

TRANSCRIPT: STERLING NEAL, JR.

Interviewee: STERLING NEAL, JR.
Interviewer: David Cline
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DC: Good morning. This is David Cline with Mr. Sterling Neal in Louisville, Kentucky. We're talking for the Long Civil Rights Movement Project for the Southern Oral History Program at U.N.C.-Chapel Hill. We were talking a little bit off tape just about the fact that you were really born into a family in which—I don't know how you want to describe it—social activism, social justice wasn't even something that struck you as an issue. It was just the way that your family sort of met the world. Is that right?

SN: That's a fair characterization.

DC: Can you just tell me a little bit more about that family, then?

SN: Well, it really stretches back to probably the Civil War. My great-grandfather and his father fought in the Civil War on the side of the Union. My grandfather was a person that was, and my grandmother, very active in this area that we're in now, basically from Greenwood to this particular location, from Thirty-fourth Street to Thirty-eighth Street. It used to be up beyond the city limits, and there was really a black settlement and basically self-sufficient. It had various names, and the people created a sort of autonomous government down there. So they've been involved in things

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developing cinder roads, public safety, that sort of thing. Then my father was in the labor union, probably in the more left part of the labor union, very active in the United Electrical Workers Local 235.

They did a lot of work that today I guess you would consider to be civil rights and human justice. They fought against male chauvinism, so the equality of women. There's a whole history behind that, so I was born into that circumstance, and that framed the way I tend to look at things. Like for instance, just on the issue of racism, I was sort of taught that people were politically backward. It was really a tool used by the ruling class to manipulate the whites and the blacks so that they would conflict against each other in favor of those who exploited them. So it wasn't a kind of a personal thing to me in the sense that I felt somebody was picking on me. I felt it was that the people who were affected by it most were victims.

DC: It was more about the power structure?

SN: Yes. So consequently, coming up through high school, I remember my sister and I joined a group called the Council of Racial Equality [CORE] around 1958, something like that. We picketed every day after school along with several other, probably about fifteen, sixteen people. They were both white and black, and it turned out that in 1960, we picketed with a minister, A.M.E. minister, African Methodist Episcopal Church minister named C. Eubank Tucker. He was a bishop of the church but was also an attorney, and there were adults in the group.

DC: What's his last name? C. Eubank—.

SN: C. Eubank Tucker.

DC: Tucker. OK.

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SN: He had a son who later became a judge here named Neville Tucker. But what we did was picket every day. Then about 1960, for reasons I can't truly explain because I went to college in 1960, my sister became the chairperson of C.O.R.E. Then there was a tremendous demonstration in the area with mainly young people challenging the segregated lunch counters. They forced the city to rescind the ordinances legalizing segregated lunch counters. Those sort of things were just part of what was going on. As I said before, we didn't discuss these things as though it was something are you going to join or not. We just did it.

DC: Right. Now what high school was that that you went to?

SN: I went to the Louisville Male High School. That was the second year of integration here in Louisville. Prior to that time, I went to an integrated junior high school called Manly in the ninth grade. And I went to this school, Duvalle, when it first opened, around 1955, I believe, or '56.

DC: That had been an all-black school at that point.

SN: Right. Yes.

DC: And what was the experience like for you going into the integrated school?

SN: The black schools had a high quality of education because the teachers were mainly the blacks who went off to college, found that they couldn't find jobs. So you might look in the post office and find a PhD in chemistry working in the post office. School teachers tended to have Master's degrees, and they tended to have a lot of experience. They were really very determined that they were going to make the students learn because some of them came from rural areas. For instance, this building's named after a woman named Lucy N. Duvalle. Now, I remember my father telling me that when

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she was a teacher, she might find herself crawling under a portable building, a temporary building that they housed students in, and dragging out a fifteen-year-old and making him sit in the second grade class that he was in because he came from some area where he hadn't been taught to read or write. So these are very dedicated individuals, and the students seem to be very, very highly motivated.

I really didn't compare myself with other students, but I probably was right in the middle of the pack because the students were extremely motivated. When I went to Manly, they placed me in a class—it's really a funny thing—for developmentally retarded, I guess retarded. The reason I know it is that some of the individuals in the class, when I looked at them, they were strange looking and they had some strange behaviors. But I thought that this was the way white people were, that they were just that—. Because I came up in a situation where we didn't have—. I had contact with Caucasians, but basically I was in a black culture, and the value structure we had was different from the ones we perceived in the white culture.

So I thought the whites were a step down morally as a culture, and when I went to Manly, I came from a cool jazz type culture where we had certain kind of standards and demanded a certain kind of respect from people and were willing to enforce it, too. So when we went to Manly, they found out quickly that we couldn't be physically man-handled because we wouldn't stand for that, because we had to protect ourselves in our own community, too. But they had me in this class, and I didn't recognize that it was a developmentally retarded class until I was a sophomore in college. As it turned out, and this is why you won't hear me criticize young people, we took a test that was some sort of national test where they take that someone identified for me as an I.Q. test once I got

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to Male High School. My score on it was eighty-eight, so they probably legitimately thought that I was an underachiever, if nothing else. So I was in this class, and the only thing that I got out of it was that I was the best looking person and the smartest.

[Laughter] You know the problems that people have when they have muscular and neurological issues.

The teachers were hostile. For instance, I had a history teacher named Mr. Johnson. I'd walk in the class and he'd say, "All right, Neal, sit down." When you're in the ninth grade, boys are typically silly. They're joking, this, that, and the other, testing. So then I would say, "Well, Mr. John—." He'd say, "One zero for you." And I would say, "What?" "Two zeroes for you." So he would actually flunk me. I actually had a ninety-seven average in his class, history, but I actually failed the ninth grade in the retarded class. So that's what I always say, my community's proud of me. [Laughter] So they finally called me to the office and told me, said Miss Picket, who's the counselor, said, "Mr. Neal, you have failed the ninth grade."

That really shattered me, because my father's the type of person, he didn't believe in physical punishment, physical hitting. I never got physically struck as punishment, but his tongue lashing was severe. He always wanted an explanation, and while I wasn't the greatest kid in the world, and did everything anybody else did, which was anything we could get away with, some things I didn't do because they couldn't be explained. Like some guy said, "Let's steal this car," I wouldn't do that, because I couldn't explain to my father if I got caught what I was doing in a car that was stolen. We had more of a street culture that I participated in. So Miss Picket has told me that I'd failed the ninth grade, then she said, "But we don't want you here. We're going to roll your grade up and send

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you to Male High School.” That sums up, I believe, the experience I had in the ninth grade.

Now, I didn’t take it personally. I just thought that they were morally imperfect people who—. Really, I hadn’t met adults who would assault children like that. For instance, this teacher told me, “Go in the room”—this room he was going to—“I’m coming in there and whip you.” Well, my father wouldn’t permit us to be whipped, because he believed that physically hitting on a person would make you a beast of burden, or would treat you like a beast of burden. So I went in and I got a weapon, two by four, and waited on him, because I wasn’t going to let him hit me. That’s the way we went through, the way I did. What I really didn’t know was that some of these teachers probably knew my father’s name, and I had the same name, and they probably looked at him as a communist or something or another.

As a matter of fact, a teacher in this building, when I was in eighth grade, the printing teacher used to walk up to me and knock my type down. He would tell me, “Neal, you’re a communist.” And sometimes he and I would actually have to physically jostle, and students would have to interfere. Since I came up under kind of a street culture where we had to defend ourselves, and I was used to not letting anybody try to manhandle me and used to win, lose, or draw, I didn’t really think this was unusual. I just thought he was crazy. You know, there are all sorts of people out there. So I just went on about my business.

I’ve never told my parents that he did that, even though I promised to myself that when I grew up, I was going to whip him. And true enough, I met him years later while we were going door to door during the black power movement and we were trying to talk

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to people about a community of love and this, that, and the other. And who would appear at the door but Mr. McBride. When I looked at him, I said, "Oh, Lord, I've been—." And then he kind of disarmed me by telling me, "Neal, we have to unite. We have to do something about these white folks." And that disarmed me, so I went home and thought about it.

I was a grown man; I was probably twenty-eight, twenty-nine years old. And I thought about—. I said no, this man deserves to be punished. So I went back, and the house was half burned down. I went next door and asked, "Where's Mr. McBride?" "Oh, he moved to Indianapolis." [Laughter] I thought that was really interesting, though, McBride, but it did teach me one thing that no matter what—. I think he was suffering from something like post-traumatic stress syndrome — [he was] a Korean War vet, and that's probably what was really on his mind. But it taught me the changes that a person can go through.

DC: He was a black man. Or he was a white man?

SN: Oh, he was a black man.

DC: He was a black man.

SN: Yeah, because many of the blacks were intimidated, you know, this labor union movement, and that was during the Cold War where the top elite was taught to hate something they didn't even know about. So it affected blacks the same way it did Caucasians. They were highly, most of them, patriotic, that sort of thing, and believing that they were being betrayed by some group of people that they called communists or socialists. In other words, they didn't believe in the First Amendment.

DC: So from Manly, then you went on to Male, and you said you got involved

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working with CORE.

SN: Let me finish that, the one issue that happened there. My sister and I went to Male. I was a year ahead of her. It just so happened at Male, there were about ninety-three blacks and probably about a thousand Caucasians. Most of the blacks there that went were extremely intelligent. Dedicated, I'll put it like that, because everybody's intelligent. And they were very high ranking kind of individuals. I remember any number I could call their names out and they're just outstanding individuals in America.

As it turned out, when I first got there, one of the professors, we called him Mr. Gearhart, told me, said, "Neal." And I don't know why he singled me out, but he said, "You know, we brought your people here because you don't have a history or a culture." So I said to Mr. Gearhart, "That can't be true, Mr. Gearhart"—because this is what I'd been taught. I said, "When whites were in caves, blacks, Africans were smelting iron. Gearhart jumped around, "Who told you that? How'd you know?" And from that day on, we had problems.

