

CORE Chapter 21

ANONYMOUS BLACK MALE

0120 -  
Interview

Negro male in Clinton, La.  
CORE staff

Q: I wonder if I could ask you first of all who you are, and how long you've been working with Congress of Racial Equality?

A: I am 27 years of age, and I have been working with CORE since 1963.

Q: How did you first get involved with CORE?

A: Well, Lorna Time, in Vickery, a councils worker, and Theo Brown, also a task force worker, came, working on voter registration. Whereas during the time when I was available, and actually, I hadn't thought too much about coming and registering. Whereas they talked, you know, and really brought about some pretty good points concerning voter registration and what it meant to the Negro. And therefore I became interested, whereas we were taught, the constitutional tests as well as the short form. It was very difficult for some people, because it was a long time before they learned the test. Whereas they went down to register, and by the Registrar being so difficult, here in East Louisiana, the people became discouraged, because they would fill out the form, and he would tell them that they made one little mistake. They asked what their mistake was, and he emphasized to them he could not tell them. They would have to come back within ten days. The people, some of them, came back several times. They were told the same thing. We then tried to encourage the people to continue; we told them don't let this discourage them. Continue to come and try to get registered. A lot of the people was intimidated because the Registrar knew a lot of them, and when they came up to register, he would go back and he would tell the people they were working for, you know, that they came down and tried to get registered. These people then slacked off because of this, you know; their bosses got after them about it, telling them, "Don't go down fooling with that place." So this stopped a lot of people from coming to register.

Q: With all of this pressure, I assume some of it was applied to you also; you continued to work with the organization. Why was this...why did this happen?

A: I didn't feel too much pressure, because I was only working part time at the present time. And it really wouldn't have made any difference to me, because when I... once that I've been convinced of something, and I made up my mind, and see the significance of it, what the whites

say to me really doesn't matter very much.

Q: Well this fellow Ed Vickery, was he a Negro CORE worker or a white volunteer?

A: He was a white CORE worker; he was on the staff.

Q: Was he here just for the summer, or was he here for a longer period of time?

A: He was here better than a summer; almost a year, perhaps.

Q: And you were mentioning to me earlier something about the demonstrations in 1963. Here in this parish, and I wonder if you could tell us a little about that, and your part in them?

A: Yes I can; a lot of things that was dissatisfactory here. We took direct action because of the difficulty that the Negroes were having getting registered. Whereas the pressure that was applied to them, and this Constitutional test. In which they couldn't, most lot of them couldn't cope with it, because it was so long and they had to go through so much, you know. It got them mixed up; whereas some of them make a mistake in this form. Well, the reason we took direct action, because also our jobs were involved, whereas they had Negroes that were sweeping and mopping and bagging, this type of thing, whereas some were qualified to work in a position as clerk within this store. Whereas they didn't feel that Negroes should have this type jobs. In the South. So...we started out that morning about 10:00.

Q: When was this?

A: This was October 12, 1963. We went up, it was about 10 of us first, began pickets. And I was one of the first to go up. So I picketed in the front of the variety store here, and that's in East Louisiana parish. In the town of Clinton. Whereas the owner of the variety store, McGee, he came out and told me to leave the store. We informed the sheriff that we were coming and going to picket, so we came up--Gene--one of the fellows--was taking pictures, a movie camera, taking pictures of what was going on. McGee, the owner of the variety store, came out with a baton. He drew it back. We also were told by the officers there that we had to walk five feet apart. So we did this, and so the owner came out, he threw back a baton, and hit me. But I never stopped walking. Because I sincerely believed that this action would have been effective. And...then we were told that we would have to leave; we couldn't picket. By the District Attorney, Richard Kilgren. I told him that I was exercising my constitutional

