Project Title: James Farmer Lecture, Exam Review and Q&A
Speaker: James Farmer (JF)
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JF: Sounds like you had it right, Council on United Civil Rights Leadership. And we just might ask you what that was. And let me repeat what it was: The Council on United Civil Rights Leadership was an organization set up by the heads of the civil rights organizations; it was an umbrella organization. Its members were Martin Luther King Jr., Roy Wilkins, Whitney Young, Dorothy Height, John Lewis, and James Forman of SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee], and me.

It met roughly once a month in New York City, and its purpose was to provide a forum where the heads of the civil rights organizations could compare notes on a regular basis, discuss and debate tactics, and map strategy. In other words, where we had differences of opinion—sometimes sharp differences of opinion—we would talk those out behind the closed doors of CUCRL meetings. Sometimes we would argue. But that was, if we may use the analogy of warfare, that was the tent and not the battlefield. When we went out on the battlefield, we were united. And the disagreements, the debates, the arguments were kept for the tent, reserved for the tent.

So that was the Council of United Civil Rights Leadership, known as CUCRL. [A. Philip] Randolph proposed his March on Washington idea to CUCRL, and the idea was adopted, and it was the various civil rights organizations who combined their resources to put on the march. And other groups were drawn in, such as some of the labor groups, [inaudible], the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the National Council of Churches, Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith, Catholic organizations, and so on. It was a giant coalition that put on the march. Now I proceed.

We'd like you to be able to define integration—what do we mean by integration? So you can give that some thought between now and examination time.

Define Black nationalism, too. Among the Black nationalist leaders were Malcolm X—that is the best known among them—were Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, and before them, of course, there was the late Marcus Garvey. Rapp Brown, who followed Stokely Carmichael as national chairman of SNCC, was also a nationalist—Black nationalist.

Student: What was his name again?

JF: H. Rapp (coughs), R-a-p-p, Brown. Rapp Brown was even more militant than Stokely Carmichael was. We didn't talk much about him, of course, in these lectures and discussions. Rapp had a very brief tenure in SNCC—SNCC went out of existence under his tenure. And he was arrested, jailed for—he was arrested and charged with inciting arson in Cambridge, Maryland, where he made a fiery speech—no pun intended—proposing that they burn down the city. And when he left, Cambridge would be set afire—parts of it. Cambridge, Maryland.

Rapp Brown, now, by the way, has changed his name; he has taken a Muslim name and he has joined the Nation of Islam—the so-called Black Muslims. And he owns a grocery store in Atlanta. It was curious; the semester before last, one of my students here decided to write a term paper on H. Rapp Brown. And he found out that Brown was down in Atlanta running a grocery store—a Muslim grocery store: Halal foods, no pork, et cetera, et cetera. So he [pitched?] a long-distance call down there. A man answered. He said, “May I speak with Mr. Brown, please?” The guy said, "There is no Mr. Brown here." He said, "Well, I'm very anxious to get in touch with Mr. H. Rapp Brown, because I'm writing a term paper on him and I'm in Jim Farmer's class at Mary Washington College. And I've decided I want to do a term paper on H. Rapp Brown.” The voice on the other end of the line said, "Well, I'm the former H. Rapp Brown, my name is such

and such and such and such now." And gave him an interview for about half an hour on the phone, and gave him my regards. I was surprised, because H. Rapp Brown and I were hardly on speaking terms when he was with SNCC.

But anyway, those were some of the militants, and Black nationalist militants. We want you to be able to define Black nationalism, how it differs from integration, and I'd like you to make a stab at defining Pan-Africanism, too. It's a term we've mentioned—I don't know that we've discussed it at any length. Marcus Garvey considered himself Pan-Africanist in the 1920s, 1930s. [W. E. B] DuBois became a Pan-Africanist at one stage in his life. Stokely Carmichael considers himself to be a Pan-Africanist now, and is working for a Pan-Africanist organization. The Pan-Africanists originally spoke of a “back to Africa” movement that all persons of African descent should return to Africa. Now very few of the Pan-Africanists talk about returning to the motherland. They talk more frequently about the African diaspora, or persons of African descent scattered throughout the world, wherever they are, considering themselves Africans because of a certain assumed similarity of culture and of heritage. That is what most of the Pan-Africanists think now: a unity of all those of African descent wherever they are in the world, whether they're in the Caribbean, or in Africa, or the United States and the islands of the sea, or wherever.

