

Interview with H. M. Michaux, Jr., state representative, Durham, North Carolina, November 20, 1974, conducted by Jack Bass ~~and Walter de Vries~~, transcribed by Linda Killen.

Jack Bass: How about first giving me just a little bit about your own background and political involvement.

Michaux: Well, I guess it goes back maybe twenty or thirty years ago when I started out driving people to the polls to vote, under the sponsorship of what was then the Durham Committee on Negro Affairs. Now it's the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People. And I've sort of grown up in it. Have watched it closely. Done some work, you know, for politicians prior to this, prior to my becoming actively involved in politics. I guess it was a thing I just grew into sort of. I think my first actual active political fling was in 1964, the year I graduated from law school.

J.B.: You were how old then?

Michaux: I was 34 years old then. I ran for the North Carolina house of representatives and lost. I repeated in '66 and '68 in repeated losses in '66 and '68. In '70 I didn't bother to get involved and '72 I got back into it and won. Went through a primary. I think I came out third in the primary, out of the three seats that were available, with no opposition in the general election. I came out second in the primary this year, '74 and had no opposition in the general election again. So that's very short and very concise.

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J.B.: Can you tell me a little about black political activity in Durham. Durham has a reputation of being one of the most politically active cities, both in North Carolina and in the South, in so far as black political development is concerned. I get the impression that Durham's role in North Carolina politics, at least within the black community, is very central.

Michaux: The reason for that being that we've got a pretty good, active political machinery operating. The Durham Committee on Negro Affairs, now the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People, has always played a key role in politics in that we've been able to make recommendations to a majority of the black community which they follow. The structure of the committee is such that everybody in the community, particularly the black community, participates. It's a non-partisan effort. They've been able to have these meetings, meet with the candidates, talk with the candidates. Then sit down with the political committee of that committee, make a decision and give it to the committee as a whole to make the decision on. And once the decision is made, whether you agree with it or not, the people seem to have followed the decision. It's a sort of a unifying type effort. In other words, prior to the final decision being made, we argue, we back and support our favorite candidate. Once that decision is made, however, the entire community seems to follow it. As a result, we've been very effective in putting a bloc vote together.

J.B.: They put out a sample ballot. Does it ever include Republicans?

Michaux: Right. It has included Republicans, yes.

J.B.: Do you interview each candidate?

Michaux: Yes, we talk to each candidate.

J.B.: Is it similar to what goes on in Greensboro?

Michaux: I don't know how they operate in Greensboro. I'm not too familiar with that. But I would assume that it's possibly the same thing. Most of the black organizations have patterned themselves after our program here in Durham.

J.B.: How do you disseminate the ballot?

Michaux: We have workers who work the polls. In other words, we will meet the night before the election. The ballots will be printed up. We'll have all the poll workers, all the precinct workers at that meeting and distribute the ballots to them so that when they go out in the morning they can work the polls, work the precincts. We send the cars out with the ballot with the slate in it. It is handed out on an individual basis. We also get computer printouts of voter registration lists for each of the predominantly black precincts in the city, to make sure. . . and we get them checked off as they. . . . We have one person sitting outside of the precinct and as they come in we check them off on that list. And about two or three o'clock in the afternoon, those who haven't shown up we start making an effort to get them out. As a result, it's been fairly successful.

J.B.: Is there any sort of a central telephone number that can be called for rides.

Michaux: Right. We use the Carolina Times office for that.

J.B.: How is that number disseminated?

Michaux: By radio. The radio that's beamed to the black community. Just by word of mouth. Everybody knows now that the Carolina Times office is central headquarters on election day. There's no problem there at all. It's also put on the ballot. Sometimes we will send out leaflets about a week before stating that the campaign headquarters are at Carolina Times. Then we have a speaker bureau that goes out on the Sunday prior to the election to make all of the churches. We also remind them of the number that way.

J.B.: How many members on the committee?

Michaux: There is no set number, simply because the committee is an open committee. In other words, we ask that everybody in the community-- actually, we consider everybody in the community a member of the committee. Normally the way it works is that each group, like a church, social or civic club, flower club, garden club, this type, will send a representative and comprise the committee as a whole. Then from the committee as a whole we've got four basic committees. The economic committee, the civic committee, the political committee, legal redress committee, and, oh yes, the housing committee. Five committees. The membership of that committee are chosen from the committee at large membership.

J.B.: Are they elected by the at large membership?

Michaux: No, they are chosen by the chairman, who is elected by the at large membership. The chairman is John Wheeler, president of Mechanics and Farmers Bank. He's been chairman at least sixteen years. John Stuart was chairman prior to his going on the city council.

Wheeler took over after that.

J.B.: And the political committee consists of roughly how many people?

Michaux: About 20.

J.B.: They basically screen candidates and reach a decision on recommendations for support.

Michaux: Right. In other words, the political committee will screen the candidates and will make a recommendation to the committee as a whole.

J.B.: Are they invariably followed?

Michaux: Yes. We've had arguments right and left. Once the political committee brings back a decision, everybody doesn't necessarily agree with it. The recommendations by the political committee can be overturned by the body as a whole. In one or two instances they have, yes, that I can recall. I know two specific instances where this happened.

J.B.: Where does the financing come?

Michaux: Individual contributions.

J.B.: Does it come from within the black community entirely?

Michaux: Yes.

J.B.: Isn't this unusual? Not unusual for Durham, but unusual for the South?

