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This is an interview conducted with Floyd McKissick in
North Carolina on December 6, 1973 by Jack Bass

Floyd McKissick: I've been active in North Carolina politics I think since I was about sixteen or seventeen, in high school. And shortly after high school. I've just been involved in politics. . .I was in the NAACP when I was twelve.

Jack Bass: You graduated from high school when?

McKissick: In 1939, in Asheville, North Carolina. And from that time on, I was in politics in Asheville, North Carolina and wherever I went. I went to school in Atlanta. . .Morehouse College and I was in politics there and I was in the Progressive Party, the Wallace party and I worked actively there and I think probably the first real politicalization came when the city council of Asheville, North Carolina refused to permit Paul Robeson to speak at the city auditorium, and this small delegation of an integrated group went to the meeting of the city council in Asheville to ask them to change the policy to permit Paul Robeson to speak. And I ended up that. . .I just went there as one of the group, but I ended up being the spokesman, practically the

spokesman, for the group.

J.B.: When was that?

McKissick: Oh, check your records. . .this is the same thing I was telling you earlier. . .check your records during the Progressive campaign at that time. . .

J.B.: This was during the Wallace campaign?

McKissick: Henry Wallace.

J.B.: Henry Wallace, yeah. (laughter)

McKissick: Yes, be sure, this is Henry Wallace in this campaign.

(laughter) So, at any rate, I was active up to that time in voter registration drives and working with the Progressive Party and I was president of the Atlanta University chapter. . .Atlanta University, of course, includes Morehouse, Spelman and Morris Brown at that time. Now it includes Clark University in Atlanta. And I ended up being elected president of that group of Wallace for President people, where you had all five universities, well, actually, the three major universities and two other schools, including the Atlanta School of Social Work and the Atlanta School of Mortuary Science at that time. . .anyway, I ended up having the presidency at that time in Atlanta. We had voter registration drives and there was another fellow by the name of Don West from Oglethorpe University who was quite active in the movement and basically the politics was to bring out a great number of blacks that could be calculated to influence the Progressive Party at

that time. Certainly young people, and that was the movement that I was in at that day. I think we had the first integrated party. . .to raise funds, we had the first integrated party at the old Morehouse College gym and it was predicted that hell was going to break loose because of it, because of this integrated party in those days. This was in the '39, '40 and '41 school years. During that period of time. Some of these specific dates could be run down.

J.B.: Were you the first black student at the University of North Carolina law school?

McKissick: Yes.

J.B.: And you brought suit to gain admittance, right?

McKissick: Right.

J.B.: And this was what? . . .you entered in. . .?

McKissick: I entered in 1951.

J.B.: You mentioned Frank Porter Graham's campaign for the Senate and you had a role in that. How would you describe that campaign?

McKissick: Well, I think that Frank Porter Graham had a massive appeal as an educator. He was a very progressive man. At that time, it was. . .how you used terms and labels was much different from now. A great effort in the campaign was not to bill him as a liberal. It would have been better, and I think possibly because he was a natural, very warm human who held compassion for people

enabled the strict conservative forces to organize against him. You remember he was defeated in the run-off, he won in the first election. And at that time, it was. . .the primary, he won the primary and then the run-off election, he was defeated because they had then decided to really launch into an attack upon him because of the strong black support that he had. That fact was used against him. And they organized along racial lines. That campaign was done that way. Bad literature went out making him to be everything that he wasn't. At that time, to associate with blacks openly in this part of the country. . .a certain amount of association was permissible, but then some other forms were not. And it was a very bad campaign, bad in the sense that he lost, but it was bad for the state because I think that he would have played a hell of a force in moving the South and the nation forward.

J.B.: You mentioned Key's book. Key refers to North Carolina as a progressive tradition, being open in ideas and advanced from the rest of the South in attitudes toward blacks and generally just being far more progressive. Now, since Key's book, you not only had Graham's defeat, you had the defeat of the two North Carolina congressmen who refused to sign the Southern Manifesto in 1956, you had the victory last year of George Wallace in the presidential primary over Terry Sanford and you had the victory of Jesse Helms for the U.S. Senate. My question is this: was Key right and if he was right, has there been change since in so far as there is

a progressive attitude in North Carolina?