right to picket for redress of grievances. He told me that I had a choice: I could go home, I could go to jail. I replied that I would continue to picket, because I wasn't going home. He in turn told me that I was under arrest. And which I was taken to jail. During that day, about every half an hour, perhaps 15 minutes, they would bring in one of the picketers to jail. They were picketing uptown. The people stood by--they was watching this thing, and didn't like it very well--the way the picketers were being treated. Whereas the boy that had the camera, his camera was taken, and he also were taken to jail. In the final analysis, there was about 45 of us in jail. We were somewhat discouraged, because we assumed that the people wouldn't continue after we were in jail. But to my surprise on Sunday, some of the adults carried signs, and some of them were brought to jail that Sunday. So this really gave us quite a bit of courage. We felt that the people was really with us. And during the time when we first came into jail, the showers wasn't working. The jail was filthy. And I informed one of the sheriffs, the sheriff from Jackson, Hardy Travis, that the shower wasn't working. He said, "Well you niggers aren't used to bathing no ways." I also mentioned about the linen on the beds; he said, if you don't like that, sleep on the floors. We did; we slept on the concrete. Although it wasn't very good sleeping, because the bad odor within the jail, because everything within it was filthy. So we sing, we sing; the jailer and his wife and children was living beneath the jail. Whereas they couldn't rest; the people uptown were complaining. So Sunday, October 13, that night, several deputies came up with their billies and things, told us we were going to have to shut up that damn noise, or they were going to take our clothes, although at that time we didn't have any heat in the jail. It was cold. We all sat close together; we took off our clothes, and piled them on the table, and we told, we started singing, "Sheriff move, move, move right now." So they came back up and asked us what we decided to do. We told them we would give up our clothing, because we weren't going to stop singing. So one of them implied, replied, that it didn't make a damn bit of difference. I told them it didn't make me any either. So they went back down and they talked; so they came back up and they told us that they would give us pine oil and soap and stuff to clean the jail, and they also would give us clean linen for the beds, and they also would fix the showers, which they did. But they never did have any hot water; always was cold water. Lot of us took colds because we had to bathe in cold water. It was real cold, without any heat in the jail. So that Sunday, a lot of our parents and friends came up with stacks and stacks of food, for us. Whereas they were told by the mayor, Joe Trepps, that they would not be permitted to see us. And they take the food back.

So they also was agreed to, in this bargain, that they would let our people come and see us. And bring us food. We told them that we would keep our word if they would keep theirs. So also, we attempted, we picketed in the little town of Jackson, Louisiana, still in East Louisiana parish. Whereas I called the sheriff, Hardy Travis, and informed him that we were going to picket in the town of Jackson. He told me, he said, "Come on up. You all will get picketed, all right." I say, "Sheriff, you mean to tell me you aren't going to protect us." He said, "You heard what I said." We went up, and we began to picket. First, we went up and we began to picket. So the sheriff stood by. Some of the picketers were shoved around, their signs tore up. Their picket signs was torn up. So some passed waving pistols out of the car, white folks. Some were ...threw rocks on the picketers, and blocked the streets.

Q: How many picketers were there then?

A: In Jackson?

Q: Yes.

A: It was about four. Myself, I picketed, and then I observed. And things got so difficult, we had to leave. I in turn called the FBI and informed him what was going on New Orleans. He in turn called the sheriff. We went back up and attempted to picket again. Whereas the sheriff informed me, Travis said, that he definitely wasn't going to walk down the street with us. That if we wanted somebody to walk, why didn't we call, get the Kennedys to do it. Then he told us that the district attorney had called and told him he'd have to put us in jail for our safe, for our safety, because the people were very much riled up. And well, we decided we would leave, because it wouldn't do any good to go to jail and it wouldn't accomplish anything. One of the young boys was picked up and was taken by one of the deputies, we didn't know where. I in turn called a sheriff, the sheriff told me he didn't know where he was; I in turn called the district attorney, and he told me the boy had been taken home, that they had taken him home to talk to his parents. So I don't know what happened, because the boy never did come back, but when we came back, he was home. During I picketed several times here in Clinton, where as I was arrested several times here. Once I went up picketing five times, five signs was torn out of my hand. I came back; I didn't have any more signs. So I took some leaflets and started giving 'em out. What was on the leaflets: "If We can't vote, We Won't Spend our Dollars." I was handing them out to the Negroes on the street. So one of the fellows that was running the IGA, Barnes, he asked me to let him see one of the leaflets.

Which I gave him one. There was a stack of them in my hand. He in turn twisted my arm, and tore the leaflets out of my hand. So...sheriff and town marshal was standing by.

Q: Nobody made any move to help?

A: Manchester; no. So I talked to him, I told him what happened. He told me it was lucky he didn't take the top of my head off.

Q: Manchester?

A: Yes, the town marshal, Manchester. So I thanked him. And he asked me, he said, "Are you going to file charges?" I say, "Yes." So I went to see the district attorney, Richard Kilgren. He wasn't in. This was that Saturday. So that Monday morning, early, I was on the district attorney's steps. Whereas I told him what had happened, and I told him what the town marshal said. I told him it was very bad that we had law enforcements, whereas we tell you such a thing is lucky the man didn't take the top of your head off when they are supposed to enforce the law. And he asked me was I going to make a complaint, and I told him yes, I was. So he took down my statement; he told me that I couldn't file a charge for assault and battery; it would have to be battery. So I told him okay. So this man was never picked up, or anything. So I went back to see the district attorney. And he told me, well, he had posted bond, you know. And that was all. Lot of...of things happened, during the time I was picketing. For instance, there was one lady that runned Cochran's drug store. She tried three times to run me down during the time I was picketing. She cut out on the sidewalk at me, and I ran out of the way. She went down, she turned around, she came back. She attempted the same thing. Again, I got out of the way. I went down further, picketing, and the owner of Jackson Appliance, here in Clinton, he came in a truck. I was crossing the streets. He speeded up and turned real sharp, and I had to run very hard to get out of the way, to keep from being hit by the truck.

