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P.1. Southern Journalism: Media and the Movement

Interview P-0015
Milton Coleman
2 August 2013

Abstract – p. 2
Transcript – p. 3

ABSTRACT – Milton Coleman

Interviewee: Milton Coleman

Interviewer: Josh Davis

Interview Date: August 2, 2013

Milton Coleman, a native of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, wrote for a number of black newspapers before beginning a 36-year career at the *Washington Post*. He first became politically involved when teaching black history at a freedom school during the Milwaukee school bus boycott and then at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where he helped organize the Alliance of Black Students and successfully campaigned for a Black Studies Program. After writing freelance articles for the *Milwaukee Star* and the *Negro Digest* he was invited to work at the *Milwaukee Courier*, the award-winning black weekly. During his time there, Coleman was arrested while investigating police brutality and also covered the opening of Malcolm X Liberation University (MXLU). He identifies the Student Organization for Black Unity (SOBU) as the branch of community organization-based activism that originated simultaneously with MXLU and describes Howard Fuller's role as leader of both organizations. He was offered a job with SOBU, which launched the *SOBU Newsletter*, later renamed the *African World* in accordance with Pan-Africanism. *African World's* coverage of events both in the entirety of Africa and in North Carolina were gathered from BBC broadcasts or from personal accounts. He describes the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee as role models to the newspaper. He decided to leave, however, out of loyalty to journalism: *African World* became increasingly Marxist and Coleman believed that all black activism, even forms that a publication disagrees with, should be reported on. He founded the unsuccessful All-African News Service, which more widely distributed black weeklies and student newspapers. Through later work with Howard University Radio, Coleman became acquainted with daily and hourly news and was introduced to the Michelle Clark Program for Minority Journalists, which trained those with no journalism pedigree. Immediately after the program he worked at the *Minneapolis Star* and then moved to the *Washington Post*, where he worked for thirty-six years. This interview is part of Media and the Movement, an oral history and broadcast collection project housed in the Southern Oral History Program and funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

TRANSCRIPT: Milton Coleman

Interviewee: Milton Coleman
Interviewer: Josh Davis
Interview Date: August 2, 2013
Length: Two audio files, 0:49:51 and 1:37:59
(Second overlaps first; new audio begins 0:21:20 into
second file)

START OF INTERVIEW

Josh Davis: Okay, here we go.

Milton Coleman: Okay.

Josh Davis: Today is—.

Milton Coleman: Today is the second of August.

Josh Davis: August second. I'm Josh Davis. I'm with the Southern Oral History Program at UNC. I'm sitting down with Milton Coleman, and we're going to talk a little bit about SOBU-YOBU. Correct me if I'm wrong. The way you pronounced it over the phone a few days ago was the emphasis on the second syllable.

Milton Coleman: SOBU [pronounces So *Boo*', emphasizing second syllable].

Josh Davis: SOBU [pronounces So *Boo*', emphasizing second syllable].

Milton Coleman: SOBU [pronounces So *Boo*', emphasizing second syllable].

Josh Davis: Right, and I had always said SOBU [pronounces *Sō*' boo, emphasizing first syllable].

Milton Coleman: No, SOBU [pronounces So *Boo*', emphasizing second syllable].

Josh Davis: So, what I like to typically do is maybe just start with your background, maybe if you could say a little bit about your upbringing or your youth and kind of your early days, where you started out.

Milton Coleman: Okay. Well, I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1946. I grew up, primarily, in Hillside Terrace Public Housing Project, which is also a public housing project where Howard Fuller lived at, though we barely knew each other at the time. I went to Lincoln High School there and I went to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee on a one hundred twenty-eight dollar a semester scholarship that I sort of lucked into. And my undergraduate degree is in the history and literature of western music. When I started college, I wanted to be a high school band director, like my high school band director. And then, early on, I wanted to become an ethnomusicologist and specialize in African American music. So, I got an undergraduate degree in music history and literature.

But I also got involved in the Black Student Movement on the campus. Earlier, I had taught at a freedom school and—during the Milwaukee school boycott. And I got my first newspaper job at the *Milwaukee Courier*, a black weekly, after I graduated from UWM. And then, that was in 1969 that I started at the *Courier*, and in 1970, I went south to work with SOBU, which was then based in Greensboro, North Carolina. And we had a relatively small core structure, and I believe my title was Coordinator of Informational Services, or something like that.

And we started what first was the *SOBU Newsletter*, which was patterned after the *SNCC Newsletter*. And then later, as the group's ideology shifted more to Pan-

Africanism, we renamed it *The African World*, which was modeled after Marcus Garvey's newspaper, which had been *The Negro World*. And I remained there—I remained with SOBU probably until late, sometime in 1971. And then, I broke off with a couple of people who had worked for *The African World*, and we began something called the All-African News Service in Greensboro, North Carolina. And it was a national printed news service aimed at black weeklies and student newspapers.

And it was a national news service, so I decided to move it to Washington. And so, I came here in 1972, and the All-African News Service kind of went under, [laughs] and I began working for WHUR-FM, the Howard University Radio station. And at the same time, I was the Washington correspondent for something called—uh-oh—[laughs] Community News Service, out of New York, Emile Milne's operation.

JD: Whose operation was it?

MC: A guy name Emile Milne, E-M-I-L, last name M-I-L-N-E. He wound up being chief of staff [0:05:00] for Charlie Rangel, Congressman Rangel from New York, and may still be chief of staff.

JD: Interesting. Well, wow, you just gave me a great overview of what sounds like maybe almost the first three decades of your life. Just to work back just a little bit—.

MC: Okay.

JD: Can you tell me again when were you born?

MC: November twenty-ninth, 1946.

JD: Okay. And so, you graduated from college in what year?

MC: Officially, in 1968. [19]68 is my official graduation year.

JD: Okay, and at the time, there was, I assume, a small African American population in Madison, although it had probably—there had been African Americans there for—.

MC: I was at Milwaukee, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, not Madison.

JD: Oh, excuse me, okay.

MC: Very different schools.

JD: Yeah.

MC: And—.

JD: UWM?

MC: UWM, yes. And, okay, so what's your question?

JD: I guess maybe I was a little bit curious about your experiences there, because you had said you were part of the Black Student Movement, and I guess kind of curious about how you got involved in activism. And you mentioned the freedom schools and just—what was your kind of entry into political involvement as a teenager, as a young adult, before moving down to North Carolina?

MC: Well, while I was at—well, let me try to figure out where this thing started at. I guess my first involvement came in 1964 or so. The school bus boycott—I mean, the school boycott in Milwaukee, I believe, was in 1964. And there was—Milwaukee public schools were considered very segregated. And so, I believe it was the NAACP called a—the local NAACP called for a school boycott. And some churches volunteered to run freedom schools in their churches on that day of the boycott. And I wound up teaching at

a freedom school, teaching black history, rudimentary black history. And that sort of got me involved in activism, and I sort of stayed on the periphery of it until 1966 or [19]67.

And I think my second or third year, or third summer, at UWM, I got a job as a—a summer job as a community organizer, working out of the Milwaukee Boys Club's facility, which was kind of between my house and my high school. And so, during the summer, I would—the next couple of summers, I worked doing that same kind of thing out of a place called Northcott Neighborhood House.

JD: What was it called again?

MC: Northcott Neighborhood House, N-O-R-T-H-C-O-double T. It was run by a guy named Lucius Walker, who subsequently went to work for the Inter-Religious Foundation for Community Organization, IFCO, in New York, and we ran summer programs for youth. I shifted to studying more African history and all, and reading a lot. In 1966, I believe it was, Stokely came to speak at UWM, and that was when he was Stokely Carmichael, before he became Kwame Ture.

JD: Did you know him, or were there SNCC people active in Milwaukee? Just because you used the phrase “freedom schools”, and that was a phrase that SNCC also used down in Mississippi, or was that just you heard about freedom schools through the media?

MC: I think it was primarily through the media. I'm trying to remember. I think that—I think there may have been one activist who had been with SNCC, but I'm not so sure he was. But there was not very much SNCC involvement in Milwaukee. We got most of our information via TV. So, we probably saw other people who were [0:10:00]

using that term “freedom schools”. And also some of the people at Northcott Neighborhood House, I believe, had worked with Saul Alinsky in Chicago.

JD: Oh, okay.

MC: And there was that link, because this was a time when community organization was first coming about. It was kind of a new movement. And it was sort of very different from the sort of—a lot of the civil rights demonstrations that were going on. And so, we tried to organize communities, you know, and I did that, my first job working—my first summer job. You know, we went into a community and we tried to get people organized around programs that would benefit the community. And this particular neighborhood had a lot of rats running around, so I remember we went down to the city hall and complained about the rats and things like that. But you tried to empower the community. And that’s what sort of got me involved. I participated in a couple of the open housing marches in Milwaukee at the time, which were being led by the NAACP Youth Council and a white Roman Catholic priest, James Groppi, G-R-O-P-P-I.

JD: Right.

MC: And then I, eventually, after I—well, let me get to college then. So, on the college campus, we organized a black student group, which was called the Alliance of Black Students. And we then pushed hard for a Black Studies Program on the campus.

JD: Was this—I cut you off before, but this was before or after Carmichael came to campus?

MC: It was after—the three big events that preceded the Alliance of Black Students were Stokely Carmichael’s speech, Ron Karenga’s speech, and an appearance

by Charles V. Hamilton, who had written the book *Black Power* with Stokely. And at the time we organized ABS, there were a lot of demonstrations going on on different white campuses to get Black Studies programs. And we were very much inspired by the one at Northwestern University, which was led by Jim Turner. And, in fact, when we were putting together our efforts to launch the fight for a Black Studies program, I remember we went down to Northwestern and talked to Jim Turner. And so, what we decided we wanted to do was to organize the black campus community there, and the request was for a Black Student Union.

