

MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Oral History Office

MRS. JUANITA JACKSON MITCHELL
MRS. VIRGINIA JACKSON KIAH

Daughters of Dr. Lillie May Jackson,
speaking of their mother's career in
Civil Rights activities.

Interviewed by Charles Wagandt

The Governor Theodore McKeldin-Dr. Lillie May Jackson Project
An inquiry into the Civil Rights activities
of
two Maryland leaders
during
the mid-twentieth century

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Baltimore, Maryland

Interviewee:

1. Mrs. Juanita Jackson Mitchell

2. Mrs. Virginia Jackson Kiah

Interviewer: Charles L. Wagandt

Date: January 10, 1976

Place: 1320 Eutaw Place, Home of

Lillie Mae Jackson

Transcriber: Garnette Brant

Cassette Number I

I: In previous interviews we discussed at some length the life of your mother, and it would be helpful for me now to have you speak a bit about what you consider to be the major contributions of your mother's life. Can you summarize it in some way?

A-1: I believe that my mother had a genius for organizing people and inspiring them to attack discrimination and "root it out," as she used to say. When she took over the presidency of the NAACP in 1935 the NAACP was inactive. She had been the adviser and the spark plug of a youth committee and she had undergirded with a group of adult citizens a youth organization named The City-Wide Young People's Forum in which her own children were active. They were just out of college and there was no NAACP and we couldn't be policemen. We couldn't be firemen. We had college educations. All we could do was teach, and there were no jobs because it was in the Depression. We couldn't be librarians. We couldn't be taxicab drivers. It was a really totally segregated community and the barriers to economic opportunity were formidable. We organized The City-Wide Young People's Forum which became a town meeting every Friday night at the Bethel A.M.E. Church. It was organized in October of 1931. Out of that grew activity, the Buy Where

You Can Work Campaign which opened up jobs in the A & P Stores in the northwest Baltimore community, in the stalls in Lafayette Market, and in the stores on Pennsylvania Avenue. It's incredible now, but it was a living fact then that although this was a hundred percent black ghetto (the northwest Baltimore section where colored people lived in 1930 and 31, 32, 33. We couldn't work in the stores. The stores that sold us all our merchandise would not hire us as sales people. So, it was the picketing of these stores, the activist activities that Dr. Jackson approved of which developed a new sense of militancy in Baltimore. This is why she was asked by Dr. Carl Murphy of the Afro-American to take the leadership in reorganizing the NAACP in 1935 and get a strong branch of the NAACP going. She approved of our picketing and she got a group of ministers and businessmen and fraternal leaders in Baltimore to approve also and undergird this youth activity. That's very interesting, that a revival of the NAACP should grow out of the militant activity of the northwest Baltimore black young people who had come out of school and had no jobs.

She secured acceptance by the community of the so-called radical activity of a group of about 200 to 500 young people in the heart of this northwest Baltimore ghetto. It was that new militancy on the part of the young people endorsed by Dr. Jackson's adult committee which created a climate for a rebirth of the Baltimore Branch of the NAACP and resulted in the Baltimore Branch challenging discrimination in the courts.

I: Basically, you're saying that your mother's greatest contribution was her organizing ability and her inspiring zeal in the cause?

A-1: I think then, her constancy. She never grew weary and never got tired of fighting for freedom. For seven years we picketed. That was one of the longest...

I: Seven years--you picketed what?

A-1: The Ford Theater, which was one of the longest picket lines in the history of this nation--year in and year out until the theater got black. She called on the Actor's Equity to refuse to send actors down here, plays down here. She worked with Governor McKeldin. Governor McKeldin was Governor at the time, the final period of the picketing in which the theater was getting progressively black, closed down because Actor's Equity was cooperating and refusing to send plays here. It was then that Morris Mechanic went to Governor McKeldin and asked Governor McKeldin to come to get Mrs. Jackson, sit down with her, and tell her that he would eliminate discrimination in seating in the theater.

I: At that point blacks could only sit in the balcony?