McKissick: Well, I think that Key was correct. I think that there have been some changes and the changes on the national level also affect your state-wide changes. You could also add to the defeat of Galifinakis by Jesse Helms to the list of changes and attitudes, but then one must look to the adequacy of a campaign, how it was financed, the organizers, the sentiment of the people, the times. Then, you've got to look at the backdrop of the Civil Rights movement and its major effect upon the United States was a very positive one, but the nation moves into fads and it was "do-good to the black people" during the sixties, 61 and '62 and then it fades. And then the riots came about and then you had that reverse trend. The urban riots created a "this is as far as we are going" attitude and "we will stop here." And that was in all of the major cities and then that attitude, the rebellions and the riots came to smaller communities and southern communities after it had left the big urban society. Which means that you've got a delay in a period of time and I think that all of these and the war, the Vietnam crisis at that time, all of these have an effect or influence candidates to posture their positions on the attitudes and sentiments of the people. On the other hand, you could point to say, the recent election of Jim Holshouser, who was a liberal Republican as opposed to a very conservative

Republican. And you can contrast the difference between a Holshouser and a Jesse Helms. I think that you could find more individual patterns like that. I think that North Carolina is a state of constraint. It never had people to stand in the school doors and say, "Thou shalt not pass," for example. I think that it's always been an attitude to move forward. Not only was I the first black to attend the University of North Carolina, I turned around and sued to open up the undergraduate school of the University of North Carolina and you were able to reach a compromise. . .I broke down segregation in the mental hospitals in North Carolina, too. . .and there's been an attitude of "Well, I'm willing to do it, but go ahead and sue me so I can do it." It's been that kind of an attitude. "The public makes me do it." In other words, "I'm safe in doing it when I'm forced. If I do it beforehand, I'm classified as a liberal, and I can't."

(interruption on tape)

W.D.V.: . . .1948 to 1973 in terms of the Civil Rights movement in North Carolina. If you were to think of gains made in that time, there may be lots of moving forward and backwards, but does it separate into periods? Or is it pretty much a steady progression? Is there anyway to look at that twenty-five year period?

J.B.: And is North Carolina just part of the overall South?

McKissick: Well, I think that certainly, it would be part of the overall South, but I think that North Carolina. . .one way you

could examine that period, one could easily examine from the type of lawsuits for the advancement of the cause of black people in the various areas to get an index of what occurred. And I would think that during that period of time, the emphasis was on education, primarily. The education and upward mobility of educators is basically concerned I think with education and I think also with some integration of labor unions. Once again, you are looking at a number of attitudes that influenced the attitudes of those in power. . .their ability to do things without a force of law, was also important. During Terry Sanford's time, I think he used general orders or just put good people in spots to try to make things happen, who would move along. Once you had a Civil Rights Act passed, it was easier to do things. So, North Carolina has had an attitude of once it is put in a position to do something along racial lines, most of the time, it cheerfully accepted the mandate and went on and did it. And then, I think there's a difference in attitudes between the larger metropolitan areas. . .of course, we have an agrarian state basically and we have no major big cities, our largest cities are around a 100,000, Charlotte may be up to 150,000 now. Greensboro, Raleigh, Durham, High Point, Asheville, Wilmington, places like that are around 100,000. But I think that in most of the middle Piedmont area, there's an attitude to go forward, to do more.

W.D.V.: Did the biggest gains occur in the last ten years, say, compared to the fifteen years before that? Are is there any way to

mark it off in terms of periods?

