Chauncey was my, you know, very close to us and liked the students...so I had some, you know, unique kinda relationships here with Black people. So, we met in the basement of Dr. Dorsey's house with about sixty Black professionals and business people. Tony Davis was there, the owner of a Black newspaper here, had a sister I knew real well. She eventually became the Secretary of State in Pennsylvania. So, we met in the basement of Dorsey's house and I presented them with a budget. "This is what it's gonna take for me to stay. I need you all to agree to pay the staff, to provide money for an office, and etcetera, etcetera." And they voted to do it, and ah, Judge Paige, Dr. Paige would collect the money and they would pay "x" amount of dollars every month for this to happen. We couldn't find nobody to rent us an office space. Churches wouldn't do it, and that was our normal base was in churches, but we couldn't get a church to agree to do that. I was having breakfast one morning at a little restaurant in South Dallas called L and J's and this well-dressed, distinguished Black man came over to my table and he stuck his hand out and he said, "My name is James Glen," and I said, "I'm Peter Johnson," and he said, "I know who you are," and he said, "I hear you're trying to rent an office." I said, "Yes and we're having a lot of problems getting an office space here." He says, "I own an office building." His office building was on the corner of Forest Avenue and Atlanta called the Professional Building. So, we followed him over there and went upstairs and he opened up an office that was ideal for us had alotta space. It was ideal for us and it was in the Black community, so we asked him how much it would cost us, 'cause I'm concerned we ain't gone have the money to pay for this kind of an office and he said, "Ah, what it's gone cost you is to continue to do what you're doing and that's my charge." And he would never take a dime from SCLC, Mr. Glen. He wouldn't take a dime. When the power structure find out what he was doing, the came down on him like a ton of bricks. They called alla his notes at the bank. They started condemning his property; he owned houses and apartments. They gave Mr. Glen...and he never would back down, no matter... 'cause I even agreed to move out of his building to keep...because he was...they would drive him into bankruptcy. That's what they done to Mr. Glen. But, he stood by us up until his death, I mean never, never, never took a dime from us and never back away no matter what the city power structure done to him. Ah, so we opened up our offices and began to prepare for this to challenge this city. By that time, I had Mrs. King on my side and I had Dr. Abernathy on my side, in spite of his hostility toward the Black preachers here. So it was getting...it was in December, coming up to Christmas and New Year's. I was gonna go home for Christmas, Christmas day, which I would do every year, spend with my family and have dinner with them, but I really wanted to use this time to organize a protest...the, the city of Dallas had what we would call a kind of a "plantation pecking order." They chose who the Negro leaders were. (Telephone rings) Excuse me. They chose...who the Negro spokesmen were...(Leaves momentarily to answer phone). Yeah, they had this, this, this kind of, I call it kind of "plantation mentality" where they decided who the Negro leaders were, who the Negro spokesmen were and ah, We kinda thought that not only was that offensive, but the, the chosen leaders did not represent the, the aspirations and the misery that people suffered down here in this part of the country, and didn't speak to those issues. They were just like "yes people" for the oligarchy here and the oligarchy was so arrogant that they refused to meet to even discuss this, you know. For instance, the issue of the Fair Park Homeowners,

they would not even talk to these people. You know, there thing was, you know, “We’ll talk to your leaders,” and you know, their leaders were leaders they had chosen to be their leaders. So, I kinda thought that, “We oughtta make them sit down and talk to the Fair Park Homeowners. Since these people are gonna lose their homes, they ought to at least give them the respect to talk to them.” So we had developed this strategic plan that was our kinda deal where we were going to...we sent Erik Jonnson, who was the mayor at the time, and the press...by mailogram or telegram there were no e-mails at that time or none of the slick stuff that we have today. And basically said that ah, “You’ve got until midnight, New Year’s Eve to meet with the Fair Park Homeowners. If not, we’re gonna block the Cotton Bowl Parade.” And I was gambling that, because of the Kennedy assassination, they couldn’t let that happen. That they kinda, at that time, knew me and who I was and knew that I had the capabilities of doing that kinda stuff. And I was kinda hoping and praying that they would say, “Well, no. We don’t need to let him do this.” And I was spending most of my time hiding at night from them because I didn’t want them to be able to come snatch me up. So I was, you know, you know, at night I was in hiding from them. But the closer it got to New Year’s Day...to New Year’s Eve, the more I realized that something was gonna have to do. So, I sent out a call for help to my friends around the country to come to Dallas for New Year’s. And they pulled into this part of the country from all over America, you know. We had a deal at SCLC where we had the ability to do that. And they came from as far away as California, North Carolina, literally. These were freedom fighters who were seasoned freedom fighters and some of our friends from the Peace Movement, the Anti-War Movement, ‘cause Viet Nam was a big thing at that time, we had alotta contacts with people who worked with us shoulder-to-shoulder in the Anti-War Movement. So, they pulled into Dallas from all over America with their backpacks and sleeping bags. So, we had the soldiers here to do this if we had to do it. I wasn’t sure how the Fair Park Homeowners were gonna to respond, ‘cause they were mostly old people. And I met with them one night comin’ up to this and explained to them, “This is what we’re gonna do and this is why were doin’ it. We think that they’re...that you all are being disrespected and that they are to at least respect you all enough to set down with you and hear your concerns. And you shouldn’t have to go to Reverend Wright or the other Negro leaders in this part of the country, you should be able to speak for yourself.” And, to my surprise, the homeowners voted to unanimously join the protest. (Chuckling) And these were old people, you know. So, we had developed this friendship with Mark Herbener, you know. Mark was a Lutheran pastor, white man. He had a church on Forest Avenue, which is Martin Luther King Boulevard—Mount Olive Lutheran Church. And Mark had given us permission to use the basement of his church on New Year’s Eve. So we had the New Year’s Eve Freedom Rally in the basement of Mark’s church on New Year’s Eve and we had my partners from all over the country and the Fair Park Homeowners and their families in the basement of the church. And of course, we were singing freedom songs and praying. And we had sent Erik Jonsson another telegram, I think, telling him, “You got ‘til midnight, if not, after 12:01, all bets are off.” And because the Cotton Bowl was in town, the national press was here, Sam Donaldson, and people that kinda knew us from other parts of the south. And this was beginning to get broadcast all over the nation—what was happening in the basement of that church and what we were planning to do. And ah, the church was beginning to get threats that the church was gonna to be bombed and calls was comin’

into the church every two or three minutes that the church was gonna be bombed. And eventually, the police department came with the chief of police and a coupla squads of cars came and told us that we were gonna have to evacuate the church 'cause the church was under threat to be bombed. And we had a policy at SCLC. It was a simple policy, "You can't run us out of our churches." That we would stay in the church. But because we had senior citizens, we had people there with children...this is New Year's Eve...so we decided to get everybody together, I did, in the basement of that church and tell 'em the truth: "The church is being threatened to be bombed. The police department is here to evacuate the church. First, people wit children, we would like for you to take your children home. If this church is bombed, children shouldn't get caught up in this because that's a decision that they shouldn't have to live with that we make." Then we said, "Anyone else who would like to go can leave. You're welcomed to leave and we gone still love you, but we're gonna stay. And if they bomb this church, with us in it, then they bomb it with us in it. And if the police department wanna drag us out of here, on national TV, that's what you're gonna have to do. But we ain't goin'." And, of course, the justice department had gotten involved now, so they were callin' Andy and Reverend Abernathy in Atlanta and Reverend Abernathy was callin' me admittin' to me, kind of, the "eye view" of what was goin' on. And of course, Dr. Abernathy was tellin' me, "You know what, Peter, I respect the fact that y'all are gonna stay in the church, and that's what you're supposed to do. And if the church is bombed you are killed, don't worry, I'm gonna preach you a great, great eulogy." And I didn't think that was that funny at that time. It's funny now, you know, but he kept sayin', "You know, if you're killed down there in Texas, don't worry, we're gonna preach you a great, great eulogy." So, we stayed, and ah, I guess at about 11:30 or 11:45 we gotta call from Erik Jonnson, who was the mayor. And, between that and now, the time Erik called, Black leaders began to come to the church and try to talk us into to leavin' and tellin' us that we needed to have a coolin' off period. So all of the colored leaders eventually came in and out of that church beggin' us "...not to do this and that what were doin' was wrong and y'all need to jut call this off. And sometime, after the holidays were over, you could work this out with the city. And ah, of course, the homeowners wouldn't have no parts of that. Ah, when the mayor called and said that he was willing to meet that night at his office in downtown Dallas, we got everybody together and asked the people to choose the people that they wanted to speak. And they chose Mr Lipscomb, Mr. J. B. Jackson, Ms. Higgins, and I think a lady, her name was Ms. Dorothy Joyner. And ah, we headed downtown to the Republic Bank Building where the mayor's office was with a police escort. And when we got down there and we got to his floor, which was on the top floor, I stopped them in the hallway to make a little prayer. And I told them that, "Wasn't nobody takin' my house in Texas." That "they didn't need me to go in there and speak for them. They needed to go in there without me, look tat white man in the eye and tell him about their property and their land. And tell him the same kinds of things they told me: what those homes meant and demand fair market value. But, don't bow your head, don't giggle or laugh, you know, but look him in his face and in his eye. And stand tall and tell him that he's gone have to deal with you all. That you all were chosen to lead the Fair Park Homeowners, by the Fair Park Homeowners." I called Mr. Jackson to the side and I whispered in his ear. I said, "Mr. Jackson, when everything is over, you tell him that I said that if the Cotton Bowl Parade is segregated tomorrow, like it's been segregated

since it's beginning, we gone still stop it. That it must be deseg...integrated tonight. They must figure...If not, no matter what deal that is made with the Fair Park Homeowners, that the segregated Cotton Bowl Parade will change this day." So, they went in, and I stayed in the hallway, surrounded by police officers and when they finally came out, Mr. Jackson came over to me and tears was comin' out of his eyes...(Voice begins to tremble) And it's interesting because that was that long ago and that still has an affect on me that night. And he had told me that they had done everything they wanted. And he said, incidentally, I'm gone be leadin' the parade with the mayor tomorrow in the Cadillac convertible. Ah, powerful, powerful night for us, and it was the first major victory of non-violence in this part of the country for us. So, of course, I came right back to the church and called Reverend Abernathy and let him know that we had managed to avoid a bloodbath. But that was what it was goin' to be...it would have been a bloodbath and I didn't want to lead senior citizens into a bloodbath, in spite of the fact that we had many of our people down here, you know, good, good people. Real, real soldiers from the Civil Rights Movement that would have been a part of that. But there was no way I was gonna be able to talk those homeowners out of not participatin' if we woulda had to do that and they would have been bloodied. And one of the first rules of non-violent protest is to bring everybody home without blood on 'em and I wasn't gonna be able to do that if they went to do that. So that's kinda...and the next day, you know, of course, I went into immediately into hiding that night. And the next day when the Cotton Bowl Parade started, you know, they were announcin', you know, "Here's the mayor's car and this float and that float...and this is the mayor in the car and we don't know who that Negro man is sittin' next to him." (Laughing) So you know, that's...and my time had run out and I needed to go back to Atlanta, but I had this strong, strong group of people lead by Dr. Dorsey and...who was saying that there was some things that they needed us to do. One of 'em was that there was a Japanese doctor on Forest Avenue named Suka-Hari and he had "colored" and "white" waiting rooms and they really wanted to do something about that and would I consider changing that and that was something...and I said, "Of course we'll do that." And so, we put together a team in a week or two and went down there, went straight through the white waiting room and took seats. And ah, he had been known for pullin' his pistol on Black people. And ah, of course, we let him know, "If you go get your pistol here, you gone end up in a grave yard, see. Go get your pistol." So, he called the police and the police came and ah, of course they wouldn't arrest anybody because the laws were clear, there couldn't be colored and white waiting rooms and here's a man practicin' medicine in the middle of our community doin' this. So we changed Suka-Hari's and took the "colored" and "white" signs down.

AW: Did he have any white patients?

RPJ: Yeah. Yeah, he had white patients. Yeah, we took the signs down ourselves and eventually, he closed his office and moved somewhere else. Ah, but in doin that, we endeared ourselves to the Black professional community: the doctors and the lawyers and the businessmen who wanted to get stuff like that done. Ah, Country—Jesse Jackson's nickname is Country. We call Jesse, Country. Country and I were good friends, still good friends...I love him—was in charge of something called Operation Breadbasket. And I talked to Country and Country said, "You know, we need some...your help in the southwest. If you can get Andy and them to let you stay for a while, we gettin' ready to

start a major boycott with A&P Company.” And A&P is all over the country. We gonna need some...course ah, “We’ll take a look at it.” And so, we had met, and if I can remember it correctly, maybe in New York City with all of the Breadbasket ministers from around the country. And I decided that, you know, get permission from Andy, ‘cause I worked in a division called CEP, Citizenship Education Project. That was Andy’s division. And ah, that I would get Andy to let me work in Breadbasket with Jesse, but Andy would still remain my night man and my boss...in which he agreed to let me do...so we, you know...I started an Operation Breadbasket chapter here, but there were only one...there was only one A&P store here and they was located maybe out in Highland Park somewhere, but it was a store that did not have Negro consumers. Ah, so we would help Jesse as much as we could, but there was no A&P Black consumer market here for us to cut off A&P’s money.

AW: Right...

RPJ: Ah, but, in gettin’ involved with Country and takin’ a look at the Operation Breadbasket principles, we looked at the Safeway Company, which was the biggest chain in this part of the country, which had all of it’s stores...a lot of its stores in the Black community with eighty or ninety percent Black consumers. And no Black cashiers, no Black assistant managers, no Black...just all white people...Black people sweepin’ and moppin’ and cleanin’ up the parking lot at these stores. Ah, let me share somethin’ with you in terms of historical stuff. There was a Black man on the Dallas City Council named George Allen, Mr. Allen. Mr. Allen was Andy’s uncle. (Pauses).

AW: (Laughing at the irony of the statement).

RPJ: ...and Mr. Allen got a son named George, Jr. who is my dear friend...and George, Jr. and I used to party together with Walter Young, Andy’s youngest brother, but I was in college. So, the white people thought that Andy was my boss and George was Andy’s uncle, they could get to George to could get to Andy to control me. But first, Andy had no control over me, you know, and ah, George was on my side. You know, he was just on my side. His thing was, you know, “As long as y’all don’t kill anybody, Imma support y’all...the non-violent stuff that you do for Black people.” So, Mr. Allen was on our side. I mean, he had, he...but not only that, Andy had no control over me! All he had to do was fire me and that didn’t mean anything to me, you know. ‘Cause they was gonna hire me back.

AW: (Chuckling)

RPJ: Ah, but when we did decided to challenge the Safeway on its behavior here, the first negotiation...negotiation session here was held at George Allen’s office, Mr. Allen’s office because we wanted to keep Mr. Allen involved in what we were doin’. And ah, George’s wife and Andy’s mama were sisters, so, you know, we had this kinda unique relationship with Mr. Allen. So, we met in...and the Safeway white people came down here from, I think, Northern California where their headquarters were, and they brought their CEO and their Chairman of the Board and all their lawyers. And we went with our

negotiating team. And first thing, we didn't allow lawyers in negotiation sessions because we were not lawyers, and we didn't have any legal issues, so we didn't...and we felt that our discussion wasn't about legal matters so why, why...we asked Safeway to put the lawyers out of the meetin'. And there was a big confrontation over the fact that, "If the lawyers don't go, we're gonna go because we don't meet with lawyers." And course I would always let people know, "My youngest brother is a lawyer, if I wanted to bring lawyers to the meeting, I would have brought my brother." You know? So eventually, they put the lawyers out of the meeting, and we started a negotiation session, explainin' to them what the issues were: simple, fair employment, fair distribution of business and contracts and etcetera. And the philanthropist...the philanthropic stuff that they done for us, as far as to SMU, we felt that if they made thirty percent of their income came from Black pockets, thirty percent of their philanthropy ought to go to Black concerns. So, we wanted them to give Bishop College money, just like they gave SMU money. And, and, so we had this discuss...these discussions with them and these negotiations with them and we got finished making our presentation the Chairman of the Board looked at me and he told me how many years he had been doin' business in the Black community...in the Negro community in Dallas and he had never had no trouble out the "nigger" community until I come and stirred the "niggers" up. I had been negotiating with white people since I was fifteen years old. I had negotiated with governors. I had never been talked to like that. (Chuckling) I had never been talked to like that. And as soon as he finished, I got my briefcase and put my belongings in my briefcase and told my negotiating team, "Let's go." And Mr. Allen said, "No, don't y'all leave." I said, "No, I don't even want him to apologize." I said, "Because that's in his heart and an apology ain't gone mean nothin'." I said, "I'll never, never talk to y'all again." So he told me, "If y'all keep boycottin' us, we gone close them stores up." Like I care. So we instituted a major boycott on Safeway and everybody had told me that, "Negroes in Dallas they don't do that. They ain't gone do that." Well, "Yes they will." So, we boycotted all of the Safeway stores organized it the way we knew how to organize boycotts and it was ninety percent effective, you know. And I mean, ninety percent effective. We had to provide transportation...same thing we had done in Montgomery. We had to plan...give people rides to go shop. We had to give people rides to do what they needed to do to keep them from going to those stores. But we picketed Safeway from the time they opened up in the morning to the time they closed at night. And we had shifts. And we had community people making sandwiches and red Kool-Aid for our picketers. And it was a well-organized boycott and ah, we also challenged our friends in the white community not to buy at Safeways in the White community. So Safeway agreed that they would meet with us again and Mr. Allen begged for us to meet with them and we did. And we met with them the next time on Forest Avenue at the Negro Chamber building because Mr. Glen was the chairman of the Chamber's board. Mr. Glen had given us free office space and he wanted us to have a negotiation session there, which we did. And ah, we signed a...what was called a covenant with Safeway that outlined what Safeway was gonna do, that we would call the boycott off and this is what Safeway...that they would hire and train Black cashiers, they're gonna hire and train Black managers and assistant managers and department heads, they're gonna do business with Black businesses. For instance, they had a white company that was a security company that had white security guards in Black stores. We wanted Black security companies in Black

stores...people with shotguns looking at Black people. So they agreed to do all of this. And they would contribute the percentage of dollars to the Black causes like education etcetera, etcetera, based on the percentage of dollars that we represented on terms of their income. And we signed this agreement, held a press conference at the Black Chamber, shook hands, and the boy called the boycott off. That next day I had to fly back to Atlanta for meetings in Atlanta. All of us had to go back to Atlanta...Jesse and me. Jesse was livin' in Chicago, workin' out of the Chicago office. But we was all back to Atlanta, I don't remember what for...what kinda...but meetings for two or three days in Atlanta. So, while I was back in Atlanta, the white power structure, here got with the Negro leaders and they decided that allowin' SCLC to do this to Safeway was not good for...Dallas's relationship with colored people...with the colored community. So they held a press conference with Safeway and the Negro leaders and the white leaders here and condemned the agreement, which we called it our covenant, not a contract and tore it up on television. And ah, they...I gotta call from George and Reverend Hart about what had happened. I couldn't believe it. I never had nothin' like that happen before. This was just unbelievable! It just blew me away! So I met privately with Dr. Abernathy and Andy I told them, "Dallas..." And of course Reverend Abernathy said, "Well, Peter we told you. We tried to get you to understand not to get in no fights down there because the Negro leaders down there and the Black preachers down there can't be trusted." I mean Dr. Abernathy was very, very, very hostile toward this community, and ah, against me coming back. I convinced him that, "I had to go back. I've got to go back, and ah, this is something we've got to do." So, we developed a plan for me to come back and ah, so I slipped back into Dallas. I had a white couple that was very close to me and they had pastored a church in the delta of Mississippi...I don't remember which community, but they were Presbyterians and Jack and Peggy Moore and both of them are dead not and they were at First Presbyterian Church in downtown they lived way down in Plano maybe. So, I had come back to Dallas, they picked me up at the airport, nobody knew I was back and went to their home. I had met Jack and Peggy when Andrew Goodman and Michael Shermer and James Cheney was killed. And then when I came here, they were living here. So they were people that I could trust. Um, and ah, we were able to go to First Church, First Presbyterian Church, and cut tapes for the Black radio station, and send them to the Black radio station with my voice, calling the boycott on again and reestablishing the boycott. To meet with all my picketers, and they didn't know where I was so they couldn't find me. Cause, you know, they were looking all over Black Dallas for me, but they couldn't find me 'cause I was way out in Plano. And to reestablish our boycott and ah, there were shots fired at my picketers. Ah, Fred Bell and the Panthers had agreed to protect the picketers on the picket lines here. It was really, really getting out of hand. Ah, I had spent most of my time in hiding during that period. Um, but we were killing Safeway. But the Catholic church, my friends from the Catholic church, nuns and priests, white nuns and white priests got involved and joined the picket lines. So, we were killing Safeway. You know, we were literally...there no...they were some stores where they had no customers at all. And eventually Safeway begged for another meeting with us and we met with them again and they basically told us that if we didn't stop the boycott, they were gonna have to close their stores down and board them up. And I told them, "We will provide the plywood, the hammers, and the nails to board them up."

AW: I know that's right! I know that's right!

RPJ: And we said, "You know, we will help y'all board them up." We closed every store in the state of Texas. Every one, you know. We literally destroyed their brand name, even in the white stores. Um, once that was over and we had closed all the Safeway stores down, we had something every Saturday morning called Operation Breadbasket Freedom Rally over at Warren United Methodist Church. And all of my friends would come from Hollywood and from other...So we would, every Saturday, have somebody of note that, you know, famous entertainers and folk would come in and out of Dallas to help me. And we was at a Saturday morning rally and I was told that the Minyard brothers wanted to meet with me. Course, I didn't know who they were, had never heard of 'em. They didn't have stores in the Black community at the time. So, I agreed to meet with them, and this is on a Saturday at the Breadbasket Program and I sat down and talked to Henry and Buddy Minyard and they said they wanted to buy them store that we had closed up, but they didn't want no fight with me. What could they do to keep this from happening? But, they wanted to buy them stores and open 'em up. And I told them what this was about that this was about jobs and fairness to people who spend money with you. And Henry Minyard said, "You mean that's all this is about? Giving people a job?" He said, "That whole fight wasn't about nothin' but jobs and stuff like this?" 'Cause we wasn't askin' Safeway to do anything that they didn't normally have to do. You have to have cashiers. Hire some Negro cashiers. You tell me that you can't find none that are qualified, do 'em like you do white people: hire 'em and train 'em. You know, it's money that you got to spend anyway. You know, so we wasn't askin' anything that was unusual or abnormal, you know. So the Minyard's people said, "We will sign anything you want us to sign. We'll agree to everything." And I kinda liked them so much that I told them that I would do this with a handshake and we agreed and shook hands on it. And they made a commitment that, "We would contribute money to the Negro schools for education and for scholarships, we will hire Black people and train them, we will hire Black managers, we'll do everything y'all are askin' us to do. Just don't picket us." So they bought those stores and opened them up. And one of our problems with the Safeway stores was that they were filthy and stinky. They had a odor and were kept unclean. Not only that, we found and proved that—through some of our friends in North Dallas, white friends—that outdated products in white stores were shipped to Black stores. And we had the evidence of that. We had a group of white women who'd done the research and found that meat that had turned colors in white stores was put color in and shipped to Black stores. And we had all of the evidence on this, that we knew that they were doin' this. So, we wanted to make sure that this stopped happening to the Negro consumers. And the Minyard brothers agreed that they would not participate in that kinda just illicit behavior. So we made this agreement with them and they bought the stores and opened them up and ah, kept their word. And they also told me that if they would make money in the Black community, they would build brand new stores that would be comparable to the stores in North Dallas. Well, Henry and Buddy didn't live long enough to do that, but their daughter, Elizabeth, and their little brother, Bobby, when they started buying land in the Black community they got in touch with me and told me that they were getting ready to build brand new stores in the Black

community that would be equivalent to the stores in the white community. And ah, and that... 'cause Henry and Buddy had made that commitment and they made this promise. And they did. And they kept their promise. But, we were able to get all of the other Black retailers that done business with the Black consumer to capitulate because of what we had done to Safeway and to change their whole dynamics of giving Black people an opportunity to work where they spend their money. Trying to think of what else was important regarding this community... Operation Breadbasket got a lot of visibility and publicity, so poor people thought that we had some baskets with some bread and some food in it. So people would come to us periodically and say, "Where is your emergency food?" Well, we didn't have no emergency food. Not just Black people would come, but white people would come, Hispanic people would come, American Indians would come to our office looking for emergency food. We didn't have emergency food 'cause Breadbasket was not... we didn't have no baskets with bread in it. And Black people would come and cuss us out and say, "You so-and-sos, y'all say y'all the Breadbasket Program, well, where is the bread and the basket?" Well, we didn't have that. Because it was so prevalent—the problems of malnutrition and hunger, that we had decided that the might have to take a look at this. There was a welfare mother here named Ruth Jefferson. Ruth is dead now. Ruth had wanted me... had been trying to get me to go into the West Dallas Projects. So Ruth... I agreed to do that. So Ruth and a group of welfare mothers took me into the West Dallas Projects one day and I spent almost a whole day in those projects. And they took me to places—homes, apartments—where little children were suffering from malnutrition and where senior citizens, who had run out of money and out of food before they would get their next check. It kinda blew me away. Because of the Poor People's Campaign, I had been taught how to recognize malnutrition, especially in children. And ah, Ruth and them showed me a lot of sad, very, very, very, sad stories of hungry children. Ah, and ah, it was obvious something that we needed to do something about. So, I established a blue ribbon panel to do research on hunger and malnutrition that was headed by a girl who had a master's degree in Social Work, Caroline Blackburn. A Black girl—a white girl who had gone to the University of Southern Califor—who had gone to Berkley in Northern California. And we established a very serious blue ribbon panel to do research on hunger and malnutrition, and ah that was made up of professional people in the Social Work area and in medicine. The research that they done was shocking what they found. Ah, and I appealed to SCLC and to our board, Dr. Abernathy, that this is something that we need to take a look at. Ah, we appealed to the United States Congress, Senator Frank Church, who was the chairman of the committee on maybe agriculture, I don't know what it was called. But, our research was authentic and unchallengeable that this was authentic research done, not by me, but by people who was in the Social Work field. Ah, so we got permission from Dr. Abernathy to develop a strategy to address hunger and malnutrition and to put it on America's agenda. And we had a retreat out at... I developed a friendship with the Catholic bishop, Bishop Shaker was his name and the Catholic church allowed us to use their retreat house out at University of Dallas. They had a retreat house called Notre Dame. And we went on a retreat to Notre Dame to plan out how we would tackle hunger and malnutrition. And we met out at Notre Dame for maybe four days where we prayed and planned and strategized and analyzed and agonized over hunger and malnutrition and came out of Notre Dame with a plan. And a part of the plan was, first, we would establish storehouses for non-

perishable food. We would challenge the churches to have a Sunday where people would bring canned goods. We were the first people in America to do this. We would also write a *Hunger Manifesto* that we were going to the rich white churches during their services and disrupt their services and read our *Hunger Manifesto* and challenge the white Christian community to take a look at hunger and malnutrition. That we would establish a committee to begin to address those immediate needs as we developed our storehouses, we was gonna have people who needed emergency food to come and we would provide them with emergency food. Ah, and we got probably a hundred churches doing this, we had most of the Jewish synagogues doing it, and a lot of our friends from this part of the country answered our call for help in terms of developing this. We established two emergency storehouses. One was at Mount Olive Church, in the basement of that church. It was full of food, stacked up and you couldn't even more in it. And the other one was at Warren Church, where we had our Breadbasket Rallies and we had tons and tons and tons of food that we had raised. And we had a process where we could provide emergency help for people who needed food and we even established a way that we could help old people and sick people prepare food everyday. There was no Meals on Wheels. This all came out of our efforts and exposed the needs, voids in our communities. And we got a lot of help from alotta people all over: whites, Blacks, and Jews, and Hispanics, to address this. While we were doing this, a fellow came to our Operation Breadbasket Program, an elderly gentleman, his name was Martin Luther Pease—Mister Pease. I never forget Mister Pease because Mister Pease came and talked to me and he cried. He had maybe four grandchildren that he was raisin', little-bitty children. And they were runnin' outta food and nobody would help him. So, of course, we explained to Mister Pease what we were doin' and that we would always have food for him and his grandchildren, but we were also...I was speaking and preaching against the welfare department for not doing this. And my argument was that, "This was not something SCLC needs to be doing. This is something the government should be doing. The welfare department ought not let old people be hunger, little children be malnourished." And the man at the welfare department name was Glen Coker. He was a white man in charge there, an elderly white man, conservative. And I would always use his name, "Glen Coker, you need to listen to what we're saying. You're gonna go to hell." And I was preaching and speaking about his constantly and Mister Pease would hear this. So one day Mister Pease goes to the welfare office and insists that he meet with Mister Glen Coker. This is an elderly Black man...goes into Mister Glen Coker's office with a...maybe an axe handle, and jumps on Mister Glen Coker and puts him in the hospital. (Laughs) Henry Wade was the DA and I had a great relationship with Mister Wade and of course Mister Wade said, "Well, Peter this is your fault. You're stirring up the people and now...". Glen Coker was Henry Wade's best friend. And I said, "Ain't no way in the world I would be involved in beatin' somebody." (Laughs) So, I was able to get Mister Wade to agree that Mister Pease was a senior citizen under a tremendous amount of stress and he just kinda cracked...

AW: Under pressure...

RPJ: Yeah. Because of his grandchildren, and not to prosecute him. Two or three months later, Mister Pease goes back to Mister Glen Coker's office, this time with a pipe...

AW: Oh Lord!

RPJ: Puts him in the hospital again! (Laughs)

AW: (Laughs) Oh Lord!

RPJ: Martin Luther Pease was his name. But out of our fight formally with malnutrition, we were able to get a lot of things accomplished. In the middle of the fight we decided, and this would be a part of our plan at Notre Dame, that I would go on a hunger fast on the steps of City Hall. We would present the city with a new law, a Hunger Ordinance that would declare hunger illegal in the city of Dallas. 'Course this is a part of the kinda crazy stuff that we would do. So we had, along with law students from SMU, written this new city law, presented it to the mayor and to the city, and told them that we wanted them to pass this new law and declare hunger illegal in the city of Dallas, and develop a new mechanism to make hunger go away. And if they didn't do it, we were gonna have a hunger fast on the steps of City Hall until they pass it. So, I went on a hunger fast on the steps of City Hall. And ah, that fast lasted eighteen days and eighteen nights. I sat on City Hall and fasted. And I was joined by professors from Perkins's School of Theology, Dr. William Farmer and some other professors, students from Perkins's School of Theology, and a number of my friends from around America came and joined my hunger fast. And while I was on the hunger fast, every two or three days, people from America, my friends from Hollywood, and New York, and other areas, would come and spend a day with me on my hunger fast on the steps of City Hall. Ah, I had this wonderful relationship with American unions. So the unions joined my fight against hunger and malnutrition. And the United Auto Workers came down and brought three or four hundred autoworkers led by their president out of Detroit and they marched from their hotel in Downtown Dallas to the steps of City Hall to join me. I had people to come from the Virgin Islands, from France, from, you know, so it was getting tremendous, tremendous international press. And, of course, there were real threats on my life so the police department had to protect me during that period. While I was on my hunger fast, my uncle passed in Louisiana, who was also the pastor of a church and he was my god-father. And I grew up in Louisiana and that's kind of a sacred thing. The Creole word for it is *paran*. It means god-father. And his wife was my *maran*, my god-mother. They had no children, so I was like his surrogate child and he was a Black pastor, my father's brother and ah, he passed while I was on my hunger fast. And of course, my mother sent for me that, "You, know, your *paran* has passed. You must come home." And I struggled with, should I end my hunger fast and go home for his funeral? Or, should I stay? And I decided not to go. I probably still have relatives who still haven't forgiven me for that. It really offended my family. I come from a real Cajun family, very Cajun, very Creole people that ah, kinda family meant...it was the essence of our existence. And because this was my *paran*, that it just created tremendous problems inside of my family 'cause I decided that I could not go. But a delegation of Black and white ministers

flew to Louisiana to represent me, Jack Moore was one of ‘em, at First Presbyterian Church. Father John Statney, who was the Episcopalian, white priest, and Mark Herbener. A delegation of Black and white preachers and others flew home to represent me at my uncle’s funeral and ah, some of them had never been to a Black funeral, let alone a Black Cajun funeral. So, some of them still haven’t gotten over that shock! You know...but eventually, the City of Dallas decided to capitulate and to ah, agree to establish an emergency program for food. It was going to be called, “Operation Assist.” And I don’t remember how the matching money...but the city would put up “X” amount of dollars, the county would match that, and the Department of Agriculture would match that. So, it was a substantial program that they would establish in South Dallas for emergency food, and I was to get...the hunger fast ended. And ah, I got sick, I lost a lot of weight and ah, I still have physical problems from that particular hunger fast. We signed an agreement with the city and the mayor. And while I was doing this hunger fast, when the United Autoworkers came, Pancho Medrano, who’s dead now, who had been my friend since Selma, Alabama—I preached Pancho’s funeral. Pancho and I decided that we would present the mayor and the city with three fish and three loaves of bread with the challenge to go out and feed the masses. So Pancho bought the fish and the bread and we went out to the City Council and the mayor gave him the fish and the bread and read from the New Testament, the “Sermon on the Mountain” to the mayor and to the city. Ah, the hunger fast and the campaign against hunger and malnutrition out of that grew national programs, the Meals on Wheels, all of the emergency feeding programs that the government did not have then. Our research was used by the United States Senate. Churches today who still have programs where people bring non-perishable food to be distributed to agencies that provide emergency help, all grew out of that effort. Ah, the programs that provide emergency food are a direct result of our struggle against hunger and malnutrition in this part of the country. When I’m dead and gone, that is one of the things I want to be remembered for: that God exposed us to hungry children and malnourished old people and we tried to respond to that. And ah, we were able to change America’s blind eyes to our hunger and malnutrition. Don’t you think that’s enough foolishness for me?

AW: I have a few questions for you. I wanted to know what year did you all meet at Notre Dame? If you can give me like a rough...

RPJ: That had to be maybe 1970.

AW: And that’s the same year as the fast and the hunger fast?

RPJ: Yeah.

AW: And I had a general question. I know you spoke about Fred Bell and the Black Panthers looking after your picketers, when y’all were picketing Safeway. Can you tell us about the relationships between SCLC, SNCC, and ah, and the Black Panthers during that time?

RPJ: I had a great relationship with them because...let me see, SNCC was very close to me personally: John Lewis, then Stokely Carmichael and Hubert Brown...Rap Brown. Rap Brown and I grew up together and have known each other all our lives. You know, right across the river from each other. So, I had this historical relationship with SNCC and with the Panthers and worked very closely with them. Of course, they had...did not believe in non-violence, as we did, but we were able to work together and find common ground in terms of the great issues that confronted our people. The Panthers saw what we were talking about and established programs to feed hungry children: their Free Breakfast Program. And it became a national program for the Black Panther Party. They provided breakfast for hungry Black children all over America from California to Watts and from Watts to Harlem. So I had a wonderful relationship with the Panthers. When the Presbyterian church had allowed Fred Bell to operate a Presbyterian center on Hardwood Avenue, that's a Black Muslim temple there now, but back then it was a Presbyterian center and Fred was its director. But Fred was a very militant Black Panther and the Presbyterian center had got offended by some of the things Fred had said and done and decided to put him out and take their place back, and Fred wouldn't leave. So, I was having lunch one day at a barbeque place in the Black community and one of the young Panthers came in and whispered in my ear that Dallas Tactical Squad had surrounded Fred in that building and had demanded that he come out with his hands up or they were coming in and there would probably be a gun fight, because Fred and them did have guns. And of course, I jumped up and rushed down there and the building was surrounded by Dallas Tactical Squad with their helmets on and their automatic weapons in their hands. And ah, I demanded that they let me go in and ah, argued and argued with them that, "You're gonna have to let me go in." And ah, either they was gonna have to put me in jail or throw me down, but I was gonna go in." So eventually I convinced them to let me go in. And I went in and Fred and about four or five young men in there with all of their guns, ready to die...And ah, the commitment that I made to Fred was that, "I would stand here with you all and I will die here with you all, but let me negotiate for you." And I said, "I don't want any of you all to negotiate with the Dallas Police Department. Let's put the pressure on the Presbyterian Church." So, I called what was called the leaders of the Presbyterian and I told them, "Now you gone have this blood on your hands, and not only that, your gonna have my blood on your hands, because I'm gonna stay. If they die in this building, I'mma die in this building, too." Then, I called our national headquarters and told them what was going on: that we were surrounded by the Dallas Tactical Squad and that I was going to stay in the building with the Black Panthers. And ah, they began to send out telegrams all over about what was going on, and also to challenge the Presbyterian Church to back off and to get the, ah, Dallas Police Department to back off. So, after three or four hours, we were able to get the church to force the Dallas Police Department to back off. And ah, Fred and them survived that and they didn't have to give up their guns and that, kind of, sealed my friendship and relationship with Fred and with the Panthers here to this very day, 'cause I just assumed that we were all gonna die in that very building. And 'cause I knew that Fred and them wasn't gonna give up them guns. (Laughing) You know, that wasn't gonna happen. So, I had a good relationship with them. Ah, still do, with those that's still alive. Ah, they didn't like the non-violence, but they knew that we knew how to mobilize our people and to organize the masses of our people into large demonstrations in the street and we knew

how to do that. And we didn't feel that we was in competition with them with some of the stuff that they done. And we had a good relationship with them still today. Yeah...yeah...

AW: Is there anything else that you think I should know? Names I should know? Just to let you know, I've been interviewing so many people, and the name Ruth Jefferson keeps coming up. What about other people who you think...or either gone or still with us.

RPJ: Well the people who worked directly with me, the staff we organized, and the people we trained. Of course, George Highland, who's dead now, Bill Stoner, who's in a nursing home up in Pittsburgh...Bill Stoner, probably one of the smartest men I ever met, probably one of the greatest organizers that SCLC ever had. This boy could organize, now he's in a nursing home—he's blind and in a nursing home in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Roman Neal, he's still here. He lives out in Arlington. He's had a couple of strokes, but he's a boy who grew up in South Dallas, went to Madison High School, worked as my administrative assistant. Vivian, Vivian was...one of the things we did not talk about was that I had talked to the students out at Bishop College, and two or three days later, the students took over the chapel at Bishop College. I had nothing to do with that, although I got blamed for influencing them, but it wasn't me. It was ah, I can't tell or call it, but it was a Black poet from Chicago. He came down here with those students. But I didn't...when they took over that building, I was attending Operation Breadbasket Expo up in Chicago with Jesse. And I got a call that the students at Bishop College had taken over the chapel and they had called the Texas Rangers and the students was trapped in that chapel. And ah, we were back and forth on the phone with our people down here, wanting them to get into the chapel, telling them, "You've gotta figure out a way to slip into the chapel and tell the students to go to jail peacefully and we'll get them out. We'll raise the money and get them out." But we had had Black students killed at Southern, Jackson State, so we didn't need no more blood shed on Black college campuses. And I wanted to get them the message that, "If y'all go to jail peacefully, no rocks, no bricks, no bottles at the police, these people will kill you, we'll make sure that we get you out of jail." Vivian was one of the student leaders and we managed to slip some of our people into the chapel and convince the students to go to jail peacefully. And that we would...so, I flew back to Dallas and I got back to Dallas and they were all in jail. And of course ah, there was a Black bonds company here that was owned by a lady who was a Fair Park Homeowner. Her name was Mrs. King and she owned, her and her husband, a bail bonds company and they told me how much it was gonna take to bail alla those students out, large amount of money. So, I went to Dr. Dorsey and some of the Black professionals and said, "We've got to get these kids out of jail 'cause I gave them my word that if they would go to jail peacefully, I would get them out of jail." So, overnight, we raised all the money we needed from Black people and some of them, I remember one lady, she bought a jar full of coins, you know, nickels and dimes, pennies in a big old jar to help get the kids out of jail. And we were able to get them all out of jail and get them on buses and get them outta downtown Dallas and bring them over to South Dallas where my offices were. And the problem was that Bishop College closed down and kicked them all outta school. So, they didn't have nowhere to go, you know. Then, we had to

get lawyers to make sure Bishop College at least let them get their stuff out of the dormitories. So, we had all these kids. Most of them were from all over America, not just Dallas kids. These kids were from all over America, like Vivian was from Oklahoma. And they were from Chicago, Kansas, all over America...so, we...John Lewis, who's in the United States Congress, John and Julian added program called VEP, Voter Education Project, and they got funding from Rodney, Rodney Rockafeller...so, I got John and Julian to give me a grant overnight where I could hire a bunch of those students in my voter registration, political education program. That way I could give them income, give them money to get them a place to stay and they could work out of my offices until we figure out a way to get them back in school. So, we ah...I got a bunch of 'em and John and Julian Bond arranged me a grant to get that done, literally overnight. We agreed to write the proposal later, but we just needed to get the money to... 'cause they didn't have nowhere to go. They couldn't go back to the dormitories, they didn't have money to go home where their homes were. Most of them did not want to go home. Most college kids who get kicked out of college didn't really wanna go home. So, I...we were able to hire...God...a bunch of 'em. And they worked at SCLC in my student program until we figured out how to get 'em back in college. But, Vivian became my secretary at SCLC and we had a women's division—SCLC women—she helped organize and mobilize women and stayed on with us. I think Vivian had her Ph.D. now. She went on back to college. She teaches down in Houston now.

AW: Do you know her full name?

RPJ: I don't know what it is now. Ah, but I sure we could find it. Ah, Vivian, ah...I'm tryna think of what her name was before she got married. But, she's been married at least twice since then. You know, Vivian has to be in her middle fifties now...but we hired a bunch of those kids—young people from Bishop College and ah, they got directly involved in our voter registration program and political education program. Ah, I had forgot about that, because we had had this blood shed on Black college campuses—at Southern you had two kids killed and at Jackson State and I wanted to avoid blood shed at Bishop College at any cost, but I had no idea that they would kick everybody out of school. But when I made that commitment that, you know, we got them outta jail, we had to figure out sleepin' arrangements, I mean it was a nightmare that night just figuring out what we were gonna do with alla these college kids. Ah, but it worked out. God was able to help us find a method to housing, to feed them, and to get their stuff off of campus, and then to give them a job doin' something with us. Yeah...yeah.

AW: I wanna thank you so much for the wealth of knowledge that you have in you life and that you have allowed us to capture and ah, just know that this particular project will hopefully be archived so that youth can know who you are, who sits before us and who we walk down the street with and who we sit next to in church. I do have one more question for you, and this is a very quick one. You know I interviewed Reverend Herbener yesterday.

RPJ: Mark, yeah.

AW: And he might have told a little story you might not have wanted him to tell, but I want you to clarify it. He said that when you were getting a position with SCLC you were told that you wouldn't be able to get it unless you were a reverend. Do you want to tell this story.

RPJ: No, I don't know that story. (Laughs)

AW: (Laughs) Oh, okay. He said that you walked in and you told them that you were a reverend, but you weren't at that time.

RPJ: Well, I've never been ordained and don't intend to be ordained, but I started preaching when I was twelve years old...

AW: Wow!

RPJ: When I was a boy. And you're not old enough to remember. Cokes usta come into a case, well twenty-four to a case...wooden cases. And when I was a kid, in order for me to see over a pulpit, they would stack up Coke cases and I would stand on Coke cases. And ah, when I...(Telephone begins to ring) I've always known that I was gonna preach. I've never cared about denominations and religions and all that stuff. And I've always thought that there were a number of us in SCLC who saw ministry as serving as opposed to pastoring churches. Now, Mark has offered—wanted me to become a Lutheran pastor.

AW: Can you talk about that?

RPJ: And I consider that. And I have nothing against the Lutherans, but I wouldn't want to be a Lutheran pastor, a Methodist pastor, a Baptist pastor, or...that's just something I have no interest in. And I love Mark, you know. He and Donna have traveled with me to dangerous places. They went to Forsythe with us and faced the Ku Klux Klan with me. (Puts on glasses and looks at telephone) Okay.

AW: We're just about done.

(Camera is turned off. When camera is turned back on, Mr. Johnson is in the middle of a sentence)

RPJ: They would not invest resources in this part of the country.

AW: SCLC would not?

RPJ: Yeah...

AW: How did, uh, Andrew Young and SCLC respond to you...to your hunger fast and all of the accomplishments that you were able to make?

RPJ: Well, they were very, very supportive. They thought I was gonna get killed. They didn't...they were not comfortable with me being on the steps of City Hall day-in and night. Spending nights sleeping in a sleeping bag. They were not comfortable with that at all and well they were very afraid that I was gonna get killed and that uh...but, they were very supportive of that and they understood that uh, that was an issue we could not ignore. That, you know, once we took an analytical look at it that it was something...we couldn't ignore that, you know. So, you know, I don't remember what year, but maybe around 1972, SCLC never had a national convention in Dallas, I mean in Texas. This was the only southern state we had never had a national presence in and I was able to convince the national board that we needed to have a national convention in Dallas, Texas, and we did. Reverend Abernathy was very close to me and he married me and my wife thirty-something years ago, you know, he was extremely close to me, and in spite of...I'm trying to take the word he used to describe..."rambunctious"...and in spite of that, you know, he supported most of the stuff I wanted to do. You know, long as I maintained a commitment to non-violence and to the New Testament. Dr. Abernathy...and Andy...I love Andy...Andy is very close to me. Andy is fourteen years older than me. His birthday is...he'll be...seventy-nine years old on the twenty-fifth of this month...and... 'cause I'll be sixty-five coming. Let me get something to show you. Andy has a brother named Walter. (Gets up and retrieves briefcase). Walter just turned seventy-five and I spoke at his seventy-fifth birthday party. See, they're from New Orleans...

AW: And you're from New Orleans as well?

RPJ: (Looking through briefcase and retrieves pictures from it. He lays those pictures on his desk). No, I'm from a town called Plackman, which is a town between Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

AW: Okay.

RPJ: Now, that's Walter. (Showing interviewee a photograph). This is for his seventy-fifth birthday.

AW: (Drops photograph). I'm sorry. Thank you.

RPJ: And ah, if you look at the program, you'll see who was all on that program with us. (Camera shifts focus to the program).

AW: (After reading the program. Chuckling). Hmm-hmm. Maya Angelou.

RPJ: Maya, yeah, that's my baby. There are some pictures from Walter's ah...

AW: Okay.

RPJ: That's Angela Davis. You know Angela Davis, huh?

AW: Uh huh.

Interview Ends.

Interview with Odinga Kambui

Marvin “Odinga Kambui” Walton (OK): So, with El Centro it gave me time to figure out how I could not be involved with the Viet Nam War thing. Of all of the decisions I’ve ever made, I put that up at the top of the heap, especially contemporaries of mine that went off to the war, how even if they didn’t get damage physically, how messed up they are in the head. Boy, people who got caught up in that shouldn’t need anymore reason just with people we talked to over the years and knowing what we know now the numbers of people we see that’s just psychologically damaged and victimized by the Agent Orange and all these chemicals they dropped and the government denied all the years. Then they had to admit to it...McNamara, the chief architect of the war, Johnson’s henchman, you know, he done come clean and exposed everything before he died. So, just think, folks in the movement were tellin’ people all along and now the people responsible for it are admittin’ to it. So, surely, there should be no argument when it comes to that. So, a decision to have enough background and wherewithal to know not to be a person to jump to the front of the line and go to the military...see, not only did I have the inclination not to go to the Viet Nam War, but I didn’t want no part of the military at all. So, it was mainly me seeing that we would be just cannon fodder for the people creatin’ wars and the people sellin’ wolf tickets sayin’ “Let’s go do it.” You didn’t see them at the front of the lines, beatin’ down the doors to go. And of course, the people from Highland Park, they ain’t goin’ they goin’ to Canada. But, since I don’t have the wherewithal and the resources, I can’t negotiate that. You know, I don’t know nobody I could go and stay wit’ in Canada to avoid the draft and everything. So, I started seein’ the draft as bein’ used as a puppet against the movement, “Make sure to get those people off the street.” And so, that was one of the more strategic moves to quietly kinda figure out how to do that and not get ensnarled in that web. And so, from that point it was just a matter of tryna immerse myself in learnin’ as much as possible and surroundin’ myself with the people I kinda figured knew more so about this than I did. Kinda one thing kinda led to another so once we kinda got into the seventies unfortunately then the powers that be that controlled the empire had had a little time to figure out how to put the breaks on this movement. Then, they started comin’ at us with the disco and this individual thing.

AW: If you would, talk to us about some of the things you organized on campus. I know you were talkin’ about havin’ a consortium with all of those Black student unions at different schools. And then if you can kinda go into how you got involved with the Panthers in Dallas.

OK: Well, basically the activity on the school campus—because of all the things going on in general like the anti-war movement and alotta that was taking place on campus. Primarily, we were doing consciousness-raising activity. Our meetings were, again, based on political classes kinda of activity, but one type of class was takin’ place on campus. The more serious stuff we would do like on weekends. There were some older people workin’ with us like a brotha his name was Charles Turner. We’d meet at his apartment on Sundays and that’s where we would be getting exposed to information like Malcolm X materials and albums and sorts of things. So, that’s where the more serious

study took place. Even some of the other...see 'cause we had got plugged into some of the other students on some of the other campuses and some of these people knew them and kinda coordinated some things. But, there was a brotha named Bernie Smitty outta Fort Worth, he was at East Texas State and he knew Leroy. I can't remember right know who was at North Texas before Leroy went up there. I remember me, Leroy, and somebody else took a bus up to North Texas one day durin' a student rally and that's the only time I remember goin' up there before they went up there. Ah, but yeah, Bishop, East Texas, Paul Quinn...not Paul Quinn...well, Bishop. You know, East Texas, North Texas, we knew that group. We were involved with the activity that was basically goin' down around the country. And of course, this was the nucleus of people involved in the Black Panther Party as time went on. Now, suffice to say, early on what Dallas had was the National Committee to Combat Fascism. Ah, that was an organizin' bureau of the Panther Party 'cause what had happened was that summer of '70 that summer that I was in Chicago because of the infiltration and repression that was goin' on in the Party, durin' the time leadin' up to Huey P. Newton bein' released from prison, in the summer of '70, a directive had been issued to where—even if people were sincere around the country—to minimize and cut down on infiltration and that type of activity that was going on, they were not allowing any new, new chapters to be established. People that were wanting to work in that vein were being allowed to set up what was called the National Committee to Combat Fascism, which grew out of an anti-fascism conference in California, Berkeley. And so, even though I had even been involved in an actual Panther chapter in Chicago, most of the nucleus of the people here, when I got back, had only been involved in the NCCF. Dallas was not to get an actual Panther chapter until a coupla years later. Ah, now some of the older people that were in the NCCF like Curtis Gaines, understand, had been in SNCC and some of the people that were with him I hadn't known prior to comin' back here in the fall. And so, having been, like I say, in the Illinois chapter, I was pretty much default the person to conduct the political education classes in the NCCF. So, the nucleus that we had that was carryin' out the day-to-day operations basically did not include some of the leadership that had gone out to California to establish the NCCF in the first place. And one thing that I might also add is that the person in California more than anybody else that was responsible for getting the NCCF chapter was none other than Geronimo Pratt, Tupac's god-father. G had given the okay and approval for that after several members had gone out there and attended a People's Tribunal in L.A. that Angela Davis and Jonathan Jackson were coordinatin'. So, that whole summer, I'm guessin' about from July through the end of the summer, that group was active in Dallas in establishin' the NCCF and distributin' the Panther newspaper and settin' up some programs, I'm not sure which programs they had in their office 'cause it really didn't seem like we got programs rollin' until later on that fall and winter. I know we had the Free Clothing Program. Ah, but mainly it was enlightening. Political education classes were well-attended. On Sundays we would have 'em. People were very responsive and just the curiosity of the fact that... 'cause alotta the people in the class didn't know that I was from Dallas. They were thinkin' I was from Chicago 'cause alotta my references were what happened there and what not. So, as I started mentionin' things here they started lookin' kinda quizzical and puzzled wantin' to know how did I know alla this stuff from Dallas bein' that I was from Chicago. Then once they found out I was from Dallas, they were like, "Okay, that kinda explains that." But, then eventually some of the

people I knew started comin' to the classes, comin' around to get involved. But, most of the faces I saw were new ah, alotta the young people who'd been involved. But, the nucleus was those that were in the Black Student Union with us at El Centro. Now, of course that was short lived. That was in the fall of '70 and, of course, by the winter, ah, January, February of '71, the activities conducted by the NCCF, Curtis Gaines, namely, ah, the headquarters in Oakland disbanded the chapters of the NCCF. And there was a article in the Panther newspaper, "Dallas NCCF disbanded." And Curtis's picture, Beverley Gaines, and Cornelius Jackson were a few people they had in the picture. And, of course, they also mentioned Donald "Red Dog" Lister, 'cause he was with the group when they had moved and set-up shop in the fancy house they had built with the money that a donor had given them that was to go to community ah, uplift. The rich white women, I understand that lived in Highland Park...now eventually Curtis precipitated the bust on the house and he was the only one that ended up not goin' to prison. 'Cause Red Dog was one of the victims of that whole fiasco and didn't learn until later on that Curtis was that agent provocateur and had been on the government payroll in the capacity from the document he gleaned from the defense table durin' recess, durin' the trial one day. I talked to him about this over the years and got more details on it. Of course, Red Dog ended up doin' a considerable amount of time in the Texas Department of Corrections. Ah, I'm not sure how much time that Cornelius did. I'm not sure he did as much time as Red Dog. Primarily because Red Dog had been seen as the person who didn't all the way fit in. He did kinda question some things as time went on and when you hear him talk about it now, lookin' back in hindsight. Of course, one of those persons involved in the NCCF with us was James "Skip" Shockley and Skip now has recently written a book, *Mother's Son*. So, he chronicles alotta the activity that went on, you know, durin' that period and ah, course he was in El Centro in the Black Student Union the following year after I had been there. They were a part of the Black Students' for Pride and Identification and some of the members with them were the twins Anice and Janice who had gone to Pinkston. But they were some serious-minded folks and they were real receptive to wantin' to learn as much about the movement as possible. In fact, later on when Bobby Seale came to and spoke at SMU, the twins and I had already planned at some point and time gettin' out to California. So that sealed the trip for us. 'Cause they definitely wanted to get out there after they heard Bobby Seale speak at SMU. Oh, and by the way, Bobby Seale is from Dallas. So, for all those who insist that Dallas was behind the eight ball or behind the curve and later on we had one of the SNCC personnel to come over, Kathleen Cleaver, who became Eldridge Cleaver's wife, was the Communications Secretary. So, she was also a member of the Central Committee and course Kathleen is from Dallas I'm learning in recent years. Out of the Central Committee there are two people from Dallas on it so that kinda puts us head and shoulders with the rest of the country. In any event, that little experience that we drew from that little brief stint with the NCCF and once it disband people sorta went their ways. Course, you know, this is about the time Angela Davis's case is exploding in the early seventies, '70 and '71. So, I'm sure at that point, that's when I start gettin' involved in establishin' the Free Angela Committee in Dallas. So some of the people from the NCCF and the Black Student Union, the twins, Skip, and myself and others, we kinda coordinated that. And by that spring, I wanna say '72, ah 'cause I think Angela was acquitted in '72 and the trial ended. It was on the front page of the *Post Tribune* and

I went up to the office and the sista took me to the archives to try to find that paper and nothin' was there underneath that date. I haven't seen it since. So, I have been able to get my hands on it. But what was on the front cover of that paper was Diane Ragsdale who was expelled at Texas Women's 'cause one of the programs we did durin' the time we had the Committee to Free Angela, was the defense committee in San Francisco was the leading committee and with our relationship with them, they had sent us the material they had, film *A Portrait of a Revolutionary* and we were showing that around and we had scheduled a showing at Texas Women's and leadin' up to the film showin' it was alotta activity on campus and basically represented the NAACP chapter on campus and she was coordinatin', basically, the film showin'. Well, when we get in...and Skip mentions this in his book, by the way. When we get to Denton, to the campus, all security folks and administrative hanchos are waitin' and they sabotaged the projector. We can't show the film. They take me into questioning and they detain me and it wasn't until somebody called the ACLU lawyer, they wouldn't let me outta the room. And they askin' me stupid, obvious questions like, "Where did you get your film from?" And all this kinda stuff and it's all there on the film canister, you know, where it came from and everything. And the canister is open and you can see the film, but we didn't find out 'til later that the projector had been sabotaged to where it would roll. 'Cause they had put the film on the thing and it wouldn't play and they had worked it to some kinda way where it would run backwards and wouldn't play. So somebody had sabotaged it. This was back in the day when they had projectors.