JD: You mean a physical building?

MC: No, and that's the problem we ran into—a union of black students, which would also operate—which would also have impact on curriculum and stuff like that. But we chose the phrase “a Black Student Union”, and everybody got confused. Everybody thought we were asking for a separate building, which we were not.

But we had press conferences and threatened to take over the buildings on campus. Finally, the faculty agreed to our request, partially, but we didn't get all we wanted. And so, we sort of wisely said, “Okay, forget it.” But they eventually did set up a Black Studies Program. I think they called it the Center for African American Culture.

JD: What year was this again?

MC: This was 1967—late [19]67 and [19]68, because my official graduation was in June of [19]68, but because of all this organizing I was doing on the campus, I did not finish my senior honors thesis [laughs] until the following year. So, I didn't actually get it [0:15:00] until 1969, but my official date of graduation was 1968.

JD: So, to move on just a little bit, Lincoln High, was that an all black high school?

MC: No.

JD: Or predominantly? It was not?

MC: No. Lincoln High School was located in primarily an Italian community on the east side of Milwaukee. But the—Milwaukee's black community at the time was really pretty concentrated and pretty small. And so, all of the—the vast majority of black students went to one of two high schools: North Division High School, where Howard Fuller went, and Lincoln High School. Lincoln was about a—I would guess maybe a two-and-a-half or three-mile walk from the housing project where I lived. And North Division was probably a little bit closer, but you could go to either one. And I chose to go to Lincoln because my parents had both gone to Lincoln, and I think most of the folks in Hillside Terrace went to Lincoln.

JD: Oh, so your parents had also gone to this high school when it was biracial?

MC: Yeah, but, you know, the interesting thing is, and I did not learn this until much, much later. One of the most revered teachers among the black students at Lincoln High School was a guy named Tom Cheeks, C-H-E-E-K-S, Thomas Cheeks. And I later learned that Mr. Cheeks was the first black teacher to be in Milwaukee public schools.

JD: Wow.

MC: And he was not there when my parents were there, because there were some teachers who were there who had been there when my parents were there. My mother was born in 1924. She graduated in 1942. I started Lincoln in, I think, [19]59 I started

Lincoln? Yeah. So, that meant fifteen years later, I had a number of her teachers. I had one of her English teachers and one of her history teachers.

JD: Yeah.

MC: You know, but the Lincoln High School population was probably majority black, a significant number of Italians, hardly any Asians, and a number of Mexican Americans, which was a little bit—and then Puerto Ricans, because there was a Puerto Rican enclave between the black community and where Lincoln High School was. And so, we had to go through there to get to Lincoln High School, and all those folks went to Lincoln, as well. And in Milwaukee, I think the larger Mexican American community now is on the south side, but we had a couple of Mexican Americans who went to Lincoln, including a guy on the football team.

And it was—there were very few racial tensions. And the school politics was really based on the two separate communities of blacks, who once had gone to different grade schools, you know. And so, I mean, I was fortunate enough to be Homecoming King, and it was because I came from the Hillside Terrace area, from the projects, and my queen came from the other area, [laughs] so we had a good political coalition there, you know.

JD: A unity ticket.

MC: [Laughs] Yeah, yeah, a unity ticket. And we had really good basketball teams. I mean, I knew of Howard Fuller's name because Howard, I believe, graduated from North Division in 1958. And in 1958, his North Division basketball team for the first time played for the state championship.

JD: Did he play?

MC: Howard was a very good basketball player.

JD: He's quite tall.

MC: Yeah, he's a good basketball player. He was a starter. It got confusing, because there were two Fullers on the team, Howard and Marvin, and I think both of them were starters, but they were not related [0:20:00], at least to my knowledge, they weren't. And Howard got a basketball scholarship, or maybe it was an academic scholarship, to Carroll College in—I think it's in Waukesha, Wisconsin, and then, he later went to Case Western Reserve.

And they played in 1958 in the final game. They didn't win. But the next year, in [19]59, our basketball team played in that game against North Division [laughs] and beat them. And at the time, there were twelve teams in Milwaukee city conference, twelve high schools. And the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association said, "We think it's terrible that two teams from the same conference would wind up playing each other for the state championship." And so, the next year, we looked around, and it would have been possible for several teams from the Milwaukee city conference to be among the eight that would be in the final, the Final Eight, in Madison, except all the schools that had two or more black starters, only one could go. The others would be eliminated. We'd have to play each other the way they set it up.

JD: Oh, I see what you're saying.

MC: And I have a—my cousin's husband, who was a Lincoln athlete and now coaches, said it's still kind of set up that same way. And we thought it was, you know, if

it had been the South, it would have violated the Voting Rights Act. [Laughs] But, anyway—

JD: No, that's interesting. I'm just—part of why I wanted to just hear about your educational background is—yeah, you know, this experience it sounds like you had of going to, I don't want to say integrated schools, but at least multiracial, and that was your educational trajectory before SOBU and before YOBUE. And I know different people in these movements came from different educational backgrounds. And so, I guess before jumping to that, I was curious a little bit about your work with the *Milwaukee Courier*. Is that the name of the paper?

MC: Um-hmm, the *Milwaukee Courier*.

JD: And, I don't know, you could just sketch a little bit about, tell us what that paper was about. I mean, I think it's especially interesting context based on where your career went after that. So, what was that paper like?

MC: Well, let me go a little bit before the *Milwaukee Courier*.

JD: Sure, yeah. I may have skipped things.

MC: Because—[laughs] I've told this story before, so I'll tell it again. I took no journalism classes in college. And in high school, I don't believe I ever worked on the yearbook staff and I don't recall that we had a newspaper at Lincoln High School. We had a yearbook. But so, because I was a music education—a music history major in the School of Music, I wound up writing a lot of program notes for concerts, and that was my main writing experience, you know. [Laughs] And so, at one point, there was this young

lady who worked at the *Milwaukee Star*, I believe it was, which was the rival newspaper to the *Courier*. The *Courier* was considered the better newspaper, but the—

JD: There were two black newspapers at the time?

MC: There were those two at the time. There were those two, the *Star* and the *Courier*. And I wanted to take this young lady out on a date on a Saturday night, and I asked her out. She said, “Well, you know, I’d love to go on a date with you, but they’ve given me these two tickets to this concert by the Ramsey Lewis Trio and asked me to write a review of it, and I don’t know how to write a review.” And so, sensing my opening, I said, “Well, you know, I could write a review for you,” [laughs] you know.

And so, we went to the concert. And I had written no reviews but I understood music. And also, I should also say that when I was in college, I played a lot of music, you know. That’s another story. But anyway, so I write this review. She gives it to her editor, a guy named Walter Jones, and he says, “This is really good!” And she says, “Well, [0:25:00] I have to be honest. I didn’t write that. Milton Coleman wrote that.”

And so, I later developed a friendship with Walter Jones. I wrote some freelance articles for him. And then, he started his own newspaper, which was called the *Milwaukee Sun*. And so, there were three newspapers for a while. The *Sun* folded. He went to the *Courier*.

After my undergraduate years at UWM, I started graduate studies in urban affairs, because at this point, I was no longer going to be an ethnomusicologist. And so, I started to work in urban affairs, and that lasted about—under six weeks, because I think six weeks was—if you dropped out before six weeks, you got all your tuition back. [Laughs]

And I dropped out. And my roommate at the time, a guy named—oh, excuse me—Tom Norman, who later changed his name to Hekima Ana—.

JD: Hakeem?

MC: Hekima. I think it was H-E-K-I-M-A, last name A-N-A. And he subsequently joined the Republic of New Afrika and was arrested in, I think, a shootout they had with police, and he spent some time in Parchman.

JD: In Mississippi, right?

MC: In Mississippi.

JD: With Milton Henry and—.

MC: Yeah, that seems to be right. So, anyway, I had at this point written a couple of articles that had been published in what was then *Negro Digest*.

JD: You had already?

MC: Yes, yeah.

JD: By the age of twenty-two or—?

MC: I think it was—it was around twenty-one. Well, let me figure it out. Yeah, it was [19]68, so I would have been twenty-one, going on twenty-two.

JD: That was just freelance stuff?

MC: That was freelance, yeah. One of them was a variation of the proposal that we had written for the Black Studies Program. And then, I wrote a couple of reviews of books, you know. I did a review of Rap Brown's book. I did a review of the little pamphlet that Stokely had written. And the guy who was the editor of *Negro Digest*, Hoyt Fuller—.

JD: Right.

MC: Took a liking to some of my writing. And so, I had done these things. And Tom, Hekima Ana, said, [phone rings]—uh-oh, let me get that. I want to see if it's a telemarketer. [Phone rings]

[Recording stops and then resumes]

MC: Said, "Join us for worship. We're going to do such-and-such-and-such a thing." [Beep of recorder] Okay, are we back on?

JD: Oh? Turn it off?

MC: No, okay. Alright, I just wanted to make sure you were on. [Beep of recorder]

[Second audio file begins here and overlaps first audio file until the first file ends abruptly at 0:49:51]

JD: We're good.

MC: Okay. And so, he says, you know, "You ought to go and—," because once I dropped out, I got a job driving a cab.

JD: Driving a cab?