McKissick: I think that most black people automatically distinguish, even by organizations, I think we start in 1960. . .the 1954 Supreme Court decision, I say you follow those suits, the pattern of those suits and how they were brought. . .and then you come to the second Supreme Court decision in Brown vs. the Board of Education and then you've got to take into concern the freedom rides that occurred in the forties. Then, you've got to take into consideration the sit-in movements of the sixties, which in my mind, was the real force in American society to really change American society. The demonstrations which went to bring about a substantial change in North Carolina in the line of public accomendations and moving up. So, I think that you could divide that movement on the basis of. . .I think if I were to divide it generally now, I'd divide it as the legal movement as one, in which you sought to get your rights and this legal movement bogged down. Then you had the protest movements that moved it forward.

W.D.V.: Beginning with the sit-ins?

McKissick: Well, I don't say beginning with the sit-ins, because you had the freedom riders prior to the sit-ins. You had two sets of freedom riders. The first one I was part of, I think, and another guy at Asheville by the name of Joe Feldman (?) I think, was part of it, Rustin, (?) Jim Houser, on the original freedom rides that happened about '46 or '47. These were the original freedom rides and that's where kids, when that bus came down, got beaten, And Chapel

Hill, Jim Peck was the white guy that got beaten at the bus station in Chapel Hill. That was the first freedom ride and of course that took about that much item in the newspaper at that time. The climate wasn't ready to see blacks take that kind of step. I think the outward climate had moved and attitudes had changed to recognize that the freedom rides would make a front page item later.

J.B.: You were a major participant in the Meredith march, what followed after James Meredith got shot in the continuing march in Mississippi.

McKissick: Yeah. I led that, I organized that march. We issued the call to bring all the organizations together to continue the march at the spot where he fell.

J.B.: Then, there was that split with _____, when Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young came down and split as to whether or not to make a black unity movement and later Carmichael got arrested and speeches and black power slogan developed, which is I think, usually associated with the beginning of black awareness. Did the idea of Soul City sort of grow out of that development?

McKissick: Soul City was an idea before the movement. Soul City actually started after World War II, in my mind. And it was first talked about when we saw the use of the Marshall Plan, and all like that. See, I've always been in real estate and I've always been a businessman. I was projected into national prominence as a civil rights leader, not as one who had a vitae in business. Because, at that time, this is what people wanted to know. . .who was speaking, who

was leading, who was a spokesman in the movement, not what is the resume of Floyd McKissick. But I'm doing what I advocated, I doing right now the same thing I was doing since I've been twelve years old and since I've been talking about it, even though I've gone through a civil rights movement.

J.B.: But do you see Soul City as an extension of the civil rights movement? With legal fight and protest and economic development?

McKissick: Oh yeah. Absolutely.

W.D.V.: Is that the way you see it, legal, then protest, then economic development?

McKissick: Yeah.

W.D.V.: Is there a physical part here too, to the movement? One part is more physical and more violent than another part?

McKissick: Oh yeah, protest. You would subdivide your protest, most likely.

J.B.: How significant do you see the Voting Rights Act? In its effect on southern politics?

McKissick: Well, I think it has had profound effect. I think that we've got more elective black officials now than we've ever had.

J.B.: How about the effect on white politicians?

McKissick: I think that it has changed white politicians to attempt to get those votes. And therefore their language changes. I think it has brought about a change, period. If a man has got a constituency of 50% black and 50% white and he's got to appeal to both of them, why

he's got to develop a line of strategy that he couldn't develop if he was appealing to all whites.

J.B.: Do you think it has resulted also in a general change of attitudes, or only in political strategy? On the part of white politicians that is?

McKissick: It would depend on the man. I think it has done some of both, but I think it would really depend on the man. But I think that most of them now realize that with the passage of the Civil Rights Act, many of them. . .the Civil Rights Act freed a lot of white people too, to be able to openly say things they always wanted to say, or live by their philosophical beliefs. I think it freed a lot of white people, too.

W.D.V.: Could I go back to the way you see the last twenty-five years again? The legal movement and the protest. Where's the protest, where did that go? What new period followed that one? Jack mentioned economic development. Is that what you see? After the protest movement?

McKissick: I don't get what you're trying to. . .