(Opens a portfolio that contains articles by and about the Black Panther Party)

OK: That's the article that was in the February 1971 Panther newspaper when Curtis, Beverley, and Cornelius were expelled and the Dallas NCCF was disbanded. And I'm sure Charlie Paul was the impetus for this whole article bein' written 'cause he didn't mention Red Dog's name. All the heavy stuff is Curtis's thing. You can just tell from readin' this that Red Dog wasn't, you know, the heavy person in this. This is where Curtis ended up (Show an article entitled "Former Activist Dies in Cab") and all the people with him. This is when they had the fallin' out and when the chapter had disbanded and Charlie Paul had gone back to Oakland 'cause he had to identify folks and people in Dallas didn't know who his was that they were in part company with. See, shortly there after, Curtis and them started something called the, The Vanguard. So for all intents and purpose, they looked like they looked when they were with the Panther thing, so if people didn't know this, they would have thought it was still goin' on. But what had happened was, we had gotten information to Iola and she did it on the newscast.

AW: At what point was Curtis disclosed as the informant?

OK: I don't think Red Dog knew 'til he was back in Dallas at a court session 'cause he mentions to me he was sittin' there durin' the recess and thumbin' through the paperwork and saw a document showin' that Curtis was an agent provocateur.

(Flips through portfolio)

AW: May I see that picture?

OK: Oh yeah, this is when we had the twentieth anniversary over at the Cultural Center. Norma Wade covered it. As you can see, Fahim isn't in any of these pictures because his whole position was, "This is not the real Panthers." Another writer recorded him as saying, "We're gonna do a real reunion." 'Cause they were Marvin Crenshaw, Charles Hillman, and...but see Hillman and them, they wasn't around. They were with Fahim. So, yeah Norma did that in the Morning Nausea. One of the things we had before we got the website itsabouttimebpp.com, BJ put together a newsletter and it must have been well-received because people would send him stuff from far and wide and Skip had did this article on the Panther Party in North Texas.

Interview Ends.

Interview with Donald Lister

Ava Wilson (AW): And if you could just state your name for the camera.

Donald Lister (DL): Donald Wayne Lister.

AW: Okay, annnnd basically how I always start an interview out is just to ask you one question, and then you can elaborate and then I'll have some special questions to ask you off of things you've said. And we'll just go back and forth, like a conversation.

DL: Okay.

AW: Okay. So, if you could, tell us about your involvement in the, the movement here in Dallas, what years you got started, what organizations you were in, your role, and we'll start out like that.

DL: And if I can remember those years, uh...I guess my involvement started at El Centro Community College. I was a member of the, ah, Black student organization called SOUL, which was headed by Leroy Haynes. SOUL was an acronym for Student Organization for United Liberation...and we were attempting to get some Black Studies...ah...at the school, 'cause at that time, we didn't have any. Ummm...we were also trying to, ah, get the student body, the Black student body involved...

AW: Uh huh...

DL: ...in this and what I remember is that we did succeed in getting a Black, Black history...class, but this was, ah, '69 and '70 'cause I only went to El Centro one year. Afterwards, the, uh, Black Panther Party came to town, and ah, I always said that if an organization such as that came, I was gonna join it...and ah...they sent some, a representative from the Black Panther Party, Elmer "Geronimo" Pratt, to town...and well prior to that, I think some former members of SNCC, ah, went to California to meet with the Black Panther Party to get, ah, authorization to set up in Dallas. Ah, the guy who headed the Party here was Curtis Gaines, who all during this time, unbeknown to any one of us in the, ah Black Movement, he was an informant.

AW: Hmm...

DL: There were some who probably knew this, but, but couldn't prove it. In fact, now I didn't see the proof until I became incarcerated, and ah, having come back to the Dallas County Jail on a bench warrant and fighting my case, ah, I was represented by a former District Attorney and he got everybody's file and brought 'em into the area where we were and he left out. He left me with the records. I grabbed Curtis's record, just thumbing through it, and saw where he had written a letter to the District Attorney admitting that his being an agent—well, being an informant for them, and ah, that was, that was the proof. But, back to the formation of the Black Panther Party, Curtis Gaines had formerly been a member of SNCC. He and I think Leroy and I think maybe the late

Cornelius Jackson, but I'm not sure about Cornelius, but I know Curtis did...went up to California, and ah, they also had the ah, Revolutionary Tribunal, which I think was held in Philadelphia, ah, this is where Huey and other members were trying to set up a national organization...a coalition with other Black organizations to ah, to deal with the, the problems that Black people were confronted with in the country. But, anyway, Curtis came back with authorization to set up NCCF, which was National Coalition to Combat Fascism. That's basically what our organization was, and from my understanding, there was really no separation between the NCCF and the Black Panther Party.

AW: Right...

DL: But there was some reason why you would have one then you would have the other. But, we had the same tenets. We had to know and understand the Ten...Ten Point Party Platform, we had to establish programs, such as the Free Breakfast for Kids Program, Free Clothing Program, ah programs that the Party had thought that the government should be providing, but since it wasn't and it was in our capability to institute, we would do it. Ah, I was a member of the Party...up until we were purged. This is when, ah, the schism came down between those who followed the line of Huey, Huey P. Newton, and those who followed the line of Eldridge Cleaver, who at this time was in Algeria. Umm, these schisms really were initiated by agent provocateurs who were working with the government's COINTELPRO—Counter-Intelligence Program. Ah, at the time we didn't know it but, ah, these were people whose job it was to ferment dissent and distrust within the organization by any means that they could. Ah, so, ah and I don't know the number of righteous that were affected, but it was like split down the middle. You had some that was like, "Okay, yeah Huey was doing the right thing," and those that were saying, "No, Huey is not doing the right thing." And, ah, Geronimo, who was really responsible for our being set up, he had been purged. In fact, Geronimo was captured here in Dallas. Ah, word came out that Geronimo was here and that we had been supporting him, then we were purged. Ah, Geronimo was, ah, taken back to California by the California branch called CCS—Criminal Conspiracy Section. This was an elite force, ah, in the police department who had more power than the average policeman. They were like akin to the Texas Rangers...

AW: Okay.

DL: ...here and they took Geronimo back. I don't even think Geronimo had the choice to waive extradition, but he and the guys who were with him were taken back to California. Ah, when we were purged, which was one of the saddest days I can remember because that had been my goal. Once having learned about the Black Panther Party, having met, you know, Huey, and other members of the Central Committee, ah, then later on to being purged, was really hard for me, but Curtis, being as devious as he was, ah, said that "You know, we don't have to be members of the Black Panther Party. We can continue what we're doing under other names." And he set up the organization called, ah...um...what was it called? You know, right now, it escapes me the organization that—

AW: Was it the Vanguard?

DL: Well, the Vanguard, it was like NCCF and Black Panther Party—

AW: Okay.

DL: That was one name, but we called ourself something else. It may have been Vanguard Watch...but, anyway, there was this white liberal, a very good woman, by the name of Mary Jane...Mary Jo...I forget Mary Jo's last name, but Mary Jo lived down in Highland Park. At one time, she and her family were wealthy, but at this time it was nobody but Mary Jo and her mother. I think her father or grandmother had been one of the founders of the uh, one of the big banks downtown...Anyway, Mary Jo had a good heart. She wanted to leave some money to one of the Black organizations, but she wanted to make sure that this organization was sincere in its effort to help the Black community. Ah, Curtis conned her into giving him the money. Ah, he had a house built, and supposedly this house would be like our community house in which we all lived and worked from and functioned from. But uh, being the informant that he was, he was setting us up. Uh, I learned that he his goal was...and this is from that letter that I read from his file... and his goal was to ah, either turn us into informants or to get us busted. Ah, when the police raided his home, uh I shot...I shot a policeman. I was convicted. I was given fifty years for this...sentence to Texas Department of Correction uh, I did about six years in the state penitentiary...uh, during this time, ah, I was subjected to a lot of ah, ah, just harassment as a result of my being a former member of the Black Panther Party and because I was uh...I was not wanting to go along with what they said... (Talking to people leaving). Y'all gone?

AW: It's okay.

DL: (Waving to the people leaving) Take care. Nice seeing you, too you be careful. Okay...The good prison inmate ah, they want you to inform on your other inmates, guards can do no wrong. Ah, but, this could get you killed, you know, you inform on other inmates. Ah, I was nev...not a snitch, never a snitch. I went to prison thinking that if I did my time that I could get out in the minimum amount of time. Come to find out, this is not true, you know. Ah, had I not gotten out of TDC, I would probably still be in TDC, or dead. 'Cause I always said—

AW: And what's TDC? Can you tell us what that stands for?

DL: At this time it was called the Texas Department of Correction. Right now, it goes by TD...TCJC, I think...Texas Correctional Department of Justice...

AW: Okay.

DL:...but then it was TDC, Texas Department of Correction. Some referred to it as Too Damn Cold. But, ah, ah, I became...I wasn't really a full-fledged writ-writer, but I did file writs against the prison system. I was jumped by guards in seventy...I think '75 on one of the prison farms. One of the turn-keys, which was one of the convict guards. The

turn-keys, which were the guys in the hall who would open the cell doors and let you in and out and uh, their other function was to keep the guards informed of what was goin' on in different units...and if there was any kind of disturbances, they would lock-down the various units, open various units so that the convict guards and the guards could go in and put down the disturbance or whatever it was. And a lot of times it wasn't disturbances, like in my case. "Let's go in there and get Red Dog and James Guy." They took us to the hole. Incidentally, what had happened was, James Guy had gotten into it with one of the turn-keys and Guy had a killed a prisoner on another unit. Ah, gotten five years for that, came to the unit that I was on and we became close friends. Uh, when Guy and that turn-key go into it, the, the guards felt like since Guy and myself were so close that I was gonna to something to this guard. So they put me...they took the both of us to Administrative Segregation, which is another term for the hole. But taking us there ah, what they would do before putting you in a cell, you would strip, strip naked, and they would have you raise your arms and everything and you would turn around, bend over, spread your cheeks. They'd look in your mouth and everything...make sure you had no weapons or anything. Ah, then we stand...we're standing up there nude surrounded by about ten to twelve guards and ah this one guard, and I remember him...Maples, a major, he was a major. He walked up to Guy and said uh "Guy, you just gone kill up everybody, huh?" Guy not knowing that we're about to get beat, why he didn't now, I don't know because he had done more time than I had...he had done time in Angola when he was younger.

AW: Oh wow...oh wow...

DL: Although he was a coupla years younger than me. Guy had been a hustler on the street, whereas I had been what I considered a revolutionary, and ah, wasn't a street person. But, ah, we...we... at this point it was us being locked up. I don't know why he didn't know what was about to go down. By anyway, Maples said "Guy, you just gone kill everybody." And ah, Guy (laughing) tried to explain what had happened and Maples swung on him, on Guy. I'm not waiting for somebody to swing on me. I swung. I swung on the nearest thing close to me. Uh, Guy, being stunned, uh, I don't think he ever recovered, but I backed myself into a corner and I'm swinging at anything that comes within striking distance.

AW: Uh huh.

DL: Umm, I'm holding my own until one of the guards pushed a laundry cart towards me. Those laundry carts have like skate wheels under the bottom. I'm tryna keep it from running over my toes and I tumble and fall into it. Ah, during this time, it's just like sharks infesting the blood-filled waters. And ah, they subdued me and ah, they put us both in cells. Ah, I think we were in separate cells. We may have been put in the same...nah, we were in separate cells. And ah, they kept us locked up...and I don't know how we were locked up, but ah, word got to my mother that I had been jumped and so ah, she got in touch with the FBI and they came down and took statements and everything from us and the other inmates who saw it. And ah, we weren't jumped again. We would eventually be transferred to other prisons, but ah the guys who had been

there...in fact, one of the guys, David Reeves, who was the lead plaintiff in Reeves versus Estell, they eventually put us in a cell together. There goal was to...for one of us to do something to the other because David had the reputation of being one of the more violent prisoners in TDC, but David and I got along like this (crosses fingers) because David knew that I was against everything that the guards were for. I was not an informant. I was not a snitch. I was looked upon as a good brother, somebody who could be trusted and someone who was not afraid to sign his name on various petitions to try and get prison conditions changed. And when they put us in the cell together, this is what I did: when David would write-up various writs, my signature would go on there. This would be sent out to ah, ah, the various attorneys. And, ah they saw that "Well, you know that this is not working out. We thought that either David would have done something to him or he'd be done done something to David." But, ah, David told me "You know Don, it's a good thing you all fought back because what they'd been doing, every time they would bring somebody in they would jump him and they were beating, beating him." Nobody was fighting back and this was just a, a, a cloud of terror in this particular unit. The Administrative Segregation was a big building with about twenty-four different cells, cells downstairs and upstairs. But, the way TDC was...this particular building was constructed, you could walk down the, ah, hall, like you were going to lunch or to ah, the gym, or a different part and you could see into Administrative Segregation, as you could other cell-blocks. But, what these ah, warden, warden was ah, had the nickname "Wildcat Anderson" and it was the assistant warden David Christian, what they had done was sealed-off the cell-block so that you couldn't see in there. And they sealed-off the windows so that you couldn't see outside. You could see inside because they kept the lights on twenty-four, seven, but the other prisoners didn't know what was going on in there. All they could hear was the beatings that went on. That's why David was saying "It's good, because since you all did that they haven't beaten anybody else that they brought in here." And ah, when the FBI agents came in and they interviewed David and the others, conditions kinda, well they got better, because like I said there were no more beatings. They pretty much left us alone. They would still put guys in Administrative Segregation, but again, there were no more beatings. Ah, Guy and I stayed locked up for maybe six months or so.

AW: Because of that incident?

DL: Right, because they didn't put us back on the population. Ah, 'cause they knew that Guy had killed one convict guard and they felt like he might kill that other one, and they didn't know what I would do.

AW: Right.

DL: I hadn't killed anyone, but they didn't know if I would.

AW: And they didn't know if you were gonna inspire the other people on the block.

DL: Right. So, they transferred me to a, a unit called Ellis. Ellis had be the sight of a rebellion prior to me goin' there about maybe a year, maybe not even a year prior to that.

Ah, the, the ah convicts, about ten or twelve got together to try and end the brutality that was goin' on there. See, ah, TDC was, the way they maintained their power, again, with the convict guards, and ah, they kept a level of brutality so that most prisoners would not get out of line because they would be met by the convict guards and the guards. So, these other prisoners had gotten together gone into the mess hall and ah, at this particular unit, what you had to eat with were only spoons. Ah, the other units you could have forks also, but since forks had sharp edges on them, Ellis would allow prisoners to eat with spoons, but these, these guys stole some spoons and sharpened them down to make weapons. On, and on this day, they went to the major, the building major and handed him a note. Ah, which they were asking that these certain...these conditions have got to change, you know. It was a list of demands. The major's name was Steele—Big Steele. We, the prisoners, called him "Big Jelly" because he was so fat. He was about 6' 4", but he's, he was just fat. And so, ah, behind his back they called him "Big Jelly." The convict guards called him "Big Steele," (laughing). But anyway, the guy who led the rebellion became a good friend of mine. His name was...because I had met him when he had come down on a bench warrant from San Quentin. They put him in the same cell I was in, in Dallas. At this time his name was Darryl Johnson, but he later changed his name to...and he pronounced it wrong, but he changed his name to Didan (DEE-DANN) Kimathi (KAMATHY). Didan (DEE-DANN) Kimathi (KAMEETHEE) it actual should be pronounced DAY-DANN KAMEETHEE, Didan Kimathi had been one of the leaders of the Mau-Mau in Kenya, ah, and I had asked Didan later, because I didn't see Didan again until I went to Ellis and this was after that rebellion.

AW: Rebellion, yeah.

DL: But, uh, 'cause I didn't remember him. And he came up to me and said, Red Dog, what's doing on? And I'm lookin' at him funny because he said, "It's me, Darryl." Then you know "Oh okay." But everybody else was calling him something else. I said, "Man why they call you—" He said, "Aww man, well I changed my name." And ah, when he had come to Dallas on a bench warrant, ah for some robbery case he had had, he escaped going back to California. But, when they finally caught him, they gave him...because he was going back to serve out the remainder of his sentence in California, and then be transferred to do his time in Texas, But going back to California, he escaped. Ah, they eventually caught him, and ah, came back and he got his time. And in his, in his trial in Dallas, he, he, he did what the...and I don't know if you know of the Chicago Seven incident, in which...

AW: No.

DL: Okay, well, Bobby Seale, who was the co-founder of the Black Panther Party, ah, had been tried in Chicago along with six other, actually, originally, it was the Chicago Eight, but when Bobby was excluded from the others, it became the Chicago Seven. But, Bobby was beaten in court and, ah, tied, and gagged because he kept, um...speaking out because he did not want to be represented by counselor. He said that his attorney was Charles Garrett, which was the Black Panther Party's attorney. But something had occurred and Garrett couldn't represent Bobby. So Bobby did not wanna be tried until

his attorney could represent him. Ah, so they gagged and bound him and beat him. Well, Didan (second pronunciation) did the same thing. Didan was saying, at this time he was Darryl, that he did not recognize the court system in America, let alone Texas. And that, ah, he did not wanna be called by his slave name and he submitted a deal in court that he be called by his chosen name which was Didan Kimathi. Ah, they beat Darryl down and gagged him and everything and they took him out and tried him while he wasn't there and gave him his time...sentence... To make a long story short, that's how he became Didan Kimathi. And, ah, Didan had led these other guys...because Didan had come from California.

AW: Okay.

DL: Which, ah the guard, the prisons up there don't play that convict guard system. And so, it was like him being in a strange universe coming here and seeing what was going on. Ah, he had also been a member of George Jackson's organization up there, the BGF. Uh, at this time I think it was the BGU, Black Guerilla Unit. But, ah, when he came to TDC, he organized the brothers. They took that list of demands to the major. You had to see the major before you could see the warden, uh, the warden took the list and said, "You niggers get outta here! I ain't gonna...ain't gonna do any of this." And when he went to get up, one of the prisoners ah, his name was Ruster Ballard. We used to call him "Rodeo"... "Rodeo Red." Red stabbed the warden...I mean the major not the warden with one of the spoons and they just started attacking them all until the convict guards came in. Like I said, there was about ten or twelve guys who supposed to be in it, but those convict guards came on the scene, it was only about three guys, no, it was about four or five. There was Didan Kimathi, Red Ballard, Willie Jackson, ah Ronnie Mullenecks out of Fort Worth, and Big Lou. I forget where Big Lou was. But Big Lou was involved in another incident in which he took one of the female teachers hostage. Ah, trying to ah, exchange her for his freedom. But, ah, they, they ah, subdued him. This was like years later. This was maybe ten or fifteen years later when Big Lou did that. But, ah, anyway those five or six guys, they beat 'em down, took back over the prison, and, ah, ah regained control. So, when I came there from Ramsey, ah, they initially put me on the tank with Didan and the others. But, ah, no...no... I'm sorry, they put us on a Hispanic tank in which the majority of the convicts were Hispanic and there were, ah, a handful of Blacks on there. They called it separating us from the other Blacks. Guy got into it with one of the convict guards, Hispanic convict guards, and locked, they locked Guy up because again, Guy had come to Ellis—well he had come from Ramsey for killing a guard. So that was...not a guard, but a convict guard and that was on his record. So when he got into with this convict guard, they locked him up, and again, they didn't lock up me this time, but they moved me on an all-white tank, because they put Guy on an all-Black tank. But, they put me on the all-white tank. Here, I'm up here with a handful of Black guys an, ah a handful of Mexicans. Ah, one day I'm sittin' in the day room and a Muslim guy, and he's sitting there and all of a sudden, a white guy just walked up to him and just started swinging on him. Now the others started jumping him. I'm thinking, ah, I don't know what's happening. I don't know what he...what has been goin' on. But, I see it's a Black guy being attacked so I jump up. Initially, I try to stop the fight, but then I come under attack and I don't know that I'm being stabbed. I'm

seeing blood, but I'm thinking, well, blood is coming from me fighting. And, ah, I'm swinging and fighting and it's just, just me and this guy, none of the other Blacks have gotten involved. And we're fighting all the other guys who were attacking him...attacking us, now. So, ah, by the time the guards come in, they stop it and they say, "Okay, take those guys and put 'em in the hole and take this guy to the hospital," and he grabs me and I'm saying, "What? I'm stabbed?" 'Cause there's no blood in front and I'd been stabbed in the back. Ah, I think I was hit about nine to twelve times.

AW: Oh no...

DL: They stand me up to be x-rayed, ah, then shock set in and I almost go out. I don't think I lost consciousness, but I do remember getting weak and falling as they were x-raying me. They take me and, ah I think I got about seventy-something stitches. Ah, from the hospital, they put me in the hole, and I get put in the hole for fighting. Now, what I am supposed to do if I'm being stabbed?

AW: Right...

DL: You know, turn the other...turn from the back to the chest? But, ah, they put me in the hole and then, ah, I find out that the guy who stabbed me, they put him in the hole. 'Cause I don't know who stabbed me, but I asked around and I found out who the guy was, and so, I'm making plans to retaliate. But after I get out of the hole, they put me on the Black tank then, and the white guy that stabbed me was on the other end. Ah, for a long time I kept a shank for the day when I saw this guy I could retaliate. Again, he's on one end of the building, I'm on another, and the only time I would ever see this guy was on the field. And in the field, we did what's considered "stoop labor." We had long hoes, or aggies, with over-sized heads on them to till the soil. We did everything with the aggies. During this time it was sugarcane season, in which sugarcane had been cut down...we had to shuck it and pile it. There would be one guy with an aggie who would chop the roots off the sugarcane. Ah, when I saw the guy who had stabbed me close to my—'cause we would be in different squads—when I saw the guy who had stabbed me, I asked the guy who had the aggie, "Let me use that. I see the guy that got me." 'Cause most of the Black guys that I was close to knew what my intentions were gonna be whenever I saw this guy. The guy who gave me the aggie said, (nodding) "Alright..." He gave it to me, and ah, when I got near the guy I swung, but he saw me, at the last second he saw me, and he broke out and ran and he stumbled and my one swing caught him in the back of his neck with the aggie. But when I raised to hit him again, I saw it had broken. So, the guys on horseback see it and they pull out their guns and, ah say you know, "The head sergeant is telling us that whoever moves—I don't care if it's the Black one or the white one—first to shoot him." And I got the aggie, but really, I just got the handle and the guy that I had just struck, he I down there with the blade. When it hit him, he fell right by it. And we both drop it and they take us to, ah, Administrative Segregation. They lock—and I don't know if they locked him up, but I got locked up. After they locked me up, Didan had been locked up again, too, and so we're all in the hole talking to each other. He said, "Man, you're not gettin' out. They're gonna transfer

you...you or him.” I’m sayin’, “Why would they transfer me when this guy has stabbed a whole lot of other...

AW: Hmmm...

DL: ...prisoners?” And they were saying, “Well, that guy has been to all those other units so they’re gonna transfer you.” And, and, they were right. They transferred me to a unit called Retrieve. Which, your uncle had been...I think Ernie had...Ernie had gone home by then, but he had been on Retrieve. Ah, I was on Retrieve with the same...by this time the guy had made warden, but he had been the assistant warden when I had gotten jumped on Ramsey. So, I’m on Retrieve. Ah, when I was transferred there, I was supposed to go to the fields that day, but I didn’t wanna go to the fields so I threw my field shoes—they were really Brogans—I threw ‘em away and just kept the visiting shoes. So when they called the squad out to hit the field, I came out in my dress shoes and the told me, you know, “Where your field shoes?” I tole him, “I don’t have any.” So me tole me to go on back in. So, I didn’t have to go to the field that day. But they gave me some new shoes, field shoes, and then that next day, in the field the guard told me to ah...he separated me from the others, then he just started cursing me and ah, he started talking about my mother. And, ah, I’m not knowing...I’m not understanding what’s going on, but hindsight, what he’s wanting me to do was to rebel and attack him. I was either going to get shot, or what have you. But, ah, I’m just taking whatever he’s saying. I’m angry, but I’m taking what he was saying. He had tole me to “Throw that hoe down!” And ah, said, “I’m talkin’ to you, Lister! Throw that hoe down!” The aggie...or the hoe...And so, I put it down and he told me to, ah, told me to, “Sit down! Kneel down!” What he’s trying to do, too, so that those other guards and prisoners who are out of earshot can’t hear that what he’s saying, that I’m doing what he’s telling me to do. To them, it looks like I’m refusing to work. What they call “slow bucking” and when he tells me to sit down, this looks to them like, “Oh, Red Dog has quit. He’s throwing his hoe down and just sittin’ down.” He calls in...naw, his captain comes over and they conversate and they call the truck in. The truck is huge to bring in recognizant prisoners in, ah, guys who are not going to work. So they bring ‘em in and ah, take ‘em to court and put ‘em in the hole. Court is really a kangaroo court in which three guards ask you a few questions and then they meet our justice. I’ve never gone there and not been sentenced to the hole. Ah, they take me to the hole, accuse me of refusing to work. Ah, I’m in the hole maybe about a week or so later it rains and the squad don’t come...can’t go out. But that guard and the other guards who would normally be in the fields riding the horses leave the squad, he’s working the hole. So, he comes about my cell, says, “Lister, why they got you in here?” And it shocked me. I said, “Cause you put me in here!” He said, “I didn’t wanna bust you, man. You were doing your work, but my uh, the sergeant, the captain told me to ‘Bust Lister.’ And those other guards told me that I better do what he said ‘cause if I didn’t, they’d fire me. ‘If you wanna keep your job, you better do what he said,’” he said. And then I remembered. I said, “Okay, it’s not you. It was the warden.” The warden knew I was there and he wanted me in the hole and, ah, that was...I never had any more problems out of that guard. Ah, but since the warden there was an old nemesis from the previous farm, I would have my in-and-outs of the hole. In fact, when I was in TDC, I did more time in segregation than I did in population,

but ah, one of the better writ writers in Texas Department of Correction was on that unit. His name was Walter Pope...naw...Lawrence Pope, Lawrence C. Pope. Pope had been a banker when he was on the streets. Some how, there was a plot against him, or he thought there was a plot against him and Pope took some hostages, made the women strip, took pictures of 'em...He thought that if they told it on him that—he thought that they would not tell it on him because he had pictures of them out of their clothes. Why he thought this made sense, and him being the brilliant writ writer that he was...it...it...just didn't jive. But ah, he got fifty years for that.

AW: Wow...

DL: But he became one of the more, ah powerful writ writers in TDC. So, ah, I think we met up in the, in the writ room, and ah, someone had pointed him out to me. Somebody told me "That guy...if you got any legal questions, that guy is the guy to ask." And so, ah, he found out that I had come from a previous farm and that I had filed on the ah, Texas Department of Correction for brutality. And, he had found out that I had been in the cell with, ah, David Reeves. And he said, you know, "Why don't you join Reeves versus Estell?" He said, "Let me see your suit." He looked it over and said, "Why don't you talk to our attorneys and see if we can't add you to the suit." And ah, the attorneys came and talked to me. Saw my, my allegations, and ah, asked me would I testify against them, because a lot of prisoners wouldn't testify because of what we had been subjected to, the brutality and what not. We went to the...the trial was held in either...I think it was Galveston...it was either Galveston or Houston.

AW: And what year was this?

DL: This was, let's see...I was busted in '73. I went to the Feds in '78. This had to be about '77/'76. Now, this was the longest, at this time, this was the longest Civil Rights trial in the country's history.

AW: Wow...

DL: ...this trial lasted, I think, about six months. I remember testifying before William Justice and goin' back to Retrieve. 'Cause at this time we thinkin', "Okay, we've done our part, made this situation change." We didn't know that we would be allowed to do our time elsewhere. So, like, when I came back they locked me up for letting my cell partner see my law book. And, ah, 'cause he got busted for something and when they took his property, they took my law book with them. So, they're going through his property and they're seein' that this belongs to Donald Lister. And they bring me to court and said that I had unauthorized... I had let him use my law book, but without authorization. I'm saying, "Why would I leave my cell, go ask a guard could I let him see my law book when we're in the same cell together?" They looking at me like I should know I should, and I'm like, "that's the stupidest thing in the world." Here I am sitting next to somebody and he says, "Can I see your law book?" "Yeah." (Gestures as if giving his cell mate the book). "Naw, you, you can't see this...you need to go...I need to go out and get permission." Number one, I wasn't gonna do that..

AW: Right...

DL: ...and number two, it was stupid for them to think I would do that.

Aw: Right.

DL: So, they locked me up. And I don't get out from then, from then on, but then we're hearing things like, "Man, you know so-and-so...Reeves...who testified in Reeves case? Man, they killed that guy...man...they put him in the hole and they found him dead." What had happened, they didn't give him his...I think he had asthma, or something which he was supposed to be medicated quite often and they didn't give him his medicine and he died in there. And then, ah, some guys were being beaten and they were told by the lawyers, "You know TDC is not abiding by your court order." Which was not to meet our retribution for the witnesses, and, ah someone proposed, or either the judge proposed, "Let these guys make a decision whether to serve out the remainder of their time in TDC, or do it in the Bureau of Prisons." And, I opted out to go to the Feds. 'Cause I said, "Any place is better than here." You know, thinking about what Malcolm said about the field nigga and the house nigga... "Any place is better than here." And ah, they took us to Houston. This is where ah we...they kept us until the Bureau of Prisons flew us out. First place I think we landed was, ah Terry Hut, Indiana. 'Cause I remember it was reaaaalll cold. And then from Terry Hut, we boarded a plane to Atlanta, and I stayed in Atlanta for, I think, about a coupla years. From my time in...I, I did six years in the Feds, I did five—I did either five in the Fed or six in the state or I did five in the state and six in the Fed, but anyway, I did eleven years flat. But from my time in the Feds, I never got written-up for anything...

AW: Hmm...

DL: Whereas in TDC, like I said, I did more time locked up in Administrative Segregation than I did in population. And I attribute this to there being at least an attempt at rehabilitation in the Fed, whereas in TDC, there was no attempt at rehabilitation. It was only about punishment. In the Fed I learned a trade. In Atlanta, I ah, I took automotive transmission, but then they trans...they transferred us out because this was the time of the ah, the Cuban prisoners leaving Cuba, coming to America. I forget what that was called...something "Flotilla," but, ah they brought those guys to Atlanta, and I remember them coming there where it got like "Man, they're gonna transfer us because more and more Cubans were coming and they can't, they can't continue to hold us both here," because they kept the Cubans locked up twenty-four, seven.

AW: Hmm....

DL: Whereas we had, you know, the run of the place, you know, you'd be locked up for sleep, but when the cells unrack you went to your prospective jobs and school and what have you. So, ah, from Atlanta, I went to...I did a stop over in Levenworth and slept for a night. Then caught a plane to El Reno, Oklahoma. In El Reno, I did about six months.

Ah, from El Reno I went to ah, Segoville, and I came home from Segoville. Funny story to me, when I went to Segoville, it was time for me to come up for—OH! Oh, in between all this, I was always filing on my case to get my conviction overturned, because as I said, I was really given fifty years. And if you could call it a good thing...it was a good thing...one of the benefits of them locking me up, I had time to work on my case, because they would...I could send off for law books and just spend that time in my case... in my cell working on my case. Ah, on Ramsey, when they locked me up, there was a law book called *The Book of Reversible Errors*, now, I couldn't afford one, but there was this guy who had, he had informed on a guy who was in the cell with him and gotten a \$10,000 reward. Ah, the guy's name was Fisher, Johnny Fisher. Fisher got the \$10,000 reward to try and get a lawyer to get himself out, but the lawyer couldn't win his case. But Fisher had bought all of these law books, and one of them he let me see—*The Book of Reversible Errors*. So, I went through the book, got various case laws that I thought might benefit me. And from those cases, I would research them, looking for that what I thought would be benefit to me. Ah, what I found was a—at this time also, the state provided you with copies of your record if you were, well most of the Texas inmate prisoners were indigent. And they would provide you with a copy of the record. Now, I sent for all of my court records, and when I went through them, I saw that what was missing was the voir dire. The voir dire is the record of your, I think it's your jury selection and I saw that there was missing. So, I resent for it and the clerk told me, "there is no voir dire." But I know that I have a copy of what my attorney had ordered and he had specifically asked for the voir dire. So, I ah, that was one of the points that I raised in my appeal and I raised some other issues. And, ah, I made as many copies as I could, and a friend of mine had gotten out and began to write me and told me that he had met my cousin. Because she had asked him...she's since passed, ah Paulette, Paulette had said... 'cause she had said...she was courtin' his brother and TC had just gotten out and she said, "you know I gotta cousin that's locked up. I wonder if you know him." He said, "Yeah I know, I know Don. We good friends." And so, he wrote me and he told me that ah, "You know, I met your cousin and she works for..." What company was Paulette working for at the time? Ah, but he said, "If you need any copies..." 'Cause he was a writ writer. He had written many writs himself. "She would make 'em for you." 'Cause anytime we wrote up a writ, we had to make so many copies. And it was tedious because most of our writs were ten and twelve, or more pages long, hand written, and we could buy carbon paper, but still, that could only press through so many, and it would have to be neat, because if you beared down to hard, you'd make smudges on the paper up under that. So, ah, I sent my copies of my writ to Paulette. Paulette made however many copies of them that I needed and sent them back to me. Ah, another friend of mine had gotten out, he'd gone to Utah and worked for a law firm. And he wrote me back and told me "Man, I been working for this law firm. So, ah, send me a copy of your, your, ah, your writ and I'll have these attorneys look over it." And, ah I did that and he sent it back. He said, "Man, these people were really impressed with your writ." Said, "this is the key." And, ah, so he sent it back and so I submitted it and low and behold, I got my case reversed. The attorney that they sent to me had been a former DA. I forget his name. This guy here was a he was one of the top lawyers in Texas. Lawyers have to do so many hours of legal work for the indigent and so he got me. So, we looked over it and everybody wanted to know who worked on this because they were surprised. So I said,

“It was me, because I had the time and I did this.” And so ah, he represented me, got my case, we went to court...now, it was a choice ‘cause right now, “your case has been reversed, you got no time. Now you can opt for a retrial, a do over. You can get the same thing. You can’t get more, but you can get the same thing. Or, you can win it.” Now, here’s my thinking: it’s highly unlikely that I’m gonna win it because I did shoot a policeman. Ah, now I said I didn’t know he was a policeman at the time, but you don’t shoot a policeman and walk free. So, the time that they offered me...they said, “Now, we can offer you twenty years.” I said, “Okay, I can take that.” Because at this time I had done...

AW: Um hmm, you already did—

DL:...about eight years at the time. So, I know that ah...and at during this time, you could do...like on twenty, each year they would give you so much of you’re good time. And, I’m out of TDC now, so I’m not getting all these cases and being written up. In TDC, my time was flat because I hadn’t built up any good time ‘cause I was losing it all in and out of the hole. But, in the Feds, I was gaining good time because I wasn’t getting in any trouble. And, I took the eleven years. When I went to Segoville and I came up for parole, my intentions were to refuse it because I was under the impression that if I took the parole, then I got out, I’m thinking that the policemen were gonna be messing with me for any little thing to send me back. So I said, “Well, I’ll just do the extra few years so that I’ll be off the paper when I get out.” And that’s what I told the parole board. That, “I’m refusing the parole.” The guy said “Well, ah, you do realize you’ll only have to do about three months on paper, don’t you?” I said “What?” He said, “That’s all you’ll need to do, about three months.” I said, “Yeah, I’ll take the parole!” And I signed the deal to come home. Ah, been outta trouble since then. Ah, married the young lady who I was seeing. Who I had just started to see just before I got busted. Ah, we married. Had a home in DeSoto...two daughters...ah, that marriage didn’t work. She filed for a divorce. She had full custody of the girls. I would get the girls every other week. And tried to be as good a dad as I could being away from them and I thought I did alright...Ah they’re in college now. I live alone, single now. I been single... I said I would never say that I won’t get married again, but I just haven’t. And that’s it in a nutshell.

AW: Can I ask you some questions off of some of the things that you were saying?

DL: Sure.

AW: Ah, I know when I talked to Mr. Shockley and when I talked to ah, Mr. Walton, who is now Odinga Kambui, when I talked to them they would talk about the purge. Can you, I guess, go a little bit more into detail as to who you were purged by. Were y’all purged by Central Committee, or...?

DL: Well, actually, there was a quote-unquote “Central Committee,” but Huey P. Newton ran the Party. Ah, as far as I know of, the only time that Huey was ever over-ruled by the Party by the CC was when...as far as his personal protection...was going somewhere or being somewhere without protection. Other than that, whatever Huey said that was...that

went. Central Committee was really just a rubber stamp. (Seeing a dog enter the room)
Ooohh...what's the Chow's name?

AW: (Laughing) Shamrock.

DL: (Laughing) Shamrock?

AW: He'll be twelve/thirteen years old.

DL: Wow...

AW: Yeah...

DL: In human years what's that seven times twelve?

AW: Times seven, yeah...

DL: Yeah, Shamrock's older than everybody.

AW: Like eighty-four.

(Both laugh)

DL: Okay...the guy who I personally fault for purging us is the guy who used to be the second in command here. We cool now...Charlie Paul Henderson. Charlie was...came outta SNCC with Curtis. He had been Curtis's second in command, ah, in fact, Charlie Paul and I went up to Nationals. Nationals was in Oakland, which was sorta like ah...each Muslim has a duty, if he can afford to go to Mecca, each Party member had to go to Nationals to see how the Party was run on a national level. Charlie Paul and I went up there. I stayed in Oakland about a month. This is where I met Huey P. Newton...my heroes...Huey P. Newton, David Hilliard was the Chief-of-Staff, I met the late Sandra Pratt who was Geronimo Pratt's ex-wife, who incidentally was under house arrest during this time, It was hush-hush as to why, but the reason why is because of the schism that was going down between members who the Party adhered more to the Cleaver line than to the Party line, which was actually Huey's line. I also met Masai Hewitt, the late Masai Hewitt, who was Minister of Education, who was later purged by Huey. And David was purged also, David Hilliard was purged. Elaine Brown was up there, in fact, I served as bodyguard for Elaine when she spoke at UCLA. All the Central Committee with the exception of...Eldridge had not been purged at this time, but he was in Algeria. Bobby was incarcerated in Connecticut. Ah, DC was underground. I met all of my heroes, but I believe the one person who was responsible for the purge was Charlie Paul. Ah, why he purged all of us, I don't know. And, I guess it's because he felt he knew that we would side with Geronimo.

AW: What was signing with...ah, siding with Geronimo mean?

DL: Well, you had the...during this time you had the siding, which the Party should not be about taking to the streets, which the Eldridge side was. Talking 'bout, "Okay, the time for talk is over with, we need to take to the streets." And there were those, in fact, this is what Geronimo was doing, ah, trying to establish a base where the revolution could jump off, but he got busted. He didn't know that he was traveling with an agent provocateur, which was Melvin "Cotton" Smith. When they were here underground, staying over in...they've torn down those apartments, but they were across from Oliver Wendell Holmes Elementary School. We used to go over and we would take 'em food and stuff. And ah, I remember Cotton standing up in a corner—

AW: What he from Dallas?

DL: No he was from California.

AW: Oh okay...

DL: I remember Cotton standing up in a corner as if, "This is the way nobody can get behind me." And Geronimo's sitting down talking about the, the stupid mistakes he had been making, which weren't mistakes. These were...he was just getting caught. They were going different places, he would go out with Will, Will Safford. And Will was one of the brothers, it was about five to seven of 'em here, and they were finding notes and stuff that Cotton was leaving. He would have like his name and a number or something. He's thinking he's putting it there on the sly, but the guy who's with him is seeing it and they're getting it and taking it back and discussing it with Geronimo. And Geronimo is discussing with us the incidents where these mistakes can get us busted and Cotton should know better. And, why is he doing this? Later on, we come to find out that he was CCS's plant in the Party. Cotton had come with high recommendations. Cotton had been responsible for setting up the defense of national headquarters. He had told them, "Okay, what we can do is build up these embankments, fill them with sand, make them so high, so that whenever we get in a shoot-out bullets wouldn't penetrate." And everybody though, "Yeah that's smart, smart idea." And, ah, nobody thought or knew he was an informant until, uh, the book *The Glass House Tapes* came out, in which Lewis Tackwood revealed his ah...exposes his cover.

Tape Ends.

AW: Okay, do you remember where we left off?

DL: Okay, in the *Glass House Tapes*, Lewis Tackwood said that, Cotton, in his words, "was a boss coke-fiend," in which, that's how he was being paid off, so much coke. And ah, he was making these detailed reports back to his handlers, about Geronimo. And when it...he thought...he felt that, you know, it was just a matter of time before they find him out. He succeeded in getting the word out and Geronimo and others were busted. Now I don't know if Curtis Gaines knew, but I do remember listening to a... 'cause Curtis had a radio scanner and he would listen to it and I remember he said, "Hey man, they bustin' Geronimo." And ah, come to think of it, he may have been in touch with

whatever part of that police department knew about it. But when they busted ah, we were listening to that scan and he said “Hey man, let’s go, go over there.” ‘Cause we were in South Dallas. We had a building on Grand and we rode over there, not too far from the apartments and we saw all of the policemen. And ah, we came on back and like the next day we got a call from two of the sisters from our organization who were staying with Geronimo. It was Phoebe and Ginger. Now, those two got busted carrying guns for one of the—‘cause where Geronimo got busted is really not the apartment that we had set him up in. They were set up in the apartments near Roosevelt High School, which had been Phoebe’s apartment. But, somebody got an apartment over in the apartments near Holmes and this is where Phoebe and Ginger were caught coming across, I think the football field, carrying rifles. And ah, I don’t know if they led them to Geronimo and the police just saw them...but they didn’t have to because Cotton was informing. Before I found out that Curtis was an informant, people suspected that he was, but Geronimo never said that he was. Today, I don’t even know if ...unless I...unless I told him, but I can’t remember. I did corres—write a letter to “G” while I was locked up. I may have told him then, but I think to that day, G thought he was busted through Cotton, but...and I don’t think Curtis’s cover was really blown until I got busted. I don’t think his cover was ever actually blown because he didn’t ever testify against me out right in court, but it was things that he said and I’m wondering, you know, “Why are you saying that?” But I think this was more to the fact of me shooting the cop and it’s...its not that ah...well he didn’t see me shoot him me shoot him because we were upstairs. It was something that he said that I’m thinking, “You shouldn’t of said that.” But, you can’t say that he out and out snitched on me because I admitted that I shot the cop. But, ah, oh, your original question was who I thought...?

AW: I was talking about the purge...

DL: Yeah, yeah, this is what...so it seemed as if...because Geronimo was responsible for setting up a lot of chapters across the country and it was at every chapter that Geronimo was responsible for setting up, were purged. And those who other Party members setup, weren’t. It was depending on where headquarters thought their allegiance lied. But, Curtis...‘cause I remember Curtis and I went up to DC. They had another Revolutionary Tribunal where ah, Curtis...Geronimo had sent Curtis up there to tell Huey to either sent...do what the, do what the instructions were or do what the plan was supposed to be when they went underground, or just leave it alone because he wasn’t getting any of the support that he was supposed to be getting. Curtis and I, it was me, Curtis, Beverly...about five of us went up there. In fact, we stayed in the Howard Johnson across from Watergate when that was going on. ‘Cause I remember seeing this **biig** hotel and we were with this reporter, this was a white reporter, I forget his name, but he wanted to ride with us because he was going to the East Coast to start working and he rode with us and he was telling me, “that’s the Watergate. That’s one of the most expensive hotels in the country.” But ah, when we got to Philly, Curtis...they left me in the room with the bodyguards ‘cause I was...I don’t remember if I had the floor or what, but I was out of it and I had drank some Robitussin to try and kill that. So, I was...I remember being sleep on the floor and I remember the sisters telling me the other brothers were saying “who is that on the floor?” And they were saying, “Oh that’s Red

Dog from Texas.” But, Huey was in the next room, I remember Jane Fonda was there, and when he...he got a chance to talk with Huey, now this is Curtis saying what Huey had told him to do, and I don’t know who to believe, but some of it falls into place, some of it doesn’t, but Curtis said Huey told him to poison Geronimo and the others. He said, “Buy them a lot of food and put poison in it.” And when Curtis, we’re back in Texas and when Curtis told Geronimo, “You know I was given the mission to assassinate y’all.” Said, “They told me to buy y’all a bunch of food and lace it with poison.” And Geronimo said, “That sounds about like what them cowards would do.” And ah, I don’t know if this was...but again, Curtis being an agent provocateur, this is what they do...

AW: They play both sides against each other...

DL: But, but, Huey...the later Huey was not the same Huey that most of the people got into the Party to join was.

(Telephone rings in background)

DL: Because, when Huey started the Party, very soon afterwards Huey got busted. The Party grew from a mustard seed into a major organization while he was incarcerated. But when he got out, him seeing what was going on, maybe that wasn’t what he really envisioned, because he began instituting a lot of changes, but what the Party became is what most of the members, most of the people who joined it, that was their goal.

AW: Uh huh...

DL: ...Huey says in his book, I think it’s *Revolutionary Suicide*, that that really wasn’t it. But, it had already grown and ah, Curtis saying that Huey was walking around bad-mouthing Elaine and the other members of the committee saying that ah, you know, ‘cause he didn’t like the fact that it was so many street people coming into the Party and getting leadership positions. He said, “You know, just ‘cause y’all scared of them niggas, that don’t mean them other niggas scared of ‘em.”

AW: That’s what supposedly...

DL: Talking about people like Geronimo.

AW: Okay.

DL: Because Geronimo had a hell of a reputation being the, ah...Geronimo succeeded a legend, which was “Bunch” Carter. When Bunch was killed on UCLA campus by US members, David Hilliard appointed Geronimo to succeed him. Now, Geronimo got he name Geronimo, first off, because he had been an army vet, he had be ah...I don’t know if G was in Special Forces or what, but ah, Bunchy saw him one day, throwing a knife and hitting a target on the street, I mean hitting a target on a tree. And ah, they struck up a conversation. And he asked him his name and he said, “My name is Elmer.” He said, “Elmer? Can’t no nigga named Elmer throw no knife like that! Nigga, your name

Geronimo!” And from then on, that’s what we called him, Geronimo or G, and he became Bunchy’s bodyguard, but when Bunchy was assassinated, he filled Bunchy’s shoes. Now, Huey was an ego-maniac and he probably didn’t like the fact that G had as much respect as he did and he definitely didn’t like the way the Party was goin’ because again, in his book, he said that what the Party became is not what he had wanted it to be. But ah, again, I’m forgetting what brought this up...

AW: No, we were talking about the purge and this lead up to that and then you were talking about Curtis Gaines pitting both sides against each other, and then we went off into this story.

DL: Yeah, and that’s pretty much what an agent provocateur do. Those are his instructions, you know. And this was J. Edgar Hoover’s instructions, “We need to cause dissention. Make them destroy themselves from within.” And ah, they were really successful in this. In fact, the *Glass House Tapes* tells...tells how, you know, he caused members to kill each other. ‘Cause it was very easy to label someone a snitch. One of the ways that he said he would do it was he would go to jail...he had been in prison with known members, Party members, and he would come out of his heel, he had a trick heel, and he’d come out of his heel with a joint. So, during this time, the average brother would think, “Oh, well he can’t be a pig ‘cause he’s smoking a joint with me, this guy is cool.” And he’d say, “Aww man, you know so-and-so?,” which would be a good brother in the Party. He would say, “So-and-so’s a snitch, that’s who got me busted.” And the brothers in the joint with him, they smoking the joint saying “Aww yeah?” Their first goal when they got out was to kill that brother. And when they would do it, Tackwood would know who did it, or he would know who was responsible for it because the guy was in the cell with him and this is who he told. This guy wither got out and did it, or he told someone to do it, or he told someone and they had it done, but the bottom line is this guy was involved in it, too. So he’s captured two birds with one stone. And this is what CCS did all across the country.

AW: I have, ah, a few, just a few more questions to ask you.

DL: Sure.

AW: First of all, thank you, this is like one of the most clear and concise interview that I have done, comprehensive-wise, as far as the Black Panther Party in the city. So this is excellent.

(Tape stops so that Mr. Lister can aid some people with a load they are carrying).

AW: You don’t have to answer what you don’t want to. Um, I wanted...so, we talked about the purge nationally, but I wanted to talk about the shift on the local-level in Dallas. So, the shift between the Party...

DL: Oh yeah...

AW: When you were talking about that shift...

DL: Oh yeah, this was people like...well I met Skip at El Centro, Walton—Odinga, we almost grew up together, because I've know Walton since H. S. Thompson Elementary School. And after the shift came, it was like been knowing this guy almost all my life, and now, you know, we're like bitter enemies. And it was because, he, so-to-speak, believed what the Party said about us. Um, we cool, right now it's like it never happened, but you have those who believed all the negative things that were said about us that were purged and ah, this is the local-level. And I can see it, because Curtis Gaines, and come to find out those who were saying he was a pig were right, but the saying like "you can't see the forest for the trees," because I'm with the guy and ah, I'm not seeing it.

AW: You probably didn't want to believe that either.

DL: Because, here's one thing, I had left home. I left home at seventeen, I think. Seventeen or eighteen...ah I left home 'cause a guy... cause...I'm telling... 'Cause I met him through Leroy and them, through SOUL, and ah, here was a guy who was a member of SNCC 'cause the Party hadn't been founded yet...here's a guy who was a member of SNCC, seems to be sharp, can talk it anyway...and, ah, he knew all these movement people, and ah, I'm telling him at the time 'cause ah, because I'm becoming a little more militant in my way of thinking. I replaced my Temptations albums and stuff on the wall with pictures of Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale and stuff and it's scaring my mother. And ah, it's to the point where ah...and I'm tryna think did she ever tell me, "You're gotta either do this or get out." But, I made that choice and Curtis just happened to offer me, "Man, you can come live with me." So, he brought me up out of my mother's house and I got all my clothes, my albums, and my typewriter and I left. And ah, I think I called my mother, I did something, and my mother—I get my bull-headedness from her—and she's just as cold as I was. She said, "Just gimme my key." So I gave her the key and stuff and from time to time I think I would go by and see...oh, because this was during Viet Nam era. She told me, 'cause she would give me my mail, and I have received some draft notices and I had no intention of going, and ah she said, "Donnie, the FBI came by here and he said that to tell you that 'the army beats Fort Levenworth'." 'Cause I wasn't gonna go down to the ah...

AW: The office?

DL: ...selective service branch. And so, I finally went down there and ah, went before the committee and I told them that I had no intentions of fighting in Viet Nam. I was as militant as I could...I thought I was, but they still wanted me in the army. So, ah, I talked to a...they used to have an organization called Legal Services here. And I talked to one of the attorneys, and I forget his name, but he said, "Well, the only way you can not go is you have to flunk the physical or have a...flunk the physical or have an obscene tattoo on a prominent part of your body." So I said, "Yeah?" And I don't know who gave me the idea of what to put on there, but I put "F-U-C-K-U" on my hand. During this time guys would make tattoos with a pen and some ink and a friend of mine just tattooed it on my

hand, “F-U-C-K” and then a “U.” I went down to the draft board, went through everything, was passing everything, and I’m mad ‘cause ah, I’m passing everything and nobody’s seeing this or saying anything. So ah, at the last deal, I’m passing every test and everything, and I’m leaning on this desk, so he looked at my hand. He was about to say, “You know, get off my desk,” but he sees that on my hand. He says, “Is that a tattoo on your hand?” I said, “Yeah.” He just started scratching through everything.

AW: Oh... (Laughs)

DL: And I received ah, ah, what was it? A 2-A, 1-Y, or whatever it was and that excluded me from the draft.

AW: Ha...

DL: But when I got busted, before I went to trial, the guys were already messing with me in jail about what I’m in there for, and they said, “Man, when them white folks see that on your hand, Don, you ain’t never gone get outta here.” So, I had a guy in jail to go over the “F” and turn it into a “B” and both “Us” turn them into “Os”. So, that “Fuck U” became “BOCKO.” And I put a band-aid on there. So ah, when they’re trying me, the assistant DA is saying, “Mr. Lister, do you have any respect for this jury?” And I answer in the affirmative. He said, “Are you telling the truth?” Again a yes. He said, “Are you hiding anything from the jury?” I said, “No.” He said, “Then why do you have that band-aid on your hand saying ‘FUCK U’?” I said, “I don’t have that on my hand.” He said, “Then, remove that band-aid!” And then when I removed it, he just turned beet-red and ah said, “No further questions.” ‘Cause they didn’t know I had changed it. They just knew I had that obscene tattoo on there. He thought that that was gone be a big startler...

AW: To get them up in arms...

DL: Yeah for the jury. But, ah, again, locally, when Curtis got that money from Mary Jane and built that house...ah, tryna think did we still have programs goin’? I think we did still have the pest control, we had a Free Pest Control Program goin’, which they pretty-much let me lead. In which I would buy concentrated spectracide, put it in canisters, and we would take out ads in the local paper and on the radio and people would call and we would go out and spray the house for insects. We had a Free Package for Prisoners Program. This is what...this is why I had alotta respect in jail, because we used to go up and visit the guys. Guys would write us and we would go up and put their articles in the paper...The Vanguard... Some kinda *Notes*... But see I hadn’t heard Vanguard in so long, but I guess that is the organization that we became. And I forget our paper, but anyway, we would print the prisoners’ letters and stuff and there was a store in, ah, Deep Elm at this time, which would sell us products wholesale. And we would take it and give it to the prisoners. Now, the Sheriff’s Department wouldn’t accept everything because it was competing with the commissary, in which the prisoners had to purchase stuff. Come to find out later, years later, that the Sheriff’s Department, well the sheriff, was getting a cut from the people he would license to sell commissary, ‘cause they would jack up the prices, and he would give the Sheriff’s Department so much

money for having...licensing him to be the commissary supplier. But with us supplying the stuff free of charge, they couldn't make the money. So, they would take out like the deodorant we was giving them. They would only let us give them maybe, ah, toothpaste...we had a lot of problems with tryna get those packages in, um, but, again I had a lot of respect from the guys because they knew that at least I was trying to help them when I was on the outside. Ah, so those guys, the purge didn't bother them. But it was just the guys, I guess, who were still in the Party, because when we were purged, ah later on, Fred Bell led a chapter. And ah, I think Skip was in that. Skip and ah, I guess Marvin [Walton]...

AW: No he said he wasn't...

DL: He wasn't?

AW: No...uh uh...

DL: Ah, you know, in fact, I don't know if Marvin ever had membership here, because Marvin used to go up every summer to...

Both: Chicago...

AW: Yeah, he talked about that...

DL: Yeah 'cause that's where he knew Doc Satcher and those other members. He may have known Fred [Hampton] before Fred was killed...

AW: I don't think he did...I think he...he said he went up there the summer after that happened.

DL: Okay, but I know he used to go up there a lot. But ah, here, ah Fred [Bell]... 'cause Fred had been locked up for ah...I think Fred had tried to hijack the plane, and...and ah, they waited him out. I think...naw Fred might have gotten arrested for a bank robbery, or something. That was Foots...

(Woman in background: Beasley...)

DL: Yeah, Beasley tried to hijack a plane. (To woman—Thank you)

AW: (Laughs. Aside to woman) You're not on camera.

DL: All of...most of... 'cause a lot of guys I don't remember and it maybe because I was locked up for so long. Sometimes my memory gets bad. Like Crenshaw...I don't remember Marvin Crenshaw before I got...before I came back, but ah, it's other brothers like him that other people say, "You remember him he was in the Party under Fred Bell, and this and that. But see, I don't think Fred had started the Party..."

AW: Not 'til 1973...

DL: '73 and see I got busted in '73, so I may have been in jail. He may have started it, you know, after we...after I was in jail. Because when we got busted, me, Curtis, John Woods and the women, Nigger Ed, and Creeper, Black Ed had left the organization...ah...everybody got out but me, you know, I got sometime. John eventually got out, 'cause all he had was jail time. And since I admitted that I shot the cop, I don't know what they did about the ah...about the other cases. I may have taken that case because Curtis was coming to me saying, "You need to take this case, you need to take that case." They never tried me for it 'cause once I got convicted for shooting the cop that was the most time I could have gotten for the other cases. Only thing they could have done was "After you do the fifty years, you've gotta do so much time in the Feds for the other cases." But ah, I remember him coming to me and saying, "Ah, this FBI agent is gonna come talk to you. Ah, tell him that that you'll take the other cases, because if you don't, they'll put it on somebody else." I said, "Alright," and I took that case. Ah, but the only thing that they tried me on was... 'cause see I had said I shot...they tried to say... they tried to charge me with three counts of assaulted murder of a police officer, even though Wall was shot, because of the fact that I said I shot three times, so they said, "Okay, well you shot at three different police officers." So, I had three counts of assault to murder a police officer. Folks ho we were all at odds with when the purge went down, now it's like, you know, it never happened. 'Cause they remember the...ah...I guess they remember the good.

AW: Ah...you talked about some of the programs that you all did. You talked about the Free Breakfast Program, the Free Clothing, the Prisoner Program, and the Pest Control. Did y'all have any other programs that you did that you can remember?