A-1: Way up at the pit. Not the first balcony, but the top balcony. We used to call that the "pit." We used to have to-- blacks would purchase their tickets at the main ticket window along with whites and then they would have to come around the side, go in the alley and up the steps (climb all those steps) up to the pit of old Ford's Theater. And there we were Jim Crow in those last few rows of what we called the pit. We

started picketing that theater. I was in the first year of law school at the University of Maryland, so that would have been '46. We picketed that theater for seven years. Very interestingly, that was considered very radical because all the judges, governors, and all of the political leaders as well as the socialites and business people all attended Ford's Theater. They felt that people who walked the picket line would lose jobs and suffer some sort of reprisal. Some did. It is very interesting that Owen Lattimore, who was the head of the School of Foreign Policy (was it?) at Johns Hopkins University...

I: He was an expert on Chinese relations, I believe. He was a target of Senator McCarthy.

A-1: At any rate, he was on our picket line, and they used that when they were after him as one of the indications that he was subversive, you know. Because he walked with blacks on this picket line.

A-2: May I add this: When it comes to Uncle Tomism, the militants didn't accuse the Baltimore Branch of being Uncle Tomish, but because of the constant prodding of the NAACP's projects that were spearheaded by Mama, and, of course, Juanita who was assisting her--I think that because of her constant prodding, there could not be any Uncle Tomism that the Baltimore Branch would be accused of. It was laying a terrific foundation to break down racial barriers, but the militants felt that things were happening too slowly, and that's why they stepped in, you know, trying to speed things up.

A-1: Well, no, the records (that I have to go back and get) will show that when CORE started its Freedom Rides, there was a group, The Council of Churches, who were active in trying to eliminate racial segregation, didn't want them to come to Baltimore. The Baltimore Branch NAACP sent a telegram welcoming them. We supported them. We provided the lawyers. We got the bail bondsmen and we got the community support behind them. We wanted all the help we could get. So that we undergirded the--as we had undergirded our young people in '60 before the Freedom Rides began, CORE's Freedom Rides. The young people started the picketing at Morgan. Then CORE started the Freedom Rides, and we welcomed them to Baltimore, and the record will show that we supported CORE.

As my mother said, "Anybody who wants freedom--we'll work with anybody who wants freedom who are willing to work within the law." My mother always believed we should work within the bounds of the law. So CORE was and we were working. We had been taught in the NAACP that you challenge racial discrimination by--that it was a legal activity to sit in a restaurant and wait for service in a place that segregated because it was our belief that what they were doing was illegal and in violation of the Constitution. So that while it might violate so-called municipal statutes of racial segregation, our activity did not violate according to the NAACP teaching and premise of the Constitution of the United States. Rather, we felt that these statutes were in violation. We must challenge them to eliminate them. This is the NAACP here. Now, the only group that my

mother never supported was the Black Panthers because they advocated violence. You heard Reverend Clifford at her funeral? Were you at the funeral?

I: No, unfortunately, I wasn't. I stopped by and paid my respects before the services. I wasn't at the services.

A-1: At the funeral Reverend Clifford said that, he was describing my mother as a person who might disagree and have a fight with you, but when the fight was over with reasonable people she let it alone and then went ahead. He was describing how my mother came--he was a new pastor at Sharp Street. The Black Panthers came to him with a breakfast program for school children, and he let them use the basement of Sharp Street Church.

He said at one early Trustee Board Meeting (she was a member of the Trustee Board) she brought up in the Board that he should put the Panthers out, as he explained it. He said they discussed it in the Board Meeting and they decided that since the Panthers were not a subversive organization (was not on the Attorney General's List as of that time) and what they were doing was feeding poor children, that they should not be put out.

However, I remember very well my mother's position. She said they were advocating violence and the taking of the arms, the use of firearms and of training young people to use firearms. She said, "You can't win with violence." She believed thoroughly in the loving non-violence of the early sixties, but she abhorred the armed violence of the late sixties, and

she would not tolerate that. She said--and I think she was far-seeing, more far-seeing than the pastor--to Reverend Clifford, "They're just using this breakfast program as bait to entrap our young people into their organization so that they can then train them to use firearms in a program of liberation." She said, "That's not the way; it's an entrapment." She said, "I see all of these young people going in and out of that headquarters up there on Mosher Street. They're teaching hate. You can't get anywhere by hating. Love is more powerful than hate."

But Reverend had given them permission and he stuck to his guns, and she lost that. But, as you know, the Panthers erupted into violence and they kill their own, who defected, on the grounds that they were informers. So history recorded her and vindicated her position.