Q: During this time, did you ever get any help from any of the local people? Any of the whites, or any of the law enforcement officers?

A: No. Then...couple days later, I was stopped by Manchester, the town marshal, and I was asked for my name and address and where I worked. And the mayor, Joe Phipps, asked me why I was doing this. I told him I was protesting because the Negroes weren't allowed to vote, to register to vote. The Negroes also finish school, and

then couldn't get a decent job. Other than the mop and the broom. And he told me, "well, you know damn well you ain't going to get one this way." I replied, "Well, we hadn't got any so far, and we weren't going to get any no way." So he asked me my father's name, where did my father live, my mother's name; so he wrote this down. So he told me, if I was drawing social security and walking the picket line, he'll see. I was going to pay for this. I told him I wasn't drawing social security. So this is...some of the things that happened, during '63.

Q: Now I understand that a lot of the people who participated had to put up their property as bail, and that a lot of this property is still not free from the liens which were placed on it at this time. Is this true?

A: All the property that was put up, thousands and thousands of dollars worth of property, was posted as bond. My barn was two thousands dollars. Two other kids' barns was two thousand dollars. And the rest of the kids barns was one thousands dollars. I must add that this boycott was very effective, because at the IGA, they were carrying off crates and crates of chicken, which had spoiled. Things had gotten so bad. There was a few people, I must say, was still shopping. They then started giving away money if you shop, and you sign your name and you drop it into this little basket. Your name would be pulled, and you will win \$25 to \$100. Whereas I learned that one Negro won-- \$25--he went on the train to Baton Rouge and spent it, at that market Really made me feel good, when I was told this.

Q: You, the community in 1963, during this time, became very active, and very involved. Since that time, what has happened in the community in this parish, regarding direct action or...

A: Well, what happened, during that time, a lot of people lost their jobs because of their association with the local CORE chapter. Whereas some attended rallies during that time where was as high as three and four hundred people. Because they were very upsetted about how we were treated and how we were thrown in jail. And this...to me, brought out a lot of people, because I didn't think actually that those many people would turn out. At all of the rallies, we had company; the town marshal, Manchester, the district attorney, Richard Kilgren, and sometimes even the sheriff, they would come outside of the church, you know, part alongside of the church, and they would enjoy our singing, because we would sing, "We're not going to let anybody turn us from." We would say, we're not going to

let Attorney Kilgren turn us around. We won't let Sheriff Dody turn us around, From walking, keep on talking, marching up to freedom land. This was some of the freedom songs that we sing. And We Shall Overcome. And for a long time, these rallies continued, and large...continued attending a large portion of people. Whereas people contributed, a dime, a quarter, whatever they had to spare. This money was taken by the community, and was called the Community Fund. This money was contributed to people who had lost their jobs, people that had mortgages whereas the bank put pressure on them, and this money was being given by the people, dimes nickels and quarters, some gave a dollar, that were able, well, they took up the notes on one man's home, to keep him from losing it, because he had a lot of little children. He also were in jail, during the time that we were in jail. He came to jail that Sunday, because he also carried a picket sign. He was permitted, uh, to pay five dollars, per month, whenever he found a job. He could pay it back that way. As long as he didn't have a job, he didn't have to worry about it. Whenever he got one, this would be the way that he could pay it back--five dollars a month. If that was too much, two dollars per month. Until he paid the amount back. This was very helpful, because it also, a lot of people without jobs didn't have food; this Community Relief Fund gave them money to buy food, some to pay their rent, where some was put off, out of the house; they didn't have any place to go. Some was told that if they would go to attend any of those meetings, they would have to go look for some place to go. Whereas some didn't have no place to go, so they had to stop. This was the type of pressure that was put on these people. Whereas a lot of people, old people at this different stores, pressure was applied that way. They demanded their money. A lot of them paid off the debts that they owe, and are not having any more dealings with people here in this parish. It has hurt a great deal; it had gotten so, whenever we attempted to go up and picket in this town here, in Clinton, we were arrested immediately, before we got our signs out, you see.

Q: When have you attempted to picket since '63?

A: We haven't attempted since, because, since this was so effective, it lasted a good while. But the people slowly started going back gradually. To some extent, the people are still shopping, and the major part of the people that was really sincere, well, they are still not shopping here in the town of Clinton. Even their appliance stores, they have gone down to a certain extent.

