Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs

ORAL INTERVIEW

FATHER DADE

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McBRIDE, INTERVIEWERS
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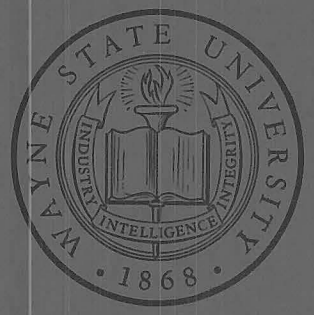

Wayne State University
Detroit, Michigan

DATE: September 17, 1969

INTERVIEWERS: Jim Keeney and Roberta McBride are interviewing Father Dade.

M: We are asking Father Dade about his experiences here in Detroit which really date right back to the period we're interested in, the year 1936 and following. Would you tell us what you anticipated before you came to the city? Were you expecting the city to be any different from the way you found it?

D: That's a good question. No, I was very much surprised when I came to Detroit because I hadn't anticipated anything. So, I was surprised when I came to St. Cyprian because there was practically nothing to work with. Now, from the other areas, I had no knowledge of anything, at all.

M: There weren't many people then living in this area or had the church itself not been developed?

D: The church hadn't been developed. I humorously remember it was a store front, looked like, not a store front, but looked like a voting booth. I remember the gentleman who brought me. I said, "Well, what do you have for work with young people?" and he said, "There". I said, "Where?" And he kept pointing to that little church and I sort of had a feeling of hopelessness that I was in for something. But, we soon built this church and things began to move.

K: How old is St. Cyprian?

D: Personally 51 years. If you count it from the founding. Though when I came here the...what we called the Little Low St. Cyprian was in existence. (Nice little church, I would say seating about

75 people or more but very unpretentious)

M: What did most of your parishioners do? How did they make their living?

D: That's an interesting question because there's such a contrast. I would say that a good many of the parishioners at that time worked for Ford's, they worked in the plants. And, I remember feeling the effects of, how do you say it "as the Ford goes, so Detroit goes." And I remember feeling the trepidation that if Ford's would shut down, as it did shut down for what do they call it?...

K: Re-tooling?

D: Retooling. Why, you'd sense that the offerings would slow up. There be a distinct fall off. And, like everybody else in Detroit, you felt the influence of or flavor of the Ford Motor Company and the other plants, but mostly Ford because most of our members worked for Ford.

K: Were any of the membership in a higher position?

D: Not at all. They were all just working in the common leagues. I guess the only one that wasn't was Jim Price, who was a... I forget what they called them then. I forget the particular term, it's a term that they designated. But, he could hire and fire right on the spot. And I soon learned of him. But, outside of Jim Price, I don't know any Negro out at Ford's that had any top executive position. Price did.

K: There was Don Marshall.

D: Well, Don Marshall was independent in having charge of the... of employment. But, Price was a part of the executive life of the... I'm trying to think what he had to do with, wheels? or

something. But, he had this position because of his ability and his knowledge. And...

M: Is he still living?

D: I think he's still living. You haven't seen him yet?

M: No, I... In fact, I don't seem to know his name.

D: Well, you ought to contact him. Yes

M: So, he would be one of the first Negroes at Ford's Rouge to rise to an executive position?

D: Right. Now, whether he rose to it or whether he came up through the plant, I don't know...whether he was...I don't know. But, he was somebody.

M: And attended this church?

D: No, he was not a member of this church.

M: Oh, I see. But you knew about him?

D: Yes, I knew about him. And from what I used to hear, he was a very fair minded person. Now, whether he did anything to anticipate the coming of the UAW and its contribution to economic justice out there, I doubt; I don't think so, but as far as the average labor relations which he had anything to do with it... (Telephone rings) Hello! (conversation follows)

M: Did your church receive any contributions from Henry Ford?

D: That's a very, very... I remember there was a time I was very indignant about that question. But, no that's... You're hitting now on the crux of the relationship of the Ford Motor Company, particularly with the black church, the so called Negro church. Most of the Negro churches received contributions from Ford Motor Company or from Mr. Marshall or from somewhere, of coal and odd jobs. They had that you're probably familiar with that system

by which you went to your minister and the minister gave you a letter. And, you took the letter off to the plant. Mr. Marshall might or might not hire you but at least... The terrible thing about this was it put you under a bind to Mr. Marshall and I soon became aware of that. I guess the good Lord, the Holy Spirit was guiding me, but I never got caught in that trap, though it was pitiful to see how men would come to you and beg you to just give them a letter. And, I'd say, "Well, a letter for what?" I knew what they wanted-- a letter to get a job. I said, "Well, I don't know Mr. Marshall and I don't know anybody out at Ford Motor Company. And, I said , My letter won't work. What good would that do?" "Well, you just give me a letter so I can get a job." So it went on for so long that... The fact that I wasn't giving letters got to Mr. Marshall; he sent word by somebody that if I would send out letters, a letter, that he'd place these people at work. But, there was the sad case of a man who belonged to this church, and still does. I imagine he would look back now with a kind of poignancy at this. But, he once shocked me by saying he was a member of my Men's Club and then by saying he was going to St. Matthew's Men's Club. And, I said, "Well, how in the world can you belong to two men's clubs?" "Well", he said, "I belong to St. Matthew's Men' Club because of Mr. Marshall. All of the men who belong to St. Matthew's Club, Men's Club, have some sort of tie-in with Mr. Marshall and Father Daniels and through them you have to buy a car and also you're assured of work and continuing work at the Ford Motor Company." Well, I thought that was scandalous.

Now, this is before the UAW came into the picture. But, the thing that kept me from getting into this letter business, why it was repugment in the first place. I never heard of a man having to...get a job by virtue of a letter and then they would offer you... I had a man offer me $50 for a letter and all I had to say was just that I recommend the bearer of this letter for employment at Ford Motor Company and I had never seen the man before. And it wasn't so much that they employed the man, as it was that one more Negro church was tied into Ford and once you did that, through the economic bind that Marshall had on this man, he also had on the church because you wouldn't want to put the man and his family out in the streets and so you went along with it. But we at St. Cyrian never did that.

K: Did you ever talk to people like Rev. Hill about this before the union came up? I mean, apparently, Rev. Hill wasn't in this.

D: No, Rev. Hill, Rev. White and I were three out of oh, I guess 57 or maybe a hundred that took in any Negro minister in town whom Marshall could lay his hands on and I'm just saying I know of the prominent ones. But, there were many whom I had never heard of who were tied in. You know, it was a real thing to have your coal and all that help. I'll never forget once we went out to Zee Woodruff's. You know her, she's a prominent woman lawyer around here. You remember Dr. Huttnon?

K: Yes, Dr. Huttnon.

