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REVEREND MARION BASCOM

Interviewed by Richard Richardson

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

*ms. 5240.5241*

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Baltimore, Maryland

Interviewee: Rev. Marion Bascom  
Interviewer: Richard Richardson  
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I. Rev. Bascom, please tell us something about your early life, education, your involvement with Civil Rights, and your decision to come to Baltimore.

A. Well, I was born in Florida, educated at the local high school. I attended and was graduated from Florida Memorial College. Subsequently, I finished Howard University. I've done some work at Wesley Theological Seminary as well as Garrett Biblical Institute on Northwestern University's campus.

Immediately upon coming out of college I became a minister of the local church in St. Augustine, Florida where my curiosity and concern for human rights began. It was here that, as minister of that church, we registered some five or six hundred people in the small city of St. Augustine, Florida. In fact, I remember very distinctly that we were able to get a Miss Elzey to bring the books to register blacks into the first floor of our church.

So that, my interest has been in human rights. Of course, what else could you be interested in being a part of the deprived and minority community?

I came to Baltimore as a result of an invitation from this church and for the past twenty-seven years I have tried to serve it. Of course, I have been pretty much at the heart and center of things with regard to the human rights, civil rights movement.

I. Rev. Bascom, when did you first meet Mrs. Jackson and what were your recollections of those early years.

A. Well, I first met Mrs. Jackson almost the first week I came here because Mrs. Jackson was a "go-getter". Our church here is proximately to the N.A.A.C.P. office. It was then located on the corner of Dolphin and McCulloh Street, right behind us here.

And, of course this was one of the churches that had historically been supported by Mrs. Jackson. It was as you know, one of the larger churches and had participated with Mrs. Jackson prior to my coming. So that my falling in line with Mrs. Jackson was almost a must, as well as a kind of normal thing for me to do based upon the concerns that I had previously.

I. Could you tell us something about the role of the church and its relations with the N.A.A.C.P. through the years.

A. Well, Mrs. Jackson just felt that the church was the bulwark of the N.A.A.C.P. and hardly ever was there a meeting held outside of some local church.

She always insisted that the church was the focal point of the community. She was oriented with <sup>IN</sup>the Christian framework and she was very active. In fact, she was a trustee for years at Sharpe Street and so she used the churches - or better still, maybe the churches served as an available resource for her activities. She never went outside the church. The church was "it" as far as Mrs. Jackson was concerned.

I. Could you tell us your personal reaction to the Supreme Court Decision of 1954, and also if you could compare education before 1954 for blacks and education after 1954.

A. Well, in response to the first question, I was highly enthusiastic June 17, 1954 about the Supreme Court Decision. I was at that time, naive enough to believe that America was a nation that concerned itself with law and order. And I just said, "Well, the walls have come down!" And of course, I think there were many other blacks who felt the same way, but as you know it has been a long, drawn-out....and the term "deliberate speed" has become a base incongruity as well as a misnomer...so that after all these years it is still not in ~~fact~~ <sup>FACT</sup> face. It's on the books.

Now, somehow I have some reservations about education then and now. I think that those prior to 1954 (and this is conjecture only, I have no data to support this) but I think that those youngsters who were educated prior to 1954 had a keener desire for learning. And although kids were segregated, I think that there was more of the "heard psychology" at work. ?

However, since 1954, and the rise of integration, there have been some other factors. Television has come into vogue. A restlessness has emerged. A permissiveness, if you please, has emerged which, in my opinion, at this point, leaves a lot to be desired. Because I think (and this is a generalization, I don't want to be held to it, but it's my own thoughts), I think that learning has to be re-instituted in the black community - a desire for learning, an appreciation for learning. There are some words that we've heard lately that I don't like anymore... "relevant", and "irrelevant". And I'm sure that if blacks in

America are to enter into a participatory relationship in the marketplace in America, we're going to have to have people who are knowledgeable about metallurgy, science, English, all the things that go along with civilization. That's my reaction.