MC: [Laughs] Yeah. I was—I had gotten a Danforth Foundation graduate fellowship, and I used to brag that I was the only former Danforth Foundation graduate fellow who got a job as a cab driver, so—because I could write during the day and I drove cab on the night shift, you know, I worked kind of overnight and slept in the morning. And so, Tom said, "You know, you ought to stop driving a cab and go work for the newspaper." [Laughs] And so, I went to Walter Jones, and Walter Jones gave me a

job at the *Courier*. The *Courier* was then *the* award-winning paper among black weeklies.

JD: Nationally, you mean?

MC: Yeah, yeah. I mean, it was pretty good. It was not—it didn't have the heft of the *Amsterdam News*, *Chicago Daily Defender*, *Atlanta World*, or any of those papers. And I remember at the time I went to the *Courier*, it had the largest circulation it had had to date, which was five thousand, two hundred. That was it. You know, that was the press run. And yet, it had a couple of good writers. It had a really good [0:30:00] number two editor, a woman named Carole Malone, a black woman. The managing editor was a white guy named Dave Novak. And it had this wonderful lady who lived to be a hundred-plus, named Mattiebelle Woods who wrote your on-the-town gossip kind of column. And I believe that it was her nephew who was initially a photographer there. And he took one of the most famous pictures of all, which was he's the one who took the picture of Otis Redding strapped in his seat after the airplane had crashed and they had recovered the body.

JD: Um-hmm.

MC: He took that photograph, that still photograph, and that launched him into a career in TV videography. He was subsequently replaced by a guy name Kenneth Lumpkin, Kenneth Warren Lumpkin, from Alabama, who had worked for the *Southern Courier*.

JD: The *Southern Courier*?

MC: The *Southern Courier*.

JD: What was that?

MC: That was a newspaper that was in the South during the Civil Rights Movement.

JD: Okay.

MC: You know, I had not heard of it. You know, Lumpkin was—I don't know whether he had been in the military or not. I think he had. But I learned so much from working at the *Courier*, because the *Courier* was—the *Courier* wanted to be a very relevant black community newspaper. And so, we did a whole lot of things that people—that the *Star* didn't do, you know. And I think it was because Walter Jones was a really good editor, and he was in charge of all of the news and editorials.

And we would do—every week Lumpkin and I would do a photo page, which would be the cover of the second section, and we would have five or six Lumpkin photos, and I would write some—I'd write a copy block for it. And we tried to really bring the community in. I mean, we did a—for Mothers Day, we did a spread on all different kinds of black women that we simply called "Big Mama", because a lot of black folks call their grandmothers or mothers or aunts or whatever "Big Mama", you know. I had a Big Mama in my family who was about that tall, [laughs] you know.

You know, Milwaukee is on the Great Lakes; it's on Lake Michigan. So, somebody said there's a ship from Ghana that had come in, so we go down there and do a photo spread [laughs] on what it's like to see these Africans, and we talked about—.

JD: So, they were sailors on a ship from Ghana?

MC: They were sailors, yeah. Because I remember we went through the day names, you know, Kwami and Kofi, and all those, Kojo, and I think we listed them in there. We did a spread on the Temptations one time when they were in town. We just tried to do all those kinds of things, plus the Black Panther Party in Milwaukee was really raising a lot of ruckus then. And I knew several of them; I had grown up with them. And police brutality was a big deal at the time. I got arrested in 19—it had to be [19]69, sometime in 1969, because what I used to do [laughs] is—I didn't have a car. But the paper was delivered on Fridays, and Friday night I would take the newspaper van and just ride around with a police radio, just looking for police brutality. [Laughs] And, of course, the police didn't like that.

JD: And which vehicle were you using?

MC: The *Courier's* circulation truck.

JD: Okay.

MC: They had one truck, and I would take it. I had to have it back [0:35:00] on Monday or whatever, and I would park it in a driveway of a place near where I lived.

JD: And you guys had a police radio?

MC: I had a police radio, yeah, and so at one point—it was like early in the morning. It was like around one o'clock or one-thirty, and the police were arresting a guy in the black community. And so, they had these—what were the precursors of SWAT teams, which were the 700 squads, which were three or four guys in an unmarked car, and they were the ones who were suspected of being the big brutalizers.

And so, they're arresting this guy, and I go up and take a picture. And they said, "You can't take any pictures." I show them my ID, you know, press pass, *Milwaukee Courier*. And they said, "You take one more picture and you're going to be under arrest." I was young and defiant. I took another picture. [Laughs] Flash goes off. I go to jail overnight. You know? And I was told that I was going to be charged with obstructing an officer, which was a felony.

And so, there was a good civil rights lawyer up there named Lloyd Barbee, who wound up representing me, B-A-R-B-E-E, Lloyd. And the charge was reduced to interfering with an arrest, which was a misdemeanor. And I went before the "hanging judge", Christ Seraphim, and he found me not guilty but ordered me to pay court costs, which Lloyd Barbee thought was ridiculous. [Laughs] He said, "What do you mean he pays court costs? He's innocent!" You know, but Seraphim said, "Well, if you want to appeal, I can find him guilty." [Laughs] And so, that was that. But that was my—that was the first and only time I'd been arrested for journalism. I had been arrested a year earlier for an open housing demonstration.

JD: It sounds like the *Courier* was politically relevant at this time. I mean, it's interesting to hear about this, because I know in this period, especially the late [19]60s, a lot of major black newspapers—a lot of people thought they weren't updating. Like in Atlanta, for example, the *Daily World* was a Republican paper, and it was very hesitant to talk about civil rights, and there was a new black paper that came out Atlanta. And, you know, the same thing happened in a lot of major cities. But it sounds like, from what you're saying, the *Courier* was staying relevant—.

MC: Oh, yeah.

JD: And was not afraid to talk about civil rights and not afraid to talk about this stuff.

MC: Oh, yeah, it was—the guy who owned it—.

JD: That's Walter Jones?

MC: No, no. Walter was the editor of it. It was owned by a person younger than Walter named Jerrel Jones, J-E-R-R-E-L-L [Note: Jerrel, with one L], Jerrel Jones, who was related to a Chicago family that owned a couple of radio stations.

JD: In Chicago?

MC: In Chicago. And I think they owned one in Milwaukee later on, too. I think they owned either WNOV or WVON, one of them. And he was a strange kind of guy. On the one hand, he clearly—he wanted to make money. But because he was younger, and because he had gone to North Division, and because he had a whole bunch of other things, he was a good publisher, in the sense that he wasn't afraid to take stands, you know, for the paper to take stands. And he allowed us to do things. And so, yeah, it was really trying to be relevant. It was trying to engage with this younger group of people who were into community organization, black pride, all these other kinds of things.

JD: And he was young himself, it sounds like.

MC: He was young himself. In fact, you know, he had gone to school with Howard.

JD: Fuller?

MC: Yeah, to North Division. And so, when Howard was going to open Malcolm X Liberation University, Jerrel sent me down to Durham to cover it, which was just absolutely unheard of, you know, to send a reporter from a paper that small down there for three or four days to cover that, because there was also—there was a SOBU conference going on that weekend, or there was some student conference.

JD: That's, [0:40:00] I think, 1969.

MC: That's 1969. Malcolm X opened October twenty-fifth, 1969.

JD: Okay.

MC: And, in fact, when Jim Turner, who had been at Northwestern, started teaching a class on Saturdays at UWM, I did a long interview with Jim Turner, and Jerrel had that interview reprinted, and we had a bunch of copies of it. In fact, he wound up also sending me to Atlanta for a meeting of the National Association of African American Educators in Atlanta to push copies of that as a reprint. I mean, and those were crazy things for someone from what was then a few years after the old Negro press to be doing those kinds of things.

JD: Pretty enterprising and ambitious, it sounds like.

MC: Yeah, yeah.

JD: So, this is interesting. How—Malcolm X Liberation University—I guess maybe this sounds like it's a good transition. You're in Milwaukee. Had you heard of this? Or how did even news of MXLU get up to you guys at the paper? Did you know Fuller already by now?

MC: I did not know of Howard's activism in North Carolina. I'm trying to figure out when I first—how would I have known about—? Okay. Alright, so what happened is I was a Danforth Foundation graduate fellow. And Danforth Foundation graduate fellows had a fall retreat at the Illinois Beach State Park Lodge in Zion, Illinois. And I met a woman named Alma Campbell, who had gone to Tougaloo College in Mississippi, and was going to Cornell. Alright, then the students at Cornell take over Willard Straight Hall, and the picture is on the cover of Ed Whitfield and Eric—I forget Eric's last name [Note: Eric Evans]—with the bandoliers.

JD: This is a Black Studies protest when they took over the administration building.

MC: Um-hmm, yeah.

JD: And it was nationally all over the news.

MC: Um-hmm. So, you know, at a weekly like the *Courier*, we want to cover that. And I remembered I had met this Alma Campbell, who was at Cornell, and I called her. And I think probably sometime, some subsequent conversation, she told me she was going to go down to Durham because Howard Fuller was doing this thing, you know, starting this university. And she must have been the one who told me about Malcolm X, but the Malcolm X people were also at the—they were at the African American Educators conference in Atlanta that Jerrel Jones had sent me to sell reprints at.

JD: What was it reprints of again?

MC: Of an interview with James Turner, talking about black studies programs, the value of them.

JD: That's right.

MC: And so, I think I probably found out more about Malcolm X then. That's also the meeting where I would argue is where I met my wife. She argues that, "No, it was later. It was Malcolm X's opening." And I just ask, "Because you didn't remember me then, okay?" [Laughs] And I think that was when I first encountered—that's when I first came to meet Howard again and realized this was the same guy that had been on the basketball team at North Division.

JD: At the MXLU opening?

MC: No, at the meeting of the National Association of African American Educators in Atlanta. That was in August of 1969, and MXLU opened October twenty-fifth, 1969.