W.D.V.: Well, it seems to me that the movement went through a physical or even a kind of violent period and then that ended. Or apparently ended. Now, something new has started.

McKissick: No, it's not new.

W.D.V.: It's not new.

McKissick: No, it's not.

W.D.V.: Well, what is it?

McKissick: I mean, I asked you whether you had read my book. It's not new. The whole struggle is for the black man to become equal to the other man and each organizational movement might have used a different name. Some said, "Equality", some said, "Liberation," some said, "Freedom." But hell, a man is just like any other man and he's expressing the same sort mission that Voltaire, Rousseau and anybody else ever expressed. In other words, "Get your foot off of my back." Period. "And if by the time you push it one direction and the foot is still on there and you get two inches above you, you still can't stand up." So, you push it a little more and if you don't push to the left, you push to the right. It hasn't changed. You push until you get it off you. And you use the strategies that are available to do it.

W.D.V.: What was the effect of the assassination of Dr. King?

McKissick: I think that there were numerous effects. It changed the organization in one sense. I think that Dr. King was by far, he was the leader, and I'm saying that all of them were very good, I think that King's presence sort of overshadowed the leadership parade. I think it had a profound effect on the movement, I think it changed the character of the movement. Yet, I would think that the movement was changing in that direction even when King was alive. You move as far as you can with what you've got. That's the way a movement goes. Then, if you reach a concrete barrier, then you've either got to find a method to go around the walls or go over the walls. And the

movement had reached a concrete barrier. And there were people who had ideas as to how to go around the wall and how to crack the wall, how to blow the wall down, and how to just march around it. And the struggle continues to move on now.

J.B.: What has been the effect of what has commonly been referred to as the "Republican southern strategy", as far as blacks in the South are concerned? The slowing down of enforcement, not only slowing down, but in some cases, a discontinuement of enforcing title 4 of the Civil Rights Act?

McKissick: I don't think that strategy might be. . .

J.B.: I might throw in here the idea of "benign neglect."

McKissick: Benign neglect, yeah. I think that strategy has been in operation in certain places, but I think where there is strong leadership again in a black community, they could overcome the benign neglect concept. I also think it becomes necessary to carry on the struggle for intergration to all parts of the system, to be able to really be in functionary roles to puncture the benign neglect theory. I think that with the rise of a number of black elected officials throughout the south, that we've had. . .while we have not made the great amount of progress that we seek to make and there's a whole lot that needs to be done now. . .I think that the entire image and attitude of the people has moved to a point that once the laws are on the book, and once that we know how to use the laws, then you have a method to deal with people that attempt to prevent you from using the laws to

your advantage.

J.B.: Some people like to use a sort of popular concept, saying that the civil rights movement is dead.

McKissick: Yeah, I've read that a number of times and I think that's a misnomer. In fact, I started doing an article on that. I think that's based upon what they conceived as the objectives of blacks within a limited period of time, not as how minorities actually view themselves.

J.B.: Right, that's my question. How do you perceive the movement at this point? Where is it and where is it going?

McKissick: Well, now once again, if you define the term of movement, that could be wrong too. And if you define the term, "civil rights" that could be wrong. It's a question of man's attitudes. It's just like someone asked me about Soul City, the name of Soul City, saying that it implied blackness. I said, "Why?" Soul is a religious concept and it's because of the racial attitudes of outward America that make it black. But the real meaning of "soul" and where it came from, is the Christian church where people expressed themselves by shouting and giving true expression to their emotions. And the same music and beat was taken into the popular vein and they called it "soul."

J.B.: Is this how you view "soul" when you speak of Soul City?

McKissick: Oh yeah. We come from a religious concept. That's what it is. Period.

J.B.: Which is within the movement that I have referred to, for want of a better term, as "black awareness." Soul sometimes, is projected as. . .

McKissick: That's contemporary. That's a contemporary meaning of the word "soul" as with pop music and etc. But it was laying around a long time in a religious context. And that is its real meaning and where it really was devised.