All the way through Male, if you look at my transcript, you'd see all these circles, behavior problems. I was just a normal kid, I thought, but one thing I didn't do was for anybody to abuse me. And again, at Male High School, you ran into various levels of, you know, just kids. They have now programs for bullies and this, that, and the other. I was on the other side of not being bullied or not being abused, but some of the teachers evidently looked at me in a way they didn't understand. I just took it that they were just, as I said before, morally imperfect people, corrupt, bourgeois, as I put it.

So finally, when I got to be a senior, the dean of the school called me in—. And oh, by the way, this is what protected me. This girl showed me something on a card we

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had to take from class to class when we first got to Male. He says, "John, this is your I.Q.." And I looked down there, and it said eighty-eight. So in my sophomoric mind, I said, "Um-hmm, I'm just twelve points away from being a genius." [Laughter] So I walked around through high school, some guy told me once about two years ago that, he said, "Yes, John. I remember you at Male. You used to walk down the hallway with a pencil in your ear, in the side of your head, trying to tell the teachers what to do." [Laughter] I don't remember that myself, but as it turned out, the dean of the school, Dean Campbell, called me in and said, "Mr. Neal, look at this." I looked at my grades, and really it was embarrassing. I graduated with a seventy-two average.

So then he said, "Look at this." And there's a test you had to take. I can't tell you really what the test was about, except they had teachers positioned every five or six feet and making demands about turning the paper rather than take the paper from you or something. It turned out that I was in the top seven percent of students that took it in the country. And they had to recognize me in the assembly hall. I didn't think anything about it. It seemed to me that shit, an eighty-eight I.Q., top seven percent, I was trying to figure out—

DC: What's going on?

SN: Yeah, I was trying to figure out why these grades were so contrary, and I thought that was really what he was trying to explain to me. Then he looked at me and said, "You cheated." And I said, "Cheated?" He said, "Admit that you cheated, and I'll let you graduate with your class." And I said, "Mr. Gearhart, I cannot tell a lie."

[Laughter] Going after George Washington. I said, "I didn't cheat." So Gearhart said, "You're not going to graduate with your class." I said, "Well, I have more than enough

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hours." He showed me where I didn't.

So I went to the Latin II teacher and told him that I needed to take two classes from him. He said, "Neal, I've been waiting for you." He had tossed me out of his class as a junior. I didn't think very much about those kind of things, except that I just concluded, "Well, here's an alcoholic who for one reason or another just doesn't see it." So immunized by my perception of myself [laughter] and by them, Mr. Neubold looked at me and said, "Neal, I've been waiting for you. I'm a fair man. If you take one of my classes, I don't care what grade you make. I'm going to pass you." That heartened me. Then he said, "But if you take two, I don't care what grade you make. I'm going to fail you."

So I went back to Dean Kalmert and told him, complaining, and Kalmert looked at me in the eye and said, "Mr. Neal, that's academic freedom." [Laughter] So when I came out of Male High School, I was fairly alienated to American society. Really, to be quite frank about it, I had plans to join the Algerian revolution, and I got sidetracked by my father. It's a long story, but—.

DC: Why the Algerian revolution?

SN: Well, because again, I believed in the transformation of human society from what I saw of the exploitation and plunder by those that were strong against those that were weak. The Algerian revolution was a fight against the colonial powers, and I thought the Algerian people were just in resisting the colonial powers. As a matter of fact, when I got to college, I didn't change. When I got to getting ready to graduate, it turned out I got married, which prevented me from joining the Chinese revolution. [Laughter] I'm not kidding. I was going over there, and you know, that was just the

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orientation that I had.

DC: What were you reading, and where were you learning about—?

SN: Well, I read the collected works of Mao Tze Tung and read probably, I don't know how much of it, I could have read all of it, Das Capital, Kant, Schopenhoeer, a lot of individuals. I didn't know a lot of people to talk about these things with. Richard Griggs' book on nonviolence, I mean, there's a whole—. I constantly read since I was I don't know how old. We all went to the library and checked out books, so I read every day of my life that I wasn't sick, probably every day. I do now.

When I was younger, a lot of union guys would come to strategize at my home. They could be somebody like Coleman Young who was at Detroit, just any number of people. I could remember their names. Lou Luker, I think he might have been the mayor of Halifax, Nova Scotia, at one time. But they would all come there, so I got to hear discussions and pick up language that I probably wouldn't have ordinarily picked up. You know, hearing people talk and then all of a sudden somebody counter, "Well, no, you're presupposing something." Or pick up historical information, and the people I looked at and thought were really worthy, Paul Robeson, or I think my father used to bodyguard W.E.B. DuBois. There were just a whole litany of individuals and flows of individuals, so my orientation was toward social change by any means necessary.

It just so happened that what I decided was to—and I really have followed that all the way up to this moment. I just operate in a more disciplined fashion to try to bring about what I'm trying to believe and knowing that it's not going to necessarily in my lifetime or I wouldn't even recognize it if it did, but just try to contribute to the ongoing change that I believe ought to occur. So that's why I was going to Algeria.

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DC: Yeah. Now, just to back up for one second, the house where you were raised, what neighborhood did you live in?

SN: Well, I lived in what's called the California area when I was in part of high school, and then we moved to a—. I lived at 1749 West Ormsby, from seven years old until I was about fourteen probably. Then we moved to 4304 Winrose Way, which is really down in this area.

DC: In Park Duvalle?

SN: Well, we don't—. See, this name Park Duvalle is something imposed by, that's an administrative imposition. They created that. We call this area Parkland. Then when the War on Poverty came, somebody merged the name and created a hybrid name that they now call Park Duvalle. That was the city. Matter of fact, I believe that Bill Gatewood did this, if you want the details. So we moved from the California area, which was really probably a mixed area. On the streets you might find somebody poor; you might find the school principal. As a matter of fact, one of the principals for this school lived on it. You might find school teachers, just a mix of individuals. We called it The Coast.

DC: The California area?

SN: Yeah, because when you cross one street, then you get into somebody else's territory. You had to know where to walk. As a matter of fact, it was a racially mixed area, too. Even though in Louisville, they probably, I don't know, about 1915 or so they passed an ordinance that any street that had a majority of either race, the other race couldn't live on it, couldn't move on the street. So you had still I think it may have been the Day Law, I don't know. Louisville is really famous for racism, for promoting a lot of

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stuff. But the interesting part about it is it's kind of a racially changing neighborhood. I won't go into all that. There are so many different things I could say about those things.

But I ran around with a group of guys, and we were all friends. We all took up for each other, and we informed each other about what was right. We kind of get our education on street corners. Then on the other side of it, I was the kind of person that read a lot, so there was a lot of—. And the persons I ran with didn't necessarily read or not. They were kind of not orientated in that direction, so I was kind of split. As a matter of fact, the book *The Outsider* was the one that really helped me conceptualize the way I really was, one foot in one culture, and another in another, and recognizing that it was legitimate, by Richard Wright. So that was kind of the background of all that.

If I were to describe what was inside, the way I was influenced, it was this kind of radical labor union, where the F.B.I.'s sitting outside of you house and all that sort of thing. All sorts of the official society, and it was during the McCarthy era, so I was kind of highly aware of a lot of the events. I can even remember them now, and participating as just a child, really probably just observing. I was told by my father before he died that the F.B.I. was in front of our house once, and I got the neighborhood guys together, and we made mud balls and threw it at their car and drove them off. I don't remember that, a lot of these things I really don't. [Laughter] But I'll take his word for that.

DC: So after high school, you weren't necessarily headed straight for college, right? You wanted to go to Algeria.

SN: Right, I believed that the college population was a corrupt—. Really, I was antagonized toward them, because I saw them as just people trying to engage in extraordinary materialism. Really I just didn't feel like being bothered with them, and I

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didn't feel I needed it. The next-door neighbor and I used to play chess, and he had been to the Air Force. What I'd done, I'd joined the Air Force; I, rather, took the test for it. My idea was to join the Air Force and then get to North African and then find my way to Algiers. My father didn't know this. He was wondering why I took the Air Force test, so he had this guy discourage me from joining the Air Force.

So this guy used to beat me so bad in chess, and I was a pretty good chess player, I thought, for a kid. But he used to just—. Wiley Crumbler, his father was James Crumbler was a civil rights leader. Well, they lived next door, and Wiley used to beat me so bad that it was just emotionally dispiriting. We would play two games at a time, and he would have me uncover check checkmate in it. But while he was doing this, he was telling me how bad the Air Force was, and it altered my perspective. And then all of a sudden, I started thinking about not going to the Air Force rather than trying to reach Algeria. So I got tricked in to college!

I talked to my father and said, "Look, I want to go to college." He called up to Kentucky State, and they agreed to let me in. I remember when we were going, I was sitting in the back seat of the car, my arms folded, thinking I was going to go to a prison, a bunch of barracks. I determined that well, I'm just going to make the best out of it. Then when I got on the campus -- it was a beautiful campus -- I saw people that I knew from Louisville. And then I started a career on that campus.

DC: Um-hmm. Can you tell me about that career?

SN: Well, college was a pretty interesting thing. I was a serious student. People used to think I was smart, but I didn't believe that I was smart. I never challenged myself on their level. I just believed that if you worked hard at something, you should be able to

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figure out and overcome it. So I studied a lot. I had a lot of probably prankishness, and I would walk in the class with no books and sit right in front of the professor and look in the man's eye, and then he'd finally call on me. He'd ask a question and I'd answer it.

I'm thinking about one particular class, and finally he called me up after the class and said, "You don't have any books." And I looked at him and said, "I don't need books." [Laughter] I was kind of alienated toward the faculty, too. I looked at them as something different. They tried their best to assist me, in terms of they saw something in me that I never thought about one way or the other. So of course they made me bring books to the class.

I had a kind of interesting kind of thing. I ended up being—. My sister and I in the senior year, I was the senior class president; she was the junior class president. I was the chairman of our fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha, and [in] Who's Who Among College Students. I don't know how that happened, but some of the professors took an interest in me. They took me to conferences and that sort of thing.

DC: What year did you graduate?