Now, let's see. One of the essay questions probably will be, "What were the—" Oh, this won’t be an essay question. It'll be very simple, factual question: what were the major legislative accomplishments of the Civil Rights Movement in the sixties? Well, that's simple. Anybody want to make a stab at it?

Student: Civil Rights Act.

JF: Civil Rights Act of what year?

Students together: ’64.

JF: ’64.

Student: Voting Rights Act.

JF: Voting Rights Act. That was what year?

Students together: ’65.

JF: ’65, that is correct. It also wants you to tell us where and when the nonviolent direct action movement for civil rights in this country began.

Student: Greensboro.

JF: Well, actually, no. That's not what we're looking for. In Chicago, in 1942, when CORE [Congress of Racial Equality] was organized. But people did not know very much about that, it did not receive much publicity, but the technique was used from 1942 on. It became popularized in 1956, with the publicity surrounding the great Montgomery Bus Boycott. But we want you to know where it began. It was in Chicago in 1942, with the organization of CORE.

It also wants to know where the Southern student sit-in movement began, and when. Greensboro, North Carolina, and 1960. The month—and you won't be expected to remember that—was February. February 1, 1960. Greensboro, North Carolina is important, and the year, 1960.

The Freedom Ride began, took place, in what year?

Students together: ’61.

JF: ‘61, correct. Montgomery Bus Boycott, what year?

Students together: ’56.

JF: ‘56, yes. A little in ’57—went over into ‘57. Actually, it started in December of ‘55, very shortly after Rosa Parks was arrested, but ‘56 would be a good date. ‘56-‘57.

The objective of the Southern student sit-in movement—the sit-in movement that began in Greensboro, what is the objective?

Student: Desegregate the lunch counters at Woolworth.

JF: Not only at Woolworth, but the other variety stores like Woolworth: Kress, Kresge, Grant, and so forth. That was the original objective, but very soon after it started it spread to desegregation of all places and public accommodations. Originally, it was desegregation of the lunch counters at variety stores.

The objective of the Montgomery Bus Boycott?

Student: (inaudible)

JF: Desegregate what?

Student: (inaudible, coughing)

JF: Sit where you wanted on city buses in the city of Montgomery, Alabama. In other words, desegregation of the municipal buses in Montgomery.

The objective of the Freedom Rides?

Student: (inaudible)

JF: Yes, desegregation of interstate bus travel—that is, buses traveling from state to state, between states, all over the country. Let me see—

Basically, that covers it. I want you to know—I want you to tell us what you think about the success or the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the Civil Rights Movement of the sixties. What were its major accomplishments? What were its limitations or its failures? Also, I'd like you to make a stab at your evaluation or appraisal of the state of civil rights in the United States today. That's opinion. That's opinion. And what would you do in the future?

Do you have any questions, not just about the examination, but anything in the area of civil rights? I don't presume to have all the answers to anything, but at least I'd like to get the questions. You know, in the sixties, I was amazed at the amount of answers I had. I had answers to everything then. But I've forgotten most of it. Now I'm not sure I know most of the questions. But there were lots of them in the sixties.

Student: I'd like to ask, for your exam schedules, is it at one time?

JF: The exam schedule?

Student: Yeah.

JF: Yes, what is the—

Student: Are you offering it at just that one time?

JF: Just that one time. If there are those here—even if there's only one person who finds that most inconvenient, then we can arrange for another time, more appropriate for that individual—for those individuals. Okay?

Student: Thank you.

JF: Any other questions?

Student: I was wondering if you could touch again on the subject of the teachings of Gandhi?

JF: On what?

Student: I was wondering if you could touch on the subject once again of how the teachings of Gandhi were quite influential in the nonviolent movement?

JF: Oh, yes (coughs). Well, in 1941, just before Pearl Harbor and immediately after Pearl Harbor, a number of pacifists, including myself, were interested in finding nonviolent solutions to conflict situations. We did not find it enough for us, for our consciences, simply to refuse participation in war. Because to say no to participation in war was a negative act, and we had to

do something positive to feel that we were constructive. So we were looking for nonviolent solutions to violent conflict situations. Not only the international scene, but the domestic scene as well.

And there were two major problems to be concerned with on the domestic scene: the first was—one, rather not the first—but one was labor and management, labor and industry. And the other was race. My major concern was race. And I began studying the techniques of Gandhi, including Gandhi's writings and what was written about him, and especially a book by Krishnalal Shridharani, a disciple of Gandhi's who was then studying in Columbia University, working on his PhD in [sociology?]. His book, titled *War Without Violence*, was an analysis of Gandhi's program and methods—step-by-step procedures as used by Gandhi.