I: When did the Panthers open up here in Baltimore--an office? Do you remember?

A-1: I'd have to check the record, but I remember very vividly when we filed the suits to integrate the public schools in Baltimore, we were considered Communist and what have you. In fact, when the NAACP was first reorganized and we sought to get a bill passed in the State Legislature to eliminate intra-state segregation in transportation (repeal of the Jim Crow statute that provided for segregation on common carriers within the State of Maryland) we were considered radicals and Communists and the like. In fact, in many sections of this state under the program espoused by Dr. Carl Murphy and my mother, Dr.

Lillie M. Jackson, a lot of Negroes were scared to join the NAACP. In the counties, Dr. Carl Murphy with the paper and my mother bringing the church in, dignified the activity and made it acceptable to the great mass of the people in Baltimore City. But in the counties, for example, Mr. Louis Goldstein whom we fought bitterly when he attempted to run for U. S. Senate because of his background of approval of racial discrimination.

I: You're talking about Louis?

A-1: Louis Goldstein in Calvert County threatened any teacher who joined the NAACP would lose her job, and the people in the kitchens who did domestic work were scared to join the NAACP.

I: He did that?

A-1: He did that. You just read the newspaper clippings. We made him face up to it when he aspired to run for the U. S. Senate--we supported Tydings. And we had a big fight with Verda Welcome at that time because she was working with the Democratic organization in this state which was supporting Louis Goldstein. On principle we couldn't support Goldstein. We supported young Tydings who was dedicated to the elimination of racial segregation, and that was a big battle. But in it were --in that battle you can see the history of the NAACP's long struggle in Maryland which had been so controversial and so radical. We felt so courageous that in many sections of this state, and even sometimes in Baltimore City, my mother and the NAACP were considered radicals. We were considered Communists and the like. One thing, they couldn't pin my mother with

Communism because of her devout religious beliefs which she was very vocal about. Even the Communists came in to try to get NAACP support. They were a little confused by my mother's radical activity, but on the other hand, her equally strong espousal of religious principles. Of course, they did not believe in her religious convictions.

I: Did they actually contact your mother at any time when she was head of the NAACP?

A-1: Oh, yes. They were in and out--that my mother saw. They espoused violence.

I: Who were they? Were they black or white or what?

A-1: They were white.

I: Were they from out-of-state?

A-1: There were some blacks, too. We had Winston to speak at some of the mass meetings of the NAACP.

I: Who's Winston?

A-1: What is his first name? See, that is why I've got to go back and refresh my memory. You know, I'm getting old, too!

I: We all are!

A-2: After that period of time, anybody would forget.

A-1: I've just had a birthday, and I've got to go--Henry Winston. It comes.

I: He was a Communist?

A-1: Henry Winston was one of the black Communist leaders of the early thirties. He was active in the Scottsboro case and the like. Then there were a number of white Communist leaders. Bernard came into the community to organize. It is a tribute, too, to my mother and Dr. Carl Murphy and the ministers

of this city that they were so engaged in what was to this community radical Christian activity, radical religious activity, that the Communist Party never really got a headway in Baltimore like it did in New York.

I: Now, let me ask you a question. Did Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violent activity, did that have any influence at all, do you think, in the route that the black movement took?

A-1: Not per se. I can't remember in any of the meetings or any of the early Board Meetings when it was reorganized or in our own youth activities that Mahatma Gandhi was discussed or exemplified. It was not until Martin Luther King proclaimed that he was a follower of Gandhi's tactics that it became discussed and the like among Negroes.

I: But, basically, so far as your mother goes, the NAACP in Baltimore was really non-violent activity arising out of a Christian philosophy?

A-1: Out of a Christian philosophy and out of an adherence to Constitutional principles, and a belief in the democratic form of government that, as my mother said for many years, "It's ballots, not bullets. It's participation." She encouraged running for elective office. She encouraged participation in the appointment, becoming a part of the policy structure, so you'd get in at the top to make policy. Get the corrections to change the policies. That's really why, I think, that the Communist Party didn't make it and why the Black Panthers didn't make the inroads that they did in some other communities.

I: Mrs. Kiah, would you like to make some comments as to how

you see your mother's greatest contribution? We've heard from your sister. Perhaps you would like to add something to it?