D: Huttnon and this lady (Oh, it was one of the most distinguished groups of leaders in the town--black and white) and they went out

to see Mr. Bennett about hiring Negro women in the plant. And Mr. Bennett was profane in his language, not withstanding the presence of these ladies in the company. And, he said, I'll never forget what he said. I asked him, I said to him," Is it true, do you run the Ford Motor Company?" And he told me, he said, "Yes, I run the Ford Motor Company, Ford doesn't run it; I run it. And, "he said," now Reverend, if you come out here tomorrow, we'll be able to talk." That was the same old story. He said he wanted me to come out the next day and we'd get in there and we'd talk and there'd be a deal for some sort of a hand-out and then he'd tie in the Negro church and so called Negro ministers with the so called (what was I going to say) one leader representing the people, possibly it might have been in vogue and he would have had whatever arrangement...deal he had worked out would represent, would be speaking for Negro people in Detroit. And I...

K: When was this meeting?

M: Yes.

D: What year?

K: What year was this in?

D: I can't remember.

M: Was it before or after the UAW organizing drive?

D: It probably was after because it was a matter...This had to do with the question of bringing...

K: This would be during the war, wouldn't it?

D: Yes, it would be... Bringing women into the plants. This is after the introduction of the UAW. So, it's bringing women into the plant. So, I asked him also about it being bugged...

He said, "Yes it was bugged". So, it amused me though not pleasant amusement. But, here you had a group of people who were the cream of the crop of liberal leadership in town - not necessarily liberal but sound and good people and he sat up there and insulted them. And, gave them no consideration, no promise about hiring Negro women. And, he just passed right over them.

K: Was Josephine Gomon working for Bennett then?

D: Now that I don't remember.

K: Yes, because she worked for him during the war.

D: Yes, well, I don't remember that. I knew her. I don't know if she's living, still living, or not.

K: Yes. She's supposed to be writing a book.

D: Still living, yes, she's still living.

M-N: Now, did you feel friendly to labor before you came out here or...

D: No, no...

M: You didn't have any particular reaction one way or another?

D: No particular reaction. My interest in labor, well, this is how it came about... I thought, in fact, I still feel, that the church had to be relevant to whatever was good for people in all phases of their life, whether it was economic, political, or social. And, here I came into a community and here was a situation having to do with the working life of people that was just flagrantly bad, wrong, certainly not good. And, then it was playing whites against blacks and blacks against whites

and the UAW, to my way of thinking, had a program and I admired the leadership, I admired the Reuthers. I knew them, and so I got in there. I would say it's just my way of looking at the relationship of the church and the so-called social vision that the church had some 20 or 30 years ago.

K: Did you find when you came here (you came in the middle of the Depression) the church doing very much? What could they do to help the unemployed?

D: Well, you see, I came when the church.... I came just when the depression was turning. I missed the depression.

K: Oh, I see.

D: Yes. And, I hope I don't see it. Well, I missed it, but I've heard tales about it (not tales, actual happenings about it). The only carryover that we had from the depression was that Awrey Bakeries used to bring bread, wagonfulls of bread and give it to my predecessor and he would distribute it to the poor. And, that was continued after I arrived, and then Rev. Hill did it too. And, I think he was doing it for (well, maybe they were doing it together) Father Lewis and Rev. Hill. But, there was not the need after I got here because things were beginning an up-turn. So, I really didn't experience the depression. And, you ask about membership. Well, now there are few, if any of my members who work in the plants.

M: At the present time?

D: At the present time, very few. I don't think, I can almost say. Now, I had retirees who once worked there. But in the new life, almost nobody. Now, you might...

K: Where do they go to church?

D: Those who work in the plants?

K: Yes.

M: It seems as it they would come to your church.

D: Why, that's an interesting question. I don't know... I don't know but, I don't have any, or very few. But, I would say when I first came, I would say 30% or perhaps more. But, now most of them are teachers, most of them...yes, most of them have civil service jobs.

M: So you are a middle class church now.

D: I dislike that term, but I'm afraid it's so. Yes, it's a middle class church. One time we had 3 Ph.D's (that gives you a picture right there.) 3 in one church; Dr. , he's now president of Dillard, Dr. Cofer, and Dr. Phillips. And, of course, Dr. Cofer at Michigan State, he's still with us.

K: What is Cofer's first name?

D: Lloyd.

K: Lloyd Cofer.

D: Yes, that right. Lloyd Cofer.

K: He was active in those days too, wasn't he?

D: Well, ... I don't know.

K: In the union cause?

D: Dr. Cofer? No, not Lloyd Cofer.

M: There was another Cofer, I think. I don't know if he'd be any relation.

K: Could he be the father of this Cofer?

D: No, I don't know who that could have been. No, not this Cofer, I don't recall him or anything. No...

M: This Lloyd Cofer is the one that Snow Grigsby agitated for and got into...

D: Gee, you certainly know him. That's right. He came here as a trouble shooter from Northwestern High School when they were having - oh, that goes back to another thing too.

K: 1941

D: Yes, that is right. We were having a lot of trouble with Mr. Rivett who was the principal of Northwestern. We finally got him out of there. And, then after we got him out, I think Cofer was brought in here, through agitation of Snow Grigsby and others, as a counselor. And, he did a splended job then. And if Dr. Bow lived he would have shot up, but he was delayed. Somehow he became assistant principal or principal, and at last he was principal of Central. Then, he went up to Michigan State. But, reminiscing about labor - I remember Mr. Bright, very fine person, good man, standing out in front of the church one day and telling me with his fingers in the lapel of his coat. He asked me did I know what I was doing? And, I said I thought I did. And, he said "Well, you realize that you're going against Mr. Ford?" And I said, "What Mr. Ford?" He said Mr. Henry Ford. I said, "Well so what?" He said he worked at Ford's, and that it was a terrible thing for a pastor of the church, particularly, to take a stand against Mr. Ford. And, I remember Father Daniels went to the Bishop to complain that I had a political meeting when I had brought a Lt. Auxelly to speak at a dinner at which was Mr. Cameron. Remember Mr. Cameron?

K: Yes

D: Mr. Cameron came here to speak. This was before the Union. And Mr. Auxelly criticized Mr. Cameron for his... the way his articles read. Actually they were slanted because of the position of Mr. Ford (at least the way Mr. Auxelly felt) on the working man and his objection to the union. And, subsequently, Father Daniels went to Bishop Craten to complain that I'd had a political meeting here, which was not so. We were then a mission; subsequently, in two or three years, we became an independent parish. It is said, I don't know by my own knowledge but it is said that Mr. Ford gave large sums to the building of St. Matthew's parish house. But Father Daniels was a person of such intellectual standing that I could easily see why Mr. Ford and he would be friends. But, I think that he was off base when he couldn't see the union or anything to do with the union. I mean, he let his friendship with Mr. Ford blind him to the real need and so forth of the black working man. Now, whether he knew what Mr. Marshall was doing, I don't know.

K: One of his parishioners we talked to who apparently knew Father Daniels quite well, thought that Father Daniels, when he was close to death, complained about Marshall and that Marshall had doubled crossed him, that he didn't know what Marshall had been doing.

D: He didn't know?

K: He didn't know that Marshall had doubled crossed him.

