

This is an interview with George Hamilton, Human Affairs Commission on February 12, 1974. The interview was conducted by Jack Bass and transcribed by Susan Hathaway.

JACK BASS: There is a picture on the wall in your office of you picketing Main Street in Columbia and that was when?

GEORGE HAMILTON: 1961.

J.B.: And you were at Allen University as an undergraduate?

GH: That's correct.

J.B.: And now it is 1974 and you are sitting here as . . . what is your title . . . Commissioner?

G.H.: Commissioner.

J.B.: Commissioner of the South Carolina Human Affairs Commission, and you are in a position of enforcing a state anti-discrimination law as it applies to state, government and subdivisions of state government. Question 1, would you have ever guessed 13 years ago that you would be here in this job, and now that you are here, what do you find?

G.H.: Thirteen years, no, I had no idea that I would be in this position. Of course, in 1961 we were all involved in the Civil Rights struggle . . . most of us . . . to obtain these kinds of jobs and these kinds of positions. I think that basically most of just wanted to become part of the system, so that we could possibly help change our system, make it more sensitive and responsive to the needs of the minority people. But I have been here, in this position, Jack, for a couple of years now, and I think we are making progress . . . it's not

as rapidly . . . I'm sure that most black people would like it to be, but we are making progress. I think that the changes that we are making, even though very slow, probably will be more lasting than if we made changes over night. I think that these changes are coming about so slowly that once these changes are made that maybe it has a lasting effect upon not only people . . . I find this job quite frustrating in a sense that I am beginning to realize that people are really naive about the real problems. They don't really understand that basically people are good natured, but they still don't understand the problems. Now I have talked with I don't know just how many numbers of white people that really are sympathetic to the problem. But they can't really deal with the problem, because they don't understand the problem; and when you begin talking about the problem, they begin hiding behind a lot of stereotypes, and this in effect makes me . . .

J.B.: When you say that they don't understand the problem, what is the problem they don't understand?

~~J.B.~~<sup>G.H.</sup>: I don't think they really understand what racism is all about. I think that racism is a system and discrimination is just a way of doing (inaudible) and so we can begin tampering with the way of doing (inaudible) we can begin fighting that through anti-discrimination laws. But then behind is this attitude that needs to be changed, and the changing of attitudes just don't come over night. So you begin telling people that black folks aren't lazy and shiftless, and no good, and trifling, and we don't all carry switchblades in our pockets, and we don't all beat up our wives on Sunday, they just don't believe it. So

it is quite difficult to penetrate the attitude that needs to be changed. As far as the law is concerned, the law says that it is unlawful to discriminate and how people can deal with that is that I think that most people that are black or white, particularly white's middle class people, are law abiding citizens and they can deal with the law, they can understand that, and I think they are willing to abide by the law; but they are doing that because of the law and not because it is the right thing to do. So it makes me become extremely frustrated because we shouldn't do things because the law says so, we should do them because it is the right thing to do. We have a constitution, and we have a great nation, Jack, and so people ought to . . . and it's hard . . . it's just extremely difficult to convince people.

J.B.: You don't see any change in attitudes in the last few years?

G.H.: Well, yes, because I think because people are beginning to get together, through job and through the school system, that young people are beginning to understand each others problems, and they are beginning to know each other. I think, in a job situation where for the first time blacks are beginning to get into the system, and work with whites, that whites are beginning to understand that all blacks aren't the same, you know, like all whites aren't the same, but for the first time they are beginning to see that now, because people are working together at . . . also it brings in some social aspects. For example, a person on a job has a party. Well, they would probably invite other people in the office to the party, and if there are any

black persons in the office the blacks would probably be invited. This, has helped to change attitudes. So, some attitudes are changing, but the process is very slow, because we don't have that many minority people into the system that white people can begin knowing as an individual rather than a class of people. Did that answer that?

J.B.: Yeah. But your point is that it is not changing fast enough. That you've got anger and hostility from the blacks, is there a point there when it becomes dangerous?

G. H.: Very much. Because the danger that I can perceive in the future is that blacks become so frustrated and so angered, because the system is moving slow, and they can't understand why a system, such as our system, would have to move slow in this particular area when we are capable of doing so many things at a rapid speed. Now to the white community, things are moving too fast. These changes are taking place too fast. Because of this the white community has built up a lot of irrational fears, about their home or their land, and so forth. So you have two opposing groups not really understanding, one saying you're moving too slowly the other too fast, and so forth. In reality we are probably moving at the pace that is the advantage of both communities, but people can't understand that. So it is dangerous. At any time it can be explosive. I mean, it takes one incident in any city that could touch off a racial disturbance. So it is very dangerous.

J.B.: Where do you see it heading?