Well, this small band of pacifists in Chicago and New York—chiefly in Chicago then—began studying Gandhi. And I wrote two memoranda to A. J. Muste, who was head of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a religious pacifist organization for which I worked at the time. In 1941 I began writing the memos, completed the first memo in early 1942. I sent these memos to Muste, proposing that the FOR, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, sponsor the establishment of an interracial organization using Gandhian techniques of nonviolent direct action, including civil disobedience, noncooperation, jail-going where necessary, and filling up the jails where necessary, in an attempt to bring an end to racial segregation and other forms of racial discrimination in this country.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation's national council, which was its governing body, discussed the two memoranda and decided not to sponsor such an organization but to authorize me as its traveling race relations secretary. Part-time, fifteen dollars a week. And that was poor pay even in those days. Supposed to be part-time but it's actually a lot more full-time. More like

full-time. They agreed that they would continue paying my salary, fifteen dollars a week, and allow me on their time to set up a pilot project along the lines which I had outlined in the memos, in one city: Chicago. And then they would determine, after a while, whether to sponsor it or not—after the pilot project was set up.

The pilot project was the first chapter of CORE. In the course of the next year, I traveled around the country for the FOR, and in those travels organized about a dozen other organizations, like the Chicago Committee of Racial Equality. And then the next summer we called a conference of those organizations and set up the national CORE, the Congress of Racial Equality. So that was the connection between Gandhian technique and the Civil Rights Movement in this country.

Now, to repeat what I'd said earlier, we had no publicity. Though we were making successful use of the technique of nonviolence, this was prior to the advent of television. Television was a post-World War Two development. Actually, it was not in homes here until, well, I guess the early fifties—not to any extent. We had no television coverage, very little on the radio, very little in the written press. Perhaps there would be a small item on the back page of a local paper such as the *Chicago Tribune*, saying that yesterday a half-dozen nuts and crackpots sat down in this restaurant until they were served or thrown out, whichever came first. But that was all.

So a nonviolent movement did not take to the skies. Not until Dr. King with the Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1956. Television coverage and charismatic leadership captured the imagination of people not only in this country but all over the world. And the movement was on wings, then. It was after that, several years later, that the Southern student sit-in movement began, inspired in part by the example of Dr. King in Montgomery—the technique of

nonviolence. And the CORE Freedom Ride followed a year later: 1961. So the movement was well on the way then. Other questions?

Student: Do you think part of the lack of publicity was because in the early forties we were in a world war and it was the biggest news of the time, bigger than anyone?

JF: Of course. And people were not inclined to listen to nonviolence in a time of war.

Student: (inaudible)

JF: Right. It sounded like a bunch of nuts, you know? People were talking about nonviolence, don't strike back, when we were fighting for our lives as a country. You're quite right, that's a very good point. Very good point.

Student: Well, I think what happens sometimes is it's so important, the most important thing that's going on, it's going to get a lot of publicity.

JF: True.

Student: Sometimes you've got some competition.

JF: Yep. Whatever's bigger than you in someplace else, publicity-wise, you're dead. You're absolutely right.

Student: What do you see as failures in the movement?

JF: Failures?

Student: Yeah, what are its limitations?

JF: Our limitations—yeah. There are many. We left untouched some vital areas, such as residential segregation—very important, very. The movement, per se, did virtually nothing on that. Martin—Martin Luther King, Jr.—began moving in that direction in 1967 in Chicago. His efforts there were a failure. And he was literally astonished at the amount of prejudice and

outright hostility and hatred that he encountered in the city of Chicago. He marched in Chicago and marched in Cicero or Cairo [towns in Illinois].

Dr. King had grown up in the South and done most of his work in the Deep South, and had come north to get support for his efforts in the South—financial support, moral support, et cetera. Here he was marching in the North, not in the South. And he was astonished by deeply-rooted racism there in the Chicago area. He was pelted—the marches were pelted with stones and sticks and eggs and everything else, and obscenities were shouted at them as they went by, and police had to protect them as mobs gathered. Finally, in what I consider the 3 a.m. of his soul, he blurted out, "The people of Mississippi want to learn how to hate? They ought to come to Chicago." He found more hatred there, he thought, than he had seen in Mississippi.