D: Well, it's possible because Father Daniels was an able person. There's no question about it. At that time, I came into the Diocese fresh from New England. The relationship of my predecessor

and Father Daniels had been very cool. In fact, they'd been non-communicating; they hardly spoke to each other. And, it caused quite a scandal in the Diocese, in that, at the first Diocesan dinner, convention dinner, when Father Daniels came in to sit down, he happened to be sitting well say where you're sitting and I was sitting where I am sitting and the whole convention was tense. You could almost feel it, as to what these two persons (there were only two of us then in the Diocese) were going to do. Well, I was a typical New Englander. You know how we New Englanders are. And, so we sat back to back, I don't know whether purposely or advisedly. And, so I was talking to my people and he was talking to his people. And, so we turned, he turned and I turned, and he said, "Good evening, Dade." And I said,"Good evening, Daniels." And you could almost hear a pin drop in the convention. And, subsequently he came and left his card at my house. And, I went and left a card at his house when we were both absent. And, subsequently we met and so we (there again the brash New Englander, I guess) I asked him pointly, I said, "Why did you treat my predecessor like you did?" And he claimed he was intellectually unacceptable to him, which is no reason that he shouldn't been a gentleman, you know. That didn't excuse him. And we got along, but he felt that St. Cyprian should not have existed, they should tear it down and run a bus over to St. Matthew and run all the people and the children over there. We couldn't see it at all, but he ended up by preaching, delivering the ordination sermon, when I was ordained as a deacon or was I a priest? No, I was ordained a priest. His note of

congratulations was so hot that we had to cut out every line, but the lines "I will be there," and the last line, "I give you my best wishes." But the lines in between we had to cut out because they were saying that we could take on everything else and dump it into the Detroit River as far as he was concerned. But, the fact is that he was quite a person in the conventions of the Diocese; when he spoke, why you could certainly realize that he was a giant.

M: How, did you have any other chances to show that you believed in the union, other than allowing this one meeting where a person, not favorable to Fords spoke?

D: You mean the Johnson meeting?

M: Yes.

D: You're thinking about Mordicai Johnson?

M: Oh, no, no, we don't have that on tape. So tell us about the Mordicai Johnson meeting. That'll be interesting.

D: Oh, that... Well, it happened that Dr. Mordicai Johnson, then president of Howard University, came in town at the invitation of Snow Grigsby. So when he came in town he... Well, Snow Grigsby was bringing these persons of wide reputation into town and there was controversy. So it was noised about that Mordicai Johnson was quite strong in his views about labor and certainly about Ford Motor Company. So Dr. Pat and Dr. Bradby said they wouldn't have him. And so if Dr. Pat and Dr. Bradby weren't going to have him, that meant that no other church would have him. So I called Snow and I said, "Snow, I understand that you can't find a church to take Mordicai Johnson." He said yes. I said, "Well bring him over here." He said, "you mean...?" I said, "Bring him here." He said,

"What about the Bishop?" I said that the bishop has nothing to do with our preachers on Sunday mornings... I said, "I'll tell him afterwards but I'm not going to call him before, so bring him." And, of course, Dr. Johnson came. And, he's no mean speaker, you know. And he made every paper in town by his remarks, critizing the stand of Mr. Ford. You certainly have to... I want to say a good word for Snow Grigsby. I think when you think of the economic and the social life and development of the Negroes in Detroit, at least in the last 35 years that I've been here, you have to make mention of Snow Grigsby. And, perhaps you don't always admire the way he did it, getting speakers and embarrassing them by these embarrassing questions after he got them to speak. But, he would bring the issues right out to the fore-front and he didn't care who it hurt or whose feet he stepped on. And, it didn't matter whether it was something that shouldn't be mentioned at the time. He hadn't... It wasn't politics for him; the question here was something that was wrong where his people were concerned and he'd bring in the best man that he knew, whether it be a power, or whether it be a president of a school, university in the South, or whether it be a prominent lawyer. But, they all were able people and he exposed the community to distinguished Negro life that they would never have seen. And, his meetings were packed and he followed not only his conscience but he was informing the people. And, I think he made a distinct contribution.

M: Now, this was an immense meeting, wasn't it? Didn't he run out of chairs?

D: Oh, you mean here at St. Cryian's? Oh, yes. Not only did we run out of chairs, we almsot ran out of time for Mordicai because he was one of these speakers who goes on for a time, for minutes and minutes. And, when you say 20 minutes, that 20 minutes is like speaking 2 hours for him. But, he was a great speaker and we didn't at the time, I don't think we were able to get the proper publicity out of it for us. But, it was a great advantage to the cause. The publicity came afterward because it was done, I think this was done like a Saturday afternoon. Just by chance, as the bishop said, my scuttlebut got to me that this was the problem that Snow was in. And,...

M: And you came forth and offered your help.

D: And we came forth and offered it, yes. Rev. Cong yes, well he was upset and said to me "We had him on our hands." I said, "Well I'll take him off at 11:00 Sunday morning." So, he could take care of him for the afternoon, see. But, there was the morning. So, I said, "Well we'll take him." And, he wad delighted. I said to bring him on over. So...

M: Did you have any difficulties afterwards as a result of that?

D: Now, did I have any difficulties? Well, it's... Oh, yes I meant to say in relationship to this aforesaid Mr. Bright that I was conscious all along that if the union had not succeeded at Fords, I would not be the, no longer be the minister of St. Cyrian's. There's no question about that. If the union had not succeeded, I would have had to resign. That was... I would say that the... Well, there were members of my congregation who stayed in. Remember the staying, those who stayed in during the strike?

M: Yes.

D: Well, I remember a member, not members, I remember one member, a nice fellow, but he just felt that it was a sin to go or do anything that would hurt Mr. Ford and he couldn't see the UAW. He would admit that the service, that life under the servicemen out there was intolerable and he would admit what this nosing into the business by the servicemen did to the employees and their families and most of the town. He could see all that, but he couldn't see doing this. And so he stayed in. And he talked to him, but...

M: How did you talk to him in the plant?

D: No, no, we didn't talk to him in the plant.

M: Oh, oh.

D: No, we didn't talk to him in the plant. We talked to him... He'd call in to his family. We knew his family.

M: Oh, I see.

D: Because the union wanted to get them out and they knew who they were and so they knew that he was a member of this congregation. And, we tried asking if he would come out, but he wouldn't come out. They were trying to get them to come out, so he stayed in. But afterward he got a better job than he had ever had.

M: So, he turned out to be a very good union man?

D: Yes, by compulsion, not willingly.

M: Which UAW people did you have contacts with at that time? I mean, you were in communication with Rev. Bowman maybe?

D: Rev. Bowman, (now you're getting into names)

K: Walter Harden?

D: Walter Harden, Bowman, the secretary treasurer of Local 600. What was his name? He's now Rep...

M: John Conyers, Sr.?

D: No, not Conyers, I know Conyers, not Conyers, Sr. Umm, I had it on the tip of my tongue. He's on Oliver's staff, now.

M: Oh, Shelton Tappes.

D: Shelton Tappes and Oscar Noble, I know Winn very well, Frank Winn. The Reuther brothers have been here to speak.