G.H.: I don't know, Jack. It's hard for me to predict just what folks will do, black or white. It's just that, you know, getting around the black community for the past few years I've

been saying to black people that we have a law, let's let the law work. File complaints, let's get these complaints processed. Get into college, get into tech school, get qualified. You know, don't let the system have an excuse not to hire you. They say well okay, we'll go to college, but what has happened to the kids that have already graduated from college, where are they? And, they're gone. They've left us all because job opportunities (inaudible) So I go into an agency and speak to an agency head and say hey, you've got a work force of 6,000 then you've got a couple of thousand blacks in this total work force, with an average job grade of three, meaning that salaries are something like \$3,400 a year or less, when 4,000 other people are white in your work force, and their average job grade is something like an 8. So everyone can see the salary discrepancy. Everyone can see the echelon of where folks are in the work force. I think black people know this. So, it's hard for me to go back and say take your time, cool it, it's coming. Because they can't deal with it any longer either Jack. But I don't know what will happen next year, or the year after, or the year after that, or how long it will take, or what will bring about a confrontation between black and white in South Carolina, but I think that I can personally, for this agency move the system faster, I will. In all the frustrations, I plan to stay on board as long as I can to move the system as fast as I possibly can and yet be able to go back to the black community and say hey, look I'm a part of the black community, I've been there, I fought, I've demonstrated, I've been locked up, shot at, spat on, tear gassed, everything else, so however you talk about the system, I am in it, to make the system be

more responsible . . . responsive to your needs, but the other blacks don't understand that. It's hard for them to comprehend that because they readily . . . they just say you're just a house niger. We are out in the field. The man is treating you fine. You can afford to say that everything is okay. So it's effective.

J.B.: What is the situation also with younger blacks, George, who don't remember when you had segregation, I mean, when they have been coming along and they've been in integrated schools and don't see this change that is visible to you and people older than you.

G.H.: That's true. And Jack, I am constantly reminding them of the fact that our hamburger sit-in had a tremendous effect, and the freedom ride had an effect, and even though they are too young to remember the days that we were put in jail trying to make a system, you know, give us the same rights as that it gave its white citizen, there are young blacks that can't remember that. But the worse thing is that these same young blacks are placed in a unitary school system, and their frustration is the fact that they know that there are white teachers who teach them in school who have children in private school, segregated private academies. And they can't understand that, so that causes school disruption. So we go in and talk to young blacks and they say don't talk with us talk with the white community. These are the people that have their kids in segregated private schools and yet making money off the public school system, and yet even stand before us and tell us they want to teach us when they don't even understand our problems or are so unconcerned about our problems

that they don't want us to learn. Jack, it isn't getting easier, the gap may be getting wider, in a sense. I may be on the inside and can't see . . . maybe someone from the outside looking in can see that. South Carolina out of all the southern states in the region . . . Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina; South Carolina is the only state that has an anti-discrimination law and an agency to enforce it. That is progress. And anyone in Mississippi looking at South Carolina would say that we have made progress. Now the people in South Carolina, I don't know whether they think we have made progress, I think we have . . . slow, but we have. There is no question in my mind.

J.B.: Some say there are more job opportunities in South Carolina than there are in other states, is that true?

G.H.: That's true. That is definitely true, and more jobs are becoming available for blacks in this state than in any other state in the southeastern United States.

J.B.: Why is that true?

G.H.: Well, let me ask you this . . .

J.B.: Before you answer that, is that an impression you have or is there any data to support that?

G.H.: Well Jack you remember the . . . we had a conference here back in November, and we invited states within this region to participate in the conference, and to bring with them whatever data, research that had been done in their state to document patterns and practices of discrimination. We were amazed at . . . information came from all the states, I think except Georgia

and proportionately we were in much better shape in job opportunities than Mississippi, even Florida, North Carolina. They came here for the expressed purpose of finding out what we were doing, and how we did it.

J.B.: Was this private and public sector?

G.H.: No, this was in the public sector. We had no information on the private sector whatsoever.

J.B.: Because of the heavy textile industry in South Carolina the percentage of blacks in the textile industry, it probably extends there doesn't it?

G.H.: Oh yeah. Blacks have a saying that they've never headed for jobs because they have always had jobs, they've had jobs on plantations, they've always been employed; but they have not been gainfully employed. So if you look at the highway department, for example, we have maybe 225 blacks in the highway department and that's a whole lot of blacks, but they are under employed, so they are not gainfully employed. So it would almost be the same thing as saying okay we've been (inaudible) all the time, what's the difference.

J.B.: But you now have how many black highway patrol?

G.H.: Jack, we started off, when I came on board with one, and I think the first month I was on board we got Colonel Thompson of the highway department to hire another black, and within two years he's hired 19 more blacks. If you compare that with statistics with that of New York or California or some other states, you'll find that we are in pretty good shape. Here again are numbers, because I think that New York had something like over a thousand patrolmen state troopers, and

they had less than 10 blacks. We have 625 highway patrolmen and 21 happen to be black in this state.

J.B.: George, your own background, you're a native of Walterboro (W)?

G.H.: Yes.