SN: Sixty-four.

DC: Sixty-four.

SN: Um-hmm. Then I went to work for the U.S. Public Health Service in Chicago, then came back, worked, and then went to Kent School of Social Work. Got a Master's degree, and then went to the University of Michigan.

DC: Why social work?

SN: Well, it fit. Social transformation. Again, it took a long time for me to even—. The idea of trying to accumulate money to me was stupid. Now I could see

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trying to do that for some purpose, buy a house, buy a car, but just the idea of just—. I basically was anti-materialism. I really was. It was disgusting to me on a gut level, so when I looked at what I was going to do, social work—. I'll tell you the movie that influenced me, the West Side Story, and I decided that was probably a good way to try to bring about change in life. So in college, I had a concentration in history, psychology, and sociology.

Then when I started working with the US Public Health Service, they wanted to send me to Chicago or someplace, but they had offended me by asking me to cut my mustache off. In those days, they wanted you to wear a suit and tie, which didn't bother me, but they wanted you to look a certain sort of way. So I told the supervisor I wasn't going to do that. Then when they offered me a position in Los Angeles or New York, I decided to resign and come back to Louisville. Then I became a social worker and then in A.F.D.C., what they called Aid to Families and Dependent Children. Then I went to Kent School of Social Work in sixty-six, I believe it is, and then they made me a supervisor.

And then I was in a group. By that time, the black power movement had emerged, and here there's a group that you probably won't see or hear about. We had a group called Our Black Thing, which was kind of like a militia, to be quite frank about it. We were armed. It really wasn't about to take too much, but what we tried to do was set up an education center and get a lot of different things that we believed were important for the community.

DC: Was that local to Louisville?

SN: In Louisville.

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DC: And it was just here?

SN: Probably we started in sixty-seven maybe. I can't tell you the real date. As a matter of fact, tonight two of the individuals who were in that organization will be at my house because every Tuesday we meet. Here, I'll explain a little deeper. One's a physician. He's retired, but he's now working—. He and his wife live in Mexico three months, and then they come back here. They just bought a condo here, and he's now working for four months over at Park Duvalle Health Center. He basically was an emergency room physician for about thirty years, I guess, and then I think they sold everything they had and put it in one suitcase.

DC: And went to Mexico.

SN: Yeah, and she's Mexican, I believe. But the other guy was a Muslim under the persuasion of Elijah Mohammad, and then moved to Elijah's son Wallace Dean Mohammad. He's a metal sculptor. In those days, we were all part of an organization that assisted in taking over the University of Louisville. Bobby, the one that's a physician, they suspended him. No, expelled him, he Blaine Hudson and Imelda Meeks, and somebody else, I don't know. And there were a number of other people that were in there, too. They were holding Woodrow Strickland, the president, and I got blamed for that.

DC: Were you there? Were you involved?

SN: I was outside with a group of people who were determined that if anybody went in there to try to take those students out, we were going to declare war. I'm not kidding about that. We had two hundred people scattered around this city to really—. We were determined. We thought that maybe football players or some other element

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might try to go in there and physically remove them, so we actually organized so that I was outside on that part of it. But—.

DC: You were no longer a student, but you were—.

SN: I was a supervisor of what they now call community-based services, the A.F.D.C. special services. So as a result of that, they arrested those students, put them out of school. Then the governor of the state, Louis Nunn at that time, sent some guy down to talk to me. This guy told me that they wanted me to come to Frankfurt and that I was embarrassing the state. They wanted, if I would cooperate, to give me a raise and give me an upgrade in my position. So I went there the next day, and the guy that was the head of the agency, Mr. Dietz, I asked him to—. He had a secretary I guess to interview me because the governor was concerned about this.

So when I talked with Mr. Dietz, I asked his secretary to leave. Then I just asked some simple questions. How old are you? And I think he told me thirty-four. Then I proceeded to curse him out, told him that he couldn't tell me what to do in the liberation of my people. So he claimed to have dismissed me. "You're dismissed." [Laughter] So I told him, "You don't have any authority over me." So anyway, that's how I left the employ of the state, with a boot behind me. So what I did was, I thought about it and I said, "One thing, I'm not begging anybody for a job." So I just got a lawnmower and just started cutting grass. My kids, some of them that weren't born at the time, believe that they were out there with us cutting grass to survive.

So at that time, the key part about that era was that we actually created a level of social transformation that a lot of people don't recognize. Like for instance, one of the persons that was in our collaborative group is now the Dean of Arts and Sciences at

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University of Louisville, Blaine Hudson. So Blaine used to write our articles. Then we negotiated with the school administration, and even though they don't know it, but we had based our negotiations on the way the United States and the Vietnamese negotiated at the Treaty of Paris. So we had a document that we handed them, and said, "We would like you to accept this in principle and substance." They agreed, so then three months later, we were asking, "Well, wait a minute. Where are all these black students that you're supposed to be admitting and these other individuals?" They were stalling, so we decided to take over the university. But preceding—

DC: What were the kinds of things that you asked from them?

SN: Well, what happened was, we actually analyzed the—. Now some of these individuals may not know this that actually participated in it, but this all started from an analysis that started at the 1876 with the Hayes vs. Tilden, where they withdrew the federal troops. When we looked at that, we saw the systematic destruction of the black economic and social institutions. We noted that in that same period, there was a school called the State University of Kentucky that was created by a group called the Colored Baptist Convention of Kentucky. It later became known as Simmons University.

But we noted that in our minds at least, that during the Depression that Louisville Trust or Kentucky Trust had the money, their assets, and after the Depression was over with, they had nothing. We don't know all the details, but in our minds we saw a conspiracy there. Then we saw the city taking it over, and it became what they call Municipal College. Then we saw them phasing that out, and then all of a sudden you had two black professors at U of L and some several different black students, very small number. So what we saw was the success of a campaign of destruction—

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DC: Of black education.

SN: Yes. So what we decided to do was demand that the university give reparations so that—. Not reparations, but in a sense, that's what it was. So we told them that we believed that they needed to—. They only had two hundred black students, so we wanted two thousand. We had a document that had been prepared, and we wanted black faculty and we wanted a minority affairs office.

Actually, so I understand, they probably were ready to do something like that, but they probably had to figure out some way to do it. Well, we got tired of them stalling, so we decided to seize—. Really, I was against seizure of the building. What I believed we should have done at the time, rather, was to simply declare ourselves independent, separate ourselves from the university, and create our own free university. Instead, the group decided to seize the buildings, so that's what we did. That's what happened there. But it really came from a reasoned analysis of the circumstances we believed that we saw.

DC: That was Our Black Thing; that was the name of it.

SN: There were a number of organizations, but principally, Our Black Thing was the one we were involved in. There was a black student union; the students out there were in the black student union. Then there was a group called The Black Unity League, and then there was a group that's very, very rarely known, called the Black United Brothers. But these two guys I'm talking about, they were having meetings with young guys, teaching them black history, and trying to motivate them to move forward in life in a positive way. So there were a number of little groups like that that you really won't hear too much about.

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DC: But were those just Louisville groups, or were they national?

SN: Well, we were Louisville. Now, I was in another group called the Republic of New Africa that I eventually got out of, because it seemed too naïve to me. They really had a good plan in the beginning. They wanted to take over six Southern states, which I was in agreement with, but I was in agreement doing it through the electoral process. Then when they somebody came up with the idea of taking it over violently, it made me recognize from long-term experience that there was an agent provocateur in the organization, I mean, sets itself up against one of the mightiest military powers in the world.

That's one thing to defend yourself against individuals or against even police departments, but there's another—. And we weren't thinking about trying to overthrow the government. We just said we want this part, the Southern states. But anyway, I got out, because I thought they were a little naïve and they'd be infiltrated. And they eventually got annihilated themselves, the whole group did. Yeah. So there were a lot groups who were all affiliated some sort of way, all across the country.

DC: How did you come together with those individuals?

SN: Which ones?

DC: The other folks in Our Black Thing. How did you meet them?

SN: I guess we just had a common interest. I'm trying to think. I guess from—. Now, I remember how I got involved in the Black Power movement, which was a result of being at a meeting. I remember that Martin Luther King and these two guys were talking about black power. Well, I had no intention of publicly expressing myself in any sort of way. When I saw these guys, I thought they were quite naïve, and that's why I

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decided not to join. One of them had hairstyle called a conk, which was really probably a repudiation of his natural hair, in my mind at least. And you know, talking about Black Power, and the guy that was supporting them was a white minister, Eric Tachau, who I didn't have a great problem with, but still, it didn't seem to me that—. I saw them more as agents more than I did as somebody authentically expressing some view. So I decided to join that way. Now how I got in with these other individuals, I can't really recall.

DC: That pushed you to give what you thought of as a more genuine expression.

SD: Well, I thought there was an intellectual void. Some of these things, if you have a theoretical framework, then you can explain things or predict them. If you don't, then you're expressing your feelings, and that's a good level of something. So I felt that my contribution would be to try to firm up the framework. We had a lot of discussion. We basically were going to defend our community, and we were prepared to. We were trained, trained ourselves, and even met a guy who was a martial arts master who came to us and taught us some actually war art rather than punching in the air.

We were dedicated. We tried to stop crime, and we eventually even created out of this effort a social agency. Somebody called it a social agency. We called it Enterprise Unlimited, and Our Black Thing did not create this, OK. But it came out of this context called—. I'm jumping ahead of myself now, but it was called Enterprise Unlimited, and we were known as the Stop Dope Now program. We believed that the drugs were part of the ruling power's way of sedating the population, because we noted that the drugs began coming into the black community the way they came after the Freedom Rides.

We concluded, rightly or wrongly, that the—. Kind of an agreement between

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organized crime and between the intelligence apparatus in the country to let them pump drugs in. What we knew from our analysis was that prior to that time, drugs were sold in the black community, but they weren't used in the black community. When we investigated that, we—. See, we're a confrontation group, gangsters, some of the organized crime out of, now that's an interesting story, out of Cleveland. And we weren't fearful of them either. We were, as I said before, sufficiently armed, and luckily—.