DL: Ah, food for the kids, Breakfast Program...food for the kids, pest control, clothing program...ah, if we could, if we had the money and people were being evicted...I do remember this certain woman we put up in a hotel because she was...had been evicted. We was tryna get them from evicting her, but we weren't successful with that, but we put her in a hotel and during this time there was a Daniel Rabinowitz, he was a rich guy and I'm tryna think of what, what hotel or business he was responsible for. But he allowed this woman to stay with her. Cases, cases like that. 'Cause they still wanted to keep Curtis's role as a undercover pig hid. So they hadn't called him in yet, because he hadn't completed his mission, which was either to turn us, or get us busted. They did not wanna Black Movement, movement in Dallas.

AW: Can you talk some more about that?

DL: Ah...

AW: Just like the reasons why that was...

DL: Well, Dallas and the powers that be, they never went through the...the biggest riot Dallas ever had was when, was when the police killed the little ah...I think he was like a twelve-year-old Hispanic kid...

AW: Santos Rodriguez.

DL: Santos Rodriguez. Then they took to the streets. That's why you see bars downtown on Neiman Marcus and all those other store, because they took to the streets then. Prior to that, Civil Rights Movement...ah, there was no rioting or anything. Probably the biggest thing prior to that was when they busted Ernie and SNCC for the OK Supermarkets. They, the powers that be had been, had been ah, successful with keeping Martin Luther King out. They did that with the late S.M. Wright. Telling him, "We don't need y'all coming down here." All across the country, all across the south, Black folks were rioting, just taking to the streets getting changes, and that didn't happen here. In fact, a guy, I think his name was Schultz, wrote a book detailing that...on how Dallas was ah, extraordinary in that it didn't have the major riots. And they wanted to keep that so they kept Curtis Gaines out there to do that. I think Curtis Gaines was telling them, "This guy here..." 'Cause when I pulled my...asked for my Freedom of Information Act, I asked for my records, they had a lot of information in there, I didn't know where they got, and wrong. 'Cause Curtis always thought my middle name was Ray, and that's what was in my FBI files...that Red Dog's name was Donald "Ray" Lister. And at the time, me not realizing yet, not having seen his file yet, that he was the source, I thought, "Man don't nobody call me that...don't nobody think that's my middle name but Curtis." 'Cause everywhere else I put my name, I sign my name "W" and that's Wayne. But ah, I think I might have heard him tell somebody that, that that was my name. Then, there it is in my file and I don't know...they've got somebody's name in there as being my father and I don't know who gave 'em that name. 'Cause I asked my mother, "Who is so-and-so?" She said, "I dunno who that is." 'Cause during...when I was born, my mother had...my mother divorced my father before I was born... 'cause my father's name is Hornsby and my mother put her maiden name down, which was Lister. And, actually, my mother is really a Johnson, but her mother died when she was twelve and her uncle raised her and ah his name was Lister...so she went under his name and that's the name that I have. But, so my birth certificate only has the mother...and ah, it got...the name is blank for the father. But, in the part of my FBI record that hasn't been darkened out, 'casue it's a lot of it, most of it, is blacked out, but that part I saw that Donald "Ray." "Who's callin' me Donald 'Ray'?" Yeah, him...But, you didn't ask me, but my beliefs...I guess it's about sixty to seventy percent what it was through all of this. I guess through maturity, I've changed...I don't think that ah, you know, 'cause I used to, I used to think that I would not live past twenty-four. I looked at that as being a reasonable length of time, because at the time, members of the Black Panther Party didn't live long lives. And I remember speaking to a...some people...we were selling the *Black Panther Party Paper*...this woman was a teacher and she was trying to tell us about the pitfalls of being in a organization like this and I'm telling her, "Well, you know, I'm twenty or twenty-one now, so, I really only have about three more years to live. I'll probably be dead when I'm twenty-four because most Panther members are. 'Cause those that had been killed that was about their age. And I thought that was a realistic way

to look at life. And then, I used to think, “Mannn, four or five more years the revolution’s comin’.” And I don’t...I know what that was...that was an infantile Leftism. We weren’t ready for revolution...really didn’t know what a revolutionary was because it was, I guess, idealism. Ah, but, you know, that...having that ah, that background, understanding why things were the way they were being wrong in that how they were gonna be changed, but having a knowledge of why things were the way they were, that saved me—that saved me. That’s how I kept my sanity a lot of times. Because, as I said, I was in TDC for about six years and ah...now this seems like a long time ago. But, when I was locked up, you would be talking to somebody, a prisoner you thought had all the sense in the world, but then all of a sudden they would say something that was crazy. And then come to find out that this guy had been locked-up about six years. Then I started seeing a pattern that most guys who had been locked-up about six years, they were crazy. And again, you’d be talking to somebody you thought had good sense, and all of a sudden they would say that crazy stuff. And then...see I’m an atheist. I became an atheist when my uncle was killed. Prior to that I was a devout Christian. I was one of the guys who before I’d eat my lunch in high school, I would say my prayers. I didn’t care about what people said. I was paying my tithes in the church. Then when I started going to El Centro, discovering Malcolm X, I went from a Christian...Well, when my uncle was killed first, I think that was what led me on a...I started having questions. My question then was, “Why did it happen?” Because to me, my uncle was the perfect Christian, leading the life what the Bible said we should live, a good man, a good father, a great uncle. He was like a father to me. So, I’m wondering, you know, “Why did God let this happen?” Now my Aintee don’t have no husband, my cousins don’t have a...four year old cousin don’t have a father...questioning this, and then all of a sudden, this time is when I’m discovering the Movement and I’m reading Malcolm. Then I go from the white, blonde hair, blue-eyed Christian...‘cause I’m agnostic now...I got doubts...I haven’t denounced it, but I’m wondering, “Why is this and that...Why is this happening in Viet Nam? Why did that happen to...why is that happening to the people in Africa? Why did it happen to us?” And then, I go from ah...but I can’t say, “Maybe God is Black,” because of all this that’s goin’ on... “Maybe I need to be praying...maybe I’m praying to the wrong god. I need to be praying to a Black god.” But then, the same questions I have for the white god, I got the same questions for Malcolm’s god. It still happened. It’s still happening...so, for a long time I was agnostic...doubting it. But, I didn’t have proof that there was no God. So, I just started saying he’s an atheist. ‘Cause you really can’t prove He exists...well you can’t prove He exists...I don’t believe you can prove that He exists, because every kind of proof somebody else comes up with I got an explanation for that. So when I go to jail, a guy told me, “Doggie,” ‘cause that’s what guys used to call me, Doggie...Red Dog. “Doggie, ah, I could understand if you came to jail and didn’t believe in God, but you come to jail and don’t believe in him.” When I got to prison, these guys who had been there five or six years... ‘cause all of ‘em—they was either Muslims or Christians...but I’m saying, “You know,” this is what I’m...this is how I’m...the conclusion I came to: these guys get locked-up, then they start reverting to what they mama and thangs told them, “Pray fo’ God when you’re in your darkest need and He’ll come through.” And then they do that! ‘Cause they’d be sure about needing help then, you know, and they don’t get it. And I say, “You know man, that’s what’s driving these people crazy.” ‘Cause I’ve heard people getting beat down, crying, “Oh God, help!

Oh no! Ow! Lord! Please, Jesus!” And don’t nobody come. And ah, I’m thinking then, if I needed a god, this is at the time when I would need him. I don’t need you when I’m doin’ alright. It’s just like a...if I’m a... if I’m a father, my child needs me when they’re helpless like a baby. They don’t need me when they can do for themselves. So, I never got in the fact where I was like, “Man, I hope so-and-so don’t happen. Imma pray that it don’t happen.” So, I didn’t have that weakness, but I saw that in these other guys. And, friends of mine who I didn’t see it in, were guys who thought like I did. Guys who...and a friend of mine, I just talked to him before I got over here, we called him “Sudden Death.” When I found out...I thought they named him that because he was a hell of a dude, but his mama gave him that name.

AW: (Laughs uproariously)

DL: He almost killed her during childbirth...it was “Sudden Death.” But ah, he’s the most least likely person you would ever think of as a revolutionary, but Sudden was, he was a good dude...

AW: What’s his real name?

DL: Marvin Phinnis...Yeah, he was from...he’s from Chicago. He came to...his mother moved here to Arkansas, and I don’t know what Marvin was doin’ over here to do what he got into, but he was eventually arrested for...a policeman was shot dead...a coupla guys came up to him and shot him dead because he had been one of the policemen who beat and stomped this Black prisoner to death. I used to know this guy’s name ‘cause it was, it was ah...when this happened, it was big news, and it was bigger news that they didn’t get convicted for it. They were acquitted. But ah, some guys saw this guy crossing the street and walked up to him and shot him full of led and they escaped. Now, Marvin was eventually arrested for that and convicted for that. Ah, Marvin did his time, he always maintained his innocence, did his time, was out, working and everything and that...a policeman...not that one...a policeman, before he retired, ‘cause he always felt like Marvin did that and that ah, even Marvin was convicted and done his time, he was out on parole and this guy didn’t want him to be out on parole he got Marvin re-incarcerated and Marvin’s mother called me and said, “You know, they just came out of the blue and re-arrested Marvin for nothin’. You know Marvin was workin’ everyday,” had this job and was pursuin’ his career. He was an artist. He was doin’ that. I told her, “Okay, we’re gonna try to get in touch with the lawyer.” His lawyer had been a...and I don’t know if Craig is still a representative, Craig Washington, ah, Craig had defended Marvin and gotten Marvin, rather than a life sentence, Marvin had gotten forty years for that. But, Marvin had gotten a life sentence because he had shot a policeman in Garland when he got arrested. Ah, they shot Marvin in the chin and, but he survived. Marvin said that the only reason they didn’t have to remove his lower chin is because everyday he would soak it with hydrogen peroxide and put that in it. But, Marvin and I met on Ramsey and became cool. Ah, I been up there to visit him, he’s been down here to visit me and we stay in touch. He and I used to have...I used to talk to him...well we used to have that conversation, “Man have you ever noticed so-and-so...no, that guys you meet and have been locked-up a long time sooner or later they say something to let you know

that they're crazy?" He said, "Man, you know, the reason that hasn't affected us is because we understand the conditions of why we're locked up. We understand why these white folks are doin' what they're doin', and them guys can't understand it. They think 'cause they're prayin' everyday, because they doin' what these white folks say...ah and stuff is still happenin' to them." And we didn't go through that because if we had an ideology like they did, we'd be just like 'em." But it's just very few people who are incarcerated for long periods of time come out sane and ah, although I was immature in my thinking as a Leftist, right now, I just consider myself as a progressive. 'Cause it seems like what Marx and Lenin preached is nothing like they preached in any of the countries that say they're that. Because capitalism has creeped in to those systems. You have some that say that's what they are...take China...China has more money invested over here than any other country and this is the epitome of capitalism. And I definitely would not wanna be a part of a socialist society if it's like North Korea, 'cause I do believe Kim Jong Il is insane. I believe that this is the greatest country for me. I would not wanna live anywhere other than here. As much as I admire Nelson Mandela, I think this is a better country than South Africa is. Ah, at one time I thought I wanted to live in socialist countries, as much adoration I used to have for Fidel. But come to find out that there's still a problem for people that look like me, of the darker shade over there, as far as succeeding in Cuba. You don't see many people on the Parliament Bureau, on the Central Committee that look like me in Cuba. And then you get books from people who live over there. This brother had been in the Party and had hijacked a plane and took it to Cuba. Said, "You know, people would say that they don't see the contradiction in how...they think they're bettering Cuban society by," and this is a dark sister saying that, "To have a baby by a white Cuban..." Saying that, "Now, I don't hate Blacks, but I don't see anything wrong with bettering the country." And I'm wondering why she can't see the contradiction in that. And it really shouldn't matter who your mate is: Black, white, Brown, Red, Yellow, blue, green or whatever. But, I gotta problem with somebody saying, "I'm only gonna mate with the white because I want my baby not to come out being an inferior baby." So Fidel has run that country for over fifty years and they haven't solved this? He hasn't elevated the people's thinking to the point where they see that this is racism? By this time, he should have conquered racism. There should be no racism in Cuba now. There's no excuse for someone saying that. There's no excuse for that level of thinking to be that way. When I see members of the Central Committee over there, I should see a Rainbow Coalition, people like the Black America from, I used to say, and I no longer hold true to this, and I still haven't dated out of my race, but I used to say, "Why would I date someone other than a Black woman, when I gotta choice from light-bright-damn-near-white to black as night." And if brothas say they like white women, well, you got sisters that look white, you don't have to go there. But now, I'm of the, I'm of the opinion that you fall in love with who you fall in love with, but don't exclude them because they're that. I've never dated a white woman because ah...I just never pursued white women. I like Black women and that's who I've pursued. But if that white woman, that Asian woman, that whatever woman come along and we click, then we click...but ah, I think Cuba should have a higher level of understanding about the issues then they do. (Reaches for a glass) Let me go, uh 'cause this ice...

AW: We can...you want to take a break?

DL: No, we cool. That ice was melting and it was cresting and I didn't want it to spill over. You still got me?

AW: Yeah, I got one more question. And like I said, this is like "the" question. So, if you don't wanna answer it, feel free to tell me. Ah, can you tell us about what led to you being incarcerated. I know we... I know you said that you shot the police officer, but what, if you can—or if you feel like it—can you tell us about that time, that night. What happened?

DL: Oh, it wasn't night. It was daytime. Ah, I think some of the guys had robbed a drug dealer and some bricks...and had some bricks of marijuana. Ah, either they had robbed him, or they had got it from somewhere. This, this...certain stuff Curtis had goin' on, he wouldn't let me be a part of it. There was somethings that they wanted to do that I said, "Naw, if y'all are gonna do that, I'm out." 'Cause that's not what I had joined the organization, that's not what I stuck with him to be about. I still had some...some ah...well...I don't wanna say...I still had some intentions of being that which I had joined the organization from the beginning of being. And I was not gonna succumb to the ah, the lowest of the low. And there were certain thing that I didn't want to be involved in. Ah, so I don't know where the grass came from, if they ripped somebody off or made a deal, or whatever. But apparently, that was gonna be the thing. We were gonna start selling grass, selling dope. 'Cause you couldn't smoke all that grass, and I saw it. It was about three bricks. Ah, Curtis was situated...I don't know if you ever gone by the house...he had a window by the driveway. John Woods had run into the house saying, "The pigs! They vampin'! They vampin'!" Vamping mean, you know, they runnin' down on you. And ah I don't think we had a phone or something. He had gone up the hill to a store and was using the pay phone and comin' home, I think they followed him, and they kept on following him. They didn't turn off like they would usually do. Sometimes they would follow you and then they would turn on off and go. But, he ran in screamin, "They vampin'! They vampin'!" And ah, 'cause my apartment was upstairs. I remember I was upstairs. I was listenin' to the Isley Brothers the song is still one of my favorites, "It's Too Late," and I was reading the book by Samuel F. Yett, um, part of the name is *The Issue of Black Survival in America*. And basically what it was talking about was, if the government decided to commit genocide on Blacks, would the whites of the country let this happen? And I was reading that, and when he came in the door hollering, I ran down the stairs to see what was goin' on. I saw the policeman stop at Curtis window. He was sitting at the bed, and I guess he heard me with all this noise. He turned and looked at me, and he's just sitting there. Ah, I run back upstairs, ah because Diane, one of the female members and her baby is up there. Nobody's home but me, Diane, the baby—Kina—John Woods, Curtis, ah I guess Beverly was there. and ah, so I go upstairs and I get my gun. Comin' from the Party, that was inbred in us—that the police did not cross the threshold. If you let them cross that threshold, you were no longer in the Party because that's where you had to draw the line. Ah, next thing I remember is a policeman coming up to the top of the stairs. I started shooting. In the heat of the moment, I'm thinking that they're shooting, too. But actually, only somebody who shot that day was me. I got across the hall and ah...to see if Diane and the baby are

alright, 'cause again, I'm thinking that we're exchanging shots. And ah, she's holding Kina. I said, "The baby alright? Are you all alright?" She said, "Yeah, but we won't be if you keep shooting!" She said, "We won't be if y'all keep shooting." 'Cause she don't know who's shooting. So ah, I said "Damn!" 'Cause I'm at the point were I thinking Imma...this is a shoot out. Imma keep shooting until they kill me or I'm outta bullets. 'Cause that's the mindset...that's the twenty, you know I'm not gonna live passed the time I'm twenty-four anyway. This is how we die. And ah, so when she say this, it's like someone is throwing a monkey wrench into the machinery. 'Cause now it ain't about me anymore. Primarily, I'm thinking about Kina, the baby. I'm saying, "Man, if I keep shootin', they gone start shootin', the baby's gonna get hit." And I know I gotta hell of a ass whippin' comin'. 'Cause I know that you don't shoot... 'cause I don't know he's hit, but I know you don't shoot at a policeman and not get beat down to death. But I know if I continue to shoot, they gone start shootin', and the baby's got a likelihood of getting shot. I throw the gun down, and I tell 'em "Stop shootin'. Don't shoot. There's a baby up here. We're comin' out." So, I tell Diane, "Get behind me, 'cause if they start shootin', they'll shoot me, they won't hit you and the baby." So, we goin' downstairs, I go down slowly 'casue they tole me to put my hands up. I'm going downstairs, and they grab me by my hair, I had hair then, and pull me on down the stairs. Diane is led...taken downstairs and led into the livin' room where ah...they hadn't found John yet, but Curtis and Beverly are there handcuffed. And ah, they ask me, "Anybody else up there?" I said, "Naw." They said, "You the one do that shootin'? Who's doin' that shootin' up there? You shootin' up there? You shoot a policeman?" I said, "Somebody got shot?" They said, "Yeah, did you shoot a policeman?" I said, "Yeah." Okay, that's when the hell started. 'Cause when I said I shot him, ah, they got me encircled...like a half-moon...And ah, I think the guy hit me. And when he hit me, I start fighting back. Now, their intentions were either to beat me down or shoot me. 'Cause when they hit me, one of 'em was standing there with a shotgun, and I grabbed the shotgun. He's got it like this, (holding his hands out in front of him, mimicking holding the gun), I grab at it, I grab the middle of it. So, he was like (in essence, Lister flipped the gun, so that the barrel is now facing the officer). They don't know whether to start shooting or what, but they're all trying to get at me. And I'm saying, "If y'all gonna kill me, kill me!" But I'm fighting. One of 'em gets behind me and puts me in a chokehold. And when they put me in a chokehold, I learned to keep my chin down. That keeps them from administering the chokehold and you can continue to breathe. But then, one of the dirtiest cops to ever come through the city, he was eventually...this guy here was...I remember reading about him killing, well they thought he had killed this guy and they had to get this guy in the ambulance and he sittin' back there lookin' at him sayin', "Yeah, that son-of-a-bitch dead." But he guy survived and he lived to tell the other guys, you know, what had happened. How they were just sittin' back there cuttin' it up, 'bout how they had killed him but anyway, he hit me in the head with his ah .45. I gotta cut. There's a scar up there somewhere...

AW: I can see it...

DL: Can you see it?

AW: Uh huh...

DL: And ah, when he hit me, my head bounced up and they were able to get the chokehold in and that's how they were able to get me down and from there, they hit a major...I don't guess it's a major...but they hit an artery and couldn't stop it from bleeding. So I went from there, to the hospital and ah they patched me up and from there I went to jail. But that's how, that's how the shooting went down.

AW: That's the...that was the major question I had. Umm...you spoke about somebody named Creeper, do you remember his real name?

DL: Creeper...Cornelius Jackson...Cornelius Alexander Jackson, Jr. Cornelius had been a member. Are you familiar with the One O' Clock Lab Band out of North Texas State? (Takes a sip of water). They're legendary.

AW: They're the Jazz ensemble?

DL: Well it's a Jazz, it's a lab band there out of...ah...

AW: UNT.

DL: Yeah, UNT...it used to be North Texas State. But they are...that's what time the lab band starts, at one o'clock. And they're legendary because ah, right, well this year, they were nominated for a couple Grammy's and it never won, but they're always getting nominated. One time they performed and Duke Ellington heard 'em and they asked Duke what he thought about 'em and Duke said, "I wish they were mine." But they're world-famous...the One O'Clock Lab Band. But Cornelius used to play for them. He also used to play for, and this guy is dead now, Al "Tin Tee" Braggs. You ever heard of him?

AW: Uh uh...

DL: Okay, Al was a local entertainer, used to travel with Bobby Bland and he wrote the...ah...he wrote the song... the hit song that he arranged for Aretha and Kenny...what's his name? What's the Country Westerner's name? Country Western singer, Kenny....

AW: Chesney?

DL: Who?

AW: Kenny Chesney?

DL: Naw...(laughing) this is before your time. This guy used to sing ah...Anyway, the hit song that he wrote was, "It's a Shame You Don't Share Your Love With Me."

AW: (Begins singing the wrong song with “It’s a Shame” in it’s title)

DL: Naw...

(Both laugh)

AW: I’m wrong...

DL: Yeah...ah... “It’s a Shame You Don’t Share Your Love With Me,” that was a hit for Aretha Franklin and for Kenny...

AW: Whatever his name is...

DL: Whatever his name is...

AW: We’ll find out his name. (Laughs)

DL: Well, Cornelius used to be a saxophonist.

AW: Oh okay.

DL: Yeah, so Cornelius had a lot of tales about his life, in that, you know the R & B world with James Brown. He used to talk about how James Brown was a tyrant and stuff, but I met David Ruffin. (Hesitantly) You know who David Ruffin is?

AW: Of the Temptations...

DL: Because ah, David was appearing at a club and a Al Braggs had a brother, I think his name was Floyd, but he was appearing there, too and ah, he knew Cornelius, and ah, they brought us back stage and got to cut it up with...I wouldn’t say David was a hero, but one of my favorite singers. Yeah, we got to cut it up and stuff. But ah, yeah Cornelius died of AIDS. Cornelius got out...I shouldn’t say most, but a lotta guys who were incarcerated, they engaged in homosexuality. Now, it would cause...it could cause you your life to tell one of them that they’re a homosexual. ‘Cause they felt like, well, they’re only...they’re doin’ the pitchin’ they’re not catchin’, so-to-speak. So, that other guy’s the sissy, the homosexual, they’re not. They’re still heterosexual. But, in actuality, if you get aroused by your same sex, that means you a homosexual. Cornelius got out, couldn’t leave them alone, ‘cause he engaged in that when he was incarcerated. I never did. That’s one of the things I pride myself in: the fact that I didn’t turn to God and I never engaged in homosexuality. Creeper came down with AIDS, too. I don’t believe it was homosexuality, because I don’t think you get it from that. I think you get AIDS from partaking of various drugs. And that’s what a lot of them do in that lifestyle. And ah, he died from it.

AW: And he was also a musician, too.

DL: Yeah, well, musicians do drugs, some of 'em, not...I don't think all of 'em do it. But some of 'em do it, but again, I think that's how you get AIDS. But yeah, Cornelius died a few years back.

AW: But he was in the Party as well?

DL: Yeah, Cornelius was...Cornelius might have been one of the ones who went up to Philadelphia, but he was a member of SOUL, and ah...see a lot of those guys in SOUL, they were put out of the organization for one thing or another. Ah, Leroy was put out because he couldn't do the physical exercises that we had to do. We had to do various calisthenics and ah I think he had some type of condition in which he couldn't do it or wouldn't do it. So they told him to go, to leave. Ah, I don't know why Skip never joined. Maybe he knew about Curtis, I don't know.

AW: He said they had a faction at North Texas State and they kinda went on up and did that up there.

DL: Maybe because he left El Centro and went on up there. But see, I didn't I did my year at El Centro and then I left, I dropped out to join the Party.

AW: You mind if we take one break? Imma run to the restroom.

DL: Go 'head.

AW: Thank you.

End of tape.

Interview with Eva “Mama Mack” McMillan

Ava Wilson (AW): Please state your name.

Eva “Mama Mack” McMillan (MM): My name is Eva Partee McMillan.

AW: How did you get involved in the movement for social justice in Dallas?

MM: My brother, Clifton Partee, got involved in politics and he resigned his job at N. W. Harlee School and accepted a job with the prestigious Progressive Voters League where they hired him to be the executive secretary of the organization and my brother was so enthused about his work he put his whole heart in the Civil Rights Movement and registerin’ voters was his main objective. He worked hard at that and enrolled his siblings into the same ventures. I remember him sayin’, “Come here, you twins! You’re twenty-one years old today, now you go and register to vote and you take a dollar and seventy-five cents, if you have it, and pay for your poll tax. If you don’t have it, I’ll give it to you, but I want you to register to vote.” So we registered to vote and he immediately gave us a list of numbers and people to call on the phone and we became phone bank callers to the voters in our precinct and also walked the street distributin’ literature and on election day, my brother secured a position for me as a clerk at the polling place, which I worked for many, many years. It was my favorite time of my life. I was rasin’ four lovely children and workin’ in the work that I loved and I remember my brother sayin’ to me one day, “Look, Eva, here’s a sign I’m placin’ in your yard.” And this sign had read, “Register to vote. Pay your poll tax here.” And he took a hammer and beat the sign into the ground and gave me a book with forms and said, “Register people to vote and collect a dollar and seventy-five cents because the person has to pay a poll tax in order to vote.” That was the law then; however, fortunately it was outlawed like thirty or forty years later. It was very unfair and it was set-up to keep poor people, Black and white and whatever nationality, from votin’. So, that was my venture into politics and into the Civil Rights Movement, my first step and I enjoyed it very much and thanks to my brother for encouragin’ me and my siblin’s to take part in this work. Havin’ been involved in the Civil Rights Movement initially through voter registration, and electoral system, I would like for this movement to be clearly defined as an important step for Black people and seekin’ equality through the vote and it was a position that we took seriously and the voters, poor people, cooperated wonderfully comin’ into pay their poll tax and registerin’ to vote and never failin’ to vote. We had a precinct that was bonded by Pearl Street and Haskell Avenue, by McKinney Avenue and Ross Avenue and our reports we sent in for each election was complimented buy the city of Dallas. They said, “Only two precincts sent in perfect reports and that was our precinct under the leadership of the Dallas Progressive Voters League and another white precinct in East Dallas.” We had perfect reports. So, it was really an effort that we really put forth to make clear our intentions and to define what we felt was important in those times and encouragin’ Blacks to vote and gettin’ out and see that they vote.

AW: How would you envision the final product of this study?

MM: I would like to see the final product of the Black Power Movement show that the unity between Black people to seek equality, not through violence so much as through power. Havin' influence to change people and to promote ideas and to gain the strides as we sought our freedom and liberty through the Black Power Movement.

AW: In talkin' to various people and in doing a preliminary literature review, on my part, I really wanted to shift the focus of this project specifically to the Black Power Movement. This project will hopefully span from '65 to '80, looking at those individuals who were integral in really bringing...facilitating that movement in Dallas. With that said, is there anyone that I should contact or meet? Do you have any suggestions as far as that's concerned?

MM: There are so many people who were involved in the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement in Dallas. It's a little difficult to name them all. But I'd like to mention my son, Ernie McMillan, whom I think was foremost out front and people like Reverend Zan Holmes who supported him and who supported equal rights for all people—a great Christian man, and people like Dr. Charles Hunter, a minister in Dallas who allowed us the privilege of usin' his facilities to meet to discuss Black power and people like a white pastor, Reverend Herbener, who also loaned us his church, a Presbyterian Church in South Dallas where we might meet and find solutions to the problems of Black people and learnin' how to bring about unity and obtainin' power through the process in which we were involved in, which was a difficult task. But, we worked hard and sometimes it seemed like we would not profit from our efforts, but I believe in the long-run that we did and I would like for it to go down in history as sayin' that, which alotta people disclaim that Dallas had no Civil Rights Movement, but we have evidence to show you that there was a great Civil Rights Movement in Dallas; however, it was crushed by the Dallas news media and by the Dallas criminal justice system, who were against the Black Power Movement and who did not hesitate to criticize every move. For instance, when my son first notified that he was organizing a SNCC chapter in Dallas, the news media immediately jumped in and said that he was not a citizen of Dallas, that he was from Alabama and was here only to cause trouble and the police were shown nightly and daily on the news, on the twelve o'clock news, five o'clock news, six o'clock news, ten o'clock news showin' my son and other SNCC members bein' whisked off to jail after bein' arrested on false pretense, but it was a great struggle and I would do it again, and I'd like to say thank you to all those wonderful people who fell in line, all the beautiful women and men of Dallas and Texas, to the many, many organizations that were behind us like the ah, Christian movement, like the Dallas Black Women's United Front—I got lost there.

AW: You did good, Granny. I have another question. You mentioned that the news media and the local city government really squelched whatever could possibly be recorded or remembered about the Civil Rights/Black Power Movements in Dallas. Why do you think that the government in Dallas succeeded and the media succeeded in squelching that? Because I look at, you know, other cities up north and other cities in the southeast and their record has been, at least, broadcast—not necessarily sayin' that this particular study wants to broadcast it, but we do wanna put it there because the youth

don't know that we did have a Civil Rights Movement. Some people in Dallas don't even know; older people in Dallas don't even know. So, excuse me for sayin' that mouthful, back to the original question, why did the government and news media succeed in really not publicizin' in comparison to other places where it was on television quite often.

MM: I think Dallas was very proud of it's position in the world of bein' the most segregated city in the United States, of bein' a place where a president was assassinated, of bein' a place where a lot of hate was espoused through the news media and through action by elected officials from the Klan in the early 1920s through the Civil Rights Movement. They fought to keep these efforts undercover so as not to have a history for Dallas of bein' a Civil Rights Movement, but there is evidence and there are books bein' written, which will highlight these—books that should have been written before now will highlight these events to show young people and older people, too that there was an effort in Dallas and there continues to be an effort in Dallas to ensure that the Civil Rights Movement stays in place and finds a solution to the problems of minority people.

AW: Anything else you want to add to that?

MM: Maybe I'd like to mention that they had a Chicano Movement. During the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas, it was not only a Black Civil Rights Movement, there were whites involved, many whites involved with us on our side and there was a Chicano Movement, which we treasured very greatly that they had many misfortunes in Dallas, the Mexican Americans, and they had a right to be ah, incensed about the injustices that their people had received. For instance, there was a young man in Dallas who was assassinated by the police through a Russian roulette game one day. (Raises finger, trying to remember the boy's name)

AW: Santos. What was his last name?

MM: Santos Rodriguez, a young man who the police arrested in the barrio and was held in the car at night and questioned about robberies and such with threats of Russian roulette game played with him and he was shot and the Black community quickly embraced the Chicano Movement, which we were a part of and we worked together on many issues. I know at the same time, a young Black guy was killed at Roseland Homes, a young man named Whitehead. He was killed by the police there and the Mexican American Movement joined us in givin' us support and we walked with them in demonstrations when Caesar Chavez was here. We joined in the movement and marched with them and ah...

AW: Would you shed some light on your involvement in the Civil Rights Movement in the sixties?

MM: I became involved in the Dallas Civil Rights Movement through my son, Ernie McMillan who was a member of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, SNCC as it was so called, because of the repression that was brought against him and

against the SNCC members, mainly from the Dallas criminal justice system and the Dallas news media, I decided I would go in there to give them strength, give the members of SNCC strength and to ah, lend my support to them 'cause they needed support. They had little support here in Dallas when they first organized.

AW: So, were you supportive of his efforts at first?

MM: Ah, not from the onset, but ah, as others began to act in uncivil ways towards him, as I stated, through the criminal justice system. He was bein' arrested everyday after he had formed the SNCC chapter here and ah, the police followed him and arrested him everyday. He went to jail everyday on flimsy charges as loiterin', speedin' when he wasn't speedin', ah, and when he was walkin' he was charged with loiterin', and the news media was printing things such as he was not a Dallasite that he was from Alabama and he was here to stir up trouble and because of the arrests and the negative reports the news media was presentin' that's when I became involved, just to give them support, let him know I was with him even though I wasn't on the onset. But, seein' that he was not goin' to change or dropout of the movement that I had not wanted him to get into, I decided to give him support and to work with him.

AW: What year was this?

MM: This was in 1968.

AW: 1968. Could you tell us some of the—I really want you to talk about some of the things that you did in the movement. So, after you became a little bit more understanding of your son's involvement, how did you get involved?

MM: The important thing that I believe was that my family, mainly my children, supported him so much and the people in the community, most of them. And they encouraged me to come along with them. They opened my eyes to a lot of facts that I did not know, especially Ernie. So, therefore, I became involved and soon other forces drew me into it because I began to receive calls from ah, cities all over the United States, people askin' me to come and speak to talk about the repression shown here in Dallas about the police brutality. So, that's when I began to travel and really became a part of the Civil Rights Movement myself and for years I worked that way goin' out of town at least once a week, for a whole weekend at times to attend rallies and organize rallies. I was mainly an organizer and as our group grew, we brought in other women and men, but it was important to have women so that they could organize together and we formed the Black Women's United Front.

AW: What year was that?

MM: That was in 1969 I believe and had some wonderful women like Diane Ragsdale, Carol Freeman, and Joy Long, so many other wonderful revolutionary women in there and as a member of the Black Women's United Front, we noticed the plight of families in Dallas, many of them were hungry and didn't have enough means to support themselves.

So one thing that we figured we could do was to form a food co-op and we did that and the Black Women's United Front food co-op and ordered food and paid for it and then supplied it to families who needed it. We ventured into many areas, workin' and supportin' other organizations who were in the struggle with us who had united with us like NOW the National Organization of Women and ah, also by joining the anti-war movement and also the ah, we formed the anti-death penalty. That was because of the so-called punishment of people in America, mainly Black men who were receiving the death penalty and we were totally against that. We formed the anti-death penalty. We also formed the Anti-Ku Klux Klan Organization and went to various cities to support other organizations who were involved in the same entity. We were kept busy. We formed another organization against apartheid knowing that apartheid was practiced here in America as it was in Africa. So, we formed a whew...I can't even think right now. I was kept busy travelin' and organizin'. I think our main thrust was against the prison system, the Texas prison system. We organized the People United for Justice for Prisoners and I believe that was the main area which we where involved because so many people where in prison. So many families were in such dilemmas because their loved ones were in prison and we formed steps for which to help people get out of prison.

AW: And what year was that, Granny?

MM: Ah, we had ah, like ten steps. I can't remember what order, but I knew the first was to write a letter to Judge William Justice who was a regional, district judge and stationed in Tyler, Texas and that was the first step to write him and let him know why your loved on was in prison and the charges about the trial everything and the support he had at home and give details of that person's life and show him what a great citizen he had been and how he was in prison unjustly and we helped many people to get out of prison. And I was extremely prod, especially when the younger ones were released. I know it was...my phone kept ringin'. Each day when I walked in my door from work my phone was ringin'. Someone was wonderin', "Would you please help me get my son outta prison?" or "Help get him out of solitary confinement?" And that was a wonderful feelin' 'cause we accomplished much doin' that. I remember one woman called me one day, she said, "I went to a meetin' to talk about my son who was in prison. He's very young, had just got outta high school and he had saved his money, gotten a job, saved his money and purchased a car. When he received his car and paid for the car, he didn't have any tires and bein' anxious to get in that car, he stole tires and was arrested immediately and havin' no offense ever against him prior to that, he was tried and sentenced to several years down in Huntsville, Texas in the prison system." And she was afraid that he would become a criminal, bein' so young and goin' to prison the society that people who were there in prison like him. I gave her our ten steps and didn't hear from her anymore until, I guess, about five years later when there was a episode in Dallas. A event where a senior, elder man was killed by the police while sittin' on the porch of the retirement home where he was livin' and we were rallyin' for him and she came to me and said, "I heard someone say Mrs. McMillan. Are you Eva McMillan?" I said, "Yes." She said, "I've never met you. I called you," and she told me what she had called me for and I remembered and I said, "How is your son?" She said, "I followed your steps you gave me and he came out of prison in no time and you told me to make sure he had a job. I did

that. I followed your instructions and now he's settled down, married and even has children and he goes to church and he's just a lovely husband and a good son and that little incident in the past was the only thing that was against him and I am so thankful that I met the People United for Justice for Prisoners so that I could see that my son was released from prison and I thank you." We formed many other organizations and mainly, we ah, answered other people's call to come to their help. I remember once that the lawyers of Mississippi called and asked that we and organizations that supported us, come to Tupelo, Mississippi to protest against the Klan. The Klan were really active in the city and no one had been able to curtail them. So, we went there and rallied for them and met people from all over the United States, even some international people had come for it and dignitaries. We ah, were attacked by the Klan once we attempted to leave the city. So, it became a non-eventful situation because we were attacked so often by people who were against the people who were fighting for the rights of others. But, we ah, worked and we enjoyed our work. We put everything we had into it and hopefully, we helped people and changed lives.

AW: What year did you start the prison...the Justice for Prisoners organization?

MM: I think it was around 1969. Earlier we had formed the United Defense for Political Prisoners, but my son was in prison at that time and he wrote and told me don't do that. Most people in prison are not political prisoners. So organize a group for all prisoners. That's when we formed People United for Justice for Prisoners. That was really a good step and we helped more people that way.

AW: I really want you also to talk about—this is kinda goin' back to something you were sayin' at the beginning. In what way—I'm tryna think of a good way to put this question. You say that you were one of the first mothers to really begin to help the young people who were in SNCC, in what way did you help their families kind of understand what was going on and kinda bring them to the side of the movement?

MM: Well, we held meetins, I imagine, about once a week and they were always notified and we formed some type of transportation. First, cars goin' out and eventually Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson secured a bus and we would get the writers to take the trip to the various prisons in Texas, chargin' them a small fee and we would drive down on a Saturday morning or a Sunday morning and take them and take them to the prison and then comin' back for them we'd have a routine trip. By them bein' able to visit their loved one and comin' to our meetins and we would have speakers to talk about poor people and how mainly poor people and Black people were in prison and to understand all the time when your son or daughter is in prison, it's no that they are guilty, it's because of the repression that went on in Texas through the Texas Department of Justice and the Texas prison system headed by Mr. Estell.

AW: Can you tell us when your son was involved in SNCC? Can you tell us how you—you remember you weren't involved that much or you were against him being involved. How did you get other mothers, like yourself, to become more involved? Or were they involved?

MM: I had alotta faith in Ernie and I really believed in him, but I feared for his life because when he told me he wanted to organize a SNCC chapter in Dallas, I said, “You know Dallas, Texas, you could go to jail or prison.” He said, “I understand that.” I said, “You could be killed.” He said, “I understand that, but I have to take that chance,” and while I tried to talk him out of I was not able, but I have all my life studied the prison system, read about them, and felt for those people who were in prison and understand what drives people to end up in prison. I had a pretty good knowledge of why people went to prison and who went to prison and the injustice through it all and mainly how Black people and poor people are the first person hired on a job—I’m sorry, last person hired on the job and the first person fired and how at times they don’t have money to put food on the table, they go out and rob someone, which is wrong, but events bring those situations on. And I understood pretty well the situation of the justice department in Texas and the plight of the people and families and lived in old Freedman’s Town and there were people there who I knew went to prison. People who were strugglin’ everyday to make a livin’ to get by. Eventually, as I stated I came around to support my son. I always knew he was right, but I just feared for his life, but when I began to give him support and I found myself havin’ support from all over the country. It gave me more initiative to go out and fight for anybody who needed help. So, that was our job in those days. We formed various organizations like ah...

AW: You named some of them. You named quite a few.

MM: Yeah, I have a bunch of them, I should have brought some notes.

AW: I wanted to ask you about some of the places that you guys organized, whether they were in Dallas or out of the state. Like, what were some of the places you might meet and what were some of the places that you might, ah, hold rallies and things like that?

MM: In Dallas, we pretty often went to the Mount Olive Lutheran Church on Martin Luther King Boulevard where Reverend Herbener was the pastor there. He made us welcomed at all times and, by the way, he was a white man. He made us welcomed in his church and we held our meetings there and sometimes we would go to Martin Luther King Center to have meetings and rallies and sales. Sometimes we would have sales and auctions. Different people would bring different things and we would auction off things to raise money for people or so we would be able to travel or be able to charter a bus to got to Atlanta or maybe Washington, DC to protest. And ah, we organized also in ah, other cities. I became a board member to Operation Freedom in Memphis and became a board member to SCEF, the Southern Conference Educational Fund, which was located at that time in Louisville, Kentucky. It is an organization that’d been formed in the 1930s by people who worked close to president’s wife, Eleanor Roosevelt and at that time they were tryin’ to get laws passed where the people could receive social security or old age pension. That was how SCEF was organized, but these people, once they obtained these things, the social security and everything else, that was all they needed and many of them left, but people needed more support and help. So, when we would go into various cities, we would join in with the local people and rallies helpin’ the people to understand just as

they did when they came here to Dallas. We would also go to cities to visit with people who were incarcerated and throughout Texas and Dallas. We would go to Austin to, to Huntsville where the headquarters for CURE, an organization to help people in prison and work with them and organized them, whew. So, we formed an anti-death penalty organization in Dallas and then it became a statewide organization and we really had some great people workin' for us, lawyers here in Dallas and ah, young state representative. I can't think of his name, from Houston who was killed in the airplane crash...

AW: Mickey Leland?

MM: Yeah, uh huh...worked with Mickey Leland, worked with Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson and several other people who ah, were so vital in our struggle. We wouldn't have gotten very far without some of those people who were elected officials.

AW: Can you tell us—going back to the late sixties—tell us how you got the name Mama Mack.

MM: Oh in Dallas, ah, all the young people kinda came close to me and ah, they were very sweet and kind and I was very loving to them. I guess they felt like a substitute mother. It didn't start from them. It started from a cowboy named Frank Clark the great Dallas Cowboy. Frank Clark attended our meeting quite often and he would call me Mama Mack and soon it became a common name for me and wherever I go I could hear people callin' me, "Mama Mack! Mama Mack!" And it's still bein' used today. Even today, I have...I know when I'm out somewhere and I hear some on holler, "Mama Mack!" I know it's probably someone in my past who worked in a Civil Rights organization with me, people like Peter Johnson, he really was a good close friend, too.

AW: Ah, can you tell us about the police and infiltration?

MM: Oh yes, that was a real weird part. We had ah, even SNCC there were people in SNCC who we were leery of 'cause we felt by their action and coincidence of things that would happen that they might be police informants and we indeed found out that several of them were, Black people. I don't remember any white people in there, but I'm sure there were because we had worked as closely with them as we did the Black people. But, each organization had set-up to be their stoolies and even our phones were tapped. I remember once that I made a phone call and a day later, I picked up my phone and I heard that same call repeated and that got to be a common thing. And when people would come to my house sometime and use my phone, I could always hear their conversation later. And ah, it was curious to me that a lot of times when I would hear this, I would look outside and see a truck of business people, I won't call their names, with their name on the truck, and I think they were doing the recording and they had a place in the building where we lived on the other side where they could have an office or whatever. It was commonplace to be wire tapped, but it was a strange thing that so many people had the police to come to their house or follow them, but no police never bothered me and I used to wonder why. Then I learned they probably were afraid of me 'cause I

was so outspoken and they targeted my children. I know my daughter Katherine was in college and she needed some work to earn money so she applied for a babysitting job. Then one day she went to her house and she had a message and said to call a certain and she figured he needed her to babysit. So, happily she dialed the number and when she said, "This is Katherine McMillan" and he said, "Katherine, where is Ernie?" She said, "I don't know and if I did, I wouldn't tell you" and then she hung up. It was pretty awful that when I would go to work sometime and I'd leave my children at home, they said that someone would ring the doorbell and they would peak out and see someone who was evidently a police or an agent there wantin' to come in, but they knew not to open the door. But they never would bother me and I would call them and say to them, "Do not call my daughters and do not have anything to them. If you want to talk about Ernie, call me!" And I dared them to call me, but they never called me.

AW: Can you tell us about certain programs that you all set up? You talked about the Texas prisoners and the prison organization, but can you tell us about some of those programs that SNCC was integral in supporting and promoting?

MM: Well, we were involved in many programs and many organizations, as I said, the Black Women's United Front, the anti-apartheid and anti-Klan and several others. And ah, we always made people feel welcomed to join us and that was the main issue, to get more people involved in the Civil Rights Movement and we were pretty fortunate. We had some wonderful people workin' with us in the Civil Rights Movement and who ah, traveled with us when we had to travel, who were right there when we needed help who we could call on, just everyday people. And we loved these people and thanked them and they were grateful to us. I remember several of them sayin', "We didn't understand what was goin' on in the world until we became involved in this organization that was SNCC or Black Women's United Front or the anti-apartheid or whatever.

AW: Can you give us the rough dates for the anti-apartheid organization?

MM: It was probably the late sixties, early seventies. I can't really remember. We organized shortly after the movement in South Africa, because as I stated, we were going through apartheid, too in Dallas, Texas.

AW: Can you tell us about—I have heard and I have read about the strike at the welfare office. Were you involved in that?

MM: No, I wasn't, but that was the early days of SNCC, before I became involved. But Ernie was involved and the leader of that group was a woman named Ruth Jefferson.

AW: Tell us about her.

MM: She made quite a name for herself. She was a born leader and a outspoken person and she led the group of women to take over the welfare office here in Dallas and they occupied it for several days.

AW: Now how did she go about organizing those women?

MM: Mainly as we do. As I said, she was a born organizer, so she would go places and talk to people, call people and invite them to meetings and just hold various programs and people just came to her and worked with her. They had some wonderful mothers, very poor mothers who were very much involved with her and who did a lot of good for the poor women.

AW: What were some of the things that they were looking to accomplish by taking over the office?

MM: One thing they wanted to accomplish was more pay for the welfare mother and a lenient policy towards them because the welfare office was so strict. They would come into your house and snoop around and watch over you and I was told they were treated very poorly in a very uncivilized way because they were poor and Black and there was no respect shown towards them and they just wanted rights to be able to live their lives, to raise their children, and to ah, get more money for their efforts because they were in a bad situation. In the first place, childcare was so expensive, they could not afford childcare to go out and get a job had they gotten a job with two or three children, their whole salary would have gone to child care. So they were more or less forced into accepting welfare, which was pretty much a system that was degrading to women, which was very sad when they could be given rights and trained for jobs.

AW: Can you tell us what were some of the triumphs to come out of that incident?

MM: Oh, I'm sorry I don't know right now. I know it was a struggle and they were still strugglin' after the takeover.

AW: Can you tell us about ah—well I have a few more questions to ask you—but I would like you to tell us some of the positions you held in some of the organizations that you named that you were a member of.

MM: The first organization was People United for Justice for Prisoners and I was elected president of that for a while and my good friend, Eva Johnson was the treasurer and we had Kweis Williams workin' closely with us, Ernie McMillan and all of SNCC worked closely with us and we would hold rallies to raise money. Also, we had dinners and programs to make the community aware of what was goin' on. That was the main thing because the news media printed such lies about what this organization was doin' and who those people were. So, we would, in forming these, in having these dinners, and invitin' these people to come, and allowin' the media to come in if they wanted to. So it was very helpful in our struggle.

AW: Can you tell us about—I remember you tellin' me about the time that you and so many others of the Black community helped SNCC evade a riot that was gonna be started by the police. Can you tell us why they were meeting first and then what happened after? Why was SNCC meeting?

MM: SNCC was holding a regular meeting. I never attend—yeah I attended a few meetings, but they were holdin’ a regular meeting among SNCC members at that time in West Dallas.

AW: Where in West Dallas?

MM: Ah, at some kinda community center in West Dallas and ah, I was at home with my two daughters and the phone rang and one of the SNCC members said, “Mama Mack, the police had surrounded the buildin’ where we are meeting. We don’t know what to do. We’re afraid to go out. What are they gonna do? Shoot us? Arrest us or what?” I said, “Do not go out. Stay in there until you hear from me again.” So, I immediately got on the phone and called the police department in Dallas, sheriff’s department and all and said to them, “If you’re in on this, leave there right away because if you listen to the Kerner Report, you understand that the Kerner Report says riots are caused by the police’s involvement in it. They get in there and set-up situations and anger the people and their retaliation, it ends up a riot.” And I called every organization I could think of, every police or sheriff’s department and even called Washington, DC and I was on the phone a while and then I thought and I hung up the phone and I told my two daughters to go to the houses next door and call everyone they could think of in the city to let them know the police surrounded SNCC. And then I began to call ministers and ah, people who were involved in the Civil Rights Movement and then I remembered about the professors at SMU, the theology professors. They had been so kind to us. They had helped us raised money and made shirts for us to sell with Ernie’s picture on it and they had done so many great things for us. And also there was an underground newspaper who had printed stories favorable for SNCC, the only true stories that had gotten out to the press concerning what SNCC was and what SNCC was for. And ah, I called all these people so they could know and so they could publicize the fact, but nothin’ happened. These people started callin’ other people. Then people started callin’ me, some of these people who I hadn’t reached sayin’, “Ms. McMillan, SNCC’s in trouble. The police have encircled SNCC in West Dallas.” I said, “Okay, thank you.” And ah, we really got the word out and that brought a lot of people close to us when they understood that the police might cause a riot in Dallas and people might be killed and they would lay it on SNCC and Black people. So, that’s why it affected so many people and why so many people came to our call and many of them began to come to our meetings and some even called meetings of their own. I remember one man named Ed Washington, he called me and he said, “We’re holdin’ a meetin’ at the YMCA on Ross Avenue in far North Dallas and we would wish you’d come and bring your daughters ‘cause we wanna talk about Ernie and SNCC,” and those people said, “We want to help you.” So we went to go get help then. Ah, in spite of the word that the news media put out, in spite of the pictures on the six o’clock news and the ten o’clock news showin’ SNCC members bein’ handcuffed and taken to jail, with the news media sayin’ that, “These people are criminals,” tryna prove that they were criminals when they were just arrested because the police knew they were SNCC members and were taken to jail everyday. But, that was a false picture bein’ generated and it affected alotta people in a negative way because many people would call me and say, “Why are you workin’ with these people? These people are bad. They’re

goin' to jail. They must be bad if they goin' to jail." So, we kinda had to help people understand and we learned from them and they learned from us. So, in the end, we had good friends. People understood SNCC. People understood Black people better and we were, by this time we had gotten really revolutionary. We had cut our hair and we were wearin' afros then and wearin' afro-styled clothes and goin' to court in afro-styled clothes we went through many a phase. At one point, my daughter Jackie, she looked so much like Angela Davis that the police started followin' her and Angela Davis was at-large. She had escaped the authorities and they were searchin' for her and I remember walkin' downtown with Jackie on several occasions and people lookin' sayin', "Angela Davis!" I could see their mouths workin' and their eye open wide. "Angela Davis!"

AW: Can you ah, can you tell us about how the media and the government here in Dallas really put a pause on the recording of the history.

MM: Well, you know the news media is always lookin' for something sensational and the police department wanted to make it miserable for SNCC members because immediately, when they found SNCC had organized here, they wanted to portray them as really evil people. So, that was the police department's role and the news people's was to report 'em. So, hand-in-hand they were a lovely couple.

AW: In what way did—if you know—did they not talk about what happened because you know we see footage of Selma and various places in Mississippi, Alabama, but we never really see footage from here and I wanted to know what brought that about.

MM: Oh, there are footages, but you have to look around for them. On a few occasions there was information sent out, like I say, not so much by the *Dallas Morning News* or the *Dallas Times Herald*, which were the two dailies at that time, but other papers—underground newspapers and local papers, mainly Black newspapers—would carry those things and ah, of course, Ernie was convicted of destruction of private property over fifty dollars, a felony. SNCC picketed a local store that was robbin' the community. They were sellin' rotten food to the community at inflated prices and not hirin' any Blacks to work in the store, other than maybe the janitor. And ah, the news media jumped on that wagon and even went to the trial when their trial was bein' held. It was negative, too what came out of the trial. The news media printed the prosecutin' attorney's style.

AW: Can you tell us what that day was like and what led up to that day?

MM: The community in South Dallas, where one of the OK Supermarkets was stationed. By the way, there were about ten OK Supermarkets in Dallas and all of them were in the poorest communities. And on the days when the women would receive their welfare check and when the elderly would receive their checks the prices would go up. They were treated so poorly that the people in the community decided they would do something about it. So they held a meeting and they called SNCC and asked SNCC to support them with a picket of the store. And I went to the meeting where the picket was organized. It was organized at Reverend Hunter's Church and was for SNCC, the community, and others who wanted to help and it was reported about these conditions at

the supermarket. So, SNCC decided to go there and ask the supermarket to change their ways, to lower the prices—first buyin’ more quality food and they didn’t do it. So that’s when SNCC decided to picket the store. So they organized the picket and one young man there was from California and he said that he had been involved in pickets in California many times and they did internal pickets. Where usually people march outside of a store, with signs, in California, they would go in the store and get carts and load them up with food and leave without payin’ for it. They’d find an excuse. So, here in Dallas it was said that the day they decided to have the picket, the young men and women went in. They each filled a cart to the level with a lot of small items, too and they let the store authorities there know that they were protesting the sell of goods, the way they treated the community, especially their customers. They would fill their carts and for instance, one woman would drive up to the counter and she would say, “Oh, look at that clock! It says five o’clock. I promised my babysitter I’d be back” and she just walked outta the store and leave the cart there. The next person would stand there then he would say, “I’m late to work” and he would run off and leave his cart. The next person might get his food tallied and then reach for his checkbook and said, “Oh, I left my checkbook at home! I’ll have to go get it” and he’d depart. So, as a result, the store was full of carts of food that the employees at the store would have to replace back like frozen foods, small food, a package of noodles and whatever. And ah, some of the people in the community got really excited and somebody dropped a watermelon and broke it. Somebody dropped a bottle of prune juice and broke it. About three items were broken and ah, the people at OK Supermarket did not complain. I guess they were a little afraid of what was gonna happen. But, in a day or so, the police department filed charges against SNCC, chargin’ Ernie McMillan, my son and the second man in lead in SNCC ah, Johnson. They were charged and tried and given ten years each. At the same time, it is said that somewhere in far North Dallas, that a group of white kids with nothin’ to do, no jobs, with plenty of energy and time to kill went into a grocery store and decided that they would smash up the grocery store and they had done worse then SNCC had done and they were slapped on the hand and the parents told to pay for the damage. But they didn’t receive ten years in prison as Ernie and Matthew Johnson had done. So that showed right there that that was a racist situation.

AW: Where you there that day?

MM: No, I wasn’t there; I was at work.

AW: Could you just shed some light about, I guess, how your thought changed over time. Like you talked about how you were not involved and then you became involved. How did your consciousness continue to grow over the years?

MM: Oh, I think I was there already. I just didn’t have any action. You see, I had a father, a grandfather, and brother who were community activist and we’d sit around and talk about the situation. The only reason I was hesitant about my son was because I did not want him to go to prison or become killed and he did go to prison for his efforts. That’s what I did want to prevent. My son, after he went to prison, he told me he learned all his strategy and what was wrong with the world from listenin’ to the debates that

family and friends would have. I told him he put some things in our mind, he made us grow. He told us, “You made me grow.” One instance I remember is when SNCC was bein’ treated so badly and I had a sister named Faye Wells, who had moved to California, and Faye was lookin’ for work. She couldn’t find a job. Finally someone recommended her to work at the house of this wealthy Jewish woman. She was a concert pianist and Faye went there as a cook. And the lady was interested in her, she said, “Where are you from.” She said, “Dallas” and she said, “Tell me about the political situation in Dallas.” So, Faye explained to her what was goin’ on in Dallas, about the people, mainly in SNCC, and that her nephew had gone to prison behind his work. So, she said, “Well, I’m going to tell my friend Ruby Dee, the famous actress.” Well, Ruby Dee was the wife of Ossie Davis and at that time, Ossie Davis was in New Orleans filmin’ a movie, one of his famous movies and when the pianist informed Ruby about what was goin’ on in Dallas, she called Ossie Davis in New Orleans and said, “Honey, go to Dallas. Dallas SNCC is in trouble.” So, he immediately dropped everything he was doin’ and he came that weekend and stayed in Dallas.

AW: What year was that, Granny?

MM: I have the pictures over there. I don’t know. ‘70 probably, ’70, but ah, Ossie Davis came here and he really turned the town around because the African Americans respect Ossie Davis so well. And ah, when it was announced that he would be here, he sealed Warren Avenue United Methodist Church full and Ossie Davis delivered a sermon. He delivered a wonderful sermon. He portrayed an old slave preacher. He would stand in the pulpit, watchin’ and makin’ sure that no whites were comin’ on to listenin’ at him. He was tellin’ the slaves how to be revolutionary and how to, you know, kill the master, or whatever and when he would see white people in the church he would say, “Obey your massa! Work hard! ‘Cause yo’ massa is good to you.” So Ossie Davis really...really—the people looked to Ossie Davis and said, “If he can come to Dallas and pull for SNCC and give SNCC a good hand, we in Dallas should do that, too.” So we gained a lot of friends from that, and by the way, a few months ago, Ruby Dee was here at the Black Academy of Arts and Letters and I took her a copy of the news report—a picture of Ossie and me when he was here that time.