Michaux: Yes, I would assume. . . . We try to maintain our independence. And therefore we wouldn't accept contributions from outside of the community. If we can't do it on our own then, you know, there's

really no way of doing it. But we can do it on our own and we have done it on our own. So I guess it would be a unique type situation.

J.B.: Durham is unusual in having a basically strong black economic base.

Michaux: Right, that's true. The fact of the matter is that with the independent institutions that we have and with the type of income, for instance, blacks have enjoyed within the city of Durham as a result of the tobacco factories and the hosiery mills and whatnot, we've done pretty well.

J.B.: There are some basically strong black institutions. The banks, insurance, university. Is there a dues structure?

Michaux: There is no dues structure. We take up a collection at the annual meeting. When it comes time for political moving we get contributions, individual contributions. In terms of services in a lot of instances and in terms of money.

J.B.: How about poll workers, drivers, so forth. Do they get paid?

Michaux: They get paid a very modest amount. Some get paid. Others do it on a volunteer basis. A driver will get some gas for his car. He won't be able to take a long trip on the gas that he gets for his car, but he does get gas.

J.B.: Roughly what would somebody get paid as a driver?

Michaux: Oh, he'd get maybe ten gallons of gas plus \$10.

J.B.: That's for the whole day. That's certainly less than he could make on his job.

Michaux: It's more dedication, I think, than anything else. It's a way of life with most of the people who work. I mean they know that they are expected to do this. They know that they have the support of the entire community behind them. It really boils down to just a way of life. Around political time, around campaign time, people become very active. They become very involved, very concerned.

J.B.: What percentage of the white vote did you get? And the change from the first time you ran to the last time.

Michaux: The first three times I ran my white vote was practically nil. What happened was in the interim I was appointed assistant district attorney and stayed in that position for three and a half years and built up something of a base. I'd say that 30 percent of the vote that I got was white.

J.B.: Did you campaign differently in the white community the last time than the first three times?

Michaux: No. I may have campaigned more in the white community than I did the prior three times. I concentrated my efforts in the white community. In '72, for instance, I had entrees to civil clubs, to garden clubs, to all types of people in the white community. And as a result I used those contacts that I had to do that. Not neglecting the black community at all. Because irrespective of the fact that I was a black candidate, I still had to go get the black vote. I couldn't take it for granted. I could never take it for granted. Because it could kill me just as well as it could kill somebody else, kill off somebody else. See, the black vote can't elect anybody. We can doggone sure

swing that vote. What it is is just a swing vote. Look at Ike Andrews' '72 race against Jack Hawk. Ike won by 1,100 votes. We concentrated our efforts on Ike. As a result, that 1,100 votes came basically from the black community here in Durham. He had solid black support. This is one reason, I guess, why Ike now says that Durham has sort of adopted him. When Jack Hawk challenged the vote, the only vote that was challenged was the vote in the black precincts in Durham county. No-where else. And they couldn't overturn it, so Ike went on and won by 1,100.

J.B.: In round numbers, what is the black vote in Durham county?

Michaux: The black vote could be 14 to 16,000. I don't say that we turn out that many. It's very obvious that we don't turn out that many. We turn out in many instances 60 to 65 percent of the vote. In a good year, we can turn out 85 percent of the vote. But I'd say we average about 60 to 65 percent of that vote. And when you compare it on the same level as the white vote, then we're far above the average white voter turn out. Percent of registered voters.

J.B.: Do you know what percent of eligibles are registered?

Michaux: No I don't, not right off hand. I did have those figures somewhere. Right now it's in a state of flux. We've had a purging of the books. We're having new registration periods all along the way. It's building back up. It's not what it once used to be. This is true among the white and black community.

J.B.: Has there been any active move in the last year to organize any sort of state-wide black political organization in North Carolina?

Michaux: There has been a move afoot to do that, yes. And there will be efforts made in the next year and a half to do that. We have been able to get some groups together, but it hasn't been quite as successful as we would like to see it be.

J.B.: Is there any effort to organize an elected black officials organization?

Michaux: No, not yet.

J.B.: Do you see that coming?

Michaux: No I don't. Not right now I don't. Maybe if we had a statewide elected candidate, or state-wide elected official it would probably work in that instance. But the only black elected officials we have now, of course, are local black elected officials. If we could, for instance, have a council of state member, I think we could get a viable organization going then.

J.B.: Georgia has a very active association of black elected. . .

Michaux: Yeah, that's true. That's a part of the national arm too, because there is a national black elected officials organization. It's odd that we don't have one in North Carolina simply because we have the fourth highest number of black elected officials in the country. I'm not sure that Mississippi has one, and Mississippi has the second highest number of black elected officials in the country. The first highest number in the South.

J.B.: Most of the Mississippi ones are very lower level.

Michaux: That's true. I think I'm right on this. Mississippi

has more representation in their state legis-- they don't have it?

J.B.: They only have one.

Michaux: I thought I saw more than that.

J.B.: South Carolina and Alabama this year both went to single member legislative districts and the result was a substantial increase in the number of black legislators. From three to thirteen in South Carolina and something like two to fifteen in Alabama. Do you see any move afoot to challenge the present apportionment in North Carolina and go to single member districts?

Michaux: Not yet. We are due for a reapportionment, I think it's '75. I know we're supposed to do the Congressional districts every ten years, which would make it 1980. I think the last one we had for Congressional districts was 1970. But for state representation it's either '75 or '76 when we're due for reapportionment again. I'm not sure how that's going to go.