JD: Okay.

MC: And I think also in—[0:45:00] wasn't—what was the year that there was a shootout at A&T?

JD: That was [19]69.

MC: [19]69, so that would have been the spring before Malcolm X opened.

JD: Right. And to clarify, for the first year, Malcolm X was in Durham.

MC: Right, right!

JD: Just for the purpose of the interview.

MC: Yeah, and because the students who came to Malcolm X—there were several clusters of people. And there was one cluster from Cornell, and that included Alma Campbell, my now-wife who was then Faye Edwards and is now Faye Edwards

Coleman, Ed Whitfield, Eric—I can't remember Eric's last name, and a few others. And then, there was a group that came from South Carolina that Cleve Sellers had brought in. There was the group from Duke that Chuck Hopkins and Bertie Howard had worked with.

JD: Yeah.

MC: And there was a group from here that a good friend of ours, Michelle Wilson, was with, and then a few others. I mean, my wife knows that better than I do, because I had hardly any relationship at all with Malcolm X.

JD: Um-hmm.

MC: Liberation University.

JD: Well, maybe you can—I don't know if you can remember much about this, but what was the opening like? What was it like to go down to—I mean, also, just to check, had you even had—had you even spent much time in the South before these two events?

MC: No. No, I—[sighs] I had gone south probably around 1964 or [19]65 with my mother. We went to Chattanooga, and that's the first time I had gone south. And I think we may have taken a train over to Atlanta. We took the train down there. And other than that, I cannot remember at all being in the South until I came down then.

So, there was a black student conference that preceded the opening of Malcolm X, if I remember correctly. And it might have been put together by a group called BSUL, Black Students United for Liberation. I don't know. I mean, the North Carolina people can tell you more about that.

JD: Was that conference in North Carolina or in D.C.?

MC: It was in North Carolina, (is my recollection). But the opening of Malcolm X was—*oh!* It was really good. Now, somebody has that on video.

JD: Oh, wow!

MC: Because what I remember most about it are several things. Number one, Howard gave this really good speech and read a letter from Stokely. A group called the Harambee Singers sang this wonderful song called “The Black Magician”. They were an a cappella group, and every one of them could sing their behinds off. In fact, one of the founders of the group, I believe one of the founders was Bernice Johnson Reagon, who later founded Sweet Honey in the Rock. And they were an a cappella group and, oh man, could they sing! Oh! If you’ve heard Sweet Honey in the Rock, that’s what this group sounded like. They were the forerunners of that.

And then, in the middle of this opening—you know, Malcolm X at the time was on Pettigrew Street in Durham, right across from the railroad tracks.

[First audio file ends abruptly at 0:49:51]

INTERVIEW CONTINUES

[Second audio file initially overlaps first audio file; transcription picks up here at 0:21:20 into second file. Time is marked every five minutes throughout second file beginning at 0:25:00]

Josh Davis: Right. [0:21:20]

Milton Coleman: And so, somebody—I think it was Howard or somebody was talking, and this train comes through, starts to come through, and the bell was ringing, “ding, ding, ding”, you know. And this guy who used to work in North Carolina—I think he may have worked for the Foundation for Community Development—named Kwame McDonald.

JD: Yeah. He’s deceased now, unfortunately.

MC: That must have happened in the last couple of years.

JD: And I’ll just say this as an aside because I don’t know if you remember WAFR radio?

MC: Yes.

JD: I’ve done interviews with a lot of those guys, and he worked at the radio station, and I had wanted to interview him. And I just learned from a guy named Obataiye Akinwale, who worked at WAFR radio that Kwame went back to Minneapolis.

MC: Yes, he did.

JD: And passed away in the last two years. But, yeah, that’s—so, sorry to interrupt.

MC: That’s okay.

JD: I just wanted to mention that.

MC: Well, the great moment came. This train comes to him. The bell was going, “ding, ding, ding”. Kwame runs up—it’s just a locomotive. You know, it’s not a train. It’s just a locomotive, a yard locomotive or whatever. Kwame climbs up on top of the

car, sits on the car, and grabs the bell and muffles it! And I had a picture of that in the *Courier*, you know. [Laughs]

JD: Wow.

MC: It was a heck of a moving moment, you know. It was a wonderful affair, you know, and we did a big spread on it in the *Milwaukee Courier*. Because I took—I took pictures, because I remember I went down there with cameras, and my cameras were not working. For some reason, they weren't working. And so, I go to Howard, and Howard arranges for some guy to loan me better cameras than I had at the *Courier*, [laughs] you know, and I took pictures and did that, because, you know, at a small black weekly like that, you do everything except sell ads and distribute the papers. So, I would take pictures, I did layout, I did darkroom work, you know, I wrote, I sneaked in editorials, you know. But it was a really grand affair, the opening of Malcolm X.

JD: Yeah. So, I guess I'm curious from there, where or how did you decide to move down to work with SOBU? Maybe I'm skipping some things, but it seems like we're getting close to that point in time.

MC: No, no, no, not very much. I mean, I worked with some independent schools in Milwaukee, kind of on the periphery, but I—most of the time I was—.

JD: Black independent schools?

MC: Yeah, yeah.

JS: That were coming out of the Movement?

MC: Yeah, yeah. But I was mostly at the *Courier*. I had always felt, I think, that I wanted to leave Milwaukee, because it just seemed like Milwaukee was off the beaten

track. And I guess I was getting more into a sense of community organization. But by that point, if my recollection is correct, the seeds of SOBU had already been sown. You know, there were like maybe half a dozen of us who had been involved [0:25:00] in student activities, campus activities and stuff like that. And I felt like that that was more my calling than just being in newspapers. And so—.

JD: But who did you know? Or who was—?

MC: I knew Cleve Sellers. I knew Howard. I knew a guy named Rick Powell, who is now a labor organizer up here. I knew the woman who would become my wife, Faye. I knew Alma Campbell.

JD: And all through these meetings—or through the retreat for the Danforth Foundation, through the educators meeting in Atlanta, and through the Durham grand opening—that's how you met all these people?

MC: Pretty much, yeah. But also, you know, there was some meeting here in Washington, because Malcolm X Liberation University—excuse me a second [clears throat]. Malcolm X Liberation University came out of a meeting held in Bricks, North Carolina.

JD: Bricks, North Carolina?

MC: Yeah, there's a retreat called Bricks, I think. And it—wow, if Faye was here, she could tell you all about it because she was at that meeting. I was not. But there were two threads of what was going on, at least that's my recollection. One was the Malcolm X Liberation University arm; the other was the SOBU arm, you know, or what would become SOBU.

And there was some meeting in North Carolina at Malcolm X Liberation University that took place before I moved down there that I remember very clearly. It may have been a SOBU meeting or whatever, but I remember it because I remember being there and getting a call from Carol Malone, the city editor of the *Courier*, so I was still working for the *Courier* at that time, technically, and being told that the teen columnist at the *Courier*, a young beautiful woman named Selena (Zack) had been in an automobile accident and was probably not going to make it. Because I remember getting that call from Carole when I was at Malcolm X on Pettigrew Street.

So, I had begun to know all these people. And it turned out that they got a grant, SOBU got a grant through—I think it was through the Episcopal Church General Convention Special Programs, GCSP, which was going to allow them to move into a house and run a number of operations. And so, I think Nelson Johnson said, “If you want to come and run our informational services, we’ll pay for you to move down.”

JD: So, you had met him, of course, too?

MC: I had met Nelson, yeah. And I agreed to do that, you know. And so, they flew Rick Powell to Milwaukee, and Rick and I rented a U-Haul truck and drove down to North Carolina, to Greensboro.

JD: Wow. This is 196—?

MC: This is 1970.

JD: Okay. And so, it’s the Student Organization for Black Unity?

MC: Yeah.

JD: Can you say just a little bit introduction? At that point, what was the group's mission?

MC: Community organization. It was considered the activist arm of whatever had led to Malcolm X Liberation University. We wanted to reach black students on white campuses. We wanted to sort of save and change black schools, because the black schools in many ways were like the black newspapers at that particular time.

JD: Now, you mean Historically Black Colleges?

MC: HBCs, HBCs.

JD: But also, just to mention, I noticed in a lot of the—there's a lot of stories in the paper about black high schools, too.

MC: Yeah, because—I can't remember—Dudley High School.

JD: Right. [0:30:00]

MC: What you did in those days, or what SOBU did, is you found fertile ground where you could find it. And there was a young man at Dudley named Claude Barnes.

JD: Um-hmm.

MC: And he had gotten in some kind of way hooked up with Nelson and those, and so they wanted to sort of develop him, you know. And so you, yeah, whatever we could do with high schools, yeah. Colleges, yeah, because they had money, you know. And we had a summer program. We had a number of summer programs. We had one that was called the Pan African Work Program, where we would try to get students to volunteer for the summer and do work in different communities.

I remember before—I think maybe before we launched *SOBU Newsletter*, we got involved behind the scenes with a strike or a work protest at the Skilcraft Center, which was a place where they made government ink pens, and they were put together by blind people, because you can easily do it like that. And I remember doing press releases about that and other kinds of things. So, it was all kinds of different community organizing. And as we were getting into the Pan African thing, there was a focus on Africa. What could we do to help Africa, you know? I'm sure we did things on the Caribbean.

And yet, the line started to be drawn between our group as Pan Africanists and the Karenga Movement, the Karenga/Baraka Movement, which was considered cultural nationalist and not that great, and the Panthers, who were considered socialists. And I later came to believe that a lot of that had to do with some differences that had been formed in SNCC and sort of remained from them. I don't know that for sure, you know, but I know that we didn't get along. We did not get along with the Panthers. We did not get along with Karenga and us. We essentially were—if there was any, quote-unquote, “faction” that we were aligned with in SNCC, it was the Stokely faction.