J.B.: Before Dr. King died, he wrote that the whole legal and protest struggle was just the first part of the civil rights movement. Now, the movement for blacks, at least, was for full equality. And the next part had to do with the elimination of poverty and he questioned whether or not the country was committed toward that goal, or even understood it. I wondered how you react to that?

McKissick: Well. . .put your question again.

J.B.: Well, Dr. King wrote before his death that the civil rights legislation, the legal battles was a battle for legal equality and it had more or less been won. And he viewed that as the first stage and the second stage had to do with basic economic struggle and the elimination of poverty and its bounds on freedom, in effect. And he felt the country failed to perceive this and questioned whether or not there was any commitment to it.

McKissick: I think that he perceived that correctly. But it's not just that simple. For too long, we have tended to categorize or divide economics from politics or politics from economics, when they

are in fact tied so closely together that it is difficult to separate them. I think that the question that becomes paramount in say, the 1970's, is the strategy, not principle. You've just simply got to make an inventory of what every minority's got and what they haven't got. And then you've got to develop a strategy to get that, based upon the law, based upon skills and abilities to get it. I said that Dr. King's statement was correct. The battle of the sixties made the big banks say, "We'll take cashiers, we need accountants". . .but how many of us were educated to be accountant? I think there has to be a recognition to carry the struggle forward in the seventies, you are going to have to have far more skills in the seventies than you had in the sixties, when the premium for rewarding good leadership was courage. . .courage to stand in front of firehoses and let a dog bite them and keep on marching. But, if you use the courage to open the doors, how the hell do you go in and stay in? The protest was not geared toward that. . .a protest can only be temporary and it is a temporary strategy and the principle is on a very high level and it then becomes time to develop another strategy, once you've exhausted efforts of protest.

J.B.: So, you see a period of consolidation for the South, insofar as blacks are concerned? Entering into a period of consolidation of these gains, the opening of the doors?

McKissick: Yeah, I think that would be a pretty good evaluation of it.

W.D.V.: Can we stay with that point about the seventies, about strategies? In order to do that, don't you have to have more skills for blacks than they have now? In order to implement these kinds of strategies?

McKissick: Correct, correct.

W.D.V.: Then, the seventies will become a time when you see the teaching of skills, communication skills and other skills?

McKissick: In other words, you've got to look back and face the truth. You've got to look back and say, "Well, now, what did we accomplish in the name of integration? Was integration a token? We got a lot of blacks in places, but what are they really doing in these places? How many black accounting firms do we have that are known or nationally recognized? How many black manufacturers do we have of automobiles? Have we really in fact, completed the battle of integration? What has been the effect of the Civil Rights Act?" You've got to simply add up and what the addition comes to, you've got to admit it and then you've got to say, "Damn it, we've got to change. " How many architect-planners do we have? How many financial planners, mechanical engineers? How have guidance programs, etc. been sending the kids. . . where have they gone? Is it not time now to recognize that we've got enough sociologists and say, "Stop right here. Don't we need more political scientists if we are going to continue this struggle?" What are your resources to go forward with and if your desire is to really get into Wall Street and you recognize that right now, the biggest

barrier in the struggle of integration is the economic barrier which you have not yet penetrated. When you say that you've got the largest insurance company in the world in North Carolina Mutual, is it in fact large, by white standards? What are its assests, by white standards? Is there a need to continue talking about "black is beautiful?" Is it not right that white kids say that "white is beautiful?" Is it not right that red kids say that "red is beautiful?" Is it not right that brown kids. . .o.k. Now we are out of the "beautiful bag", the slogan era. Well, where the hell are you and what are you going to do to become a full fledged American? Or do you want to go back to Africa? I for one believe I'm going to stay here. This is the kind of cold analytical analysis that I believe we need. And that's why I've been concentrating on what I'm doing and what I'm making.

W.D.V.: Do you see the seventies becoming intensely pragmatic, then?

McKissick: Absolutely.

W.D.V.: As opposed to the ideological and. . .

McKissick: That's right, absolutely.