AW: And what did she say?

MM: Oh, she loved it. She handed it to her granddaughter and told her to put it somewhere and hold it.

AW: Anything else you think I should know? I know you have plenty.

MM: Oh, I would like to say that it was a wonderful experience that I can never forget and, God, it taught me to grow—bein’ involved in the Civil Rights Movement and havin’ a son in prison because I had to live with that terrible thing. I my life I had heard about prisons like Leavenworth, Sing-Sing, Attica, and Soledad and all those terrible places and I never thought I’d have a loved one in one, but then because my son decided not to be drafted to go and fight in Viet Nam, where he felt he had no enemies there. He had never

had a struggle against the Vietnamese people or they with him and he said, "I want to stay here with the people in America and get them straight." So, he refused to be drafted...he didn't refuse to be drafted, he had planned to refuse to be drafted, but by the time the draft board ordered him to appear before them, he was in jail, havin' been picked up by the Dallas police department, which was a daily occurrence, and he could not report. So, the government filed charges on him as a failure to appear before the draft board. Ah, so he was given ten years and then the judge called another hearing and he cut it in half and gave him five years. So, ah Ernie was sent to Leavenworth on that charge, but he only stayed there about three years. He was given ten and the person in charge of him, the person, his advisor—I don't know what you call him...someone, a caseworker. Caseworked was talkin' to him one day. He said to Ernie, "You are a political prisoner," and he recommended that Ernie be released. And so, Ernie was released after a long struggle with the Texas authorities 'cause we tried to avoid him from goin' to a Texas prison. The people of Kansas, where Leavenworth was located, we had met with them here in Dallas at the...when SCLC had met here and they had said, I had told...someone had introduced Ernie's wife Felicia and me and they presented us with tickets to fly out to Leavenworth and visit Ernie. These Baptist ministers got up and said, "When you get to Kansas, here is my phone number. You don't have to go to a hotel. You can stay at my house" and we got to know them and he said, "When Ernie gets outta prison, we'll accept him here so he won't have to go back to Texas. We have a job for him and a committee with all these Baptist ministers and we'll get him released to us." So, that was goin' through smoothly and just as Ernie was about to be released to the Baptist ministers, Texas showed up and fought it and we fought them for the longest and Texas won and Ernie was sent to Texas Department of Correction where he...it was even worse there than it was...

AW: Which prison?

MM: He went to the Huntsville at the main prison at first and then they sent him...he began to organize and when the authorities there saw that he was organizin', that angered them. So, they sent him to a prison farm in Angleton, Texas where he could pick and chop cotton. So, he was sent there and on Father's Day in 1974 I believe, on a Sunday when we were supposed to visit, 'cause we would always visit. We could only visit every other weekend, Saturday or Sunday and we never failed because what we had learned and what we tried to preach to the people who have family members in prison was, "Never miss a visit because once they think you don't care, they treat them anyway. So, we were there every other week to support Ernie and we would pass out literature while we were there. We would go into the yard and say, "People United for Justice for Prisoners have ten points. Call us. This is our number" and people began to call us and wait for us and when people would come to visit their loved ones they would say, "Would you help me?" So, we just found more wonderful friends and I remember on one occasion when a lady came up to me and said, "Would you please help me? My son is in solitary." She said, "We're from El Paso and we drove all the way down here, my husband and I, and they won't let us see him because he's in solitary. So please help us to see him." So, I said, "Well I'll try; I don't know what I can do," but I went inside and I said, "I need to speak to the warden." They said, "He's not in. He won't be in today;

he's outta town." I said, "Well, I'll go before the joint committee of prison reform, maybe they'll help me." Now, they feared the joint committee on prison reform 'cause that was the legislative committee in the Texas House and ah, Eddie Bernice Johnson was one and Mickey Leland was a member and it was a joint committee of democrats, of republicans, of whites, Blacks, Mexican Americans. It was really a wonderful committee that changed things in Texas Department of Corrections. We called it TDC and ah, they made things so much better for the inmates. So, when Ernie, on this day, this Father's Day when authorities came to—oh, lemme start here—when Ernie and his friends, cellmate, looked out the window that morning and saw Angleton police cars all around, and they saw people with canisters in their hands, gas canisters. So, they said, "Something's goin' down. They gone make us go to work today." So, Ernie said, "I'm not goin'." So several went, but a few people said, "I'm not goin' if Mack's not goin'." And one man, he was an older man, about fifty, he had a heart condition, and he had planned to go, but he was so sick that he couldn't go. So, the authorities called out. They used psychology. They always, when they were gonna do wrong they'd call out the honor group. The honor group, these were prisoners, you know, who would do anything they say. "Fall out! March to the field." So, they'd go. "Second honor group, march to the field!" Then they called, "Cell so-and-so, march to the field!" Well, when they had finished callin', ten people had refused, hadn't gone. One of 'em was Ernie, eight more inmates and then the sick man. So, what the authorities did was to put them in solitary confinement and ah, I didn't know what was goin' on, naturally and somebody in the prison decided to let me know and about Tuesday or Wednesday. I said, "Whose handwritin' is this?" It had my name on the front and Ernie McMillan's name at the top as the returning, but it wasn't Ernie's writin'. I said, "This is not from Ernie. What's goin' on?" I opened it and it said, *Dear mother, oh that was terrible what happened on Illinois last night, Sunday night.* Illinois Street was the street I lived on at that time in Oak Cliff. So, I knew it was a message. So, I said, somethin's goin' on down in TDC. So, I called this lawyer named Miss Cruise. Her husband was an inmate in one of the prisons, too. He was a writ writer. And he kept the authorities busy writin' the state and he was always in court tryna help the inmates and so, Miss Cruise and he married. So, I had called her and asked her to go down to Texas Department of Corrections at the unit, retrieve unit in Angleton to see Ernie and she said she would, but she needed a reason to go because they just wouldn't let her in on her say so. So, I sent her a telegram. I said, "Go to see Ernie McMillan and ask how you can help him" or something to that effect. She went there and at first they didn't want to let her in, but she was determined. She was like her husband, determined and they finally let her in. So, Ernie told her what had happened and asked her to file a lawsuit against the state of Texas and Mister Estell, head of the Texas prisons and thy did. And Ernie, in the meantime, wrote a letter to ah, State Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson. She was a Texas state representative at that time. She is now a United States congresswoman and she was a member of the joint committee. She formed that joint committee behind Ernie's letter and ah, they decided to hold hearings. So, we would, about once a month, we'd go to some town where a prison was to have a hearing on the wrong thing that the authorities were doin' to the inmates and it gained a lot of purpose, but it ended sadly, because one inmate had taken a gun and kidnapped some of the women workers there and that was a good excuse for them to make the joint committee disband.

AW: You think that they did that on purpose?

MM: The guy, the prisoner, he just wasn't politically minded.

AW: Did he do it for the wardens?

MM: He just did it for some selfish reasons.

AW: He did it for the accoutrements?

MM: No, he just did it 'cause he wanted to escape.

AW: Oh, I thought they put him up to it.

MM: No, no. They didn't put him up to it, but he was their dream come true because they used that to say that the joint committee was in error and discontinued it. It was voided. But, it did alotta work there and it gave us courage. We gained so much courage. We would go to the prison. Instead of just leafleting the retrieve unit, every prisoner we passed we would stop and leaflet them and once we came to this prison...I forgot the town. It's a high-security prison. We said, "Let's go down there." We didn't know what we were doin' 'cause that was a terrible thing. We had beer in the car. We had babies, two grandchildren, Ohene and Anyika in the car with us, a group of women and we turned down this lane and went towards this high-security unit. And as we neared, we saw police all up and down the side of the road examinin' cars makin' sure we weren't bringin' any contrabands and people were standin' out a people were holdin' up their arms, searchin' 'em. We said, "Uh oh, how are we gonna do this?" So, the first thing was to throw the beer out. So, we slung the beer down in the ditch. Then, we couldn't turn around, so when we got to the...when the officer came to us, the security there said, "Who are you comin' to see?" I didn't know anybody in there. I said, "Oh, we're lost." He said, "Where you headed?" I told him we were headed to Houston and he said, "Well, did you come out that highway?" "Yes." He said, "Well, you lyin'! Turn around here and get outta here." We turned around and got outta there, but that taught us a lesson: not to go into the high security places. But we still were policin' all the other prisons.

AW: Did you ever find out who wrote you that note that said, *Dear mother*?

MM: No, I never did.

AW: You talked a little bit about what happened at the prison that day, but what happened to the prisoners when they didn't come out that day?

MM: Ah, they were placed in solitary confinement and ah, this was Sunday, Father's Day and Ernie said he wasn't gonna miss seein' his family comin' to see him for anything. The other's said that same thing. And Monday morning, bright and early, several guards lined the walls of the prison where the solitary cells were located with axe

handles with mesh wire wrapped around it and small bats and anything and they opened one cell door and tell that inmate who refused to work to come out and as he'd come out, he'd head to the door to escape they would beat him. Everybody was hittin' on him. And ah, Ernie had learned, bein' a Civil Rights worker in Georgia, they learned how to cover themselves. He knew how to hold his head. Ernie said he did this (Covers her would-be male private parts) and this (Covers her head) And ah, therefore he didn't get hurt too badly, but others got heart pretty badly, especially the heart man and ah, they had to take him to the hospital. But, they had a hearin' on it. The joint committee had a hearin' on it. So, it helped the inmates a lot to know that someone outside cared for them. And Ernie said that when they would bring him...Ernie would be subpoenaed to court in prison once he reached the place to testify at the courthouse, when they drove him back to the prison, they wouldn't let him in. They made him stand outside all night, punishin' him. Anyway, it was exposed and Ernie filed a suit against them and he won the case. His lawyer won the case for him. Ernie McMillan versus Estell. He asked for like \$50,000 for each inmate but they ended up gettin' like \$1,500. It wasn't much, but the principle was that they were right and the authorities had done wrong and they were found guilty and forced to pay them that. So, that was a great move.

AW: Anything else that you would like us to know about?

MM: Oh, there are many things, but I can't think of anything else right now.

Interview Ends

Interview with Marion Ernest “Ernie” McMillan, Jr.

Marion Ernest “Ernie” McMillan, Jr. (EM): (Begins waving his hand as if he is cutting himself off) That’s if I get to talkin’ too much. (Laughs)

Ava Wilson (AW): (Laughs) Okay, so, state your name, again for the camera.

EM: Hi, I’m Ernest McMillan.

AW: Okay and just tell us your role in the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas.

EM: Ah, in Dallas I was a student returning from working in the Civil Rights Movement in the Deep South, I enrolled in Arlington State College, which is now University of Texas at Arlington. So, I was a “student activist.” I was always still loosely connect to the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee and in ah, 1965, I was asked to come back to Americus, Georgia and help participate in demonstrations. So, I left Dallas and went back and participated in demonstrations in Americus, Georgia, which helped lead to the Voting Rights Act. Uh, I never felt really formally separated even though I was living a life as a student in Dallas and running head-on into racism in Dallas and at the school predominately caused me to get more involved with ah, activism on the campus. And following that period of struggle on the campus, I got involved with the draft resistance movement, working in alliance with people from the Southern...from the ah, Students for a Democratic Society, SDS. And that led to me realizing that organizing work really needed to take place in the Black community. And so, I began to reestablish myself in the community working as the organizer for the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee creating a SNCC chapter in Dallas. And so, we’re goin’ go as far as that into the sixties?

AW: Yeah, what year was that?

EM: Ah, ‘67 or let me see...well, let me say this, ‘65, ‘66 was at the university level ‘66 through ‘67 was with the anti-draft movement and in the war—anti-war efforts, and then late ‘66 through ‘69 or early...to ‘69 was when I was organizin’ with SNCC in Dallas.

AW: Okay, and tell us about your time organizing with SNCC in Dallas.

EM: Well, there is an old saying that, “You can not be a prophet in your own hometown,” and I didn’t realize that then. I felt that ah, you know, I loved my community; I knew it and I thought that this was like being in the water so-to-speak and I was a fish and so just natural. Ah and...but the people I ran across and ran into were not really from my past, per say, they were new friends I found, ah, Hispanic, African American, young people from college campuses and what not: Bishop College, El Centro. Not people pretty much from my family...not my family...from my community, my high school, and peers and what-not that I grew up with. And so, it was almost like I was a different person with a new set of relationships and it never, other than from my

family, there was never any connection between my associates from elementary, high school days, and community life in Dallas with the movement life, for the most part.

AW: And why do you think that was?

EM: I don't know. I guess I'm sayin' that to say, I guess it is hard bein' a prophet in your own town. You can't be, you know, because people see you in a certain way. They put you in a box and they don't really think of you otherwise and when I was meeting new people, it was like, "I'm coming to you from a different...I'm a different person than I was in high school..."

AW: They had no frame of reference.

EM: ...Because the experience in the south really helped to change me more than I had helped to change anything, you know. So, I came back as a different person and it was like ah, I may have been a playboy or an athlete or a nerd in somebody's mind in Dallas, but when I was buildin' with SNCC it was something altogether different. Did I answer that?

AW: Uh huh, yeah, you did. I'm looking at my questions and I'm thinking. What would you say were the official years of the search for equality, in whatever form, whether it be Civil Rights or Black Power, in Dallas or any other...Peace Movement?

EM: I would really be troubled to try to segment the movement into one period being more important than the other. I really think that we have a continuous, unbroken line of resistance from the days the first slaves...enslaved people were brought to these shores. And in Texas, it may have been much later for Black people to actually settle here, or be imported here or driven here, so that particular taking root in Dallas was probably in the 1830s. But from 1830 to 1930, it wasn't as if people were sitting on their hind quarters and not doing anything. There was resistance in every fashion from ah, getting up slowly and moving slowly, to burning crops or putting poison in the master's coffee or running away or hurting yourself so you didn't have to work. So, it was all forms of resistance and all of them, we stand on the shoulders of those acts. And so, if it wasn't for that precedence, that predecessing...predecessing? Anyway, our predecessors and the acts they took on, we would be set much further back than we were in the sixties. So, we didn't just come out of an empty void or anything. It was a part of an ongoing line of efforts that was unbroken in our people's history and I think it just took different shapes because the contributions of one led to possibilities for greater contributions in the next period, or different contributions in the next, because it wasn't a smooth, straightforward line of, "We gone build here and then we goin' there." It was twists and turns, we go back some ways and what-not. In fact, ah, I was amazed to learn, for example, that my grandfather, whose father was enslaved, became a doctor in one generation. And during the twenties, when he built the clinic in North Dallas, was the height of the lynching movements in the Deep South. So, how can you explain, you know, a town like Sherman being burned down, which is fifty miles north of Dallas, and Tulsa being crumbled to the ground, and Black soldiers returning from World War I on a...goin' downtown Houston

and killing eighteen police officers because they were oppressing them and harming their community? So, there was just...it wasn't an even struggle is what I'm tryna say. There was ups and downs and different pockets of existence and things. But, Dallas's contribution was relatively quiet compared to other cities like East St. Louis or Harlem and places like that. So, when I was a teenager and in the late fifties and the early, early sixties, ah, there were people like Juanita Craft, who made her contributions. There were attorneys like Bedford and Mason and Bunkley who were fighting on another level to take issues of our Constitutional changes to the courts and people like L. A. Bedford would tell me later on that the times they were strugglin' to create law was times when Black were pretty much most disrespected. So, to have someone to go to college, to become an attorney, to put on a tie and go into a courtroom where so much racism and antagonism stood and oppose him, it's hard to invalidate that experience and say, "Because we took to the streets and did it another way, that ours was greater or more advanced." But we had individual acts. There was one minister, for example, his name is Roosevelt, I want to say Turner, who, one man, went downtown to a restaurant and sat in, you know, and you had so many instances like that and so, I cannot say that the sixties was better, but there was different flavor to it than others. So, I hope I'm answering your question, but Dallas has been, as far as African American struggle, since the early 1820s, 1830s through today has been a wonderful struggle, just taking different forms and manifestin' itself different ways. And the sixties was a particular period because we had won, through struggle and hardship and sacrifice, the right to go to school with others, the right to vote, the right to vote without a poll tax and things like that. So, now the fundamental problems were still there, but the gains we made enabled us to take even bolder or different steps in the struggle. And so, I think that if we were able to zero in on what we could do and say, "What's next?" You know, "If this was done, then what next." And I think today we should ask ourselves that same question. You know, we may have an African American in the White House, but we have an African American president who's leading the war effort in two wars at the same time and bailing out banks when we are not bailing out people who are unemployed, for example. And turning his back to the plight of the people in Honduras whose government was overthrown and yet we rushed in to give him recognition and gave our ambassador to them 'cause they had a fraudulent election that looked like it was democracy again, but it's far from that. Repression is still intense and we're supporting repressive regimes, not only like in Honduras, but other regimes as well. So, the struggle continues and we may have some Black faces in high places, but the movement is far from being won just in terms of electives and laws and supreme court...those struggles still continue, but it's gotta be won by changing customs, attitudes, and attitudes of and mindsets and behaviors on a massive scale. So, we've got a long way to go to reach that point. A luta continua. I didn't answer your question at all about Dallas.

AW: I just asked...you know, that's really good to understand and I think that...

EM: Tryna put it in some kinda context.

AW: No, and it's a good context because a lotta times—all the time—you know, with historians cataloging and recording our history, it can tend to get disjointed and put into

another chronology altogether. So, with you saying, “This is a continuum of our cultural perspective and our experience in American, since we first got here, it’s a lot different than hearing, “Oh, we’re Americans and so, in 1918 this happened because of World War II.” No! This is because we were brought here in chains. This is because we were stolen. So, it’s not, you know, it’s not in that American chronology per say. It is incorporated in that, but it’s not.

EM: We have our own.

AW: Right, it’s our own. So, with that being said, could you tell us, just some strident, you know, I’m trying to understand and put everybody’s interview into it’s perspective point and really note the shifts in thought and the shifts in ah, in different groups coming together. So, I just wanted to know...you came back into Texas and began SNCC in what year? In what year would you say ah, that the movement in that form kinda shifted?

EM: You know, I’ve always been surprised and astonished and just bold over when you would travel from one city and to another and you would see people without any kind of ah, t.v. monitoring media announcements anything, but doin’ the same thing. It was always a wonder for me that you could go to, for example, New York and see people dancin’ a certain way and then you come home and you see people doin’ the same kinda dance, but nobody sat down and said, “Here’s what we’re gonna do y’all, but we’re gonna do this dance like this.” It was just somethin’ electrical, something in the air that gets transmitted. And so, in 1966 when Stokely Carmichael called for Black Power, there was already a shift taking place of a mood or a shift in direction in terms of civil rights versus human rights and we had already lost ah, Malcolm. So there were things goin’ on that people were makin’ some different decisions and comin’ to some different conclusions about what we should do and things were changin’, so we just couldn’t keep the same beat goin’, per say. We had to move forward. So, the question, “What next,” for us in Dallas was, “How do we begin? Where do you start?” And so, one of the first places we started was with cultural gatherings for sharing values and talking about the pride and the contributions of Africa in the world. So, that was one of the starting points and I think some people stayed there and it became groups like US or, or whatever you want to call it. There were different names, but what we called cultural nationalists. Then there were others who were saying, “We just can’t be content with owning dashikis and celebrating our, our heritage inside our homes and in our community buildings, but we need to find a way that our relationship to the police, to the government, to makin’ decisions about politics that affect us everyday needs to be addressed.” So, the whole thing about revolutionary nationalism was the route we took in the SNCC and that was to organize to change the decision-making process, the allocation of power and the accessibility to systems of power and it meant, ah, direct action. It meant working on many levels and tryna come up with ah, strategies that brought a synthesis between election campaigns and legal fights with street action and there was always a tussle between which one was most important, which one was the leader, which one was the say on what-not. Within the revolutionary nationalist movement and internationalist movement, it was felt that—we felt that—of course we should be the head. We were the vanguard or the forefront...that the lawyers and the attorneys and the clerks in the system

should support that, rather than determine that route. And we felt, too, that ah, that, the cultural and educational people should also support that movement. So, the songs, the music, the times of poetry and literature all should be something that propels the direct action, the revolutionary phase of struggle, forward, rather than goin' backwards to...ah, looking backwards only. But lookin'...findin' skills and awareness for sharpening our tools to make changes today in the world. So, the role of SNCC... SNCC...SNCC took was to build allies with other people of color, to organize on a visible front for neighborhood protection against police attack, to put forth ideas and ah, ah thoughts on paper that could be circulated where people can learn about ah, what's happening downtown and what our relationship to it is and what kinda things are goin' on around the world to bring changes and we decided that our main course would be within the African American communities on the streets, so to speak, with the blocks and the neighborhoods, but also on the college campuses and in Dallas, we had Bishop College...was one of those places. There was a small group of African American people at SMU and they had their relationship with some progressive whites that they could align with. So, we had affiliation with students at that campus, and then from the community itself, there were ah, workers, whether it be butchers and ah, ah ex-army veterans and street pimps and drug dealers who were reformin' their ways and seeing the truth about the harm they were causin' their people, began to gravitate a form a new kind of non-traditional relationship: students, workers, what we called "street people," lumpen, proletariat and even allies from the Hispanic and progressive white community began to find and sort out their relationship. And so, we took it to...from our newspaper and from our educational pieces to begin to hold community mass-meetings and began to use those mass-meetings as practicing democracy, rather than the SNCC talkin' to people about, "This is what we need y'all to do. Here's the plan; go do it," and makin' decrees. We took the attitude of what people call today focus groups, where we sat down and we asked people questions and we ah, found out from them what they thought was important and we began to find a process for prioritizing what was kinda number one, two issues that needs to be addressed and so we began to look at economic exploitation as came...as a theme over and over again from the three or four different communities we were workin' in: West Dallas, South Dallas, and Oak Cliff. And then the college campuses, we began to piece together this information and we came up with the need for boycotting ah, stores in the community that was refusin' to hire African American people, mistreating people in, in undignified ways when they shop there, and providing unsanitary conditions for the food they were serving, er...selling, rather. So, we took that route as our...one of the key routes, but it wasn't the only route and we would...relied...relied maybe too much on spontaneity, but one thing I can say today about young people is that we really ah, more instantaneously and about now and doing things then and without any second thoughts about consequences necessarily or aftermaths or having a goal-measurement plan or a goal-attainment plan or "Where are we goin' with phase one?" It wasn't that sophisticated at all, it was, "Let's do it." That was the kinda attitude. So, for example, with the welfare office, we simply went down to the welfare office to see how they were treating people

AW: What year was this?

EM: This was in 1968.

AW: Okay.

EM: And ah, we didn't come outta that buildin' for three days.

AW: Tell us, tell us about um, some of the things that you wanted to accomplish and give, give us the climate of what was existing at that time at the welfare...what the welfare office was doing.

EM: Okay, ah, at that time it was called "Aid to Families with Dependent Children", that was one of the main sources of revenue for people of color who were below the poverty line. I think the War on Poverty had begun under LBJ in sixty-four. We had a little office like Office of Education. I mean I'm sorry OEO, what was that? Office of Equal Opportunity things like that...there were plenty of welfare, not welfare, but plenty of War on Poverty pimps around who were more concerned about makin' there own dollars and the trickle down theory was at work and so we had a system that several Blacks who'd been very vocal and were shakin' the trees to make a difference were being hired to become counselors and vocational therapists or vocational, occupational specialists and forget the struggle. So, it was a, it was a, that was a shift takin' place right under our very noses. And so, we decided that something wasn't working with this War on Poverty program because people were still, you know, getting blocks of cheese that was twenty years old delivered to 'em and being paid quote/unquote eighty-eight dollars a month for a family of four ah, to live on and be suffered...be subject to degrading treatment and instant removal from the welfare roles for any slight subjective infraction. So, we learned those things by visiting...already had some ideas because many of our people have experienced that directly, but actually going to the welfare office and meeting people there and talking about how they were being treated, we couldn't just walk away from that. We decided that we needed to hold up right there—H-O-L-E up—right there in that place and not come out until somebody made some changes. There was a blind gentleman there, for example, who they were denyin' aid for. There was women who were African American and Latino who were being threatened with being cut-off for...of welfare when they were in more need for resources than ever, who were being denied educational opportunities to better themselves. In fact, it was more of an incentive to stay on welfare and sit on your butt and wait for the check every month than to go away. It was more penalizing for you to do so. I think one of the examples we learned was that by taking a job somewhere, you would be...your welfare check would be cut, you know. So, starting from entry-level, working poor-type job sorts of things and having to get transportation and daycare and all that was more expensive than to stay on the welfare role. So, it was a way of just kinda killing the spirit. And so, we found these things out and we decided to stay. And we were very blessed to find people like ah, Ruth Jefferson from West Dallas and many, many other women down there who said, "Look, we wit' you brothas. We glad to see you here." And they made dramatic changes in instants.

AW: Well, tell us what they did.

EM: Some of ‘em would refuse...just stop the...takin’ the pomade or conch or whatever you wanna call it, out of they hair and makin’ afros, you know, and sayin’ they would stay in the office with us. They had their children provided for and they said they would stay with us and make sure their children were safe, could go to school, would have a relative take care of them. So they refused to leave the office. They took a revolutionary stance. They helped us man the phone lines ‘cause we took over the office when the welfare office workers left we were in the building alone by ourself and we had...we used the phones, started callin’ people: the press, legislators, friends, churches, tellin’ them that we were own there and what we’re standing for. People from many churches and many universities—people from SMU and Bishop—would bring us food, they had signs, and formed a picket line around the building that kept the police at bay from attacking us. There were cameras and reporters on hand who were witnesses to our being there. We could tell our story directly to them. We even got some legislators to come down from Austin, to agree to meet with us to work out a compromise so that they would present new legislation to the Texas State Legislature and the senate to life the ceiling for welfare recipients who were with dependent children. So, we went there to learn. We got involved and made new relations and new revelations as well and we left there three or four days later with a new law that raised the welfare limits for people who were on aid, families with dependent children—the welfare laws. So, that was a great victory for us. The police were held at bay. No one was beaten down or thrown out the building or arrested and it was all because the community stepped forward and embraced the movement and celebrated it and gave full support to it that we weren’t separated or ah, ostracized or neutralized by any notions of being outside agitators.

AW: Right. Um, how did you all take over the office? How were you able to physically...

EM: We simply told them that we weren’t leavin’.

AW: Okay.

EM: We weren’t leavin’.

AW: Y’all didn’t have any guns or anything?

EM: No, we had no guns. We were there non-violently, but we weren’t just gonna ah, roll over and kiss they butt either. So, we didn’t make any implies there. We just told them we were not leaving and they left us and they shut the office down and left us inside. I don’t know if that was a order from Austin or a local office for the branch manager’s office or what. I’m sure it went all the way up to Austin, maybe even to the federal government for, “How to handle these wild radicals down here.” But, we simply stayed and, for example, made calls to ah, New Mexico, to ah, Reyes Tijerina who was leading the movement to reclaim the land stolen by the colonialists in New Mexico. He said he would come there and join us if we were ever threatened with an attack and he was gonna come armed with men and women from New Mexico. The Brown Berets in Dallas joined support and marched the picket lines. White students and Black students

from SMU and Bishop College joined us, too. So, there was just responses to this call and just kinda made a stand. We were given food by these people, so we were able to stay there. We had access to the phones and the restrooms and we slept on the floor. Ah, we read poetry. We played songs and we sang and we deep conversations. We had history classes with the twenty, thirty, forty people that were in that room for the three days and we emerged as a new family, so to speak, because from that point forward, we now had a office in West Dallas, where we never had before and that office became known as SNCC West. It also...a chapter of the National Welfare Rights Organization was set up through that. And so, we began to really branch out from that experience.

AW: Where was that SNCC West office located?

EM: It was located in the projects in someone's home. We didn't have a fancy office. So we dedicated...maybe there were two or three houses that were used and some of the brotas like Eddie Harris moved in and ah, one of those apartments and we established a area where people got to know us. We saturated the neighborhood with flyers and leaflets and began patrolling the neighborhood, takin' pictures of policemen as they patrolled...going to the schools, escorting kids to the schools and so forth, and became a part of the neighborhood. It wasn't an office set up somewhere, but we did, thanks to Fred Bell, finally free up a area, I think it was on Singleton. Ah, I think we rented it for like twenty-five dollars a month, or something. A little office where we set up a phone. And so, that became more of an official storefront for us, but our base was really in the community, everyday with the people, day and night.

AW: Now, you being from Dallas, this question might be a little irrelevant, but it still is one that is important to me. I hear you talking about people like Ruth Jefferson and Fred Bell. Those people who kind of emerged as leaders in their own right. How did SNCC allow, or even any movement in the city, how did they allow that organic, you know, native leadership to emerge amongst the people in the various neighborhoods?

EM: Okay, it was not so formal or ah, institutionalized or set up in terms of a process for going from a street volunteer to a official field secretary for SNCC. In the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee in the sixties: '61, '62, '63, '64 there was a real system of that where it was also some conflict for transforming ah, ah, the field secretaries who came from college campuses from the north, west, and east to the south into grassroots-minded people and ah, kinda fusing and merging together with local people and there were some caste or class differences there that we tried to heal and there was a tendency to romanticize the local people and say, "Whatever you guys say is it." You know, without any criticism. But, there was also training through Freedom Schools and, and ah, like the Dorchester Center and the Highlander School that trained people to become leaders in a more systematic way. But, the Freedom Schools in the local community were more like basic education just like History and Civic 101. And so, we had those kinda mechanisms set up from '60 to '64, '65. But when the Black Power Movement came about, ah, in Dallas and the local area, everybody was kinda on your own. Within the Black Panther Party there was a more systematic, military style, recruitment, hierarchal order and division where you graduated and certain criteria needed to go from

one level to the next. In more...in SNCC it was more openly democratic. A person could drive up to tomorrow for the first time and exhibit great leadership skills, could be propelled to the front of the ranks, you know. And that became a problem to because we had a coupla instances where someone could drive up with a big 'fro and a bone in their nose and ah, speakin' some Swahili and have any and everybody enamored by their skills as a Black Power leader, when they really weren't. So, we had some problems like that. And also with agents being in ah, planted in the movement, too. Ah, there was less security there maybe then with the Black Panther Party. So we suffered ah, from being more openly democratic with some chances for intrigue and for undermining that in a, in a easier way than others, perhaps. And so ah, the process though was ah, with Dallas, mine was very unique because nearly everybody in the Dallas SNCC office was Dallas people. There were several, maybe out of the thirty, forty people we had, there may have been four or five that were from other cities and other states that were in town for college purposes, but there was no conflict or no method for bringing about...we had ah, discussions. We utilized certain books that we used as authority for training and we kind of ah, polluted without having a strong bearing on correct literature or literature that really serves growth, we kinda had a laissez-faire attitude about literature. So, there was one book called *The Nigger Bible* that one person brought in from California. It was a rave out there and it became, for many, the basis for theory for their being in the movement, where other people, for example, looked more toward science of Nkrumah, of ah, Sekou Toure, of ah, Marxist-Lenin-Maoism, so we had another strand of more toward Pan-African and Marxist-Leninism. So within our SNCC chapter we had three schools all tryna work as a united front when we should have been a cadre of some sort. So we had the cultural-nationalists; we had the Pan-Africanists, and we had the Marxist-Leninists and there was never a sharp, overt distinction, but it was kinda just kinda subtle and it became sharper and distinct durin' around '69 when people gravitated towards one in terms of their geography, too. So we had one group that was revolutionary that settled in Oak Cliff, another group that was ah, ah, that was more cultural nationalism that gravitated to another group, and another group that was more Panther-oriented that gravitated towards another area. So it became cliquish then and that was probably fed from outside, too with some people being on the payroll to do such by the police or FBI. But, the main problem was internal and that was a lack of clarity and a lack of strong emphasis for learning and discipline-learning, which I think is one of the internal problems that led to ah, you know, promotion of individualism and values and laissez-faire toward knowledge and those kinda things. When I say laissez-faire, I just kinda mean just kinda let people do what they wanna do kinda thing. "It's your thing, do what you gotta do" kinda attitude. So those things led to the demise of SNCC.

AW: You know...

EM: Did I answer your question?

AW: Yes!

EM: Okay.

AW: I was gonna say you said some important things that I was gonna ask you later and I like the way it just kinda came out of your conversation and it's like the strategy um, comparin' the strategy between different organizations and tellin' kinda how ah, one idea birthed maybe a different organization or a different school of thought and things like that. Um...

EM: You know, I think there was a lack of tolerance toward ideas in some fashions. So if you, for example, supported King then you couldn't support Malcolm, and rather than seeing them as a part of a whole, you know, of the whole quest for African American liberation and that these are two sides of the same coin, we kinda saw them as two separate things and it was a way of attacking each other, you know, and not seein' the commonalities and the common denominator in these, in these ideologies or behaviors or strategies. So ah, and it became really sharpened as we go, when you had the FBI, for example, would send letters to the people of US on Black Panther stationary usin' harsh liableist, slanderous language and they would also do the same with US literature and promotion usin' language and foul threats toward the Panthers, which led to shoot outs and harming one another and really just sapping the movement of its real unified energy base, you know. So we fell prey to easy divisions. When I say easy divisions, we were, we were fooled easily and led astray because ego or, or ignorance or feeling insecure and kinda battled each other. And so, I think that's another part of youth, too that ah, came to the forefront we had really segregated ourselves from old school and it was a tendency to where everybody in our previous generation became categorized or stereotyped as bein' Uncle Toms and if you didn't wanna hold a gun in your hand be anti-Booker T. Washington, then you couldn't be a friend of ours. You know what I'm sayin'? So it was basically that. So we were without the fruits of advice and senior wisdom and we pretty much told ourselves, "We're gonna do this ourselves," you know, and really didn't study history and see the connections. So I think that was part of bein' in the shadows of ignorance and bein' so young that we didn't really value the connection of bein' intergenerational. I think intergenerational ah, interactivity is just crucial to ah, building a sustainable movement.

AW: I was gonna ask you was age a factor because of that shift in between organizations. Um, and this is just a side bar, I see that happenin' a lot now. Um, just with my generation and...

EM: We haven't learned? (Laughs)

AW: No, I think it's because we don't have those conversations. We do have intergenerational conversations, but we don't have this conversation. Like, "this is what we did," you know, and I think accepting other people and ideas and beliefs is so hard when you're so young and you feel like, um, "this is the way" and you become indoctrinated in the thought that really becomes central to you, you know, and becomes a part of, basically your core beliefs and being. Especially one that you kind of find on your own, so to speak... kinda becomes very dogmatic. So you're not really tryna hear, not tryna hear anything else. I myself am guilty of that and being (Sacarsm in tone) the

rip old age of twenty-four, tryna come out of that, you know, bein' so one-sided and thinkin' I know what...

EM: I didn't come out of that 'til I was forty. Bless yo' heart!

(Both laugh)

AW: Lord knows I ain't all the way out of it.

EM: I'm still tryna get out of it.

AW: I mean it's a struggle because it's a personal struggle, you know and I think that that's something that gets lost, too in talks about the struggle. Dealin' with self and dealin' with, "Get yo' stuff together before you can help anybody else," but at the same time doin' that and makin' sure the work that you do feeds who you are and it's not just, "I'm doin' this because I have to" or "I'm doin' this because I feel obligated" or "I wanna look like Martin Luther King" or "I wanna be Angela Davis" or "Let me do this" and, you know, be and when it's not innate and when it's not comin' from the heart. Anyway...

EM: Amen.

AW: I wanna shift a little to how people perceived Dallas's movement. I know people always say, you know, especially people who may not be from here who come into Dallas and they wanna say, "What? Where was the movement? There was not riot. There were no shoot-outs that we know of. We don't know about any police brutality happenin', so there was no movement." What do you have to say about that, you know from a current perspective and people asking you that today? And then, and kinda like comparin' it to where you were at that time. What do you have to say about people asking questions like that or havin' that type of disregard?

EM: You know, Dallas is a unique city in a many different ways, but at the same time, it's fundamentally, basically identical to any other large city in many other ways, too. But some of the unique aspects of Dallas is that ah, you know, the economic base was mixed. Ah, it relied on ah, being a non-port city. It was completely land-locked and at the same time, it was a hub for interstate travel and commerce. So you have finance and you had ah, some manufacturing and you had ah oil and aerodynamics kinda leadin' the way, so it wasn't any one event...for example, Birmingham is a all steel city, so to speak. You know, Philadelphia as you say, is some of those same things, or Chicago was pretty much meat-packing, but so Dallas had a diverse base and so you had a business community that was the so-called capitalists of the Chambers of Commerce that were mixed and they came together with a unity around coverin' all those basis. So, Dallas also had a strong service industry and so you had people who were dependent upon a job and welfare for their families by being domestics or waiters or porters, those kinds of things. So you had a large contingency of that. I said all of that to say there wasn't a strong industrialized segment in Dallas that comes face-to-face with organizing unions in

mass ways so the struggles were mainly stemming from church or stemming from legal frameworks. And so our battles took place ah, strongly from the legal perspective. I think it was Dallas attorneys that led the ah, to the desegregation of the University of Texas Law School without a single demonstration takin' place, you know. And it was people at Wylie College that occupied the courthouse in that particular county, lead by James Farmer, and those students who you read about in the *Great Debaters* who ah, led the movement for confronting the system. And so, Texas has it's own way of contributing to the struggle and while it may not have been highly visible and dramatic, in a sense, there was a a, unbroken thread of resistance throughout and I talked about Roosevelt Johnson demonstrating and Juanita Craft. We also had desegregating...Blacks and whites desegregating restaurants in Highland Park, which I just found out about recently and ending the "Negro Day" at the State Fair was done not just willingly either...and it was ah...so Dallas, in a lot of ways also profited from other area's efforts to desegregate. It was the struggles in Nashville, Tennessee, in Birmingham, Alabama, and Albany, Georgia, and Memphis, Tennessee that lead to Dallas adopting a desegregation plan for the whole city...and in those cities you had thousands of kids locked up, for example in Birmingham and Nashville, but Dallas was saying, "We cannot let...we can't...business must go on as usual. So we cannot let this happen." So they immediately had an accommodation-type mentality to work out a way of orderly desegregating the city from A, B, C, D. Even the schools were desegregated first grade in this year, second grade will desegregated that, all the way for eight years 'til we finally desegregate all the schools. That was the attitude they took on organization and ah, ah...so I think a lot of it was due to ah, ah, attitude toward compromise and workin' behind closed doors with non-elected leaders from the Black community, but who were in positions from ah, bein' church leaders to bein' businessmen may have some kinda collusive side to 'em. Like, "If you wanna build a buildin' you gotta go through us for your church" or "If you need another loan, you gotta go to this bank." So there was a sense of ah, of, I hate to use the word patronage, but I will, toward, you know, ah, ah, a father—white father—and a, ah, African American chilluns who were tryna raise themselves up. And so, it may seem contradictory to what I said earlier, but that took a predominant role in Dallas toward makin' changes and at the same time there was just the threat of violence, just the threat of publicity for shutting down businesses or delaying transactions was enough to make the businessmen say, "We gotta move." So, just by threatening to have a demonstration downtown, the image of Dallas would become known throughout the nation. So the fathers quote, unquote, of Dallas power structure, White Citizens Council, and all was ah, ah, on top of that to make sure the image would never come to be. They were clever in that sense. Now, the White Citizens Council in Dallas was a direct product of the White Citizens Council that was formed in Indianola, Mississippi. At that time, I think it was in the fifties, maybe '55, '56 when city councilmen from all across the south and businessmen came together and said, "We need to cut off this movement toward ending Jim Crow and all by comin' up with strategies and tactics to protect white folks interests." And so the White Citizens Council of Dallas was a powerful force. So, the John Burks Society, which was one of the most reactionary organizations...equal to the Klan, but more classy in terms of havin' ownership of media controls and ah, powerful business persons, the ideology was still the same and it was the white Nazism, John Burks Society, and the ultra-right led by people like Congressman

Joe Poole, who was the chairmen of the House on Un-American Activities, who got elected year, after year, after year because there was no Black vote, you know. He could just get elected by screamin' ah, ah, "White people!" You know, and he could get elected. It was not a, you know, it was not even strange to me to realize that Dallas was a place...

(Camera stops so he can collect his thoughts. When it resumes, he is mid-sentence)

EM: So it was these kinds of things that there was a climate, it was a system of control that led to a attitude by a piecing out parcels of crumbs to the disgruntled community and I think a lack of bold leadership to go along with (Someone closes the door to the room in which the interview is held) I'm talkin' so loud? Ah...the gradualism of making changes: a stair-step plan to desegregate the schools, a citywide agreement between the merchants of Dallas and the Black pastors to like, "Let's desegregate the buses first. Then we do the grocery stores next, and then we do the theaters." It was like kind of a plan, a sequential plan for desegregating the city that came about, but it was full of threat and the promise of demonstrations that they saw at other places had worked.

AW: Now that's interesting to me. It's almost like Dallas was tryna be like a bastion of the south. Kinda like, "Bring me your tired, weary, huddled white masses. Y'all can come here and y'all don't have to worry about y'all crazy Negroes. 'Cause we have..."

EM: "Our stuff under control."

AW: "In check." Yeah, that's crazy.

EM: And I think they saw the handwriting on the wall, but they wanted to hold the hands of the clock...the clock's hands as long as they could back and make the changes as gradually as they can and make the changes less about power and more about superficiality, surface things like cosmetic changes and signs bein' removed and so forth. But, the relationship of the power, of the politics, and economics was never threatened. And so, you have, up until maybe 1970 a City Council elected at-large, you know. It was nobody representing a district until in '71, '72, '73. So that was unheard of where you had Chicago, Gary, New York, all these ward politic community-based elections that could be a base for creating a power political resistance movement. So, we didn't have that in Dallas at all. So it was partly on the uniqueness of Dallas's power structure and the willingness to be gradu...of a gradualism and the ah, compromise nature of the leadership that worked with them to make sure that they wouldn't shake the boat. But there weren't too many instances of violence, of ah indignities and pain and sufferin' inflicted on the Black community here. It wasn't like we were treated better than anywhere else. We had lynchins here, we had people false in prison, even electrocuted in the electric chair for crimes they did not commit, for daily indignities like you can't even try on the shoes before you buy 'em. All those kinda things goin' on in this city, we were not without racism and the naked hand of terror in Dallas, it was just the way ah, this power structure chose to operate to gradually loosen up their reigns and was pretty much

a primary factor here. But you had people, militant voices like Reverend Earl Allen, like...

AW: Of what church?

EM: I don't remember the name of his church, but he led the demonstration against Picadilly Restaurant. He's now in Houston. He was run out of town. Yeah, I can't think of the name of the Father...Father Brown, who maybe mysteriously died because he was a kind of a Marcu Garveyvite who was callin' for, "Black people, you need to pool your money together." So we had people and forces like that. You know, we had AME Zions who were firstly independent about Black people owning their own and building their own institutions as well. So, we had those ingredients here, but...I don't know how to put anything after but. But ah, it was unique.

AW: Very unique and it almost seems, and I mean I don't wanna brush my hand over it and say worse, but I guess unique is the best word we can use, um because it's...I mean it's written down and there have been books written and there is a current book out that I think it was either published in '08 or '09, um *White Metropolis* and it's talkin' about that whole "Dallas Way." The whole "Dallas Way" of going about doin' things and I guess I'm wondering, could you compare that to your particular experience in another southern city? Like how...tell us about that shift and coming back to Dallas and knowing that that same racism exists, but seeing it in a different way. How did that, not only how did you react to that, but tell us about that comparison.

EM: Yeah. Well, for example, in Albany, Georgia we fought tooth and nail to ah, get policemen on the police force. Ah, maybe in the late fifties, early sixties it was always a all-white police force and soon as we finally won the right through economic boycott and demonstrations in Albany, Georgia, we started having the privilege of getting beat up and locked up by Black policemen.

(Both laugh)

EM: So, we had those kinda things goin' on and there were...I was in the middle of a riot...well, let's see, it was a physical rebellion in Albany, Georgia and I never experienced anything like that in any...in Dallas, for example, where people would march downtown throwin' bricks and bottles and you felt like you mind was ah, ah, apart of something else. It was ah, you know, you just became just like a living organism where you're moving and almost organically as a whole with out anybody directing calling commands. It was...it was almost ah...what's the word? Self-automated movement without a core brain, it was an amorphous movement and people would shift and move almost in harmony and direction just based on some invisible force. So having that and then in Birmingham, Alabama when we were demonstrating against ah, ah, schools that were refusin' to allow Blacks in, you run right into, on the campus of the school, hooded Klansmen, you know, and who were denyin' you interest or in, in, in Mississippi where in Holly Springs and Tupelo, Mississippi you would have marching down the street and marching demonstrations against the Klan, you would have the

National Air Guard flyin' over your head makin' a cloud...ah, makin' a cross in the air from the vapor trails of their planes. And with the Klansmen: armed Klansmen with sheets standing at the post office, at the City Hall, and all these government facilities, I guess supposedly guarding them from these Black people marching down the street, you know. And they were...we were the ones bein' arrested or bein' beaten and these were people that were the ones violatin' the law. We were exercisin' our rights and they were here takin' law into their own hands and so having experiences like that and then comin' to Dallas ah, you know, I just think we need to ah, recognize what is the ah, where is the opportunity in that for us to grow and do what's next. And so, Dallas twenty-ten presents to me ah, a real opportunity to learn from the past and to go forward. So, I think we have an opportunity here in Dallas to make a leap because there was a history of Black struggle and resistance, but I don't think it's been as indented, or as pronounced, or as visible to the point where we are locked into or strapped into it where it's so rigid that you can't break free of that history. So we have more opportunity in Dallas to write a new page, you know, of multiculturalism of ah, takin' on issues for justice, ah dealin' with issues like unemployment and distribution of wealth, as well as things like sending youth to prison for...in the, in the masses without...because they have the Zero Tolerance policy and creating a whole generation of, of youth who are labeled as criminals. So we have an opportunity to do some things here that maybe other cities may not have that ah, privilege of doing so, 'cause our history has been ah, not so firmly impressed where we are locked into it. So I think we have a wider flexibility for moving ahead here in Dallas. So, what may appear to be a negative, could be actually positionin' us to be able to do more in the future.

AW: Hmm...Now I kinda wanna take a few steps back.

EM: Okay.

AW: I ah, you've been answerin' all of the questions that I had spontaneously probed you for and you answered all the questions...

EM: Good, we're on the same wavelength.

AW: Yeah. It's just flowin'. It's just really flowin'. Umm, it might be out of pocket to ask for like a chronology of SNCC in Dallas, but I think you're probably...you're the best person to ask. Umm, you know, and I asked Granny and she always...she told me that she came into it after you and you influenced her to do that. So she wasn't able to really give me from the start to, I guess, when, when you disbanded in SNCC form. So, if you could, just give us a chronology maybe of events, of maybe things happening, names of folk, and everything like that.

EM: Okay. Okay, I would generally and roughly say that ah, the active, full-time effort to organize the Dallas SNCC chapter began in the late fall or winter of 1966. And ah, it led to just the ah, congealing or the coming together of a handful of folk who shared the same commitment to build a SNCC chapter in Dallas. And I think there may have been four people or five people like that who came together for that. And one of those is a

Hispanic brotha by the name of Jesse Arredondo who is from Seguin, Texas and ah, so...and ah, I'm tryna think who else might have been there. Ah, I have to come back to that. So, in the early days...oh and Lafayette Locke who was a, ah, ah just released from federal penitentiary in Leavenworth who was an articulate, gifted man who studied revolutionary science in prison and, and his lawyer who helped free him became his wife and they moved to Dallas and we got really involved with one another. But his history was deeply mired into street mentality. So he brought people with him who were former prostitutes, who were people who would boost clothes out of stores, who would play games ah, hustlin' games on people to take them out of their money, con artists. So he brought a few people like that who had reformed their ways and were beginnin' to take a new track to say, "You know, we need to get this stuff out of our hair and out our head about where we makin' a livin'." You know, out our hair is just this processed stuff and out our mind, this white stuff about robbin' from each other. And so, he put or brought a nucleus of people together with him. So we had basically, one or two youths from the college or university and one or two youth from the Hispanic community, the Latino community and maybe four or five people who were from what we called the street or lumpen thing. We came together sayin', "Yeah, we can do this." And then ah, we felt that the emphasis needed to be on getting together people who were free to operate more so than others and that was the university students. So we began to pull together, by the spring of '67, ah, a Texas-wide state youth conference, which I was able to pull together by takin' several weeks and months hitchhiking and traveling around the state meeting people to find what people where doing in their respective cities. So I visited Houston, San Antonio, and Austin visiting ah, ah, Huston-Tillotson College, University of Texas, Texas Southern University, University of Houston, East Texas State University, don't let me forget them, and ah, I can't remember who was in San Antonio. But we began to see that there was a commonality. It was time for it because now Black Power was announced that people were beginning to build how we can make Black Power apply to our lives and to our community. So, people agreed with the proposal I had. We needed to form a state-wide Texas Youth Conference to see, if nothing else, to bring ah, a storehouse of information together. To share, build, network, and then be able to go back to our respective communities armed with some, some ah confidence with some knowledge and with some network and with some resources that we could share to be able to be again in our own cities. And so, that was called and that took place in Dallas and I believe it was at the Bethlehem Center in South Dallas where we held it. And we found out through reading the freedom of information files ah, that the police were well-surveying these gatherings. So it was a lot of quotations and even mentioning of, of diaries from police following different people from San Antonio, Houston, and other places here. Oh, and please don't let me forget Denton and North Texas State University...North Texas State and Arlington. So we had people from Arlington, then Commerce, Houston, San Antonio, Austin came together to form this conference. And most of these people were all, if not all of us, SNCC-minded people. People from Houston like DeLloyd Parker, Thomas Malannason, people from Denton like ah, ah, Leroy Haynes and ah, brotha Smitty. We called him Smitty, from East Texas State University. Mario Celinas from San Antonio and ah, Larry, I can't think of his name, Larry from Austin, UHT and people like Sherry...Sheryl...Sherry Locke, Gene Locke from Houston, but we were at University of Texas. So we had a lot of just a rich treasure

house of mental power that we pulled together and we had maybe two days of meeting and we went back feeling that, "Now we know what we gotta do" in our respective cities. And after that we brought Stokely Carmichael to, to Texas. He visited Austin and San Antonio, no...Austin and Houston and spoke at large rallies at the campuses of University of Texas and at, I believe it was University of Houston rather than Texas Southern and that really helped get our imagination goin'. And also we had people like Lee Otis Johnson, who was the head of the SNCC chapter in Houston to really just ah, become my mentor, to help me understand the movement from Africa to today. Not only about from...for particularly African Americans in and the trail from Africa to Houston and Fifth Ward, Houston, where he lived, but how that connected with my life and others around the state and the whole country as a whole. So just gettin' an education from him and people like him and beginning to find resources like people who could write plays, who could write newsletters, articles, who knew how to print, who knew how to operate mimeograph machines and began to share that technology and those kind of gifts, we began to pull those target Dallas and South Dallas where we could get these things going. So by ah, ah, the winter of '67, we began to ah, ah, put together meetings ah, on the campus of Bishop College. We began to recruit youth from SMU and from Bishop. They were threatened at Bishop, mainly, for participating and bein' expelled from school. Some of 'em were suspended or put on academic probation from Bishop College because they would wear African garb or because they would wear sandals. You know, there was...it was illegal for a woman at Bishop College in 1967 to wear open-toe sandals. That was considered whorish or wenchy or whatever you wanna call it because of dress code.

AW: Let me tell you, Black colleges are still like that today.

(Both laugh)

EM: So we began just tryna find out what was important to them about the educational system, about what they were learning, about the food services, about dormitory practices, about how women were treated, those kinds of things and we began to give support to their emphasis about their lives at those schools and then that began to grow more to where we got a following of people who said, "Let's take it to the community." So, by '68 we began to ah...what were we focusin' on then? Putting together a newsletter, going to the community talkin' about the war, that we shouldn't be drafted, you know, ah, what were veterans facin' when they come back home, what were we doin' losin' our lives over there. So we really began to talk about the relationship of racism to the war and to our own economic plights, more in terms of speaking engagements, going and speaking at community centers and churches and goin' in people's homes and talkin' and building up support that way. And that took several months knockin' on doors, handin' our flyers, calling meetings, and having flyers when maybe only a handful of people would come out, maybe none. And then we began to go to the people to ah, take it to the clubs, restaurants, cafes, places like that and sitting out talkin' to people in bars in grocery stores and just kinda meetin' people there as well. So that took a lot of time and effort and energy expended. And then King was killed in April of 1968 and that just created, just ushered in a whole new level of activity and people

sayin', "We got to...What's next now? What can we do to respond?" And there were people who wanted to take Molotov cocktails and burn up the town. There was others who wanted to riot generally and just attack people. There where ah, places like Detroit, St. Louis, even Houston where there were some flare ups. There were even some incidents in Dallas even that I am more personally aware of where some Molotov cocktails were thrown at buildings and some places where set on fire, but nothin' really extensive like people were takin' to the streets by the hundreds or sporadic incidences like that. And the Dallas police were on their toes, you know, and they were very much in force and visible and tryna make it seem as though they were on top of things and they were gone crush anything that showed its ugly head to them; what they considered ugly head. And so, ah, at that time, there was a need for the public to address what was happenin' with Kings death, "What did that mean?" And everybody was ringin' their hands, even white liberals, conservative whites, Blacks, even people who were pacifists, all kinds of folks. So there was a documentary, a live documentary was gonna be aired on one of the major channels, I think ABC, channel eight, and ah, I was slipped in as one of the participants and the mayor was on the show as well. And it became a ah, more of a dialogue between he and I than anything else of course people had been allowed to view it, but it began to be confrontational, him talkin' 'bout, "We have it made. Everything is okay here," and I was sayin', "We don't. Here's why." So, that became a sensation because it was on...we only had one or two stations then so everybody watched that. It was maybe an audience of several hundred thousand people.

AW: When was, when was, ah, what year was this?

EM: This was right after King was killed, 1968. And so, that brought people to flock to SNCC, to call for, "Come here, I want you to speak to my group, to my group. I wanna join." And so forth, and that's when we began doin' the mass community meetings and we had a strong cadre of twenty, twenty-five people—without training—you know come on board. But, these were college students like Mike Morris at SMU, or there were workers like Don "Kwesi" Williams, ah, Ed Harris, ah, college students and ah, gifted people, ex-veterans and so forth who began to flock to us...street brothas, ex-dope fiends, and what-not began to be a part of this cadre. It wasn't a test we gave or a application they had to fill out or any background check done, you know. We just kinda took people in and started directin' their energy toward holding community meetings and finding out what the community wanted to do and that led to ah, the boycott, led to police patrols, led to the welfare sit-in, led to ah, ah, the boycott at OK Supermarket. You know, not necessarily in that order, but those kinds of things began to happen. Led to more arrests, more heat, and repression from the police, which led to court cases, fines, and legal battles and more demonstrations and protests and fighting and tryna link up individual or seemingly personalized hurt and harm to seein' it as issues. For example, ah, the people of a little part of Dallas, I think it was called Roosevelt Heights, were one of the high flood plain areas of Dallas and the city wanted to use that land to just take it over and make it as a turning basis for ships to travel from the Bay of Houston...Bay of Galveston up the Trinity River to bring cargo and merchandise and commerce and use it as a way ships could turn around and go back down and take stuff from Dallas to points beyond the shore. And so, ah, Black people were bein' threatened with eviction from the land or

outright just takin' the land from 'em with eminent domain and things like that. When I was invited to go and meet with these families and we proposed to them that they organize a single cooperative—they all band together as one cooperative, they pool their forces together and unite as one and they demand that they be treated as a whole rather than pickin' off people one by one. And that's when the ah, heat really picked up then. So we became an economic threat because not only were we callin' for ah, a end to ah, nasty stores in South...we wee talkin' about Black owners of the stores, so we were talkin' about a shift of economic power on the retail basis like stores takin' over in our own community and we began to sell stock and shares of stock in our chain of supermarkets that we were gonna buy. And people like Tony Davis who was one of the predominant businessmen of our time who also headed up a empire of media of newspaper, radio shows, and whatnot, became an advocate for us to bring in Black businesses. So we began to pick up some popularity with other sectors of the community that were puttin' us down before. There was also a demand that we get into politics and we begin to support candidates and we, we didn't choose the select candidate, but we chose to encourage people to go vote for the people that represented them, and we would have bullhorns and campus people to do voter registration and we were arrested one day for usin' a bullhorn on what is now Malcolm X Boulevard and threatened with violatin' the city ordinance about usin' too much sound. And slapped around and harassed by the police and held in jail and fined for our participation, ah, and that was also in '68. So in '68 that was on the electoral front that we began to get more involved on the economic front. We began to take strides...we were always doin' things like, ah, the cultural awareness through our educational newspaper, which was called the *Black Disciple* and we took over the welfare office. So we were fightin' on different fronts and we began to link up things like personal plight versus community destiny and workin' together to cure our ears—ills. So we had the welfare rights women form an organization called National Welfare Rights Organization. We had people in Roosevelt Heights and workin' 'round OK Supermarket begin to form cooperatives and begin to create a basis for selling stock and shares and banning together hiring lawyers to defend their rights and create cooperatives for them. And we also, on the electoral front, began to organize and fight for more participation on the, on the political arena. So we were everywhere. Like I was saying there was only a handful of us. Then there was the threat of violence and riots and so ah, we discovered, just by accident again, that the city was proposing to have a new, what they would call a "Anti-Riot Ordinance." And this was gettin' ready for the summer of '68 or maybe it was '69, by now in which...no it was '68 in which ah, I think it was July or August of '68 in which ah, the city council was gonna vote on a Anti-Riot Ordinance where they were sayin', "Any two or three Black gathered together on the streets could be arrested for conspiracy to riot."