I. Sort of like Jesse Jackson has been saying recently?

A. I think I'm saying pretty much what Jesse Jackson has been saying. I think that more and more of us are going to have to do some "in house" and I stress "in house" evaluation and reappropriation of priorities and values.

I think that there are some things that only blacks can do to blacks because blacks basically don't trust white people. And there's reason for that--real reason for it. I find myself trusting less. This is a sad commentary, but the facts and figures will indicate my position.

I. What has been the role of the church in the areas of employment, housing and voter registration in the last twenty-five years or so.

A. Well, the church has served as the hospice for voter registration, the march on Washington, it was supportive of the Martin Luther King days, Southern Christian Leadership, CORE, N.A.A.C.P. And in that we're talking about Mrs. Jackson, you'll have to remember that the N.A.A.C.P. has substantially served more consistently in the black community than any other organization. And I think that it's purely because the N.A.A.C.P. has attempted to deal with the problems of America judicially. And I think that here is probably where the action is. I think America has the capacity to do right, but it just doesn't have the will to do right. And if we are to continue to be a law-

abiding nation, then it seems to me that, although we thought that all the legal ramifications had come to an end, we're more sure now than ever that we've got to continue in the same direction. That is to win battle after battle in the court. We've just got to break down..break in half the backbone of discrimination. Now I'm not talking about love. I'm simply saying that we've got to develop a wholesome respect for each other.

I know that love is much better than respect, but until we can develop a climate in which we can respect each other, then that climate (it seems to me) will provide us the opportunity of growing from respect to love...as far as people love.

I. What are your first recollections of Gov. McKeldin.

A. My first recollections of Gov. McKeldin are kind of amusing. I first saw Gov. McKeldin at Beachwood Park. He had on run-down shoes. He did not look like a "well-heeled" politician. But Gov. McKeldin had a real religious fervor about himself and there must have been something to it because up to his latest days, he talked about the things moral, the things ethical, the things good, the things decent. And I would simply say that probably Mr. McKeldin was years ahead of his time.

I still think of him deferentially and with great love and great respect. And interestingly enough, he was one of the first politicians to recognize the inherent strength the black community was possessed of.

He was a good man. He was shrewd, but he was a good man. He was political, but he was at points non-political. I think that there were some things about the man that cried out for decency and morality and respect. And on this basis...I even

A. As I've said before, I think his moral conscienceness, his feeling for people. It's just like....the reason that many white people don't like black people is because they've never known. And they've known them in the "master-servant" role.

I'm often taken aback by the fact that people are surprised that blacks are articulate, can speak well, can think well, can write well, can teach well, preach well, and practice medicine well. We have been the victims of a subtle kind of psychology which indicated that blacks were inferior. You know, if you're white you're right, if you're brown, stick around. If you're yellow, you're mellow. But, if you're black, get back. This has been the psychology.

It is <sup>not</sup> true that blacks are equal in terms of their opportunities, and ~~we~~ take advantage of those opportunities.

I. How did you feel about McKeldin preaching in black churches?

A. He was a good preacher. Any white man who wants to act decent and treat blacks as human beings is welcome in black churches. It's the white folks who have this problem. We don't have it, they've got it. There's no black problem. It's a white problem that fails to understand that we are a part of the American dream, although I know we're no "melting pot".. And yet we are a "melting pot". In spite of the fact (I say this very frankly) black women didn't go around raping white men. A multi-colored black community didn't just come to being by intercourse within the community so that well...that's all I want to say about that.

was CORE. It was Southern Christian Leadership. It was N.A.A.C.P. It was Rosa Parks that everybody has forgotten about that really made the demand that the time had come.

I. You think that McKeldin, being in the position he was in the 50's as governor and as Mayor from '63 to '67 helped matters?

A. Oh certainly! Without a doubt. You can have a thing moving universally with people dragging their feet. But, I think, as I've said before that McKeldin did the best he could with what he had. And Baltimore will always be a different kind of Baltimore because McKeldin was here. Now it would not have come as soon had there been someone else, I don't think. We would have dragged our feet on and on. But McKeldin recognized that he was dealing with some "musts" and he abided by them.