J.B.: How do you assess the Holshouser administration? In general and also specifically in terms of response to needs in the black community.

Michaux: First of all you've got to recognize that I'm a Democrat. Divorcing myself strictly from the party, I would have to say that the Republican party, prior to this last election which was the November 5 general election, had made some inroads in the black community by key appointments. Which they played on. They made about five key appointments which gave them a great deal of publicity and say "look at what we are doing." On the other hand--

J.B.: Who were these key appointments?

Michaux: You had Rene Wescott here in Durham, who's the head of the department of social services. Morris Key, who's assistant director of corrections. Grady Davis, who was put on the parole board, paroles commission. You got a couple of top rank commissions with blacks have been put on who heretofore have never been on those commissions. Ron Barbee, I forget the commission he's on. Then Walter Johnson, who's a Democrat, is chairman of the new commission. They have not appointed any judges, for instance, except one, Statler Bullock in Raleigh fulfilled a district court judgeship. But nothing above a district court judgeship level. It was Democrats that appointed Sam Chess, who's a special superior court judge. They have traded on that, but by the Republicans coming into office after having been out for seventy some odd years, they're at a disadvantage. Because they don't have the people to draw from. The people that they are getting are so-called newfound Republicans. So they are at a disadvantage, particularly in the black community where you have just a depletion of Republicans. So they're trying to win some folks over. However, I think as a result of this last election, they're just going to give up on the whole thing as far as black politics is concerned. They are not attuned to black politics as Democrats may be. Certainly most of your black voters are Democrats, registered Democrats. But the Republican party just has not developed a black program in order to attract black politicians. I guess because of the national image of conservatism that you have in the Republican party. Now Wallace, on the other hand, as far as Democrats are concerned,

Wallace makes a good show for the Republican party as far as blacks are concerned. In other words, if anything would drive blacks to the Republican party and make them go, you know, strictly Republican, would be for instance to let Wallace be the Democratic nominee for president or vice president even. The Democrats would have a hard time holding on to that black vote. I guess what I'm saying is due to the fact that there has been no Republican administration to have any experience with in modern times, what little the Republicans had done prior to the November 5 general election was a great deal of progress. And there was a decided effort on a two party system. Among blacks. With the central theme being that you're first black then you're either a Democrat or a Republican.

J.B.: Would you say then that Holshouser tried but he didn't succeed?

Michaux: Right, I think that's what I'm saying.

J.B.: Did he not succeed because he didn't try hard enough or because he didn't have the resources?

Michaux: Because he didn't have the resources, basically. I think he tried. I don't think he's going to try any more, though, because of the disappointing. . . . In fact I'm looking for a complete turn around. We had been in talking with the governor and some of his aides about the appointment of black superior court judges on an appellate level, for instance. In a way, we were asking for special superior court judges, in addition to the one that's already there. I notice lately that he has appointed three special judges. They were all white

and Republican. We got a list that we submitted to the governor of blacks who were qualified and interested in becoming superior court judges. Suffice it to say that maybe one out of the twenty or thirty names that were submitted. . . maybe one or two were Republicans. The others, of course, were Democrats. And the first question they want to know is how many are Republicans?

J.B.: But there were Republicans on the list?

Michaux: Two, I think, maybe one.

J.B.: But they weren't selected. Was that since the election?

Michaux: Yeah, he appointed them day before yesterday. Monday. Made the announcement Monday.

J.B.: What sort of relationship did the black legislators have with Holshouser?

Michaux: We have a very amicable relationship with the governor. We don't have any problem with him. We did side with him in one or two instances where the Democrats wanted to take some of his powers away. We felt that that was just wrong because if a Democratic governor were elected you'd have to come back and change it all over again. Many of us feel that it's a short-lived tenure. That you're not going to have another Republican for some time to come. Some of his programs were good. Some we could support. Of course others we could not support. Overall, we had a very amicable relationship with the governor.

J.B.: Did you meet with him as a group?

Michaux: We never met with him as a group. We never really ever saw the necessity of meeting with him as a group because at that time

there weren't but three of us. We met on a couple of occasions with some of the governor's aides when he had some special appointments that he wanted made, that he did make. And we were introduced to the people prior to their taking office. Black appointments. But we just didn't see any need for meeting with him. Because all three of us were Democrats and all six of us are still Democrats now. There will be six of us in the general assembly. Two senators and four members of the house.

J.B.: Do you anticipate there will develop any sort of a formal black caucus or even informal?

Michaux: Maybe informal. We call ourselves the black caucus informally. Somebody would see us standing around in the halls talking to each other about some type of legislation or something. But it would be an informal type thing. It's pretty rough with six of us there and 164 whites in there. So we really don't have time to sit down unless a real pressing problem comes up. We make each other aware of whatever knowledge we have in whatever area of legislation that's up.

J.B.: Let me throw something at you and just get your reaction to it. It's a theory that is not necessarily valid. One theory is that black political development in North Carolina, to go back fifteen or twenty years ago, was ahead of the rest of the South.

Michaux: I would agree with that, yes.

J.B.: But that today it no longer is.

Michaux: I would agree in a sense with that, too.

J.B.: One part of the theory is that because things were better in North Carolina that when change came there wasn't as much change in

North Carolina. The need for change was not perceived as being as great, so that there was less change. And the rest of the South has, in effect, caught up and North Carolina is just another one of the southern states in terms of attitudes now.