AW: So you could be with your family...

EM: Yeah...

AW: Comin' out of church...

EM: We found out about this because Ed Harris rushed back, I think he ran from downtown to South Dallas to tell us what they were voting on, preparing a new...and we called a meeting for the community to come together and out of that was formed Black Citizens for Justice Law and Order and that organization was formed right at ah, Reverend Mark Herbener's church, Mount Olive on what is now Martin Luther King Drive. And so ah, things like that would begin to happen...pick u, accelerate fast. Ah, we were movin' to a whole new level and arrests were pickin' up. Somebody in our office would get arrested everyday for somethin', even for nothin'. And ah, we had been given ah, charges that were baseless. We were bein' planted with drugs and told it was ours. We were bein' ah, accused of buying weaponry without license and so forth, but all those charges were ninety-five percent fraudulent or falsely created charges just to keep us off the streets, keep us from organizing, keep us spendin' our money on bonds and defenses rather than supportin' the movement. We feel for that trap and we ah, you know, kinda got off balance with that, but all this was happenin' around the country at the same time. This was COINTELPRO, Counter-insurgency program of the United States government led by the FBI and the CIA to, to de...to neutralize the movement. So ah, while things were pickin' up with people's awareness, and enthusiasm to make change, there was also a increase in ah, repressive moves against the leadership. By 19...by the summer of 1969 there had been twenty-eight Panthers were killed by the police, ah, hundreds of people were arrested coast-to-coast on various charges from misdemeanor to serious felony charges. Some people are still locked up today from that, you know. So ah, we still have a long way to go in terms of ah, ah, becomin' more astute and nimble and sophisticated and being effective in organizing and effective in sustaining a movement and we took some dips and we took...and we made some lulls and we fell into some ebbs, and ah, ah, some of us got arrested, I was ah, became...I became a fugitive rather than face a all-white jury for charges of, of ah, draft evasion and destruction of private property. Ah, I had a family, a wife who was pregnant and, but spontaneously, uh, I was led to ah, be told that I was violatin' the law and I could be arrested if I didn't humble myself and get...turn myself into the police ah—at the risk of bein' shot on the way to the police station. So, so, my decision then, along with Kwesi Williams, was to become a fugitive, was to run and to get our family together on another piece of earth somewhere outside the United States. And so ah, that...

AW: This is a result of—other people have talked about the OK Supermarket—this is a result of that and ah, they charged you with draft evasion, so both of those charges.

EM: I was charged with draft evasion, I was arrested and charged with firearms violation, I was arrested and charged with destruction of private property, and then, I was arrested for jumpin' my bond, jumpin' bond. So, all those were really connected to just the, the enerdy they spent on destroyin' this movement and makin' sure—not only did it wipe us out—makin' sure it would never happen again. They wanna teach a lesson that “If you rise up against us, this is what's gonna happen to you.” So it wasn't just to destroy us, but it was to make sure that forty, fifty years would pass so somethin' like this could never happen again. So that was the zealousness they took toward it.

AW: That was really good!

EM: I wanna ask you a question off the camera.

AW: Yeah...you want me to turn off the camera?

EM: Yeah.

(Interviewer shuts camera off momentarily)

AW: Okay so, basically where we left off was you were giving us a brief chronology of SNCC...

EM: Okay...

AW: ...And you left off when you were talking about how you had left and come back and was in prison and you were telling us about...just briefly about that experience. I don't know if you wanted to take back up there or if you wanted to continue with that chronology of your involvement.

EM: Okay, but not chronology of SNCC's development, just my relationship to SNCC?

AW: Yeah and your...in the movement. I'm sorry.

EM: Okay, because I was tryna give you...I'm tryna recap to and see should I be talkin' about the chronology of SNCC to its demise and my relationship to it those things too?

AW: Both.

EM: Both. Okay, cool.

AW: We can...we can, if you want to, we can finish with your involvement in the movement at-large and then we can double back.

EM: Okay, ummm...Now where did I leave off?

AW: You were talkin' about your time in prison and how...

EM: Okay. So I had gone through fugitive days and all that stuff?

AW: No, no, no. You had talked about how because you were in draft...you did draft evasion and because of the OK Supermarket incident that you had been sentenced to prison and that...and then we went off on a tangent...

EM: Oh, okay I got you, I got you. Um, there were several charges leveled against me: state and federal. All total there was a state charge for destruction of private property that held a twenty-year maximum sentence and there was a draft evasion charge that held, I

believe, up to five years, plus some fine, and then there was another charge leveled against me for firearms ah, violation. And these three charges, you know, all were whirling around the events of direct action. The supermarket sit-in was the basis from them chargin' destruction of private property. The draft evasion charge was my refusal to just passively submit to their desires to put me in a uniform and send me to Viet Nam. So, while I participated in the draft induction thing, it was not a without some resistance and questions and maybe even some belligerence on my part. So, instead of lockin' me up and throwin' away the key and sayin', "You are committin' a crime!" They said, "Go home McMillan and we'll re-induct you, we'll try to re-induct you again on a better day." So while I was locked up on one charge, I learned about the draft evasion charge bein' an indictment against me by the federal grand jury, and then after bein' released from jail on that, then a raid on my house and two other homes that were basis of SNCC operations—one in Oak Cliff, another one in West Dallas, and another one in Lancaster area near Bishop College, which is deeper Oak Cliff—were all raided at the same time. Well, these were homes where families lived and where children were livin'. The police used helicopters, armed men with helmets and guns and ah, helicopters and all kinda devices simultaneously attacked those three places at once.

AW: (After loud voices are heard from another room) Let me close that door.

EM: Okay. It's still runnin'?

AW: Yeah. So you can continue.

EM: I can still continue.

AW: Yeah, keep goin'.

EM: So, ah, the firearms charge was to retrieve a thirty-caliber carbine rifle that I had purchased, what I thought legally, at a legal store, a supermarket or one of these discount stores like Wal-Mart. And so ah, I was told that I was illegally purchasin' a gun because I had been convicted of a felony. Being convicted of a felony means you're not out on the streets; you are in prison. And so, I was not ever finally convicted of any felony all my cases where either on appeal or hadn't been formally gone to trial. So, that was erroneous, but all these things were thinly disguised ways to remove us from the streets. So, that led to my fleeing the United States. Even that was unplanned, spontaneous ah, movement because, I don't know how much detail you want to go into those things...

AW: Yeah...

EM: But ah, I was appointed a lawyer who had no experience with criminal law. He was a tax lawyer, a civil lawyer. The federal courts had gave him to me as my appointed attorney since I was indigent, or poor, and had no funds to purchase an attorney...fees. He was assigned to me to represent me for the draft evasion charge and part of that included removing...taking my passport away from me and restricting me to the northern district of Texas. But, during the period of time that I was under the stipulations of this

bond release, I traveled outside of the district of Texas several times and always with the procedure of contactin' a lawyer, who would contact a U. S. attorney, who would then check with the judge, who made sure they had all the information about where I was goin', the purpose of my goin', where I could be reached at and when I was due back. So, we did this for about two or three times—trips to University of Pennsylvania, trips to Atlanta, places like that far outside the northern district of Texas. On the last trip that I had ah, taken in which I was charged with evading or jumping bond was to a World Council of Churches meeting in Connecticut and so ah, I actually made it there, and when I go there, I found that ah, through calls from my lawyer that the court had agreed for me to travel. And so my lawyer said, "Look, there's a warrant out for your arrest. Try to sneak back into town. Don't use the airport. Don't use the bus station because they will, more than likely, attack you and arrest you. They're lookin' for you all over." So, the person who was travelin' with me was also under a charge for possession of marijuana, which held a two-year to life sentence. That was Kwesi Williams. So we put our heads together and said, "Look, this is a trap. This is an ambush for us, so we need to find away to hide and seek to safety." And we did and so that led to us eventually leavin' the United States and bein' away for approximately two years and I was arrested, finally, upon returning to the United States, because we felt like being in Africa was not a place for us to tell people what to do or to organize. It was for Africans to do. So we felt that our best way for us to fulfill our mission in life is to be in the movement in the United States. And after being back in the United States for about a year, I was arrested in Cincinnati, Ohio, put back in chains, brought back to Texas, and was sentenced to three years prison time, which was runnin' concurrently with the state prison, which was ten years. So, I was to go first to serve my time in federal prison and then be released to Texas. And so, the period of time that I was locked up for was a about little over three years and during that time, SNCC had ah, pretty much evaporated from the scene. And so, just to show you, briefly, what the levels of development and the evolution of SNCC—to me it was one in which, and I think we can verify this through historical accounts—that SNCC began in 1960...April 16, 1960. Founded about 3 or 400 students from all over the south, primarily and ah, became the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee and I think Ella Baker was a mentor for many of the young people there as long...as well as the others, who through the graces of Southern Christian Leadership Conference and ah, Dr. King had gotten permission for Shaw University to open up from them to use their rooms and be sanctioned as a legal event. Well, I think the design for the SCLC was to make this a part, a wing of the SCLC where they would have troops to do their demonstrations, but the decision of the youth was that, "We're not gonna be bought or hardly under anybody's wing. We want to be independent, be our own self-sustaining, self-contained group." And so the Student Non-violent Coordinating Community was founded, I think the core of that group was people from Nashville who had been involved in training and non-violent practice and engagement ah, under the tutelage of Reverend James Lawson. Those people were like Diane Nash, John Lewis, Marion Berry, ah Bernard Lafayette, people like that who were embraced by students who had less experience in the movement and less training and formed the core of SNCC. In fact Berry, Marion Berry, was elected the first chairman of SNCC and SNCC wanted to save the world. We wanted to build...is...we wanted to practice the world we wanted to build. So, we wanted to see if there is one man, one vote, everybody should be equal

and have what we wanted to have, a democratic, a ultra-democratic base within SNCC. So SNCC became very ah, well-known for its style for having meetings that go on well through the night, early in the morning, trying to reach total unity and doing that. It worked for sometime and SNCC was able to utilize that mode of decision-making and also do effective things throughout the south from the Freedom Bus Rides to begin organizing voter rights and voter registration campaigns. SNCC then moved to a more centralized form of organization when the Atlanta office, under people like James Foreman, H. Rap Brown, Stokley Carmichael and—the Washington clique from Howard, pretty much the Student Action Government, called themselves SAG, Courtland Cox, Ivan O'Donald, people like that—began to exert themselves and began to move more toward ah, an international perspective, ah saying the relationship to Africa. There were at least two or three tours by the SNCC leadership to Africa and they were embraced by people like Nkrumah, Nyerere, ah Sekou Toure and people like that and they learned a lot about the country...a lot about the continent and many countries in West Africa and around. They brought back a spirit of internationalism to the local movement and this same time when, when ah, Malcolm X was talking about human rights versus civil rights and the world stage was lookin at people like Robert Williams and the NAACP and talking 'bout puttin' a petition before the United Nations callin' what the plight of Blacks was, was actually genocide. So, there was a strong movement in the African American movement, generally speaking, but within SNCC especially to begin to shift or morph itself from being ultra-democratic, strictly talkin' about participatory government with one person, one vote/one person, one voice to one where it was, "We need to identify and target this to Black Power and the need for Black communities to be able to organize themselves and link up with people around the world and to determine or own destiny, self-determination for oppressed people." And SNCC put out some strong statements in support of the Palestinian people, for example and for alliances with ah, Latino groups within the United States and Native American groups and so that international flavor began to be more and more relevant to the everyday life of SNCC and Black Power became its creed or mode of operations. Ah, from 1965 I believe it was when three civil rights workers were killed in Philadelphia to 1966, was a great period of great tumult—tumultuous, torturous changes in SNCC. For example, we had received tremendous out-pouring of support from the Jewish community, ah from people who were liberals, ah Hollywood, people who were entertainers, after the three civil rights workers were killed, but when SNCC made statements like, "Solidarity with the Palestinian people," everything quickly dried up it became obvious that there was a network of people who want to control movement rather than be supportive and nurturing those movements. And that to me became apparent what I saw as the Zionist Movement and even working closely with people who were for war. So even people like Dr. King for example who were shifting the domestic call for civil rights to saying, "We need to get out of Viet Nam and that there is a connection between poverty, justice, civil rights, and war." They feed each other when you have racism and war. When one group of society, whether it's women, people of color, or workers, the basis for that oppression is also manifested through war and tryna dominate others, become an empire. So ah, that whole character of the movement was shifting: moderates like Dr. King to the revolutionary nationalists and so forth, so that was a growing trend. I think the intensity with the death of King toward more militant struggles and toward more dramatic ah,

demonstrations and calling for withdrawal and troops and so forth. I remember traveling with Stokley Carmichael ah, in Greenville, Mississippi and Greensboro, Mississippi to Washington, DC and traveling with them as, kind of, the person lookin' out for 'em, with two or three others and goin' from a meeting where he sat down with young teenagers and ah...in the Northwest part of DC and the same day he would go and meet with ah, peace activist who were organizing for mobilizing against the war...to be able to sit down with a cadre of men and women who were planning national demonstrations. So, just the many different levels of SNCC was profound and very broadly encompassing. So, I saw SNCC moving from maybe in the early sixties being southern targeted in voting rights to become a internationally flavored and ah, focusing on power relationships and beginning to shift and talk about radical change for the country.

AW: What about in Dallas? How was ah, since its founding when you came back, was it much the same?

EM: Well, when we began in Dallas it was pretty much after the Civil Rights Act had passed and the Voting Rights Act had passed and right at the time near King's assassination, around the same time that Black Power would be coming to the forefront. So, we didn't go through all those different changes here, though Dallas may have done so with, you know, having ah, campaigns for voting rights and public accommodations those kind of things, but SNCC, when SNCC was established in Dallas it was primarily on the slogan around Black Power.

AW: Okay.

EM: Let me say one other...there was one other stage and ah, this was at the time when Rap Brown went underground, ah that SNCC became more of a dual level organization. You had a visible, public front in which it was aggressively organizing for Black Power but it also had an underground wing that was for generating sustainability in terms of defense, in terms of protection, in terms of ah being able to defend ourselves from illegal attacks from police and so forth. If you remember, the young brotha in Chicago that was killed ah, I think that was in November of '67, ah Fred Hampton. You know, that was a complicity ah, assassination by corporate America aligned with the, the police, or the military because you had AT&T who would bug his phone and the police department who disguised themselves as workers for...putting up tele...t.v. lines, I mean telephone lines and so forth, to ah, buying...submitting agents within the organization who would give the floor plan for the room that he stayed in, show where people lived. So, for inside security, we needed protection and for...as well as for the illegal attempts to destroy the organization through COINTELPRO. Mainly, we needed to respond by having...not being so naïve as to just be open to everything, but have another component that was public, I mean that was private, secret in a sense, of the organization. So we had those two levels and then when ah SNCC...when Rap Brown went underground, a contingent of SNCC met in New York, I think it was in Harlem and that was in June of ah, '69 or May of '69. We founded an organization called the Black Revolutionary Action Party and then SNCC...and then we declared that Rap Brown was its leader and we didn't know where he was per say, somebody did...and we were all...we, we, we, embraced

self-defense and arming ourselves and we embraced being aggressive against drug pushers in our neighborhood and who were flooding the community with heroin at that time. And so we began to target them by getting the pimps and the drug pushers out of our neighborhood, beginning to see that there was a connection between the drug pushers and the police. So, you fighting against drug pushers and drug dealers, you're automatically fighting against the police that protecting them and allowin' them in the community. In fact, Rap Brown was shot and wounded and captured because he organized...during a raid against a big-time, butch drug dealers in Harlem and the police were part of that too, protectin' the drug dealers. So, that was a final stage of SNCC. At the same time you had other groups like the Black Liberation Army forming, ah the Black Revolutionary Action Movement—RAM—BRAM in places. You had the Dodge revolutionary union movement that had its armed forces too, in a sense. So, the workers were organizing in Detroit and the Midwest steel belt through the automobile workers was one force. The cultural nationalists began to arm through the Black revolutionary...through US coming up with their own thing dual-level and then with the revolutionary, having two or three different wings, the Black Liberation Army, which was pretty much an extension of the Black Panther Party and the Black Revolutionary Action Movement, which kinda was an extension of the armed wing of the workers movement and Black Revolutionary...BRAP was the armed part of SNCC—Black Revolutionary Action Party. So, you had ah these kinda forces goin' on too. And there were people that began to hijack planes, who began to rob banks, who began to extort businessmen who were rippin' off the community...I hate to use that word "extort," but declare they needed to pay taxes to stay in the community, things like that. So, that was another stage of the movement that's not talked about too much.

AW: Did ah, did Dallas experience any of the ah, any of those types of things?

EM: Yes!

AW: Can you...would you speak on some of those things?

EM: Ah, I can't really speak on it.

AW: Can't remember?

EM: Maybe the statute of limitations expired by now.

AW: Oh, okay. I understand.

EM: But basically, we had people who on their own felt that they were serious and committed to the movement and they needed to make sure SNCC had funds and so without anyone telling them what to do or expectin' anything from them, they independently pulled together a bank robbery, you know, and things like that. And while I was in prison, I learned it got even more gangster...gansterish-like by people shakin' down businessmen, you know, white, Jewish, Black, it didn't matter and sayin', you know, if they did not give funds to them, that they would burn they place down or make it

hard for them to do business and the money wasn't necessarily used for the movement. This was going to buy people cars and clothes and jewelry and drugs, perhaps, you know live a little life. So, you know, that wing was even ah...we learned...even so that particular wing was run by agent provocateurs, you know, who were paid by the FBI. So, I won't mention any names today, but basically, it's pretty well documented and known. In fact, we had a revolutionary brother by the name of Geronimo Pratt who was running from the law. He made the mistake of coming to Dallas where he was apprehended, you know. We had revolutionary doctors, who—'cause he was shot and wounded—who healed him surgically, got him back on his feet, you know, without anybody declarin' it, you know. It was just done through extra-legal means, but we had good, talented people in the Black community who could do those kind of things, but we also had people who were paid by the FBI to locate fugitives and know what we're doing all the time, who turned Geronimo Pratt over to the FBI for arrest. In fact, I was arrested in Cincinnati, Ohio because there was a paid agent who gave me even a plan and the directions and address to go to find a particular job, one of these war on poverty jobs, but the whole route I was takin' was known by the police so they knew exactly the best point to ambush us where there would be no way to exit left. You know, we had the wall of the (demonstrating the layout of the street with his hands) here and we had...on a one way street and...where they could just pull us off from the back and the side and the front where we were jam packed, you know. They had our pictures in their hands and...said, "That's Ernie McMillan. That's Kwesi," you know, that kinda thing. So, they knew who they were looking for and they had help getting us arrested from paid African American so-called activists, you know.

AW: Around what year, to just give us a point of reference, what year did that happen—were you apprehended and in prison and for how long? I mean, we know three-and-a-half years, but tell us from what time to what time.

EM: Uh, well I actually became a fugitive quote-unquote and on the run quote-unquote in June of 1969.

AW: Okay.

EM: And from June of '69 to December of, I think that was 1971, I was...hold on let me see. From June of 1969 to April of '70, I was in Africa, or away—out of the country. From about April of '70 to December of '71, I was in the country working, organizing, and building ah, underground movements, organizations and arrested in December of 1971.

AW: So, you were there until about mid-1974?

EM: In prison.

AW: The middle of '74?

EM: Right to December, to the end of '74, locked up.

AW: Okay. Uh, tell us about coming back, if you don't mind, coming back from being incarcerated and attempting to organize in the city. How did that work out?

EM: Yeah. Well, during prison, you have a lot of time to yourself to be able to think, to read, and to write. Ah, and you have a different rhythm as far as distractions and what not. So, I was...did a lot of studying, reading, and thinking. We had people like my sister who had students at the University of Houston to send us books and what not. So, we organized at the federal level, which was a little more flexible, had more concessions to organize a Black culture workshop. And so, within Leavenworth, we organized a Black culture workshop and we had alliance, an alliance of co-equal groups with like the Chicano workshop and the Native American workshop and so we even did some tri-lateral things together as well as had our own thing. We had people from Kansas University, I can't think of this doctor's name right now, but who—Gilmore I want to say—who would come and bring students. He was like the professor, head of the Black Studies program and we would do workshops and we host things and help us with our writing. Also had, I wrote for the paper, the prison newspaper, you know, so I was free. I felt like, "Wow, you know, I'm free to do a lot of these things, even though I'm enslaved here, I'm free in another way." Writing and studying and being able to affiliate with, with people in the outside community in Kansas, as well as people in Texas who stayed in touch with us who helped kinda grow...keep us abreast of things, but you do get a different warped spectrum of things because you're not really livin' it. You're just kinda abstracting what you hear and tryna think of what that means, rather than feeling and concretely being a part of what that means. So ah, when I got out in December of 1974, I had gone through the federal penitentiary and the state penitentiary and while being in the state penitentiary, I had gone through being placed in solitary confinement on a coupla occasions and bein' beaten for refusing to work and things like that and we had gotten the attention of some new, a new wave of reform legislators who were talkin' about changin' the prison. So, I was able to participate in hearings for prison reform. While in the state prison, I met a state legislator by the name of Eddie Bernice Johnson and others, Mickey Leland out of Washi—out of Houston and I can't think of the person who was in San Antone, who were really, vitally committed to prison reform and that was just a piece of the puzzle, 'cause they wanted to see wholesale change for life for the Black community. And so ah, they were able to introduce some legislature that got rid of some of the most ah, naked, terrorist type operations in the prison like building tenants. These are convicts operating as guards, legally as guards and we had prisoners legally operating as doctors, you know. You know, who would operate on people and administer medicine. So they got rid of some of those things. They were not able to get rid, for example, slave labor because we were not paid anything, but they were not able to win the right for us to be paid, but they did make some headway. So, in there I met Eddie Bernice Johnson and when I was released, she hired me to become a legislative aid. So, I got back immediately into being a point person for the community, a community liaison and that mean answering letters and I felt like I got more than fifty letters a day from prisoners 'cause she was identified with prison reform so she assigned me to make sure that I responded to all those letters. A lot of times, there may have been somebody complaining about brutality or can't visit they family or something being denied and I

would try to do my best to, to solve those problems. And in the course of that I even met and got in touch with the people that ran the prison system and one of those persons was the chairman of the Texas prison board right was here in Dallas, named T. Lewis Austin. So I could...got in a relationship with him where I could even call him up or go to him and say, "Look this is what happened to this young man." He would get on the horn and they would get it straight. So it was immediately good pay off for some things and he became a good friend of mine even though he was a conservative republican who was loved by whoever, Dalk Briscoe who appointed him to these seats of power. He was for, he was for right, you know. And ah, but he had his own conservative economic scheme, but even that...and then he was tryin'—I'm getting all side tracked.

AW: Naw, go ahead.

EM: He was transferred to become the president of Brown & Root Company, which is now...ah, what's the big company, war machine company?

AW: Halliburton?

EM. Halliburton, you know, in Houston. So, the same time I was in Houston, he was in Houston and he was able to provide us with grant money for the Fifth Ward Enrichment Program. In fact, the first plane ride most of these kids had was on a Brown & Root plane that we flew over Dallas, you know. Everybody got air sick because they had never been used to planes before, but ah, that was quite an experience. So, I owe him a lot and one day I hope to be able...he's deceased now, to you know, write out my ah, thanks to all...gratitude for what he's done 'cause he helped save some lives in prison and helped save some young boys in Houston. Anyway ah, so, immersed into electoral politics and being a bureaucrat, in a sense for a legislative representative was one, but that line was quickly crossed over by me because I wanted to get more involved with changing Dallas. But being on the staff of an elected official, it was perceived by them that if I'm doin' something, it must be this person behind it, my boss. And they didn't see that I have an individual life too. So, when I became the campaign manager for Albert Lipscomb in his seat to ah, run, ah, become a city councilman, I was told on no uncertain terms that I couldn't do that.

AW: I didn't know that!

EM: Yeah. So, I said, "You know, you can't tell me what to do. This is my li—this is after five." So, she said, "You are known on my staff after five, even on Saturday, Sunday." So she, so I said, "You can't control my life, so I'm gone." We left on good terms, but I couldn't stay under that restriction. And so, I became active with Lipscomb and his first term we didn't win but we laid some good organization basis for the next time around when he did win. And so, I got involved with the movement again in Dallas in '75, '76. Well, most of the year '75 was with Eddie Bernice Johnson, and then in '76, I decided that it's best to get with people who are most apt to be for revolutionary change and so I got in a, as a assembly line worker at a local plant and became active in the union there. And I began...and during my prison time, I began to study Marx, Lenin,

Mao Tse Tung, Nkrumah, ah, people like that, Amilcar Cabral and I really saw one thing key to wherever there was some significant benefit and change for Black people, whether it was Mozambique, Africa or Conakry, Guinea, or Havana, Cuba, that it was Marxist-Leninist was in the mix some how. So, I really got off in studying that and in studying Marxist-Leninism, I ran into other people who wanted to study it and we began to form study circles away from our job, in our homes to meet weekly and we began to try to figure out how we can interpret what happened in Russia, let's say, what happened in China, or what happened in Cuba with conditions here in the United States. And what...and the science of analyzing, the science of social change, how can it be applied here? And so we began to try to put it into action and we formed an organization that became a national organization that became a multi-racial, multi-cultural that was fighting for change, revolutionary change in this country. We decided that one of the campaigns had to be around unemployment, another had to be for the democratic rights of Black people to...for self-determination, support for people of color throughout the United States. So, it was a broad, embracing group, but due to internal bickering and differences of opinion, and radical shifting and the country with the war ending and with the ah, you know, new presidents coming to being and ah war in Afghanistan looming with Russia, with China seeming to turn toward capitalism, things like that, the group just kind of folded. And so ah, around that time, I think it was a...I decided that I wanted to help, use whatever experience I had to organize the south to be able to help people today. And I got a call from, just...it was more than a coincidence, that the people in Mississippi needed organizers to help them fight against the Klan and so I met with a director of a group called the United League of Mississippi. His name is Skip Robinson and I think he is deceased now. He was out of Holly Springs, Mississippi and they had had battles with the Klan because they were trying to organize African American people as a political base and the Klan were opposed to them, and the white citizen's council. So I was invited and then welcomed and embraced and assigned, finally, to organize the Delta region of Mississippi. And the Delta I was somewhat familiar with 'cause I had worked there with...in Tallahatchie County and Greenwood and Greenville and Indianola during the early, well, mid-sixties. And so, coming back was like getting reacquainted with that. And so, we organized a chapter in Drew, Mississippi and a chapter in Indianola, Mississippi and we began to role. When ah, here we come with agent provocateurs again, it was...there was a young man almost inseparable from me. I thought he was legit, but turns out he was a policeman and he encouraged me to ah, ride with me one night and he said he needed some money. He said, "Look, you stay in the car, I'm gonna go...there's an old drunk man in the bar there he's drunk. He's from Chicago, got a lot ah money and I'mma go get this money. I'mma jump in the car and you take off." So, I was kinda like, "You sure man?" He said, "Yeah, it ain't no big problem. I'm just gonna reach in his pocket and snatch it. I saw where he put it." And he actually did that. I didn't see him do it, but came in the car with money and we took off. And so, I looked back in my rearview mirror and there was cars followin' us and it was this old man and a car full of people followin' us. So, I drove through backyards and under clotheslines and fish tailed. I had learned how to drive through SNCC, thank you, to get away from the Klan and we had got away from them, but that guy...they reported it or he reported it...somebody reported it as somebody in a car with Texas license plates had robbed him, two Black men. So, a coupla days later, I was visited by the police. I was taken to jail

and charged with suspicion of armed robbery and ah, they said, “Look...” And ah, Mama, my mama, told me that even days before that people...somebody had told her from the Dallas police department that somebody from Mississippi to want to know...get my criminal background information. Anyway so, when I was visited by the sheriff, in this country in Mississippi, I think it was Greenwood, that ah...he said, “Look, we know you’re on parole and we know that if we charge you with this robbery, they’re gonna revoke your parole and you’re goin’ to prison.” And they said, “We can do one thing. I tell you what. If you agree to leave Mississippi, we will not press any charges against you.” I said, “How long does that take?” He said, “And you can stay away for two years.” I think that was the statute of limitations. So I said, “You know, I’m not goin’ back to prison, you know. Thank you very much, I’m outta here.” (Laughs)

AW: What year was that?

EM: This was ah, 19...80. Wow, okay. ‘79, ‘80, right in there somewhere.

AW: What was the name of that organization you were talkin’ about?

EM: United League of Mississippi.

AW: Uh huh, that one and then the one before that you had started organizing in Dallas with the study group and it became a national organization.

EM: I didn’t give you a name. (Laughs)

AW: Okay. I know, but I was just asking.

EM: You know what it was.

AW: We’ll talk about that.

EM: Okay. Anyway, I then came back to ah, Dallas and tried to figure out what I was gonna do with my life and I basically said, you know, “I really can’t be who I wanna be here in Dallas because people have this image of me or whatever. So I wanna...I don’t know what I wanna do exactly, so I wanna start fresh and just see what happens, but I don’t wanna go north to the cold Philadelphia area. I wanna stay in the south.” ‘Cause the south, I thought was where the movement was really gonna jump off. You know, it had done so before and this is where the heartland of African Americans was, in the south. So, I said, “I’m either gonna be in New Orleans,” thank goodness I didn’t do that, “Atlanta...”

AW: I wiah you would have we woulda had somewhere to visit.

EM: I woulda been flooded out. “Atlanta, or Houston.” And so I did research on both of those...all three of those and I figured out...I decided on Houston. Houston has the largest Black population in the south. It had a strong international flavor to it as far as being a port city. I think it had the second largest port in the country.

AW: Really?

EM: Yeah. Or third. I think it's New York, Los Angeles, and then Houston, the third largest port. And so, internationalism was a factor, being between the Black belt and Mexico was a factor because you got Black and Brown meetin' up right here in Houston, and you have the largest Black population in the south: 650,000 Blacks in Houston, and you had ah, a history of struggle, you know. Plus, I knew people there, Mickey Leland, DeLloyd Parker, Thomas Molanisan, all these guys, George...Gene Locke ah, all these people I've known and said, "Look, I could go here and I can, you know, I wouldn't be without support. I can...maybe somebody would help me find a job, or something." And so it worked out that way. I got a job there as a drug counselor with a company called Alternative Drug Abuse Program as a counselor and then I began to have good relations with the director of that program who said, "You know, we can help you get some services to the Black community." So he said, "I'll help you identify some resources." So he had me to write up a proposal and we got a youth prevention program started at Shapes Center 'cause I was volunteerin' for Shapes and ah...as a youth...organized the summer youth program, but we wanted to do more than just summer, so we started a group called the Mighty and Proud and the Mighty and Proud was a youth education group that provided alternative activities to the streets. It allowed them to get persons to come in talkin' to them, takin' them on different adventures, exposin' them to different works, and counselin' them too about their lives, boys and girls, teenagers. So, we started this at Shapes Center and it was the first of its kind in the Black community where we had full-time staff devoted, in the community, to educating youth about the dangers of drugs and givin' them some options, you know. And so, at the same time I was ah, I had then moved to work with a group called Communities in Schools, and so I was...I took ideas about youth work and worked...and became a project coordinator for Communities in Schools and I was at a school, at a elementary school in a Black community in northwest Houston called Acres Homes. Acres Homes was really weird because it was not really urban and it wasn't really country. It was like a mix. You might see people ridin' on a mule up and down the street and ah...a woman with a thing, a tub on her head and then you see the skyscraper of downtown Dallas right there and somebody jumpin' with they Hip Hop cars goin' right past, so it was really a wild community. And so, I started a youth program there and became a buzzword for some people that I was workin' with boys, helpin' with a rites of passage type program, this was in 1982, '83. And so, I was invited to go to Fifth Ward to meet with people who were tryna do something there, but they didn't know how to start. It was an all female staff and they were with a clinic, based on a school campus that was tryna teach about sexuality and how not to...how to have a good life and not to become pregnant too soon and how to make a good life for your family. So it was all women dealing with girls and they were getting repeat pregnancies from girls and they were feelin' like frustrated 'cause they said, "These boys are the problem!" You know, so, they really needed somebody to work and form something to help with the young men. That's how Fifth Ward Enrichment Program was born. But, I skipped over one point I wanted to share with you. In 1980, after coming from Mississippi and moving to Houston, I had a...I was intrigued about the formation of a call to form broad united front of Blacks together. And so, I had met through even in

Mississippi people wanted to do this kinda idea and my cousin Harry was in New York affiliatin' with that same idea. And so, we said, "Let's go for it. Let's found this organization." We founded in 1980, the National Black United Front and I was one of the founding members and I became the first chairman of the Houston chapter of the Black United Front and I was married to Marionette and she became the second chairperson after I left. But when it became so crazy in the Black United Front, one thing is that it was so narrow, you know, if you didn't talk like them or sound like them or look like them, then, "You're not a part of our Front." But the Black community's all shapes, sizes, colors, hues, beliefs, and ways of making a livin' than any one or two or three. So, I kinda felt that that was too primitive a way to work. And the other thing was that they ah, they wanted to just do demonstrations, you know. When it's something wrong, "Let's go march, or something." You know, I said, "We need to build some org...we need to have some educational institutions in our community that can sustain the knowledge of our youth. We need to be able to have intergenerational operations and we need to be in the communities, and we need to really target the youth." So that...with that I decided to work with Communities in Schools and I think that what helped me...inspired me to that was the Mighty and Proud, seeing that that was our hope, you know. So from the Mighty and Proud, Black United Front, Communities in Schools, then Fifth Ward Enrichment Program. And I was there in Houston for like twenty-seven years...

AW: Yes you were.

EM:...with Fifth Ward Enrichment and now I'm back home. So we...we cool! (Laughs)

AW: (Laughs) Bye!

EM: Short-term!

AW: I have ah...

EM: This is round two! I think I have enough juice in my battery, enough gas in my tank to do one more adventure.

AW: Okay! Good! And you're on your way. You're well on your way. Lord knows we know. (Laughs) Lord knows we know!

EM: (Laughs)

AW: Uh, I had a few more questions. Now, organizing in the southwest—I asked a few other people that the other day—uh, just tell us about how you could...I'm thinking about Texas being so huge, okay...you being able to organize city-to-city and the next city is what, three or four hours away...so I'm just tryna understand how you were really able to build a coalition, a sustainable coalition without the internet, without, you know, video mail, and all this...how were you all able to build lasting relationships and sustain them and organize?

EM: It was almost a sense of we against the world. You know, when you ah, enter somethin' wholeheartedly, there is ah, ah...what is the word? There are like souls in other cities that are doin' that and you kinda meet bein' at an occasion together and you exchange notes and then they tell you about somebody they know in this other city and you exchange notes and then they call you and say, "Look, we havin' a party or somethin'. Won't you come on down?" So, you kinda build the social ties first by being in the same, common arena with...sharin' the same, common values. You just kinda find each other. It's accidental and it's also necessity. So there is a dynamic relationship between luck and accident and necessity and destiny. Those two things, necessity and luck, go interplay and so that's what life is all about the interplay of those two forces. And so, that's what happened. I was tyna share with you that you go to, even in those days, they're doin' the watusi in Dallas and we're not watchin' it on t.v., but we doin' it and somebody else in Philadelphia is doin' it and somebody else in DC is doin' it, whatever that dance is. So, I don't know if it's by college people comin' home exchangin' information, whatever, but there is some kind of invisible hand at work that allows people to find each other, or insures that people find each other and get together and start combinin'. And so, for example when Stokely spoke at University of Houston, people, everybody in San Antonio, East Texas, they come down there and we get to talkin', sit down, exchange notes and then we say, "Let's stay in touch." And so, when he spoke at University of Texas at Austin, people...we had the same kinda thing and so we kinda...in his wake, a lot of that happened. And then, even previously, people moved from town-to-town where they take things ah, with them and share information about those other towns. So I really can't explain it but it is some miracles at work that take place that a lot of stuff...we did not have cell phones and computers. We had mimeograph machines and we were hitchhiking and we had phones that ah, that you had to turn dial and get the operator in order for you to get to it. So, we did have those things, but in a way it was a good because, I guess, the time element is different because now things are so accelerated. We had...we were operating on a different rhythm. So, you didn't have to know where I was two minutes ago, like we do today, you know...or you can take a picture and have it in your hands in the next minute. It still happened, but, you know, I think it was less accelerated, but it definitely happened...but...so, the nature of things was still the same as it is today, just the speed of it is different is the only thing that I would say. Just like you communicate today ah, in one minute you know this, it just took us maybe like five weeks to know, but it still happened.

AW: Right, and I'm thinkin' specifically about the Texas Black Youth Conference. Marilyn was talkin' about that the other day.

EM: Who was?

AW: Marilyn.

EM: Aww, she was there?

AW: She was was gettin' y'all money from the Urban League! (Laughs)

EM: Cool! Alright! (Laughs)

AW: She said, “Girl, I don’t remember half the stuff I did.”

EM: (Laughs) She’s wild. Wow. That’s great, beautiful.

AW: I can’t believe, you know, just the size of the city and comparing it...

EM: The city?

AW: I’m sorry, I mean the state and comparing it with the east and it bein’ so clo— everything bein’ so close, so state-to-state-to-state you can have a coalition, but here, I can’t even imagine y’all goin’ outside of the state and still organizing.

EM: Yeah. I really think, you know ah, for example at University of Texas at Arlington—then it was called University State Campus, no University State College, there may have been 10,000 students on campus and it was a commuter school for the most part. It may have been two hundred Blacks, but we would...those two hundred Blacks would come together all, you know. It was just like us... it was like circle the wagons, you know.

AW: Right! Where are you?!

EM: And so, then they would tell you about somebody else that’s at East Texas doin’ the same thing, or somebody at UT. So, we had that kinda fraternally ah, you know, exchange of information because we were against the world. We were piled on by racism, the segregated dorms, you know, Confederate flags in your face, you know. People expellin’ you because you write a paper that says we should have Black Power, you know, things like that. So, it’s like, it’s up front. And so we had to organize and we just reach out to the people we know. And that was, I don’t think we...maybe the people in El Paso may have been in another world. You never got to El Paso, but Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, Austin, East Texas that was more cohesive and that was, you know, more cohesive, but Lubbock, Amarillo, El Paso...(Making a sound)...phew that wasn’t even in the picture.

AW: (Laughs) They were doing their own thing with Oklahoma or something.

EM: (Laughs) They were with New Mexico.

AW: What about...can you tell us about...and all of these are if you feel like it. Um, do you mid tellin’ us about, I always hear people talk about Kwesi Williams. Would you just tell an account on him, just so his story can be lifted up.

EM: Yeah! Kwesi Williams was a young man who grew up in South Dallas and ah, I think he has a pretty large family, brothers and sisters. And he grew up, you know, with a high school education and when we met him, he was working, I think as a butcher, in ah, one of the stores in South Dallas. And ah, but he...he loved to party and ah, he loved adventure and ah, he had some ailments like bad feet and stuff, so he...you know, he

couldn't maybe be drafted into the army, but he did his own thing. He discovered us through the OK Supermarket thing. It was in the heart of South Dallas and it caught his imagination. So, he just dropped everything he was doing and said, "This is it." You know, so he became a part of SNCC right there on the spot and I don't think there was ever any looking back. And some of his family members, especially maybe his parents, were ah, fearful of him—thinkin' he was crazy, stupid for riskin' and throwin' all this thing aside for bein' a hippie or bum, you know. But he became a part of the movement and he was articulate in the sense of bein' able to express himself before people very well, had a little dramatic flair and he could write pretty well, too. And so he would write articles for us for the *Black Disciple* and he really had a way with people in terms of being able to convince and argue have...polemicize with people and challenge their thinkin'. He was up front with that 'cause he...I think he did a lot of thinkin' himself about the world, how it was, and how we had been miseducated. So, he was really a propagandist in a...in a big sense of the word 'cause he could really ah, convince people about our negative way of treating each other was definitely negative and how it was hurtin' each other and how we needed to change. So, he was always good in terms of bein' a people-person, bein' a good expressive person and ah, he became ah, like my protégé in a way because durin' the mid...ah, late '69...I'm sorry, late '68 early '69, police repression had really heightened up a few notches and so, it became the policy of SNCC to never travel alone. And so, when I was supposed to go to Connecticut to speak to World Council of Churches, he was assigned to go with me, you know because we just had to look out for each other. And it wasn't like my choice or anything. It was just like, "Here we are." And that accident, him bein' with me, and the other accident, bein' told the police are after you, and then decidin' to leave...so we were really much, joined at the hips, you know...locked at the waist from then on for about two years. So, gettin' to know him through trial and tribulation on the road, bein' underground bein' sought by the police, ah, bein' in strange lands and we kind of worked out a ystem where we recognized each other's strengths. And so, we became really co-dependent on one another for different things. So, I knew what his expertise was. He knew what mine was. So, and then when we separated, in France we had to separate because we were kinda torn. The Malian...I'm sorry, the Guinean country would not...or embassy, would not give us permission to enter and give us political asylum. So, we decided that we needed to try another way to convince Conakry, which is the capital of Guinea, to have...become political acceptance there. And so, we were trya reach Stokely Carmichael, who was then Kwame Ture, tryna get him to be our envoy, out ambassador of good will for that country. And so, nothin' was payin off. The communication wasn't good. Our letters weren't gettin' in. The embassy was tellin' us we gotta wait another day, "Come back tomorrow. Come back tomorrow," and our money was runnin' low. So, we decided that we better conserve our money and split up, you know. So, he was able to get an ally, a young lady from...who was traveling to—she was on her vacation. She was havin' a good time. She liked Kwesi. She said, "Kwesi can hang with me, and I'm gone go to Canary Islands from France to Spain to the Canary Islands. Then, I'm goin' back to California, but hey, you know, he can stay in my room. He can eat. I'll feed him" and this kinda thing. And then, "Mack, you go to Africa and try to get the Guinean Embassy...try to get to Guinea through, maybe through Mali." Mali was right next door to...is right next door to Guinea. And so, goin' to Bamako and being able to be right

there with the...I was told that we had a better change of being accepted than in Paris tryna talk to somebody about bein' in...once you get to Africa they're more...receptive to taking you in. So he said, "You get to Bamako. You get Guinea to accept us and then I'll meet you in Mali and we'll go on and walk on into Guinea." You know, that was the plan. (Laughs)

AW: Did it work?

EM: Well, no it didn't. So what happened was when he got to Conakry...I think he ended up in Dakar, Senegal. We cut...I don't know how we communicated, by phone? I don't...did we have cell phones? No...we communicated so kinda way and said, "Look, I'm in Dakar, Senegal, I'm ready for us to get on to Guinea." I said, "Well, I haven't gotten the paperwork. They keep givin' me the run around here." He said, "Well, I'm outta money." So I said, "Well, c'mon we'll find a way to do it." So he came to Bamako. I'd been livin' in the Grand Hotel, which was a luxury hotel in Mali in Bamako and I hadn't even paid a dime while I was there. And so they treated me like I'm a rich man, you know like, "Oh, just sign the bill!" So, you know, every time I'd eat, I just signed the bill. I just had a little change. So, my real money went to payin' tips to the waiters. And they would think that that was splurgin', but I wasn't payin' for the big money, for the food, I was just payin' like...a dollar to them was like, "Whew man!" You know, I could for a week off a dollar. So, I would give 'em a dollar and that's what I'm actually payin' for my meal, but they thinkin' I'm just tippin' 'em, but I'm givin' 'em a dollar to pay for my meal and I would sign for the real meal. So, everyday my bill is runnin' up at the Grand Hotel. I'm not payin' a room; I'm not payin' for the food. And so, when Kwesi comes, I say, "This is my last night here, man. We got to do something." So we ordered a big meal. He ordered frog legs and stuff. We had champagne. (Laughs) And we decided that we were gonna just get on the road and just try our best to make it from there. We decided to go to Ghana. We met some brothas who were hitchhikin' from Ghana to Germany in Bamako and they told us about, you know, they tryna get a better life for themselves, but they leavin' their family behind. They said, "Our family will take you in." You know, that's what they were tellin' us. So, I said, "Yeah?" You know, I told you about the young man in Accra. He said, "Here's my father's home address. Don't worry. Just go there. You'll be accepted. Don't worry." So we had a place to go. That was weird. And so, I had like two or three dashikis and ah, some socks and underwear and maybe some letters and stuff in a suitcase. We through that over the back rail window from...into the patio downstairs and I put on like three or four different clothes on under...I had on my dashiki, I had like four changes of clothes under that and Kwesi put all his stuff on too. We were walkin' around like we were just takin' a midnight stroll. So, we went by the house and got our luggage and went to the lorry station, which is where everybody gets on little trucks with planks on the back, where people sit and you pay like a small little change and you can go far, you know. So, we got on a lorry from Bamako to Ouagadougou, which was then Upper Volta now it's...

AW: Burkina Faso

EM: Thank you. Went went from there to Ouagadougou and from Ouagadougou to Ghana.

AW: Wow!

EM: By road and that was adventurous. There were a lot of things happenin' on the road.

AW: I...I wish we could just take your brain and, you know, have a cinematography moment.

EM: That was Kwesi and I together, you know, just travelin' by road and then when people embraced us in Accra ah, we were there for...I would say a month, maybe two months, stayin' with this family. And, you know, every now and then my family or his family or somebody could send us like an envelope with like twenty dollars in it or something. You know, we'd have a little money, but that was basically it. And so, we were...

AW: How did you communicate back to the United States?

EM: Oh, it was by pony express. You know, I would write a person and inside that letter would be a letter to somebody else. And so, they would open the letter and they know they would put it in a letter. It may take a week, but it might go to New York and then from New York we send it to Ohio and then send it to Dallas. So, when my mother got it in Dallas, it would be from somebody in Ohio, you know what I'm sayin'. And then we had a phone system too that we could use. I could call and say a number on the phone, but what it actually would be a different number when you do a certain math to it. So, I would call Harry or somebody and say, "Look, call this number." It would be like four, five, seven, eight, nine, ten, but if you add nine to either one of those numbers, it would flip and then it would be the real number. It some math or somethin', but we learned that through...just by givin' a number, but when he writes it down, he adds nine to every one of those numbers and it becomes the real number. So, that was little things we did like that. I had gotten a passport in Canada. So, I was travelin' under Canadian i.d., so was Kwesi. And the people that helped us get the passport in Canada were like Catholic priests and were well-respected people who lied for us and signed and testified that we were who we said we were. We got the names of the people we were from the graveyard and then we went to Halifax, Nova Scotia because that's where most of the Black people lived. We went to a cemetery where Black people were and we walked around and found somebody close to our age who died when they were young. You know, so if you found somebody born in 1950, who died in 1952, that means that they don't have no criminal record. You know, it's nothin' happenin' so you got their birth certificate and a clean life. You know, so you could worry about gettin' driver's license and all those things without...for the first time for them, you know. So, we were reincarnating these people. I was...who was I? Clarence Jones and he was somebody else. I don't remember all the names anyway. So, sometimes people would call us by the name and we wouldn't even know who were they talkin' to. (Laughs) "Oh, you talkin' to me? Speak up man!" And

so, just to...I'mma round this off now, just to tell you that ah, they made a law, I think it was in 1970 in Accra. It's called the Alien Removal Act. Kofi Busia was the president of Ghana and he ruled that, "Anybody that's not a born Ghanaian gotta go." (Laughs) "If you from Togo, Nigeria, wherever yo' ass from, I don't care where you from, you gotta get there." So, that became a law. And so, we were on the road, all these thousands of people were bein' forced to leave Ghana. I think they had to resend it later because they saw the whole economy almost collapsed. The Nigerians were makin' the gold. The Togolese people were bringin' the bananas. So, everybody had a role to play in the economy, you know. You do that and the Ghanaians go, "Where we gone get our fish from now? Where we gonna get our gold from now?" Anyway, so we were on the road and we got to the ah, Ivory Coast/Ghanaian border. People from the Ivory Coast said, "Y'all ain't comin' in here." (Laughs) "And the Ghanaians said, "You ain't comin' back in here." So, we stuck on the border, you know (Laughs) I don't know if it was for days or what, but we just camped out like thousands of people. The Ivory Coast wouldn't let you in and the Ghanaians wouldn't let you back. (Laughs) So finally, somebody let...some sanity came to somebody and they lifted the thing and we could go into Ivory Coast. Went to Abidjan for a coupla days. Our destiny was a place I said I never wanted to go in my life. It was Liberia. I said, "Why am I gonna go to Liberia? You know, it has Tubman, they the crazy people, there were all these Americans." But that was one reason we should go because, first of all, it was right next door to Guinea. We said we were gonna try to circle around and enter Guinea from Liberia now. We could have gone to Tanzania and that was one idea we had when we were in Ghana. We were tryin' to figure out, "Where are we goin' now? We can't be here in Ghana." So we said, "Let's got to Tanzania." But there was a Biafran War goin' on between Nigeria and the Ibo people. So that would have been...that was the only way you could get to...and we thought about goin' to Algeria, but that's too...you gotta cross the Sahara desert. (Laughs) "Can somebody get me through the Sahara Desert, please?"

AW: That woulda be a whole 'nother adventure. Some camels, turnbans...

EM: Really. So anyway, we decided to hit Liberia and ah, there was a large African American population there. We could speak English, finally fluently. Even though Ghana was more British-speakin' English. And ah, we were told that there were one or two good people there that we could count on. And we also had a better sense to get into Liberia from an English speakin' country into Guinea. Rather than try to speak French to the Guinea people, we could speak English to the Guinea people in Liberia 'cause they are...they have to speak English. Anyway, so that was all part of the rationale. So, when we got to Liberia, finally, there was a gentleman who owned a church...owned a church...he was the pastor of the largest Black church in Monrovia. Man, I gotta get his name again. He's from Louisville, Kentucky. He took us in and he had got us a place at the YMCA, one of his good friends. We didn't have to pay. We stayed at the 'Y' and he was workin' with us tryin'...we had several different jobs from ah, taxi driver to you name it. We tried to do all these kinda legitimate jobs. So, just to give you one example about bein' a taxi driver, in Liberia, you have to rent your cab. It might be seventeen dollars a week. So, you rent the cab, you give them you r seventeen dollars, you got the cab for a whole week. You can make your money and then the next week, you gotta pay

them seventeen more dollars. Now, the trick was, it takes a whole lotta quarters to make seventeen dollars. People pay you a dime and a nickel to get from one place to the next. So you stop...they wave you over, and they say, "Let me out here." I say, "Okay, that's twenty-five cents." They say, "No! That's not twenty-five cents, it's only a dime, here." We can't argue with them. I said, "Where is the boundary." There wasn't any meter. So they were all...we were all...they were all under payin' us. And it got so bad that Kwesi'd be in the backseat sleepin' and I'm drivin' and then when I get tired...we were doin' twenty-four hours a day and gas just about the same price it is now in Ghana...I mean in Liberia. Three dollars a gallon...a liter, or whatever it is. And so, we spent a lotta money for gas, not gettin' any money from the passengers, gotta pay these people seventeen dollars. If you come to the place and you got fifteen dollars, instead of seventeen dollars, now you gotta pay nineteen dollars the next week. So, it keeps gettin' up and up. (Laughs) You end up bein' a slave. All your money goin' to the cab. (Laughs) You ownin' these people thirty dollars now. Ah! (Laughs) It's a racket boy. They got you goin'. And then we were told, you know, "If you speak out against Tubman, you can go...be sent to prison."

AW: Oh Lord!

EM: So, we had a, you know, one time that told me that a man just said, "To hell with Tubman!" and the next thing you know, never heard of again, you know. (Laughs) It's a prison they have; it's called Bellow Yellow. It's notorious prison in the jungle where they say people go and nobody ever comes out of there. And so, next thing we wanted to do is we said, "Let's go to the diamond mines. We gone go make some diamonds." They said, "Look man, those people will kill you offa that." (Laughs) So we were 'bout to...we were gettin' ready to go to the diamond mines when they said, "Look, if you get a diamond, you're not gonna get back here with it." You know? (Laughs) "Who you gone sell it to?"

AW: Gotta pay off them cabs some kinda way.

EM: So, we had some dilemmas, but we were blessed by this brotha, who was the pastor of the church. I really admired him 'cause the Secretary of the United States came to Monrovia. His name was Rogers. I can remember his name, but I can't remember the preacher's name. And so, Rogers had his security and I sat in the church, just wanted to hear what Rogers was talkin' about and the...he...so Rogers said his little thing and then the preacher got up to make a closing remark. His whole thing was a sermon about David versus Goliath and he was saying, "Goliath is the United States and they tryna beat up these poor little people, but these poor little people gone knock they ass out." That's what his sermon was...so I fell in love with his speech and his temperament and his courage and he agreed to help us. So, he got us connections to get out of town. He helped raise money for us. When we decided that we wanted to go home, he blessed us, you know. He said, "Yeah, I'mma help you get home." And so he got us airplane tickets, one way to get outta there. So, he was the way we got back.

AW: Um...

EM: April of '70 that was after Kent State and after two of our friends in SNCC were killed by bombs, ah Che Payne and Ralph Featherstone. When we...when we saw these people we know were bein' killed, we said, "Look, we gotta get home and get our...the fight is over there. We stick out like a sore thumb tryna tell these people what to do over here, talkin' bout organize." "Organize what? You better organize your butt at home."

AW: Can you tell us about ah, Matthew Johnson?

EM: Yeah, Matthew, ah...was kinda like a charismatic person who popped outta the...popped on the scene in Dallas from nowhere. We were organizin' in Dallas in '67 and '68 and then when King was killed, a lotta people came outta the woodworks, and Matthew was one of those and he came, ah drivin' this old like a 1939 car...four-door that had ah, the panel on the side that you could stand on the side. The doors let up and it was like, "Cool man!" Everybody said, "Wow, that's a cool car." You know, it was like fancy, classic. And he had congo drums, you know, he could play 'em and he had a big ole afro and he had the *Nigger Bible*, you know. So, it was like, people was like, "Who is this guy?" Some people actually started doin' like this, you know. (Begins mocking a person bowing at someone's feet) Ah, and so he quickly rose to the top and his thing was, you know, "We gotta go back to Africa in our way we live. You know, we gotta practice communalism. But, the men run it and the women are our slaves," you know, that kinda thing. He never would bring his family around. It was like, they over there, his family and SNCC is like here. So he had a dual life goin'. He'd come with us and pose and practice all these things. And so, ah, during the ah, SNCC boycott of OK Supermarket, he was one of those sayin', "We just can't march around with little signs." He said, "We need to tear something up in this place, you know." So, that was one of the thoughts about that. The people were saying, "We need to demonstrate and have a protest about these stores that are ghetto-gouging us." And his thing was, "That's too Uncle Tomish, you know." So that militance was like, "We gotta go in here and tear up this place!" That led to the charges and all, and ah, his house was one of the houses that was raided for guns that he was also...I think he had like a twelve-gauge shotgun or an automatic shotgun they confiscated from him and they charged him with draft...with a fire arms violations, too. He died. Did you hear how he died?

AW: Can you tell us?

EM: Yeah, so, he died at the hands of his own son we were told, you know. Who, he just...all his sons were named him: Matthew Donald Johnson I, Matthew Donald Johnson II, Matthew Donald Johnson III. I think it was four of 'em. I think it was Matthew Donald Johnson I that put a bullet in his head because he was tellin' him he couldn't play football, that he had to cut his hair off his head, punchin' him, just humiliatin' him, he didn't want to be humiliated anymore. And so, out of fear, from what I understand, he stood over his father and shot him while he was sleep and then he ran because he thought his father was gonna get up, you know, and come and get him. So, it was sad.

AW: But he was...was he a co-leader in SNCC?

EM: Yeah, he was. He became like the co-chairperson in SNCC just by bolstering and posing as the super Black man, know it all.

AW: Can you tell us...I have a few...just a few more questions. Everybody tells the story of—not everybody, only two people have told the story—of Ruth Jefferson ah and Donald “Kwesi” Williams and I forget exactly what...how it went, but some kinda way, Kwesi had gotten put in prison, maybe you can fill in the blanks here, he got put in prison and Ruth went and said, “Let my man outta prison,” and they went to blows with the police and let him out? Do you remember that?