But I think more than that - he was willing to be a part of the engineering force to bring it about, and you can't do away with it however you rationalize it.

I. Why do you think blacks picketed McKeldin in 1963. I believe they did.

A. Well, we picketed Mr. McKeldin to lift up the problem because as I said before, there were just some things Mr. McKeldin could not do. And there was always an understanding that it was a human kind of thing to do. Sometimes you are forced to picket your friends. And friends understand why you're picketing them. In fact, to tell you the truth, now that he's dead and gone, he suggested that we do it....simply to highlight a situation that he could not handle. Which seems to give you a new kind of index that the man really cared.

I. When you say he couldn't do it, you mean philosophically or politically?

A. Philosophically, he had done it up here. But politically, what can you do? I mean, it's strange I don't remember the men, the people who were in government then. McKeldin's the only one that sticks out. The little "crumb crunchers" are forgotten. And it's McKeldin that you are asking me about this morning which seems to indicate and to validate the fact that McKeldin was a real person.

I. That was my next question. I was going to ask you if, during this period, if any other public official stands out in your mind on Civil Rights.

A. I think the two men who stand out in my mind are McKeldin and his successor, Tommy D'Alesandro\*. And I have acquired an appreciation of him, his humor, and his willingness to do many things. For example, I was the first black Fire Commissioner in the history of Baltimore City, and I was appointed by D'Alesandro.

So these two men stand out in my mind as being friends. Not being able to do everything I think they would have done, but the political exegesis of the time demanded that they not be done, just as is the case now.

I. Why have blacks left the Republican party?

A. Well, they've left the Republican party because the Republican party is insensitive to black people. It's that simple. I ran for the Presidency of the City Council and the

power Republicans gave me nothing but advice. And not only did they not give me advice but they gave me no money.

I. Is there much of a Republican party in the City, do you think.

A. No, there is no Republican party in the city because the Republican Party is not concerned with the responsibility of having blacks to enter into a participatory relationship with them. And I suspect I know about as well as anybody. I know they left me out "on the string". They wanted to tell me how to campaign, what to say in the campaign, but they did not want to give me any money. In fact, I did not get five hundred dollars out of all the white Republicans in Baltimore City.

One Republican told me probably the best thing he could do to help me was to discourage people in the third district from going out to vote.

I. Why do you say this has changed you... <sup>historically, as you know</sup> the Republican Party, the Party of Lincoln, the Party that ~~turned~~ <sup>CAME</sup> out for civil rights .....

A. That's very simple. The Republican Party has evolved into the Party of the privileged. In fact I don't know whether it's the Party. In a little while, after this election, we might not even have a Republican Party. So that I'm very disillusioned with Party. I'm disillusioned with the white leadership of the Party and the black leadership of the Party because I think they're game-playing.

I. How about the Democratic Party in the City. How is that responding to the needs of blacks do you think.

A. Well, it is, at any rate, more hopeful than the other Party. It's going to take a larger participation of blacks in

the Party. We'll have to run more people. By people I mean people--men, women, and we're going to have to look for new leadership. But the Democratic Party in this town is the best thing we've got, we might as well face it.

In fact, I'm thinking seriously of changing Party affiliations.

I. Was Mrs. Jackson very political?

A. Well, yeah, Mrs. Jackson was political. I mean look at all the folks in her family that are in politics. The Jackson-Mitchell clan has historically been a part of the Civil Rights political struggle although she did not, you know, actively politic. Yeah, Mrs. Jackson was a politician. You can't exist by being inpolitic in a society. Politics after all is the orderly or the disorderly science of ~~cooking~~ <sup>GOVERNMENT</sup>.

I. How do you see the Jackson-Mitchell family role in Civil Rights in the last twenty-five years?

A. I see it as being very human--has great strength in it, and weaknesses. It has ambivalences. It is a normal family. We're not talking about a conclave of saints. We're talking about an <sup>en</sup>clave of power. It just goes--you know, when you think about Clarence Mitchell, Chief of the Washington Bureau of the N.A.A.C.P., and go right on down to Mike Mitchell who is the latest. Well, between those two there's just a lot.