M: Oh, you mean all this time during the drive and immediately before, you would let labor representatives come in.

D: Oh, yes.

M: And,...

D: We've had... I mean, you have a picture of Bowman, and myself and White or Bowman and Hill. And, there again you come back to the same thing we were talking about with Johnson. The churches tighten up and what Bowman's problem was was that he couldn't get into the churches. And so Rev. Hill, Rev. White and St. Cyrian were the only churches they could get in to have any kind of a meeting. I mean, just to hold a meeting, except halls. Now, they could hire places, usually, but they wanted to put their finger on Negro life. And, Negro life then and now is in the Negro church, the black church. And, so we didn't have the addition then, we had only Page Hall. So I said to Bowman "Sure, have a meeting." So he had meetings. And who's one of the board members, the first board member?

M: Edwards?

D: Edwards, yes. They all used to come in here and have meetings. In fact Edwards was here, one Sunday speaking. He read something and he had some quotations from some...a speech I'd made somewhere. It sounded like what I'd said, but I don't remember where I'd said it. But that's been you know time, it must have been 30 years ago. We're talking about 30 years, aren't we?

M: Just about.

D: About 30 years ago, yes. Time has moved on.

M: Yes, sir.

D: Time has moved on. But, as the things went on, of course, the NAACP got in. I think, I was chairing the legal redress committee at that time and we brought - I shouldn't say we brought, the NAACP brought Walter White and so now things began to move and they began to get the larger attention of Negro leadership all over the country. So Walter White moved in and I think McClendon was the president and we had these meetings every day at the YWCA. And White was acting as secretary and it simply was drawing all the community in. And, then it was really rolling. But,...

K: Do you think the whole NAACP (was for the union?) here in the city?

D: The whole?

K: Yes, well it's split here. How did Dr. McClendon feel about the union?

D: Well, I think now, Dr. McClendon was right in there pitching. He must have brought White in there. Well, Gloster Current.

K: Horace Sheffield, wasn't he the one who was supposed to have gone over to Dr. McClendon's house to talk him into joining the union?

D: That I don't know. That might have been, might have been. But, Gloster certainly was no...

K: Well, he came a little later... He was head of youth, I think?

D: That's right. We're jumping around through these years now.

M: That was what Sheffield did. He was in the Youth Committee too. He drove that truck out there, didn't he. The Sound truck?

D: Yes. That's right. Now, you're coming to that time.

M: We have a picture of the sound truck.

D: That's Horace Sheffield, yes.

K: Rev. Cleage was out there, too.

D: How's that?

K: He was head of the youth for his church.

D: Yes of course Sheffield was a member of this St. Cyrian church in those days.

K: Oh, he was?

D: Yes. He didn't become an Adventist. He wasn't then a member of his wife's church. Later he became a member of his wife's church, but then he was a member of the youth for, black youths organization. He grew up at St. Cyrian.

K: Were you a member of the Westside (what was it called) the Westside Improvement Group?

D: Human Relations Council?

K: Human Relations Council? Well, there was a Human Relations, too.

D: That's what it was.

K: When Snow Grigsby was in it?

D: Well, no, the Westside Human Relations Council, which was founded by me 30 years ago is still going.

M: So we're talking to the founder of it?

D: Yes.

K: The one I was thinking of started in the '20's.

D: '20's?

K: In the 1920's.

D: I wasn't here then. 1920's? What did you call it, the Westside what?

K: Westside Improvement Group or...

D: I don't know anything about that.

M: What was its purpose?

D: Who were some of the members?

K: Well, Snow Grigsby was one of the founders of it. He's lived over here since 1920 anyway.

D: Lived on the west side?

K: Yes.

D: I don't know anything about that. Well, sir, now you're telling me something. West side of Detroit. I know that the West side Human Relations Council was very much active in anything that had to do with that type of... Well, it still is. But, then it was very much involved, not because I was President - I was its President for two terms, but it went far, it went, it moved on afterwards...

K: Was this the same group, the president of it in 1939 I think was...

D: Turner Ross?

K: Turner Ross.

D: Right.

K: Turner Ross was told he had to get out because he was disobeying the Hatch Act.

D: That's right. I'll qualify that. You know more... That's right. Yes, because he worked in the post office.

K: Yes. And that was at the same time that Snow Grigsby was told that he had to give up his Civic Rights Federation.

D: But, he never did do it.

K: He got more and more into the Alliance.

D: Then he got to be editor of the paper. Wasn't it some time after that?

K: Yes.

M: And, he still is editor

D: Still is.

K: And he removed himself here and there.

D: Oh, yes. Well, he really was violating the Hatch Act because he was... Snow was doing everything, that a person working for the Government shouldn't be doing. There was no question about that.

K: You know Austin Chavis? I don't know if he lives around here or not?

D: No, I don't.

K: He was... He wrote a letter attacking Snow Grigsby.

D: Attacking? No.

K: He would be what they called in those days an Uncle Tom.

D: Of course, some of them now, they call some of us Uncle Tom's now. Well, I've been called bigot, I've been called...

M: You've been called bigot?

D: Yes, bigot. The news called me a bigot, a zombie, pioneer of social progress, and of course, during that Communist business they called me everything, but...

M: Were you accused of being red?

D: No, I was accused of being... No I was never accused of being a red. They never could tack that on me. But, because of the position that I took, they thought that I was fighting Hill. You know, I wasn't fighting him.

M: Oh, I see, I see.

D: No, I wasn't fighting Hill. I thought he was just misguided, that's all. I still would say that he was.

K: Say who?

D: Rev. Hill.

K: Rev. Hill?

D: Yes. You haven't run into all that business yet?

K: Oh yes. Well, I've been into Hill's relationship. Well, he was in pretty close to Jack Raskin.

D: Yes, Jack Raskin, he was... There were two, there was a girl and a fellow that really were something. I wished you'd mention their names. But, they were the smoothest couple that I've known. But, they got everybody, they got most of them but me. But, I always thank Gloster Current for that because they were such nice people, ever obliging, ever, ever kind. But, he was, he saw through them.

I'll never forget, he told me "watch out, now. Watch out..." And, I did watch out.

K: Do you think there were a lot of people duped by these?

D: I do. Really I do.

K: It is the feeling...

D: No question about it in my opinion. In my opinion there's no question about it.

K: Because certainly one of the problems seems to be that the Negroes in the Union all were in the left wing, in spite of that thing. And, when the left wing lost, to Reuther, in 1946 they didn't have any power anymore.

D: No. There was R.J. Thomas. Remember R.J.? And I was made an honarary member of the Ford local...

K: 600?

D: 600 (Rev. Hill was too).

K: You spoke a little bit earlier about this Northwestern High School racket. Were you involved in that? Did you know what was going on?

D: I thought I did. Yes, I thought I did. That isn't very fresh except that Rivett and I had a hassle. But we finally... got him out. But, you see when you talk about the West side, you have to remember at the time I came and for a good many years, there was no place where young people could go and socialize.