JS: Um-hmm.

MC: And I think that was primarily through Cleve.

JD: Right.

MC: But—.

JD: (Who had) been so prominent in SNCC?

MC: Yeah. And, of course, there was connection between Cleve and Stokely and my wife-to-be, because she had been—Faye grew up in Boston. Faye's parents were

active in the local NAACP. But she had been a member of the Friends of SNCC Boston Chapter, and so she had gotten to know Stokely and a bunch of other people. And so, Faye graduates from Simmons College, goes to work on the staff of Cornell. And Cleve, meanwhile, after the Orangeburg Massacre, Cleve becomes something-or-other in South Carolina. And Stokely calls Faye and says, "You've got to do something for Cleve. Is there something you can do for him?" [Laughs] And Faye gets Cleve a job at Cornell as a visiting professor of black ideology or something like that, [laughs], you know.

JD: Yeah. Wow.

MC: And then, Faye winds up coming down to North Carolina. [0:35:00] And so, that was, as best as I ascertained it, because I didn't know hardly anybody else from SNCC. And it did seem to revolve around Stokely, because some of the people who had connections to other people just weren't there. And then, Willie Ricks was also around us an awful lot.

JD: Who was also in SNCC.

MC: Yeah, he was in SNCC. Willie Ricks was the one who coined the phrase "Black Power".

JD: That's right, even though Carmichael often got credit for it.

MC: Yeah. They used to talk about how Dr. King used to always ask them whether they had any other warmup speakers besides Ricks, because Ricks was a good speaker, and his job was to get the audience all riled up. So, when Stokely came on, you know, they were ready to go, you know. And Ricks was really good. He was really, really

good. And they said that Dr. King used to always complain, “Don’t y’all have any other speakers besides Ricks?” [Laughs] You know?

JD: Because he was too radical?

MC: He was too radical, yeah.

JD: Yeah.

MC: Yeah, but he was good. And smart. I mean, he—Ricks was from Chattanooga, had worked, I think, at a golf course or something like that. But what I learned from Willie Ricks was you can be very effective if you can make things very, very simple. And Ricks’ example used to always say, he used to always say, “Jesus taught in parables,” and if you can do that you’re going to be much more effective.

And, you know, there are all sorts of things that I learned that I used in journalism that I got from a whole bunch of other people, you know, including—there was a guy, the guy who’s married to my cousin who coaches the basketball team, was up to that point the greatest athlete in the history of (Lincoln) High School, because he was All-State baseball, All-State basketball, All-State football, just a phenomenal athlete named Albert Jackson. Albert ran out of eligibility before he graduated. And so, my junior year I was on the basketball team, on the varsity. And Albert used to kind of like coach us during the week, along with the regular coaches, because he was smart. He was a point guard; he understood the game. But during the games, Albert would sit on the end of the bench, you know.

And I was certifiably—at least in my view, Albert claims this is not the case—but I was the worst player on the team. You know, I was the twelfth man on the twelve-man

squad. And so, I would sit on the end of the bench next to Albert, because I knew that during the first three quarters, I was not getting in the game, [laughs] you know, and maybe not even in the fourth, you know.

But I would sit there, and we would bring the ball down the court. And Albert would ask me, “Okay, what defense are they playing?” I’d look at the defense and I’d say, “Oh, it looks to me like they’re in a 1-2-2 zone.” He’d say, “No, no, look harder, look harder.” And he’d tell me what defense they were really in because he knew how to read that. And so, what I learned from Albert Jackson was I learned to understand basketball better than I could play it.

And so, and we won the state championship that year. I did not get in the game. In fact, when we became that one team to go to the Final Eight in Madison, they listed the scoring totals for everybody on the team. And I think the top guy had scored something like three hundred and something points, or whatever, you know. And at the very end, “and Milton Coleman—two”. [Laughs]

Anyway, that was a very valuable lesson for me, because later on, as a journalist, I learned how to edit people who could write better than I could ever write.

JD: Um-hmm, wow.

MC: You know, but you learn those things. Anyway, I digress.

JD: Let me ask—let me just check on the time. I just want to—.

MC: It’s eleven thirty. We’ve got it. We’ve got a little more time.

JD: Okay. Tell me about the founding of the newsletter. So, it sounds like you said Nelson Johnson brought you down as a communications director or something, so it

seems like [0:40:00] he obviously recognized you were both an activist and had a strong background in journalism.

MC: I was the chief propagandist. [Laughs]

JD: Yeah. So, tell me all about the newspaper, what you guys did, why you decided to start it. You mentioned, I think, that there was an influence of the *SNCC Newsletter*.

MC: Yeah, the SNCC people, and I think this was primarily Cleve—Cleve and some of Stokely's other folks had been active in SNCC on the peripheries of SNCC. There was a woman named Ethel Minor, who I think is still alive and lives up here in Washington. There was Charlie Cobb, who was very important. Charlie Cobb was—my view is that Charlie Cobb was the official SNCC journalist. I mean, you know, Cobb seems to be the one that everybody points to. He continues to write. In fact, when I went to work at WHUR, the Howard University radio station, I took the slot in which Charlie Cobb had been, because Charlie went to work for NPR.

JD: That's right.

MC: So, I took Charlie's spot at WHUR, which was right next to Jean Wiley, J-E-A-N Wiley. Jean Wiley had been in SNCC, and it was Jean Wiley's car in which Rap Brown was riding with Featherstone when the car blew up in Maryland.

JD: Yeah.

MC: So, there was a group of SNCC people.

JD: But how does—just to (underline), how does Charlie Cobb connect to SOBU?

MC: Through Stokely.

JD: So, he was active in SOBU?

MC: No, no, no, no.

JD: He was active with the Center for Black Education up here in D.C., Drum and Spear bookstore.

MC: Right, and the Center for Black Education, Malcolm X Liberation University, and a school in Newark all claim to be part of a loose confederation. All those people kind of—.

JD: Right, a network.

MC: Yeah. So, the SNCC people kind of recalled this *SNCC Newsletter*, and so that—so we began as the *SOBU Newsletter*.

JD: So, it sounds like the SNCC people really had influence within SOBU, because when I look at the masthead of the newspaper, your name is on there, Nelson Johnson, Chuck Hopkins, but none of those people's names are on there. But it sounds like you're saying they were quite influential within—.

MC: They were [clears throat]—they were some of the old hands around. I mean, it's not like they—I don't think any of them were in—Cleve was in Greensboro. Cobb was up here. Ethel Minor was up here. Stokely was in Africa. But I think they were kind of an unofficial brain trust and I think a certain role model. And you respected them an awful lot because of what they really had done and what they had gone through, you know.

JD: Yeah.

MC: So, I can't remember why we decided to start the newsletter. I just remember that it started out as *SOBU Newsletter*, and then we changed it to the *African World*, because we were getting the Pan African thing going. And I seem to recall that I even got a letter from Amy Garvey, Marcus Garvey's widow, saying how proud she was that we had launched this newspaper, which was modeled after the Garvey newspaper.

And the staff was pretty small. It was me and—Chuck was on the staff of Malcolm X, but Chuck is a writerly kind of guy, and so Chuck would write pieces and cover things. And we all, I think, took pictures. I developed the pictures, printed them, you know. And later on, [0:45:00] a guy who's now deceased named Harlee Little, H-A-R-L-double E, last name Little, who was from Washington, or I knew Harlee—I had met Harlee in Washington. He later on came down and did communications at Malcolm X and taught some people how to do photography and stuff like that. Charlie, at the time, was—Charlie was in Tanzania some of that time.

JD: Um-hmm, Charlie Cobb?

MC: Charlie Cobb. And he wrote some pieces for us. And there was one young lady who could draw cartoons, and so she did some of our cartoons. And then, I had working with me two wonderful young women who had gone to Bennett College: Connie Smith, who was from D.C., from Southeast Washington, and [clears throat] Gladys Robinson, who is now big in North Carolina education. I'm pretty certain she's on the board of Bennett College and I think she's in the state legislature or something, Gladys Ashe Robinson, A-S-H-E. She was Gladys Ashe then, and she subsequently became Robinson. And they helped to do the production work and the typing and stuff like that,

you know. And then, one of the students at Malcolm X when Malcolm X moved to Greensboro was a guy who I had gone to high school with named Hubert Canfield. And Cant would come over to help put out the paper and to do mimeographing and stuff like that. And we started out—when we first started having the paper printed on newsprint, it was printed in Mebane, North Carolina.

JD: Right. That guy's name is Smith. He was—I'm not making this up. Was it a white guy?

MC: Yeah.

JD: And he was known in the area for being like a printer who would print radical papers.

MC: Yeah. Yeah, because I—his name was Bill Smith, right?

JD: Right.

MC: Because I used to call him Mebane Bill, because I—.

JD: Yeah.

MC: It's a crazy thing, because I would go over there very, very late at night, or relatively early in the morning. And I didn't have much experience in the South, and so, you know, all southern white folks talked alike to me. And I had no idea what this guy's politics were. But I'd come over there with copies of the *African World*, and we'd have these headlines that were really derogatory toward white people, [laughs] and he'd say, "That's a mighty interesting newspaper you've got this week, Milton." [Laughs] You know?