I. Why <sup>was</sup> is Baltimore selected as a "target city" by CORE?

A. Well, because Baltimore is on, let us say, the main line between Miami and Boston. It's an in-between city, it's ambivalent. It has not discovered who it is. It's got a little of the suave, the politic, has a little of the ignorance.

It's almost like a chameleon so that Baltimore might well be the city to have been selected based upon all of its advantage, its disadvantages.....and again, not to overuse the word, its ambivalence. I think all this is a part of the reason that Baltimore was chosen. It's next-door to Washington, the Federal City. On the other side is Philadelphia, Wilmington, *below it is* Richmond, New York. And then of course, you've got the Montgomery, Prince George County complex, the poverty of western Maryland.

I. What has been the relationship between the church and CORE in the last 25 years.

A. The church has been supportive of CORE. Walter Carter, Griffin, Chance...the relationship has been beautiful. You see, the July 4th "jail-in" up at Gwynn Oak Park was shared in by CORE. The jail-mates were members of CORE, N.A.A.C.P Bob Watts who is now judge, and Juanita Jackson Mitchell served as counsel to get us out of jail. So it was really a concerted effort of all kinds of people. I'm not too sure we didn't have some Communists and I say Communists in the finest sense of the word, not derogatory. And I'm not a Communist. But, they participated. Everybody was welcome. Anybody who was willing to get in the struggle and CORE was in the forefront and CORE got its money from the church, got its accommodations from the church. So the church has never had any argument with CORE. In fact, he doesn't like to tell you, but the President of CORE, Farmer, is a preacher and a graduate of Howard University School of Religion. His Daddy taught New Testament at Howard University. Course he doesn't bother with being a preacher, but if you've ever watched the rascal, you'll see the preacheristic behavior in him. Very few people know that Farmer is a seminary graduate.

I. I didn't know myself.

A. Yes.

I. How about the relationship between the church and the Urban League.

A. Well, the church and the Urban League has historically.... See, the point is, the church in most instances for black people is the vessel out of which these things have come. So that churches have no argument. In fact the black churches have been

the only segment of the church that has been willing to participate. I can understand that because the black church has been a part of the persecuted so that we had no choice, but to participate in things liberating.

I. Started by Richard Allen.

A. Yeah, Richard Allen and of course, there was this ~~Barrett~~<sup>GARNETT</sup>, who was Presbyterian. There's a man here in this town, Harvey Johnson and others, so that it has to be remembered that the church "mothered" emancipation and is still trying to do just that--has no other choice but to preach deliverance to the captives.

I. Was the church involved in the Rt. 40 "sit-ins" in the early 60's.

A. Yes, my Lord! They..some of the buses left this church and left other churches going on the march on the Rt. 40 East and Rt. 40 West. Yeah, not only that, but we provided the money for bond to get folks out of jail when they were arrested and acted in a conciliary fashion with the authorities.

I. Was there much..from just the newspaper articles it seemed like the restaurant owners were almost fighting every inch of the way and then they sort of got to the point that they tried some form of compromise. Was there pressure from the churches..

A. I think that there is a built-in pressure in the business community when it starts losing money that is the *summa bonum* of their morality. They get very moral, very acquiescant when they're losing money. Money is the name of the game. And I don't give them any credit for having accommodated change. They've changed because they've had to change. You'll have to remember

*and* looking over the shoulders of blacks in America

\* PROBABLY EARLY 19TH CENTURY ANTI-SLAVERY LEADER

Guards.

I. How do you compare that, again, if you know, with Salisbury which is also on the Eastern shore. It's about fifty miles south of Cambridge, and from what I've read, it was an easier transition or an easier time of it.

A. Well, I think that I can only stab at that. You did have Princess Anne, a little college down on the eastern shore that's close by. You did have students going in and out. And then you had a more enlightened community down there. People that were not anxious to change, but changing on the basis of the signs of the time. And I think that accounts for it.

I. Yes, I think it was interesting. Some of the things I read of the differences even though they were both Eastern Shore communities, it was an interesting observation.