D: You name any young person of any prominence in the last (say in his 40;s now around town) and with rare exceptions they came out of St. Cyrian. Not members now, but they were part of his youth life and they found an encouragement and a freedom of social expression in this church they couldn't find any where else. Now, we took a beating for it because of such things as dancing in the church and such things as letting people run wild. But, I can remember no scandals among young people, nothing... But, now in basketball, we won several championships. The only place you could go, you couldn't go to St. Stevens, you couldn't go to Hartford, you couldn't go to New Light, you couldn't go to Tabernacle. If you wanted to dance, you wanted to socialize, you didn't want to do anything else but pray, as a young person, you had to come to St. Cyrian, you went to St. Cyrian.

M: And you had an organized program for young people?

D: For young people, that's right. An organized program for young people: discussions, activities, retreats, athletics.

K: You know this seemed to be the big absence throughout the city. They wrote in a report that was made by the Urban League, in 1941, after the Northwestern situation, that there were no places and the Y was closed to Negroes up here. There was no place; they couldn't join any of the clubs at the High School (Northwestern). And, there just was no...

M: What kind of discussion programs did you have? I've heard there was some fine socialist thinking among the young people.

D: Well, we used to bring in... Well, we'd bring in speakers.

M: A. Philip Randolph or someone like that?

D: We had... Well, one thing we've had for years are these dinners which we have every year. But for the young people we had Miss Ernestine Postal who's now... Well, she's married and her husband died... She led the group, she's a Michigan Grad and at that time she was very, very, what am I trying to say, not clever, but a very capable person. She was able to inspire the young people and to give them the freedom, but also to give them a sense of balance and values. And, we had the largest guild society here. And, as I said, we won repeatly the city-wide basketball championships. I would take them on retreats, I would take them on... I'd bring in (you asked about my speakers) I'd bring in anybody. For instance I once took them to hear Lionel Hampton. Then I took them back to have a discussion with him. Things that the parents thought were wild. "What are you doing back stage with Lionel Hampton?" Girls and boys, now, you see. And we were talking about - all right, now I can show you my scrapbook where we were talking about birth control, we were talking about sex when it was unheard of. In fact we had a... We were almost the only ones that tried to get Dr. Kinsey here. In fact he was signed to come, but domething turned up and he couldn't and when... I don't know what the diocese would have done then. But, we, we...

M: Did you get a lot of criticism from parents in the church, in your church?

D: Yes, because I quit after a while because I just couldn't take any more. And we suffered too. I finally came to the position

that it was too much. I got tired.

M: Of the criticism?

D: The criticism was just too much. I mean as I said to the parents, "Well, nothing ever happens to your girls or boys and you don't help. And you won't do anything and yet, you sit back and criticize." And, so finally, I said, "Well I think it's too great a price that I'm paying with my own family." So I just began to slow down. And, I've never gone back into it like I used to which is regrettable.

M: When you look at the young people who were in your program in those years and you can just pick out any number of them now within the city leading successful lives...?

D: That's right. Horace Rogers is one, Damon is another one, Eddie Sylvester was assistant Secretary of Welfare. As I say, you can... Oh, a young orthodontist that my daughter went to the other day (I had forgotten about it) said to tell her daddy that he was one of his boys. You see there was no other place. Rev. Hill wouldn't have them over there.

M: No?

K: Why didn't he?

D: He didn't believe in dancing; it was sinful.

M and K: Oh

D: That's what it was. Any expression other than young people going to church on Sunday was wrong. And, we believed that religion can be fun.

K: Rev. White didn't have this?

D: Rev. White didn't do it either.

K: Because he had a lot of trouble with his parish...

D: Yes... Rev. White came in... Rev. White began to surround himself with a bunch of young fellows and young group, like Cleage, Walter Greene. And, he made a distinct impression upon them. We're talking about the later period, now.

M: Is this Walter Greene of the Civil Rights Commission?

D: That's right... He's coming along now.

M: And, of course Horace White.

D: Yes, and Cleage. But, I'm talking about '36, from '36 on, it'll be about 10 years.

M: Did any of them turn out badly, of your young people?

D: Not a one of them. Russell was appointed by Spreen. Of course, they don't come to church, but... That's part of the answer.

M: That was probably the 1st opportunity those young people had to show some kind of leadership, wasn't it, in coming out and working with other young people?

D: Then the other interesting thing is the so-called middle class.

D: They were not middle class then; they were just poor people.

D: Now they're middle class making 18 or 20 thousand dollars a year. And, it's sad, isn't it that we forget from whence we came. We all forget that we...

M: Well, I think that's very important that you helped all this young group to...

D: Well, it's nice...

M: It sure is.

D: I don't know about how important. But, now it's a different type of leadership and it's almost impossible to find somebody to do it. Now in a young person who can... Now, what I need, I need somebody who can go into the community and do in this community

what we did... They say, well, with me it's a so-called generation gap. That's much mis-talked about, but that's part of it. They need somebody who can talk their language, you see. We had a hundred dollars worth of damage to windows last week and I still say, at least I believe, because there is no communication between this church and all these churches on the West side and these kids around here. They moved in, new folks and the poor, but they're human. And there can be a response. I mean, how do you know there can be a response if you have never tried?

K: Do you remember in 1942 or so, the kid gangs that existed in the city that were over on Central?

D: 1942?

K: Well, no, I think it was the February or March of 1943. It was just before the riot. And a whole gang of a couple hundred whites ran down through Central Street, Central Avenue over here, and then the next night a bunch of Negro boys ran down and stoned another section which was white. And, the next night they did this again and they had quite a breakage. But, I was thinking... You were talking about this generation gap and it seemed to me that someone has written in the newspapers, Gloster Current say or somebody, about the youth, the wildness of the youth, in these years, particularly during the war and just before the war...

M: So you mean that the youth of today isn't different from the youth...

K: No, but I think it's a very serious problem when our community begins to lose contact with the youth.

D: Right.

D: It is. It really is. We have a group. I tried to start a group... One minister takes the attitude, he said "Well, you're trying to rejuvenate what happened 30 years ago." I said, "No, I'm not trying to rejuvenate. Anybody... Any fool knows you can't bring back what happened... But, I'm trying to prove that the community... You don't have to necessarily short change it because there is change. And there must be some way that we can adapt ourselves to the change and keep the community from just going to pot, to pieces." Rather than just saying well, "No", he said "Just forget it, there's nothing you can do." He feels that in ten years, he said that these churches will not be here because the people around here are not going to church. Well, I started to get... I didn't say this to him, but he was going to force me to say it. I said "Well, if they are not coming to the churches, it's our fault, you see." And, it's our fault that most of them have become so middle class. The person who isn't middle class, who is on welfare - well, we're sort of hoity-toity to him and are scared to death too... You know, it's sort of a sign that I say about the Lord. He said he couldn't get in there himself, so don't worry about trying to get in. And, some of our churches... Well, you look on Sunday morning we got Markiv's we got Thunderbirds, and we got Imperials all lined up out here and they drop quarters, and nickles and dimes in the plate, you see.