DC: You would confront them there or here or—?

SN: We went to them, but actually we stumbled into them. We went to a place—I'm not going to identify this, because I really appreciated what this guy did for real—and demanded that they give us these pool tables. In doing so, we were saying, "You all put these drugs in this community, and we're taking them out." This is really an almost comedy in a sense, because who I was talking to was the representative of organized crime in Cleveland down here. They were over the concessions for entertainment, pool tables, and pinball machines.

Then this guy said, "What's your name?" Now when he said that, I really got ready to pull my forty-five out and smack him upside his head. I said, "Sterling Neal." He said, "You have a father worked in the labor union?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "He work in Cleveland?" I said, "Yes, he sure did." Then he said, "I know him." And then he said, "Have a seat." He explained to me this whole setup around here; then he gave us the pool table. Now he's the vice-president of a bank now, but I'll never reveal his name [laughter] in that I appreciate that. A number of people had done what this group I was in did, and had gotten physically hurt, bones broken, and all that sort of thing. Now I wasn't

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all that worried about that, because I was too—. I don't know what to say; I just didn't worry about it. I didn't believe that a person could reasonably attack me without me being able to defend myself, and that's all I really wanted.

DC: Now what did you want the pool table for?

SN: Well, we had started a youth center called The Masters of Reality on Twenty-eighth and Greenwood.

DC: And that was under Enterprise Unlimited?

SN: Yes. There had been a riot down there, and there's a pawn shop called Lucky Morris's. We took the pawn shop over. We might have even rented it; I can't remember all those details. But we started organizing the youth in the neighborhood, and we called it the Masters of Reality. We also had a drug abuse program and a rehabilitation center, one based on trying to get people into job circumstances, lots of sheltered workshops. Then we would try to get them, once they got into the habit of working and taking instructions and all that, to come to work on time. Then we would try to send them out to some other area. We raised our money by donations.

DC: And you were cutting lawns at this point still? How were you making your own bills?

SN: A living, you mean?

DC: Yeah.

SN: Well, let me step back. OK, as it turned out, after the state so-called fired me, a guy came to me named Frank Clay. Frank's name may be on one of these documents. He asked me to take over the social service department of the Park Duvalle neighborhood service center. At first I told Frank I didn't want to be involved with

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anything that had to do with the government. Then he said, "Nah, this is a community-led thing. We have a corporation, a board of directors, and the community actually guides all this." So I came over there and worked with and tried to develop a social service department.

Then the board and I had a split. The state wanted to take, in my view, untrained social workers and pair them with these community people. In a sense, I guess it makes community people aides to these social workers. I was opposed to that. I felt that the community people had the experience, which was to me knowledge, and these kids coming out of college who didn't know anything. So I rejected it, so the board asked me if I would cooperate with the state. I told them that well, OK, you hired me for my judgment. Now you're telling me that you don't agree with my judgment. So I just resigned. Then a bunch of guys and I got together, and we started our own corporation, Enterprise Unlimited, probably about seventeen guys in the beginning.

DC: OK. So you did start over here with the neighborhood center. How long did you work, then, for the neighborhood center before you left?

SN: For the neighborhood service center?

DC: The neighborhood service center.

SN: OK. Now, for about a year. That was in 1968, probably.

DC: And that was funded by War on Poverty money?

SN: Yes.

DC: Yeah. And was next to the health center? Was the health center here yet?

SN: The health center sprung out of a health committee, and it was one of fourteen that had been created in the United States. During the reign of one of the

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executive directors—Harvey's son later became the mayor—in some fashion. I would say they pulled a *coup d'etat* where they just simply made their minds up that they were going to incorporate and just take the health center from under the service center, which was based on this community group, and turn it into an independent setup. And they did that. Harvey Sloan, David Gittleman, he was the attorney, I think, at that time. I thought that was a betrayal of the community myself. In the end, the service center withered away. Presumably you're familiar with the service center.

DC: Yeah, but if you could tell me a little bit about what happened to it.

SN: Well, it was a highly sophisticated sort of thing. I have some documents here that I just happened to find. Just to show you the level of sophistication, all of these for the most part are community people from down here. You can just tell by the committee structures what they were dealing with. They were dealing with a number of different programs, like there was one called the Model City Program—. Really, this country had a fairly creative period during this time, where the federal government was willing to experiment and they were willing to join in a partnership with them. That's just about what this represents, a partnership between the population, the residents, and elements of the state, local, and the federal government.

It was always this whole issue of control and authenticity. Now these people were serious, and they did not want to be controlled. They just wanted the information necessary. If you were to just look through some of this stuff, you can—. Well, not this. This is just something I found when my father died. He evidently in a peripheral way was involved in this, as many of these people [were] in various other ways. This just happened to be in a box of stuff that I had.

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So eventually the War on Poverty lost favor when they realized if you go back to the Green Amendment. Edith Green, I think. Vermont, I'm not real certain, but she was a congressional representative. What they found out was that at the federal level, they tried to institute what really could have been true democracy, decision-making at the grass roots level. That's a period that really needs to be explored, the thinking that went in that. The elite, and I'm just going to use that word rather than going into a lot of detail, found this threatening. Then they cut down on that power of grass roots representation and expression. And I think the Green Amendment, if I remember correctly, was the amendment, and I don't even remember all the content, that kind of smothered that effort. And then it went downhill from that point on, until it became tamable.

So now you have something called the Community Action Partnership that you simply give social services. If you look on the board of directors, you'll see probably individuals who are elected but are probably not independent. I'll put it like that. They may be city employees, or maybe any number of individuals who are kind of a get-along-to-go-along people or go-along-to-get-along sort of people. But the independence that was reflected here, I mean hard questions. People spent a lot of time and energy -- really one of the great efforts out here in terms of democratic expression. They had their own board of directors. They hired the experts. They knew they weren't the experts, so they hired the experts. Just one minute. [Neal's cel phone buzzes]

DC: Sure.

SN: And then the health center was probably part of that effort of taking control from the—this is my point of view—from the authenticity of grass roots representation or

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citizen representation. Because then what happened was that once they created the health center, the board of directors of the health center became controlled and directed by expertise. Now it has a board of directors, but it's mainly selected and mainly managed by the staff.

DC: Um-hmm. They cut out the people?

SN: Yes. Because these people were elected from different areas. They represented actually a much larger pool of individuals.

DC: So when these people did have a voice initially, how were they organized and how did they manage to come together and work on this?

SN: The War on Poverty did not create all this. As I mentioned before, this whole area has been independent, I mean people trying for years. So there was a history to all this, people trying to make the neighborhood better. I just happened to see down here a woman; she was a crippled woman named Vernice Hunter. Miss Hunter got out there on Wilson Avenue with a cane or crutch and stopped the traffic and the kids, so that they would go across safely. Then they got some notoriety, and then the city either—. They start paying attention. They put some traffic lights out there.

Then I'll tell you, I was in a class when they began setting up all this at Kent School. I can remember talking about this in the class. Not me personally, but the class. It was under Dean Kendall Sperger, who later became the dean at least. Evidently Kent School was involved in this, too, because one of the issues that they had to grapple with was the fact that the people down here in—. There were two housing projects, the Cotter Homes and Southwick, and they didn't permit strangers to come in there very easily. A strange person walking around might be physically attacked. Therefore, a social worker

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couldn't come in, the police generally didn't come through here, and it was really more self-regulated. Matter of fact, when I was a kid they called it "The Stronghold," and it was better not go in there if you didn't know someone.

But this was a concern of the ruling fathers. I wish I could find a more neutral word. But whoever believes that they have the interest of Louisville in heart and believes that they have the power and responsibility, that element looked down here and saw what amounted to an independent sort of something down here, sector. Part of this was an effort to bring within the process of governments, and that's probably as neutral as I can make it.

DC: Part of this, War on Poverty-organized [work]?

SN: Right, because the whole country was kind of stirred up. Remember back during those days, you had the Poor People's March and the Poor People's Campaign. You had the constituencies demanding to be included inside of the benefit system in this country. The welfare rights movement. Around then, though, you had the open housing movement and all these different movements demanding that wait, with all this wealth, the distribution isn't proper and we need a new distribution process. So the response was extremely interesting, creative, and of course part of the response was just like bringing a kid into a school system. You bring them into an obedience system also, and a compliance system.

So all of that was part of the tension, even though if you were talk to somebody that was involved, they might not conceptualize it that way. But looking back and seeing it, that was part of the stress and tension that eventually led up to the Green amendment that undercut the expression of poor people. These were not necessarily poverty-stricken

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people. If I look at it, there's some individuals that may have been on public welfare, but James Mayles was an independent business man. I could go down; Willam Smith was an accountant. Reverend Rutherford was independent. I could go down. James Frye owned his own business. Clarence Price, he was a hustler of some kind.

DC: But all independent?

SN: Yeah, these were some rascals to work with, too. They had their own point of view. Lucille Dehoney, her son is the vice-mayor of Lexington. He used to be in that same position here under, Milton Dehoney is his name. As a matter of act, Sadie Elmore, I may be wrong, but she may be on the Board of Education now, one of the representatives. C.J. Lindeman, he was an attorney. This was really a community effort as I look through here.

DC: Now these don't sound like people who could be easily silenced. So after the War on Poverty, money went away after the Green amendment. These sound like people who would probably keep fighting. Is that true?

SN: Well, most of them were not really involved in it, but I will say this. I happened to notice a lady's name down here who lived in the housing projects, and when I was over the—. Well, here's one right here that's still working, Lula McIntire [now Hodges]. She's still working over at the Park Duvalle Health Center. Her husband just recently died. But I just happened to see a name here, Miss Bruce, and she lived in the housing projects. It turned out that when I was over the social service department, the staff were mainly women, and most of them lived in the housing projects. One of the staff members I remember lived across the street from me. My father asked me if I would hire her, and she was somebody I knew and respected and all this sort of thing.

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She was extremely bourgeois. This was her orientation, Miss Burkes.