A-2: What I was about to say, she has emphasized. I'm anxious for her to be recorded as much as possible because she has contributed to history. She is history herself, she and Mama. She was Mama's right arm. Through the years, Mama couldn't have accomplished what she has if it hadn't been for Juanita who was laying the groundwork behind the scenes. So that my contribution couldn't be a major contribution as far as answering questions is concerned. I was anxious for my sister Juanita to talk as much as possible to supply what you need.

A-1: One thing, my sister was not here in Baltimore. She was out of state.

I: Yes, but she did play a role at one point.

A-1: Yes, but then, too, my mother compelled. It wasn't a question--my mother was very dynamic. But she developed a strong sense of obligation in all of us. My sister was active wherever she went. All the members of the family were active wherever they went in the fight for freedom, because my mother developed a sense of obligation to use our talents and our training and our monies, and our time and education to help fight for freedom.

A-2: As a result of Mama's setting the pattern here in Baltimore and my being one of her daughters, she was so stimulating when it comes to her children; and her grandchildren even down in Georgia. I was conducting a Votes For Victory Campaign quietly,

because at that time it was against the law, the Georgia state law, for you to violate the Georgia Constitution, part of which emphasized Jim Crow. I mean the segregation of public carriers and when it comes to voting, that was a definite violation. We had to do it in a more subtle way. I conducted very quietly a Votes For Victory Campaign and, oh, around a thousand people we were able to get to register to vote, and then vote when the time came. Now I would have lost my job if I had been out front.

I: What sort of job did you have at that time?

A-2: I was teaching. Mama reached down in Georgia, through her--I mean her influence. I was following the pattern. I was doing that type of thing in Georgia.

I: You mentioned in a previous tape that your mother had an operation that would have killed most people, and that she said to God that she was going to devote her life to His service if she was given an opportunity to bring up her three children. Do you feel that she would not have been as active in this movement if it had not been for that personal crisis which she encountered?

A-1: I think very definitely that that happened at a time which gave a sense of direction to my mother's whole life. I think that was very influential. She felt that God saved her for a purpose and she always said that she promised Him on her hospital bed if he would save her life and let her rear her three daughters she had then, that she would give Him a life of service. She preached it. My mother never accepted a dime for any of her public service activity, her church activity .

or her NAACP activity, and it was her example of giving without financial reward in the fight for freedom that compelled and inspired so many people to work with her. I just feel that I'm so inadequate. Really, I've got to sit down and write and think and get all of these dates straight in the succession.

A-2: There were so many people who thought that Mama was being paid, because she was there every day beginning with the opening of the office through the closing, which would be about what time, Juanita? She remained there, and then she'd go out to check on taverns in the community. People were complaining about too many taverns in one area. Then she'd come on back and spend much of the night in the NAACP office. On Sundays she was out preaching NAACP in the churches. And that's why people had the idea that she was being paid.

A-1: For thirty-five years she gave. She really gave her life to the fight for freedom. She gave unreservedly of her time, and it was her example and her fervor and her unselfishness that inspired others. A lot of people thought she was paid. They used to call from the jail, "Miss Lillie, come on down here. I'm in jail. Miss Lillie, come see me. You've got to help me." They thought she was on the payroll. But she said, "God pays me."

Interviewee:

1. Mrs. Juanita Jackson Mitchell

2. Mrs. Virginia Jackson Kiah

Interviewer: Charles L. Wagandt

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A-1: I used to resent the way some people would call her. Then sometimes the discrimination was so severe that people out of the hurt and anger would berate my mother and the NAACP. She always took it very quietly. She understood the pain that accompanied the severe deprivation that we suffered in Baltimore, and she was very compassionate and tolerant. She taught us, "When the people call," she said, "It's God calling and you must go." She also was quite a psychologist. Many times I would say to her, "Mama, I'm tired." She said, "Oh, you're young. Oh, no, you want to be active. You want to give God a full life because if you don't, He'll take all your blessings away. Now you've got a good husband, and he's devoted to you. You've got nice children. Put your hand in God's hand. You give Him your life." She said, "You know the Lord will bless you."--and the implication being nobody would take my husband away from me! She was a supreme psychologist. You've got to interview Mr. Wood.

A-2: At the funeral one of the speakers said Mama was the conscience of the community.