Michaux: I think you're right. North Carolina was a progressive state as far as the other southern states were concerned. I agree with you on that. I agree with the fact that the other states have caught up with North Carolina and in stances passed North Carolina. But I think it's because we have a tendency in North Carolina to want to remain sort of within the status quo. Maybe it was felt that we were too progressive before. And we want to cut back now. In other words, progression has not kept its pace in North Carolina. Because of the general attitudes of people. For instance, you take Durham. Durham has no reason for dropping, for instance, from the third largest city in the state of North Carolina to the eighth largest city with no apparent growth at all. You take Raleigh, High Point, Fayetteville, Wilmington, cities like this that have surpassed Durham simply because they have had progressive thinking. And I liken North Carolina unto the city of Durham. We just are not that progressive here. We made some inroads before. Durham was the leader, as far as black politics was concerned. But we have sort of remained operating under the same ideas and the same theories. In other words, Durham I liken unto a mill town. It just won't progress beyond it's boundaries at all. In the overall spectrum, why should people who work in the research trianble be spending all of their time and their money in building and living in Raleigh

and Cary and Chapel Hill and not Durham. We haven't made Durham attractive enough. This is the thing. Why I don't know. Maybe it's because of the state politics and everybody wants to keep it on a conservative level. I think we're moving away from that. And I think this applies in North Carolina. It takes time for people's ideas and attitudes to change. Landlord tenant legislation that benefits not only the lower economic spectrum but the higher economic spectrum. The fellows down east tell us they don't need that down there. We may need it in the piedmont but they don't need it down there. I mean, you know, this type of attitude. We're all right like we are. Leave us alone. I think it's this type of attitude we're going to have to get out of.

J.B.: The impression I get is that in eastern North Carolina that black political development really is pretty undeveloped.

Michaux: Very definitely.

J.B.: Why?

Michaux: Here again we go back to attitudes. They have not had the opportunity to see blacks operate on the plane that they have in the piedmont. The piedmont is supposed to be the more enlightened area. But here again, the eastern part of the state has been a dominant area and they say they treat our folks all right. They like us. And this is the general attitude that has developed. And as a result they try to keep *them* down. That's really coming out from under the sheets now. Because more blacks are moving into areas in the eastern part of the state. More blacks are taking a more active role as compared to a passive role in the past. So that's going to change. Because I've seen the

attitudes of some of the eastern legislators change. They are amazed to see me or see George or see Henry ^{Frye} ~~Lee~~ get up and expound on a bill articulate. I mean this is just amazing. They don't understand. But once they see it, then they respect it. Once this happens, then they begin to see. . . you know, people still sort of thinking half-progressive ideas, too. Not necessarily work to the detriment of anybody. Or want to change their particular status quo. Just want to make conditions better.

J.B.: Registration is still relatively low isn't it in the east among blacks?

Michaux: Yeah, and that's going to take voter education. That's going to take just more concentration on getting people out, to show them that they can go and register without fear of any type of harm or recrimination.

J.B.: Isn't this going to take some sort of state-wide political organization?

Michaux: We have a young man who has worked diligently and has done a lot to increase registration in the state. John Edwards with the voter education project out of Atlanta. They've done a remarkable job. But we're going to have to sort of do it on our own. If we're going to field a state-wide candidate, we're going to have to come together.

J.B.: Is Howard Lee acceptable throughout the black community as a state-wide candidate?

Michaux: I think so, yes. I don't think there's any doubt about that.

J.B.: Well, if he runs for lieutenant governor, which is rumored and which he doesn't deny an interest in, what will be the effect of that?

Michaux: I think it will have a great effect on increasing total registration and increasing total participation among black community.

J.B.: What do you think would be his chances of winning?

Michaux: It depends. I can give you an example. In this last campaign for the senatorial campaign and the attorney general's race, I travelled in about 65 counties in the state speaking primarily to white audiences. I think I spoke to two totally black audiences all during that period of time. Supporting the Democratic ticket. And I was invited to these groups. People come to me and say "We hope we get an opportunity to vote for you some time in the future." I think the attitudes are changing all over. This was in the east and in the west. Voter attitudes are changing. And I think that Howard has a pretty dog-gone good chance. I'm basing that on my experience and what I have heard. When I was in this race for the attorney general--you know, there were eight of us in there--had we not committed ourselves--a lot of it you can write off and a lot you take serious--had we not committed ourselves, we think that you would have been our choice. Well, admittedly I got into the race late, but I wanted to get in and feel the water, feel what it was like. The responses that I received indicated to me that there are people who are changing, that there are people who are willing to work for a viable candidate, whether he be black or white. It just so happens that I'm black. But I seem to articulate, or have

articulated, some of the needs of whites. So I'm looked upon not necessarily as a black legislator but as a legislator who represents my constituency. And this is the same thing with Howard. Howard is in the same type situation.

J.B.: The impression I got from just keeping up through the press accounts in the attorney general race was that you, as leader of the black caucus in the Democratic executive committee after you withdrew really absorbed a key role in determining Edmiston as the nominee.

Michaux: Yeah, that's about true.

J.B.: What do you interpret as the significance of the '74 elections in North Carolina. The election of Morgan and Edmiston and the wipe out of the Republicans almost in the legislature.