Anyway, these women challenged me. They were talking about how they felt men weren't this, that, and the other. I was explaining to them, "Well, that may be true for some," and trying to get away from overgeneralizations. So they said, "Well, you got a college education, and that's why you're saying all that." I said, "You can have one, too, if you want it." So they said, "You're crazy." So I told the guy that was my assistant, I said, "Melvin [Bethel], next Thursday, get two buses, and anybody that wants to go to college, you come out there next Thursday." So maybe twenty people, I don't know the exact number, came. We took them to the University of Louisville and told the registrar, "These people want to go to college. They aren't going to pay any tuition, and they won't take any tests. Admit them." So that created a little crisis.

The university responded real creatively, I thought. They brought in a guy named Wendell Robinson who worked there. I guess Wendell was supposed to cool us down, but some sort of way, wanted to work these things out. I never discussed it. He died, and I never had a chance to discuss with him everything that he did. But it ended up with these people going to the University of Louisville, with some interesting results.

Juanita Burkes, who decided to go into a program out there ended up—. She's the person that put the glass on the Galleria downtown. She became a very successful businesswoman. Still is. Eighty-four, eighty-five years old. I believe she's ninety, but you know. [Laughter] And Leonard Gray was on our board of directors one time, and he decided to take advantage of it, too. Some of these individuals got master's degrees, and they actually filtered into the system. So at a minimum, this so-called War on Poverty pushed them into this income distribution system. A lot of fascinating things. That's a

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piece of history almost nobody knows about.

DC: Um-hmm. That's very fascinating.

SN: Yeah. Miss Burkes, as a matter of fact, if you were to talk to her, she's one of the more successful individuals that came out of that. Some of them only went to school for a couple of years. I remember a lady, Bobbie Atherly, I think she got her master's degree and works with the board of education. It's been so long, she may be retired by now, but they were all part of the staff. And then we let individuals who wanted to, anybody that wanted to could go out there. But they got in the University of Louisville and made something out of that opportunity.

DC: The staff at the neighborhood service center?

SN: Right. It started in a staff meeting there. Somebody jumped up—. I remember the woman's name, Judy Lowler. She jumped up, "Men aren't any good!" Actually, she said black men aren't any good. I said, "Wait a minute. Who are you talking about?" And so we went to this little dialogue, and she didn't go out there. But we set up the opportunity, and some of them really took advantage of it. Others went into job situations. For some of the people that worked. For instance, the head of the public works here—I don't know the exact department—Rudolph Davis, he was over an organization—a working organization, rather—that we had for young men, Ambition Incorporated. I could just name on and on and on.

So in the end, most of these individuals benefited from it. I've had the opportunity to be still living to watch what happened. And the Green Amendment, that's something that when you look back in time, you have a tendency to compress time, but the Green Amendment was the start of this decline.

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DC: Right. But some of these programs managed to survive?

SN: Well, they went on for a while. It's just simply that when they realized the amount of creativity and the amount of—. The system got threatened by it, this process. That's what happened with the Green Amendment, but that's something you don't hear very much about. But it really ought to be, because for one reason or another, this country decided to experiment, took a risk, and it was really a period of a lot of cogitation, a lot of agitation, a lot of ideas. And it really set the format for the future. Had it not been probably for the Vietnam War, we would have probably transformed into a much different society. It caused the infiltration of drugs at such a massive level that there was a legacy of it, that it really corrupted this society in a way that we still are reeling from.

DC: Can you tell me more about that, about how you see that, how you saw that happen?

SN: Well, I mentioned that in 1960, in my opinion, a combination of organized crime and elements of the U.S. government permitted the infiltration of drugs into the black community. What I didn't finish saying was that at one time, drugs were sold out of the black community, and the reason was the black community was always hostile to the police because the police were always an element that, coming out of slavery, was hostile to the black community. So the black community always had a strong ethics of not cooperating. So what the drug dealers did, or the people in organized crime, they put it at the periphery of the black community, like at Sixth and where Mohammad Ali is, used to be Sixth and Walnut. They put it at the periphery locations where mainly Caucasians were coming to purchase drugs.

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The average black that would use drugs would have to be somebody that was a gangster that would be—it just wasn't accepted—somebody that was hip or a musician. There's a certain element of hipness and abstractness more kin to the beatnik and existential movement than with individuals that just used drugs as a way of distancing themselves from the rest of society. But except for those, you didn't see people using drugs. That was just a no-no. After the Vietnamese War, where the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese corrupted the American soldier by trading drugs for guns and all that, then they became addicted to heroin, powerful marijuana. That's an untold story, too, that part of the defeat was based on this collaboration.

DC: And the drugs, right.

SN: Was based on class warfare and a collaboration between these soldiers and the enemies that they were fighting. You'd leave a truck or weapons and here's the heroin, so they were transporting all this stuff back to the United States. It started fueling the—. For some reason, in this country we need drugs to maintain some kind of stability. At least a lot of people do, legal or illegal. And then of course, I think that you can go back and hindsight is supposed to be perfect sight, but the sort of values that were being expressed got twisted by the drug trade and by the fact that people just simply lost the motivation to do certain kinds of things. They may have wanted to transform the society, because it was in the process of a revolutionary change, mainly from the youth sector. And then if you notice, that's the sector today that's been almost overwhelmed by materialism, vulgar materialism. That's not by accident, I don't think. It was just like the drug movement in the sixties to sedate the—.

DC: You see it as similar?

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SN: Yeah, and the British in their areas have always used that kind of—. They used it in the Boxers Rebellion, Australia, with the Native Americans, and that's the way we saw it. We didn't see it as anything unusual. We saw it as part of a policy of domination.

DC: Right. So you started Stop Dope Now—.

SN: Say that again.

DC: Stop Dope Now. When did you start that?

SN: Well, I didn't start it. I was part of a group of guys, and if I had in the way of conceptualizing it, we declared that we had won the Black Power Movement, that we had defeated the forces of evil and won our independence. The question was, we started moving toward a strategy. This is my point of view, okay, and I wouldn't want to say that this was the point of view of everybody involved. We started to move toward a strategy of institution building in the black community, and one of the things we started looking at was social intervention. We saw the drug trade as a way of destroying the motivation of people, and we thought it was part of a control process.

So we actually had two programs, one we didn't get off. One, we had the Stop Dope Program. But we also had one we were going to start called the Stop Crime Now program, where we were going to go to the people committing crimes and just tell them, "You can't commit crime anymore. If you do, we're going to arrest you and make you clean these streets." We were going to physically do that, because at the time we were still elements that had some arms; let's put it like that. It just so happened we got so tied up in the administration of the drug program that we never really got to the—. We did come in contact face to face with some of these guys that were in the criminal element,

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but we never really got into the kind of true confrontational dialogue that we needed.

They themselves felt that one of the few hopes that the community would have would be the fact that they were armed and willing and daring, and if they really needed to defend the community they could. But they were basically criminals, where we were looking at them as mainly agents for oppression. But we didn't get into that part. If we had, we would have carried out what we were talking about at the time for whatever good or bad would have come out of it, because we were determined.

DC: So did Stop Dope Now, was that before you came over to work here?

SN: Stop Dope Now occurred after the—. Now here, let me separate.

DC: I'm trying to get the chronology.

SN: The time sequence.

DC: Right.

SN: Now, Stop Dope Now started probably in 1968. In 1968, '69 rather, I think I was at the Neighborhood Service Center. I left and after I left, within months we started Stop Dope Now. *This* started around 1995. Now the people who started this, Neighborhood Place: A Partnership of Agencies, they believed that this was something new. But actually, preceding this was the Neighborhood Service Center. As a matter of fact, when I first came here, they put me here as the administrator and then just simply left me alone.

It's a real accomplished thing, and my fellow administrators wondered why I was able to master it in thirty days. The reason was that I'd already gone through the same thing at the Neighborhood Service Center, and I understood what I saw when I came in. The service center was what they call co-location, where you've got these various

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agencies and they may not be linked together the way this one is, more collaborative. But if you're co-located, you can't help but collaborate. They're both versions of each other. I could make the claim, even though I might not be able to trace it directly, that this service center is the progenitor of this.

DC: Neighborhood Place?

SN: Yes.

DC: Can you compare the programs that you had then to the programs now? Are they similar or—?

SN: Yeah, they're similar from the standpoint that you have a collection of agencies who brought the resources in, and this one has a more explicit partnership agreement to it. The other one, the service center, was where each partner contributed a certain amount of money, a certain amount of resources. The other one had that in a more informal way. For instance, the vocational rehab might have two counselors and an office, and that was in their budget. That wasn't part of the service center, but the service center's budget came from the community action agency. You see?

DC: Yeah.

SN: Where the budget here—. For instance, I'm hired by the Department of Human Services, so they pay all the administrators. It's a real interesting arrangement.

DC: Um-hmm. Have the issues, the concerns of the people in this community changed much, or are they the same issues?

SN: Well, the community changed itself. If you look at the demographics, the community's changed, but there's emerging problems that are developing. For instance, now that they have the new welfare regulations, you're having more and more people

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rolling off because they only have five years in which they can stay on. So it's creating an underclass that we haven't yet seen, because as people roll off, they're probably working out all sorts of arrangements, whether with their families, "Mama, I'm coming back home," boyfriends. Some of them are becoming independent in terms of work, self-sufficient. So there will be a residual element that'll slowly build up and become, I don't know what you call it, but it will be there.

At the same time that's happening, you have the individuals who've been to prison who are building up, building up, and becoming an element, both of which I believe will destabilize the community. Now, while that's occurring, the physical standards of the community have improved all over, not just in this particular community. The city has a strategy that has been quite workable in terms of providing housing, and that has improved the physical stock.

Now different issues are arising. For instance, more and more people with marginal incomes are purchasing homes. But the way the homes are being purchased on interest-first loans or adjustable rate mortgages, without escrow accounts for taxes and insurance, eventually there will be a meeting between the marginal resources and then the demands of trying to take care of the housing and everything else. So that's going to be a problem probably within the next two to three years that's emerging.