A-1: Mr. Wagandt, she was a really most unusual person. But we've got right here now Mr. Leslie Wood. He's the brother of Marcus Wood. Mr. Leslie Wood can tell you the many things-- Mr. Wood is a graduate of Morgan State College. He comes from a very eminent family out of Virginia, and his father just passed away last year. He had a group of seven sons. They

were ministers and doctors, architects and contractors. Mr. Wood is a graduate of Morgan, but he is a contractor. He used to do my mother's work. He was her contractor and he can tell you. You interview him while he's here because he can tell you a lot about my mother. She used to use the same psychology on him that she used on her children.

A-2: Before you go on with Mr. Wood, remember Mama was one of the few who never appeared to be--if someone said something fairly nasty to her, she didn't appear to be ruffled. She wasn't upset by it. She went on ahead anyway and finally that person was working with her, continuing to work.

I: What I would like to do as I have only a limited amount of tape here left, I would like to find out more about you on another occasion, Mr. Wood, and then get together with you rather than just coming at you cold now, not knowing that much about your relationship with her.

A-1: He was very close to Mama. How many years, Mr. Wood? When did you first start? See, this is the kind of spadework we've got to do.

A-3: 1945 I started here.

A-1: He was active. Anybody who worked for her, did anything, she'd get them to do work in the NAACP. White and black.

I: There are a couple of points I do want to follow up on the limited amount of tape left. You mentioned something about Governor McKeldin and your mother pertaining to the Ford's Theater, and I would like to know about the relationship.

A-1: They were good friends. It was not just Ford's Theater. It was a whole slew of activities. We always felt, well, she

felt that God had touched McKeldin. She believed when a person was liberal, from Baltimore standards, she believed that God had touched his life and that he was responding to something higher than himself. She felt akin to Governor McKeldin because he was religious, too, although later I was very disillusioned when I heard him and all his profanity.

I: Profanity? McKeldin? Never!

A-1: You didn't know that?

I: No. He never used profanity.

A-1: I was so amazed when we picketed City Hall for--I believe we were picketing for the Postal Alliance then. Oh, what were we picketing? At any rate, Mayor McKeldin (he had been Governor, he was Mayor again) and when we had this picket line out in front--what were we picketing? I think it was public accommodations. Oh, the City Council hadn't introduced (I think Dave Glenn was his assistant at the time--he was a black assistant).

I: Dave Glenn and Parren Mitchell were both very close to him during his second administration.

A-1: But anyway, Dave Glenn was his assistant and they'd drawn up a Civil Rights Bill to eliminate discrimination in public accommodations in Baltimore City. But they hadn't introduced it in City Council. So the NAACP and the Postal Alliance under John White (You'll have to talk to him, too. I forgot about him)--at any rate, we got a picket line down in front of City Hall to prod the Mayor and the City Council into introducing that legislation and getting it passed. So Mayor McKeldin was so shocked! Somebody called him. It was at noon one day, I remember so well. We had this long picket line. I was on the

picket line. John White. We had some ministers and postal workers, and NAACP people. A long line. He was so shocked. He was at an Advertising Club luncheon and when he came back-- the chauffer brought him back to City Hall, he told us when he had us come in. He said, "Here I was at the Advertising Club luncheon telling what wonderful relations we had with the black citizens, and they came in and called and said there's a picket line in front of the City Hall!"

He hurried up and ended his speech and came back to City Hall, and he came out on the picket line and said, "You don't have to picket me." He said, "You come on in and tell me." We said we'd been trying to get that bill. We've written you. We've called you. We've talked to you. Why are you so slow introducing the bill?" But that was when I first heard him. He was so excited and so furious that he was--and I have the clipping, where I came out and they said, "What is the reaction of Mayor McKeldin?" I said, "He's god damning all over the place!" And he was.

I: He was really?

A-1: He was so furious. Why Mayor McKeldin could--in his later years because he had been Governor and the like--now that was the first time I realized that he had some choice invectives.

I: I never knew that. He was always a low-key guy when I was around.

A-1: I will show you the clipping. I've got that. I saw it the other day. I've been trying to get all these clippings together. But he was furious, but the very next City Council meeting the following Monday that bill was introduced. That

was our Public Accommodations Bill. Then the FEPC...

I: That was a fairly comprehensive bill, I believe. All of it went through...

A-1: Fairly comprehensive. Civil Rights Bill.