EM: I don’t know. It may be true. I don’t doubt it at all. Ruth was that kinda woman. She was very strong-willed and she loved Kwesi and she hated injustice, you know. So, it all ties together to me.

AW: Was she workin’ with SNCC specifically or was she just with the National Welfare Rights Organization?

EM: She was workin’ with SNCC and the National Welfare Rights Organization was the mobilizin’ arm for SNCC to reach the welfare women. So, she was a SNCC organizer whose special role was to mobilize the Welfare Rights Organization. So, it’s like the dual level thing. You have a core group that’s planning and doing strategic thoughts and making decisions and then you have arms of connections with the community and that was one of them.

AW: Just a few more questions. I wanted to know...

EM: Who told you that? I gotta find out more about Ruth Jefferson.

AW: Granny. Granny and Marilyn.

EM: Marilyn? Sound like Marilyn.

AW: ‘Cause they were good friends. Ah, can you tell us about infiltration in...at any level of the org...SNCC or of any...?

EM: Yeah, I think I said...I kinda touched on it...

AW: You touched on it...

EM: I think I touched on it a little bit when I talked about ah, agent provocateurs in ah, SNCC and Black Panthers.

AW: Was that the demise for SNCC in Dallas?

EM: No, I wouldn’t want to blame it one that because it is basically, if we had ah built a stronger foundation and had check and balances and good organization and had provided

for ample security and raisin' our awareness and had more forethought, we would have been around today. But if you're loosely organized and you're all-trusting and you're not checking and you're not matching words with deeds, things like that, then that's gonna lead to that. So, I can't blame it on that factor, but it takes advantage of the looseness in the organization, the lack of discipline. When you have that, you set yourself up for failure...for...you're courting disaster. For SNCC in Dallas...the first time I realized that just knowing...everybody knows or senses that we're bein' watched and that we are...our phones was tapped and things like that. But when you actually hear your voice on the telephone from a conversation you had, that's, you know, that's proof positive. And you see ah...when you're in a house meeting and somebody says, "Look, there's a man in the yard with a, you know, boom-mic," you know, and you have somebody standing there tryna hear your meeting with a boom-mic outside and you run and he run's off, that's another proof. When you see people—police—goin' through your trashcan, tryna get papers out and put 'em in bags and tryna take all your trashcans and put 'em away to research and to see what y'all talkin' 'bout and what paraphernalia might be in there to get information on you...when you see—when a police officer tells you, "I had a camera in your room. I know how you like to make love, McMillan," that kinda thing...I kinda think that was false and they were just being braggadocios, or whatever, but ah, you had those kinda things being put at you too. We were standing...I was standing on the corner, Fourth of July, I want to say 1968, the corner of Martin Luth—well now Martin Luther King and Atlanta. Squad cars pulled from all sides of the street and swooped on us and pulled guns on us and asked to see our I.D. and everything and said, "We heard there was gonna be a riot today on this corner. Y'all been plannin' that?" We...you know, we were talkin' about it. We might have been smokin' some dope and talkin', sellin' some wolf tickets. "Man, Fourth of July would be a real Independence Day." You know, something like that. But that's on July the third. On July the Fourth, the police are there on your butt tellin' you, "You not gone do that," kind of thing. So, it became obvious that it was super-intensive surveillance of us and as well as someone inside providin' with help, too. But you never could put your finger...and sometimes, bein' suspicious and not sure kinda led you to be paranoid about people, you know. So, you don't trust anybody. So, that became a paralyzing thing. So, we decided, "We're not gonna be paralyzed by fear. We're gonna do our thing. Let the chips fall where they may, you know." So, we kinda took that approach, because otherwise, we would have to put our heads down and be like, "Damn, it's hopeless, you know. You can't beat these people, you know." But I think good organizational savvy and taking forethought planning, careful planning and follow-through are ways to overcome and discipline inside is a way to overcome any kind of agent provocateur. Ah, there was a...examples of people ah, you know, snitchin' and we realize now lookin' back at Curtis Gaines and I always thought Matthew Johnson was a plant, you know, myself. But now I realize that it was our own stupidity that let someone just by their appearance or lack of substance become a front because they look the part, you know, or they talked the part, but that's a lesson for us even today. With ah, Lee Otis Johnson in Houston, he got a thirty-year sentence for one stick of marijuana because a person he thought was a friend sold him a joint, you know. So, posin' as a friend and then tellin' the police, "Yeah, I gave him a dollar or yeah, he gave me a dollar for this joint," and then that's sales. And in those days, that would get him thirty-years in prison, you know. I guess we could go on

with...with...it became even a mental health question too because ah, man, when you are in the battle front and you are fighting and you are serious about the fight, time ah...you can abuse time, you don't get enough sleep, or you start hearin' people say different things that you run with. I think Huey, Huey Newton, for example, really became a paranoid, egomaniac. In Dallas...I'm sorry, in Austin, he came to Austin, I think this was in maybe '71, and ah, there was some young Panther chapter in Austin and the young brotha there who was real popular with the people in Austin, he put together a club to make money and give it to the Panther Party as well as organize against the police and do flyers and have community meetings. So this brotha was doin' it on may different fronts. His name is gonna come to me soon and anyway, ah, and Huey P. Newton is goin' through the country checkin' on, Black Panther chapter parties and what they're doin'. So when he comes to Austin, ah, when ah, ah, Huey comes to the club, they asked him to play some music for Huey and instead of playin' music for him, they played music for this brotha. They played this song called "Mighty, Mighty Brother" and that was their theme song for this brotha. When Huey heard that, he said, "Look, this ain't it. I'm the...I'm the...I'm Huey P. Newton, you know. Y'all should be at your feet, bowin' and scrapin' and prayin' to me." You know, so he took these brothas outta the club they put 'em in a hotel room and beat 'em senseless, tortured them with electricity and stuff, tied 'em and said, "Look who do you think you are? You can't override Huey." You know, that kinda thing...that kinda maniac stuff...beat him up really bad, you know and told them they wouldn't be a chapter for the Panther Party 'cause they disrespected Huey. You know, things like that, that head-swellin' ego-mania. And I think that they did somethin' to Huey when he was in prison. He was in a prison called Vacaville, V-A-C-A-V-I-L-L-E, Vacaville. And that was a prison where they experimented with drugs and ah, behavior modification on prisoners. And so, there's thoughts and talks and tales about how they experimented on, on Huey. You know, it's the same thing they use against terrorists: sleep deprivation, I won't say water torture, I don't know what all they did, but more sophisticated things of tryna get him to break his spirit and break his will. So, I think that has a lot to do with it, too. Plus, he...we all have human frailties so, whatever those are, they'll try to exploit them and play on them. So, if you gotta big head and you like to hear your name called, they'll find a way to use that against you, you know what I'm sayin'. So that could have been a part of that. And then, so, I didn't realize that the federal prison had so much sophisticated means either until I was in the federal prison. In the state penitentiary, they just beat you and lock you up and throw you in a cell naked. That's it, you know...or shoot you down. In the federal penitentiary, they had, like one brotha I knew who was very outspoken they put him in...they took him to Missouri prison where they...which is the Springfield, Missouri Prison, which is a hospital and what they did was, they stripped him naked, they put him in a cell that was cold and they threw water on him and then they loaded him with thorazine, which is a paralyzin' drug. So, basically, he just laid there and caught pneumonia and his autopsy showed that he died of pneumonia, but then they were surveyin' what caused the pneumonia. But you know, like paralyzed him, put him on thorazine to where he can't move, he can't talk, all he can do is move his eyes, you know. So, that's how they get rid of you there in the prison system, in the federal since. It's sophis—and that was in the seventies so you can imagine goin' on there now. But, I got away from agent

provocateurs, but it was prevalent, and I can't really blame the demise of the movement for that. It was lack of internal control and foresight and wisdom.

AW: Can you give us some more of the names of the SNCC officials?

EM: SNCC officials then?

AW: In your...in the Tex—in the Dallas...

EM: Dallas?

AW: Uh huh.

EM: Ah, Michael...what's Michael's last name? Mike Dodd and Matthew Johnson were cohorts and we had ah, Michael Morris, Mike Morris who was the head of our SMU division and was out of Hamilton Park, he's till around. Black Ed and Eddie Harris...ah, Eddie Harris was the editor of our newspaper the *Black Disciple* and Black Ed was just ambassador at-large, doin' it all. Ah, John "Doo-Doo" Woods was ah, one of our officers. Fuji Mama another...

AW: What's her real name?

EM: I can't think of it...Fuji...Mama may be able to tell you what it is. But, Fuji Mama was a extraordinary sista who was doin' our women's work ah, actively. Taft Baker, naw, she came on in the seventies, I'm sorry, can't use her name. Ah, there was another sista, who was my woman she was like workin' downtown in a as like a what are the people that take blood and stuff? What are they called? Like a feebologist or somethin' like that? I met her down there and next thing you know, we were a couple.

AW: Who was that?

EM: Diana is all I can remember right now, sorry.

AW: Was it Meredith?

EM: Who?

AW: Was it Diane Meredith?

EM: It could have been.

AW: 'Cause when I was readin' some of the papers...

EM: I would love to meet and see how she's doin'...

AW: When I was reviewin' some of the papers that name was up...she was the secretary.

EM: Okay, yeah. That was her. Ah, I got a terrible story to tell about that, but I'm not gonna go there today. Ah, who else am I forgetting? Ah, we had Fred Bell, Charles Beasley, ah whew...Jesse Aredondo, at one time or Jesus Aredondo. Ah, you gotta interview...Black Ed can call these names off like that (Snaps his finger) I'm sorry, I can't.

AW: That was good though.

EM: That was good? You got enough?

AW: Uh huh.

EM: For now thank you (Laughs)

AW: Thank you so much. Anything else you would like to add? 'Cause those are all the questions I have.

EM: If I think of something else, I'll try to come back but, ah I think that's...can you put it off, just for a second?

AW: Uh huh. (Turns camera off)

(Camera comes back on and interview resumes)

AW: Okay.

EM: Somebody characterized the ah...that was Dr. James Lawson...characterized the movement as from civil rights or human rights movement for non-violent struggle was from 1953 to 1973, but I think we can say from, effectively, from 1960 to 1970 was really a high tide of resistance and a high tide of movement activity against the war, for civil rights, against poverty, for human rights, and building international alliances. And I think at the core of that movement was the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee as a drivin' force, and it's...and it's gone, you know. So all we have now are remnants or historical notes, or maybe some papers, but we don't have any institutions, per say...any concrete evidence, in terms of monuments or organizations or institutions that persist today that represent that, per say. But, I think we can say that the spirit of SNCC still lives through the new generations that stand up and fight for rights and ah, carry on the struggle today. And even though we may not have freedom schools that were built in 1964 in Mississippi still in existence today, people who attended those freedom schools are now in position of education and authors of books and are parents of kids who carry on. So, I'm not really ah, disappointed or downtrodden because you don't see S-N-C-C emblazoned somewhere today on some monument or in some facility or even in some books or on somebody's lips, but it's just...to me some how it's just become a part of the air, a part of the spirit, a part of the existence; wherever there is struggle, there you find the remnants and the fires and the embers of SNCC still burning brightly. That's it.

AW: Okay. Thank you, sir.

(Tape Ends)

(Tape resumes)

AW: AOs you were saying 1975- 1977?

EM: Yeah, I'll probably more accurately say '76 through '78 maybe. Ah, but I was convince, after talkin' with people I've known for many years, even relatives who were involved in the struggle that ah, you know, we can really channel our energies and make some divisive inroads by forming a revolutionary party, ah, with some of the best minds in the country, some of the most experienced people...activist...community-minded ah, revolutionary people that work together. Revolution is gone happen, you know, by chance. They don't happen just from ah, scattered energies just comin' up and spontaneously makin' revolution, but you have to organize and be strategic and really be disciplined to organize the fight effectively...do well to attack the sources and the root causes of exploitation and racism by organizin' a revolutionary struggle and then, you know to sustain that struggle is one thing, and to be victorious in that thing is another. And then, to be able to capture power, and to make the promises that you hold dear to your hear become actualized, that's another whole struggle. But, little by little, by bein' true and committed to the science and the art of revolutionary change, learning from international revolutionary experience from people who came before you, and bein' able to...you have the tools and the methods for analyzin' it and then translatin' it to a language where people can grasp, put their arms around it and embrace and internalize is a, is a challenge. And so, I accepted that challenge and I joined with people in an international sense, comin' together for the struggle. We formed the Communist Part, Marxist-Leninist and the reason we said the Communist Party, M-L was because there was a Communist Party, Communist Party, USA that was formed in the twenties here in the United States that was an out growth of the Russian revolution and we felt, just from experience and practical awareness that the CP-USA had betrayed the struggle. It was about perpetuating itself—that it had not spoken to the needs and heart and soul of the interest of African American people and out aspirations, let alone other oppressed people locked in the United States. So, we decided that we had to be in opposition to that sellout ah, institution and build a new one and really stay true to the science of Marxist-Leninism. We didn't really make this a public statement. This was a well thought out effort to really see the long-term struggle and really develop education and ah, capacities within our community that could ah, carry struggle forward to the revolutionary change that is needed.

AW: Can you tell us some of the programs that you all were instrumental in endorsing and carrying out?

EM: Yeah, we were involved in several mass struggles around unemployment issues. There was a ah, Fight-Back Campaign; we marched on Washington under the auspices of Fight-Back. We were callin' for, you know, jobs and income. More jobs for people and

better income for people. So, we fought that struggle from, you know, coast-to-coast and united many people around it and built organizations that helped people fight for and achieve unemployment benefits, better jobs, or in organizing strikes and in unions that could be able to speak to the needs of the people more and be more representative of the workers' actual needs. Ah, we got involved in support of the Southern Conference Educational Fund in the south, which is known as SCEF. Ah, just many different ways and others as well, but those are two very popular organizations that we got behind. I would say the Fight-Back organization was pretty much just pretty much well-organized from the CPML, period, and it trickled down from that, whereas SCEF and other organizations were already born and goin' well, were doin' progressive things and we got behind them and supported them to be able to do more in the communities and so those were a couple examples. In Dallas, not really got anything goin' on that level at all. So, we were slow to get involved. We tried to reach out to the postal workers and with automobile workers as well as in different community struggles especially in the African American community. But, the organization ah, didn't really come together as we had hoped. And as I said, by 1979, 1980, it was on it's death bed, you know.

AW: So, did you all start in Dallas, or were you an off-shoot of different chapters nationwide?

EM: There were people from around the country, but it wasn't a physical headquarters. We finally built an office in Chicago and we had a newspaper that was published in Chicago and that was the headquarters for the organization. But, we didn't really have visible chapters of it. So, people were from different parts of the world, from as far west as Hawaii, you know, as far north as Maine and people from all stripes and colors—Native Americans and all, different parts of the country. But, they were most involved in their local struggles, but we learned and wanted to work together as one aim, one will, and one heart. So, the leadership of CPML took ideas from the people involved in the various and different struggles and then took those ideas and gave it back to them in a more clarified form, through the newspaper, through manifestos, through statements, through action items that they would support. And so, it was just ah, I don't know, it was just kinda an organization of will and an organization of ideas and a plan of action that was behind our organization in the different cities, states, and even rural areas across the country and within the United League, I was one person representing the interests of progressive-minded people through the CPML. So, my aim there was not only to do local work in the Delta region, but to be able to, by my example, show that there is a better way to organize and fight as well as be able to reach out to others to organize revolutionary struggle within. So, you wouldn't be satisfied with just electin' county commissioner. You wouldn't be satisfied with gettin' a new policeman—a Black man in a policeman's uniform, but the struggle was far beyond that so encouragin' those little bitty steps, but tryna keep true to revolutionary objects was my aim and my job and my heartfelt interests and really sayin', "The movement has to go forward to really get to the root causes of oppression." And that's what the CPM was speakin' to. So, we combine daily acts fighting on the local level doin' small things: from helpin' somebody be ah, prevented from bein' evicted from their job or from...bein' evicted from their home/fired from their job or being reinstated or winning their unemployment insurance and things

like that, but that was a way of building confidence and building knowledge and building experience for the larger struggle, which is not completed yet. (Laughs)

AW: It's never completed.

EM: Uh huh...

AW: How did you think a study of this nature could be of value?

EM: Okay, I think this study could be of value to not just me but to a lot of people. I think we're talkin' about forty, forty-five years ago of experience during a pivotal period in America's history and as you point out yourself, Ava, you can't find anything written about the Dallas experience. So I think this would be a great way to fill that gap and to help bring clarity to the minds of young people even today of the steps that were taken in the past, the victories and successes as well as the failures and downfalls of some of the activities and it helped people so there can be a sharin' of lessons learned. If there were any best practices, I wish you would help discover what were some of the methods that may have been used and might be applicable to today. So, just kinda a way of passin' the baton on. This historical piece can be a way of servin' the future as well by clarifyin' ah acts and deeds and proving a sense of what kind of lessons we have learned. So, I have high hopes for it. You also asked the question about what did we get outta Houston? Ah, Dallas is an inland city, kinda conservative and not much of a tradition of struggle, whereas Houston was more of an international city, a blue-collar town with a lot of history for labor organizing: from dock workers to ah, factory workers in the town. And so, there was a great deal of respect or tradition for that. Then you had a Black university located in the middle of the community in the inner-city, next door to another university that had a mixed population. And so, they had that kinda dynamics. For me, personally, it was a help to me because I came from a background of working in rural or semi-rural area: working in Southwest Georgia and Alabama and Mississippi, little counties like Tallahatchie and walkin' door-to-door and ridin' a mule to walk to somebody's house to register to vote or organizing in small little towns. But the big metroplex like Dallas and various different communities and the various different traditions in an urban setting was something I had kinda lost a sense of. So, I actually hitchhiked from Dallas to Houston ah, and in those days it was not nearly so dangerous. I hitchhiked from Dallas to Austin, spent a coupla nights there and slept at the "Y" with friends and little campus housing. And then hitchhiking from Austin from Houston and comin' to Fifth Ward, Texas a stayin' at the home of Lee Otis Johnson, who welcomed me in his home and we spent at least seventy-two hours except for three or four hours sleepin' now and then we were just immersed in conversation. He just practically unloaded his whole brain from the history of Africa to experiences of younger people in the inner-city today, in those days. And so, ah just capturing all that 'cause I never did have somebody just...or never even read in-depth the rich history of Africa or even began to connect that in a way he had with the history of Black people in this country and just the whole prospective he used from just down-to-earth, lively grassroots talkin' not just high, pie-in-the-sky intellectualism, but really something you can grasp, put your hands on really helped me to return home to Dallas feelin' I was better armed and better prepared to immerse myself in the struggle

for Black Power....connections between other communities and Dallas that helped us to interact and get support and information and resources back and forth. So, within the city we had colleges like SMU, Bishop, which is now Paul Quinn, we also had resources and individuals and activists who were on the Denton campuses: Texas Women's University as well as North Texas State, which is now University of North Texas and then in East Texas we had people who were students at East Texas State University in Commerce, Texas. So, the interaction and support between those was pretty fluid. Ah, we would be called on to go to different campuses and speak. Those students would come to Dallas and ah get a part of our meetings and activities or there would be ah, letters and phone call exchanges or articles in their campus newspapers could as well be written about us and they would make contribution to some of the periodicals here. So there was kind of a good, loose relationship, affiliation between the individuals at those campuses that began to gel and form into like chapter-like branches from ah, SNCC into East Texas State and Texas Women's University and North Texas State to become even Black Panther Party chapters later on. Ah so, one thing we really tried to do in the early sixties—in the mid sixties, around 1967, was to pull together a statewide network of youth organizations and it mainly came from the campuses as well as a few community organizations in Houston. There was ah, Texas Southern University, University of Houston, University of Texas at San Antonio, SMU and TCU and other institutions, East Texas State sent representatives to Dallas and I think it was December of 1967 to form what we called the First Texas Black Student Conference. And so, it led to a good discussion about what we had in common, what were some visionary things that we wanted to accomplish and talk about different activities and actions we could take and identify issues that kinda linked us altogether. We had people like Lee Otis Johnson, who was a SNCC leader in Houston, DeLloyd Parker, who was the founder of Shapes Community Center, Esther King who was one of the ah, student organizers at Texas Southern University campus, who participated with us as well as people from San Antonio. Ah, I'm tryna think of a coupla names, I can't think of 'em off the top of my head though who came to us and Austin, too. Don't let me forget Austin. UT and Huston-Tillotson College, too. So, Austin, Houston, San Antonio, Dallas were the primary areas for organizing movement activity from the streets to the campuses whether it's from the campuses to the streets and that was a dynamic, too because we found that we had to involve the community and that students couldn't be ivory tower thinkers and see themselves separated, although there were some pretty self-contained issues related to the campuses as well like electin' a Black homecoming queen or beginning to speak about the ah, school mascots at the campuses that were racially inflammatory or derogatory. So, those were the kinda things that may have affected the campuses more than others. Even some policies regarding Apartheid in South Africa where the University of Texas was sending millions of dollars to support an illegal regime spilled over in the community as well. So, the campus-community relationship was a dynamic one and we found students even droppin' out of the campus, joining the street struggles and seeing the university and the college as being kind of a dead-end street or something that was isolated from the movement and they wanted to get more involved with the people's movement. The Black Power Movement hit Texas first in Houston and Austin and that was through the Houston SNCC chapter and the university students at Texas in Austin brought Stokely Carmichael to the state and helped excite and gear-up the movement among the Black activists as well as lay out

a more-clear line of approaches to the struggle. Methods for resolving and entangling some of the middle forces from being under complete control of the power structure to becoming more independent in their expressions. So we had a good start and I would say that was early as the summer of 1966 when that took place. In Dallas, we found our most outgoing opposition from a few church leaders. Reverend S. M. Wright was one of them who led the Inter-denominational...no, what was it called? It may have been the Inter-denominational Pastors' Association and their call was that we were rushin' the country too fast and to hell and that we were disrespectful to the past and we were destructive more than constructive. There were ah, government leaders...we had very few elected government leaders at that time and so, we didn't really find too much opposition at all because we didn't have it. There was Reverend Holmes for example, who was a newly elected state representative and was really for us and really gave support for us. Ah, we had ah, district attorneys who were charged with prosecuting us. The chief district attorney at that time's name was Henry Wade and he had assistant Das who were called to bring charges against us and actively prosecuted us. There was a particular justice of the peace in Dallas that was notorious for letting out western style justice or just law west of the Pecos and even just law west of the Mississippi and that was Justice Richburg. I think his initials were W for William M. A. Richburg and he was a justice of the peace, which was an elected position. We had people who actually filed charges against us for making threats quote-unquote and they asked for personal protection from us from the state, a peace bond against us. There was a head of the security agency his name is Willie; his first name is Willie. His last name is Lithicum who actually filed charges in the justice of the peace court and said we threatened him because he was askin' us not to distribute leaflets of literature in areas he was contracted to protect. And those are all that come to my mind. So, I think our main obstacle was ideas rather than people. Ideas like "You cannot fight City Hall. You cannot win against white people. We are outnumbered. They are superior. They had better resources, better thinkers." So, it was like a negative, slave mentality that was capturin' us more than anything else like, "Don't you dare speak out against the system. You can't win and they are always right." So those kind of things were more prevalent and dominant in the Black community than they are today. Thank goodness.

AW: Would you like to add anything else?

EM: Nope, that's all for me.

AW: Okay.

EM: (Imitates Porky Pig) Th...th...th...that's all folks!

Interview Ends

Interview with Diane Ragsdale

Ava Wilson (AW): So, I wanna thank you formally for doin' this interview. It means so much to me because ah, I'm doin' my master's thesis at Temple University and when speaking about the Civil Right Movement and taking classes on the Civil Rights Movement, on the Black Power Movement, or any movement in the sixties, our region kinda gets lost in the mix. It gets left out and people don't know a lot about what was goin' on here in the city—what was goin' on in the state of Texas at all. So, I decided because I know all of you and I have grown with you as my role models and my teachers, that I wanted to highlight you all and really immortalize our movement here in the city. So, I could not do this without Ms. Diane Ragsdale.

Diane Ragsdale (DR): Thank you very kindly, my sista.

AW: You bein' such a great fore-bearer of our liberation. So, if you would for the camera, just state your name and I'm gonna ask you just one leading questions and then we'll do a series of probes as we go along.

DR: My name is Diane Ragsdale.

AW: Okay, and Ms. Ragsdale, if you could just tell us about your introduction into the movement and ah, what you particularly did.

DR: Well, first of all, I have to say that my mother was a tremendous influence on my life and ah, at age eleven I was a member of the NAACP Youth Council and ah, so, in my ah, that was in the mid-sixties and so my mother put me in three institutions really. My sister and I, not just me, my sister Charlotte, who has gone on home to be with God, was also involved in the movement, but our mother put us in three institutions. One was the church. Our church was always involved in the movement on one issue or another ah, Kirkwood Temple C. M. E., Christian Methodist Episcopal. The other was the NAACP Youth Council under the leadership of Juanita Craft, and of course the other institution was the Maria Morgan YWCA. Maria Morgan being an African American female for which the YWCA was named. Anyway, those three institutions, the church, the NAACP Youth Council under the leadership of Juanita Craft, as well as the Maria Morgan YWCA, all of these institutions ah, shaped my life ah, and gave me a ah a reason to be involved in the movement for justice. So that's very important. Ah we ah, we continued with what the church, the ministers or the pastor at the time was always sayin' we needed to be involved in this issue or that issue, whether it be affordable housing. It might be a police abuse issue or an issue related to a protest on a college campus or the NAACP Youth Council bein' involved in a number of Jim Crow issues at that time. And so ah, really I was eleven and Charlotte, my sister was thirteen and it was very important for us to be a part of ah, the struggle at a young age. That is what my mother wanted and I'm glad she did because it gave us a good grounding in the movement for justice and really gave us an appreciation for what others had done on our behalf. Excuse me, is he too loud?

AW: Ah, I can close the door.

DR: It's more for you than me, but I just don't wanna...because he can just bless his heart, 'cause he will talk louder and louder and louder. (Laughs) He's talkin' on the speakerphone with the door open. But anyway, the movement as a young teenager at eleven years old, really not a teenager yet, but as a young child was a movement that really gave me tremendous grounding and tremendous appreciation for what we had, for what others had done, the bridges that others had built really. And, of course, we progressed and I continued to stay in the movement and that's another thing. It was a start, but it was also the start of a continuum. And I am who I am in significant part because of those three institutions, of course startin' from my mother, you can call the family an institution if you desire, but of course institutions beyond the family were the church, the NAACP Youth Council, as well as the Maria Morgan YWCA. I used to walk from door-to-door with my mother ah, to solicit Maria Morgan memberships. I used to ah, walk as a part of the NAACP Youth Council, I was soliciting memberships as a student at James Madison High School. I'm a graduate of James Madison and so my role was to solicit memberships with teachers and students alike. The ah, and so...but also as a student and talkin' about the beginnin' and dealin' with a continuum I met Al Lipscomb along the way. He had the ah, I'm pretty much so still a student now, and ah, probably sophomore or junior year and Councilman Lipscomb or the Honorable Al Lipscomb had an organization called the South Dallas Information Center right there located on Pennsylvania. And so, I was, I became involved in that, once again, as a part of this continuum. Every issue in town was comin' through the South Dallas Information Center. Good God almighty! It could have been utilities turned off. Ah, you know, rats or rodents in people's apartments or, you know, housing that was significantly substandard. It could have been, once again, police abuse. I could have been voter registration, voter education, which is also what I picked up at the NAACP Youth Council but as a part of that continuum with those institutions, I met, you know, councilman Lipscomb, which really began to really enhance my understanding even more so with respect to the struggle. And then, talking about this continuum, I began to participate in the SCLC and we had a local Southern Christian Leadership Conference where I participated in various protests and marches and participated in the Safeway boycott at that time for poor quality of food and just basic racism and we had a very successful boycott with respect to Safeway. Along with that continuum, my god-brother by the name of Skip Shockley, who lived across the street from me, was a member of the Black Panther Party, and so I began to sell papers for the Black Panthers and participate in...

AW: How old were you at that time?

DR: Probably...early on...probably about eighteen at that time.

AW: Okay. You were young.

DR: I think I was barely a freshman, but it was really before I went to college to be quite frank with you. But anyway, so Skip was involved in the Panther Party and so I

participated in a number of P. E. classes or Political Education classes and the Free Pest Control Program with him. So I guess I'm tryna say here, Ava, is that it's all about starting young on some level and beginning to become grounded in that liberation struggle through education, through your seniors, meaning not necessarily senior citizens, but your elders. Ah, and also beginning to develop a better appreciation for what they've done and a better appreciation with respect to what you need to do and a better understanding. And so, that continuum was a pretty awesome inspiration for my grounding. So as a result of that, when ah, when I got to college I was still involved in the movement. I was a part of the student movement at TWU at that time a part of the student movement, but sistas before me had actually established an NAACP on campus. And so, I actually went to TWU, my first year was 1970, but sistas had already begun a movement to create the NAACP, which was wonderful. Because what happened was we just used the NAACP to leverage our movement, you know. We didn't have to create a ah, the Black Student Union because we had the NAACP on campus. And so, I got to be up under the sistas who had done that before me. And so, ah, that was a wonderful thing and we had various protests, always about African American History courses, African American professors, African American professors and tenure, etcetera. And so, these were issues of the day, if you will, which I think is still relevant today when it comes to what college campuses really have, continue to have, African American History courses, and classes or curriculum and really the subject matter, if you will. How many have degrees in it where you can actually get a degree? And so, that was a struggle of the past but it's still a relevant and current struggle for today. So ah, and so, a number of teachers who not only were professors, but professors with tenure and so, all of these things were relevant at that time and once again it continues to be relevant right today. So anyway ah, they put the NAACP on social probation. They said we were too ugly, too hostile, too bad, but they created something that never happened before because we were...we attempted to show ah, the Angela Y. Davis—this is during that time when she was accused of, of, ah, really of murder when she wasn't even there and the judges...of the judge, etcetera. I think it was Jonathan at that time, Jonathan Jackson as we called, who in essence moved forward and went into the courtroom and began to shoot people. George's brother, younger brother. So, we wanted to show a film of Angela and course it never did show. The brothas of the Black Panther Party in Dallas brought down, brought it to Denton for us to show it and I don't know what was goin' on, we felt right now in that given classroom, we felt that they had messed with the equipment. We really did feel that we had been sabotaged. We had planned it. The Deltas from North Texas had come over, because she was a Delta, and is a Delta. And so, we had really organized it and it was wonderful, we had standing room only and good God, we were sabotaged! So the young brothas who actually had retained the film were ah, coiled by the campus police, by the city police and they had to sit down and be drilled and drilled. He's here ah, Marvin ah, Marvin, I can't think of his name. Marvin is his slave name. Marvin Walton is his slave name.

AW: Baba Odinga.

DR: Yeah, Odinga! (Laughs)

AW: I interviewed him earlier in the week.

DR: Odinga, right. And so, anyway he brought the film down and he and Skip Shockley and Smitty and so they cornered him and it just made no sense whatsoever. And so anyway, the bottomline: they put us, the NAACP, on social probation. And so, in essence we could not operate. So, in essence, we were defunct. But, to make a long story short, with respect to that, shortly thereafter my mother said, “Diane, I want you to transfer to Dallas Baptist” is what happened. So I really graduated from Dallas Baptist in Nursing and went to TWU for Physical Therapy. But ah, Mama became concerned really to be quite frank with you. So, I transferred to Dallas Baptist. The ah, and ah, and we still was involved. We still had a nice movement on Dallas Baptist’s campus. It wasn’t as hostile, but it was easier to get those conservative Christians to do better than those people at a public school. I means as it relates to moving forward with tenure here and African American History program, right, it was easier gettin’ things done at Dallas Baptist, a conservative Christian institution, than a public institution called TWU. But anyway, ah, so, it was a difficult time at TWU, transferred to Dallas Baptist and continued to ah, be involved in the movement. Any questions you want to ask? I’ve been goin’ on and on.

AW: Yes, sure. I was really enthralled with what you were saying.

DR: Thank you, very much.

AW: Everything is so timely and some of the questions I have, you’ve already answered.

DR: That’s okay, I can elaborate on those.

AW: Sure, I’d like you to elaborate on the actions taken against the NAACP at TWU’s campus and you specifically.

DR: Okay, good, good. The ah, as it relates to the ah, ah, NAACP Youth Council, once again they created a, should I say, they created a ah, what is that? A...they created something that had never taken place before that was to put an organization on social probation, a penalty or whatever you want to call it—some punitive action. Ah, and they put us on social probation and said it was defunct at that time. What they, in essence, ah, they actually called my mother and shared with her without reservations, “She is creatin’ problems” dah-dah-dah, “She’s not going to graduate from here.” I mean, you know, she was ah, they ask my mother to come to the school and talk to them with me there, with her present and said, “We want her to transfer.”

AW: So they said, “You have to leave”?

DR: Right I had to transfer and ah, ah, you know, of course to be quite frank with you, I guess we could have challenged it at the time, but my mother was more concerned about me completing my education and so, and also, to be quite frank with you, she was more concerned about, “I don’t know these white folks.” (Laughs) “You know, this is not

something I want to confront” to be quite frank with you. So yeah, that’s what happened. That’s how I got to Dallas Baptist.

AW: When you went to Dallas Baptist, did they know about your reputation?

DR: I think so. I think so.

AW: So did they already have something predetermined about you?

DR: This is the thing, no, no they were ah, if I have to be quite honest about this, they were glad to receive me. If I have to be quite honest about this. Glad might be an exaggeration, but they received me well and, matter of fact, they were on the proactive side. They began to talk about they offer, which was smart of them to be quite frank with you. They wanted to, what’s the word? Disarm.

AW: Right, because they didn’t want you bringin’ you people up there.

DR: But I could imagine that TWU, we had the Deltas, the Deltas at that time had a militance about them. It wasn’t just about Greek this and Greek that. They marched in there like they were sistas to see the Angela Davis film. What I’m sayin’ is when you look at that and when you look at—what’s Marvin’s name?

AW: Odinga.

DR: Odinga! When you look at Odinga and other members of the Panther Party comin’ forward to bring ah, to bring the film, just the whole ah, aura, you know, the whole presence of everything was ah, was not a ah, did not make them feel comfortable. I’m talkin’ about TWU. That’s right. I’m glad you went back to that because they asked for a meetin’ with my mother. They called her and asked her to come to Denton and she came to Denton and sat down. I never will forget. The dean, the president, the dean of students said, “We need to find somewhere else for this girl. That was an experience. That was a good experience for me.

AW: Did you experience other backlashes from them before that time? Before they said, “Oh, we want you to transfer”?

DR: Ah, well, I don’t recall to be quite frank with you because we were doin’—well, we were accused of doin’ something we didn’t do and that was ah, we lived in Gwen Tower, which is one of the largest towers on TWU’s campus and ah, I think they accused us of defacin’ the equipment, but they didn’t act against us in anyway. They just raised questions about the president’s oil painting being somewhat defaced. But I don’t think some students went up there and defaced that man’s paintin’. But anyway, the first...when they really began to see the organization as a threat was when we really stepped it up and tried to get people exposed to a fair and just trial for Angela Davis and that was the whole purpose behind that. We wanted to be a part of that national movement, to in essence, ensure that Angela received a fair and just trial.

AW: And so, the students were receptive, Black and white?

DR: Well, a few white. Mostly African American, no question about that.

AW: Moving forward in you life, um, this is really good. You go so well in chronological order with everything so it's goin' really well.

DR: Thank you.

AW: Moving forward, at Dallas Baptist or thereafter, how did you maintain your liberating spirit? Like how did you continue in the struggle?

DR: Well, what's interesting is my mother was always continuing to be an inspiration, you know. She knew what had taken place, you know. So she was always forever inspiring...my sister was inspiring, too, you know, Charlotte. But we were involved in the struggle, so at this point and time, see I'm at Dallas Baptist and so for the most part I'm based in Dallas now. I'm not on campus. I'm at the house. I'm at home, and so, I'm not on campus. And so whatever was takin' place in the community I was involved in it. So I was even closer to the urban politics, in particular, Dallas, which helped me and perhaps even broadened me even moreso.

AW: What organizations were you involved in?

DR: Well, we had the Black Women's United Front with Kathy and Jackie and Mama Mack. We had ah, we certainly had the, even at that time it was still with SCLC, Southern Christian Leadership Conference was there. And ah, then I don't want to belie the fact that I was still in the Black student movement on campus at Dallas Baptist. While I didn't stay on campus, I was still very much so a ah, very much so involved.

AW: Can you talk about your time with Black Women's United Front? Because you're being very modest, right now. The people are not gonna know that...well...

DR: No, no, no, help me out now.

AW: You're being very modest, which is a great quality that you have, but people need to know that Ms. Diane Ragsdale, you the woman in Dallas. You are the woman. So, I just want you to talk about your time in Black Women's United Front and some of the things that you did that were integral for the organization, whether it was organizing or just being on the ground, educating women.

DR: The key...let me deal with the South Christian Leadership Conference and then I'll delve into that because we had one active for a number of years here and I was very much so involved in it. My sister was, too. We h, so we had a number of marches, particularly anti-police abuse, ah, affirmative action marches as well and also the whole issue of affordable, decent housing for all. That was always a ah, a legitimate cry, "Affordable,

decent housing for all, fundamental human rights for all.” And so, there are good and bad apples, talkin’ ‘bout police officers. “You know, we now there are good and bad apples in every profession, but ah, that includes the police department, but what happens throughout this country, you don’t have any bad police officers. So you always have to bring that forward that we’re not doing a wholesale indictment against police, but there are problem officers. So anyway, with SCLC and as a part of my teen life and early young adult life, that’s where I was exposed to Peter Johnson and Joe Callahan and Arthur Graves and others and Bill Stoner, by all means. That was important to us. I was exposed, later on to a young woman by the name of Joan Long who had established an organization—not had established, but ah, was a part of an organization called Black Women’s United Front and really, to be quite frank with you, we believed that ah, ah that we were anti-economic exploitation and that where there’s greed and selfishness ah, somebody gotta be the victim of somebody else’s greed. Ah, somebody gotta be the victim of somebody else’s selfishness. That’s fundamental and the organization was anti-racism and anti-sexism. And so, we would hold different panel discussions around those issues and ah, ah, so what we recognized is we had a...in order to elevate the issue of sexism, we would have different workshops and seminars and panel discussions and then in order to help to address the issue of economic exploitation, we had a food co-op that was consistent for a while, for a number of years. We were a part of a collaborative called PBT, People Buying Together. So we had that process going and we had to ah, recognize that ah, exploitation is a reality and people are used to economically gain—other people are used in order to gain and so anyway what we did was try to create various programs to kinda minimize that adverse affect. And the Panther Party and the Black Women’s United Front, in particular, moved me to another part of that continuum, which was institution-building and organizing. And so ah, and one of those ah, key elements of institution-building was a food co-op initially, because if we are to address the issues and concerns that affect our lives, as African people, then we have to develop those institutions that address those problems. So, whatever those problems are, then we need some type of institution and then we need to connect together to leverage the impact. And so, ah, that’s what’s important, the institutional-building and ah, as a part of workin’ with the Panther Party, you know, that’s where we had the Free Breakfast Program or Survival Programs and that was an early, like I said, the was the Panther Party and the Black Women’s United Front helped me in a significant way to do what I considered to be critical analysis. And to, in essence, to begin to look at the evils of capitalism if I just might so frank about this. And so ah, the oversimplification of that explanation is, we got greed and selfishness, somebody gotta be the victim of that. So somehow, in order to prevent that greed and selfishness from affecting people in a terrible way, we need to somehow determine how we are going to force the sharing of the revenue. You know, that’s what’s so terrible about it. It’s unfortunate that you have to set up structures to force people to share. You have to set up structures to ah, not be selfish or whatever. So when I began to read *Black Panther Speaks* many years ago it was just a series of writers. Matter of fact I went to N’COBRA, the last N’COBRA National Convention here and there was a book—here in Dallas that is—and there was a book *Black Panther Speaks*, I had lost mine and I purchased it again. I said, “My Lord, brotha, where did you get this book? This book here I read and I know it had to be in ‘69. You know, this is one of my kinda early books that made the light bulb go off.” It

was on the haves and the have-nots and why we got these wide disparities, you know, when it comes to income. And so, there is so much when it comes to exploitation, when it comes to selfishness, and so much greed and the haves and the have-nots. And so, but anyway, so the Black Panther Party helped me to look at that as well as the Black Women's United Front because they both had not only anti-racism, anti-sexism, but they also both had a economic focus, too, with respect to economic exploitation—against such. But anyway, I began to work with others to create institutions, too, recognizin' that institutional-building is very important. This is a livin' indication of it.

AW: Yes, can you tell the camera what you mean by this? 'Cause we can see it, but...

DR: I'mma get to that. I'm gonna evolve the continuum.

AW: Yes, ma'am. I'll keep you on your timeline.

DR: And so, my point is just the importance of institutional-building from within is not just something that just dropped in my lap. It was something from my exposure to literature. The importance of institutional-building and organizing came as a result of my exposure to organizations and as I've indicated, the Panther Party and the Black Women's United Front. So anyway, we did the food co-op and People Buying Together. That in and of itself is a—I know I'm goin' backwards, but—that in itself is an institution that forces sharing on some level, a cooperative. We bought together and therefore got volume breaks with respect to the amount, with respect to the prices. We had a lot, my Lord, we had a lot of people involved in PBT, People Buying Together, from different organizations to different people—Black, white, Brown, different religions—from Good Street, United Methodists, different organizations—Black Women's United Front, different extremes. But we all recognized somehow we had to come together to ah, to receive the benefit of wholesome food at an affordable price. And ah, so, to that end we began to do that consistently for a number of years. I forget how many, but I how that it was over ten years.

AW: And where were you located? Where could people go to get the food from the co-op?

DR: Oh right. It was close to Methodist Central. We had some warehouses over there. Close to Colorado it was off of Beckley.

AW: Okay, so in Oak Cliff.

DR: In Oak Cliff, that's right. So we would go to various farmer's markets like Friday and Saturday and we would bring it in that Saturday morning and people would be there to divide it up or whatever, based upon your order and that type of thing. Mama Mack, maybe she would take orders that Wednesday and Thursday and say, "How many you want here and how many you want there?" And then that order was turned in and then you went and got it, you know. So it was a beautiful concept.

AW: About how old were you durin' the time that it started?

DR: I was still, I was still early twenties.

AW: That's amazing. That's amazing.

DR: And so, but anyway, we went, we began that process and ah, as time went on I began to become involved in electoral politics, but never left behind ah, what I considered to be the fundamentals of the movement: institutional-building and community organizing. And so, when I say community organizing, that includes education. Some people say, "What about community education? What about the education of the people?" Well, you don't organize people without education. So anyway, as we began to go along, I began to get involved in electoral politics and I realized that ah, electoral politics—and I still believe today and recognized then, and once again, this came straight from Angela's mouth—that, electoral politics is not the solution, but it's a tool that should be utilized. And so ah, that's what was being used. It's not like it's gonna cause revolution, but it does cause some reforms to relieve people of their hurt. So that's what happened. We were involved in that and I became involved in electoral politics with Paul Ragsdale, my cousin and others and then Councilman Lipscomb as well when he was runnin' and course Elsie Faye Higgins in later years. 'Cause I done skipped to maybe twenty-nine, thirty now. Elsie Faye Higgins appointed me, nah I was about twenty-seven. Elsie Faye Higgins appointed me to City Planning Commission. I think I was the youngest CPC member on planning and zoning. And ah, so, I was on the City Planning Commission and then I moved for a number of years and then when I was thirty-one or thirty-two I ran for council at that time and won. But it was a ah, on going movement. I stayed elected until 1991 and to be quite frank with you, the enemy rezoned and redistricted and the majority of the Anglo community really rejected me, but they had—this is just what happened—they had the district was seventy-percent African American, thirty-percent Anglo, but they out-voted the African Americans, but that's okay because that was a whole new part of my district. That's where organizing really has to take place. I don't victimize the victim, you see, but I'll count that up as a part of the experience. It's just a part of the struggle, you know what I mean. But what's important is that we, the single-member district movement was a good movement and while I was on the council for eight or nine years, it was a movement of anti-police abuse, affordable housing, working with others to organize, to educate them about their community, created neighborhood associations, worked with others to strengthen neighborhood associations, ah, lookin' at how land is used, addressin' the issue of the proliferation of alcohol within our community, alcohol-related businesses within our community, which was ridiculous and continues to be ridiculous right today and ah, the, like I said, the land use issue as well as the need for community-based economic development. And so, while I was on the council, I recognized that there is a strong relationship between electoral politics and economics and just the movement in general and so you have to be able to appropriately connect those. The key is that, if I might back out just a minute...

AW: Uh huh.

DR: ‘Cause I forgot to say that I graduated from Dallas Baptist in Nursing. So I have a B. S. in Nursing. So, I wanna say that so I can fast forward because one of the reasons I am involved in the community development movement now—right now we’re sittin’ here and I am the managing director a non-profit and a co-founder called a non-profit called the Inner-City Community Development Corporation. It’s a community-based non-profit controlled by a majority African Americans, ninety-nine point nine percent. The key here is that this came out of the realization...the creation of this institution ICDC, Inner-city is one word, and the CDC, Community Development Corporation, the creation of this organization came about by the realization that we must build institutions to address our problems. And so, while I was really on the council, I was puttin’ the seeds in place to help develop various institutions, ‘cause you know sometimes you have to—and it’s regrettable—but sometimes you have to be in certain positions to get people to listen to you. Ah, and so, we began creating the institution and we provide affordable housing to low to moderate income families and we have...we do business training and business incubation along with community education and so also we provide tenant space for other organizations. It’s important that we do that. It’s a struggle. That young man that you were just listenin’ to that was talkin’ loud, he’s our comptroller and what I mean by that is institution-building means that you have to have certain people in certain positions doin’ certain things, buildin’ a legitimate institution. And so we ah, we simply cannot ignore those things we have to do and the point I’m makin’ buildin’ institutions, particularly in the heart of poor communities, people of color, in particular African Americans, it’s a very difficult job. It’s a challenge. It’s a challenge everyday. And ah, because part of it is a lack of education and at the same time while you’re tryna strengthen your infrastructure, you try to educate the people. It’s an ongoing process.

AW: How do you juggle?

DR: Tryna bring the people along with you and then at the same time you know you gotta have some money...other people say, “I love you dearly, Diane, but I gotta feed my family.”

AW: So how are you able to one, stay sane and two, juggle being at the level, just down here, right with the people, but also having to be here and maintain a managing position?

DR: I think that’s a very good question. How do I maintain my sanity? I have a close relationship with God. There are some people who legitimately criticize certain parts of the movement in the sixties, meaning that we just didn’t have that connection with God that we needed. And so, I am convince that we’ve got to have a close relationship with God, with a power on whom you can lean and a power on whom you can trust. The other thing is to have a relationship with other allies and comrades, you. Marilyn Clark, for example, I called her last night, “Oh Doctor, I’m sleepy. I’m sleepy.” I must have called at about 1 AM, but my point though is that those types of things, that’s important and to maintain relationship with God and with your family, with your allies and friends. And so, but all of these things helps you to maintain your sanity and you can talk through things and talk over things. And how do you juggle that? That’s a different question. That’s a difficult challenge and that is being the managing director and at the same time

being on the level with the masses and tryna being them to a level of education. You've gotta have staff members that are committed. I mean, if you're here strictly for the dollar bills, you're not gonna get that much of a salary. Number one, we don't have it. Number two, you've got to have commitment. We have to work different hours that are atypical. You know what I mean? And I would say here for the most part, we've been able to assemble a staff that's ah, committed. One of the major problems though, which is what our people acknowledge, most of us now are over fifty in this organization. So, we gone have to, not be kidnapped, but see, we need to begin to evolve on out the door, but to still be involved, but on another level, you see what I'm saying? And that's important. And it's the realization of that is to gradually infuse younger people on staff is how to keeps things alive and well. We gone have to do internships or whatever.

AW: Just so you have that apprenticeship for people to learn the job.

DR: That's right for people to learn the relationship between the community development movement: it's not just about buildin' buildins. It's about buildin' lives for people. It's about organizing people. See one thing, we can build, let's just say, fifty homes this year. But a question is raised...public policy can demolish five hundred homes. And so, you've got to be, you've got to have that organizing arm committed to—and many times that's what happens you don't have that organizing arm you need that can affect the public policy. Many times that's what CDC needs and we need not look upon the community-organizing component of the struggle as a hobby. It is not a hobby. It is to be treated like a full-time position that is needed and that's required where you have training for ongoing organizers that you'll hire and where you'll have training for the people. That's right. So institution-building and organizing are involved into that and early, early I got involved, like I said, through Black Women's United Front and the Black Panther Party, but I think it's important—like I told you, I got my degree from Dallas Baptist University. The only reason I bring that up again is because I made a transition to the CDC movement, the community development movement ah, because I know people's livin' conditions. See the CDC movement helps to improve people's livin' conditions and I know that the livin' conditions adversely affect people's health. And so, that's the relationship.

AW: I wanted to just—some things you said really triggered some things in my mind that I think would resound with students of African American Studies who are studyin' the time. You know, you all began to make alotta headway and alotta times we get it all mixed up in out minds, just 'cause we weren't there and we read the books and I thin that we, we just...it doesn't click sometimes. So when you were talking about the Black Women's United Front, you were talking about how you were anti-sexist, but that you also worked in tandem with the Black Panthers, who I imagine were majority male. So I wanted to see...

DR: Well, let me try to clarify that. They were really two different times. Okay, they were two different times. They weren't necessarily in tandem with them, but those are two different institutions that were at different times in my life that greatly affected my life.

AW: I wanted to know because I have an agenda with asking this question. I feel like a lotta times in the academy people, it's sad to say, Black women feel like they have to disconnect from their Black men and that while, yes, we can be patriarchal and sexist, that they have to leave them altogether. How did y'all come together and work together, in spite of?

DR: Well even with the Black Women's United Front, our position was never to disconnect, but instead to ah, struggle through these issues. Not to disconnect, but to struggle through these issues. I mean the truth of the matter is we all have to sit down and confront and deal with what our expectations are in any given relationship. It can be an organizational relationship, ah, a personal relationship, a friendship, or whatever. We have to all say, up front—not behind, in the middle—up front say, “These are the expectations from both of us.” And so, those things are quite clear, but, and bein' on the front end, if it's obviously determined that after struggle, discussion, and debatin' and that type of thing and you still cannot come to some consensus... 'cause that is a consensus, relationship. It's not, “It's my way or the highway.” That is a consensus. Ah, and we all have flaws. It's just what flaws you're willin' to tolerate. And so, that's why you deal with the expectations up front and say, “Well, I expect you to brush your teeth every mornin'.” Then you say, “Well, I don't brush my teeth every mornin'” and then I say, “Well, I tell you what then, I don't think we gone agree to a consensus. (Laughs) Naw, but anyway, that's something that if there's a failure, then it's a failure to...you know, I've never been married. Of course, I've had relationships, but in all relationships, you need to give the heads up. Express the expectations. Without the expectations, on the front end...right...

AW: I appreciate that stance because, like I said, many of my contemporaries, we tend to think that...we tend to superimpose our ideas on to the times. So I wanted to hear...

DR: A lot of times we're idealistic. We're too idealistic.

AW: Yes, we had this discussion all the time in our class about sexism and feminism and Black women and Black men and it's like, if we're gonna come together, we have to be together and be able to say, “Now, brotha, now stop. Stop what you doin'. You're bein' wrong. Now, we're not leavin' you. You know, we're gonna stay beside you, but we're not gonna let you abuse me or...”

DR: And that is not tolerated and like you said, we recognize that we all have flaws, but there are just some flaws that will not be tolerated. And so, that is what we have to determine and some brothas need to get some treatment. I mean, if a brotha likes to abuse a sista, he's sick. If the sista likes...will receive the abuse, of a brotha, she's sick. So it's not justified by, “I did this. He did this. Oh, he loves me this is how he shows me.” Then she's sick. And so, both of them need some treatment, some professional treatment. But I think that ah, oftentimes, once we get into the relationship, because we're in love we are willing to excuse that which should not be excused.

AW: I just wanted you to tell me what years you were involved in SCLC.

DR: Okay, good. So it had to be...let's see, I was a senior in high school, so it had to be '69 to '73, '74?

AW: So that was into college.

DR: Yeah it was, '73, '74. I wanna say '69. I think it was '69, '70, it coulda been '68, a little in college—just a little in college.

AW: You have done an excellent job of collapsing decades into minutes. You know, that's a gift. No, I'll tell you, that is a gift. What else should we know about the Dallas movement, about your organizations, and about the work in general?

DR: Right, right. You know, I think we have to come to the realization, I think we have come to the realization that, but we've got older and realized that the young adults who are grounded, now I'm talkin' 'bout those who are grounded in the movement right now have to realize that the movement cannot exist on volunteerism. Now volunteerism is important, very, very important, because we can't pay everybody, but you gotta have staff support, plus volunteerism. Because what happens is that many of our revolutionaries, activists really don't have retirement programs because they've invested most of their life into the movement. And many of them who have retirement programs, many of them made it better for them. The ones who have the retirement programs. And so, I think it's very important that recognize that because we're gonna have to start goin' back into the movement in a aggressive way. I see a lot of young people who have alotta respect for the movement and for me, but they need some help financially and they gotta good mind, a good heart, but in this society, one of the things that we have looked over—I'm talkin' 'bout ex-movement people, I'm not talkin' bout... 'cause there's alotta materialism out there. I'm not talkin' 'bout you need to go buy you a Mercedes. I'm just talking 'bout you gotta make sure that people who are involved in revolution are able to, in a fundamental way, take care of themselves and their families. And ah, because we tend to ignore that in the past and we want a few out here to be, for the most part, volunteerin' their time. And we're seein' they open up doors for others, but what you see know is they're strugglin' for their survival, which is unfair. So anyway, that is just, to me, one hard lesson ah, that has to be taught and cannot be forgotten. Also, when we come to talkin' about detachment on some level we had to recognize that we did not bring on more young people consciously and deliberately. At some point and time, we dropped. Now, we did have youth programs and then in the eighties, well the late eighties and the nineties, we began to, the movement began to detach from the youth development. Within the movement I'm talkin' about, with all due respect and I think it's important, but the Girls' Club or the Boys' Club, although I think it's very important 'cause right now, thank God for the Girls' Club and the Boys' Club. Whew wee, we gotta...we gotta alotta young adults, children, teenagers havin' children and so many dysfunctional families and ah, the failure to embrace and look upon each other as, "He is a part of me or you are a part of me or I'm a part of you" and the failure to do all that. And so, we need the church, a progressive church and we need the Girls' Club and Boys'

Club. Ah, but there is a difference between social service and social justice. And so, that's just a part we can't forget either.

AW: What would you like us to know about the movement in Dallas during the time you were active and even now.

DR: Well, this was a...we got a lot of revolutionaries, a lot of activist involved in the movement. I mean ah, good God, yes we could have had more people. We could've done better, but we had some very good accomplishments and some very good connections. And ah, you got a few of these people who have the gall to say that because we didn't have a riot and all that silliness...and that's just stupidity.

AW: Can you expand on that? Because I think that's somethin' that ah...

DR: Well, some people would say that somehow, they gotta have a riot in order to declare yourself as a city who was involved in the movement and many times, that was ridiculous. I mean, it's about education, and institutional-building, not destroyin' the institutions, but creating and strengthening your institutions and protecting your community and protecting the lives in your community. You know, educatin' people. It's not about puttin' a buildin' on fire. That's destructive anger. That's not constructive anger. Constructive anger, you know, is about...it's about the creation of a community where we buy and sell from one another, where we extend our love to one another and where we have rules and regulations that are humane, you know, and respectful to one another. So no, that's just ridiculous. That's nonsense.

AW: I wanted you to elaborate on that, too, because I know that when I'm presentin' this research to Temple University...Philadelphia, a place that had plenty riots, there might be that to come into question that, especially because Dallas's Civil Rights Movement wasn't as lambasted on television.

DR: Well, yeah, it was not as nationally known and that which was really much lambasted well, that which the media, the European media exposed nationally was really a bunch of fire here and a bunch of fire there. But, there are other cities that had tremendous movements. So, and the unfortunate thing—good God when we look at Philadelphia and what is goin' on in Philadelphia, currently, with respect to the elevated criminal activity and the lack, obviously, in my opinion, the lack of direction, of we got some serious problems in Philadelphia. I think it's one of our leading cities, but we got some serious problems in Philadelphia. So, ah I have a number of people who live there—people who I know, but it's just ah...but we want...see that's what's so amazing. It's not about one city against another city or, you know, our people against these people here or we're ahead of y'all or not that discussion is nonsense. Right, because, "Brotha, if you're in Philadelphia and you're hurtin' or in pain, good God almighty!" My sistas and brothas in Haiti, good God, I'm in pain! Those people look like you and me. Those are my people. So the question is not, "Why this happened" or whatever. It was an earthquake. That's what happened. You know what I mean? But when it comes to...that's another conversation that's about nonsense, which leads...which is all just

connection, and that is, there's no infrastructure there. There's none of this here. There's none of that there. One of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere and etcetera. Not even lookin' at the historic perspective. And so ah, we just need to be about the business of service and stop tryna ah, fix blame. We need to fix the problem.