W.D.V.: That you might lose if you don't. . .

McKissick: Yes, if you don't become coldly pragmatic, you might lose the things that you've gained during the sixties. Conceiveably, you didn't make the gains that you thought you were making at that time. You see what I mean.

W.D.V.: Do you think that most black leaders are willing to make that kind of cold assessment?

McKissick: No. I think a lot of them are not ready to make it. I think that a lot of them feel that it's still a matter of protest. That you point to the evils of society, but that you don't attempt to correct them. I'm solution-oriented and I made up my mind that I'd have to become solution-oriented and I made up my mind that you cannot talk about what you must own and control until you simply develop the team and the skills and you went out and you did it.

W.D.V.: There is really no other way to achieve power?

McKissick: If you think that you can take power from somebody, I think that you are whistling Dixie. And I think that if Rockefeller anointed me tomorrow, "Floyd McKissick, be Rockefeller", he wouldn't give me any power by doing it. I think that power is something that you acquire by growth, stage and skill, development of the mind and ability to use the mind successfully and the ability to deal with all facets of American society and I think that power comes by having a damn sound analytical mind, and mind that doesn't carry chips on its shoulders and the ability to have funds to solve problems with. That's just a part of it, of course.

W.D.V.: In your own context, though, it makes it pretty damn important that Soul City succeed as a town.

McKissick: Oh, absolutely.

W.D.V.: Just as a town concept, forgetting about the black aspect of it.

McKissick: That's right. Forgetting about the black aspect of it. If

it succeeded as an all black town, it would be defeating my objectives. Because I believe that the force of the new town concept is a strong socio-political-economic force that deals with every rangeable problem that we have in American society. We can focus it on one and we can bring together, you know, the private sector and we can bring together industry, government and educational resources to really build the town free of racism. I'm still an integrationist. I've often said that I was a cultural nationalist, when I say a cultural black nationalist, I accept what I am and I'm proud of what I am. My ancestry is Africa and you know, all that. But, I'm an American and I don't want to be anything else but that.

W.D.V.: Where do you stand right now? Do you think this new town concept is going to succeed?

McKissick: Yeah.

W.D.V.: What will the impact be on, say, the rest of this state and the South? Forget about the nation for a moment? Where do you see that going?

McKissick: I can't give you a clear cut answer, but its total impact is going to be to let America see that there is a solution to many of the problems that we have. It will also let the state know that the state has participated and supported this project. I doubt that other states could have gotten the support that this project has gotten from the state of North Carolina. The state of North Carolina will benefit economically by having a project like this. A project

like this appeals to the self interest of people. It opens thousands of opportunities, not just full employment, but upward mobility of employment to agree with the psychological man and his ego, to a great extent. Rather than throwing people together in a highly competitive society where there are only four or five leadership roles, Soul City opens up thousands of leadership roles, as compared to that. I think that by having those leadership roles available, it increases the quality of people. I think that will be here.

W.D.V.: This really intrigues me. You take something like delivery of health services, do you see the way that you are going to set that up as kind of a model for an urban environment? Or the way you are going to deliver educational services and so on? Are you going to be doing that differently than other urban places have done?

McKissick: Well, I think that we are going to be. . .Soul City is somewhat experimental. And we don't make rules to be different.

W.D.V.: I mean, are you going to have the same models?

McKissick: But we are flexible enough to accomplish the objectives that we seek. And we were talking about being solution-oriented. We don't think that what has gone on, we are debating now as to what kind of tax structure do you want? Or the use of tax funds. Can they not include transportation? So, all of our transportation could be free. So these are the kind of concepts that we deal with here as opposed to being in, say, the Raleigh or Durham area, where you are just wasting time even talking about dealing with one of those

concepts. My time is running short.

J.B.: Let me ask you one quick question. Getting back to North Carolina politics, what is your perception of the role of Terry Sanford in this state and how significant was his administration? During this twenty-five year period?