A. Yeah.

I. Why didn't Baltimore burn during the 60's as did other cities. For example in Watts or Detroit.

A. Oh, Baltimore did burn!

I. But it wasn't the massive...it was relatively minor compared to...

A. Well, you see Watts is an all black community and there is no "all black community" in the sense that Watts is. But my friend, I'll tell you that this town was incendiary. I was a member of the Fire Commission at that time and I got a chance to see it. But here again, you have to remember that only two per cent of black people participated nationwide in those disturbances and I do not call them "riots" because they were not directed toward persons. They were directed toward property.

When you talk about the Hay Market Riot, you're talking

about people versus people. In the Baltimore City, it was people versus property. And I would simply say that this town did burn, and I would just recommend that you talk to more people about that. Because it burned much more than you're impressed it burned, because I was in the midst of it.

I. Do you think that McKeldin played a role during the time. I know he came down and went through the part of the black community.

A. Well, just let me say this. The man's personal ~~life~~ enabled him at least to view it. He didn't cool it. Nobody cooled it. Time cooled it. When you say, "Why did it happen?" It happened because the image of leadership in "My King" had been destroyed. And this was hopelessness; hopelessness is response. You kill the leader, you kill the general, and then you have the mob. As long as you have the general, you have an army. But in the absence of the general and the high command, there's a mob.

I. Did you see any changes..I think we've touched upon this before--any changes in City Hall after McKeldin left office, with D'Alesandro coming in.

A. Oh yes, yes. Definitely. I still think of Tommy D'Alesandro as being concerned, youthful and pretty much conscious of the time.

I. Who had been the main participants in the Civil Rights Movement in the last twenty-five years among blacks. Would it be the middle class or the upper class or poor classes.

A. I think there's been a cross-section. Furman Templeton of the Urban League, Lillie Jackson, Juanita, Bob Watts, Chance, Carter, Frank Williams, I could just go on and on. There were

men out at Morgan who participated, supported. Dr. Jenkins, the President of Morgan gave support to the movement. The Ministerial Alliance, Chet Wickwire, out at Hopkins. Believe it or not, Walter Orlinsky was a part of the struggle in those days so that you can't say that it was proletarian nor bourgeois. You'd say that it was just people, who were sensitized to the great need, the insurmountable barriers that were there.

*I, there's one -*  
Mildred Atkinson, you know, as you think about it.

There were white pastors, they've fallen away though. But there were white pastors who got into the struggle. There was Rabbi Lieberman, God bless him. There was Monsignor Austin Healy, there was that "little saint", Cardinal Sheehan. You know, when you begin to call the role - it was everybody, the rabbis, the Catholic Church, Henry Offer, don't forget Joe Connally. I've mentioned another "saint", Maurice Lieberman of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation--these were great guys. I wish I could remember them all, but you know, you just can't. There were whole orders of the Roman Catholic church that entered into the fray..marching. We assembled five or ten thousand people on Easter Monday in bitter cold on the March for Baltimore, not the march on Baltimore, but the march for Baltimore.

We had Jacob Javits to come down. Jackie Robinson. I was the chairman of that. Sam Daniels, of the Masons. I know I've left some out, but these are some of the guys that come to mind as I think about it.

I. There's one incident when there was some pressure put on local contractors in Baltimore to hire blacks in a short period of time. I think you may have been involved in that.

A. I was. Those were with the Apprenticiable Trade.

I. Yes.

A. Raleigh Porter and Iozzi. In fact I've got Iozzi's telephone number still in my...Guido Iozzi... his telephone number then was 276-8500. In fact I've got a number here... what was the vice-president's name...can't think of it right now...

I. Agnew.

A. Agnew! I even have his number still in my file here, you know, his private numbers.

I. While he was Governor or Vice-President.

A. While he was Governor. Interesting. I think I have it. I was looking at it the other day. Oh...Agnew, his number is 647-6701. It was a private number, you know. Those days we were really...

I. Was there a friction with McKeldin over this incident with contractors and employees.

A. Oh no. No, no, no, no, no - he encouraged this. In fact, I took the first black electrical apprentice on the job. I "hand-delivered" him.