Michaux: Well, I think it's a repudiation of a lot of things. Primarily I think Jesse Helms helped Robert Morgan get elected, first of all, because of his attitude. His attitude doesn't sit well with too many whites. You don't even have to count the blacks in there. I think they realize there was a mistake made there. The second thing was that the Watergate situation undoubtedly. . . the Nixon situation undoubtedly had a problem. And the economy. People think back to before my time and before probably your time. I don't guess you lived any during the depression. I was born during the depression. I don't know what went on. But the only thing I know was that Franklin Roosevelt, a Democrat, brought this country out of the depression. And many people that the feeling. . . the way I get around speaking and the way I hear things and see things. . . people say we are in a depression. It's a depression of

a higher plane than was in '29, '30, you know on through '33. And they are hoping. . . they feel that the Republicans have gotten us into this economic depression, with Watergate. And as a result, the complete wipe out of Republicans just portrayed that. Now it's going to be left up to the Democrats to live up to that billing that they've got. Because if they don't do it in '76 the Democrats are going to be wiped out.

J.B.: Did it represent a repudiation of the Holshouser administration.

Michaux: I don't think it represented a repudiation of the Holshouser administration as much as it did the general economic trend of the country and the Watergate situation.

J.B.: But in addition to Watergate and the economic situation, you did have a Republican administration here and the defeat of the Republicans was worse in North Carolina than almost any place in the country. And Holshouser was out campaigning and it was his hand picked candidates running.

Michaux: Well, the other thing is I think he's got friction within his own party that caused that, too.

J.B.: I'm not sure I understood exactly what you meant when you mentioned Helms' role. You mean the fact that Helms was sitting on the sidelines or there was a reaction to Helms--

Michaux: I think there was a reaction to Jesse Helms period, as a representative from the state of North Carolina. I don't think that most well-meaning people even want to identify with Jesse Helms. I

think even some of the people that voted for him regret that they voted for him now. Because, let's face it, Jesse Helms has made no significant contribution since he's been there. If anything, it's been an adverse contribution. If he's made a contribution it's been adverse to the best interests of the people of the state of North Carolina. Because you go somewhere and you say that you're from North Carolina then the problem that you run into is people say "Oh yeah, you're from that state with that radical senator up there, Jesse Helms." You know, folks get tired of that and become rather ashamed of it after a while.

J.B.: How important is the voting rights act in North Carolina?

Michaux: It's important enough to have been applied in I think it's about eight counties, maybe eight or ten counties, where they had to apply it. This has been in the eastern section of the state, too. I think it's important to that extent, but I think we need it to still guarantee the franchise.

J.B.: Were you concerned when Morgan said that he would not vote to extend it?

Michaux: No, I'm not concerned about that. I'll have to wait to see what Mr. Morgan does when he gets to Washington. I'm practical enough to have to listen to politicians most of the time and know that some of the things they're saying they haven't quite thought out or they don't really know the ramifications of it. I couldn't, for instance, tell you the complete ramifications of the voter law itself. But I know that it has helped out in areas where help was actually needed. I

wouldn't be surprised if he did not take a stand at all. I've got my fingers crossed about Mr. Morgan. I remember 1960 as well. But I can remember some other things about Mr. Morgan that have happened in recent years that led me to support him as a candidate. Such as his helping to save this law school down at North Carolina Central University. Whether for selfish reasons or not, he did go in and help save that school. He made some promises when he ran for attorney general that he kept. He integrated the staff of the attorney general's office. He got three black assistant attorney generals. He integrated the SBI. He set up a consumer protection division, which is an infant and needs nurturing along. You can't forget those things. And I had suggested to Mr. Morgan that when he face audiences that he indicate the fact that he had grown out of some things that may have been prevalent in the 'sixties. And I think he finally articulated that in one of his press conferences after the episode with Dr. Lake. I indicated to him that he maybe would want to say that while some people grow with time and learn, others don't. He didn't go quite that far. He said, though, that he felt that he had grown out of the situation that he had become involved in in the 'sixties.

J.B.: What was the reaction in the black community to Dr. Lake's withdrawal of support?

Michaux: I don't know. Because I didn't even bother to feel the course out. The first reaction, I think, was one that this is a political trick. When the news first broke. I said "Well, Lake is playing politics." He's doing this because he knows that Morgan probably needs

the help and this would try to turn the tide of the black vote toward him. But if they did like I did, when they went back and read Dr. Lake's letter, then they realized it was not a political trick. That Lake was just as serious as he could be and maybe there may have been some hope that Morgan had grown out of what happened in the sixties. But I don't think it really made that much of a difference. There were two candidates, Stevens and Morgan. Stevens was an unknown quantity. Morgan was a known quantity with hope. I think that's what made blacks go that way.

J.B.: Did Stevens get any black support to speak of?

Michaux: He didn't get any in Durham county. He had one or two people working for him but even they backed out. I found that most of the black Republicans were working for Jim Carson for attorney general rather than Bill Stevens. He had workers down at the polls and he pulled a trick at the polls that I think worked to his disadvantage. He had leaflets printed up showing his block, his name and his number. And that was all. Of course when you hand this to an individual and he goes into the voting machine, he flips up Stevens' number, or flips Stevens' number down and then he pulls the straight Democratic lever and finds that it won't work. What he does, he goes back and he flips Stevens lever back up and pulls the straight Democratic lever. And then he tries to flip Stevens name down and finds that it won't work. So he doesn't bother. So I think that hurt him a whole lot. You know, this is just one isolated instance.