Well, we did very little on housing—almost nothing. We did very little to try to counteract racism itself. We were attacking the effects of racism, the structures that racism built up to protect itself. Segregation, for instance. But for the prejudices themselves, we did virtually nothing about.

Another weakness of the movement was we did no long-range planning. We should have. But our excuse for not doing it was that we were crisis-oriented; we were constantly confronting emergencies and crises and couldn't find the time to indulge in the luxury of thinking and doing long-range planning. As a consequence, when success in terms of achievement of the short-term goals—Civil Rights Act of ‘64, the Voting Rights Act of ’65—came upon us, we were caught flat-footed without programming for the future, what to do after we get the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act. What were the problems likely to be? We should have thought at the time.

Several times, in CORE, I scheduled think sessions where we planned to pull the entire CORE staff in, out of the field, at some camp out in the woods, away from the telephone, for

some extended period of time—maybe two weeks. We would have scholars there with baseline data so this wouldn't simply be batting the breeze, but strategy sessions. And we would talk about what the problems were probably going to be in 1970, 1980, 1990, the year 2000, and how we can deal with those problems. Try to anticipate the obstacles that are going to arise. Try to predict what the job market is going to be in the future, and how we should begin to prepare our youngsters for those jobs. All that had to be done—you know, futuristic thinking. Futurism. But we didn't do it. I would arrange a schedule and had everybody put it on their calendars, but invariably, before the dates rolled around, some emergency would arise: Schwerner, Goodman, Cheney get killed down in Mississippi, or we'd have 3,000 people in jail in Greensboro, North Carolina. And it seemed obvious to us then that we could not pull staff out of those areas and indulge in the luxury of thinking. But I think the movement is paying a penalty for not having done any long term planning.

So now there is a lack of unity among civil rights organizations because there is no clear and united sense of direction and objective. There is nothing comparable to CUCRL, the Council on United Civil Rights Leadership, today. The issues, granted, are much more complex than they were in the sixties. But even so, it should be possible to get some unity to the point of union, so that there can be concerted action on them. So those are some of the limitations, as I see. Some are failures of omission, and others shortsightedness.

Yes?

Student: Some contend that the President's administration is trying to turn back the hands of time—that is, trying to reverse some of the achievements made during the Civil Rights Movement. Your comment?

JF: Well, I agree with that, quite—I think that is true. His administration is trying to do that. I hope that I will not offend those who are supporters of President Reagan. I respect him as an individual and as a person, but I disagree with him strongly.

During the sixties, Mr. Reagan was opposed to the Civil Rights Movement, sit-ins, the Freedom Rides, and he said so in no uncertain terms. While the Civil Rights Act was up for debate in Washington, he spoke out several times in California against it. He thought it was a mistake, he thought it was an infringement of the rights of the businessmen who man restaurants and other places of public accommodation, for the federal government to step in and try to control their lives by telling them who they could serve and who they could not refuse to serve. But he was opposed to it. And it has been my feeling, and the feeling of many other civil rights activists, that since he's been President he's set about trying to undo what has been done by the Civil Rights Movement in a number of ways.

The Voting Rights Act is an example. When the Voting Rights Act was up for renewal and extension, he was opposed to it and said so. He thought it ought to be let die right then. We don't need it anymore, it served a useful function but that time, its time, has passed—which of course was the same point of view held by the segregationist Strom Thurmond, who took the lead in Congress in trying to get the ball rolling on letting the Voting Rights Act die. But we managed to mount such a public relations campaign to bring political pressure there on Capitol Hill—letters, and telegrams, and phone calls, and rallies, and marches—that they saw that ending the Voting Rights Act was not going to fly politically.

So then they adopted a new strategy and that was to change it, amend it, so that in order to establish discrimination, you would have to prove intent to discriminate. In other words, the effect—if the effect is discriminatory, that didn't matter. You had to prove that that was their

intention. Well, of course we know in a long history of civil rights activity that it's virtually impossible to prove intent. There you're being asked to read a person's mind. “The gentleman intended. Well, she intended.” You're being asked to go into the closet with them and to pray to their god. They talk to their conscience, their conscience talks to them. So you can't tell what they intended; you can only tell the effects of what they do. In my opinion.