DC: Yeah. Is there training in place for those individuals about how to take care of a house and how to plan financially?

SN: The Urban League has some, but the problem as I just characterized it hasn't been recognized by the system. They are talking about more housing, and actually the amount of money that seems to be gushing through the American economy has forced a

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lessening of the credit requirement, which I agree. Somebody was talking to me about predatory lender, and I said let them come to me. Nobody else will lend me any money, so I'll just borrow from that. [Laughter] But there are all sorts of economic structures that now are being created within the community. They're helping people to maintain, but at some point it'll become a problem. All it takes is just a dip. Like there's some people that are working in jobs that don't provide them with enough money. So they'll go to a location or a pawn shop or whatever, borrow two hundred and fifty dollars, give them a check, and then come back and borrow three hundred dollars and pay the first check off and have fifty more dollars. That will help you get the water paid maybe, some more food or whatever, but eventually it will catch up with the individual. So those are new problem that haven't really been identified, and therefore there's no real effort to—.

Everything is being pushed, like earned income tax credits and those sort of things. But the other side of that hasn't really been identified by the system, because the people who manage the system don't have these kind of problems. That becomes clear. Our council used to receive a stipend for babysitting – we have a community council that actively oversees all this – we seem to be the only council that receives this stipend, and recently, I think for budgetary reasons, the stipends got cut out. The idea was, well, have them bring the children and just pay one babysitter.

Well, the person who I was talking to and I both don't have children in the household. So we weren't sensitive to the fact that when you bring a young child, a baby, in contact with another baby, you're probably opening up the opportunity for transmission of whatever disease or infections, or that you have to bring them out in the cold or you have to bring them out in the heat. Then you have to manage them, and kids

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are kids no matter what. They rip and run and this, that, and the other. This isn't a good place with all these sharp edges for somebody small. Well, we aren't going to think about all those details. Now if we'd had a mother in there, she would think about that.

When you look at these emerging problems, these are people who make income that is sufficient or higher, and there are benefits. They're like the people who cut Medicaid, all of them are people who make good incomes and have good medical insurance. So they're able to sit back and talk about, "Well, they're going to abuse the prescription program," and not recognize that the people that write prescriptions are trained and have their own ethics and this, that, and the other. If there's any abuse, it would be coming from the person making the judgment that somebody needs a prescription. But when you've got insurance and got all these other things, you don't think about imposing on somebody a burden, because you have to share it.

DC: So do you still, in terms of serving this community, do you have community meetings? How do you get people's feedback or hear from the local people what they want?

SN: Just in terms of this structure, we have a community council that meets. As a matter of fact, it should meet, and I have to talk with the chairperson. I've been kind of sick recently, but talk to the chairperson. We normally meet the third Saturday or Thursday of each month. But also there's a lot of other stuff that's going on in the community. For instance, our club, the Yearlings Club, we worked out a relationship with the—.

DC: I was there the other night.

SN: Oh, OK. I didn't get to that one because of too much walking for me. Was

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that for the political—?

DC: Yeah, exactly.

SN: Yeah, and see then there are all sorts of issues that are going around, and people who are interested in these sort of things know each other. And then we have another group. As a matter of fact, my daughter is over this group, REACT, dealing with toxic air.

DC: That's your daughter, yeah.

SN: Yeah, Ebony Cochran. So we're in consultation on all those sort of things. And then pretty soon I think I'm going to leave here because I really don't have time to work now. The more important things that can be done will be trying to prepare this next generation with the kind of techniques and insights for leadership. While, the current leadership that we have, while it's really good, it's part of the general leadership in the community, because in Louisville, the political strategy's co-optation, so all these leaders get absorbed up into the process. They agree, just like I agree, with most of the direction of the community, there's some things that probably are not good for the community, or for the black community especially.

But they aren't able to express these things as clearly as they are talked about among people in general, like [City-County] merger was clearly part of the elite's belief that this city might elect a black mayor because of the demographic changes. So, in their perception, that was bad. Or I noticed a report, I just got on housing, really a tremendous kind of effort to make sure that people have housing in this community can turn this community to everything I've ever wanted to work for. I happened to notice in there that they put down there one of the barriers to housing was segregated housing. I said,

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"Segregated housing?" So what they're talking about is that from beyond First Street eastward, all the way down to the river, and from over in the neighborhood we call Portland, all the way out Cane Run Road and Eighteenth, Dixie Highway, you have almost a solid black neighborhood. Now these neighborhoods developed mainly, from my childhood, they developed mainly where blacks were in this neighborhood and that neighborhood because of the insurance and mortgage lending policies. But I noticed in the Brookings Report, they mention it also: most of the blacks are concentrated in the West End. And I'm trying to figure out, "So what?" What it is about the skin color that makes it so extraordinarily different, except that it's more easy to identify me. If you have evil purposes and it's based on that, you can say, "That's one right there." But otherwise, if you go through this community, you have an extremely spiritual community, more churches than liquor stores. That's no kidding. When I was young, there was a bar on every corner. Now there's a church on every corner. It all depends on how you look at religion, but at a minimum, it offers guidance and hope for people. You can argue about whether Jesus is this or that or the other, and who would know. But whatever you believe, if you're in a religious structure, it's going to set up a moral structure for you also.

So the community itself is really a good community. You can walk at night and you really won't have that many problems down here. Really the crime rate is not very high down here. There were some murders that occurred, and people are like, "Somebody got killed in the West End." Well, when you examine that closely, what you find is a failure of public policy, the execution of public policy. Almost all these deaths are related to drug trafficking, and the police are unable for various reasons to stop it.

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Therefore, somebody finds themselves down the street from me, and they shoot to settle a debt. What has that got to do with the street I live on? You see what I'm saying?

DC: Yeah, I do.

SN: Yeah. So as a matter of fact, some of us are getting ready to make a more aggressive kind of effort on this drug thing, and we'll have to see how that comes out. Because some of these rascals think they really are violent and bad. But we actually have less drug usage in this area than in the South End. Go ask Steve Thompson if you really want to verify. Steve's a big old mean cop, okay? I'm not going to claim I like Steve, but I remember my brother was telling me once he was talking to Steve about crack cocaine, and Steve almost started crying because of what he's seen out in the South End and over in Portland. And these are traditionally are Caucasian or white areas, but the demonization process comes down here.

DC: On the West End.

SN: Yeah, like this thing about the Derby. Actually, the city turned a traffic problem into a social problem. Then when you start looking at the intervention that they did, then you see that's where the start of all these complicated sort of things. The newspaper's involved, too. We have a group that's really working on all this. What I'm trying to encourage, the people that I'm trying to -- I don't know, mentor -- I don't even like to use that word, but with my presence it's let's first get the facts. Because people are using a kind of intellectual process where they get a fact and then make a conclusion without separating it. Then you end up with an unsupportable premise.

For instance, the newspaper put in the newspaper, "At least it stopped the lewdness and lawlessness." Now, fact. I called up one of the persons doing research.

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OK, now, call a snitch; this is the quick way to do it, and find out the arrests during the Derby time for the last ten years. Now, if we find that not a lot of people have been arrested in this area for taking their clothes off, because they surely will do that when they get drunk and all this sort of thing. I've never seen any of it. They surely will do that. But if we find there's not a lot of people that do that, then it's not any more different than the rest of the city, then the question arises: Why are you saying that there's lewdness? Why are you connecting—?

Like somebody got killed. Some guy bumped into another guy's car who had one of these five thousand dollar hubcaps, and the other guy shot him. Somebody saw it, and the guy jumped out of the car and said, "Hey, I have insurance; I will pay for this." The guy shot him anyway. Now, what did that have to do with anything other than somebody got mad and used poor judgment and killed somebody? Thought more of his hubcaps than the other guy's life. Now somebody almost got killed on Fourth Street Live, but you notice the newspaper didn't say, Closed for Derby [there].

We're getting ready to address that. The powers that be really don't understand that once we do this systematically and then start raising these powerful issues, this is what I want to train these younger ones in. For instance, how do you raise a true political issue? You have about ten thousand houses down here, but really I don't know the exact amount, just as an example. Each one of them pays a sewer and drainage fee of seven dollars. OK, that's seven hundred and some odd thousand dollars or more a year. Then you look at the drainage work being done, and then you may find about two hundred thousand. Well, you have a fact there. This area is exporting money.

Now, that doesn't necessarily mean that you disagree with it. That's the second

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question. Now, if we find that there's some tremendous drainage needs that are being not met, but they're being met somewhere else, then it becomes a political question. This is the process. I try to get away from this overgeneralization, overstating the problem, and then accepting as some of our leaders have, "Well, I've not agreed. I don't like what they did with cruising." A word has been imposed on the community. I started going back asking, "When did this word come into being?" And then somebody finally identified, "Well, you know, the Caucasians, they cruise on Preston and some other streets, and in the South End, just drive up and down the street. Having a ball, having fun. Hanging out a window and drinking on Saturday. And they called it cruising. Used to be, years ago, males that were homosexual cruised. They were looking for males. Then the question is, well, how did this word get tagged onto people driving down Broadway on Derby? Well, it turns out there's a history to it. We have to detail it so that we can find out, because I think that this is an invention.

Now I'm not talking conspiracy, but the city, fearful that Freaknik or some other kind of public gathering will come to Louisville, overreacted, and has built up this big story. The question is, is the story true? Now if it's true, we can maybe deal with it in a sloppy way, but we're trying to deal with it. If it's untrue, then it leads to other things that we need to start looking at. So right now we're in the process of recruiting individuals, really not even recruiting, but that's the word that could be used. Who's interested below forty in leadership development, who's interested in how this city actually works, in what are the techniques.

DC: I wonder what are your techniques, then, for finding and organizing these people?

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SN: Well, I just know individuals from over time. People came to me with this, and I agreed to do it because what I decided was that I really was trying to write a book. I've been doing research on a book I call *The Veil of the Conquest*. Actually, I looked around and said time has really passed, and I really thought I was going to write it quickly. But the information, the research, has gotten so fundamental, now I've got to study the genetics and I may have to get a little more expertise in math.