M: So, there's something wrong, isn't there?

D: Sure, there's something wrong. But, the people see all these... Well, I can't talk - I live in Elmwood, that's a sin in that they have those houses down there where the people once lived that can't live there now. And, they are living everywhere. But,

churches aren't touching them at all, you see. They don't go to churches. The majority of them don't go to... There's Tabernacle, St. Benedict, there's New Light, there's Hartford, there's St. Stevens, little churches. Now, that's what, about 6 churches right within a finger touch. And, I would almost say that the majority of their members do not live around this neighborhood.

K: They don't live around this neighborhood?

D: No, they don't live around here.

K: And, the people around here don't go to those churches?

D: Don't go to those churches? No.

K: Are there any other churches that cater to these people?

D: No.

M: They just don't go to church?

D: They don't go to church... But, it's the church's fault. That's what I'm trying to say. Of course, it's going to be... it will be a difficult job, but what job isn't difficult if you want to do a good job. I mean, nothing is easy. And, it's dangerous, but it can be done, it can be done.

K: Do you remember the Sipes V. McGhee case?

D: Yes, I do.

K: This was just north of here.

D: Well, Mr. Graves, the lawyer, was a member of this parish.

M: Oh, he was?

D: Yes indeed...

M: Then, Mrs. Willis Graves--

D: Was a member of this parish.

M: I see.

D: So Graves was a member... was a lawyer when I was chairman of the Redress Committee and Mrs. Willa Polk was the one who gave us the money and sent the case, carried the case along. Remember Mrs. Willa Polk?

M: I don't know her.

D: You don't know her? Well, Mrs. Fannie Polk - We didn't have any money... She gave us $3,000 and kept it going, enabled them to carry the case and finally get it to the Supreme Court.

M: It's Ed Swan, I think that told me -

D: He was a member of this parish.

M: Was he?

D: That's right.

M: Now, the day before the lawyers were to go down to Washington, they had to go to all the churches to see if they could take up a special collection.

D: He was a grand person. They're dedicating a window to him some time this month; Ed Swan, Willis Graves, Herbert White, Roy Martin,

M: Is Roy Martin related to Louis Martin? I don't know Roy Martin.

D: No, he's not related to him at all.

M: I see.

D: Louis made quite a contribution to the city around here. But, the Chronicle doesn't do all they could do too. The Chronicle could give (this is off the record) but the Chronicle...

K: Were you involved at all in the housing issues?

D: Sojourner Truth, I was vice-president of that one.

K: You were Vice-president?

D: How's that? And, Hill was the president... That's right.

M: Oh, on that Committee?

K: Citizen's Committee...

D: I would have been the president, but I came 5 minutes late and he had been elected president. But, that's just a little joke.

K: How did he get in there? For years he was in an undisturbed church over here on Hartford. He never got involved in too much.

D: How do you explain it? I don't know.

K: And, all of a sudden out of the blue, he's up to his neck in everything.

K: I mean, you know, he's running for Councilman, he was head of the Citizen's Committee. And, he was involved in the Citizen's Committee when they went around and fought for hiring women in their plants.

D: He did a lot of good, there's no question about it. But, the only thing that was a so-called wonder was that he wasn't a young man.

M: Did you ever have direct contact... You didn't run for any political offices or anything of that kind, did you?

D: Con-con.

M: Were you at the Constitutional Convention?

D: Yes, I ran. The first time, I outran everybody and the second time I outran everybody the second time. And, I ran the highest in the city in Con-con, the second time.

M: I guess I knew it, but I had forgotten about it. So my memory isn't very good!

D: With the exception of Bishop Romney, I was the only clergy. But he doesn't admit he's a bishop. But, I was the only on the Con-con.

K: Don't you feel that there was a great deal of militancy after 1937? Then in 1941 the Ford Drive and then, followed by the Sojourner Truth, then the drive for getting women hired and the

drive for hiring Negroes where they weren't hiring Negroes in the plants. Then came the riots in 1943.

D: I remember that. And there's a little excerpt about me is the Wayne University publication by what's his name?

M: You mean the Lee -

D: Lee and Humphrey. They had a line or two about my part in the act.

K: Actually, the cry of militancy goes out of the Negro community. There's more emphasis on using the NAACP method of fighting through the courts. And, there's a fear, one seems to detect a certain fear of confrontation whereas with Sojourner Truth they met the Joseph Butlers and Dow Jones...

D: And, the priests.

K: Yes, whereas when in 1945, the same as when you came up on the southwest side with the blue jackets and one thing or another, there wasn't this confrontation and there was a plea that went out signed by Hill and by the NAACP and Urban League and others asking for no confrontation of any sort. I'm wondering what the consequences of the riot were on Negro leadership and on attitudes of how to handle the problems that existed.

D: Well, now in the first riot, you mean in the first civil disturbance? Of course, I thought it was characterized by getting along, if there's such a word as that, of blacks and whites. There were whites living in this neighborhood then and I remember going over where Wilson's dairy was being called over there and talking to the people and asking them to disperse and not to create a disturbance and that. A meeting would respond and I remember that in this neighborhood there were whites who went to work (what am I trying to say?) there

wasn't a sharp cleavage of racial antipathy as you had in, well, as you had in the last civil disturbance. Now, what you are asking, I've never thought about it. Now, you're brought it to mind... Wouldn't it be that new faces were coming on since then?

K: Well, it's true you... Of course, people like Gloster Current and Raymond Hatchet were coming in. I'm talking about right after the riot. But, I have a feeling that there was less... The UAW, once it had the Negro in the fold, once it organized Ford, they weren't so interested... They fired a lot of workers, reps., and organizers. You know, Reps. and organizers in 1945. By 1940, there was this feeling that the (Side of tape changes)

Side 2

K: There was no contact with the federal government...

D: But, the Negro, has he ever become politically orientated that way? He isn't yet, is he?

K: The poor people aren't for one thing...

D: The poor people are, you say?

K: They are not orientated. They are always attacking the working class for not being liberal. Well, part of liberalism is having a stake in the community. Going back to 1924 (there was an article I read in 1924 attacking the Negro for not being liberal) well, how could the Negro be liberal? He didn't have a stake in the society. There was no need for him to be. Oh, well a handful, maybe, here and there. The old families, for instance that were here before 1916 could be considered liberal, all right, to a certain degree.

D: To a certain degree. But, they were looking out for themselves.

K: Yes.

D: The Urban League was mroe concerned with who you were, and not so much what you could do but, first, who was this person that I might recommend. And, then... Of course, he has to have the ability. But what relation does he have and if he comes from a poor working class family would he get the same kind of push as if he came from the so-called old Detroit family? It was questionable in the Urban League in those days. Of course, now I'm criticizing Mr. Dancy, am I not?

K: Well, Mr. Dancy... My feeling about the Urban League, I think it was a group that tried to do jobs that nobody else was doing at this time: meeting the trains and one thing or an other.

D: Also strike breaking, too.

K: And strike breaking, too... Althought there wasn't the strike breaking in this city that there was in other parts because there were no strikes.