J.B.: And you went to Allen?

G.H.: I went to Allen.

J.B.: And you got an A.B. degree there?

G.H.: An A.B. at Allen.

J.B.: In what?

G.H.: In Sociology. I left there and went . . . my family is in the funeral business . . . so I left there and went to New York to embalming school at American Academy of Mortuary Science and received an Associate Degree in Business Administration in Mortuary Science, and then came back and went to U.S.C. and got a Master Degree in Public Administration because I wanted to get involved in what I am doing . . . something similar to this.

J.B.: Then what?

G.H.: That's it.

J.B.: Then you went to work for O.E.O.?

G.H.: I went to work for O.E.O. in 1965 when O.E.O. was founded. I became a part of that group and I became the Director of the Tri-County area . . . Berkley, (inaudible), and Dorchester County. We stayed here until I ran for public office. I ran for the house as a representative from my county and I lost in a run-off election, and I was appointed to work on the Governor's

staff here, and I came on board . . .

J.B.: Didn't you get in a citation when you (inaudible)

G.H.: My agency was selected as the outstanding agency in the southeasern United States, and we were third in the nation.

J.B.: Tell me this story about you and the Klan.

G.H.: This was back in 1965. Head start had . . . was just coming out, and we wanted the proposal . . . we wanted the program (inaudible), they fund us on the basis that we would have white kids in the program. Well, you know, in 1965 it was hardly possible in South Carolina to get the white kids into the Head Start Program, because the public school system had not really gotten integrated. So I went around the community talking with white people, trying to get white people to put their kids in the program and they laughed and said no they wouldn't do that and so forth and so on. So it dawned on me George, if you're looking for poor whites why not go to a Ku Klux Klan meeting. So a white lady came in one day and was looking for a job in a summer project, and I knew that her husband was in the Klan. So I made a deal with her. I said that if you could get an appointment for me speaking engagement at the Klan meeting, then I'll give you a job in the program. She said well I want the job in the program, but she said I don't know if I can get you a speaking engagement at the Klan. I said just ask your husband to let me appear on the platform. So she said okay. So a couple of weeks later her husband called me and said that if I wanted to come, they were meeting that night, he said now, it's your life. So I got there and there

were about 150 people there. I drove up around the back and I walked through the crowd, and they were looking at me and shouting niger . . . niger . . . just this that . . . so I walked up to the platform and sat near the platform . . . there were some chairs in the front, so finally the guy called me up to the platform and this time everyone just screaming and I got up there and I spoke, and I spoke for about 15 minutes, and don't ask me what I said because I don't even remember, I was so scared. But I can remember that after the fifteen minutes that I asked for those persons who wanted to put their kids in Head Start, and people were raising their hands and we recruited 48 children out of that, and we recruited 10 parents who worked that summer as volunteers. So we had not only the only integrated program in South Carolina, but we had the only integrated program in the whole southeastern U. S.

J.B.: Integrated with the Klan?

G.H.: Yes, and every year after that, they worked with us. In fact, when I ran for public office, they formed a coalition with us and the Klan actually supported me . . . most of them.

J.B.: That was in the first race, how about the run off?

G.H.: In the run-off they made a racist campaign out of it. The guy I was running against just got out in the community and he just made the white people think I was the worst niger in the world. The white support I got in the first election didn't come back. They were afraid. And the few that voted for me, they called on the phone and said look we're voting for you but we're scared to sound. So he made such a racist campaign

out of it . . . the run off . . . that there was just no way for . . . in fact I was scared to even go back into the white community, but it was . . . but we had a really good program.

J.B.: How did you get in the Governors office?

G.H.: I don't know. The Governor just called me and asked me to come up and talk with him, and I came up and he asked me if I was interested in working for him. He discussed the job and what the job would do, what I could do for black people in the job, and of course on his staff I was assigned to head up his Advisory Human Relation group which was sort of similar (inaudible) except I was operating under Executive Order, rather than the General Assembly creating a (inaudible). But I didn't know the Governor before his election. I met him actually . . .

J.B.: What did you talk about in that first meeting?

G.H.: Well, he asked me if I was interested in working for him, and I told him that I didn't know. He said to me well, I've heard about you, and I've heard about the things you have done and things of that nature, and I think you would be a great person for this office and I think . . . and we chatted about that and I said well Governor, you know a lot of white folks think I am militant, I'm really not, but they think I am. It just may hurt your administration. We went on and talked about black-white relationship, and then he finally said to me, well if I was black I would be doing the same thing you are doing. Because, he said, I just wouldn't sit back and let people discriminate against my people. So we sort of striked on a good cord and I was very impressed with that, and we talked about a few other things, Jack.

J.B.: Did you get support when you were over in the Governor's office from him?

G.H.: Very much. I ran into all kinds of problems. Jack, you are familiar with one anyway and that is Orangeburg, the mayor wanted to sue me, and the Governor backed me on that. First the Governor asked me to make a public apology in order to keep things cool, and I said oh no Governor, no I am not going to apologize to that guy, things I said to him again, again and again.