J.B.: North Carolina uses voting machines only in urban counties.

Michaux: Yeah. But I didn't see any sign of black support for Stevens anywhere along the line. No huge pockets of it, not even in his own area, Caldwell county.

J.B.: How about Carson?

Michaux: I think here again you've still got the repudiation of a Republican administration because of problems that exist. I don't think the Lillian Woo situation helped him any. I don't think the Edmiston tax situation helped him any, particularly when it was found out that the information was leaked from the department of revenue. People begin to analogize that to the Nixon administration, where tax data was given to the White House. I think most people looked at that. And then I think Carson's overall appearance. . . you know, he just didn't make a good appearance. And Carson was a qualified candidate, I don't think anybody could question that. But I think his appearance and just the times and the circumstances in these couple of situations that came out led to his defeat. Plus the fact, I think, that Rufus probably got in, rode that Morgan coattails, too, a little bit. I think that had it been just an attorney general's race, I think Rufus would have won but it would have been much closer.

J.B.: How do you assess Hunt? Does this move Hunt into a much stronger position as party leader because of his role in the campaign?

Michaux: I don't think so. I think Robert Morgan is the party leader. I think we've been leaderless for the last two years. Jim Hunt, while he's a good friend of mine, I don't think displays the attri-

butes of leadership that he could display. I don't think that he takes the positive role that he should take. I think Morgan is probably the undisputed leader and I think we'll see that in the next executive committee meeting.

J.B.: When is that?

Michaux: I'm not sure. When they want to call it. It will be after the mini-convention more than likely.

[End of side of tape.]

J.B.: Would he and Hunt basically agree on things?

Michaux: I think they will agree. I think that Jim Hunt is in a position that they're going to have to sit down and agree on some things.

J.B.: So Hunt's potential insofar as being elected governor will depend to some extent on what he does between now and 1976 and how effective his leadership is.

Michaux: Very definitely. And how he and Morgan can work out any differences that they might have.

J.B.: What differences do you anticipate in the legislature next year, between that and this past year, past two years, where you had a substantial Republican minority. And that's gone. And yet the leadership in the house is generally perceived to be more or less conservative.

Michaux: I hate to think about it. I really do. And I'm scared that the press, for instance, is going to come up and ask me some questions about that and I won't have an answer for them. Because I'm a

little afraid of this next session of the general assembly because of the conservative leadership that's going to be there. I'm afraid also because with the Democratic majority that we have, we are going to have to be answerable to the people of the state. And it's going to depend on what the leadership sees as their role in relation to what the people of the state want. I can't make any assessment of it right now. I really can't. I just feel that progressive measures may be in jeopardy.

J.B.: Who in the house leadership is viewed as a prospective candidate for governor, has indicated that he would like to run?

Michaux: You mean in this coming session or the last?

J.B.: Both.

Michaux: Well, in the last session I think Jim Ramsey may be a viable candidate. Owen Allen may be a viable candidate. Kenneth Royal.

J.B.: Where do they fit on the progressive spectrum? From one to ten with ten the most progressive and one the most conservative.

Michaux: All right. Jim Ramsey, in my thinking, is probably the most conservative. I don't think there's anybody who's more liberal. I think if you put it on a one to ten scale with ten being the most conservative, you've got Jim Ramsey at ten. You've got Gordon at about seven and you've got Kenneth at about five or six. I'd put Hunt at about five or six.

J.B.: Where would you put someone like Luther Hodges, Jr?

Michaux: About two or three. I think Luther Hodges, Jr., is progressive enough, he's wise enough, and I think he's a very viable

candidate. Whether he will be for '76 or not, that remains to be seen. 1980. There's a very good possibility that another Hodges will be governor of the state of North Carolina. I don't know whether Luther wants to go out on the limb in '76 or not. Until everybody's had their second or third shot at it and have been clearly denounced. You've still got to contend with Pat Taylor, you've got to contend with Skipper Bowles. Then you've got to contend with the current crop. It's going to be a rather crowded field, I think. You may probably have to contend with Bob Scott. There are some rumors out that he may be leaning toward that, or he may be thinking about running for lieutenant governor. It's just too close to speculate. Don't know. But I think Luther Hodges is definitely going to be a governor of the state of North Carolina. Luther Hodges, Jr.

J.B.: Do you see any development of, not a black program in the legislature but. . . . Let me ask you this. What sort of coalitions are there in the legislature? Between the black legislators and the progressive white legislators. In terms of programs aimed at people of lower economic levels. Is there an active "populist" type coalition?

Michaux: No, there isn't. And that's simply because everybody including the black legislators want to keep their options open. And it's very necessary that you keep your option open in that type of legislature. The reason you want to keep your options open is because you either want to vote for or against a bill. As the issues come up, we like to form the necessary coalitions. For instance, tax reform. I

think all of us are agreed. . . most of us are agreed that tax reform is necessary. Now the type of coalition you form there is sort of hard to figure out. But landlord-tenant legislation. We would have to actively recruit a coalition there. Our recruitment of a coalition there would depend on the people we recruit, what they want. In other words it's a give and go trade off situation.

J.B.: Is there any sort of an urban caucus in the legislature?

Michaux: No. Each delegation has its own thing going for it.

J.B.: Is there a Democratic caucus as such?

Michaux: There is a full Democratic caucus.

J.B.: Does it function effectively?