M: Were you involved, by the way, in that situation where Horace White out at the Dodge Plant and other Negro leaders on top of a sound truck tried to stop the scabs, the Negroes who were coming in to cross the picket line?

K: This is 1939.

M: Yes, we really are skipping time now... But I bring it up... because it's something I just happened to think of.

K: It was the closest that came to a racial conflict until 1941.

D: I don't remember that.

M: Well, it was on the east side, and you might not have known about it.

D: No, I don't remember.

K: There was a minister who was involved in that. He organized the first... (He is still in town) and he organized the first all black union.

D: Really?

K: Called the National Association of American Workers. Now, it was in the bars, bar-maids, attendants, etc. over on the east side.

M: Who was the minister?

K: I've forgotten now... I've got him down...

M: You see, I don't know him.

K: What he did... This was as a counter union against the AFL. He later played a part in that '39 strike, again as a counter union.

D: You can't think of his name?

K: I'll remember it. I had it down. He played a very lousey role really, I think this was a company union which organized the NAAW... He plays the same role as Evans...

M: Evans?

K: Right... Evans, played for the AFL-UAW.

M: Homer Martin's group?

K: Homer Martin, when they tried to use the Negro as an issue.

D: Of course, talking about the UAW, I know that the UAW and the ministers, I guess it was two or three years ago, there was definitely a coolness between them, a real coolness between the UAW and the ministers. I remember speaking to Mr. Reuther about it.

M: Was it on candidates or politics?

D: It might have been. I don't know, the general ability to get together on anything.

M: Oh

K: This was right after the riot? Or just before the riot?

D: No, let me see what time. Well, since Edwards has had his job, so it couldn't have been...

M: Maybe it was the Interdenominational Alliance that was so unhappy because there wasn't any labor support of black candidates.

D: I guess that's what it was. Yes. Now at one time, the ministers were all for the union and I was, well, I was kind of interested to see that the tide had turned.

K: There is a felling, I gather, among people at the UAW that they lost a lot of contact with the Negro community. I guess that goes back to TULC, the origins of TULC.

D: Yes, of course that gymnastics with Horace and Edwards is something you know. I mean, that certainly put the Negro and many thinking people in a not very pleasant position. Now you are, here you see me, now you don't, and here I am, and now I'm not.

K: I imagine it hurt Horace's image considerably?

D: Completely. I think one time Horace could have been a candidate for mayor. But, I think that these recent things and then going over on 12th street and being almost run out and then saying the wrong things afterwards...

M: What was that? 12th Street?

D: Well, he went over during the riot, you remember, to speak to them, and they booed him.

K: Conyers got the same thing.

D: Conyers got the same thing. But, Horace was sort of one who like the Mayor of Cleveland, had a rapport with all sides, you see. And that act cut him off with the very group that no other could reach. I would say that Horace at one time had a rapport with all sorts and conditions of Negroes. Any other Negro in town, there wasn't a Negro in town that had it like he had it. But, the riot killed it.

K: You think it was the riot that killed it for one thing.

D: Well, I don't, that... I think that underlined it. The man in the street doesn't have much trust in him, much respect for him... And then afterward, then there's gymnastics, Edwards in TULC and the other group Edwards had (MDLCA) and all that business... Yes. And then I remember when he wrote an article in the NEWS, well he jumped all over me but it came out just like I said it would.

K: What was that?

D: Well, I made the statement that we didn't need two of them. The Negro community couldn't stand two organizations... And, they were just wasting their leadership, and wasting effort and wasting everything. And, that we needed one. And, it seemed to me to be perfectly ridiculous if we had two men of good leadership fighting among themselves not for any cause but purely on personal ambition. And, the community in the meantime is suffering. And, I thought that we should have - well, the paper put it romantically, that I was asking for a leadership like that of Martin Luther King. And, there's no one like Martin Luther King in the city, I think. Oh, we have a Cleage; but he's had his day. But, Cleage's roots are not right.

M: So, we're still looking for that person, aren't we?

D: I think so. I think Horace at one time carried tremendous weight, but then Horace began to dance the tight rope. This personal ambition is quite a thing, you know. It's really something.

K: Do you think, you mentioned that power in talking in the 43' riot, do you think the 67' riot had more hatred, bitterness in it?

D: Or fear!

K: I mean... I was here, I was in Highland Park, well, all the time. I never felt that there was any hostility toward whites by blacks in Negro neighborhoods and yet I don't think I would have dared to go out in 1943. From what I've read in 1943, I don't think I would have been seen on Brush street then.

D: Oh, no. I wouldn't be seen on 12th street now... I wouldn't advise you to be seen on 12th street on a dark night.

K: Well, I don't go on 12th street after dark.

D: No, I wouldn't go through there, not even the two of us. I don't know, that's an open question. But I was interested that, as far as I could observe, things have gone along just as they always went in this neighborhood.

K: In an integrated neighborhood, apparently, in 1943, certainly they had no trouble.

D: That's right. And, this was an integrated neighborhood. Now, I don't believe there are any whites at all over here.

K: Well, I was interested to see that the McGhee and Sipes, of the McGhee-Sipes Case, still live together, next to each other. That was more than 20 years ago.

D: You are talking about leadership, aren't you? What difference do you see in the leadership of 20 or 30 years ago and the leadership of the Negro community today?

K: Well, not much. There isn't much leadership. I don't think there's much... I have the feeling that you're talking about breaking up the personal ambition. I think there is that. But, I think also there an attempt on the part of... I feel, in just listening to people, that there's a lot more racism among liberals and those one-time radicals. I'm talking about white men.

D: I'm talking about black.

K: No, I'm not talking about black. I'm talking about white...

D: More racism today.

K: I think that they would like... Their attitude toward Negroes is very paternalistic.

D: Today?

K: Yes. And, I think that they go out of their way. I think that Horace Sheffield and I think Buddy Battle and I think a lot of these people are victims of this attitude. Now, they can be played on. They're men with more ambition than some others and so on. But, they are... The attitudes I find, reflected at the UAW headquarters and from other people, of, I think, good will, their attitude toward the Negro is less than fine.

D: Less than fine?

K: Yes.

D: Well, now, what I really want to know is what you think that the... What distinguishes the leadership among the Negro so-called leaders as contrasted to, say, the leaders that you have talked with say 20 years ago or more?

K: Well, 20 years ago, I think there was more hope than there is today. There was...

D: More dedication?

K: More dedication, less... You talk about this business of automobiles - rich cars and one thing or the other, well, I think a lot of the leadership of 20 years ago had the same attitude that the leadership in the UAW had. Now, the UAW today is fat.

D: Fat cats?

K: Yes. And, I think that a lot of the Negro leadership that arose at that time, if they're not fat cats, they're not... They don't have very much hope. I don't think that Raymond Hatcher, for instance, has the hope that he once had. Now, he works. He's not a fat cat.

D: What's he doing now?

K: He's working in housing in...

D: In town?...

K: Yes.

M: The deputy director of the Metropolitan Detroit Citizens -

D: Oh, yes.