J.B.: What was it . . .

G.H.: I call it racist. I told him that he permitted three kids to die in Orangeburg . . . I was speaking to a black group, and he was on the platform; and I said I was very happy to see the Mayor of Orangeburg sitting behind me rather than in front of me, that he had permitted three kids to be killed in his city, and he did nothing to stop it. He was in his office when he could have run over to the bowling alley and spoke to the proprietor and told the proprietor that Orangeburg wanted to be in compliance with the laws of the land, and there was such a thing as equal accomodation law, and that he could not discriminate against the blacks. And the man didn't do anything, he sat in his office and three kids got killed, and he went back to the black community a little later and said hey, don't forget to re-elect me. I said well that is pretty racist in my book. Well he didn't like it because he was sitting behind me, so when he got back to his office, he wrote the Governor a letter and told the Governor to fire me and the Governor didn't fire me. He was going to take me to court and possibly take the Governor to court.

Things went on like that. So the Governor . . . he had given me all kinds of support. Things were pretty hard because here again, Jack, a lot of speeches I make, people can misinterpret the speech, but the Governor has been behind me.

J.B.: Do you think this agency has the power to do the job that it is assigned to do?

G.H.: I think we need some more power, Jack, and we're going before the general assembly this year to get some more power. I think we need some more expressed power in the private sector than we have so very limited authority into investigation of the private sector. We need some additional power there, and until we can actually be able to get EEOC, that is Equal Opportunity Employment Commission in Washington, until we can get their approval, and get designated as a 706 agency, then we lack the proper authority. Our authority should be very similar to that of EEOC if we are going to be able truly to do the kinds of things that I think the general assembly intended for us to do. I think they just need to give us more authority.

J.B.: Do you think you have enough authority insofar as the public sector is concerned?

G.H.: I think we do, I think we do. People look at authority and say well you have no sanction in your law, you can't lock people out. But I don't think that locking people out is an answer. Frankly, . . .

J.B.: Do you have any authority to order back pay reinstatement promotion?

G.H.: Oh yes, and to me that is much more important. . .

J.B.: Do you have subpoena power?

G.H.: We have subpoena power. As long as we have the power

to order persons out of compliance with the law, we have that power to issue an order and I think . . .

J.B.: Have you issued any such an order?

G.H.: No we haven't Jack. But we have been able to conciliate, we've had over 200 complaints, and we have been able to conciliate them. I think that most people would rather sit down and conciliate a complaint rather than come to a hearing and be ordered to do something. We prefer not to order people. If persons are willing to sit down and conciliate their differences, fine. Those persons who won't, we are prepared to issue them an order telling them to do it. So in the public sector, I think we have enough authority to solve the problem at least in the public area . . . public employment.

J.B.: George, what do you detect as the mood of blacks in South Carolina politically at this time? Where are they?

G.H.: All mixed up and confused. I don't think that they are ready yet, Jack. There has probably been one planning session . . . a couple of weeks ago in Orangeburg and I was there. There has been no planning as of yet. Right now I think the black community is sort of split into groups, and personally, I think it is sort of a power struggle to sort of . . . to promote and identify one black leader in the state. I think a lot of black people would like to get that position. I think that some of the older black leaders now are being pushed out, and I think that some of the younger blacks are saying we want new leadership. We want to be able to identify with a black person in this state who will be able to articulate and communicate our problems. So you have a little struggle here . . .

J.B.: Do you think that's possible?

G.H.: I don't know.

J.B.: Isn't that going against what is happening everywhere?

G.H.: I don't know. You see we have experienced a wave of things over the past few months. What happened is that eight politicians in this state, for example, got together and two blacks . . . and the two blacks promised to deliver the votes this year. I think that most black people turn off to that. So they say we have got to struggle to defeat that candidate just because two blacks said they would deliver our votes. But what is also going on that there are some people who are trying to merge up into leadership positions. At the last meeting I gathered that Senator Griffin was okay, let's not everybody merge up to leadership, let's pick one or two persons, and say let these people be the ones who can articulate our problems. I think that is where we are now. It's not solid. I think between now and the June primary, a lot of things will happen.

J.B.: Was this meeting of power? . . .

G.H.: No. That's another thing. It wasn't a power meeting, not a United Citizens Party meeting, it was not even a black caucus meeting. It was just some black friends . . . that got some black folks together and said okay, we need to talk.

J.B.: Is there really any single black political organization in the state now? That represents more as a larger black political voice than any other?