AW: This has been an excellent interview.

DR: Thank you.

AW: You...can you run for mayor? (Laughs)

DR: (Laughs) Thank you my sista.

AW: We appreciate it so much.

DR: Oh, my pleasure indeed!

AW: Anything else you'd like to add?

DR: Oh no, I'm doin' fine. No, no. Thank you though. I'm just so proud of you.

AW: Oh, I got it from you.

DR: Oh, I'm so proud. Thank you.

Interview Ends

Interview with James “Skip” Shockley

(As the camera begins to roll, the interviewee and the interviewer are already in conversation, getting acquainted with one another. They are discussing where the interviewer attended high school).

Ava Wilson (AW): Washington...

James “Skip” Shockley (JSS): Booker T.!

AW: Yes. Did you? Did you attend Booker T.?

JSS: No, I went to Madison.

AW: Madison?

JSS: Uh huh.

AW: Okay. You know my whole family is Booker T...

JSS: They went to Booker T.

AW: ...products. (Laughs). Even my father's side. My father is David Wilson, 'Jet,' everybody called him Jet.

JSS: Jet?

AW: Last graduating class...

JSS: That last graduating class, what was that?

AW: '69.

JSS: '69? Oh, okay, yeah.

AW: He was all-state, all-city...whatever...for track.

JSS: He ran track didn't he? Yeah, that's what Booker T. was famous for, for track.

AW: Um hmm, that's what he did. But, both sides of my family went to Booker T. Um, then after I graduated from Booker T. I went to Howard and also majored in African American Studies, and now I'm getting my master's at Temple.

JSS: Oh, good.

AW: So, ah, when we were all deciding, “What are you gonna do? Are you gonna write your thesis or take the test?” And so I said to myself, “Well, maybe I’ll take the test.” Then I was like, “No, that’s the easy way out.”

JSS: Easy way out...uh huh.

AW: ...and I won’t feel like I’ve mastered anything unless I have a product of work. And so, I talked it over with my family. And they were saying, “You know, it’s not a lot of literature written on the movement here in Dallas. Why don’t you start doing that? So, I began to read some literature talking about the lack of research of the Dallas movement and why it wasn’t publicized. You know, that in and of itself was interesting: the reasons why it wasn’t even put in, you know, the media attention. So, I said, “Well, I need to interview everybody because everybody’s voice needs to be heard. So, then I told Marilyn about what I was doing and she said, “Well, after you get done with school...there’s no way you’re gonna be done by the time you finish school...so won’t you just start the groundwork for a larger project, which would be archiving all of this history so we can put it into a...do a little curriculum and you know, so that people know your name and so that people know what you did, because it’s so important. And you know, especially me coming outta high school thinking, “Did we have a Black Panther Party in Dallas? Did we do—” Of course, my family supplemented that because they were involved in the movement...

JSS: They was involved. That’s right.

AW: But for so many people who have that passion and want to know that history, it’s not available unless they go looking for it. So, I would just want it to be more accessible to people. So, that’s the reason why we started this project.

JSS: That’s a great idea, ‘cause we’re not getting any younger, you know.

AW: Right, and we have to have your voices on film...

JSS: ‘Cause every time I see Odinga, I don’t know if you went over to his place. It’s like a museum.

AW: It is like a museum.

JSS: And I said, “Man, I wish we could do something so we won’t lose all this.” You know?

AW: Well, we’re trying.

JSS: Yeah, do something or we gonna lose this.

AW: We’re trying.

JSS: Because all this...when I go over there sometimes I say, "Boy, I don't remember some of this stuff that we done." In fact, when David came, David Hilliard, the Chief-of-Staff, came to Dallas and he was talking about some information he wanted to get on the party that they lost in national, Odinga said, "Oh, I got that." He said, "You do?" Went to his house he said, "Man, we've been wonderin' where some pieces of this stuff were." You know, pictures of, of ah, old...because one of the pictures that was drawn out was one of the original Panthers was Japanese. It was two of 'em. In fact, one of 'em died a few years ago...pull it up on the website they'll talk about him 'cause they really praised him. He was at one of the reunions probably in, ah, 2000 after the thing at the, New York, the bombing of the trade...World Trade Center. We went to Washington DC for the reunion and that's where they really gave tribute to him...the things he did for the Party and ah, he was actually one of the founding members.

AW: Oh wow.

JSS: And a lot of people don't understand, you know, and say, "you had a Japanese." Said, "Oh yeah we had Japanese, we had Polynesians, we had Black Europeans, people from the Caribbean, we had people from China, and Korea." 'Big Man', we had one of the original members called Big Man. He wrote a book. "Big Man" Howard, he would do, ah what we called recruiting and he traveled all over the world and ah he would form chapters in Tokyo and even when Americans couldn't get into China, Panthers could get in China, and we had a relationship with China before Nixon went to China. And people say, "What? Where this picture was taken of Black people in China?" That was taken in 1970, before Nixon ever got there 'cause we had those relationships with different organizations. And, you know, people would tell me, stories. Eldridge Cleaver's wife, Kathleen, she said when she had, I think, the boy, her son, I think she was in North Korea when she had her son. When she was in North Korea she said she was walking down the street in North Korea and she walked up to this sista who had an afro and she spoke to the sista and the sista didn't speak English. She was actually Korean. And she saw the same thing in Russia.

AW: Really?

JSS: Uh huh, because Huey always said that we are the first Internationalists. We were sent all over the world as slaves that's what makes us the first Internationalist because we had to learn other people's culture. We weren't only taken to the west. The majority of us were—North America, South America, Canada to work as slaves, but we was also taken to England, even far east as the Orient. And that's why he always said we was the first Internationalists because we had to take other people's culture in order to survive. That's why we can survive because of what we had to be forced to do.

AW: Well before we go any further...

JSS: Oh I'm sorry.

AW: No, no, no that was great! If you could just state your name for the camera.

JSS: Okay, my name is James “Skip” Shockley, ah, Dallas, Texas.

AW: And usually I just do a lead in question and then all the subsequent questions will come from probes that I want to do on things that you’ve said that I want you to elaborate on. So, just tell us about your time in the movement here in Dallas, any of your experiences, and about when you started in the movement here in the city.

JSS: Okay, I started in the, probably early 1970s. The reason why I started is the...basically I wasn’t doin’ anything but on the streets, gettin’ high, basically. I had just got outta jail about a year before. Ah, and I met a friend of mine who introduced me to Leroy Haynes and ah, he was a member of the Black Panther Party. They just started organizing the Party here.

AW: Who was that friend?

JSS: Ah, that was Leroy Haynes and my friend was Norris Batts. And we all, ah, Norris and I, was recruited by Leroy Haynes into the Black Panther Party. It was known then as the National Committee to Combat Fascism. That was one of Eldridge ideas because Huey, at the time, was in prison, and Huey wanted to ah...the Panthers was growin’ so fast nationwide because of Black guys with guns and they were really standin’ up to the oppressor and Huey felt that we needed to slow that down. But with the influence of Eldridge, he organized the National Committee to Combat Fascism to kind of build a coalition with white radicals. And his influence became very prevalent because that’s when we really started talking about the gun. But I joined it because it was fascinating. You know, here I am, I’m a brotha pretty much...I finished high school in 1965, so between 1965 and 1979, you had a good idea of what I was doin’. Basically I was on the streets not doin’ anything and takin’ some course at the junior college, but I became real close with the thugs in the city so I built kinda a reputation of a streetwise brotha. And ah, but that helped me in the Party. When I joined, I think that’s what they was lookin’ for: some streetwise brothas. So, when I joined, I became heavily involved and started climbing up the ladder into leadership position.

AW: So what were your first experiences back in 1970 when you joined the Party?

JSS: My first as in...joined?

AW: Within the Party.

JSS: Within the Party. My first experience was basically when we started out selling papers and we used to sell papers downtown, we would probably spend most of our days selling papers. Ah, I did take some courses down at the junior college downtown. Night, ah...at night we would have what we called “guard duty.” And the reason for that is because alotta people thought that we were these gun-toting guys who wanted to shoot police. But they don’t realize the intimidation that we got from the police. And anytime, especially two or three or four o’clock in the morning, the police ride up...ride on you, on

your office and have your office surrounded and ah, loaded and locked, ready to fire on you. And so, that's why we had guard duty because in the house we had women, we had children, and ah, of course us, but we had to make sure that we provide safety for, especially for the children we had in the house. What a lotta police would do provoked a lotta things against us. We would sell papers. At some point, they would cause some distraction, maybe somebody's fighting, set us up, throw us in jail, destroy our papers. We'd go pick up our papers at the airport and the FBI would be out there watering-down or setting fire to the papers. Ah, we always had, out of national headquarters, Sam Napier, who was over the distribution, so we always had the alternatives. If they set fire or watered-down our newspapers, at Lovefield, then our next alternative was to go to Greyhound and retrieve as many papers as we could have sent from national or we'd go to Continental. So, we always had those particular alternatives 'cause we knew that this was happening not only in Dallas, but this was happening worldwide where they was destroying our communication. And so, that's, that's my first experience and I realized that I wasn't in anything that was a club or something that was a plaything, that this was for real. When you see someone come into the office and want to disrupt your office, and before you know it, the whole block is surrounded by police in riot gear ready to come down on you. So, those things became real. So, as I began to realize that I said, "This is really serious." And I began to take it seriously. In my recruitment, I would tell people, "Look, if you really want to get into this thing called Black Power or the Panthers, this is not no romantic thing." I thought it was until you see people come up missin'...that ah... "Where is so-and-so-and-so." "Well you know I haven't seen him. They're in jail." Ah, what can we do? They're getting sent to prison on some trumped up charge. And so, I began to realize that all this was for real. That we was in a war against the establishment. We had no bones where we were as Panthers. I think what ah, made us different from the Civil Right Movement or the non-violent movement is that when they marched, they realized that violence was gonna be involved and they was gonna be the victims of violence. We didn't have no bones about it. Violence was definitely at our front door and that we was at war, not only with the local police, we was at war with the FBI, the CIA, and military government. Ah, there were clandestine things would happen, not only in major cities, but all over that we could see that ah, "Hey, we're really at war here, you know, for what we believe." We was just...that's what really made me stronger and say, "Oh, okay, I really want to be a part of this, you know. No matter what."

AW: Thank you for all of that, because it's all so necessary and it's interesting that you brought up the NCCF, uh, because when we...I took some courses on the sixties and things like that, and I think when we learn about the time period, we don't understand the different shift and things like that. In fact, I had never heard of that that particular shift brought about by Eldridge Cleaver. So, how long were you all known as the NCCF?

JSS: Ah, not long, because, actually, NCCF was the Panthers. Ah, and the idea that Huey had didn't wash well with part of the leadership because we felt that as you see, in old movies and documentaries, is that most of the white so-called revolutionaries, except for a few, didn't seem serious. They seemed like they wanted to dance out in the streets and do antics and Huey always said "Look, this is for real. We're stepping out here and

we're saying we're anti-government and that we want to change the system. Don't you think the system takes that seriously?" So, you've got a group of people over here who are white that is pulling all kind of antics, you know, flower children, which is fine. You had Jerry Rubin, all those type of people, but hey, you're gonna get killed 'cause you wanna act like a clown? You know, and if we are true revolutionaries and are gonna get killed then we gotta stand up for what we really believe in, we can't be no clowns. In fact, when things come down, which it showed time and time again in Los Angeles when the police raided the office in Los Angeles and when they killed Fred Hampton in Chicago, is that the white far left did not support us, you know. And some of those riots could have been avoided in the first place. In fact, we was anti-riot in the first place, and so that's why that NCCF did not stand pat, because we said that we need to go 'head and start doing things in the community. That's where our programs came out. Our Free Breakfast Programs, Sickle Cell Anemia Programs, because when you talk about sickle cell anemia, at that time, it was not even recognized in the Black community. The Black Panthers was the first organization to recognize the problems with sickle cell anemia and came out and wrote about it and start settin' up stations throughout the nation to test people for sickle cell anemia. You didn't have a sickle cell anemia program in Los Angeles or in Dallas until after the Party made it know that, "hey, this particular disease has been affecting Black people for centuries. And people are dying, Black people, are dying from this disease. And they could be, through counseling, through testing, and advice, they could live longer." So then, after that, you start seeing sickle cell anemia associations growing from...well it came from the ideology of the party.

AW: Can you tell us about some of those programs that were instrumental in the city in particular?

JSS: We had a Free Ambulance Program. In this city, what we had was the Free Breakfast Program. It was very instrumental I think because most of the kids we had from Denton to Dallas, we went into the projects and what came out of that was that most of the kids would come over and we would feed them before they went to school that morning, and that we did. We would organize, not only us, but we would organize different fraternities, especially sororities, they came on board more than fraternities and the sistas helped us cook, they helped us feed the kid. In Denton we had a chapter in Denton, Eastside of Denton called 'Dreamland'. And we actually took over the whole projects and the sorority sistas would come over from TWU and North Texas and help us feed the kids that morning. After school we had what we called a tutoring program. In that we ah...people loved us because we decreased crime. Because we moved the thugs out because we confronted them. We said, "Look, this is people liberated territory. In fact, this is our territory, so if you wanna be a bad guy you join us. If you don't want to join us, you move out." So we moved them out. In fact, during that time we had firepower, so most of the guys would say, "Hey man, I don't wanna mess with y'all guys 'cause you crazy anyway." So we didn't have any problems with that. We began to develop good, I guess, coalitions with organizations that dealt with...what's that called? The Links and other sista organizations.

AW: Top Ladies of Distinction?

JSS: Yes. We would go to tea and ah...what's that? Teacakes...on Sundays. You know, dress up and some of the sistas and some of the brothas would sit with the sistas and we would discuss the problems of the community. Ah, we would go to, ah...When Huey came out of prison we started emphasizing that we needed to form another relationship with the church 'cause we pushed the church away. We needed to form a...that's where the people are, that's where are people are. We needed to form a relationship with the church. So we began to form a relationship in the church and they began to help us out, especially in supporting candidates for offices. So if people said, "Oh the Panthers like them. We'll go with that."

AW: In this city?

JSS: In this city. But we did a lot in Denton, you know. "They like Al. So we'll go with Al." 'Cause Al was pretty much the man of the time, you know. "They like George Allen. So we'll go with George Allen. They like Eddie Bernice Johnson, so okay, we'll go ahead and vote for her. You said you like Eddie Bernice?" "Yeah, I think she's an alright sista." "Okay, we'll vote for her." So, you know, we had that kind of relationship. You know, people really, ah...People were really...ah...people weren't afraid of us. It's what the media put out there. That, you know, "Here are these crazy Black males and Black women that want to just spread violence all the way around. But we always had a working relationship with the community, because one of the things that we...the reason why we had a working relationship with the community is because within the community, where we were, crime was decreased. You know, it wasn't...you know, the criminals, they supported us. You know, we weren't the Civil Rights type where we were pass by the brotha in the street. The brotha in the street would say, "Hey man, here's fifty dollars, man, to your program." Or the sistas out here on the streets that's hustlin' or prostitutin', "I like you guys. Ah, here's ten dollars for your program." Or, "Can my daughter be a part of your Free Breakfast Program?" "Sure sista, bring her on in. In fact, sista, why don't you come in and talk to us." So we started building relationship. We started transformin' people, because some of those young sistas that was out on the street got heir GED because we said, "Okay sista now, you're out there on the streets hustlin' or your mama's crazy. Come on in here and let us...You know, you need to learn something." And so they got their GED and some of them went on off to college. We recruited all over Texas, especially out of high school and we sent a lot of young people to college and a lot of times we would just take them because we had a recruiter, Bernie "Smitty" Smith that ah...

AW: Was he from Dallas?

JSS: He was from Fort Worth and ah, he had a good...what would you call it? His talent, his skill was young people and we would go to Beaumont and recruit young people and we'd go to Abilene and recruit young people. After the purge we tried to transform ourselves. And through Leroy, myself and Smitty, we said "Let's take the party a little bit further." They were college guys. Smitty already had his master's degree. Ah, Leroy already had his bachelor's dregree. I'm a brotha who is street-minded

wise. So, we kinda merged ourselves within a coalition and said, “Let’s start recruiting statewide.”

AW: Okay, I have a...that’s great. I have a whole buncha questions to ask you. Um, let’s start with the beginnings in Dallas. When we were...earlier you had told me that you were infiltrated from the start. I guess just tell us about that. How did that come about? And then talk about the purge, if you could mention that too.

JSS: Well definitely because that’s something that’s ah...What happened was before I joined the Party, Charlie Paul [Henderson, now Hasan Khalif], Curtis Gaines, Leroy Haynes and a group of other sistas and brothas went to Los Angeles to meet with the leadership there. In Los Angeles, Geronimo Pratt, you probably heard that name...ah, let’s see, David Hilliard and some of the Central Committee...‘cause they was having a rally for George Jackson and Angela Davis was there and all that. So, they went up to ask for a chapter, and ah, through David Hilliard, he gave the okay and he asked...his command was for Geronimo Pratt to be our supervisor. So, when they came back here, after that, then I joined. So, for some reason we didn’t have that “great bond.” Our leadership with Curtis Gaines was kinda like a hierarchy. He was up here and we was down here and we always wondered why there’s a difference between the ah, what we saw in other cities. The rumor was that Curtis was an agent that was feeding information to authorities—the FBI. Something happened in Dallas where ah, Geronimo Pratt was in exile, he was in hiding. He left LA because the LA shooting and when he left LA he went underground. So he was going to various cities and he ended up here in Dallas and one night, something...all hell broke loose

AW: What year was this?

JSS: This was back in ’71. Ah, all hell broke loose. Geronimo was arrested put in Dallas County Jail. Ah, half our chapter was saying Curtis is working with the police. We [Bernie, Skip, and Leroy] pulled back and some of the good brothers went with him and some of us went in another direction. At the same time there was a split between Eldridge and Huey Newton, so that fed flame to the fire. We followed the philosophy of Huey. They said they followed the philosophy of Eldridge. To me, they were mostly tryna act like gangsters. What happened in that couple years later, ‘bout a year later, some of guys said Curtis Gaines—we called them the Renegades...got busted, sent to prison, and come to find out that Curtis testified against them, so that’s how that whole thing came about. So we were tyrna figure out what we were gonna do. What I went...I went to El Centro full-time and I recruited new recruits: Paula Ransom, Malik, Anice and Janice Lewis, Carl Austin, Odinga... [Marvin Walton]...me and Odinga kinda organized that together. And ah, we ran a chapter out of El Centro College. We just took over the whole Black Student Union and that’s where we ran Panther programs. We had a Free Clothing Program and we did some Free Breakfast Programs outside in the community and we did Voter’s Registration So, basically what we did at El Centro, we just kinda took ver the whole thing. We got good support from some of the professors there, even though a lot of them though we was militant to the core. ‘Cause what we did was ah, we just pulled a coup on the Black Student Union.

AW: They were called SOUL?

JSS: Yeah. We just (Making a sound) schoom. We just took it. We said, "This is ours." You know, we went to them one day and declare that we was the leaders and that was it. SO ah, that was our base. At the same time Leroy went to North Texas and in North Texas in Denton there was a strong Pan-Africanist organization there. Kinda a movement up there where brothas where Pan-Africanist. So he said "Man, I need some help up here." I said, "No we're gonna to stay down here in Dallas for a while to kinda feel it out." People like Al Lipscomb was getting strong and Eddie Bernice was getting strong in politics and helping out in the community and different things like that. But what Leroy managed to do was, he managed to organize a small group of people with Bernie Smith. So, the summer of '72, we left and went to Denton and merged with Leroy. So that's that whole Dallas scenario. That's how we started with the purge and ended up in Denton.

AW: And about how long were y'all in Denton and how long did y'all...

JSS: We stayed in Denton probably about two years. You know, one of the things that a lot of people say is that, "Well, these seem like short times," and they were, but, the stress involved was tremendous and so, you just imagine... 'cause I called Leroy, Norris, myself, and Smitty, we called ourselves seasoned veterans of the struggle. But it was... we was recruiting young people, and times were changing. And so, with that kinda stress... 'cause we stayed up twenty-four hours a day. We stayed up strategizing, planning, ah, trying to get the newspaper so it won't get sabotaged ah, leaving town to visit other affiliates. We went to Beaumont, Houston, Tyler, ah Abilene and so, we was always on the go. So, with that, it took its toll on the young people.

AW: You covered a lot of ground in a short period of time ah, you know I wasn't even thinking, "Oh, that's a short period of time." I'm thinking, "You did all that in two years?" I can't believe you did all that in such a tight time...

JSS: From seventy to seventy... it probably ended in seventy-five. But there was a, you know, it's like... ah, constantly, you know, just constantly, you know, no rest. A little bit of rest, you get up, you got something to do. You know, I gotta supervise these young guys on simple things. "Look brotha, you can't just ride here on this sista here because you like her. You got to give her some respect. You know, I know you probably come from a different background, but you got to give her some respect. She works harder than you do." You know, and ten there were sistas givin' orders and these brothas didn't like that. I'm tellin' the brothas that, "Hey, this sista's in charge man." "I don't...!" "Naw, it's not what you don't wanna do this sista's in charge. She's in the leadership. Now, if I have to come back and tell you that again, I'mma have to get some brothas to start whippin' on your head." You know, stuff like that. That ah, you know brothas didn't understand. You know, that was happenin' nationwide. You know, you can't... you know... brothas say ah... sistas say, "I want you to do this." "I aint...!" You know, and then he comes out with the "b" word. Aww, here we go, yeah. "Say brotha

come here. Let me talk to you.” What is it man?” I said, “What the sista tell you to do?” “She told me to do so-and-so. I ain’t got no woman tell me...!” I said, “Hey, brotha, this sista’s in leadership and if you not gonna respect the sista, I advise you to get out. Because these brothas over here is gonna...” ‘Cause we had security. We always had security. Ah, not from the outside. You had to have security on the inside. We was politically and we was military. And so, “You don’t want these other brothas comin’ in here. I’mma tell you nicely, ‘cause if I have to order these other brothas to come over here and talk to you, they gone do more than talk to you, now.” So, you know, so you had that kinda stuff goin’ on also. And you had relationships because you had...we had a communal setting so you had relationship problems that would pop up that we had to deal with on an organizational level where we had to sit and talk about any ah...you know... “This sista feels that this brotha don’t care about her and all he wants is her body and all that.” So we had to kinda work through all that, too because we was living in a communal setting.

AW: Do you mind if I change out this tape really fast?

JSS: No, no.

AW: Okay because I’m about to run out, run out. (After a short break) Alright, we’re back up. I had another question. Now Texas—huge state. So, I’m...you’re talking about going to all these different cities and I’m wondering if you could, for us—because when we think about the Panthers on the east coast and even the Panthers on the west, even the Midwest, they don’t have a large amount of territory to cover. You can be in the next state in an hour or two. So, it’s not hard to organize from state-to-state. Now, in the state of Texas, the next big city is four hours away. So how did y’all communicate with each other and consolidate and organize effectively given the amount of space we have in this big ole place we live in?

JSS: Well, it was kinda hard. Seem like it was easy for Smitty. What Smitty would do, he would ah, he had a good eye, a good ear I guess. In Abilene, guess it was in nineteen seventy...probably ’72, right before we moved to Denton is that thee was a small riot in Abilene. The young Blacks was protestin’ against police brutality. So, Smitty always had a good ear about hose particular things. So, he went to Abilene and he made contact with the young brothas, these are young high school brothers and ah, the ah...and Smitty had...you had to know Smitty. He was about six foot seven, real dark, nice looking guy, always had ah—he didn’t even look like a militant—always had nice cut hair, always dressed conservative and the parents there was worried about their children and he said, “Well, what we can do, since they are leaving high school...are leaving, won’t you let me take them and I’ll put them in college, I’ll make sure they get in college and find some funding.” He was always good at that. Make sure we found some funding and make sure we find some housing. Now housing was the Black Panthers that was the house. So, the young people was really into it, “Oh man, we can join this movement!” You know, but at the same time, “You gonna join this movement, but you goin’ to school.” So we recruited those people, brought them up during the summer...

AW: Brought them to Dallas?

JSS: Huh?

AW: Brought them to Dallas?

JSS: Brought them to Denton.

AW: Denton? Oh okay.

JSS: And ah, most of them stayed. Some of them left. You know, didn't like the regiment type stuff, 'cause these was young folks. An ah, at the same time in Tyler, some sistas protested. I don't know what happened. I think it was the changing of the...you know, Texas they was droppin' all the...closin' all the Black schools and making Blacks students go to white schools, this was part of integration and a lot of young people didn't like that. You know, "You gonna close my school and make us go to a white school and then you gonna call this integration?" And so, it was a group of sistas that didn't like that and so we went down there and recruited them. They joined us. In Beaumont, ah, it was a large group of young people. I don't know what happened in Beaumont you had ah, Lamar University also down there. So we had a group of...you had a Black Student Union down there, but you had some high school kids comin' out. So we went down there to a meeting. (Telephone rings) And ah, they...they loved us. So, you know, I talked a little bit on sickle cell anemia and the history of the Dallas chapter. Leroy talked about the philosophy of Huey P. Newton and inter-communalism, our philosophy. So before we know it, we have alla these young people from different cities. Now, Houston already had a branch of the Panther Party, so we always had a relationship with them. They had they own Free Breakfast Program, they own testing for sickle cell anemia, high blood pressure, diabetes and all that. So they was pretty much...they was always self-sufficient 'cause after the assassination of Carl Hampton, they actually became a part of the Black Panther Party. And so, we would just keep the relationship with them.

AW: Carl Hampton, was that a...

JSS: Ah, yeah...Carl Hampton was the original organizer of the Houston chapter.

AW: Okay.

JSS: He was killed on Dowling Street by police back in ah, probably 1969, uh huh. So after that, the Houston chapter got pretty strong, so we had a relationship with them. But most of our young people came from Beaumont, Tyler, Abilene, ah, some from Dallas, ah, and Denton.

AW: That's amazing how you cover all of that territory. I guess it...you know, I'm thinkin' in comparison to the east...but I guess you had nothin' to compare it to so it was nothin' for y'all to do that. You know, you didn't think twice about it, you just did it.

JSS: You know, we couldn't compare it with the east or west because, you know, I guess you come from what, Philadelphia or New York you just take a...

AW: A one-and-a-half hour ride...

JSS: Yeah, just take the turnpike and go straight ahead, but in Dallas, you...Dallas to Houston, Dallas to Beaumont, it's all day and we used to have caravans. Back and forth to Beaumont because Beaumont was our largest chapter outside where we organized up here in Dallas and Denton. 'Cause what we did, we actually left Dallas. The only people that was left was Odinga, Anice and Janice, and a few other people that we always had communication with 'cause Odinga was always good at maintaining the flow of the paper. So with our papers comin' to us and Dallas with Odinga, we always had a good distribution of sending out the Black Panther Newspaper throughout the Dallas area.

AW: Now, you keep talking about Smitty and I heard the Smitty so many times and silly me, I ain't asked, "Who is Smitty?" What is his name?

JSS: His name is Reverend Bernie Smith.

AW: And that's the recruiter.

JSS: That was our recruiter.

AW: So Bernie Smith and Smitty, that's the same person?

JSS: Uh huh.

AW: And he's still in the area?

JSS: Uh huh.

AW: Oh really?

JSS: He lives in Dallas now.

AW: You have his information?

JSS: I have a phone number...

AW: Oh okay.

JSS: I can give you a phone number of ole Smitty.

AW: Sure...Also, I wanted you to, if you could, name other Panthers in the Dallas chapter that still might be around, or may be available, and some of the women in the leadership too.

JSS: Okay, I'll give you Paula's number, Paula Ransom and ah, I've been tryin' to get in touch with Anice—Janice but I can't find them. Probably the only person who could find them was Odinga.

AW: He said he wasn't in contact with them.

JSS: I have lost contact with her. I think I lost her probably about ten years ago. She was working as a nurse, I was working as a nurse and she ah, we exchanged phone numbers, but I guess she moved or something and I moved, so I lost her.

AW: Any other people? I know you mentioned Norman Batts—Norris Batts.

JSS: Norris Batts...Norris Batts is ah...I know we couldn't find him 'cause I know he's pretty much homeless. Ah, probably could find him through Paula because him and Paula was pretty close and I think they still run into each other once and a while. Ah, most of the females, ah, that was most of the females in Dallas because after we dispersed a lot of them went back home. A lot of them went back to Beaumont. I can give you a U. S. Williams, one of our recruits. He'll be glad to talk to you.

AW: Okay.

JSS: Let's see, who else is in Dallas? I lost a lot of contact because I tried to stay in contact with Khalif Hasan. I don't know. I can't find him. But his wife...Marilyn Clark might have his wife's number...ah, what's his wife's name? Linda Hasan. 'Cause she used to work for the city, I think she retired last year, but probably can find him through, Linda Hasan.

AW: I have a few more questions to ask you. One, real simple, where was your office located here in the city?

JSS: The first office was located on Second Avenue I think it was...I went and looked up the number because I had to look it up for a guy in New York...I think it was 2013 Second Avenue. Right over there by the Cultural Center.

AW: And then, ah, you had another office too?

JSS: Had one on ah, oh...200 South Rudell in Denton.

AW: Okay, and can you tell us about the military arm of the Party? I know we talked about that earlier, about those men who would...if you couldn't straighten them out then you had to get the other men on them. So, I wanted you to tell us about the military arm. (To Mr. Shockley's wife) How you doin'?

JSS: This my wife, Myra.

AW: Nice to meet you.

Mrs. Shockley (MS): Nice to meet you.

AW: I'm Ava Wilson.

MS: Hi, how are you doing?

AW: Good nice to meet you. I'm a McMillan, I don't know...you may know my family, Ernie McMillan. The McMillans.

MS: Oh yes...

JSS: Mama Mack?

MS: Oh yes, yes.

JSS: Okay, the military arm. What the military arm is, it's the...ah...we always believed in respecting our weapons. So, what most of the people in the military arm are under the Minister of Defense and that means that they was in charge of defending us against outside forces. So, we would train not only males, but females to ah, be with abreast to different type of arms, not only jus the regular arms like .45s or shotguns and all that AK-47s, M-16s, ah, you know, even anti-aircraft weapons if we got a hold to 'em...demolition and all that 'cause we did have people come out of the Viet Nam War. So they would...some brothers with knowledge would train us to do what we would call guerilla warfare and sometimes we would go out into the, to the woods and train...you know, how to shot a shotgun at different positions, different arms, how to break-down AK-47s, clean your weapons, how to fire M-16s...used to train a sista how to fire a M-16...how to care for a bomb or a demolition or even hand grenade, you know so we won't kill each other. You know, but the military arm was one...and at one point we was in a inner-city setting wherever we went. So that meant not only the police, is that thugs or people who wanted to try you for various reasons, so you had to have someone over here that that's basically what they did. They tried to secure the perimeter. We had a...we had to have a military mind secure the perimeter. What was our perimeter? Our perimeter was Dreamland at that particular time. How we secure that? Politically, we secure that by getting the trust of the people. How do you get the trust of the people? You get the trust of the people from our Free Breakfast Program. You get the trust of the people of giving them, or trying to help them understand that, "It's not us who's feeding you, you're feeding your own kids. So, we recruit you to come in and feed your own kids. Sista, if you sleep all day, and lay with your man all night... c'mon now. Gotcha kids over here. They're ready to eat. C'mon sista, feed your kids." Os we got that trust. Grandma, "What's grandma's needs? She needs a safe way to get to the store so nobody can mug her so she can get home safely. She needs to get to the hospital. So, let's get her to the clinic or the hospital the day that she needs to get there. Now brother, you take this old lady to the hospital, or sista, this is your job, take this old lady to the hospital." We got to deal with sororities, fraternities. We got to deal with community organizations.

We got to deal with political...politicians and we got to deal with administration. So, who's most aggressive with that? Well, in our organization Leroy was aggressive with that, Smitty was aggressive with that, I was aggressive with that, but on the other end, we had to secure our perimeter. So ah, we had a incident one night is that we was at a party. Sistas invited us to a party. Get to the party, coupla thug there...so they wanna disrespect one of our sistas and so we said, "Okay, let's talk this over." Went back to the office, "Let's talk this over. What is the situation, brotha? Got these thugs over here, they just disrespected our sista. So, what do we do? Okay, let's set a example 'cause we have to secure our perimeter. We don't do nothin', these niggas gone think we punks. So, let's move on 'em." So, we moved on 'em. Put 'em in the hospital and we came back, after they got out of the hospital, we recruited 'em. "Hey, brotha!" "Man, I don't want no trouble." "Okay, you know the community 'round here don't ya?" "Yeah." "Okay, here's some voter registration cards, fill these out man, bring 'em back in about five days. You got a car?" "Yeah." "Okay, we'll have voting probably 'bout in a couple months. We need your car to pick up some old folks." You see? We done secured the perimeter. The military arm has worked on that level. Now, the police...so, what the police does is that what we do in the...in the projects is that we had a workin' relationship with the manager and the owner of the projects. So, the owner comes to us one day and say, "Uh, I gotta problem." We say, "What's the problem?" "The FBI was here." "What he want?" "They want y'all outta here?" (Laughing) "When?" He say, "They want y'all outta here now. What do I do?" "Don't worry about it. In fact, we need to have a tenants' union." And so, he say, "Tenants' union?" "Yeah, we need to address the problems of the tenants and your manager." Okay so, he agreed to that. He didn't want no trouble. So, when all this came back around again, the FBI shows up and they say, "I thought you 'sposed to get these niggas outta here." He say, "I don't have no problem wit 'em. The community's clean, ain't no thugs here, ain't nobody robbin' nobody, ain't nobody killin' nobody. If y'all want 'em out, y'all come get 'em out." We done secured the perimeter 'cause they not just gone come in now 'cause the people are behind us. So we have secured the perimeter.

AW: That's very good.

JSS: Yeah...so...white boys come in...one night...one day these white boys came. They 'sposed to be from the Ku Klux Klan. Ah, they come and they tryna scare folks in the community. "Where them niggas at?" Ah, "Here we are." (Making the sound of the cocking of the barrel of a gun) "Bloomp bloomp." "God damn! Them niggas crazy!" They gone. We done secured the perimeter. The community's sayin, "Right on!" (Laughing) You know, so that's what we mean by the military arm is that you have people that was willing—and you know, you had to be, on all fronts, you had to be...realize that you, at any moment, you could lose your life. So, this wasn't no plaything. Ah, you got to protect yourself 'cause we learned one thing: that this government is the most treacherous government on earth. When they want to get rid of you, they gone try everything in they power to do that. That's what they did to the Black Panther Party. You know? They infiltrated from within and they attacked it from without. They caused mistrust among comrades. So, they don't want anything like that. No opposition. That's what this government...doesn't...they don't want any opposition.

And what...why the assassination of Martin Luther King... 'cause they don't want any opposition. They want to say to the world that, "We are the most greatest democracy on earth. Forget about slavery. Forget about Jim Crow. Forget about hittin' a brotha over the head or terrorizin' the sista or terrorizin' the Black community. Forget about killin' the Indian. Forget about denyin' Hispanics their rights. We're the most famous and the powerful democracy on this earth. We don't want anybody to show any difference." That's what that's all about. And so, when we began to say, "Look, there's a difference here." That's when the government started movin' on us. And that's why Huey always said, "The gun ain't important." You know, when we came out with the gun, he tried to explain that to everybody. When we came out with the gun that was just shock therapy. That was just to put them on hold. Now what you gone do after that? You can't fight his tanks or planes. You know? You can, but you gotta do it in a most...in a guerilla fashion. You can't just jump up and say, "I'mma kill some white boys!" Hell, they got all the tanks and guns. So, what do you do? You organize you community. So, when you organize your community fully, it doesn't matter if your community's infiltrated as long as people are being served, as long as people realize that, "Hey we are for the liberation of ourselves," because everything is infiltrated. The terrorists are infiltrated, but what do they do? They got us scramblin' all over the place. You know, we'll change laws for terrorists. We send out armies, mechanize armies for who? Terrorists? For men that run around in dresses? They don't have tanks. They don't have planes. But we're sendin' tanks and planes and we're lockin' up our people inside these borders. You can't get on a plane unless you undress. Now, terrorists know how to get through that, if he's a terrorist. That's why the guy was sittin' on the plane with his underwear strapped. You know, we the ones sufferin'. So, the people suffer. All this other stuff is about...it ain't about nothin' but control and power, you know. The people's the one that's gonna suffer. In war, women and children die. In struggle, women and children die. We just after power, that's all. The government: "Got to hold on to my power." We say, "We've got to have power against the oppressor," but who's gonna take care of the community? That's the way it goes, you know. We didn't fail, it's just, we didn't realize how treacherous this government was, you know. We didn't realize that. We all...through the Civil Right Movement and people talk about the Civil Rights Movement all day long, you know, "Martin Luther King did this. Martin Luther King did that." Martin Luther King, he had sense enough to know that, "Hey man, if I keep doin' this long enough, they gone kill me." You know, it didn't have nothin' to do with romanticism or non-violence. "If I keep doin' this, they gone get rid of me. That's the power. I'm affecting their power," and that's what the Party was all about, you know. We had put...we go straight ahead, we goin' through the acid test, we gone burn and that's it. We used to tell the young people when we recruited 'em, "You know, you finna get ready to go through the acid test." And they'd say, "What?" "You finna get ready to go through the acid test, man. This is the acid test." And people left, ah, a lot of people left. A lot of people left with a sane mind, a lot of people didn't, you know. A lot of people went in exile, some people still in prison, you know. 'Cause you go through the acid test and it's just not a plaything. In Dallas, Houston, Oakland, New York and all of that, listen to all the stories, pretty much there might be a lot more stories that are more dynamic than others, but the reality was that we all went through the acid test. We burned, you know. Your uncle could say that. He went through the acid test. He burned. So, how strong are you gonna

be up here? (Pointing to his head) You know, to take you through. I've seen some guys that I thought was super-macho, break under all the weight. You know, 'cause it wasn't no plaything. We always told the young brothers, "Man, you finna get ready to go through the acid test. It ain't no plaything." "Ah man, what are you talkin' 'bout? You know, I know." And then, "Damn, man! I don't think I can handle this, man! This is too heavy for me." You know...you're being stopped on the highway, three o'clock in the morning and you facin' some old white crackers and they tell you, "We know who you are. Well, what should we do with them right now?" And you're sayin', "If they get ready to shoot, man, we gone have to start shootin' back." Yeah, we was in Beaumont, ah, we had a...they had a protest in Beaumont. The deejay down there called ah, his name was Mark Brown. The police roughed him up and paralyzed him and at the same time they shot a Black guy and...they shot him in the back. I thin his name was Danny Moore, or something like that. We went down there to help 'em out and we had a boycott of...I think it was White Way...Gateway or White Way Food Store down there in 1972. And we ah, the boycott was pretty successful the Black community, you know, liked what happened, the results, but right before the last of it, I think it was me, Norris, and ah, another brotha that came from...he came from a small town right outside of Beaumont...he was with us. We looked around, we was by ourselves. The young brothas from Lamar University sistas ah, they got scared 'cause the Ku Klux Klan, you know...ah...where did the brotha get dragged?

AW: In Jasper.

JSS: Jasper! See, Jasper and Searsville is right down there and that's Ku Klux Klan territory. Ah, they, they started threatenin' us and stuff like that but it was just me, Norris, and ah, probably about four or five of us was actually from the organization, we was down there helpin' the ah, the students with the boycott, but the students got scared and left us. And ah, that's when we came to the realization that we gonna have to shoot us some white folks. We gonna have to go on down...we just gonna have to get killed while we down there. 'Cause we were stranded. We got out because of my connection. I had a girlfriend that lived in Port Arthur and she made connection with Smitty, ah so we hid for about two days, but the police and the Ku Klux Klan was lookin' for us.

AW: Did y'all ever have to...?

JSS: Naw. What we did was we didn't have to confront 'em because they really didn't get to us. They was lookin' for us, but people was hidin' us, but we was loaded and locked. (Laughs) So we just made the decision that, "You know, this is it. If they come we meet 'em face-to-face, we not gone ask them any questions."

AW: Can you tell me some more stories about run-ins with the police like that?

JSS: Ah, mostly it was just harassment, you know. I think ah, I remember one of our comrades, Jackie, out of Abilene, Bobby Seale's comin' to SMU to speak. He was runnin' for mayor at the time and ah, it was three carloads of us and we got out of Denton... 'cause we 'sposed to meet Bobby at the airport, but our last car, they had to

leave a little later than us and they stopped Jackie and harassed him and told ‘em that, “Your leader’s in town.” You know, all this kinda stuff. “We outta blow your head off nigga, right now.” You know, all this kinda stuff. He said, “Well, you can take me to jail or whatever you wanna do. If you wanna arrest me. Well, why you gone kill me?” And ah, you know, stuff like that, you know. Just harassment and stuff like that. Tryin’ to provoke us into something, you know, ‘cause we always...we...Huey always said, “Look, take the arrest.” That was the difference between him and Eldridge. Huey always said, even when they stepped out as Black Panthers for Self-Defense with the guns, he just said, “Take the arrest.” Legally, we have a right, at that time, they had the right to show their weapons and question the police, but they always, said, “Take the arrest.” You know, we weren’t just no crazy fools, you know. If there was a situation where you just asked the police, “Do you wanna arrest me?” And they might say, “Yeah, we’re gonna arrest you.” “Okay, ah, then, read me my rights. Let me go to jail and let us call our lawyer?”

AW: Who were ah, some of the lawyers that you had?

JSS: Ah, some of the lawyers...it was...Stony...Burns that we had a lawyer out of Dallas and ah, what was the Black lawyer here?

AW: L.A. Bedford?

JSS: L.A. Bedford would help and George Allen wasn’t a lawyer, but he would help get us a lawyer when he was alive. So that was...we always had access to a lawyer.

AW: Can you tell me ah, like the rank and file positions of some of the people here?

JSS: Okay.

AW: Like I know you talked about you worked your way up. So, can you tell us like about that, like what positions you held and ten positions that other people held?

JSS: Okay, okay. Well ah, locally, I was like the chief. Ah, Leroy was the chairman. Smitty was our field marshal. Ah, Norris was our field marshal. Ah, Paula was our communications secretary.

AW: What’s a field marshal?

JSS: A field marshal was basically a recruiter just out in the field. Uh huh, you know, just ah, gettin’ people, you know. And Smitty was good with that. Ah, gettin’ young people and recruitin’ young people, makin’ assignments for ‘em.

AW: Now, when I, when I interviews Baba Odinga, the other day, he mentioned...so, after the purge, he mentioned a spl—another split between ah, a chartered Party in ‘73. Did you witness that, or were you affected by that or how did y’all work—did y’all work together?

JSS: Well, it wasn't a split, what happened was Fahim got out of ah, prison...

AW: Was he already affiliated with y'all before that?

JSS: No, no...and ah, what happened we ah...around '74... 'bout the end of '73, '74 we dispersed. Ah, we had a lot of internal problems and everything, so we just kinda dispersed. Ah, Fahim ah, asked to ah, start another chapter here at Central Headquarters and he did along with Marvin Crenshaw and Charles Hillman.

AW: Would you ah...in reading about the Panthers in Oakland and in well California at-large and then on the East Coast I know one of the things that they did was police watches or police patrols. Did you all do that as well?

JSS: We did at first and, you know, that didn't last long, you know, because what happened was in California, the law changed. They called it the "Panther Law"—the Monfort Act forbidded Panthers from carrying guns openly, so that, that kinda dispersed. So, but we was pretty much entrenched, especially in Oakland, it was pretty much entrenched in the community by then. So, 'cause you had...

AW: So, you didn't even have to do that because you had secured the...

JSS: Yeah, because you had people comin' from al over and they had a... 'fore they even knew it, they had a headquarters, and people comin' from all over and you had people with different expertise. You had people comin' outta SNCC joinin' the Panthers. You had people comin' out of ah, Martin Luther King's movement joinin' the Panthers. You had brothas off the street that joined the Panthers 'cause the façade that they had. You had ah, sistas with skills, comin' out of college and stuff joinin' the Party. So, you had a well-entrenched organization there. Ah, in fact, they probably coulda took over the whole city. If they woulda really, you know, stayed into it, they probably coulda took over the whole city 'cause you would have a well-oiled organization there. Now, here we didn't have to worry about patrols so much because our communities was pretty much more segregated than, you know a few of the Party's...

AW: That makes sense.

JSS: Yeah.

AW: Right.

JSS: You knew the police was there and they were comin' and you pretty much knew their names and stuff like that. We had a coupla agent that were assigned to us from the Dallas Police Department.

AW: Oh really?

JSS: Uh huh...they specific job just to follow us around and so we say, "Hey, what's goin' on McClinton." You know, 'cause I see him today, you know. And...but he...you know what he said every time I see him?

AW: What?

JSS: I sho' miss y'all guys. (Laughs)

AW: (Laughs)

JSS: "I sho' miss y'all, man." He say, "Man, when y'all...Man that was the best job I ever had." 'Cause he said, you know...he was a Black guy.

AW: Okay.

JSS: He said that ah, eve though he was assigned to us, to watch us, he said, "Y'all had a purpose. And, you know, I'd watch y'all and y'all worked hard and everything. Y'all wasn't no thugs or anything like that." You know, we would cuss him out. "McClinton! Get yo'..."
(Laughs)

AW: (Laughs)

JSS: You know, 'cause we would ah, we'd be downtown sellin' papers and we'd see him with this other white guy, turnin' the corner. "McClinton, what are you doin'?" He'd look and we'd say, "Man, get on away from here, man! Go arrest somebody!" He'd say, "I'm 'sposed to be arrestin' y'all. Y'all make my job too easy." But ah, he tells us today when I see him...'cause I see him...I probably seen him in the last year about three times.

AW: Okay.

JSS: And he say the same thing. "I sho' do..."

AW: Do you remember his first name?

JSS: His name was James.

AW: James McClinton?

JSS: Uh huh, in fact, he gave me his phone number and everything, and ah...James McClinton...and he say, "I sho do miss you guys." He'd day, "How's Charlie Paul doin'? Leroy doin'? How's so-and-so doin'?" You know, I sho', I sho' miss y'all." But ah, every city had they assigned agents to Party members. So, we didn't really have to worry about partolin'...and every city has their own...I guess...way things evolved, you

know. Baltimore evolved pretty much the way we did: infiltrated from the start. Ah, so you'll see that in ah, what's that Des Moines? What state is Des Moines in?

AW: Iowa.

JSS: Iowa?

AW: Uh huh.

JSS: They chapter got blowed up by the FBI...just blowed it up. See, you don't hear about that. Where chapters was actually blown up by the authorities, you know and it's just ah, the history is just...in Philadelphia, they made 'em all strip naked in the winter...cold. All strip...they had whole pictures of 'em layin' in the street, women and men, stripped naked, you know. So, we was always oppressed, always just totally disrespected for different reasons, you know. Because they felt that we...some of 'em felt that we was communist and some people...and the government just didn't like what we was doin'. This is the first time in history that Black men stood up with a gun in their hand and said, "We ain't gonna take this no more." They didn't like that at all, so they had to do something about it. J. Edgar Hoover said, "We gotta do something about that." If you read the COINTELPRO files and ah, the way he ah, went after the Panthers, it was totally illegal. You know, it was totally illegal. He talked about Malcolm, ah, how he was gonna deal with Malcolm, how he was gonna deal with Martin, but when he talk about the Panthers, the law...he just said, "Forget the law. We goin' after these. We gonna do everything in our power to destroy 'em." You know, 'cause we caused a lot of fear in this country. That was the first time that they ever seen a Black organization like that. So there was a lot of fear—even some of our people was afraid to a point, you know. They trusted us, but they was afraid to a point. You know, 'cause that was the first time anybody ever seen something like that. Then, the programs, they understood it and everything like that, but it was like, if they shoot at us, we gone shoot back.

AW: So you spoke about 1974...it all...was it um your arm of the Party that kind of dissolved, or was it both arms that were operating dissolved?

JSS: Well, the Party itself, nationwide was goin' downhill. Ah, we, locally, I think the people that we had was just too young. They didn't come out of our era. I came out of the sixties. Started recruiting people in the seventies that were comin' outta high school in '69 and '70. Ah, things were changin'. Ah, people were more interested in goin' to parties, and so we can't hold down a young sista or a young brotha day-in-and-day-out that had to have a task and their friends would be doin' different things, you know, partyin', hangin' out and stuff like that, and they realize they got to have a task. Some of the young people, they was strong enough to say, "Hey, this is what I want to do." But, ah, it just didn't last like that. It was takin' a toll on all of us, to tell you the truth, you know. 'Cause things was changin' so fast that ah, that's all I knew for those short years was that bein' a Panther, you know. Then I start realizin' that, "Hey, you know, the control I had over people was enormous." You know, you could tell somebody...you could practically tell somebody that, "Hey I order you to kill somebody," and, "Yes

chief.” You know, then you start realizin’ in your head, “Well damn, what kinda power do I have?” You know, you tell somebody that, “I want you to go down to Beaumont and do this and come on back,” and they say, “Yes chief.”? And you start realizin’ that things are changin’, but I’ve got power over thee people. You know, me and Leroy used to talk about that, how much power we had over these young sistas and brothas.

AW: Did it take a toll on you?

JSS: Sure, it took a toll on me. I took a young girl...this is a young girl in high school, away from her family, “Come live with me.” She still a junior in high school. And I thought, “That’s power.” You know, we trained her and all this kinda stuff. And then when I got confused and wanted to move on, then she can’t understand that. Then I realized, “Boy, I got some crazy power here. This is really some powerful stuff.” ‘Cause I talk about that to Leroy all the time, the power we had over people, you know. And I tell you and can you imagine this: you to a young girl’s house in the middle...early in the morning, you not only take her, but you take her friend, and you take her out of the city, out of her home and bring her from South Texas, tip of Texas, all the way up here to live with you? Her and her friend? That’s...that’s unimaginable. And so, you just start realizin’ that, “You know, maybe this thing is not goin’ the way you want it to, you know. It’s getting’ kinda crazy.”

AW: How would you deal with that feelin’?

JSS: Humm?

AW: How did you deal with that over the years? How did you—

JSS: It took me a long time and I just dealt with it when I wrote my book. I just dealt with it. I really ah, had to pray about it for a long time, you know. ‘Cause the impact on her, I don’t know how it left her. When I left her, it wasn’t good at all. So, ah, I had to deal with that for a long time and ah, basically just asked God for forgiveness, you know. I write in there, I don’t say her name, but in the beginning, I put her initials in big letters and “I hope that God has been good to you.” You know, ‘cause she was the beautiful, the most beautiful woman you ever wanted to see, you know. When I first met her, we had to whop some niggas’ behinds behind that woman. Soon as we got her off to...outta the car...the thugs said, “Damn man!” You know...“Well, here we go.” So, that’s you know...and...and I think ah, it’s leave a bitter taste. I had a talk with sistas at national Headquarters and some of their experiences had left a bitter taste in their mouths. You know, they are proud that they are Panthers, but some of the experiences has left a bitter taste in their mouth, ‘cause it didn’t happen just locally, but nationwide and different degrees, you know. I was talkin’ to a sista, ah, sista gave ah, Panthers...Sistas and the Panthers, they gave a...they had a small conference at one of the...in Oakland a coupla years go and they talked about their experiences and some of the changes they went through. ‘Cause a lot of ‘em had to fight for leadership. From the first place, some of ‘em didn’t like ah, Erica Huggins or someone like Kathleen Cleaver. See, they didn’t have to fight for their leadership. You know, Eldridge was big time, hi wife was smart,

came out of SNCC so, she was automatically in leadership, you know. Erica Huggins, her husband was murdered in Los Angeles. She was a writer ah, poetry ah, for the Party. She was well-respected, but then you start seein' sistas comin' up from ah, bottom up, it was a lot of resistance, you know. So, they talked about that. You know, then we had the military arm again and you had these brothas over here, that's all they knew how to do so some of 'em wanted to ride on the sistas so that's a bitter taste for some of 'em. You know, 'cause you had brothas who had privileges in the military arm, especially in Oakland...they had...some of 'em had privileges. That's all they had to do all day long was kick somebody's behind, you know. 'Cause they ha to deal with dope dealers, they had to deal with pimps, they had to deal with the underworld and it was a big underworld there than here. We didn't have to worry 'bout brothas on the street. I knew them. So it was like, "Hey Skip! What's happenin'?" Right on, brotha!" You know, so I didn't have to worry about the brothas down here 'cause they knew me. They knew me from the streets. So, "Oh man, you with Skip man? Oh c'mon!" You know 'cause one sista, we went to the club one night, but I had on some shorts and they wouldn't let me in. She said, "I'mma go in there and see what's goin' on." And I'm standin' out there waitin' on her, she come runnin' out. "This man is chasin' me!" You know, big Black guy, you know. Look like he'd scare anybody, you know. She ran over there, hidin' behind my little butt and ah he walks out the door, I said, "Say man, why you messin' with my woman?" "Skip man, I love you man! I didn't know that was your woman!" And she was like, "I thought he was a monster!" "Man...", and he had to tell her the story, "...me and him, we used to be on the streets and we used to do that..." So locally, it wasn't all that. Nationally, it as a different story. You read some of the stories that ah...and I think that's what Huey...that's how Huey went crazy, because he came from the streets and he had all these ideas in his head and ah, he was a kind of a genius. So, when we formed the Party...and ah...'cause to tell you the truth, we they say co-founders, Huey was a mastermind, and but he had all these ideas and all that stuff came out of his head, and so after awhile, you could see it. It was just messin' with him and even people he grew up with said, "Damn, man! This brotha here he done gone crazy!" You know, 'cause he was just...one instant he's on the streets, next instant he's quotin' philosophical ideas and, you know...and it was just...a lot of madness. 'Cause you had...intellectual people would come and meet with him and they'd say, "This man is a genius!", but at nightfall, he's a thug, you know. He's holdin' people at bay with dope...the community...and he would tell them, "Hey, you gone donate to the Party whether you like it or not." You know, and people started sayin', "Damn, Huey done went crazy." And that's the way his mind just start—but I don't blame him, 'cause I could see how your mind could—'cause I can see it on my personal level where, you know, you got all this power and you realize, "Damn, I got control over all these people?" And ah, Huey...I don't know all that much, you know, 'cause people would just follow me, you know, 'cause I'm this and I'm that. I'm the chief and all that. He's the...Huey was the...oh, it got to the point where we called Huey the servant, you know. We gave him a deity, you know. So, you can just imagine where his mind was goin'. We done gave him a deity now...Minister of Defense, he was the Commander and Chief, now he's the servant, you know. So, it's easy to go from that revolutionary idea to that revolutionary cultism and that's where we was headed. Comin' from that revolutionary

ideology and we was goin' into that revolutionary cultism...to become a revolutionary cult.

AW: Well you definitely shed light on a variety of things that are so necessary and needed and all I can do is say, "Thank you." That's all I can say is, "Thank you." And...

JSS: Oh, I appreciate it. Well, I can't take it with me. I don't want to.

AW: We appreciate it, Dallas appreciates it and the young people appreciate that.

JSS: You know, 'cause a lot of people...I think that...and even people that was some what part of the struggle...it's...and I say this in a way that's...a lot of people did not understand the Black Panther Party, the inner-workings and stuff. Even people that was in the struggle, whether they was in SNCC or whatever...is that...I even talked to people here that I know—more cultural...like to deal with culturalism...to me, when it come to talkin' about the Party, is that, I don't think they really want to hear it.

AW: Why is that?

JSS: I think because it's just too many things involved. It seems like when you start talkin' about it, they sort of back off from you, you know. I think we just one in ourselves. I can talk to...when I talk to Leroy...that's why I'm so glad to see him sometime and we can talk about old times. Khalif...we can kinda talk about old times. Even talkin' with Diane about the Party, they can't grasp it, you know. Ah, what they heard, or what they seen in the media or whatever, they know all that, but they can't grasp the whole dynamic. It's a hell of a dynamic. It's a hell of a dynamic that the Party, ah, had, you know. You talkin' 'bout, you know, even when you talk about the communal livin', the rules that you had to follow, and they way you had to treat sistas and the way you had to treat your livin' space.

AW: Tell us about the communal livin' space.