They finally dropped that—the pressure we mounted was sufficiently great. So the bill went through, the extension went through, and the President signed, albeit reluctantly. Now, the Justice Department under Ed Meese and Bradford Reynolds is bringing suits against civil rights workers in the Deep South who are trying to register people to vote—register Blacks. In some cases, in Alabama for instance, the civil rights workers are using absentee ballots. They're using forms to take to old people and sick people who cannot go down to the courthouse or wherever it is they have to go to get the registration forms. Taking them to them, having them sign forms, have them notarized, with a notary public there, and then taking them back, registering. And trying to do the same in voting by using absentee ballots. This has been done by the white communities in Alabama for many, many years. But now, however, that the civil rights workers are doing it to register Blacks, the Justice Department is writing a suit against them for voting fraud, charging voting twice. How? Well, they say, Spiver Gordon, you voted for yourself, right? Okay, then you took an absentee ballot over to Sister Jones, who is ninety-two years old and so arthritic she can't get out of her house, and you showed her where to sign, so you showed her where to sign it and where to vote. You, in effect, voted twice. And that is a criminal offense.

And so Spiver and a number of the other civil rights workers have been indicted—multiple indictments. Spiver has been convicted; I mention him particularly because he was, of course, a member of CORE. He is appealing. I don't know whether he will win or lose.

Also, affirmative action, which was another victory—I didn't mention affirmative action as a legislative victory because it was not legislative, it was the executive department— executive order. Where the federal government is concerned, an administrative decision. The President has said, and the Justice Department Attorney General has said, they're opposed to affirmative action and numerical goals and timetables. They say affirmative action's not so bad, but numerical goals and timetables, which sound like quotas, are terrible, because they are color-conscious and not colorblind. This administration is a lie. When you say to an employer that since you don't have any Blacks or Puerto Ricans in your employ, in the next five years we want to see you bring the number of Blacks and Puerto Ricans up to ten percent of the workforce—let's say approximately ten percent of the population in this area. So that's numerical goals and timetables, and that is a quota, and that discriminates. It discriminates against whites. It is color-conscious, and not color-blind, says the President, and says Ed Meese

Therefore, the President has said and repeated on several occasions that he intends soon to issue an executive order which will ban numerical goals and timetables in affirmative action. Well, now, there are many companies, business concerns, and city agencies such as police departments and fire departments which have worked out plans of affirmative action including numerical goals and timetables. Some of them have had no Blacks in their force—the fire department or the police—and they worked out a plan with the NAACP or whatever other civil rights organization exists in that community to improve that gradually in the next five years or ten years, aiming at parity with the population—percentage in the population, roughly. It's not a hard and fast figure; it's a goal, and it's flexible. Negotiable. They've worked out a plan, they've agreed to it. The Justice Department has learned about it. The Justice Department's called them

up or written, saying, You must not do this, because this discriminates. This is color-conscious. We want colorblind.

These companies and these agencies say, Look, Justice Department, please get off our backs. We're happy. Our workforce is happy. The community organizations are happy. The special interest groups are happy. The trade unions are happy. Everybody's happy, would you please leave us alone? But instead of leaving them alone, Brad Reynolds files a suit against them. Takes them to court.

Yeah, they're trying to turn back the clock on those. Part of it is ideological, I think. Honestly, some persons in the administration, I assume this is true of the President, feel that—let's see, how should we put it?—that there's no longer any systemic discrimination against Blacks as a group, or other minorities as a group. And that if a Black person works hard, and follows the Protestant ethic of work habits and everything else, he will do as well as anybody else, because there's no longer any racial discrimination. And this individual will become a white person, with an invisible black skin.

I don't think that's true. It has become popular, and it has for years, to say that there's no longer any racial discrimination. In fact, one Black man, a guy in Michigan, a professor [William Julius Wilson], wrote a book entitled *The Declining Significance of Race*. Other Blacks, Black intellectuals, neoconservatives—I would generally classify him as such—have taken the position that it is no longer a race problem, it is now just a class problem, and there's no longer any problem with race. Color doesn't mean anything anymore; it is class, class only. It is an economic problem.

In fact, I heard a discussion on that this very morning in New York City, on a TV show that was being taped. The discussion was with Bayard Rustin, whom I've known many years—

1942, as a matter of fact. He used to be militant; now he's very, very neoconservative and takes the position that it's no longer a race problem, it's now an economic problem. That we did it all in the sixties.