G.H.: No. You know Jack (inaudible) . . . but you remember the United Citizen Party, when we found it, it was for the purpose of threatening the other two parties in this state, particularly the Democratic party. We were coming out and backing the Democratic party, and the party was giving us nothing

in return, so as a threat, only as a threat, we created a new party, a third party in this state, a black party, and said okay we won't go Democrat, we won't go Republican we are going to whatever party offers us the most. It was such a great threat that the Democratic party said okay, come back into the (?). We'll give some positions, some appointments, we'll listen to your problems and everything and so forth. At that time the United Citizens Party had the power, and then PAL came along, Public Awareness League, and that group picked up the power as the spokesman for the black vote. And that was in the past election. Now we have a new election coming up, the United Citizens Party is ineffective and PAL is ineffective, right now, and what has got to happen is that either to strengthen one of those other two parties, or to create a new party or new group in the state.

J.B.: Was the Democratic black caucus effective at all?

G.H.: It was, because it was the same people that served really in the United Citizens party, was really serving on the black caucus. It was the same people. Just that we had that little party over there that was a big threat. We were all Democrats but we just wanted that party to be there, so if we couldn't get the Democratic party to be more responsive then we could just take our votes and either throw it away or put them somewhere else. So . . .

J.B.: Do you see a single one or two black leaders in . . . emerging?

G.H.: Yes I do.

J.B.: Who?

G.H.: I don't know who.

J.B.: But there is a real desire to . . . this surprises me a little bit.

G.H.: Well you know in most areas you have black people say that we don't want anyone (inaudible), we can't afford to put that much trust into any one person hand. We need more than one, there ain't any one spokesman for the white community, why the hell should there be one spokesman for the black community. Black people are fed up with one guy going into a man's office and making a deal for the other blacks. But the position is reversed here in South Carolina, believe it or not. This is the first time I have thought this through (During this conversation the tape is picking up a conversation on a short wave radio completely over running the interview.) . . . You know one of the guys in particular and he is getting older, and he helped the Governor to be elected, there is no question about it, but there were blacks that were angry about it . . . about the whole thing because he was the guy who did all the speaking, and we wanted to say other things. But this year, now, is totally different. The feeling I am getting. They feel that the only way we are going to unite the blacks in this state is for some damn person in this state to emerge up with some damn charisma and bring them all together.

J.B.: Do you think it is possible for somebody to do that?

G.H.: I certainly do.

J.B.: Do you think there are people in the state who feel that way?

G.H.: I certainly do. See what has happened in the state, maybe you can follow me, after Governor West went in the United

Citizens Party, in effect, became dismantled, because the guys who made it up were the Democrats, and many of those guys were appointed to various positions, so that sort of weakened their strength, and to PAL it did almost the same thing. Now what happens because then the blacks split into various other little groups, see. NAACP has been around in this state, and it is not really non partisan. In this state, NAACP can't be non-partisan, because in this particular state the closest party to the blacks have been the Democrats. So since NAACP is black, NHP has been in a sense has been a bit partisan in anything to do with the party. But what happened because all these various groups began to weaken themselves after the appointments of blacks . . . none of these groups can sort of emerge back up and take over again. And because there have been a lot of personal battle between individual blacks, and individual blacks have gone back and done their own thing, you see, it is hard now to say where blacks are. What a lot of people are saying, and these are ~~axixoxofxttxxblacks~~ the blacks that have a lot of confidence in him, that there is going to have to be an individual in this state that can pull together the total black forces, who can pull together the United Citizens Party, PAL, NAACP and bring the strength back together again, whether it be under the leadership of a black person or the leadership of a new organization, a new organization may be possible, but what we've got now is nothing at all. Now we know that the issues in this election are very important to us. We know that capital punishment is an issue with us. All right, we know that strengthening the agency law here is an issue to us,

We know that reapportionment is an issue to us. So blacks have got enough issues to rally behind something. See Jack, black people are generally very emotional people and we tend to become involved when crisis develop, very much so, particularly those crisis that seem to effect us directly, and then we just come together quickly, but there has got to be a black person, or two or three black persons in this state that can bring all those black folks together, and I believe that we have the leadership in the state. I believe we have some blacks with that kind of charisma . . .

J.B.: George, don't they have to by definition hold (inaudible) political office, or some visible office. I mean you don't propel somebody up to leadership. What is he leading. I mean, I am not trying to be an opportunist, I am just saying (inaudible) against everything that is happening every other place.

G.H.: Well that question has come up so many times.

J.B.: Rally (inaudible), or a Department head, or a Chairman of a Party or somebody, or somebody with some visible symbols of (Inaudible) along with the charisma.

G.H.: That's unfortunate because I am the only black head of an agency. There are a lot of people that have asked me to try to get the black community to rally behind me in an effort to organize. I don't have the time, and I don't have the energy, I don't even have the patience, and that's unfortunate. We thought about Jim <sup>Clyburn</sup> ~~Glarvin~~ but see Jim working in the Governor's office doesn't give him the same authority that I have as an agency head. Because the agency itself is designed to promote

certain things, certain social changes, and because this agency is probably very close to black people, this agency has been identified as the agency to do it, but the efforts that . . . I personally don't have the energy. I just don't have the time. I mean, there is far more that needs to be done.