JSS: The communal livin' is that ah, we live in a community, male-female, ah. Some of us lived in the same bed. Ah, some of us had their own rooms and stuff like that, but you had to maintain where it was at, make sure it was clean and everything. Ah, make sure that ah, if there was sexual relationships involved that we had to make...try to make sure that we didn't have any sexually transmitted diseases spreading throughout the community. Ah, we had our doctors and stuff like that, and locally, we didn't have that big problem. Food, you got to make sure that your comrades had to be fed. You're feedin' other people. It was sometimes where you fed other people and you didn't feed yourself. If you wasn't a good hustler, you might go hungry and this was the problem with some of the young brothas is that they was streetwise, but they wasn't survival wise. So they didn't know how to lock on and it's a contradiction there because I knew...(Tape skips) So, you know, I had a girlfriend in a communal setting, I knew I was gonna eat because I had a female there, but if I wanted to really eat good, it's a sista out here that

said, “Hey brotha, I’m interested in you and c’mon over here and eat.” You know, so, the young brothas see that, you know, “Skip, you get to eat man! You eatin’ over here, you eatin’ over there, you and Leroy.” You know, “Man, you got to...you call yourself a revolutionary, so be a revolutionary. Go over here and talk to this sista. Go and have some ah...you got to...”, brothas on the street would say, “Have some swagger, you know.” Say, “Say sista, all Power to the People.” You know, catch phrases and everything like that. “All Power to the People.” “What did you say?” Then you get that hook, then you say, “Okay.” (Laughs) It’s survival! You know, it’s survival and some brothas couldn’t do that and some brothas were layin’ well. Some brothas lived with other sistas in the community and they lived with the community itself. But then you had sistas that were single in the community so you had to prevent brothas tryna ride hurt on them, you know, ‘cause you know we’d hear all kinds of stuff, “Damn baby, you in the Party, so I’m a brotha, so you need to come on and get right.” And you sayin’, “Say, brotha you can’t be doin’ all that. The sista don’t want no relationship. She don’t want no relationship.” “Damn, man, you know...what...y’all...” “Naw brotha, you can’t do that if she don’t want no relationship, you know.”

AW: Was the communal livin’ space in Denton?

JSS: Yeah. Yeah, we had a...in fact, what we did in Denton, we just took about four apartments...the best ones they had...the manager—the owner just said, “Hey, y’all take anything...y’all take anything y’all want. I don’t know problems.” And we didn’t give the white boy no problems. We just, you know, ‘cause we had more people mov—comin’ up, we’d say, “Hey man, we need another apartment.” And he said, “I gotta four bedroom.” That was the best apartment that was in the whole place for the projects! “Okay, we’ll take that!” We didn’t pay no rent. We had four apartments, didn’t pay no rent. We used one apartment for our office and ah, Free Breakfast Program and our After School Program. We had one apartment ‘cross from there that was for the comrades...the brotha that was on the military arm and Leroy, our chairman. And ah, the brotha that was on the military arm, he had a wife, so she stayed with him and ah, the other apartment was for some young comrades and I had an apartment further down with mostly new comrades, which was mostly...I didn’t have nothin’ but sistas in mine. I ended up with all the young sistas, so we ah, so what we did with the young sistas is that I would see them, me and Smitty was pretty much in charge of the young sistas, keepin’ the young brothas from kinda ridin’ hurt on some of ‘em and ah, one of the young sistas was my girlfriend anyway so they felt more secure down there so we had...and we had some brothas outside of the ah, communal that lived with either sistas in the community or somewhere else so, we kinda put it like that. And that worked out pretty good, but when I went to Oakland I found out that most of the communals there, the properties were owned by the Party. The Party owned a lot of property in Oakland. They had a nightclub. They had a church. Plus, they had offices and two or three daycare centers. Ah so, they had a lot of real estate, ‘cause I stayed in Berkeley when I went up there at ah, one of the offices there and come to find out, “They got real estate all over the place!” So it was, it was...communal livin’ is...you try to make sure that everybody not just satisfied, but can eat, can be clothed, you know, ‘cause we had to worry about that to, be clothed. You know, ‘cause you had to be...we was at the stage there around ’72, the

whole philosophy of the Party changed. We had started dressin' up, lookin' like people in the community. Get rid of that black tam and that black leather jacket standin' out from everybody. Start dressin' like people in the community. Ah, if you goin' to church on Sunday, get you a suit. If you goin' to an affair, get you a suit. Sista got to dress nice, nails done and all that. So, we start changin' that from that black leather jacket and those tams 'cause we was just standin' out too much. So, when I see these young brothas now, call themselves the New Black Panther Party, you know, they're not reading the ah, the way the Party evolved, the philosophy. I know they're not reading the philosophy, you know, 'cause they mixin' Black nationalism with some old Black Panther stuff that we got away from back in 1971 an '72, but they call themselves the New Black Panther Party. You know, they walk around with all this regalia on talkin' 'bout they're the New Black Panther Party and we tried to talk to some of the brothas and they don't get it. And that's what I mean by a lot of people don't get it. What they don't get is that the reason why we call ourselves revolutionary is because we had an ideology and the ideology was always changin'; it wasn't standin' still. We started at self-defense, police ridin' hurt on brothas, kickin' they're behinds, shootin' 'em in the back. "We got to stop this mess." Then we came with ideology. It was the wrong ideology because we started pickin' up Marxism and Leninism and then when Huey got out of prison he said, "Wait a minute now. What's all this Marxist-Leninist stuff? The world has changed. What do we see now?" We didn't understand what he was talkin' about. He said, "You're talkin' 'bout socialism. You're talkin' 'bout ah communism, that don't even exist! It don't exist in Russia. It don't exist in China. So, why are we talkin' about it?" And we said, "What do you mean, Huey?" He said, "Well shoot, when you got to Russia and when you go to China, the first thing they got to buy is what? A Coca-Cola. The first thing lookin' for is a GMC. Ah, you go to Atlanta, what do you see? McDonald's. So we're talkin' about corporate. The corporate world has tore down national boundaries." All that game about communism and socialism and revolution and all this, that's over. What we see is the corporate dominance of the world. That's what we see. So, what are they talkin' about now? Globalization. Huey was talkin' about that back in 1970 and we thought he was crazy. That's how heavy he was. We said, "Man, what is this brotha talkin' 'bout?" He said, "We need to start talkin' about globalization." He said, "Hey, when you go to Nigeria, on a dusty road what you gonna see is a brotha, he got a radio in his hand, listenin' to a British broadcastin' station. What is that? That's inter-communalism. That means that the whole world is tied together. There's no national boundaries anymore. You know, if you have to buy this product, then you have to buy this same product in this different country. You gotta buy that same product over here." So what happened is the corporate world is dominating the whole world. So what we are? We are slaves to consumerism. So, they have tied the world into...you've got...that's what the Viet Nam was for...War was about, to open up a new market. Takin' away from the old market, which they gonna call communism...that's that old market, that market ain't goin' nowhere. "So, what do we do?" "We secure this area around the United States for the corporate world. So Vietnamese, they don't have to buy noodles, they can buy McDonald's." And you gone see the same thing in Iraq. After the war, they not gone be buyin' these ah, pita breads, they gone be buyin' McDonald's. It's a new corporate structure. It's a new market place, and then that new market place is gonna go into Afghanistan, and then that new market place is goin' to Africa. It's already in Africa, but

they gotta secure it more. That's what we're all about. It's not about dressin' up, lookin' bad in front of white folks, we're about, "hey, what is oppressed?" "The world: the people of the world is oppressed." "Why?" "Because of greed." It's corporate greed that is tryna take over the whole world. It doesn't matter, when we talk about China thirty or forty years ago, how communist it is. Look at China, now.

AW: Capitalist as all get out.

JSS: Capitalism, you know...corporate, you know. So who got to buy alla that? The people. If you can't afford it, then what you do? You starve. So that's what Huey gave us. The real Panthers, you know. Whatever happened to him in '89 and all that, I always remember that back in 1970, he was talkin' about what we're talkin' about right now: what Obama is tryna do, deal with globalization. He was envisionin' that back then, so that makes me know that brotha there was way ahead of his time.

AW: I, I really appreciate you mentionin' somethin' and it's kinda like, I guess, not getting locked in to...and getting comfortable or not misunderstanding your mission, your message, the reason why you're doin' things, and so when you're talkin' about the New Black Panther Party, and the way in which...it's like they...I don't know...I guess a misunderstandin' of the time, or a over-glorification of a certain aspect of the Party and not understandin' the fluidity of thought and movement.

JSS: Right. Right.

AW: That's a good point because I...not only...not just that organization, but I think people who are not in that era in general, especially young people like myself, and even people younger than me, whether it's through the media or just not understanding that whole continuum of thought, you know, we get locked in—

JSS: Umm hmm...yeah, yeah, we're locked in...

AW: And the media has done that to us as well, like...oh when we think about the Panthers, what's the first thing you think about when somebody say Panthers? The tam and the jacket and the gun. And a lot of times that could be all that we get from it. But I think that it's important to understand that the Panthers, like any other Black organization or Black cultural...Black culture, in and of itself, is fluid. And it addresses the needs of the people at the time. So, if we have gone past a certain point, it's time to regroup, refocus, reanalyze and address those new needs. But I think that that's somethin' we miss as a people altogether. The ability to say, "Okay, I'm not gonna be locked into this dogmatic way of thinkin'". Okay, those principles that we had before were so great, they're not goin' anywhere, they're a part of our legacy and we're not...and by us moving away from that, we're not forgetting that, but we're not used to that change. And it's not really change, it's just, I guess, a transition. We're not used to that transition and pickin' up and continuin' forward and not bein' locked in. So that's a really good point.

JSS: We become reactionary, you know. We react to ah, things. It's just like when we was in ah...talkin' about ah, ah, what down in Silsby, Texas where the brotha got dragged, is that ah, I was lookin at the news, said, "Oh, we got he New Black Panthers down here and they, you know, they got hey guns and stuff like that..." And I was just sayin', "Do these brothas really know what they doin'?" You know, "Do they really know what they're doing?" First of all, you know, as far as takin' a gun out in the open, now, is illegal. Back then, there was a legal precedent that Huey said, "We can take guns openly because it is legal. As long as we take guns at a certain position. We cannot point at anybody. We cannot point it to the ground. We gotta hold it at a position where it's diagonal to the ground and to the sky. And when we do confront the police, we have to stay a reasonable distance from the police and ask a legal question. 'Why are you arrestin' this man?'" Okay when the law was changed, "Okay, let's put the guns away, but legally we can have weapons inside our homes or our dwellings," so we always looked at the law from that point. Now people broke laws, but the main...we always followed the law when it came to weapons. We just didn't display weapons just for show, you know. But what brothas are doing, they get reactionary and then they want... "Oh okay. We want to act like some bad Negroes," but not realizing that if stuff does come down, like down there in Texas, if something went array, that brotha woulda got killed, 'cause I heard they weapons was empty, you know. And that's a gross misrepresentation of the Party, because our weapons were never empty. If you gone step out there brotha, be for real, you know. If you gonna take somebody with ya, you know you goin' down, so do flow show and flow boat for us, you know. Don't do that. Now if you goin' down there to protest, put the weapons up, go down there and protest, do what you gotta do, and come on back. Or organize the people and tell 'em or organize somebody down there and address the issue and come on back. But those issues will always be addressed. What's the real issue is that our communities, what are they doing? Our communities are suffering. You got overrun of drugs and crime. They're not being confronted. Police can't solve those problems; the people have to solve those problems. People livin' in fear. Of what? Their own people. They not livin' in fear 'cause some whiteboy gone ride down on 'em. They livin' in fear 'cause Cousin Joe down here standin' on the corner is actin' a Goddamn fool. 'Cause he wanna sell some crack, he'll blow my head off. So we got to organize against that so we can come back to the real point is to organize our communities so we can keep up with the rest of the world. You know, so brothas can be educated.

AW: And I think that the major problem is them thinkin' that their the only ones that can do it.

JSS: Yeah.

AW: And what's key is mobilizing the people.

JSS: Mobilizing the people!

AW: So they can do it on their own.

JSS: That's right. So they can do it on they own.

AW: But to know that they have support from you or, you know, elsewhere.

JSS: Yeah, and they'll get the support if they go 'head and do it. 'Cause you know, if somebody within you is gonna disrupt you and tear you down, then you can't move forward. I grew up in South Dallas. I never seen South Dallas in that state before, you know. When I was goin' to school, you know, I wasn't a good kid, I had a good neighborhood. I go over there now...I go over there, I say, "Damn, these niggas done went crazy." And that's the way I feel. They done went slap...they done went stone crazy. The old people in their homes, they can't come out on the porch 'cause they're afraid, you know. Guys sellin' drugs all up and down the street, you know. Women walkin' up aimlessly to you, you know. Offerin' their body for a few dollars 'cause they wanna get high. Damn, this is madness. We ain't never had nothin' like this. The community just totally went down. So, we need to ah, if we need a New Black Panther Party, I think the need to organize around that, you know, and try to solve those particular problems, so we can move forward. Instead of just grand-standin', wearin' old uniforms that don't mean nothin', you know. We stepped outta those. If you see the...when you look at those pages, you'll see the evolution of the Party where tam, black leather jacket, to brothas dressin' different and sistas lookin' different, you know. 'Cause it wasn't necessary anymore. We had to start really feedin' people. Dealin' with children, tryna educate. That's why they started the school in Oakland. And for that short period of time, they had the best successful rate as far as test on any high school level than the whole city of Oakland. That came out of the Panther school. Those children that went to that school and tested, they tested higher than the rest of the school system 'cause they taught 'em Black history. They taught 'em world history. They taught 'em how other people lived. You had other people comin' from all over the world, showcasin' how they lived. They started seein' different things...

AW: And they saw teachers who looked like them, who cared about them.

JSS: Yeah, that's right, that cared about them, you know. You know, and some...and even at that school you had a coupla white teachers, but they were...the culture was totally different, you know. And...young brothas had respect, you know, they had martial art training and discipline and stuff like that...and so, when they tested them, they always tested higher...they always tested higher. They used mathematics as a...I don't know, Huey had this idea and they used mathematics as what they called, "dialectical materialism," that everything in this world, if it exists, has a opposite ah,...an attraction. So, "Let's try to teach the kids on that level as far as math." And seemed like it worked. So, you know, we had a, you know...that's why when I say that people I talk to that was in some from of the Movement, didn't understand the Panthers, because it was much more than what they saw. It was...it was a lifestyle like none other. It really was. It was a lifestyle like...when we called ourselves comrades, it was true, you know. 'Cause we had a different...we lived in a different world. We talked different, our music was different, our art was different, the we treated each other was totally different, our children was raised differently...and ah, that's what I mean by that, especially then,

children...we was young then in the seventies. They was raised totally different, you know. We just had a different viewpoint, a way of lookin' at the world. You know, as opposed to lookin' at the world the way it is. You know sometimes when I'm sittin' with my wife and she say somethin' and I say somethin' else, she'll say, "Where did you get that from?" I say, "It's just the way I," you know, "The way I was taught in the Party."

AW: She wasn't involved in the Party?

JSS: Naw, she...she wasn't involved in the Party...and it's just the way I look at...I might look at somehtin' different, you know. It's just like Obama. He was elected; I was elated! But, at the same time, I told a sista at a church the Sunday afterwards, she was...had these t-shirts, "We have made it to the mountain top." I said, "Sista, wait a minute. Lemme look at that t-shirt." She said, "You wanna buy one?" I said, "What that say?" She said, "It says...'We have made it to the mountain top'." I said, "Baby, you crazy?" I said, "The war has just begun." She said, "What war?" I say, "Ah, who was elected?" "Obama was elected." "Well, don't you know the war has just begun?" We see that now. The war has just begun. What are the republicans doin'? They're wagin' a war. What are the tea parties doin'? When you talk about tea party, that means wagin' a war against what? Some type of oppressor. So the war has just begun, you know. We still jumpin' up and down and talkin' about how wonderful things is and we don't realize that it's a war goin' on in American now, you know. We gone leave this man hangin' out there if we don't stop celebratin' and realize that, "Hey man, we gonna have to pull behind this brotha." We have to tell the democrats to get off they ass and participate in this war. 'Cause that's what it is. It's a war goin' on. That's what politics is. Politics is war without bloodshed. War, ah, is politics with bloodshed and so, but we get things all mixed up. We don't have...American people don't have a...ideology...they don't have ideologies. They don't have, you know, they don't believe or accept from one point to another, and so I think that's where Black people are at. We got this man in office, and right now, he's...we have hung him out to dry because we don't realize that as soon as he was elected, there was a war goin' on and these white...these republicans and these other tea party folk, they not pullin' any punches, are they?

AW: Uh uh...

JSS: They sayin' anything and everything that they can. Back in the sevent—the seventies and the sixties, during the Civil Rights Movement, a white boy woulda said, "Hey, he's a jiggaboo and he's a Nazi." We woulda been up in arms, wouldn't we? Now somebody callin' you a president, Sambo, jiggaboo, Hitler, and you don't realize it's a war...it's a ideological war goin' on?

AW: Do you mind if we take a quick break?

JSS: Oh sure.

Interview Ends.

Interview with Reverend Bernest L. “Smitty” Smith

Ava Wilson (AW): Whenever you’re ready, could you just state your name for the record?

Reverend Bernest L. “Smitty” Smith (RBLs): Ah, I’m Reverend Bernest L. Smith.

AW: And Mister Smith, would you tell us or give us an overview of the movement in Dallas and your involvement in that movement?

RBLs: Ah, well for me, it started at ah, UT Arlington and we, we were students and I was the president of the first Black Student Union at UT Arlington, but, you know, at that time, we communicated with each other, so all of the Black Student Unions, like at El Centro, SMU, we knew each other. And took it on my initiative to go and meet everybody because we all had similar challenges and similar things to do. Our laundry list was the same. You know, Black History, Black Studies, Black Studies, okay, more Black students, more scholarships, more Black professors. We had our laundry list and we would run it at every campus. But ah, my involvement with the brothas in Dallas just moved me to a whole ‘nother station because Dallas was the, the place where ah, single member districts were goin’ on. The struggle for the school district was goin’ on. The struggle to keep South Dallas, Fair Park was goin’ on, and Dallas was a place where even today now you have a Black state senator, you got a Black congressman, you have four Black city council people, you have Black people on the DART board, the school district board, the everything. Okay, so Dallas was really the place where action was goin’ on. Later on I found out that my teachers and some people, some old people in the community where I grew up in Stop Six were involved in the Coalition of Black Democrats, which was an organization which was really going at that time, okay. Well, then once I connected with those persons I met in Dallas like Ernie McMillan, Fahim Minkah, who is Fred Bell. Fred Bell, who is Fahim Minkah, he was at UTA on a track scholarship, okay, and you just can’t talk to Fahim Minkah any kind of way. You know what I mean? Even back then and then he started the action to organize the Black Student Union, but they were afraid of—Black students were afraid of Fahim Minkah. (Laughs) Okay? And I was popular. Everybody knew me. So, they thought if they elected me, that thinds would be easy, you know. Ahh haa haa, that didn’t happen, okay. But we, we...because we were students, we had the life space with the time to communicate, travel and during that time—again I said Dallas was the place to be—and I was in SNCC, SCLC, the Party—Panther Party, okay, ‘cause we were the National Committee to Combat Fascism, and all that. I mean, which was a good thing, but from the interaction with those in Dallas, while I was in graduate school at North Texas, we moved in...we occupied a...ah, what you call it? A apartment complex for lower income people and ah, it was called Dreamland. So, you know, it was us in Denton. And then, Leroy Haynes, ah, Skip Shockley, and ah...James “Skip” Shockley—Skip Shockley—we three and some others, we really ran the actions and the activities in Denton and North Texas and we communicated with the sistas in...

AW: TWU?

RBLS: TWU. Matter fact, ah, one of the guys in our Black Student Union at North Texas...see on the weekend, you'd go to Texas Wesleyan and you wouldn't know that it was not co-ed, and one of our persons in the organization, I always forget his name...ah, J. W. Hudson. J. W. Hudson was over there courtin' some sistas and J. W. threw a rock at the...at the...at the ah, the girls' dorm and the police came and pounced on everybody and arrested Diane, okay, ah...what was her name? Mary Ellen Hicks's sista ah, was up there, too, and then we were ready, you know. We went to the ah, dean of our college, North Texas, Dean...oh God, I can't think of his name, but we went to his house and told him that we were gonna go and help the president of Texas Women's. You know, our objectives were not so...you know, but we had political intentions, too. But we went over there in the middle of the night and talked to the president of Texas Women's. We ended up stayin' at the girls' dorm for a week or two. We told him that we could help him mitigate the circumstances. That's where I first met Diane and Diane was who she is now. You know, she was outspoken and she was a leader on that campus and ah, she...we used to start to talkin' to them about how to organize their campus and to be careful to make sure they got their objectives covered and ah, a lot of things happened, and ah, in the break, you know thy...students went home and when they came back, the campus...the ah, the administration had really come down on them. And ah, I'm real proud of Diane 'cause she went on and graduated and Diane was really active in South Dallas, okay, extremely. You know, she was very bright and then her sister, Charlotte Ragsdale, which, you know, I had a crush on Charlotte. Charlotte was smart and she was cute as she could be and Charlotte was real active, too, but there was a different fellowship that we all knew each other and we communicated with each other and because of the issues we were in, we would come to each others' aid, okay. Particularly if you weren't a butthead and people could get along with you and you were not egocentric over something, you know.

AW: Now, I have just questions...ah, clarification. Ah, could you tell us the years of involvement when you were in SCLC, SNCC, and then...

RBLS: (Sighs) Ah, I'm gettin' old. Um...Black Student Union I think, '67, late '67, '68.

AW: Okay.

RBLS: And then I started bein' real active in Dallas in late 68, '69, '70, okay, and ah, oh God, it's been that long...and er ah, we keep up with each other for the most part, those of us, probably 'til '74, '75, okay.

AW: When were you in the Black Panthers?

RBLS: Oh God, '69, I think. I can't remember. '69 through '72, '73, okay, but it was really because of Leroy and Skip, okay, and then we were friends then. You have to understand, the Party was the lead organization for direct action and community involvement ah, beyond uh, voting and demonstrations, okay. SNCC, at the time, Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, but the Party was actually born out of

community, okay. And the Party had Free Breakfast Program, Free Shoe Program, a Liberation School, ah, we moved it to another level where we were 'cause we started runnin' people for school board and political offices and we went to school in Denton, okay, but we still maintained contact with people—families—in Dallas okay. It was kinda crazy.

AW: I have a few questions to ask. Now you, you have a very...your name preceded itself 'cause so many people mentioned "Smitty" in their interviews....

RBL: Yeah... (Laughs)

AW: So, you know, and they talked about you being such a dynamic organizer and I want you to kinda talk about, you know, Dallas, Texas, period is a huge state and in understanding about organizing and what it takes, tell us just a little bit.

RBL: We actually knocked on doors and one of the things we did that are...is not done today is, we spoke to everybody that walked down the street, but my parents had prepared me for that 'cause, you know, we always treated people like they were somebody. But, we, we had, we actually had the petitions, we knocked on doors, we talked to people, we'd go to grocery stores, okay. Your uncle, as I said, we did a shop-in at Minyard's located on Martin Luther King. We actually loved the people we were working with. We didn't look over anybody, okay and the issue that we were workin' on was simply self-determination of your community. Ah, we did have an effort to help students go to college, okay. Ah, the difference is we loved and respected the people we worked with, and I don't know, I was real blessed because, um, the people I worked with, I mean, I can't even explain, they were good people. They were bright, very bright, okay. They were determined to do something in our neighborhood. And South Dallas, Fair Park, you know, you can't do that again, because the city had it's intention to take Black people's land in South Dallas, Fair Park, okay. And with my own eyes, I saw people standing, sittin' on their porches in front of their house with a shotgun, pointin' at the bulldozers. Naw, you can't take my property. And for a young man at that time, for me at that time, that just took me to a different understanding of what to do and what not to do. But, we actually walked the streets; we talked to people. We would go into Ms. So-and-so's house and sit down and talk with her. We'd make sure that nobody would break into her house or harm her, okay, and Diane and Skip grew up in South Dallas, Fair Park, so they knew just about everybody, okay. And Charlotte and ah, Ernie, okay...and we'd actually sit-down, I can't stress this enough, we talked to people and we understood and respected people we served. Okay, around specific initiatives that we had, okay, we worked together. We were extremely comprehensive and clear on how to organize a neighborhood. I mean, we knew who to talk to, we knew who the drug dealers were, we knew who the criminals were. I mean, we accorded them a certain protocol, but they also knew not to mess with us, okay. Ah, I'mma be real honest with you 'cause you didn't mess with the Party. I mean, you just didn't do that. Now, I think when we were workin' on the school board issue, okay and when we were workin' on just basic economic issues in South Dallas, you have to understand that the effort to redo Martin Luther Kind Boulevard, to make it vibrant in our community, we were doin' that back in '68, '69,

okay. Without the help of the Black Chamber, okay, because they were on another spectrum, okay, and the Urban League and all the other organizations that came later, they were involved in different pieces, but we were down where the people really lived.

AW: You were down at the ground level.

RBLS: Yes.

AW: And I have another question. You brought up, um, that the Party was very different from SNCC, and the Party, also very different from, just like you said, the Black Chamber of Commerce. Can you tell us, I guess, how those interactions went because you were very young men at this time and I'm just tryna think about helping young people understand the shift in thought at this time.

RBLS: Ah, I've given that a lot of that and I've saw a movie with Kadeem Hardison, talkin' 'bout *Panther*. Ah, they didn't capture the essence of it, you know. They did okay, you know. And there's a movie called *The Final Come Down*, where, ah...what's his name is in it...ah...Billy Dee Williams, okay. And that's another depiction that other people try to...and what it comes down to is that people in the neighborhood, though we were young, knew most of us from growin' up, and we knew Mr. Jones, Mr. Smith, Mr. Thomas, who now was the president of the Chamber, or the owner of the Black newspaper, or the owner of the cleaner's, okay. And we would...and then the political atmosphere of Dallas had ALL Black people under wraps, okay. There was no way you could move or get anything done, okay. We were the more aggressive part of it, okay. 'Cause we would get in your face, okay. We used to go to ah, Congressman Frost's office, close his door and tell his aides to get out and get right on his case 'cause he was votin' against us in congress, okay. And he'd come here and have one face, but we got feedback from ah, people in D.C. that he was votin' against Black people in the House and they would say, "Well, how did y'all send him down here?" The ah, Mattocks may have been the state representative; I can't remember, okay. But, we knew the elected officials. We knew the local woman who was the precinct captain, okay, or the neighborhood association president, okay, 'cause people from Dallas, Diane and Skip in particular, they knew 'em, they knew 'em. But when we came down to issues, okay—particularly with the Chamber—we'd talk about economic development. At that time, we began that they had a vested interest to be more in-line with the Chamber downtown than us because we didn't know 'til we found out later, that they get part of the bed tax, okay. And then, when we talked to the Urban League, or at time OIC, Operations and all that stuff, okay, they were doin' functions that we had been doin' just out of our hip pocket. I mean, but we would get people out of the neighborhood to donate food and money and businesses, people would give us money for support, but they didn't wanna be named, okay, and we knew it. As far as my part, you talk about...I learned to organize actually workin' with SCLC and workin' with your uncle, Ernie, okay...because we knew we'd knock on your door, were very polite. At the same time, we didn't rush folks; let them know what we're doin'. The atmosphere was that all Black people in Dallas accorded their due. So, everybody knew that, okay. The...I hate to say, the homogeneity of the...the homogeneity of the neighborhood was to our advantage because we were all

locked in. So we talked to each other and saw each other. The only area that was really weak is the one I'm workin' on now, it's still weak.

AW: What is that?

RBLS: The church, okay.

AW: Can you speak about that? Because a few people have.

RBLS: Yeah, the church leadership, okay...those who were pastors at that time, who were probably forty or fifty, some young ones. Ah, we met at Warren United Methodist Church and I forget the name of the church...it's Episcopalian right down on Martin Luther King. There were people who came from out of state as speakers there, okay. Stokely would come in quite a bit, okay. So, I want you to talk to Mary McFall, because we had a good hook-up. We'd get SMU to pay for his time, but then he spent time teachin' us in the neighborhood, okay. Then, we'd have him at UTA, okay. Then we'd take him to North Texas so he could get some type of financial backing, but he also spent time organizing, telling us what was happening around the country in different places he had been, okay. So, we had a little communication network. But, I don't know. You asked me a specific question. Um, I'm a preacher's kid. I came from an all-Black neighborhood, all-Black school and I didn't see myself as second or inferior or all that. My parents didn't teach me that and I was really surprised when folks tried to approach other people like that or me, and it fuelled a rage in me that ah, was kinda tough, okay. And we were taught not to back up, okay. Ah, I was the guy that they used to go help people get outta jail, 'cause I gotta bad temper, okay. So, I was never in a sit-in. The only reason I walked or was in a march was because I was a marshal to, you know, keep it organized because, you hit me, I'mma hit you back or I'mma wait 'til you sleep and break in your house and cut your throat. And everybody kinda knew that and I'm not a mean big bad guy. But the bottom line is, "No!" The disrespect was obvious among whites and Blacks at the time and the institutions were as racist as they could be. You have to admit or understand that I went to UT Arlington two years after it was desegregated because of the suit at UT Austin, okay, and I went to graduate school at North Texas State where the '59 or '58 students who went to North Texas couldn't stay on campus. They stayed in the houses of Black people in the community. So, when my generation got up to Denton, it was not unusual for us to be or have an alliance with Black people in the community, okay. And we didn't realize it at the time, but we had a natural ah, relationship with folks who were in Denton, Texas. Now you go to Denton now and you'll find Black people who are elected to different offices, which is totally strange to me, okay, because it was a little tough little town, okay. Now, the organizing skills that you say...me...came from a relationship with Ernie McMillan, ah, Skip Shockley, Diane Ragsdale, Charlotte Ragsdale, ah, Leroy Haynes, okay. Ah, a brother from SNCC named Willie Ricks and Mickey McGuire, the name just came back into my head...Mickey was a character, okay. And ah, but we, but they had been in cities in the south and they came in and I can say, and I'm not just sayin' this because he's your uncle, but ah, Ernie was brilliant as a leader and an organizer in the community. I mean, and Diane and Charlotte were masters at it, okay. And I'm from ole ratty poot Fort

Worth. So, when I came to Dallas, I picked up those skills watchin' the people and workin' with people, and we got along with each other 'cause we were young, okay, and we really cared about each other, okay. And then your aunt, Marilyn Clark, okay...it's different...we kept up with each other purposefully. I mean, we didn't call each other up on the phone talkin' about our boyfriends and girlfriends, no silly mess. We were talkin' about, "Well what we're gonna do with this issue? How're we gonna organize this block? Who's giving us trouble?" Now, one of my assignments, you know, if you we in the Chamber and got cross with us, you know, you'll see me and we'd talk about it and not in very nice language, okay. One of the people that I think was really outstanding in Dallas was Al. I mean, Al was cold-blooded, I mean...I have to talk to you off-camera about a whole lotta stuff All did, but we'd get Al and put him before that microphone...that was just his calling. I mean, this guy was tough, okay. He was just bad and we all knew it and we supported J. B. Jackson, Elsie Faye Higgins...it's a lotta people that are dead and gone that were really raised in South Dallas that cared about their community, respected people, and they did what they could because they knew that the administration of the city, the whites that ran Dallas—think they ran Dallas—they did not care about our land or our people. I mean, you know and I've been waitin' to say I mean it's a shame, you know, ah, 'cause what's the colored boy that was the mayor of Dallas? I can't remember his name.

AW: Ron Kirk.

RBLS: Ron Kirk. I mean they went...them white boys went all the way to Austin, picked a brotha. Him, with his dumb self, he came up here, okay, and ran for mayor. Nobody ever knew him up here, okay and that means they looked over about fifteen to twenty brothas and sistas who thought that they were at their time and I'll refrain from namin' 'em 'cause I gotta lotta respect for 'em, okay. They were not even asked, okay. And Ron came up here, and a bunch of us knew Ron from Austin, okay. Ron was okay. But that's the type of attitude that the city of Dallas has—they gone pick who we follow and put them in our face. And that's way I'm really proud of...although, West came in on the tail end, West's from Dallas. I mean and when he ran for D.A., his showing was so good, okay, that it was a natural thing for him to move over to another ah, spot, okay. Ah, although ah, Price was on the County Commissioner board, he's not from Dallas, okay, but he came to Dallas. And ah, he was young and he got elected because he spoke up. Now, the...the ah, people we have here now that's elected in the House, West is still with the Senate and Eddie Bernice came from a long relationship of bein' involved with the community. I mean and she evolved up to congressman. It's not because she just moved at the natural graduation. She had the sense to do it and a lotta us back her and knew her and we figured she had the style to get it done. Okay, now, I don't know, because I thought about this before you called, and I didn't know we were gonna do this thing on the camera and all that other stuff. You have to understand we were young. We believed that we had a right to stand up. We knew that we represented the community in which we came from, okay. We worked together. We respected each other. Don't mean we didn't have differences with each other, and certainly we were not perfect people, okay, but we believed in what we were doing, okay. If you have some kinda concept of faith, okay, the reality is that our steps were already ordered. I mean we worked hard at

it, okay. We would get up and if you talked to all of us you would realize that's why we had a hard time sustaining relationships—interpersonal relationships because we were committed to a cause. We were determined to get something done. I mean, we didn't believe in giving up, okay. You couldn't buy us, I mean, for five dollars or a car or somethin', okay. Because we wasn't gone have it. I mean, and we were connected to a national movement, too. The Party, SCLC, SNCC, those were national connections and these people came to Dallas, okay. A lot of 'em, they were not welcomed in the churches in particular. Excuse me, I'm gettin' off point...because the church leadership, these were people who had never been involved in any kind of organ...organizing in the community...who had a vest interest in the lack of involvement of the people in their congregation, and a lot of 'em were afraid, okay...just pure fear, okay—scared, okay...and er um...S. M. was probably one of those ones who took advantage or had the timing, okay, to connect with the white leadership of the city, but again, he was chosen, okay, personally. But, you know, there's some bad and some good, but at least he did have his own way, okay. Now the church community we have now and the church community as it has led, a lotta us absorbed it, 'cause now Leroy is a C.M.E. preacher, okay. I'm Baptist, Primitive Baptist, okay. It's not surprising a lot of us decided started to serve in church, okay. If you talk to a lot of people and, you know, hope you get a chance to talk Zan Holmes, okay, 'cause Zan was a Methodist preacher, but Zan always accorded us a certain respect and always...he always responded whenever we asked him to do something. And he kinda served as a counselor, okay, to a lot of us, okay, because, ah, we trusted him, okay. He was not somebody that was gonna sell us out, okay. I, you know, that, that that personage is missing now and now we have a lot of people who are into the church movement, a lot of people in the t.v. and the books and the tapes. I mean, they have no concept of community 'cause they never served in community, never. They don't...they don't understand, okay. They don't get it, okay. Now, if you look at ah...I'm tryna think who's still kickin'...Um...I mean, I hope you get a chance to talk to Zan, okay and just really talk to him because Ernie knows him okay and we still have a lot of respect for Zan. All of us do, okay, because he was there, okay. And you gotta remember Zan as the first elected state representative after redistricting Dallas, Texas, okay. Talk to him, okay, 'cause he's good. Now, I don't know 'cause you asked me to do this...the sum total of it is, for me, was I have a lot of love for my own people, and I've seen my own people lead and do and understand, okay, and I was with the Party one time—they were out at SMU and ah...and er ah...they were...how can I say this? They were...their motives were political, but some of 'em were not, but I...they...I hear Mickey McGuire make a statement. He said...oh, that was at TCU, he said, "If all you white people died, we would be fine." (Laughs) We don't need white people to live, okay. We'd be just fine, okay. When he made that statement it struck up on me. He was right, okay. In that scene in the movie when Ali went to Africa and he went on the plane, he said, "The pilot is Black? The only thing they let pilots...They don't even let us drive the bus in Louisville," where he was from, okay. You have to understand that type of spirit, I mean, it wasn't nothin' but God. And it moved me because you cannot keep a people ah, contained or defeated or beat down. God ain't gone have that. In my lifetime, I never thought that I would see the end of apartheid, never, you know. I'm thought my great-grandchildren would be born before apartheid ah, was dissolved. Okay, I got a lot of respect for Nelson Mandela and Bishop Tutu and I knew it was very hard, 'cause they

were people who were under guns in prison, okay. We were under the same pressure, but not as direct, okay. And I'm not understanding that, but you got to understand that just when they stood up in Liberia and Nigeria and other cultu...other people defeated, conquered people stood up; it came to a point in this country when we did the same thing. There is a connection between all people who are under subjugation and discrimination, all of them. And the people in Afghanistan and Iran and Iraq are no different. You cannot do that. You cannot keep another person or another people down just because you've got guns. They are not separated. Now, I'm from the Rap Brown school of reality and I'm tryna be...make sure I don't come off as Mister Macho.

AW: No.

RBLS: But, I believe that...Rap Brown said that, "There would be fewer hunters in the woods if the rabbits had guns, okay. He made that statement back in the sixties and we used to carry 'em, okay. I think it was a little crazy then, but we did. We used to have nine millimeters. We had shot guns in our trunks because the police in Dallas were doing then what they are doing now. They were bringing in people. They were arrestin' people for no reason. They were givin' brothas cases that brothas' say...that's before drugs now, okay, because drug cases are real, okae. And they were, without cause, direspectin' the women in our, in our neighborhoods. And we in the Party, they didn't do that when we were around. No campus, no city we would be in. You can ask Skip. We did not tolerate that, okay. And I don't know if Skip talked about agent provocateurs...

AW: He talked ah...a few people talked about Curtis Gaines, and ah, Marilyn actually gave me copies of the SNCC FBI files. Those names have just been gone over with a permanent marker or liquid paper. So, ah, everybody has kinda talked about Curtis Gaines being that agent provocateur, and people who, you know, they still don't know to this day who those people are.

RBLS: Well, that's another thing 'cause people who were not born and raised Dallas, you know, my job...my blessin' is that Reverend Leroy Haynes was the president of the Black Student Union at El Centro and my chapter was at UT Arlington you can go to Fort Worth and you can ask people, they'll know where I am, who I am, who my family is, and I can account for my time, but if people comin' into Dallas that we didn't know, okay, they would portray themselves as this or that and the atmosphere was so fluid and so volatile...if you took upon the stand and said that you were an organizer of this or that, people just...let you fit in. And ah, I never will forget, really Skip and Leroy our Party, Panther Party and they really brought me in and, you know, taught me. Therefore, that friendship and fellowship, I grew and I understood. We took a van full of people to Oakland, California, okay. I got sick of hearin' it, okay. Said "C'mon man, let's go..." because, that's the way I am, "Let's go see," and we took a van full of people to Oakland. And once I found out the Party didn't have a researchin' development or a training program, you know, they had a law, the personnel was changing quite fluidly, and you had to go to Oakland at that time. Oakland is still a tough place, okay, but once you talked to the leadership of the Party, you had an awesome respect. They were young and the Party was really organized because the police brought brutality and violence and

disrespected people in their neighborhood. They were young and they were organized and they said, "No more." That's what I hope your generation does in a different way because it's usually youth. If you look at the apartheid struggles, okay, it was students. You...if you go to SCLC, there were a sea of students that helped organize all the demonstrations. They were seminary students and students on campuses and people don't know that, okay. Actually, Jesse Jackson was just a pooty-butt student, okay. A lot of them were that, too, you understand. In in Dallas, now, one of the things that was so dynamic in Dallas...local leadership, people who grew up in the city...I'm real proud of Diane because she ended up on the council because it was a natural progression of where her talents were and she did an outstanding job on that council and she's doing it still today with CDC...ICDC in the neighborhood, okay. And then time gets you. You start having kids. You know, you get older, okay, but a lot of us are still involved in different things to this day, but...

AW: I'm sorry just one question...

RBLS: Yeah.

AW: When you say ah, you hope that our generation...well, my generation ah, approaches it in the same, but different way, what do you mean by different way?

RBLS: Ah, your generation has more of an international focus now. Y'all have to really...and that's why God gave us the internet and Sky...Skype, or whatever, okay. You all have more internationally. There is a fellowship and connection that the youth of this country, the young leadership, has with leadership worldwide that I hope you will connect with. We were really local, though we had the spirit connection with national. We didn't have the mechanism to communicate or relate. I really hate that crap in Haiti, because at least they start talkin' about it. The news has slanted it differently and made us understand that the U.S. government purposefully has kept Haiti in economic subjection, okay. And everybody's thinkin' that President Obama and if anybody says...I say, "President Obama," it's disrespectful...has...they think that he's the magic wand, but he can't...he's not...we all have to do our part. Its just God lettin' us know that we have an opportunity to get in certain circles now, okay. But, if you look at the news coverage...the news coverage has changed and excuse me because one conglomerate owns all the media outlets: the t.v., the radio, the newspaper, okay. And our local newspaper that we own, Black newspaper, they compete with the internet and all that. Some of them are doin' a little bit better, okay, but if you're not, during your lifetime, if your not talkin' to somebody just like you in South Africa then we're doin' something wrong, okay. If you, in your lifetime, are not talkin' to somebody that's just like you in Afghanistan and Iraq and Iran, okay, then we're doin' something wrong, okay. Very, very wrong, okay. If you, in your lifetime, if you don't decipher the issue between the Jews and the Israelis, okay, we're doin' something wrong, okay, because there's a lot of things that we need to be kinda careful about and understand what's really goin' on. Not just take the government's word on it. I mean, 'cause I don't know, any Black person who trusts the U.S. government is outta their mind. You shouldn't do that. They work for us. We don't work for them, okay. And we should hold them accountable for

what they do. I was tryin' to keep up with this mess about youth and the youth vote, how they worked hard to get it. The rappers comin' out and the whole nine and then the resulting reports were that there was not that much of an impact, okay. And er ah, but they didn't talk about how you generation, if they don't see something substantive, you can't fool them, you know. If it's nonsense, it's nonsense. I mean, y'all not gone go along with that just because it's the thing to do or it's expected of you. But, even in the neighborhood, in Dallas, we need the young adults to understand community development, understand site development, okay, ah, funding projects and my generation...I hope your generation gets it, too...ah, ah...housing for seniors, okay...how to, you know, look at your family because we have got to stop young adults from starting their family too early without making their education plan and a funding plan, okay. And we certainly have to make sure that they keep themselves healthy, okay. And I participated in self-destructive lifestyles, okay. And that's a real battle, okay. You don't look down on a sista at Wal-Mart, which is one of my favorite places to shop, if she's less than twenty-five and she's got three children and you can obviously see that she is not in the physical shape she should be in for her age and her hair is purple and she's got somebody's name all on her neck, which I so proud of you, you ain't got that or earrings in her nose and, you know, laugh because in our day, we didn't. We talked to the sista, okay and we explained to her, tried to embrace her, and engender a friendship with her, okay and we changed people. I think more on some crazy thing we did, which I think was fantastic and funny, we had a lot of sistas takin' there...what is it? Goin' back to the afro. Takin' the chemicals out your hair, wearin' it natural. (Laughs) Our women can do anything, okay. They're beautiful people. They can do anything they want to. The only thing I don't like is the long extensions and all that stuff. I think that's silly, but that's the way it go...but ah, I don't know if I did what you want me to do.

AW: Yeah, you definitely did. I was...ah...you premeditated some of the questions that I was gonna ask you. I was gonna ask you, "What would you want a study like this to look like?" And you kinda just touched on that just now, but if you would, kinda further...

RBLS: I...I...I hope...and this is so providential that you're Ernie's niece, Mama Mack's granddaughter, and if you talk with your family about their contributions, you should...everybody knew your family, okay. And I think that it's not an accident that here you are tryna get this done. I mean and again, I say if there is anything that I can do, let me know. My thing is there's got to be a bridge because we, in my generation, we didn't write it down, we didn't leave a record and we didn't talk, okay. There are some specific things that we need to talk about off camera that we have some difficulties on our own, among our ourselves and among our ranks, okay, but there was a respect and love that we had for each other and there is a gap...when drugs came in, okay and when the brothas from Viet Nam came back, okay, and then there's a natural leadership maturity, okay. And when the leadership of the Party got in certain situations...when they purposefully put them in prison to disrupt the leadership chain...when Malcolm was killed, okay and Martin was killed, okay...those things were purposefully done to disrupt the leadership, okay. Then the secondary leadership was not as committed, okay, or didn't have the clarity as the leaders that were stepped out front. You have to understand

that I'm just amazed that Dr. Martin Luther King was only thirty-something years old, okay. I disagreed with him, okay, but I respected him, okay and anything that I could do to help somebody who was gonna do a march or sit-in, I would do, but I wasn't gonna do it, okay 'cause I didn't have that kind of discipline, okay. I really didn't, okay, and I was not gone do that. I mean, uh, I'll never forget we met...we purposefully set up a...um...encounter session with the police in Arlington and my little chapter of the Black Student Union, we couldn't wait 'til we got them pigs in that session and they marched in with they little ole silver helmets, and a little ole brotha from Waco named uh, Alvin Whiteside, and he hated white people to the core. He was a red brotha and he hated that, too. 'Bout fifteen of us and 'bout fifteen pigs came in and he got up and stood in the middle of the circle and said, "A pig is a pig is a pig and I hate a 'g-d' pig," okay. They stood up and we ran to the door, blockin 'em from gettin' out. (Laughs) And the cops say, "Well, I guess y'all straight. I guess y'all say, 'get me now'." We were ready to take those chairs and kick they (Censoring himself and muting the following word) ass with whatever we could, man, but we had that kinda presence of mind. I mean, a lot of people don't know that Muhammad Ali came to North Texas State University, but he was still Cassius Clay... 'cause Frank Wymon, who was the president of the Black Student Union at North Texas, who turned...who converted to Islam and became a Muslim, okay and the Muslims were courtin' Ali, okay...He fixed where Ali could come to campus 'cause that's how he was survivin'. He would do those speeches on our campus. So, we sent him to North Texas, SMU, UTA, okay, sent him down to UT Austin...we would do anything we could to support somebody, okay. And that's why I'm interested in you talkin' to Mary McFall because she was intricate on that SMU campus. We were spendin' those white folks' money out there...and er ah... the Black Student Union chapter at SMU, had a hard job because that's the seat of that little white prestigious power.

AW: Yeah, that's Highland Park.

RBLS: Yes, yes, yes, yes, but I don't know...and I mentioned to you that we have to get an underground railroad at Temple. I didn't know that the program was that outstanding because there was a fight between the Party and Ron Karenga's group for the chairmanship of San Francisco State, I think, of the Black Student Union...I mean Black Studies Program. It was a vicious fight, okay, and on our yard, we...my generation, we were actually responsible for hiring all those people who came in. My Government teacher at Dunbar High School, Reebee Kerry, who was the first...yes, he was the first congressman from Fort Worth, okay. We hired...got him hired at UTA as a ah, Black dean, okay. The white boys didn't wanna hire him and we...they were sittin' in their room, about five of us walk in there and say, "You gone hire him or we gone whip your...and ain't nobody leavin' this room." And they hired him, okay, 'cause we meant it. We were just that determined to get something done, okay. Now, there's a certain amount of courage, audacity, and just, ah, excuse me, cajones that we had that this generation does not have, but we used this (Points to his head) more than we used this. (Raises his fists) If we had to use this (Raises his fists again) we would, but we outthought our opponent. We had to, because we were outgunned, okay, and we knew it. Ah, the picture you see of the Party standin' on the state legislature, we didn't have any

shells in our shot guns 'cause it's not against the law. So they read the law and that was not against the law. They knew they could carry shotguns, but they couldn't carry pistols, okay. And some brothas at Voorhees university got shot, okay, 'cause they took over a building and they had loaded weapons on top of the building and they came down and told us, "Don't do it," okay, but we had that kind of communication network, okay. I hope your end-piece, I can't wait to see it, and er ah, make sure you get Leroy's number because he was my podna. Ah, he was makin' a speech at El Centro and I'm more of an organizing guy. I'm more of a knock on the door, hands-on, go do, and get it done. Whenever they wanted something, they called me, and not just me by myself, but I'd go get it donw. And then ah, he was makin, a speech at El Centro; (Chuckles) he gets put out of El Centro—I hope you here me Leroy, okay—for inciting to riot. And he was makin' a speech and he asked me after the speech what did I think of it. I told him the truth. I told him, "The content was fantastic, but the delivery was the shits," okay, because he was (Chuckles) not a good delivery guy and we became friends from then on, okay...then on, okay...because he had his—I hope you hear me Leroy—the women thought that he was such a brain, and he would be traded off that stuff and it tickled me man. It really made me laugh, but ah, he's a smart man. When he was a senior in Beaumont, in Beaumont High School, he won the Time Magazine Award for World Affairs when he was in high school. He knew more about world affairs than a senior in the United States. The boy is smart, okay and we had that kind of leadership. Skip is smart as he can be and he's not a coward and Diane is brilliant, okay, she's smart. And ah, but we had that kind of leadership. Today, that leadership is absent. We respected our people and we loved our neighborhoods. We were not ashamed that we were from South Dallas or from Stop Six, okay. We didn't sit among people who were not Black and hold our head down, or try to be like them...wanna be...embrace their social status...not what we wanted to do. We knew who we were and we knew what we had to do and that makes it tough. I mean that was pre-integration, okay and that was a solid-base that we gained from our own families, okay. That makes a big difference even though we were all kinds of coloreds from all different kinds of places, which you don't have now. You just don't. You don't. I'm thinkin' about one of my favorite movie series, *Lincoln Heights* and uh...one of the daughters of the main character, her friend likes girls and her brother thought he liked her and then the girl admitted at the prom that she liked girls. Now that, uh unh, we didn't have that. (Laughs) Oh no! We didn't play that. No, uh unh. One thing we had, "Tribute to Black Woman Day" on my yard and we got carnations 'cause that's all we could afford and we went to everybody's class and called the sistas out and gave her a flower and gave her a kiss...and three hundred of 'em, okay. But, we did that purposefully as a distinct reminder that who we were and you respect your own self, okay. And ah, some of the war stories...I think we did ah...yeah...they lost in the history book...they were fun, okay. They really were. I mean I get tickled because if we took over the City Council meeting, we took it over. If we took over a school board meeting, the school board meeting was stopped, okay. Ah, we didn't play. I mean if we went to a congressman or a city councilman's office, they knew to listen to what we had to say. We didn't play, okay and then we also knew that we represented people that we came from. We're not tryna get a job or get paid or get a grant, okay. Uh unh, that was not our objective, okay. We knew who we were and we knew who we represented and that's the top thing that you don't have now. I hope you

all start, okay, to agenda that again...not be just like us because you all have a lot more to do as I said. You gotta be a lot smarter. A lot, well, organized and have a real clear connection with each other and be careful and that's what we have to do.

AW: Thank you so much.

RBLS: No problem.

AW: One question I had was what made you take up the role as the organizer?

RBLS: Well...hmmm...I had to analyze people strengths and weaknesses, not only of people that I serve, but of the people who were up under me. But as to who can...who's able to complete a task, and who belongs where, you know, within the organization. Well, you know, that's another thing. Some things, you know if you use this tape...some things is between us and one of the things, you ask your uncle, because we'd go confront a brotha, you know. We'd catch his ass by hisself and tell him, "We know you did that. Don't you do that again, or we'll whoop yo' ass. Don't you do it again, okay. I don't know if Skip talked about it because the FBI did have the cross-draggin', dressin' fag, Hoover, did have agents in the Party and all our organizations. Now, Leroy...Skip may have sent for his file, I haven't sent for mine, okay. But they were...well, how silly was that? You know, keep a surveillance and a file on so-called civil rights leaders, okay. They did it on Reverend King and others, too, okay, but there were people who were sent into our organizations to disrupt them, okay. We called them agent provocateurs and the ah...the Party called them "jack-of-apes," okay. A cross between a jack-ass and a ape, okay... 'cause you couldn't get them to do anything, okay. Once we found out who they were and we did have our own way of trappin' them to find out who they were, we would get rid of them or just set 'em up where they would show themselves. 'Cause our people were lookin' for leadership...any, anybody could then look like they were tryin' to do something and tryin' to be a leaders, but the community absorbed them, just took 'em in. And a lot of times it got real confusing. Real confusing, okay. Now the stepping stone of that—I hate to say it—were those brothas who got talked into bein' undercover agents, okay, for the police department, the FBI or any other agency, I don't understand why a brotha would do that. 'Cause you can't trust the people you work for, you can't, 'cause they have no interest in your interest, okay, and we knew it. Although we were pro-Black people bein' police officers and stuff, I mean, you have to have a...he's dead...Chief Stafford who was ah, I think he may have been the first deputy chief of police for Dallas. We knew him, okay, and I think, ask Diane, he was okay. But, ah it was a different world, okay. Now you do...it was more than people just being confused they were purposefully stupid and they didn't have enough history or whatever. They were purposefully stupid and they were informin' on their own people for whatever reason, okay. And we were real careful with brothas who had a legitimate case and they were gonna be incarcerated or they were facin' imprisonment so they chose to infiltrate us and sell us out to mitigate their sentence. I mean we had a little informal way of talkin' about that and makin' sure that that didn't happen. One thing you have to understand that on UTA's campus, on 'cause Skip, Leroy and myself and North Texas and East Texas State, we had our own recruitment program. We forced the school to put

some money a part. We ran it. We signed our own checks. We did our own budget, okay, and we went out to bring more of our people through college, okay. We did it, not an athlete or anybody else. We knew it was important for our people and get an education. I mean, talk to Skip. I mean we looked for 'em. The only reason we didn't force TWU to do it 'cause it was only women. Well, now they takin' men, but Diane left there and went on about her business, but if you not on any campus and you're not actively puttin' together a recruitment program...and we would go and pick up students and bring 'em to our campus. They stayed in our...we went to those sororities and fraternities, too and got them to let somebody to stay in their room, okay. We made up a schedule for them. So, they went to English, Math, History, Science. We made 'em go to class. Before they left, we completed their application and their financial aid application, even if they were juniors and we held 'em and we kept up with 'em on our own and helped them get in school, okay. Some of 'em were pretty rough boys, but we did it. No administration. We did it. We did it 'cause we knew in our Party education was the most important thing that you can attain 'cause once you know then can't nobody keep you in bondage. Then, once you understand who you are and what you are to be, nobody can keep you down. You won't...you won't...that's why that scene, "Who are you?" "Kunta Kente." "No, you're Toby." I mean, he knew who he was and finally was forced, but it didn't kill him or kill his spirit. And that's why I'm so proud of you. Get your master's. Get your Ph.D. and just...I hope before you leave that campus we'll get more students to...we'll start us a underground railroad to that yard and back. If you have not, I hope you talk to my cousin that works for Royce West who runs his district office her name just...she gone kill me (Pauses to remember) Lawanna Barton...because one of the best things that West did is the internship program he does, okay, every year. He's been doin' it for sometime and a lot of young adults are in that thing. Matter of fact, I'll call Lawanna. Before you leave, I'll make sure that she sits down to talk to you. Okay, because you need access to young students. I mean, if you all can communicate with each other and generally respect each other and encourage each other, okay...and I think that...J.S. made a good point: we did have a way of assigning people their job. So, it's not an assignment you turn down. We did have a way to try to train people. We did have training programs. We did.

AW: Can you talk about those training programs?

RBLS: Ah, we, you know, we identified people and recruited and they would work with somebody over the Breakfast Program, over the Shoe Program. We start you off cookin', then pickin' up the kids, and then we'd also, you know, take you to meet people in the community, okay. We...what they call mentorship, we did it as second nature, okay. I mean, we had people who were fourteen and fifteen followin' us around, okay. And we brought 'em up. Ah, my heart is broken 'cause this little brotha in Frazier Court, his name was Marcus Goree. God man, this little brotha was brilliant. Sixteen years old and that was much later, I was workin' in Frazier Court as a learning center director. This boy was talkin' to people in the city and the state government, they thought he was thirty years old and at the time CAA or something in Dallas, so they said, "Mr. Goree, would you come down and talk to our board?" And when he showed up, they were surprised that he was only sixteen. I mean, but, me and a brotha...his name is Orungu now,

umm...ah...Robert Beaumont/Orungu, we had took this brotha under of wing and we had took him to City Council meetings, took him to school board meetings, okay, took him to ah...um...Austin, okay, to the legislature, okay...and showed him how to organize and write some stuff. And ah...we lost a lot of good brothas to drugs. He got killed because drug...ah...people were lookin' for his sista or his brotha, okay. He didn't do drugs, okay, and they killed him instead. Ah, you know, and it's not something that ah.... (Puts his head down and pauses for a long while and clears his throat) We lost a lot of good brothas. (Pauses again) He ah, was smart.

AW: I wanna thank you again for your time and I just want to ask if we could continue to be in conference with one another.

RBLs: Oh, of course, of course.

AW: And I appreciate your presence as well...

Interview Ends