I: It all went through except the one portion of it pertaining to housing. That never got through.

A-1: That's right. And Dave Glenn was his assistant. He said, "Oh, I've done this, and I've done this, and I've done this." And this is why they called us militants. And we said, "But we're still denied, and regardless of him, we're suffering. We are deprived of our Constitutional rights." We were what you call bad Negroes because we stood up. Dr. Jackson had told us to speak out loud and clear and to tell the truth as you know it.

I: Do you remember anything about the year that CORE made Baltimore a target city?

A-1: Yes. We invited them.

I: Did the NAACP, you're saying, invite CORE?

A-1: The NAACP sent a telegram to, what's his name--Hill, who was the Director of CORE at that time, invited them to come to Baltimore because the Council of Churches was opposed to them. They thought we were coming along fine and the like and they didn't want any Freedom Rides, and didn't want this intensive--

I: Well, did you invite CORE to make Baltimore a target city, or not?

A-1: No. Well, we invited them. They had announced that they were going to make Baltimore a target city.

I: You mean they announced it and then you invited them?

A-1: They didn't say it was going to be a target city. They

said they were going to start the Freedom Rides, and we sent the telegram.

I: Later on, Baltimore became--CORE selected two cities one year to be target cities. I think one was Cleveland which exploded in riots that year, and Baltimore was another target city that particular year. What I'm really trying to get at is, did you all invite CORE to make Baltimore a target city that year or not?

A-1: I can't remember. I know that when CORE started the Freedom Rides there was considerable opposition. They announced it from New York, and there was considerable opposition. Ann Miller can tell you there was. Mildred Atkinson can tell you there was, and the Council of Churches and that group of people. We were not always considered nice people by the Council of Churches. We were too radical. We were too militant, really. Although, as I said before, we were militant, non-violent people. But they thought that it would disrupt and hurt more than help, and as a result, they were opposed to it. The Baltimore Branch sent a telegram to Hill (I'll know his first name. I'll get a copy of the telegram.) inviting CORE. We were waiting for them. We would cooperate with them, and we were prepared to help with the legal--furnish the lawyers and the bail bondsmen and the people to help. We wanted all the help we could get. My mother felt we needed all the help we could get to eliminate racial segregation. Just so it wasn't violent. She didn't believe in hate. Now she would fight, she would strongly, vehemently denounce racial segregation for what she called it, "The sin it was against God." But she never believed that we

should fight with our hands or fight with guns. She thought we should fight with the ballot, mass meetings, the education of public opinion, going into courts and the like. Now when the NAACP filed suit in the 1936 suit against the University of Maryland, they called us everything but a child of God, the NAACP. You consult the newspapers. The Sun had all kinds of letters from parents of the University of Maryland who said that blood would flow in the streets, etc. I think it was either Gerald Johnson or H. L. Mencken who wrote a strong feature article on the editorial page of The Sun counseling that this is a Constitutional activity and that we had a right to do this. Of course, Judge O'Dunne in the lower court gave us the decision so promptly that I think the whole Baltimore community felt since we won it in the lower court with Judge O'Dunne--he never even left the Bench. He gave Charlie Huston, who was our brilliant lawyer, he gave him the decision right off! When Herbert O'Connor, who was the Attorney General at the time, asked Judge O'Dunne if he would grant him a stay so he could file an appeal to the Court of Appeals of Maryland, it was Judge O'Dunne's answer which helped educate this community. He said, "Certainly not. I rule that this exclusion of blacks from the University of Maryland Law School is an unconstitutional act. It's in violation of the equal protection of the law of the Constitution. And your Constitutional rights are personal, present, and immediate, and cannot be postponed." And as a result, Donald James Murray was admitted in September. The decision came down in June.

I: What year? Do you remember?

A-1: It was '35 or '36. I'll have to get all the dates.

At any rate, Herbert O'Connor appealed it, but when it got in the Court of Appeals, Donald James Murray was in law school, actually attending classes. Then the Court of Appeals affirmed Judge O'Dunne's lower court decision and we had a precedent. Now the NAACP used that precedent when it argued the University of Missouri case in the Supreme Court. Then we got a national precedent. But, talk about radicals, we were considered real radicals and not very nice people.