J.B.: Do you see this person who emerges as being someone who already has some visibility because of their position.

G.H.: They've got to Jack.

J.B.: It could be someone in the Legislature.

G.H.: It could be someone in the Legislature that would have some visibility, someone like . . .

J.B.: ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Someone who is a college president?

G.H.: No. I doubt if Dr. <sup>Nance</sup> ~~Nanz~~ (?) or any other college president can do it. But I would say someone in the Legislature could do it. Someone like Finney, or . . .

J.B.: It has to be someone like a governmental or political figure.

G.H.: Exactly..

J.B.: It can't be a church . . .

G.H.: No, it can't be. It can't be a minister who just got a church.

J.B.: It can be a minister who is in the legislature?

G.H.: Yes. Right. To give you an example, I spoke with the <sup>AME</sup> ~~(inaudible)~~ Bishop here a couple of months ago, and I was trying to encourage him, because he is very political . . . very political. I was trying to encourage him because he has something like 130,000 AME's ~~in~~ in the state, to become more visible, and so more black people even though they are not AME's can identify with. But he said okay, what do we do with the blacks who are

Baptists, you know. So he was right. He said I have a strike against me. (Inaudible) So it is going to have to be probably a public official, a black public official in the legislature or somewhere that has some authority, some visibility, some political strength.

J.B.: Can I ask you about blacks in elective office in South Carolina? Did you run for the state house in 1966?

G.H.: No. '68.

J.B.: The second primary was a racist primary, if you were to run again this year, would you have the same kind of a situation?

G.H.: I don't think so.

J.B.: Why?

G.H.: Well, a lot of things have happened in the county I ran in before I . . . that county, for example, voluntarily because I am the head of this agency, volunteered a month ago to become the first county as a pilot county, to have an affirmative action plan; the city and the county, which takes in the schools, the hospitals, the library, every . . . and they just volunteered (inaudible) are up there and we want to back your agency, and we want our county to be the first in the state to have an affirmative action program. City council met, adopted affirmative action resolution . . .

J.B.: George is there a basic change in the political climate in that party, or is it because of your personality? In other words, if the black were to run now for that state representative seat, would he face the same kind of thing in the election, the visible racist kind of a campaign?

G.H.: Maybe. I'm saying that if I went back and ran, that

I believe that I would be able to get a different kind of a turnout, a different attitude. I think that I would be able to get white support personally, and I am saying because the people controlling the politics in the county are the very people who are trying to support this agency. People don't like to be the first to do anything.

J.B.: What I was trying to get at, do you think that there might be a basic change there.

G.H.: I think there is a change. I think there is a change, but I don't know whether or not they would support any black candidate. I am sure that there may be a black in the county that could run that they could support. But I know there have been some changes, and that there is an acceptance on the part of the total white community.

J.B.: You generalize the entire state that way? Comparing the situation in '74 with '68, say you have a black candidate who is running for the general assembly (inaudible).

J.B.: Actually, your race was in '70 wasn't it George?

(It is now apparent that there has been a third party in on this interview, however, he has not been introduced and there has been no mention as to his name. He has asked very few questions and sounds like Jack Bass, therefore, the transcriber has, to this point, put his questions as coming from Jack Bass. For the remainder of the interview he will be named just unidentified.)

G.H.: During the race in '70. Mine was in '70.

Unid.: That was four years ago.

G.H.: However, we had some strange things happen here in Columbia. We had two blacks in the house, and they were defeated when they ran again. There people got . . . some people blamed the black community for their defeat, some people blamed the white community, I don't know, but they were defeated. Columbia, to me, is a very progressive kind of a city, you know, state capital and everything else. But two blacks ran . . . two good blacks; Jack, you know them, two good blacks, kinds of guys you would want to represent the total community.

Unid.: What I am getting at, I guess, is the rhetoric of the campaign. Was the rhetoric changed at all. There was the racist rhetoric of 1970, would that work in 1974?

G.H.: I don't think so. I don't think so. I don't think, for an example, the guy that ran against me and said to the white voters, don't elect a niger because a niger is this and a niger is that, and so forth and so on, would be able to appeal with that same rhetoric to the community, the same white people, because I think the time has changed. I think that the integration of the schools, that a lot of things, that job opportunities, that job opportunity bringing blacks in have changed attitudes as I mentioned a little bit earlier. So a lot of things have happened in four years. I don't think that a guy singing a racist campaign tune now could excite or get enough people behind him. I think that a lot of white people want to do some liberal things.

J.B.: Is that your perception of reality or do you think that is real?

J.B.: Do you think they really want to do that, and if so, why?

G.H.: Well, Jack, you know more about South Carolina politics than I do, I don't think that . . . okay, listen to me . . . Besinger announced recently to run for Governor. Four years ago, Besinger recited that we don't want to integrate with blacks, that blacks remain blacks. You know, all of the stereo. Besinger, himself, has changed his tune. He runs an independent ticket, he was like the guys who buy George Wallace. Now he is saying blacks aren't too bad.