I. What year was this, do you recall.

A. I don't remember the year, but the boy (not the boy), the man is now a "licensed" electrician. But before then, blacks were excluded from all the apprenticeable trades based upon the "grandfather clause".

I. What was your reaction to Agnew's speech in 1968 when he..

A. Well, that's very obvious. All of us got up and walked out. That's just <sup>THAT</sup> ~~there~~. Agnew wanted us to do the impossible. Agnew wanted us to do what we weren't willing to do. Agnew wanted us to go against our grain. And incidentally, when we left Mr. Agnew's office we came in here, in this very lower auditorium and had our meeting.

I. How do you account for his change, or do you think it was a change because he seemed before this to be....

A. Oh no, no, no. From the word "go", Agnew was the least evil, so we thought, between George Mahoney and Agnew. We never had any great love for Agnew. But because of the incendiary remarks of George Mahoney, we had chosen to go with Agnew. But there was no love lost. In fact, Agnew told me in the presence of several people that whenever he saw me, Marion Bascomb, coming he was repulsed...in his office. And I told him then that <sup>that</sup> was a problem that he had to overcome. He was the most arrogant man I have ever known. And the truth of his arrogance will never be known because his "nolo contendere" has *obfuscated* the possibility of our ever knowing, unless you can pull up some of the threads from his book. But, of course, I'm not going to buy his book because that will seem to increase his pocketbook and I don't want to be guilty of that.

I. How do you view Mrs. Jackson's relationship with McKeldin.

A. Beautiful Beautiful. And you know with that Bible talk that just got the old lady completely. But, I think that if she saw or felt anything that was amiss in him, she would say it. I think that of Mr. McKeldin, it can be said, that he did not agree, did not want to stamp his *imprimatur* on everything. Instead, I think he knew that he was dealing with people who had minds. And there's another guy, Tucker Dearing, although he's been disbarred, Tucker Dearing has been very active in the civil rights struggle. That name...you know, as you sit down, you forget about these folks. But Tucker Dearing must not be forgotten in the struggle for human rights.

I. <sup>YES</sup>  
~~This~~ Judge Watts and Judge Cole mentioned Tucker Dearing's name.

A. Yeah, well I'm glad they did. I'm glad they did.

I. How about Mrs. Jackson's relationship with Mayor D'Alesandro, III?

A. Was that the young Tommy?

I. The young, yes.

A. Oh yeah, they had no problems, no problems. She called him Son. You know, demote him to a boy and holler at him if she took a notion. In fact she'd holler at anybody. I don't want you to think that Miss Lille was just a quiet person. She was aggressive, arrogant, demanding, commanding, insulting. But her over-arching desire was to better the condition of what she called "colored people". She never did get "black" in her vocabulary.

I. What were your impressions of Mrs. Jackson as a business woman. She was, I think she did have a successful real estate business, on the side or...

A. Mrs. Jackson was just a woman who had reared children. You know that her husband was either white or near white from Mississippi. In fact, I'm the one who saved him from getting killed out here today when some black thugs jumped on him. This was the beginning of the old man's death. Right across the street here, on this alley. And this again, is the tragedy, that we do not keep our history and our personalities alive. They come on the scene and we forget about them. But again, you see Mrs. Jackson (getting back to the question), Mrs. Jackson educated all the children. Which meant that her husband's chief source of income was operating church to church

movies, so he had no real income. And that's a part of the black matriarchy in our community. So she had houses, that was the only thing that she could do.

I. This gave her sort of a financial independence.

A. Oh, she had a financial independence and a base.

I. Yeah, to be able to participate full time within..

A. Oh yes, full time, full time. Actually, and I say this very honestly, the N.A.A.C.P. could not have paid Mrs. Jackson for the work she did even if they had put her on a salary. A salary of \$25,000.00 a year would not have recompensed her for services. Hers was a twenty-four hour a day thing. People knew to call Miss Lillie when they needed her, not only in terms of the civil rights struggle, but in terms of personal problems, police brutality and that was flagrant in this town at one time.