Well, for me, that is simply nonsense. I think it is both race and class. There's still racism. Ask yourself if, when you see a Black person you see just a person, or do you see a Black person? Those of you who are white. Those of you who are Black, ask yourself if, when you see a white person you see a person who happens to be white, or do you see a white person? I suspect it is the latter. I suspect that all of us, when we see a person for the first time, view that person through race eyes. Because—it's nothing to be ashamed of. It's nothing to deny. Because we've grown in a society which conditions us in that way. And we have to *de*condition ourselves, if there is such a word as decondition.

Decondition ourselves; that's the nub of it. I would say this—this is an extreme statement, but I think that it is accurate. It certainly used to be completely accurate, twenty years ago I'd say it without any second thought. Now, I [think before?]. I used to say, it is impossible for any person in our country to grow to adulthood, whether that person is Black or white, without having some residues of racial feeling. That was an extreme statement. Now, a bit more sensitive, I'd still make the statement. But with some reservations now. The more sensitive among us, among white and among Black, work hard to get rid of it, to root it out of us. And if we're very, very sensitive, we succeed. The less sensitive, we succeed to a lesser extent. If we are insensitive, we don't succeed at all. If we don't try, we certainly don't succeed. But it is hard, because we grow up in a society which conditions us to racial responses. We're Black or white. To say that race doesn't count now, that color doesn't matter, that we are colorblind, is to tell

ourselves a lie. And I guess the worst kind of a lie is a lie we tell ourselves. It's all right to tell somebody else a lie—when you tell yourself one (laughs), you're kidding *yourself*.

No, the time will come when we will have no racial responses, I'm sure. I don't think that time has come yet. I don't think that. I know a good friend of mine in New York, a woman from South Dakota—maybe it was North Dakota, it doesn't matter—who is very much anti-racist. She's white, of course—I don't think there are any Blacks there! One or two, maybe (laughs)—but she was leading some children in the street, a blocked off street, in some game. She was a social worker. And she had to line them up somehow and decide who was going to play what role. So she started off, "Eenie, meenie, miney, moe, catch a—" (muffled noise, class laughs). You know the saying, don't you? Eenie, meenie, miney, moe, catch a nigger by the toe. She said, "Eenie, meenie, miney, moe, catch a—" (muffled noise, class laughs). Then she said, "*tiger* by the toe."

And she worried, brooded about that for weeks. She finally told me, and I laughed uproariously. I said, "Why in the world didn't you go ahead and say it? Get it out. Because it meant nothing to you." But the fact that it troubled her so much said it meant a little to her, I think.

Well, we can get rid of our biases, and I think you young ladies and young gentlemen who, ten years from now will have families, will have an awesome responsibility and a great privilege of seeing to it that if your children grow up to be decent human beings, with decent, humane values, that one of those humane values that you'll instill in your children will be that of knocking racism.

I think parents can do it. More than the teachers, more than the preachers, more than anybody else, but then they can do much better if they have first done it for themselves.

Any other questions?

Student: I just had a comment: when you were talking about the limitations of the movement, and one is how it did not counteract racism. I'm not sure the movement as such can, because that's a personal—that's something in [somebody's head?]. So how do you do that, as a movement?

JF: Well—

Student: Other than coming through the back door, through the legislation?

JF: That's a good point.

Student: I don't think that's a failure. Maybe a limitation, but not a failure.

JF: Well, some of the movement intellectuals argued during the movement's day that we were trying to get at racism, that laws have educational effect long term. Because people don't want to be law violators, they keep abiding by a law which says, you treat everybody the same, and by and by, long enough, you will begin to feel that everybody is the same. I guess maybe that is true in the long term, but it's a very slow process.

How do you do it, how could a movement do it? I'm not sure. I was talking with Dr. Kenneth Clark, one of the better-known Black psychologists, who thinks that it can be done and that it would be a task for colleges and publicists to work out together. What they'd have to do in these fields is reach into the kind of input that goes into determining people's thinking, how they think and how they feel. Or how they feel, I guess, then how they think. That would mean the television, what kind of image they get on television. This would have to be a concerted approach where you sit down and kind of program it, obviously. Movies, certain books, especially preschool books, textbooks, children's books. Comic books would be very important because people read those more than anything else.

The danger of that, of course, is that it might be too Big Brother-ist. If it's to be so all-encompassing, affecting every instrument which comes to disseminate culture—and that's what he's talking about—then it would have to be orchestrated, I suppose, by government. And if the government begins orchestrating what goes into all those instruments, where does that stop? Would the cure not be as bad, or worse, than the disease? I don't know. But I think your question is such a good one, I have to kind of talk around it there. I'm not sure what can be done, can be orchestrated, but I think it might.