McKissick: Well, I think he played a very significant role in North Carolina politics. I think that his role cannot be underestimated. You can see facts of what Terry Sanford has done in a number of ways. I knew him. . .

J.B.: Can you give me a couple of examples?

McKissick: I think the educational system. He concentrated on education and he's written a number of books, and he used education to permeate the whole political system. It just permeated the whole political system. To be fully aware of education. And you look at where North Carolina schools were when he came in and when he went out. See, he was a gifted man and he could meet and associate with anybody. He took strong stands when it was time for him to take strong stands. He took them and he made the movement. He was never a coward. If he told you he was going to do something, he did it. If he wasn't going to do something, he didn't do it. If you know him personally. . .he has rendered some assistance on this project, for example. Duke works with us in some ways on the Soul City project.

J.B.: I think you said that he raised the level of consciousness about education. Do you think that is one of the factors that resulted

in overwhelming approval of this major bond issue this year? Did that lead to that, is there a sort of cause and affect relation?

McKissick: Well, Terry Sanford, used, while he was governor, he became the teacher for North Carolina, in a sub-conscious way. He changed so durned many people's attitudes. In education, he became the teacher of attitudes in the state of North Carolina. He brought people together by his public statements and his remarks. I don't know whether many people realize just how effectively he could build attitudes so rapidly in this state by virute of his committment to education. And so many people. . .well, I'd say that when you talk about education, I think that he would have pretty near 98% of the people with him, that quoted him on educational issues and that same support would go in other areas whenever he needed it. When you say that it had an effect upon North Carolina, it has been a profound effect, even in the civil rights issue while the struggle was going on. We used to meet with him, have breakfast with him at the Mansion. He called me in and said, "Now, look, I'm not opposed to the demonstrations. I just don't want violence. You demonstrate all you want, just recognize your limits." I said, "Well, we are going to demonstrate." He said, "Well, I'm going to set up a Good Neighbor Council in this state." That was one of his first acts and Capus Waynick, I think, was the director of the Good Neighbor Council, from High Point, used to be his visible representative.

(end of side A of tape)

McKissick: He took a personal hand in seeing that the Good Neighbor Council got off the board, it was not a. . .it was called Good Neighbor Council because that was probably the best name that it could be called in the state of North Carolina at that time without being a radical. But it was serving as a civil rights banner and then it also served to bring, I think at one time we were in Goldsboro and the Klu Klux Klan was meeting us on the street in a head on battle and we weren't going to move out of the streets and the Klu Klux Klan wasn't going to move out of the streets and he notified the highway patrol and he told them to exercise due caution. He wouldn't let the local police move out of hand if a demonstration was occurring. I talked to him one time and I said, "A demonstration has got to run its course. The best thing to do is to let it run its course." We agreed upon that. I think that the attitude exhibited and Terry Sanford's actions would put him, certainly in my mind, as one of the very best governors that North Carolina has ever had.

J.B.: If you have time, I would like to ask you about your perception of busing. In particular, the black perception of busing.

McKissick: I've got to run to Charlotte and they tell me I've got about a dozen phone calls to make before I run now. I'm a believer that just the physical bus itself can't really solve constitutional problems. It's people that have to solve the problems and busing is overemphasizing a mechanical method to achieve a social goal. And in some instances, busing is desirable, in other instances, busing

would not be a desirable thing. Just like I think that many places in the South, including North Carolina, when finally the courts said "we will have integration," integration meant that you were going to lose the black schools. They were going to close. In many instances it destroyed that black middle class society, which would have been. . . I mean teachers in that group. . .it had a very bad effect, because then there was educational effort to bring people together, so to speak. These lost jobs and in many instances, left the community. Then you had a battle between the haves and have nots. I think that integration has been used,. . .it has thrown many black teachers out of jobs in the South. Southern Regional Council, you see. . .talk to John Lewis, I think they gathered much data and statistics on just effective integration has been and to what extent and where these black teachers went and how many left jobs, etc. I digress to get back to the point of busing. I'd much rather see in many instances. . .there is nothing wrong with a school that is predominantly black if you've really got the facilities, the equipment and the teachers there. Nothing wrong with it. What are you going to do about that in ,say, the eastern part of North Carolina where you have counties like Warren or many of these counties, where the population is going to make that school a predominantly black school. It's there. Period. And the kids need to be educated, period. And you are going to bus these kids over to some other place and that is going to force a closing while in the meantime, these kids need an education. You need to be