And I said, “Oh, well, let me get these papers and get out of here,” because, again, I did not have a car. By that time, Faye and I were married. And so, Faye had this Volvo, and I would—I don’t know how many papers we printed, but it was not—they could all fit in Faye’s Volvo. And so, I would go over there and I would stay until they finished the press run. I’d put all the papers in the car, and then I’d go back to Greensboro. And then, the next morning, Canfield and I would, along with Gladys and Connie Smith, we would bundle them all up, and then I’d take them to the bus station, and we’d ship them out by bus.

JD: Greyhound?

MC: I think so. It was on—the bus station was on either Friendly—Friendly and Market are the two streets, right, that go like that?

JD: Yeah.

MC: It was on the one that goes from A&T toward downtown. It’s the one that comes from downtown toward A&T.

JD: Okay.

MC: And that’s how we did that. It was just—it was really fun. It was just like the *Milwaukee Courier*, because Canfield and I would be in the SOBU headquarters on McConnell Drive, McConnell Road? McConnell Drive? Whatever, right there at McConnell and Benbow, right on the corner. And we’d been in there until like two-thirty, three o’clock in the morning, you know, trying to get everything squared away. But it was good, [0:50:00] and we felt we were making headway.

JD: What do you think the circulation was at its height when you were there?

MC: Oh, God, it couldn't have been—[sighs] less than a thousand.

JD: Less than a thousand?

MC: I think so, yeah. I can't—I just have no way of recollecting.

JD: Yeah. So, what do you—you said you felt like you were making headway.

Headway with what?

MC: With getting out the message. And, I mean, one thing that had been constant with me ever since I first went into newspapering was a belief that a lot of the news that black people needed to know to better make the decisions that affected our lives wasn't being told.

JD: Right.

MC: It just wasn't out there. And it wasn't out there because people wouldn't tell them. And so, one of the things we tried to do was create a different reality for people, one that we thought was more accurate. And so, to the degree people read the newspaper—excuse me, to the degree that people read the *African World*, we felt we were making public relations gains, public service, public awareness. You know, you could read more about Africa, we felt, in the *African World* than you could in the *Greensboro Record* and *Daily News* combined.

JD: Right. And even throw—I would assume, or I would think, probably, even if you threw in some of the Greensboro black newspapers.

MC: Oh, absolutely, because the—.

JD: The *Peacemaker*, for example.

MC: Yeah, the *Peacemaker*. Well, yeah, we were kind of odds with John Marshall Stevenson, if I remember correctly.

JD: That is the editor, was the owner of the *Peacemaker*, who I think changed his name to Kilimanjaro.

MC: Yes, he did, yeah.

JD: Why were you at odds?

MC: I don't know. It probably has something to do with Greensboro politics, because essentially we followed Greensboro politics, I mean, Greensboro black community politics.

JD: Yeah.

MC: And Nelson was our guide on that. And Nelson was a sort of a radical activist because he had been affiliated with what happened at A&T. And then, he and Brandon and a woman named Dorothy something, they called her Dot, had founded the GAPP, the Greensboro Association of Poor People. And they were working with them, with Nelson and us. And then, another thing that we did, that I did, was we did a layout of the newsletter of the Greensboro Citizens Association, or something like that, because Nelson—Nelson has always been, in my opinion, very much a grassroots kind of guy. And, you know, Nelson—I don't think Nelson ever got into the African thing that deep. He left that to Howard, you know.

JD: What was Howard's role in all of—the newspaper, for example?

MC: Howard had very little role in the newspaper per se. Howard was, however, considered the guru.

JD: Kind of the chief theoretician of SOBU, YOBU?

MC: He was the leader, so to speak. He was really the leader. Now, if there were—I imagine there were, if I thought about it and if my memory weren't going, [laughs] I could recall times when Howard and Cleve and Nelson would disagree. Howard had a different feeling about Stokely than Cleve did, you know.

JD: They were friends, weren't they?

MC: Yeah, but [0:55:00] I remember, for instance, there were people who were considered Stokely's people that Howard didn't seem to think much of, you know. So, in no kind of way was Howard a clone of Stokely or a puppet for Stokely. No, he wasn't. But he was considered—I mean, you have to remember Howard's title when he was at Malcolm X, and it was probably one of the best ways to describe his presence in that movement: He was the "Head N-word in Charge", you know. That was his official title. Did you not know that?

JD: He was the head—?

MC: He was the "Head Nigger in Charge".

JD: Ah, people actually called him that? I mean, I'm familiar with the phrase. I didn't know if people—.

MC: Called him the HN—.

JD: The HNIC.

MC: The HNIC, yeah, uh-huh. In fact, I think, if you look at my *Courier*, if you ever find my *Courier* stories about the opening of Malcolm X, I think I refer to him by

that. Because Jerrel Jones said, “Who (let you use that)?!” I said, “The guy’s titled that! What do you mean?!”

JD: So, he didn’t mind that?

MC: I don’t think so, but I cannot recall it.

JD: I mean, it’s a show of power.

MC: Oh, you mean Howard didn’t mind it?

JD: Yeah.

MC: No, no, no. Because the n-word was different at that time. You have to—well, you’re not old enough to remember. But Rap Brown’s book, the book that I reviewed on Rap Brown—*Die Nigger Die!*

JD: Right, right.

MC: You know, and that was a time when that word was going through a metamorphosis. Because it’s like when I was in high school—it was only five years before that, five or six years before that—at Lincoln High School, among black teenagers, I mean, if you had a girlfriend and she really liked you, she would tell her friends, “That’s my nigger even if he don’t get bigger,” you know, [laughs] and it was just—it was a very different thing. He didn’t ever mind that.

JD: Yeah, okay.

MC: Also because you’ve got to remember that this was a revo—not revo—this was an anti-establishment group.

JD: Right.

MC: And, I mean, a lot of people were still calling themselves Negroes at the time, and (we were trying to get into) black, much less African and all that, and Pan African. So, no, Howard didn't mind that at all. I think later on, (he did). And Howard was a good rambunctious kind of guy, you know.

JD: Yeah.

MC: Very smart. But also (rambunctious). Anyway, so he really was like the personification of everything we were trying to do.

JD: And he was officially the head of MXLU, but it seems like MXLU and SOBU—technically they were different groups, but they were very, very close, and they had shared a lot of staff. Is that right?

MC: Yeah, and especially after—especially as Malcolm X decided to leave Pettigrew Street and come over to Greensboro. Because, now, remember—this is just my after-the-fact thing—Howard Fuller was quite a rabble rouser in North Carolina.

JD: He was the man in Durham.

MC: Yeah.

JD: I mean, he really, arguably, was *the* most important activist in the city at least in the second half of the 1960s.

MC: Yeah. *And*, so Malcolm X Liberation University is going to move to *Greensboro*? And what are all these nice, law-abiding, churchgoing, middle-aged, middle class black folks going to do about that? Well, it was Nelson Johnson's job—he did it very well—along with Lewis Brandon, Nelson Johnson got some of the most influential

ministers in Greensboro to welcome Malcolm X [laughs] moving to Greensboro, you know.

JD: Yeah.

MC: And that's why I say Nelson was the community activist kind of guy. Howard had been a very good community activist when he was at FCD, Foundation for Community Development. But he took a lot of time with Malcolm X. He was on the road, raising, trying to raise money for it. He went to Mozambique and was gone for a month or something. We didn't hear from him, [1:00:00] and then, he comes back. And so, the groups were—there were no formal relationships, but we were all kind of on the same page, I thought, for a while.

JD: Yeah. One thing about *African World* that's so impressive to me, or interesting, is when you look through it, one, there's all this coverage of Africa—anti-colonial struggles, what's happening in Ghana, what's happening in Mozambique, what's happening in Tanzania, a bunch of different countries, South Africa—but then, there's also all this coverage of North Carolina, and it's not just Greensboro either. It's Wilmington, it's Durham, it's little towns—Ayden, North Carolina. Who was bringing in those stories? Who were the reporters bringing in these stories from all over the state and from the region, because that's just was such an unusual combination of coverage?

MC: Well, one of them was a guy named Jim Grant. And Jim was older than I was, so he's probably in his seventies now, because I'm sixty-seven, or I'll be sixty-seven. Some of it we may have gotten from students. I did not have much of a reporting staff. And so, a lot of what I did—somebody would give us some information or send us

a story, and I'd rewrite it. We had no wire services. I'd have to go back and look at some of the things and see where I got a lot of that stuff from. I mean, one of the things I did for Africa news was—.

JD: *African World* or the All-African News Service?

MC: No, for news about Africa.

JD: Ah.

MC: I would listen to the BBC, and they had an Africa report, and we'd just rip stuff off from the BBC.

JD: So, BBC was available on the radio in North Carolina at this time?

MC: You could get it on a shortwave radio.

JD: Shortwave, yeah.

MC: And I don't know, I'd have to go back and look at where I got the other stuff from. I probably rewrote some of it from the *New York Times*, because I could get the *New York Times* in downtown Greensboro.

JD: Yeah.

MC: In fact, my wife always jokes that one time I was supposed to pay the rent. I went downtown to pay the rent and dropped the envelope at the newsstand. And fortunately it had our address on it, and they sent it to our house. [Laughs] And so, even to this day, she kids me about it: "Will you mail this letter, but don't mail it at the newsstand, okay?" [Laughs]

JD: Right.

MC: I'll have to go back and look to see where the North Carolina stuff came in.

JD: Yeah. This is interesting, because there's a lot of coverage and there's photographs, too, and there's, I mean, it's stuff from all over the region. And they're covering stories that I think, yeah, some of the, I guess, traditional black press wasn't covering, or they are at least covering them, you guys covered them in very different ways and just much more radical.

MC: Well, Jim Grant was really very integral to that, and I'm sure—I'm almost certain he has bylines in the paper.