K: He's still a dedicated man. He's still working at the same calling that he had back when he arrived.

D: But, he hasn't got that hope.

K: Well, there isn't any place to put it.

D: Right.

K: See, I argue that what happened to the Negro was that he came to town after 1918, or around 1918... In 1918 they change the charter and when they change the charter they fixed it so no group could have their own political power. The Negro never got a chance to build up any political group. And every since then, they have never had a chance to build up a political group. They may elect Austin, but Austin isn't... He won't be answering to the Negro community in the same way that a councilman would have 20 years ago.

D: You mean with the division?

K: Yes.

D: That happened in 19 what?

K: 18

D: 1918

K: You see, up until 1918, there were 40 or 41 councilmen coming from different wards. Now, the ward system has a lot of faults. But it had some virtues. Now, to go back to it is what I understand certain leaders feel they want to do. I don't know if that is going to do any good. I mean in a way, the people have to allow them to go back to the ward system just in order that the whites can still maintain power.

M: You mean that will result in a kind of confinement?

K: Yes, the system was confining. But, the great hope in Detroit in the 40's was that now at long last the community had an ally, a very strong ally, the strongest of allies, the UAW and the CIO. But then...

D: That's become a fat cat itself, now.

K: That became a fat cat. It got rid of a lot of Negroes. Horace Sheffield was fired in 1945. Walter Harden was fired. You made a statement on his firing that I've got in which you said that you couldn't understand why they would do that to him. He was the man who had come to a number of ministers and had been so instrumental in helping organize the community and he helped organize...

D: Where is he now by the way? You know?

M: Hardin died.

D: He died?

M: Yes.

D: Well...

M: What do you think now? Jim told us how he feels about Negro leadership today. What do you think?

D: Well, of course, mine may be selfish. But, I think that there isn't the dedication that we had. I may be selfish. But, I think that if we were more concerned about the cause, I think that Rev. Hill and I might not have always agreed personally but we submerged those personal differences for the cause. And, we'd get in there and fight just as hard regardless of whether Dade or Hill liked this particular thing or not. It was the cause. And, now I think that the leaders are, the so-called young men, they're interested in power and personal ambition. And, maybe that's unfair.

K: Maybe there isn't any cause that they can see.

D: Maybe there is no cause that they can see. Maybe there's no hope. Maybe they feel that there's no hope. And we saw that... Well, of course there again I believe there is hope, you see. So...

K: What do you think of DRUM and Elrum?

M: Yes, I was wondering too.

D: Well, you take one thing - making a Negro president at General Motors: Crazy, man, crazy. I mean...

K: Let's see, I worked for the labor school; we had a number of people, not a great number but some of the guys that went to labor school were active in the revolutionary union movement. And, I think that's where the great hope is. I think that there are going to be some awful mistakes made. I think some of the rhetoric gets pretty wild and some of the guys that are in it are pretty wild. But...

D: That's the hope.

K: I think that's the hope. You see, I think... I'm big on union control by its members.

D: You are?

K: Yes. And, I think they have lost it.

D: They're lost it. That's right.

K: And, they haven't gotten it back.

D: They ought to give it back.

K: And, through the process of getting it back, it's going to make the difference. And, we're going to have the cause again.

D: Yes.

K: And, that men... Of course, we can't look to Horace Sheffield now. He's well, a broken man as many seem to think.

D: Yes, he is really.

K: That's too bad. Now, could you tell us something about (if you can remember, I don't know) this part about this Citizens Committee that came out of Sojourner Truth. How big a base did it have? How many people were involved? Were churches involved?

D: Generally, I would say, it was a group of 25 or 30 meeting, during the height of it, meeting practically every noon at the YMCA. We planned stragedy, planned how we would (I was going to say) march on... What's the name of that priest out there?

K: Zulick?

D: I guess that was him. He was so active then against us and Hill was president and there again we would just get together; I'm trying to think if there's any particular reason. There again, there were just a few ministers there.

M: Was it mostly a ministers' group?

D: No, there weren't too many ministers; it was made up of people who were interested in advancing best interests in Negroes around town...And, there weren't too many people who were concerned to come down here every day to do this as citizens. No publicity to it, I mean, you weren't making the papers, the papers weren't concerned about you. They might be concerned when you had an actual confrontation out there. But, it was just...

K: You ran your own newspaper, didn't you? You had a flyer out every day.

D: Well, yes.

K: There's a collection of those you know.

D: Yes.

K: Jack Raskin's group. I guess Raskin was involved.

D: Raskin, what did he call his group?... I forget whether it...

K: Civil Rights Federation?

D: Civil Rights wasn't it, something?

K: Yes, Civil Rights Federation.

D: Yes, they were the ones that would offer to do the leg work. That's how they moved in and well ingratiated themselves with some more than others. And, how deep is the question. Now, they didn't control the movement...

K: No.

D: They certainly didn't leave very much, but they won over somebody.

M: Were there some young people who got their training there and later became prominent as leaders in Negro life?

D: In this group?

M: Yes. Or, were those mostly established leaders?

D: Mostly established leaders, yes. I would say that they would be... Well, Gloster Current would be there, Elvin Davenport might be there...

K: Do you know Judah Drob?

D: I certainly do. He's up in Lansing, isn't he?

K: Is he? I don't know that.

M: He's in Washington, now.

D: He is in Washington?

K: Yes.

D: What's he doing in Washington? Good fellow.

K: Yes, he's...

M: Some OEO program.

K: He was active in that.

D: Good fellow, good man. I think his heart was made of gold.

K: He use to write a column for...

D: You never met him?

K: No.

M: He's white, isn't he?

D: Yes, he is.

K: He was a socialist organizer?

D: Right.

K: He had a column in the Tribune.

D: Good fellow.

K: Good friend of Gloster Current.

D: That's right. Good friend of mine too.

M: We're probably keeping you from some appointments now. It's about 20 to 12.

D: Well, we've been... I don't know if we have accomplished anything, but it's been interesting talking to you. In fact, you've stimulated me. I wish that I were 20 years younger. I'd show you there is some hope.

M: That's what I was going to say, that's a sign that you believe that there is hope because some people...

D: Sure there is hope.

M: My age are saying well, can anything be done about this?

D: Sure there's hope. I mean...

K: They asked whether leadership could come in 1933. And, it came. Although it's interesting to me that the three ministers who helped organized the union, at least stood by the union...

D: That's right that stood by...

K: Two of them had to come from out of the city. Hill was the only one that was in the city.

D: He was born here, wasn't he?

K: Yes. He was the only one. Unfortunately, Rev. Hill can't remember anything now.

D: He can't?

K: No.

D: Not anything?

K: Hardly anything. We spent an hour with him and I tried all kinds of ways to bring them back to him.

D: And, he couldn't come back?

M: He states that himself - regrets it very much and he is taking some medicine, or something of the kind.

D: You don't mean it?

M: Well, we enjoyed this very much and you suggested several things that we hadn't even been aware, or at least I haven't been aware of. So we appreciate it very much.

THE END