So I decided what I need to do is quit working, because it takes—. Eight hours I'm doing what somebody else wants me to do, whereas really it wouldn't take me more than about two months to write this thing, if I could gather myself. So people just came to me asking me—. I'm in various forums and meetings and meeting with the people who are interested in—frustrated people, really. Because they don't have a framework for explaining what's going on. For instance, the utopian has been. [phone rings] I'm sorry.

DC: I lost it. OK.

SN: So this guy's organizing. Now, he's a convict, OK. He called me up and said, "I want to run for office." And I said, "Well, the common understanding is if you haven't had your rights restored, that you can't." I said, "*But* that's just an understanding. What you need to do is find out what is the legislation that says that you can't do that. That's the first step. Then the second step will be that, yeah, you should run and challenge it. [his phone beeps] But if you do that, what I can do is help you". Low battery? "What I can do is help you maybe get a coalition of people, so-called progressive people, some that are interested in the denial of prisoners' rights, and challenge directly society's right to deny you the benefits of citizenship. You pay taxes; I

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don't know how lawful you've been, but presumably you have been. At least they haven't convicted you of anything."

DC: This came up as a question at the Yearlings Club the other night for the candidates about restoring felons' rights.

SN: I don't want to make too great a claim, okay, but there's a strategy that has been articulated, worked out. I call it "yeast," where rather than taking a leadership position, I try to define and others define what the issue may be, provide basic information. Then those people that have the heart for these kind of things, they step in and use all this information. Or it stimulates them to look deeper into the question. We started probably in 1999, right here, we started a group where we had about 30 individuals representing agencies, community groups. We tried to deal with the issue of the felon, believing that they constituted a fifth-class citizen in our community that was going to be a destabilizing element at some point. They were hidden back in housing projects; they were frustrated. They can't get the kind of jobs they believe they should have and all this kind of thing. So we were going to deal with it. It just so happens that that effort didn't work out well, because we made the mistake of putting it in the hands of somebody that didn't have the real skill to carry it out.

Then we started another organization called The Way Back, and it incorporated. Actually he's the president of it, and then I got sick with a kidney transplant. But I pointed out to them that they had everything that they needed, and I wasn't going to do anything else with them, because they were the ones that could benefit from this. They're the ones that had the insight they needed to move forward. They were unable to move forward with that, and of course from my point of view, that's all right because

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what's not fit will decline or die.

Now he's still interested in some stuff, and the other people, they came out of that effort like with the Kentucky Alliance. Allen Barnett, who's always been involved in prison rights, when he first came to me, he came and I don't know who referred him, but he gave me his resume. His resume started out, "Three years in LaGrange Reformatory for Burglary. He's been to prison in and out for all of -- he's about 75 now. So Barnett is still involved in prison rights. As a matter of fact, I'm going to get with him and try to tie this guy into him so that they can deal with this on their own. There's no need in me taking the time that I have and doing that and getting pinned down in that, when really if they follow the instructions, they can just go right with it. Then I can just add on as need be.

There's certain people that if I talk to they'll see the point and maybe want to join in. For them, it'll be a matter of how do you organize and keep your focus and keep your agenda and not get overwhelmed by somebody else. So he's interested in running for office, and that might be where the challenge will come to. But he's organizing this community of affair, I don't know, June, maybe the thirteenth, I'm not certain, but it'll be the Cotter Home / Little Africa / Southwick reunion.

Now about two years ago, some people—. He actually started it about twenty some odd years ago. He's just an old hustler from—. You know, that's how he's basically known. But about twenty years ago he started it. He's been in prison probably about five times, claims he's been there twice and didn't commit the crime. That's why I try to convince him, see, you're not really the smart one out here. [Laughter] But about two years ago, without any assistance from the city, they moved the Cotter Home /

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Southwick reunion from a small park that's probably about no more than four blocks away to this large park, the Russell Lee Park. And the numbers are extraordinary. It was full; the park was full. Somebody told me it was thirty thousand people; I don't know. I don't really believe that number, but I can't disbelieve it either. But parking, you had to walk five or six blocks to park.

The question, as an organizer, for me is how did all this happen? Well, evidently the cell phone plays a—you know. And there were people who lived in this area, and they moved away and they bought houses. And they're now looking at, you know, each year there's a neighborhood reunion: the California neighborhood has a reunion, Beecher Terrace has a reunion. This was the old black community that these reunions are centered around. So he's organizing that.

He was the president of our community council. I asked him if he was interested in running for the presidency, and he ran and we had to work with him on how to run a meeting, and not get distracted and not tell somebody, "I don't agree with that!" No, you're the chair; now drive the agenda. So we had to go through all that sort of thing, so he's moved from -- on a scale of fifty, he's moved from one to about ten in running meetings. But he has confidence he can do things. He's brought property now. Of course, he's going to be hardheaded, the same thing that got him in the penitentiary. But the key thing is that he sees himself as a community leader.

DC: You've developed him as a leader.

SN: I won't say or take that. I'll just say, when I used to be a therapist up in Indiana, a lady called me up once and told me, "Thank you, I really appreciate what you did for me." I said, "Miss, I tell you, I appreciate your thanks, but I actually get paid for

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what I do. What you did was took opportunity of the circumstance. I'm like heat and you just simply took advantage of the fact that you were cold and needed the heat." So I won't take any kind of that, because most people don't take my advice. As my daughter told me, "Daddy, thank you for all the advice you gave me that I never took." [Laughter]

But he and others, for instance, we have a radio show -- I'm answering your question now -- in this radio show, we started off the radio show with the Stop Dope Now program. We used to bring all these drug addicts and treatment people on the program. "Mr. Jones, you've been a drug addict for forty years. We want you to explain how you abandoned your family. How do you feel about that?" We got down into the grit. So we brought that here, and we've had probably for about four years now, or five, a radio show on WLLU.

We have intermittent funding for it because we pay them, and we bring people dealing with domestic violence, with child abuse, with resources. What we do is we use the community council people, our community people, as the hosts. Then we bring either recipients of services or we bring the experts, I'll just call them the experts, who provide the services. Then people can call in and ask questions and that sort of thing. So that show's been a pretty good way of communicating to the community various things.

DC: So you're able to draw on things that you've tried for many years now; you have many strategies now?

SN: Yeah, there's a number of things being worked out, I mean really a number. For instance, with that U of L program that we have every second Saturday, we convinced our club, the Yearlings Club, which is really dedicated to entertainment, not entertainment but debauchery.

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DC: A social club.

SN: Yeah. [Laughter] It's a social club. But some of us, we have a committee called the social concerns committee. We've been having forums over time. We've had a number of people, Anne Norfolk—. Someone asked us, "What are you doing bringing Anne Norfolk here?" We told them, "Hey, look, we actually own this club. We own it lock, stock, and barrel, and we can bring who we want to." And we're nonpartisan. Some people in this club are Republican; some are Democrat. What we want is for Anne Norfolk to *tell* the community her position.

Governor Fletcher was going to come down. We really need to bring him since he's getting ready to go to the penitentiary [laughter], because we have a high number of felons in our community. But we've had a large number of individuals. Ron Brown, before he got killed, we were going to bring him here. But what we did was, each year we have a reception, or no, back up. Each year we have in September, we have this dance, and we give money to a college, mainly black colleges for scholarship. Then with U of L, a number of members that originated that club came out of that school called Municipal, and they actually have a tie-in in a sense over there.

We invited the president of U of L to come down and to enter into a relationship with us, where they would provide scholars and all this sort of thing and talk to the community. And he did. President Ramsey, he came down, and he was real happy and really sent tickets to the game – a real good response. This year he had someplace to go, but we have a reception, a community reception, mainly the black faculty members of U of L. Then on the second Sunday we have a forum. I just got through writing back on the youth forum we're going to have. The original idea was that maybe the faculty

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members had something they could tell based on their research and expertise. But it's become a little more general, and I can't be too dissatisfied. Everybody else seems to be satisfied, but I was personally hoping that people would— like for instance, there's one person, Yvonne Jones, she's done a lot of research on the Lebanese community. She's highly aware of the Lebanese gangster structure, as I am from being schooled in it by one of them. Then they've converted probably from that into legitimate businesses. We were trying to bring in the Jewish community and the Palestinians, but the Jewish community, their representatives, said, "We don't want any Palestinians there." We told them, said, "Well, you can't determine who we bring, so we're not going to have any of you." I'm getting ready to suggest to our committee that we bring in, if we can find her, Molly Bingham, who's been over there, and Ira Grouper, who they threw out, I believe, because they've been their eyewitness, see. [Laughter]

Now, we weren't trying to propagandize for this, that, and the other. Unless you're really involved, they used to say unless you've been there, you don't know there. There's no way for us to truly grapple with the different interests that might truly conflict, but we do want to know what's going on. So we'll probably have that, and it won't be within the series with U of L. We'll probably do that on a Thursday or something like that. So that's another way that we ----

DC: Community education?

SN: Yeah. Um-hm. We just had that judicial—. I don't know if it's a judicial forum, but we've had them. When the political campaigns come along, we invite candidates down. Was there a good crowd? Usually we have a sufficient crowd—.

DC: You had a good crowd.

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SN: Yeah, we usually have fifty to a hundred people down there. Then they ask questions and they are interested, so that's another way that we tried to—. All of this is really part of the same thing. It just seems like it's here, there, and the other. There's just a whole bunch of stuff. For instance, next year you'll probably hear about the black inventors' fair. Now we really started this off for this year, and my daughter really is over this effort, Ebony. But she got overburdened by all these other things that she's doing and decided to wait till next year. But out of that, what we hoped to do—and this may help them before we even do the black inventors' fair—what we want to do with that was to inspire young kids basically that you can rise up.