I: Talking about the time when CORE was in here, do you remember a mass meeting at the Knox Presbyterian Church? It doesn't ring a bell? McKeldin entered it or something? You don't recall it?

A-1: But I do know this: Governor McKeldin, from a young Mayor and as Governor he was very courageous. He appointed a number of "firsts." He appointed the first colored Magistrate in the courts. He did a number of things. I can't remember them all. Then as Mayor he appointed Linwood Koger as the first black Assistant City Solicitor. Then, of course, he preached brotherhood, and he was very unpopular, too, in many respects, because of his liberal leanings. And we relied on him to help us.

I: Do you have any other stories of your mother's relationship with him?

A-1: Yes. This is opening the seven seals now. White people in this community believed in freedom, too, and this has always kept the NAACP going. But white people would write my mother anonymous letters telling her about discrimination that the

NAACP should be investigating and fighting. My mother got in the mail one day a letter about Sandy Point State Park. The letter said it came from a State employee that State funds were being used to create a segregated beach at Sandy Point in Annapolis and she should investigate. She got busy and investigated. When we got down there and when my mother investigated, she used everybody around us. She had the Afro reporter go with us.

Dr. Carl felt the same compulsions as my mother to help eliminate discrimination. So the Afro would send a reporter with us and the like, and we found that the State had a beautiful sandy beach at Sandy Point for white people, the East Beach, and had a mud hole on the side of the bay where you didn't have any nice sand--just a mud hole--which would be for blacks. So we found that the letter was accurate.

So then we started laying the groundwork for a suit in the courts. Dr. Carl let us know that Governor McKeldin (he was governor at the time) was going to speak to the National Newspaper Publishers' Association which is the black newspaper publishers' organization, historic organization. Dr. Carl Murphy was President at the time. So he called my mother and said, "Mrs. Jackson, let's have a meeting with Governor McKeldin and see if we can persuade him to agree to withhold funds for the development of the Jim Crow section of the beach so that there'll only be one beach when we go to court (because we'd already filed suit in the court and we were getting ready for the hearing) so that the judge will have to admit us to the only beach that's there. So Governor McKeldin was at the

Negro publishers' and we waited. This little committee waited, and then we talked with him. He said he would rather that-- he said, "You know, I have to get elected and if I withheld the funds"--because they had made clear when we were raising so much cane about this mud hole that they were having for Negroes--he said they had no funds for improving the so-called colored beach, that he would have to take it out of his Emergency Funds. All of this had been in the news. So we asked him, "Don't take it out of Emergency Funds."

Now this is one of the times when Governor McKeldin didn't have courage enough to do that. He said, "I would rather the Court order me not to use the Funds. I have already indicated to the State that I would have to take the funds to equalize the beaches out of my Emergency Funds, that there is not enough left in the appropriation to bring the black beach up to the white beach." Because we said they could never be equal, because, you know, they couldn't be practically equal. So he refused to do it, and we were very disappointed. So we had to go on to court. We had a very lengthy court hearing on Sandy Point, and we lost it in the lower court. The Governor of the state rushed and poured these emergency funds into the Jim Crow Beach for blacks, and we had to hire all kinds of experts. Our National Office helped us to testify in court about the lack of equality between the two beaches and the like. But we lost it in the lower court, and then we won it.

I: In the Court of Appeals?

A-1: In the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. And the State appealed to the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court refused to

review it. So we won and we opened it from then. But that was one time Governor McKeldin--but my mother and Dr. Carl, they pushed him to the limit, though. They challenged his belief in brotherhood. They were always at his tail! Stepping on his tail trying to pull him, because it was--my mother used to say that racial segregation robbed black children of their birthright, and that was the right to grow up and to realize their potential. There was nothing nice about the way she denounced racial segregation. She said it was of the devil and that anybody who went along with segregation was not a Christian. You couldn't believe in Christ and you couldn't believe in God and segregate your fellow man. She denounced it so a lot of people in this town respected her, but they didn't like her because she would nail it whether it was the Governor. Because she turned on McKeldin, too. She criticized him for not making those funds available. My mother believed in standing up and speaking out loud and clear, and she never pulled any punches. She was uncompromising. Even with our friends--if they did wrong, didn't go far enough, or didn't do what she thought they should do, she denounced it.

I: In the riots in Baltimore, do you have any comment to make on your reaction or your mother's reaction to it in '68 after the assassination of Martin Luther King?