Michaux: It functions effectively.

J.B.: Is there one in each house? Does it have a chairman of the caucus?

Michaux: Yes. There is a chairman of the caucus. Normally in the house it's the speaker pro tem and in the senate it's the president pro tem.

J.B.: Is that just by tradition?

Michaux: Yeah, they are the majority leaders. And of course the minority party has its caucus too and the minority leaders generally chair that. You know it's going to work a little hardship in the senate this coming session since there's only one Republican in there. I guess he'll be the minority leader and the minority caucus and the whole shooting match.

J.B.: Do you perceive the Republicans as being out of it insofar as '76 is concerned?

Michaux: No I don't. I think there's a possibility that. . . . Two things. If the Democrats don't produce, the Republicans are coming back in. And number two, if things level out, you're going to get a significant Republican minority.

J.B.: How about the governor's race?

Michaux: I think the Republicans will see the governership. . . it will be another 70 years. And I say that because. . . I don't necessarily believe that ought to be the way it should be. But I think we're basically a Democratic state, a party state. There's no doubt that Holshouser and Helms got elected accidentally. It's got to be that way. Because if it hadn't. . . . You had Republicans running for the lieutenant governor. You had Republicans running for council of state positions. Every Republican got beat except the governor's race and in the Senatorial race. It's got to be an accident. They rode in on that last ditch effort by Nixon, who at that time was at the height of his popularity. Witness his landslide margin in that particular election.

J.B.: Does Skipper Bowles fail to effectively serve as party leader in the '72 election?

Michaux: I think he did. I think he failed. I think Skipper was so intent on capturing the governor's seat that he forgot a lot of things. And that he made a lot of mistakes. First of all, I think he spent too much money. I think a lot of people said, you know, "Man,"

If he had stopped at a million dollars. You know, gear himself to about a million dollars in that campaign. I think he really would have had it. But I think people got the notion after a while that all he was doing was just buying the governor's seat. And I think that worked to his disadvantage. I think that some of the deals that I've heard about and can't verify that he made hurt him. I can't verify them but I can probably see the results of them. I dare say that in your getting around you may have heard of some of these things, too.

J.B.: What would be an example?

Michaux: I think Nick Gallifanakiss got the shaft. And there's another thing that I see a problem with the Democrats in this state. They are not unity minded. There was a move afoot to get Morgan and Edmiston, for instance, to open up joint campaign headquarters throughout the state. That never came to pass.

J.B.: They did campaign together--

Michaux: In some instances they campaigned together, yes. And this is one thing about the black community. They believe in unity. We may separate on ideas, but once we want to look out for the black community then we get together. And I think more of this is going to have to happen in the Democratic party. There's going to have to be a unifying effort to bring all factions of the party together and somehow or other say "Now listen fellows, we respect your idea and we respect your idea and we respect your idea, but as a whole we have voted to do this. And I think this deserves the support of all of us." Rather than somebody

getting mad and taking off on a tangent.

J.B.: Morgan was able to achieve this unity to a large extent, wasn't he?

Michaux: He was. Yet and still, as black politicians we tried to get them to unify more, solidify more the effort to bring all groups of the party together. That happened, yes. I would agree it happened to an extent. But I think it could be much more forceful. I think we need some leadership in the party that's going to promote that.

J.B.: You have any idea who Morgan would pick as chairman? Who?

Michaux: His campaign manager, Charlie Winberry.

J.B.: Would he be a unifying force?

Michaux: I think Charlie would. Charlie's pretty well respected in a lot of fashions. He's from the east. He appeals to those in the west. Blacks seem to respect him. I think he could be a unifying force. I think he could provide the type of leadership that would call for unification. I don't think Jim Sugg has the type of--I don't want to say it, but I guess it is--charisma that's needed to do it. It's a charismatic position. And it takes a diplomat and a politician to handle it. I think this is where Sugg lacks. I think he just lacks that leadership ability.

J.B.: How do you perceive the role of women in politics in North Carolina?

Michaux: Oh, as more powerful every day. I think women are becoming a more and more viable force in politics than you could imagine.

They are becoming acutely aware of politics. They are having more and more symbols to look forward to. They are realizing the breakthroughs. Take Mike Mullins down in Charlotte. I firmly believe that if Mike had not switched around on his commitment that he would still be a senator from Mecklenburg county. Even though he was a Republican. Mike was young, personable. He had it up here. I think the women did him in. I think one of the reasons that Gordon Allen may have a problem on a state-wide basis is because of his switch on the ERA vote. I think ERA will pass this session of the legislature.

J.B.: How about the role of women in black politics?

Michaux: More and more everyday. Black women are becoming more and more viable every day. They are not sitting home playing that role. They see too many black women who are making it politically. You've got Cartess Collins, Barbara Jordon, Evonne Burk. Three black Congresswomen. Shirley Chisholm, of course.

J.B.: No black female legislators in North Carolina.

Michaux: No, not yet. There have been some who have run. You keep it up and one day they will be there.

[Interruption.]

J.B.: When is North Carolina going to have its first black Congressman?

Michaux: That's a good question. Don't know. And I don't mind saying that personally we are entertaining some thoughts along those lines. It depends on a lot of things. I've got to find out about that

redistricting. It seems like to me it's before 1980. I'm just not sure. Because when Nick was redistricted. . . . Nick served in three districts. And I'm trying to remember when he was first elected. He served three terms. All right. Then he ran for senate in '72. So evidently it was 1970. . . . The first time he ran, Forsythe, Rockingham, and Durham. That was the district then. Went all the way over to Forsythe county. Then they redistricted again in '68 and he ran from another district that included Durham county. And then the last district. So maybe it is 1980. But it depends on what Ike wants to do and how it works out.