JD: Okay.

MC: And if he doesn't, it would have been because he was working for somebody else and moonlighting for us. But I seem to recall that Jim Grant was an experienced journalist who moved around the state a lot, and he may have been the source of a lot of that stuff.

JD: Yeah., I mean, if it's—.

MC: I can't remember where else—I'd have to look at it and see, you know.

JD: Yeah.

MC: And a lot of what we did was not very—it was not as transparent certainly as journalism at the *Washington Post*. [Laughs]

JD: You mean—in what regard?

MC: I mean, in regard to data, a lot of stuff I put in there we got from other [1:05:00] publications without giving them credit.

JD: Ah, like you said, okay, reading the *New York Times*.

MC: Yeah, um-hmm.

JD: Can you tell me some about the split you had with—? I came across a story in the newspaper that announced your departure from the paper, and—.

MC: As best as I can recall it, I do not think—I don't recall it being an acrimonious split. Others may recall it differently. I just felt that, at the time that—just before I left, I felt that the ideology was becoming too strong, and they were moving much more toward a Marxist ideology. And also, at the time, I realized that I was more into journalism than I was into community activism. You know, I used to—I remember telling somebody at one point, if I have a choice between reading a book on Marxism and reading *Popular Photography* so I can take better pictures, I want to read *Popular Photography*, you know.

And also around that time my wife, Faye, and I had been married then, Sekou had been born, and I felt that I was becoming more—I was becoming less ideological, not just in terms of whether we were Pan African or whether we were Marxist-Leninist or whatever, but I was becoming more of the mind that black folks needed to know about what all kinds of black folks are doing, even the ones with whom SOBU disagrees. I was moving more in that direction.

I'm not so sure where Faye was, but I do know that right around that time, I think she had—Faye never was on the MXLU staff once they got to Greensboro because—or maybe only for a short period of time or whatever, because I remember she was doing consulting work for somebody because she used to have to go to Johnston County, North Carolina. And she said that there was a—because Faye had not spent that much time in the South, either, and I think the time she had spent had been in Little Rock, because her

folks are from Arkansas—but Faye said, you know, she’d go to Johnston County, and you’d get to the county line, and there was the sign: “Ku Klux Klan Welcomes You—”.

JD: It’s true, yeah.

MC: “To Johnston County”. Yeah?

JD: Yeah. That’s a very well-known sign, and that county was notoriously racist.

MC: Yeah. And she was also getting her master’s degree in early childhood, actually from the University of Massachusetts, but she spent a lot of time in North Carolina at the time. And so, you know, things were changing in my life. And, of course, the other—oh, yeah, the other thing may have been this, that it may have been a financial thing, because at some point while I was at SOBU—I believe it was while I was at SOBU—[1:10:00] I received a Southern Education Foundation fellowship, and that paid the rent, so to speak. And I think it was during the time SOBU—and what may have been the case was that that fellowship was ending, and so that source of money was not going to be there. I just don’t know. I cannot recall all of it at the time. But the basic reason I left was because I felt sort of that the ideology was moving in a direction that I didn’t want to go.

JD: Yeah. And so, your next step was All-African News Service?

MC: Um-hmm.

JD: Tell me about that, because I don’t know—just for the record, this is different than the African News Service that was based in Durham?

MC: Yeah, yeah.

JD: That’s different.

MC: Africa News Service—.

JD: Which is now based in D.C.

MC: Yeah, it came along a little bit later, but I knew the people who started that, Reed Kramer and Tami Hultman.

JD: Right.

MC: I think were the ones who started it. And I think they—weren't they at Duke?

JD: That's right, because they—.

MC: Because Chuck knew them.

JD: You know, Charlie Cobb worked for them.

MC: Yeah.

JD: Bertie Howard worked for them later.

MC: Yeah.

JD: Okay, so I just wanted to clarify it's different. Tell me about All-African News Service, because this is news to me. [Laughs] I never heard of it, actually.

MC: Really? Okay, well—.

JD: What (was the idea behind it), and what did you guys do?

MC: There were several of us who had worked for the *African World* who also were—who were of a like mind on this turn toward a harder Marxist-Leninist line. As me and Chuck—.

JD: Hopkins?

MC: Yeah. And a guy named George Broome, with an E on the end.

JD: How do you spell the last name?

MC: Broome, with an E, B-R-double O-M-E, who he was a printer at the *Carolinian*. Because I don't know whether I told you we printed with Mebane Bill for a while.

JD: Um-hmm.

MC: Then I said, "I've got to get out of here," [laughs] you know, "because I don't know what this man has got in mind."

JD: Yeah.

MC: And so, that's when I started taking the paper to Raleigh to be printed at the *Carolinian*.

JD: Right

MC: Jervay.

JD: Jervay, yeah, Paul Jervay.

MC: The older Jervay, P.R. Jervay.

JD: Right. Okay.

MC: His son—and it was me and Chuck and Broome, and I think we were the core of it. But I had developed—at some point, I had developed a couple of stringer possibilities, and it was enough to put out a weekly report that, because we had Francis Ward, who worked for—he was in the Chicago bureau of the *Los Angeles Times*, so he moonlighted for us. We had a young guy out of Howard University who had been the editor of the *Hilltop*, named Robert Taylor, who was in New York at Columbia graduate school, and he wrote for us. We had a woman named (Aisha/Ayesha) Turner in Atlanta. I

forget how I met (Aisha/Ayesha) Turner. We may have had somebody in L.A. Charlie did some things.

But it was designed to be a news service for black weeklies mostly and student newspapers. You paid us hardly anything; I think it was like fifty dollars a week, thirty-five dollars a week, something like that, and a lot of them didn't pay. It was competing with the National Black News Service, NBNS, which is based here in Washington, and was more establishment-oriented than we were. So, we were kind of taking the Jerrell Jones-*Milwaukee Courier* approach toward them that Jerrell took toward the established black press, you know. And so, we had a little—we always tried to have something in the packet from [1:15:00] Africa and we would have all kinds—I think we did good things about the Panthers, about (push) and everything. We just tried to get all this information out there.

JD: So, it wasn't focused exclusively on Africa but on all black people's news?

MC: Yeah. And "All-African" was a phrase—it was a Stokely phrase, a different way of saying Pan African.

JD: Ah, okay.

MC: Because it was All-hyphen-African.

JD: Not—it's "All", then the word "Africa".

MC: "Can"; "All-African".

JD: "All-African News Service".

MC: Yeah, uh-huh. I think it was “All-dash-African News Service”. But I can find out. I can check that. I may have a card upstairs. Anyway, I think we got up to twenty subscribers.

JD: Newspapers?

MC: Newspapers, yeah. And that wasn’t enough, so—well, first of all, we started. What it was was, at the beginning, it was me in a room downtown in Greensboro with a shortwave radio and a few other things. That was it—and these stringers, and paying phone bills. And so, at one point, I just realized that [sighs] if we were going to ever make it, I needed to get out of—I needed to come to Washington.

JD: Yeah.

MC: And so, we moved. We got a grant from either IFCO or the General Convention Special Program, a very small grant we got, and we moved to Washington. And I opened up an office at 1826 Eleventh Street Northwest, which was on the same block as the *Washington Afro-American* newspaper, much bigger and more established, and we lasted—.

JD: What year is this?

MC: [19]72.

JD: And you left SOBU in what year?

MC: I think [19]71.

JD: Okay.

MC: That sounds about right.

JD: Somewhere around there.

MC: No, I left SOBU in [19]72, maybe early [19]72, and the reason I know that for sure is because I used to take my son up to the SOBU office, and there was a little platform in the room where I was, and he was in a—those little chairs, those babysitter, (lying back), [laughs] and I would sit him up there on this thing. And I remember somebody was coming to town on an official visit, and Chuck thought this person was really—should be considered PNG. And Chuck said, “Yeah, she—,” because my son’s name is Sekou.

JD: Considered what—? P—?

MC: Chuck considered—PNG, persona non grata, you know, not that important, somebody who needs to be dissed. And Chuck said, “Yeah, instead of having somebody important meet them at the airport, we ought to have somebody lower echelon, like Sekou!” [Laughs] You know?

JD: [Laughs]

MC: And Faye and I always joked that, “Wow, you couldn’t be any lower echelon than Sekou at that point.”

JD: Your son’s name is Sekou?

MC: Sekou.

JD: S-E-K-O-U, like Ture.

MC: Yeah, like Ture, named after Sekou Ture and Patrice Lumumba, Sekou Lumumba. And Sekou was born December ninth, 1971, so this had to be in 1972. In early [19]72, I was still at SOBU, because I was there. So, I think I left—I think I came up here in late [19]72.

So, anyway, we moved up here, and it didn't work out. I went to a convention at the National Newspaper Publishers Association, which is the black publishers, and tried to get people to buy into it, and a lot of them just wouldn't. And so, we just ran out of money. And I moved from the office on Eleventh Street, because we couldn't pay the rent, and I had hired a couple of other people when I had that grant.

And I moved to [1:20:00] an office building on McPherson Square. I was back to a one-room office again and just a few doors or a few floors away from a guy named Lonnie Kashif, who at the time had worked for *Muhammad Speaks*, the Nation of Islam paper.

JD: K-A-S-H-I-F.

MC: K-A-S-H-I-F, Lonnie Kashif. He's now become Ghayth Nur Kashif, but he left the Nation of Islam.

JD: And he had worked at *Muhammad Speaks*?

MC: He worked at *Muhammad Speaks*, and for some reason, I had gotten to know him. And then, we later on we became pretty decent friends and actually worked a lot to try to get—he became an orthodox Muslim, and we worked a lot to try to get people on the *Post* local staff to understand Islam a lot better.