A-1: Well, let me put it this way. We had the threat of riots in '42.

I: That's when a number of blacks were killed, right?

A-1: In other cities. In Harlem. A number of blacks were killed here and other cities were rioting. You know, it was

over lack of jobs in the defense industry and intensive discrimination. And in Detroit, New York, and all around they were having riots. So my mother organized the march on Annapolis. First, the Baltimore Branch was all organized to march on Washington with A. Philip Randolph and Walter White, but the joint heads of the proposed march on Washington under Franklin Delano Roosevelt (because they wanted him to issue an Executive Order to prohibit racial discrimination in defense industry)--but at any rate the march on Annapolis channeled the steam of the colored people of Baltimore City into a constructive channel. We marched on Annapolis, and, of course, we got some concessions from Governor Herbert O'Connor. Now, in '68, again, it was Martin Luther King's death and the wave of indignation over his assassination that, as well as the frustration of our young people over the expectation of full Constitutional rights and the lack of achieving it that triggered the riots in Baltimore.

I: The difference between expectation and realization?

A-1: That's right. Because we were moving on President Johnson again, President Johnson whom we had fought against being the candidate initially, when he was trying to be the candidate when Kennedy was trying to be the candidate. We even attacked Kennedy for taking Johnson on his ticket as the vice presidential candidate because of his record of compromise when it came to Negro civil rights. So, Johnson had come in. My mother said again, "You can only say that God touches people." Who would have thought that Lyndon Johnson would become the greatest civil rights president in the history of this nation?

That's what my mother said, "God touched him. Put His hand on his shoulder and turned him around."

I: Must have given him an awfully big shake!

A-1: He did. At any rate, Johnson became the greatest--he was greater than President Roosevelt, greater than Truman. He became the greatest civil rights president in the history of this nation. And, as a result, black people had new hopes, and our young people especially. But there was a lag between the anticipated goals and the performance in the cities of this nation. When they killed the perfect man, the man who had been non-violent and who had himself preached loving non-violence and had turned the other cheek and turned the other cheek. When they assassinated him and then we had all of this problem of discrimination in the city schools and blacks' realization of goals, then the riots broke out here. It was a wave. I think it was an emotional wave all over the country after his death.

I: In more recent years there has been a decline in rioting and violence. How would you account for that?

A-1: We've got the civil rights laws.

I: Well, you had them then, too, actually.

A-1: But the '64 and '65 Voting Rights Act--when you look at the history of a community and a nation, it was comparatively recent. But I would say that I think if Nixon had continued, we would be on the verge of riots. I think the expectation is we're going to throw out the Republicans who have a historical record of always taking care of the rich people when they get in and forgetting about the poor people.

I: Not all of them. McKeldin wasn't really that way, and there was a man by the name of Abe Lincoln, and Teddy Roosevelt.

A-1: They considered all of them mavericks. They didn't consider them true Republicans. Their own party never considered them true Republicans.

I: The Republican Party was founded as a party of reform, believe it or not.

A: At any rate, I think the expectation is we're going to put in a Democratic candidate who will, and the Democrats will get back in and continue the reforms that are necessary for the poor people. Johnson did a tremendous job: Medicare, education, everything, every phase of life. Johnson had these massive social measures which improved the lot of the common man, and then all of this O.E.O. and giving jobs. You know, I see the humble people who got jobs under all these federal programs under Johnson, the little people in the community. That did a lot to prevent riots, really.

I: Is there anything else you would like to add to that?

A-1: This is just the icing on the cake. We haven't gotten into it, really. I've got to go back through all the records, clippings, etc. I have assembled quite a few of the clippings.

I: What about letters? Do you have any letters? What are you doing with them?

A-1: Oh, yes, and the editorials that have come. You've got some.

MEMORANDUM

November 29, 1976

On September 21, 1976 Virginia Kiah provided me by phone with information from her family records. Mrs. Kiah stated that Lillie May Jackson's grandfather was Dan Carroll. Mrs. Kiah further stated that Dan Carroll was born on Doughregan Manor and was the illegitimate son of Charles Carroll of Carrollton. Charles Henry Carroll (1836-1911) was the son of Dan Carroll and the father of Lillie May Carroll Jackson.

Charles L. Wagandt

CLW:bw

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