I. Do you think there's been a desertion of the Civil Rights Movement by its former participants.

A. No, I don't think that. I just think there are some blacks who have forgotten from whence they came and money has a way of changing people's attitudes. You know once they get up out of the barrel, they're busy going <sup>away</sup> about their business. And this is what frightens me. I hope that responsible blacks will not leave the fray to irresponsible blacks and there are irresponsible blacks. And the newspapers, you know always decide who the black leader is. And this frightens me, that there might come the time when we'll be left with the radical fringe and this is what the white community better watch.

They'd better listen to the sober speaking blacks. Because you don't have a unified black community. It is as

dichotomous as any other community. It is the radicals, the near radicals and the non-not so radicals and then there are those who are just out of it.

I. Do you see any national Negro Leaders or black leaders now that command any, you know, command sort of a center ground of communications.

A. Oh I think that we still have black leaders. They're more seperate now because the legal aspects, the basic and fundamental legal aspects have <sup>sort of</sup> served to <sup>THRU</sup> ~~year~~ us apart. I think now that there is a kind of evolutionary process going on that is running the black community more into the political arena. We've got to have people who can vote for us, people who have power. And the ability to move people sometimes when they have no consciences is not in demonstrations. You've got to have strong black people in congressional and state and municipal government. And although it is very quiet, you've got more blacks now in political life in America than ever before. Southern cities with black mayors, comptrollers, city solicitors, where the action really is. This is the most helpful thing we've got going.

I. I don't think there are any black city-wide officials in Baltimore right now, are there?

A. No, no.

I. Milton Allen was the last.

A. In terms of city-wide, you know you have the judges who were..

I. Yeah, the judges are..

A. Well, I ran, you see for the presidency of City Council but being a Republican I lost. And yet I garnered thirty thousand

votes, spending about five thousand dollars in my campaign. I didn't even have money enough to buy automobile stickers or money to put on placards on buses or radio or television time. But my defeat was based upon my poverty.

I. How do you view the rise of militancy in the civil rights movement in the late 60's.

A. Well, from passive resistance, *Soul Force* so forth and opportunities denied--from that you move to militancy. Because if you cannot ask for, plead for, then you ultimately become militant. You know, as long as somebody is "on your neck" and you say, "Please get off. Do get off. Why don't you be nice, and get off". Then one day somebody says, "Dammit, get the hell off my back, off of my neck." Because you're tired. This is the rise of militancy. The rise of militancy can be attributed to Malcolm X and others, and then all black movements across the country.

It's a normal thing. If you can't get it by pleading, then probably you'll have to do it by bleeding, or at least the threat that you're going to do it.

I. Why do you think organizations such as the Panthers or other militant groups have been relatively unsuccessful in the mainstream.

A. Poverty. Poverty, police harrassment, and surveillance, intimidation. And when they were not able to pay their rent, they were put out in the streets. And I feel there was a real resistance to fighting our way out of this because you really can't, we really can't win. Blacks can't win with force. To go back to *Bayard Rustin* coalition, coalescing is the name of the game. Not *ING* coalescant from a point of weakness, point of respect for each other's position.

So that militancy --physical, violent, militant is absurd. And that's why it's not prosperous. You know, the Police Dept. has tanks downtown, rbt guns, ~~shock~~ troops--I mean, it would be senseless to go out and be militant.

I. How do you account for the decline in membership of organizations such as CORE, and the N.A.A.C.P. and the Urban League in the last few years.

A. Well, because of a lack of stimulation. All of these groups raise money on a pretty perfunctory basis. They don't have big hundred dollar plate dinners like politicians. You'll have to remember that many blacks are poverty-stricken, and four dollars, five dollars, ten dollars for N.A.A.C.P. might not be as important as some meat. And yet this <sup>DOES NOT</sup> ~~does not~~ excuse us. This is a part of our inheritance, not inherent, but part of our weakness.

Sometimes we beg for the things we need, buy the things we want.