One of the things on the nonracial aspect of it is that as I pointed out to some of my Caucasian colleagues, I said I'm a black nationalist. My view is working with the least of these, you know, whoever's behind, and that's who I'm working with to the bitter end. So what we see out of this is to correct the view of many Caucasians who've been instilled with the idea of black incompetence, and to correct that idea also in blacks who've been instilled with that idea, too. So we'll do this, and what we're doing is creating a—. Well, we're also going to create a festival and create a metaphor out of -- This'll be too complex for me to go into right now, but anyway, we're working on it. We see a way of transforming the community, and so out of that we're going to develop a math and science center. Yeah. Really we're about a year behind on that, but that's all right because once we really start rolling, there really won't be—. Like for instance, we just missed a conference that I should have been in, except for this foot, on the Kresgy Foundation, who will give capital money, one half of a, you know, that sort of thing.

DC: Funding the math and science center. Would you do that here or would

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somewhere else—?

SN: No, this is different. This is just an aspect of things. The only reason I took this position—. The person who asked me to take this position, Roger Wilson, was over the council at the time, and I told him, "No I don't want any of that. I'm going to write." Then he came back, said, "Man, this is a perfect position for you, and it helps the community." So I thought about it, and I said wait, he may take this as me being arrogant or not appreciating this issue or concern. So I decided to apply for it, and I did, then they selected me and all that sort of thing. But this is just an aspect of things. This is where I can do the kind of things that I would do ordinarily. I'm just getting paid for what I like to do. The other things are all part of it. I don't consider it to be work.

Developing the center will create a level of competence that the school system who have real dynamics that hurt ethnic groups and people in lower socioeconomic class by systematically discouraging them. They used to, in the Sixties we said they said they pushed them out, but the institution regained its footing and that disappeared, that notion that you could do something like that disappeared. And now we've identified that there's a systematic discouragement. Like for instance, just for black males, it starts in the kindergarten, where they just simply ignore them. Or as a woman came to me complaining, she said, "My son's teacher"—her son's a very dark complected person—"called me up and told me, said your son's disturbing my class. Each day he asks a question, and each day he answers a question. Now you have to think about that one. [Laughter] You see what I'm saying?

DC: All right.

SC: So the teacher's got this perception that's shaping, really that puts into

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actually a delusional system. So our notion is that we might not be able to correct some of that within the system, because the school system isn't set up to educate kids. It has multiple goals, and one of them is educating kids. The other's distribution of public resources to who they want to and salaries and all that sort of things. What we figure is that let's create this center, and the way we want to do it is we don't want to ask anybody for any money. We believe the community ought to be responsible enough to support it itself.

DC: Raise the money.

SN: Yeah. And we have a process in which we're going to do that. But it takes time to do that, and that's why I'm going to have to leave here. I don't have time to sit down and organize a fundraising campaign that takes intricate details. When you don't have the cash to go in, the work has to be done. Probably within a year, we should have that on stream. Then we'll bring in not only just math and science as known today, but like for instance, we just had a Dogon priest come in and talk about their calendar. The Mayans have some stuff using bars and dots and all this sort of thing.

And it won't be exclusively—. You know, someone asks a question; they're really concerned about that. Are we going to let other people in, white? That's no question. We aren't going to substitute ourselves for these people who in the most immoral way that you could imagine have oppressed us. Somebody walks through the door, what difference does it make? So that's how it's going to be, it's principally for blacks, but that notion, invented notion, they don't even use the word race now, the people that really deal in it. Once they got the genetic studies and they said, "Huh-uh, no," and I'm going to have to deal with this, too. Language groups. They keep talking

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about something that couldn't have existed. Proto-Indo-Europeans, well, Europe wasn't created until the Greeks named something. So my book will deal with all that. Yes. So that's the kind of stuff that's really churning. Then with the people, I guess now they've labeled them activists, to try to bring them into a more disciplined approach to dealing with things. What happens is that they're dealing with individuals that are disciplined and can take whatever they're talking about and shift it this way, shift it that way, or even agree with them. But a street fighter fighting against a trained martial artist will tend to lose most of the time.

DC: And it takes some training.

SBN: Um-hmm. So that's what we want to try to do. All those kind of things are being developed, and there are people—. In terms of identifying individuals, to me it doesn't matter. Whoever has the heart for it that can stay for one year. They can't do that, then they don't need to be involved in this leadership training.

DC: Can you recommend other people that you think I should talk to who are particularly involved in this neighborhood?

SN: You mean in the—?

DC: In the Parkland—.

SN: Park Duvalle?

DC: Yeah, Park Duvalle.

SN: Yeah, there are any number of individuals. It all depends on what aspect you want to really deal with. Each one of us has a point of view. Some of them may even be contrary. The other day I met somebody who when I showed her this, she said, "Well, my mother was involved in starting the health center." Her mother's not on any

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document, but that doesn't mean she wasn't involved. But her mother came in the middle of the conservation. She may never know that this health committee was the governor's body of the health center. There's a woman over there, Lula McIntire. She's over at the health center.

DC: [Pause] How about Tom Moffett. Is that somebody—?

SN: Who?

DC: Tom Moffett.

SN: Yeah, Tom, he's been involved down here. As a matter of fact, he lives down the street for years and years and years. He retired from the health center, but he's working back at the health center now. He's over there now in the finance department. I used to be the Chairman of the Board of Directors over there last year. Yeah, Tom has a long-term view of all that. He probably has a very reasoned view.

DC: That's what I'm looking for is a long-term view.

SN: Yeah. And just like the guy I just mentioned to you, Dixon, he may or may not be able to gather his thoughts in a way that would be very coherent to you. But he lived in the place that they used to call Little Africa before they built the housing projects over here. It was a labor camp. And he grew up in these housing projects. He's been in this area for most of—. He claims he's fifty-seven.

DC: What's his first name?

SN: James Dixon. If you call over to Park Duvalle Health Center, he's the receptionist over there. He answers the phone. He calls himself the "Voice of Park Duvalle Health Center." Then you've got William Gatewood. Bill Gatewood was on the inside of a whole lot of this. Whereas I was kind of on the outside, counter-elite, Bill was

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more the insider within the power structure. He's currently, I believe, the temporary Interim Director of the Presbyterian Community Center. Yeah, Bill was on the inside. I think Bill may have supervised me at one time, too.

DC: The two things I'm doing while I'm here are looking at sort of neighborhood organizing in this area, but also the whole Rubber Town issue and REACT. So if you could get me in touch with your daughter, that would be great.

SN: You can call her at 551-4734. Ebony and her group, one of the things they try to do is they try to involve the community. They've over time—. It seems to me that they've been quite effective in what they've done, because they use basic information. When they go to those meetings and somebody says well and starts using technical language, they've already consulted with people across the country and the internet and can answer them. That's one of the reasons why they've been effective. This is really one of the things I want to try to popularize, the idea of using facts, to start off with the facts rather than the conclusion. You can contact her.

DC: Is she a Neal or—.

SN: Last name's Cochran. She's married.

DC: Well, I've taken up so much of your time already this morning, so maybe we can end here, or if you have anything I didn't ask you think I should have asked.

SN: Well, there's more than you could possibly ask, because all of this is just being condensed. There's just all kinds of aspects to all this.

DC: OK. I'm here till the end of this week, and then I leave for a week, and then I come back for another ten days. So if you're willing to see me again, I might want to stop by.

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SN: Well, I can. In other words, some of this probably is helpful. Some of this I remember quite personal. Lord, here's the guy who hired me, Frank Clay. He's a realtor, Clay Realty. He died---

DC: Oh really?

SN: Yeah, we called him Clay Daddy, but he came to me somewhere around this time and asked me to take over the social service department. The thing that I want to try to emphasize, really was a tremendously talented and dedicated group of people that created all this, the service center. While the health center is what remains, the health center was just one aspect. They had a parent-child center, Ambition Incorporated, dealing with the youth, had a social service department; that was what I dealt with. The health center dealt with the health issues. Tremendous effort.

DC: Was there a neighborhood organizing component?

SN: Yeah, that's what we were basically doing.

DC: I spoke to a couple of times now—. I actually went to the Yearlings with her the other night, Benitha Ellis.

SC: Yeah, Benitha was active at that time. Benitha was especially active with the education issue, which a lot of people failed to recognize her for. Yeah, but Benitha's a tough woman; I'm talking about physically tough and willful. She came out, and I'm trying to remember, because while all of these things were going on, there were things I was interested in, and they were peripheral to what I was interested in.

DC: You can only do so much.

SN: Yeah. Benitha Ellis, Eddie Hill. Eddie is currently, I think, in a nursing home, but he still has his mind. I've got to go visit. I think he's in the Second Christian

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Nursing Home. Eddie was a friend of Martin King, and Eddie actually has a great memory. I'd like to go by and talk to him. I used to really almost every day, but now it's only periodic. He can remember names and issues that have been thrown...I cannot tell you. Henry Owens, we ran Henry—. When was that? Back in 1960, around [sixty-] eight, I think. He beat Ace Brown, who was the candidate preferred by the system, and Henry was just an upstart.

DC: For what position?

SN: Alderman. I think he was the tenth or eleventh ward alderman. We used a technique. We ran Henry, we ran my brother Jerry, and using just a technique, using phone banks, and just a systematic sort of thing, we ran a woman against Miss Elmore who was totally unknown, named Denita Wright. Matter of fact, she called me, and she considers herself to be a community activist and subject to stand up in a meeting. Her mother was involved with the health center, Barbara Mitchell.

Now you can reach Denita to reach her mother, and Denita's at 776-2970, her home number. Her mother Barbara is now the chairman; she succeeded me as the chairman of the health center board. As a matter of fact, we've been involved in the health center, both of us and others, for a long time, since Erin Brown was the—. He's the one that got me involved in it, and he passed on. Now there are any number, just tons and tons of people that participated in a certain kind of way. So she's got some sort of insight. I think she was there when Harvey Sloane was there.

DC: All right, great. Well, that will get me started.

SN: Yeah.

DC: All right, well, thank you very much. I really appreciate it.

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SN: Nice talking to you.

END OF TRANSCRIPT

Transcribed by Carrie Blackstock, September, 2006