I know dictatorships can do it. Cuba, by fiat—or is it *fye*-at?—fiat, wiped it out. But that's a totalitarian society now. But the pre-Castro regime was not anti-racist. Castro came in and made the demonstration of racism a criminal offense, and all of the instruments which determine how people think, and so forth, they get that message across. And I'm told by people who spent time there that it seems to work. I think it's going be hard.

Other questions?

Student: Just a comment that (inaudible) theory, few people who were racist towards someone they knew well—

JF: Knew well?

Student: Because once they know people well, that sort of [decreases?] racism.

JF: Yes, generally that's true. One caveat there. Maybe I'm wrong—don’t hesitate to disagree with me—

Student: Okay.

JF: Good (laughs). Isn't it possible, though, for a person to, say, know a servant well and love that servant, and still treat that person as a servant and think of the person as a servant? Which could well be a form of racism.

Student: Yes.

JF: Could be a form of racism.

Student: But wouldn't that apply to whites having white servants and blacks having black servants? Just as people and not as colors? Just as the position, not the race.

JF: Well, now, would it? Let's discuss it; I think it is an important point.

A person has a white servant, the servant is a servant but there is no concept of genetic inferiority. But it is quite possible for a person to love a Black servant, love that Black servant dearly, as we loved the mammies—the Black mammies—as we loved Uncle Toms. Loved Uncle Toms. But there was the concept of genetic inferiority and the basic difference. The basic difference. No less affection or love, but it was superior-inferior, genetically. Now with white, I assume it would be superior with inferior on status level, but not on a genetic level.

Student: I don’t think we could automatically assume that (inaudible). Either way, it's a problematic business.

JF: Yeah.

Student: (inaudible) the Irish were discriminated against, and the Irish weren't allowed to go into some stores, and they had to go into the back doors to things, and people had Irish servants—that even if they were white families and the Irish were white, they still thought there was something (inaudible).

JF: Did they think it was genes, though?

Student: Maybe cultural?

JF: Cultural. As in the South, the white plantation owner—his plantation owner was an absentee owner—and there was the riding boss—the store boss—the riding boss on the plantation. Now, he was on a different level from the poor whites who worked on that plantation, the

sharecroppers or tenant farmers, was he not? But it was not a caste system, that's the distinction. It was not a caste system, because it was still possible for that tenant farmer to become a store boss.

Student: Maybe a better example than the Irish would be Hitler's race theory on the Jews. They were thought to be genetically inferior.

JF: I'd argue they were thought to be genetically superior.

Student: Not in the Nazi perspective.

JF: Not in Nazi terms, that's right. Yeah.

Student: And Jews are still—people are still prejudiced against Jews today. Maybe not to the point of Nazi terms, but still.

JF: Yeah, but you see, there is one thing different—I'm not finding the words that I want to put my finger on it, but there is a qualitative difference. The anti-Semite looks at the Jew and feels the Jew is somehow less of a person than he, the anti-Semite, is. But he does not say that he is inferior to me. The thought is, the Jew is smarter. And the Jew will outdo him in business. That the Jew will run circles around him. Therefore, he hates him. But there is not that thought in dealing with a Black. When he looks at the Black, he doesn't see a man he believes is smarter than he is, he sees a man who he thinks is genetically not as smart.

Student: But even based on historical background, the first Blacks came here basically as slaves, but our introduction to Jews here in the United States was, the first interactions seem to match, the limiting of freedom.

JF: Well, there were white indentured servants that were near slaves. But Europe was not a caste system. Intermarriage was not taboo. That is a classic distinction.

Slaves are, it is true, thought to be inferior. Aristotle looked at the Greek slave and concluded in his writing: See? No wonder they're slaves; look at them. They're obviously inferior to the rest of us and inferior to their masters. Otherwise, they wouldn't be slaves.

Well, of course, Aristotle made a common mistake. He confused the effect for the cause. They became inferior because they were slaves, because they were treated that way, not the other way around. That's the way it's been historically. You had to brainwash a slave to make him act like a slave. You beat him and whip him and sometimes he prefers death.

I'm glad that at last we've got some questions—people are challenging some assertions. All right, that's good! Because, you know, you may be right and I may be wrong!