J.B.: One theory we've heard, not in North Carolina specifically but in some other states, is that the next wave of grass roots black political leadership, which came originally from ministers and a lot of morticians and teachers, and then professionals are moving into it. But the next wave, particularly the grass roots level, is going to come out of the labor movement. Is there any evidence of this in North Carolina?

Michaux: No, there isn't. Not a bit of evidence that I have seen in North Carolina that it's coming out of the labor movement.

J.B.: Any A. Phillip Randolph Institutes?

Michaux: Yeah, we have a chapter here in Durham that's very active. But it will be a long time before it has progressed to a point that it will be politically active. I just don't see it right now. I see it still coming from the, really, from the professional ranks. I think there's going to be a broader spectrum in the professional ranks.

As you said before, that your leadership prior to this time came from your doctors and your teachers and didn't necessarily include your lawyers. But the school principal and the doctor and the mortician in the neighborhood where you were looked upon as recognized black leadership.

J.B.: How about ministers?

Michaux: Yeah, ministers, too. I'm sorry. Include ministers in that.

J.B.: One theory that we've heard in North Carolina for the lack of . . . the contention that there has been retarded black political development in the east, is that a number of the ministers actually lived in places like Durham and then just had their churches there and were not available in the community on an everyday basis.

Michaux: I don't think that's true. You've got established churches in communities. Joy Johnson, for instance. Well, Joy is southeast. Joy has been in Fairmont all these years and Joy was elected. Maybe it's been the quality of the ministerial leadership that's been lacking in those communities. Every minister that has some type of leadership wants to come to the urban areas rather than the agricultural areas.

J.B.: Do you think eastern legislators now perceive blacks as being an integral part of their constituency?

Michaux: No. The ones I know just don't. With one or two exceptions. I think they could care less.

J.B.: Has this been the result of the failure of blacks to become

sufficiently active politically in the east?

Michaux: I think so. If they make their forces felt one time. . . . Well, I can look at what happened to Howard Lee's campaign against Fountain. Fountain came home and campaigned. First time since he's been elected that he's been home campaigning. I mean really actively campaigning. Because he knew that the percentage of black voters in his district could hurt him if Howard could have mobilized that force. So he came home and he had to pay some attention to his district, rather than sitting up in Washington and letting his campaign be run. And the Republicans are making Democrats aware of this also. You can't sit back now and expect that primary to make you tantamount to election. You have to work at it. The black vote is doing the same thing.

J.B.: Outside the urban areas in North Carolina, then political education still remains a major problem facing blacks.

Michaux: I would say yes, very definitely.

J.B.: Would this be a major goal of a state-wide black political organization?

Michaux: Yes it would. It would be a primary goal.

J.B.: What was the effect when Reginald Hawkins ran for governor? Did that have an effect in jumping up registration?

Michaux: I don't think so.

J.B.: Why would it be different if Howard Lee ran for lieutenant governor?

Michaux: Because I think Howard is more creditable than I think

Reggie was. As a candidate. Well, I don't want to say creditable. Let me say more viable as a candidate than Reggie was.

J.B.: So you think that he would be perceived as somebody who just might be able to win.

Michaux: Right. Blacks would not be voting simply because he's black but because not only is he black but he's a qualified candidate and has a possibility of winning.

J.B.: And one of the objectives of such a campaign would be to increase political awareness, particularly in the east.

Michaux: Oh yes, very definitely. See, not only have you got to work. . . . A black state-wide candidate has a double problem. He's got to work not only to educate the black population, but he's got to work to educate the white voter, too. This is why you can't just jump out and run. You've got to build up your credibility, your viability, in both communities. And the only way you can do it is to spend a little time at the grass roots level. Like Howard has done. Howard has paid his dues. He's worked actively with the party throughout the state. He's recognized in the party not only as a black leader but as a party leader. This helps him to build up his viability.

J.B.: The long range effect of that, if it ends up working out, would be also to strengthen a Democratic opponent for the US Senate in 1978.

Michaux: Very definitely.

J.B.: Who is generally perceived at the moment as the leading

candidate for that race?

Michaux: I have no idea at all. I don't think there are any leading candidates right now. It's way to early to even. . . .

J.B.: If Rich ~~P~~^Yrior, for example, jumps into that race, would he get widespread support or not?

Michaux: I don't think so. I don't think Rich could draw the east. I think we're going to have to go back to sectionalism on that. I think we're going to have to come out of the west. I'd much rather see a person come from the west, personally.

J.B.: Would ~~P~~^Yrior fit that role?

Michaux: No, he's from the piedmont. I'd like to see a westerner, five points on the scale, Democrat come out of there.

J.B.: So someone like Edmiston would be a possibility.

Michaux: Rufus would be a possibility. He could be a very good possibility.

J.B.: He would also have the age advantage over someone like ~~P~~^Yrior.

Michaux: He would have the age advantage and he would have the experience advantage, really. Well, I don't know. Ten years on Sam ~~E~~^EArvin's staff gave him some modicum of experience. Rufus may be a good candidate. I just think it's just too early to tell.

[End of interview.]