J.B.: No, he's come further than that George, he now believes that blacks have souls.

G.H.: (Hysterically laughing)

J.B.: He told us this yesterday.

G.H.: Really?

J.B.: Yeah.

G.H.: That's all right George. So you see its a . . . I don't know if its a change or what . . .

Unident: Are you saying that the fact that he does use the rhetoric in '74 indicates some kind of a change.

G.H.: Some kind of a change, yes.

J.B.: But he's been saved, and the question is that the whole state hasn't been saved.

G.H.: That's right. That's right. He's been saved.

J.B.: But he's been in a religious experience.

G.H.: That's right.

Unident: Yeah, but it is more than that Jack, if he is not running within the Democratic party, and not outside the Democratic

party . . .

G.H.: That's true, so you have had a political change. It

. . .

Uniden: It's more than a religious experience . . .

J.B.: No, I think the significance of Maurice's thing is that Maurice runs inside the Democratic party, to me it's a message that the entire vote in South Carolina is to Wallace.

G.H.: That's right.

J.B.: I think for the Democratic party, it just happens to be a blessing.

G.H.: That's right. That's right.

Uniden: Can we get back to your hypothesis that they want to white swap this, and they want to be more liberal and they want to do something about it.

G.H.: I think so.

Uniden: Based on what. I mean, why would they feel . . . (End of this side of tape.) That somehow whites want to do this and are really willing to go through some really basic attitude changes, and are not only willing to do it, but want to do it, that kind of intrigues me.

G.H.: Okay. I don't know whether . . . you say . . . racism is so low below the level of consciousness that many white people do things and aren't very conscious of it, because it is so far below that level of consciousness, it is buried there, so they do things every day without even recognizing that certain things are wrong because they are doing things against blacks. But on that conscious level here in the south, blacks and whites have lived very closely together, same

neighborhoods, the whole business, where certain things that were going on here in the south with closeness between the white and blacks in the south, you've never really had anything more awful (?), not really. It doesn't surprise me, that someone (inaudible) racist attitude in a southerner. If he doesn't bring it out, it wouldn't surprise me that a southern white tomorrow would not support a black candidate, if he felt that that candidate would be for his interest. Now when someone dig out, and dig down below that level that conscious level to that subconscious level, where all of the racism exists, if someone would dig that up in a campaign, and they become a racist person . . . let me make it so I can give you . . . I don't know if I am really . . . okay, this is it. When I ran for public office and the first election many whites seen me as their hero, a guy who was concerned, a guy who had knocked on their door, way back, years before I had even offered myself as a candidate, asking that their children get involved with a program that I felt would be beneficial to their children and the family; okay, they didn't forget that because I was their hero. I was a guy who was administering programs, you know, family planning program, administration of food through U. S. D.A. . . . all kinds of thing, I was a hero. But they went out there in that first election they didn't see me as a niger, they seen me as a good candidate who was concerned, and they voted. That's because that was the conscience level. On the run off, the guy who ran against me went out into the white community and started saying to them, do you want those people to marry your daughter, well you know when they are

elected that's what they'll be doing. They'll take over. Now let's not forget that we had them as our slave and those people have not forgotten that, they would enslave us. Then all the way down in that sub-conscious level came the real racist attitude that I can't permit myself to vote for him any longer. He's not just a candidate, he is one that hates me, and I have got to protect myself. That's my own personal analysis. It may not match anybody else's. But I am just saying from experience what I've . . . you know at my mass meeting there were any number of whites sitting there. You know, cheering, shouting, and at the run off they were afraid to even come on that side of town. The first thing they thought about was getting cut, getting shot, me marrying their daughter, or my son marrying their daughter, that kind of thing.

J.B.: Did you say . . . could you say now George, that a lot of whites are ready to do liberal things?

G.H.: They're ready to do it, they're ready to do it.

J.B.: Is this a guilt reaction?

G.H.: Oh yes it is, I am sure it is. Jack I am sure that there are any number of white people feel extremely guilty, and I think this is where we have a lot of paternalism because they do feel extremely guilty, and whenever opportunity presents itself and they can elect a person . . . a black person, or to appoint a black person, or something, they will, as long as no racial issues come up. Because when a racial issue comes up, they have got to take sides. For an example, when Manning ran in Atlanta, I am sure that the

Manning campaign was crime, let's get rid of crime, let's clean up Atlanta, let's develop a transit system. You know, that was something everybody could deal with, white and black. But if somebody came along, like ~~Hosay~~<sup>Hosea</sup> (?) who was a different kind of a guy than Maynard Jackson, it made it much easier for the whites to identify as a militant black who will destroy the white community. But they couldn't say that about Maynard. So Maynard's campaign was just a campaign of a guy who was qualified to be a man who ran and won. And I think that many white persons who felt guilty, said I'm going to vote for him because I think he is going to be okay. We need to give those people a break, they need to be in government, I think he can do a good job, he can probably do a better job cleaning up the streets than anybody else. It's one of those things.