I think there's a qualitative difference, and I think the qualitative difference is because you do have some residues of a racist feeling. I don't doubt—you know, before Black power, most Blacks considered themselves inferior to whites. I looked at my father, and he always astonished me, not just because of his brains—he could speak and write and read and think in so many languages—but because I was convinced that in his heart of hearts, he believed that Blacks were inferior and whites were superior, despite himself and his obvious superiority as a person.

But then I asked myself, how could he believe anything else? He was born in Kingstree, South Carolina, 1886. As a small boy, moved to Pearson, Georgia, and there was brought up, and *everything* that he saw or heard told him that Blacks were inferior—a Black was told he was inferior, and came to believe it. How else do you explain the phenomenon of a Black with kinky hair referring to kinky hair as bad hair? And straight hair as good hair? I have bad hair (all laugh). Your hair's good hair (laughs). Or trying to lighten one's skin—make it whiter. But on the other hand, whites try to darken their skin by cooking themselves in the sun (all laugh). And curl their hair, too! (all laugh)

I think it really was ridiculous, but Blacks did reject themselves! And considered themselves inferior, and thus began acting inferior in the presence of whites. That's why it was such a breath of fresh air, in spite of all its potential for danger and for evil, when the young Blacks in the middle sixties began shouting, Black is beautiful, it's not ugly! I'm somebody! My hair's not bad hair, it's good hair! I won't try to get rid of those kinks; I'll grow them long in a bush and celebrate every kink! And make a few more of them! So there was something refreshing about that—a person coming to terms with self—in spite of the danger of that person then saying, If you are not Black, and your hair is not kinky, then there's something wrong with you. You're not pretty, you're ugly. You're not beautiful, you're ugly.

And that's, of course, what happened with many of the Black is beautiful, Black power advocates. But many social movements have those negative, general—Flip Wilson said he believed in Black power once. He was almost convinced; he'd go to a meeting, and hear Stokely Carmichael's oration, and he'd be all fired up once he'd listen to one of those orations, and his chest was stuck out, and his head held high. He'd walk down the street and told himself that the first brother or sister he saw, he was going to give them the old Black power salute, you know? Righteous fist up in the air. He said he'd got a half block away, and he saw a brother coming toward him—a Black brother coming toward him. He waited until he got real close, and he gave him the old salute. He said, "You know what that guy said? He said, 'You better get both hands up, baby.'" (all laugh) "'This is a stick-up.'" (all laugh)

Black is not automatically beautiful. The point is: it's not automatically ugly. That was the lesson that had to be learned.

I think that (claps hands)—Blacks hated themselves, and believed themselves inferior and most whites believed Blacks to be inferior. I told Senator Bilbo—this was 1938, '37? You don't

know that name, do you? Senator Bilbo? Ted Bilbo, Mississippi, the granddaddy of all senatorial racists. The twenties and the thirties, and I guess the early forties, too. Bilbo—I talked to him, got an appointment with him—I was literally a kid, eighteen years old or so. And he said, "There ain't a nigger on Earth as smart as any white man." Which, of course, is an absurd statement. Absurd for any intelligent man—he was an intelligent man, obviously.

So I rattled off a list of a few Negro—that is the term used in those years—Negro geniuses. He thought for a minute, said, "I bet every one of them had some white blood" (class laughs). I mentioned one, one Black scientist who performed some miracles in surgery. The first successful operation on the human heart—open heart surgery. A Black surgeon. I mention that to Bilbo; he thought for a while. He said, "Yeah, that's right, niggers always were good with knives." (class laughs) I had to laugh, too (laughs). You just can't win with this guy.
Maybe I told you last week that—did I tell you? About Bilbo? That I learned that he had a Black mistress and Black children—half Black—whom he put through college. He loved his illegitimate family. I got this information from a chauffeur of Bilbo's. He said he took him over to this lady's house at least twice a week. And there he was, the worst Negro hater in the Senate. He'd educated his children. It's a funny thing. It's a strange love-hate complex. Less so now. Less so now than it was in those years, but we still have residues of it we have to try to get rid of.

What time is it?

(students talking)

JF: After eight? Do we want to take a break, or do we want to—have I gotten all the papers?

(students talking)

JF: Are there some who still have their papers here, or are there some who don't have their papers here to turn in? Okay, you will get them into the office—

Student: Tomorrow.

JF: Okay. Those that have not brought their papers, please try to get them in tomorrow. Okay?

[end of recording]