JD: Right. And, I mean, in a place like D.C., NOI and other Muslim groups had a really big presence, right, so I would assume that was—.

MC: But by the time I met Lonnie, he had left the Nation. Yeah, he had, because I met Lonnie when I was there, which was before I moved to—before I went to work at WHUR. And then, I worked at HUR until—I left here in 1974 and then—.

JD: Hah, that's kind of—sorry.

MC: And then I went to Minneapolis, and Minneapolis was where I first met Farrakhan.

JD: Ah.

MC: I had known of him before, because the Milwaukee mosque was very important, because it's only ninety miles from Chicago, and one of the ministers at the mosque is someone I had gone to grade school with. And so, yeah, I left here in [19]74, went to Minneapolis for two years and came back.

JD: It's interesting, WHUR, I forgot that you had worked there, and that's kind of HUR's heyday. I mean, HUR is such an interesting station for being not—it was commercial but obviously connected to this great university and just had an influence on a lot of radio stations in North Carolina through its programming, right, because at this period it was pretty open, much more open to talking about politics than it is now, and even Pan Africanism, I think.

MC: Oh, yeah, yeah.

JD: Judy Richardson of the Drum and Spear bookstore told me—.

MC: Yeah.

JD: She had a show on there, probably maybe when you were working there, () I think.

MC: No, no, Judy was not there when I was there. [Laughs] The guy who I used at All-African News Service, Robert Taylor, who was the former editor of the *Hilltop* at Howard, came back to Howard and was the news director at WHUR when it began. I got

hired at HUR in part because of Robert Taylor. And then, Robert Taylor left and we needed a new news director, and we hired this guy who had worked at the Black Center for Education, Kojo Nnamdi.

JD: What was the name?

MC: Kojo Nnamdi.

JD: Oh, the guy on the radio now, right, on WAMU!

MC: Yeah, um-hmm, Kojo, yeah, who at the time was—well, he was Kojo at the time, but he was originally Rex Montague Paul, Monty Paul.

JD: How do you spell his last name again?

MC: Two Ns, N-N-A-M-D-I. First name, K-O-J-O, which is a West African day name. I forget which day it is.

JD: Uh-huh, that's interesting. So, to summarize somewhat briefly, you've had a [laughs] very accomplished career. When did you start at the *Post*?

MC: May twelfth, 1976.

JD: [Laughs] Okay. I guess this is a really big question, but one of the things that was most interesting when I first saw your name in *SOBU Newsletter* and then started looking around online [1:25:00] and seeing, "Wow, this guy had a thirty-year career with the *Post* after this." What a transition! I mean, what was it like going from having worked at, you know, a traditional black newspaper, then what I would say like a new wave kind of radical black newspaper, to I guess we could call it new wave black radio, WHUR, and then the *Post*? What was that transition like?

MC: Well, easier than may have been thought, because of a number of things. I mean, you know, when I moved to the news service here, I had begun to become more conscious of Washington, what Washington is about, because the Watergate was around. And I—and when I went to HUR, part of my beat was to cover Capitol Hill, because Charlie had covered it, Charlie Cobb had covered Capitol Hill. And so, and that was during the time of Watergate and Watergate Committee meetings and all that. And so, I began to sort of rub shoulders with some of the guys I saw on TV on the evening news, you know, because HUR was credentialed on the Hill, and I could go—I could (get day passes) to the White House, you know. And then, a big turning point came in my life when Howard and a bunch of other people organized the first African Liberation Day here in Washington.

JD: Right, in [19]72.

MC: [19]72, okay. In [19]72, I'm up here and I think I was still running my news service. I had not yet gone to HUR. And I go down to this press conference they had at Metropolitan AME Church on M Street, right around the corner from the *Post*, and I meet this reporter for the *Washington Post* named Alice Carol Bonner, and she had also gone to Howard. And Alice had gone to something called the Michelle Clark Summer Program for Minority Journalists at Columbia University.

And eventually—Alice told me about this, and I wound up going into that program in 1974, and that was to make the transition into daily newspaper journalism. HUR had been a transition into daily journalism, as opposed to weekly journalism, and, in fact, almost hourly journalism, because sometimes you had to file pretty quickly. And

even if I didn't have to file quickly, you know, you see these people working for TV stations and radio stations who could just sit through a hearing, pick up the telephone, and dictate a ninety-second story, without a single "ah", [laughs] you know. And so, I'm starting to say, "Wow, this cat's pretty good," you know. And the importance of the summer program—.

JD: Who is Michelle Clark, by the way?

MC: Michelle Clark was a CBS news correspondent, a young lady who had gone through what was the Summer Program for Minority Journalists at Columbia University's graduate school of journalism. She was killed in a plane crash in Chicago, the same plane where George somebody, [1:30:00] who was a congressman at the time from Chicago, was killed. And so, they renamed the program after her: Michelle Clark Summer Program for Minority Journalists. The year I was in it, it was run by the legendary Bob Maynard, who had been an ombudsman for the *Washington Post*, a national correspondent, editorial writer.

JD: He's African American?

MC: He was African American. And the other person running it that year was John Dotson, John L. Dotson, Jr., who just passed a month or so ago, who was then chief of correspondents at *Newsweek*.

JD: How do you spell the last name?

MC: D-O-T-S-O-N, John L. Dotson, Jr. And also in that group was Earl Caldwell from the *New York Times*.

JD: Right.

MC: Nancy Hicks Maynard, then Nancy Hicks before she married Bob Maynard. Frank Sotomayor of the *Los Angeles Times*. And Walt Stovall, who had been married to Charlayne Hunter-Gault when she integrated the University of Georgia. Walt was a white guy, good ole boy from Georgia. And that program was the real transition into high quality daily journalism. It was a program designed for people who had no official journalism pedigrees. They promised you a job at the end of the program. And I got in the program in [19]74, and they sent me to the *Minneapolis Star*, and I stayed there for twenty months and came back here. And my stomach's beginning to growl, so—.

JD: Yeah.

MC: Let me take a break for a minute.

JD: We can wrap it up if you want.

MC: Okay.

JD: I know you've got to get out of here. This has been a great interview.

MC: Okay. Well, I've got to stay around for—(Gene)'s coming to pick up some tickets for the tournament.

JD: I didn't want to cut you off, though.

MC: No, that's—I need to stop talking because I have acid reflux in the morning.

JD: Okay.

MC: And so, my stomach is growling and everything, and I haven't eaten anything yet, so.

JD: Let me just ask: Is there any important question I left out or should have asked?

MC: I don't think so, no, because your focus is on the—it's on those early years, and the stuff afterwards doesn't matter that much. No, I don't think so.

JD: I think, yeah, I mean, you had such an accomplished career after that that it seems like that's much more better documented, and, yeah, those early years about *African World* are not very well documented.

MC: Now, the Moorland-Spingarn Collection at Howard also has a full set of the *African World* (package).

JD: Yeah. And so, you went on to work for *Washington Post* for then—[19]86, [19]96, [20]06—over thirty-five years?

MC: Thirty-six and a half.

JD: And you rose to—well, first you were a city editor?

MC: No, I came in as a Montgomery County reporter and I did Montgomery County for, I think, four months or so. And then, I was transferred to the District Building, City Hall here, to cover the mayor and the council. And I wound up covering the very first election of Marion Barry.

JD: [19]78?

MC: The election of [19]78, yeah, September twelfth, 1978. He took office in the following year. I remained a reporter on the city staff for four years. Then I became briefly an assistant city editor. Then I was city editor from 1983 to 1986, yeah. And then, 19—no, that's wrong, something's wrong. 1976. City editor from [19]80 to [19]83. Okay, [19]84 to [19]86, [1:35:00] I was on the national staff as a reporter. Assistant managing editor-dash-metropolitan news from 1986 to 1996. Deputy managing editor for thirteen

years. And then, senior editor for, I guess, maybe four years. And I'm now contributing editor.

JD: Wow. That could be a whole other interview. We didn't talk about Jesse Jackson. We didn't talk about—.

MC: We didn't talk about Jesse, we didn't talk about Janet Cook.

JD: Marion Barry, fascinating person. So, you must have worked with the guys who wrote the *Dream City* book. I'm forgetting their names.

MC: Tom Sherwood and the guy from the *Washingtonian*, Jaffe, Harry Jaffe.

JD: Yeah.

MC: Yeah, Sherwood—[sighs] Sherwood will tell you that I sort of trained him as a city hall reporter.

JD: Yeah, interesting.

MC: Because when I became assistant city editor, I was replaced by two people, a guy named Keith Richburg, who we hired right out of college, who went on to become a foreign correspondent for the *Post*, and a nice guy who knew Cleve Sellers in Orangeburg because his folks taught at Orangeburg, at South Carolina State, named Eugene Robinson, who is now the Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist for the *Washington Post*.

JD: Right, yeah, of course! I was just scanning my memory to try to pull out his name. Yeah, of course.

MC: The same year that I, the same summer that I came to the *Post*, there was a young guy who went on to cover city hall named Juan Williams. And one of the real

break-in beats on the *Post* was the weekend, the job on the weekends covering night police, which was the shift that ended at two-thirty, when the last () were closed. And Sherwood broke in covering that shift. So, at one point, I said, you know, “I want to put Sherwood on City Hall.” That was the beginning of his (career).

JD: Interesting, wow. Yeah, that’s a great book. Gosh, you’ve really soldiered through and done a great interview. So, I can wrap it up now.

MC: Okay.

[Second audio file ends at 1:37:59]

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Sally C. Council