Unident: Suppose someone would have pushed that button.  
Racist . . .

G.H.: Maynard would have been wiped out. (inaudible)

Unident: What I was trying to get at, was it still possible . . . would people still consider it a good campaign strategy to push that button today as compared with four years ago?

G.H.: It wouldn't be as cool today as it was four years ago. It wouldn't be as strong, I mean some people try to use it but it wouldn't be as strong. I don't think that many white people are willing to buy it.

J.B.: Then the basic attitude changed?

G.H.: I think so. There have been changes. I am one that would admit that there have been changes - slow - but there have been changes. People attitudes have changed, but it has

come as a result of certain things; integration of schools, integration of the job, intermingling among each other socially. This has changed attitude. The separation of the community certainly didn't, it just built it up, it just built up more fears. But I think with the integration, this has changed some attitudes, a whole lot of attitudes. I think that there are any number of white people across this state today, who would vote for a black candidate, because it is the right thing to do, okay, . . . so they say we owe those people something, we think they ought to participate in government.

J.B.: Do you see any black candidates running for state wide offices?

G.H.: Just one.

J.B.: What?

G.H.: I'm not going to run for state wide office.

J.B.: What's you running for?

G.H.: Ohhhhhhhhhhh! Trying to take over the Secretary of State job.

Unident: Why on earth would you want that?

G.H.: I was just kidding you, just teasing you. No, noooooo. I want to be in a position where I can do something for some people . . . Secretary of State, oh God . . . he's just a rubber stamp that the Governor past over here's a little stamp that says Secretary of State. No, I thought about running for Lieutenant Governor and then changed my mind.

J.B.: Do you think there are going to be any blacks running for state wide office?

G.H.: I don't know. I'm trying to encourage some.

J.B.: For Lieutenant Governor?

G.H.: I started to run . . .

J.B.: How about some of the other Constitutional offices?

G.H.: Well Danny <sup>McLeod</sup> ~~McCloud~~ has a very influential job and ~~Attorney General~~ ~~Tony General (?)~~, the Treasurer Office is pretty powerful, Adjutant General . . . I don't know why in the hell we elect an Adjutant General anyway, he should be appointed. But in the Controller General office . . . is pretty important, so we got maybe four Constitutional offices that are some pretty important jobs.

J.B.: George, the frustration you find in the black community, and the growing frustration you say, do you see that evolving into a withdrawal from politics? Is there a feeling now among blacks that they participated now in the last few elections, and really don't perceive any change so why bother. How significant is that?

G.H.: I think we have a few blacks, Jack, particularly young blacks who feel that way, that prefer not to get involved in political processes. We have been defeated in so many ~~instances~~ incidences when we were growing, but I think <sup>by and-</sup> by ~~in~~ large, most blacks still feel that the power is in the hands of the politician, that they are the ones that pass the law, or the one that control agencies, and agencies, of course, deliver services. So I think (inaudible) that most blacks feel that we still must get involved in the political process no matter how frustrated we become. I've ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ said to black people at mass meetings and various occasions, I've said, you know, don't get angry, get smart, and in getting smart let us

try to get involved in the political process so we can have some control or some power. I think that we are still there, still plugging for it.

J.B.: What I detect is that within Columbia, there is a great division within the black community between sort of the conservative old guard and the more militant younger people. Is this true state wide or is this more in Columbia because of the results of the last election and defeat of all the black candidates?

G.H.: This is true state wide. We have about the same kind of division in every community throughout the state. We have the more militant blacks who feel like withdrawing from the total system, and then we have the conservative blacks, the old line established negro leadership who still control a lot of people. Even though we have that division, I think this is not, I think that the militant black in the state have not organized themselves into any particular force. I think it is just small groups, but I think most of it is just plain old rhetoric. But I think that the old kind of negro leadership is still around. I think they do have the power to organize the black community behind them. Even though we have even the black Moslem, for example, in some of the larger cities like Columbia, Charleston, Greenville, we have the black Moslem who are saying, you know, who are saying let's develop a black nation. You find very few black people gravitating towards the black ~~M~~uslim faith because they simply don't want to form a black nation. They still believe that this is their nation and that deserve a part of the pie. So it isn't that bad here in this state. I think it is worse in other parts of the nation, but it isn't quite as bad here.

J.B.: Are you familiar with these A. Phillip Randolph Chapters

that are being created in the state?

G.H.: I've just heard about them vaguely Jack. I've just heard that they are moving into the state; but I am also aware of the fact that Reverend Jackson, who was here very recently, a few months ago we had a homecoming in Greenville for him. And part of his coming back was that he wanted to establish, you know, <sup>PUSH</sup> ~~push~~ organizations throughout the state. So it doesn't surprise me that other groups are coming in to South Carolina.