dealing with the issues and I think that every kid has an individual constitutional right to an education. So, I think that sometimes. . .I believe in busing. But I believe that. . .I don't like to apply a general rule, being a lawyer, there are more exceptions to general rules than the application of the general rules. . .the number of times it is applied to a given situation. I think you have to look at a situation and determine who those people are and what they are trying to seek and then try to bring those people together to achieve the goals that we set for ourselves.

(interruption on tape)

McKissick: . . .it might not be 100% free of racism, but I bet you that if we can get in there, it will be 70% free of racism. Because I think that we are automatically running those people out who believe in that concept and those who don't believe in it aren't going to be around anyway.

J.B.: How important in your mind, is Soul City as a model for the rest of the South?

McKissick: I think that it's about the only thing that is really positive going at this time. Of those projects that are going. I think that other people have got good projects that are going to serve a purpose, but I think because of the "big dream" as people say of it, and what it embraces in so many different areas of concern, that it is basically the civil rights movement, if you want to use that and I'll let you use that term to make it simple, it is the movement. And when

you look at the staff around here and you see where they have been, they have now got out of the streets, gone back to school, taken the specific sciences that he said you needed to know and then have returned here. And our applications now are generally coming in by the tons now, recognizing some of the things that I've said. In fact, I got a letter from a guy the other day that said, "I disagreed with you and I remember when you presented your plan". . .that was Dr. Clark of the Metropolitan Human Resources in New York. . ."and I attacked your plan of Soul City as a return to segregation because you wanted to go back to the South." And he said, "And all the things you said about blacks going back to the South has been fulfilled, and I'm going to join you. Because I now see that that is the only thing, and I admit that I was wrong in opposing you. And now I'm going to join you." And he asked, "How can I join, and in what capacity?"

(interruption on tape)

McKissick: I said, if this pattern can be set up right it can create so durn many opportunities, it can take the pressure off the larger cities. You see, the bigger cities represent. . .there is always the argument of "can you have big cities dying?" Well, the big cities have got to live, they represent so much for us. . .and I think it's the quality of how manageable can big cities be? And I think that if you could take three million people out of certain areas of New York City and develop a town over here, a community that allows a person to have their upward mobility, to move forward. In other

words, you create a university out here and you've got a great number of new jobs for professors, you see, teachers, employees and such. The advantage of a new town is that it starts off as a non-competitive force for existing towns. And it can siphon off thousands of people and I think that every man seeks to be able to rise to his highest level. Every man is likewise motivated by self-interest and every man wants to be happy. He doesn't want to fight. He really wants to love, not fight. And I believe that if you can combine these things, just like when we came here, what's it going to do with Oxford and other things? Now, one of the things I've got to do before I leave here today is get an agreement between Oxford and Henderson for our regional water system. They say Well, you come down here. . . the emphasis has always been made upon people's differences. If I found out that there's one point where you differ from me, see and you found out the one point where I differ from you, we'd fight over that and then we'd walk away. We never talk about what we agree upon. And I say that if you bring a group of whites from Oxford, Henderson, Franklin County, Warrenton, all these counties around here and sit them down together and say, "What do we want?" and start sifting all their wants. . . and you bring all the blacks together and you'll find that they've got 90% common interests and you put them together to start working for those 90% common objectives, bring them back together one year later and you'll find they have now increased to 93 or 94. I think that you've got

to forget the differences and put people together to work on common objectives. Just forget the damn differences, we can't solve them anyway, most of the time and you're always going to have pretty near that 5% difference. Get them together on their common objectives and you slowly detract from their differences.