I. How about white participation in some of these groups.

A. (inaudible exchange between I. and A.) Certainly, because there's a polarity ~~between~~ <sup>in</sup> the black and white community now. Many friends that we used to be able to call on the phone for help are no longer available. White people have gone back to their whiteness and black ~~people~~ <sup>folks</sup> have gone to their blackness. And white people have been raising hell about blackness and they've done it covertly and we've done it overtly

Where are all the dialogues we used to have in homes. They're gone. What big businesses have taken little black businesses under their wing to help show them the way to do business. How many black businesses are given enough money to ensure success, rather than to ensure failure. Just like all the government projects--gave us just enough for us to fail. But they've spent enough money to go to the moon, Marshall Plan, to help Egypt and Israel, make money off the Russians. It's just that our priorities are all askance.

I. You notice this, I'm sure in the Nixon-Ford Administration they are sort of suburban oriented...

A. Let's not even get vulgar by talking about it, because they... you know, they're hopeless. The whole Nixon-Reagan-Ford syndrome is against everything that I hold dear.

I. What do you see..what are your predictions for the future as far as black aspirations and maybe getting the dialogue between black and white repaired or started again.

A. Well, maybe the bunson burner will get hot enough so that we'll all realize that we're in the crucible together. That might happen. And in the absence of it happening. (And its not in our time.) But in the absence of it is the third world which people don't even realize<sup>is</sup> about.\* See, what America forgets is that Rome had a great civilization. The Greeks had a great civilization and only that civilization that is humane and decent will last. And in most instances, Rome and Greece did not die because of forces outside. <sup>But</sup> Because of forces inside. So it will not be Communism that will destroy America nor any other totalitarian form of government. It'll be our inability to deal with ourselves. And although I'm sorry to note that there's so much talk about Capitol Hill novelties--sex orgies and what have you, doesn't it sound like Rome? Greece? And those of us who say, "It couldn't happen here," find that it is happening. It's like the university that you're attending.

Morgan is not a university and you know it. A university is the result of schools rotating around a <sup>LIBERAL</sup> little arts college, medicine, pharmacy, science, education, engineering. And you cannot develop a university when they have withdrawn funds for its growth.

\* "EXISTS"

- I. I think certain aspect of it...I think it has..
- A.9 It has legislative sanction to become.
- I. And I think it does, in certain areas, I think it fulfills the role of <sup>a</sup>university.
- A. Yeah, but you understand what I mean..
- I. Yeah.
- A. The "pure" university. I just had to throw that in.
- I. Because all the great universities of history, for example, up until the late nineteenth century had none of these departments either. You know they <sup>were</sup> ~~was~~ mostly humanitarian.
- A. Yeah, but I'm talking about the universities we have now. You know Yale was a college. Harvard was a college. All of them start out as colleges, basically, liberal arts. And rotating around liberal arts are the other schools. In fact, and there are some blacks in this town who recognize this--that Morgan cannot become a full-fledged university until the legislature decides to build it, to finance it, to provide faculty, <sup>and</sup> staff commensurate~~y~~ with the demands of a university. And this is a part of the syndrome that frightens me to death. You ask me what I see in the future. Unless these things are addressed, I see nothing in the future because if you don't develop people who can deal in the marketplace, you have nothing. We've got to bring this to a close real quick.
- I. Just one more question. <sup>WHO</sup> ~~What~~ do you think is on the "cutting edge" of the Civil Rights Movement today and compare this to who was on the "cutting edge" twenty-five years ago.
- A. I can't answer that question because the focus of what's happening is so different now...until in <sup>terms</sup> ~~times~~ of leaders... I am not certain. I think leadership has been proliferated into different areas now so that you don't have the sharp issues that

you had before. The issues are now more subtle. So you don't have the leaders because you don't have the same sets of problems now that you had then.

You had "eating in a greasy spoon". That was easy to identify. Voting...easily identifiable. Housing...easily identifiable. These are not the real things now. We've got some of these things fairly well licked. Not licked, but fairly well licked.

- I. Thank you Rev. Bascom.
- A. Okay, glad I could spend some time with you.

Bascom

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