Q: Have the whites made any concession due to this pressure on them?



A: No; several people written a letter--they all got together and they signed this letter, asking to set up a biracial committee. This was considered intimidation by the power structure, whereas some of these people were over 80 years of age, they were taken to jail, because they asked to set up this biracial committee. This is the type thing that goes on in the town, in the South. Whereas the whites don't believe that the Negro should ask for anything; they should still look to be told what to do, how to do, what to say, and how to say it.

Q: Do you think that the form of organization which CORE has now in this particular parish is going to make progress within, well, in the future? Do you think they'll be able to mobilize the Negro community and break down many of these barriers which exist within the white community?

A: Well, right now the white power structure has quite a few informants. They are told every thing that is being attempted. Whereas these people, they are always getting favors from the white power structure, such as jobs, very good jobs, and they're in the upper class, they're sort of the upper class Negro. Now I think very soon that the Negro people in this area, town of Clinton, parish of East Louisiana, will be able to take care of their own problems. They are organizing themselves whereas they will be able to handle their own problems.

Q: And this is what CORE wants?

A: This is what CORE wants. Because eventually the Negroes within the parish are going to have to start standing up on their own two feet. Taking care of their problems, coping with their problems. Talking to the white man, let them know that they are dissatisfied with the way things are going on within the community. A lot of the people is not very understanding, in this parish; whereas you have a lot that are understanding, and they...sort of look through things for what they really are. Whereas the people that doesn't have very good understanding, well, they looks to their minister for leadership. Whereas in this parish, most of the ministers against voter registration, and talk against it. Most of them do not permit civil rights workers to talk about voter registration in the churches. Whereas they say they feel, the ministers do, that out of all of this, they feel that the white treats them good, and the Negroes shouldn't be bothered with this mess. Whereas a lot of Negroes, work for whites, doing domestic work, and their boss lady tell them, "Don't you go up there with that voting mess, that voter registration, because it's not going to do you any good. It's not going to do you any good, so it's not worthy bothering with." So they won't, because they're

0120-9

told this.

Q: This is meant that many--that the Negro community now is less militant than two years ago in 1963, is that right?

A: Yeah. Because some of them has been given jobs with strings attached so as they're not to involve themselves in certain ways...within the community.

Q: How do you hope to combat this particular apathy, if it can be called apathy? Do you have any particular plans which you're now working on?

A: Yeah, we have. We're trying to organize a community whereas if the people within the community wants to get organized, they can talk to the other people who doesn't have a very good understanding. Explain things to them. Whereas they can understand and see where they're making their mistakes by sitting back pulling one way--pulling back whereas they're trying to go forward. Now, Negroes' educational system here in the South should be changed. Because Negroes use the same books year after year after year after year. They even use them if the backs wear off them and they still use them if all the pages aren't intact. Whereas they are not modern books. Here in the South, Negro history and part in the South is not taught. The Negroes know nothing about Negro history. And in none of the places in the South are the Negroes taught driver education. They aren't taught typing, not any type of foreign languages are they taught and some they are not taught shorthand. They do not have adequate facilities in the school. For instance, whereas they work on chemistry and experimenting and they don't have any type of equipment to do this. Whereas the whites they have. The Negroes, I must admit, they have fine schools, but they don't have in those fine schools what they ought to have.

Q: What about the teachers? How are they?

A: Well, Negro teachers, well, they are not about to ask for better books or better things because they are afraid they will lose their jobs. This is their main concern. The Negro teachers would be more active to speak up, but they're afraid of their jobs. For instance, one teacher, Hazel P. Matthews, she was a teacher at West High in Jackson, Louisiana. She, also, was one of the people on this committee that I had mentioned previously that asked for a bi-racial committee to be set up whereas the Negroes could discuss their problems within the community. Because of this, she had to meet court so much, she had missed so many days, this was part of the reason that she was fired. What I mean by fired--she was through with her term but she was refused a contract and this has somewhat affected her throughout the State of Louisiana.

0120-10

Q: Yeah, I imagine. Has there been any attempt to integrate the schools here? In the first place, are they supposed to be integrated?

A: Well, as I understand it, several parents have gone down and applied for transfers to the white schools. So, although they haven't received any hearing concerning this, but we're hoping that they would be able to be admitted this summer in September.

Q: There were three students who went to the white school last year, is that right?

A: Uh, this I wouldn't know because I wasn't here. I was working in North Louisiana.

Q: I see. Why don't you--what type of work were you doing in North Louisiana? Essentially the same type of work that you're doing here?

A: Well, in North Louisiana, there are many problems. For instance, last summer, direct action, whereas they did some testing and, too, a lot of arrests were made. And we canvassed from door to door....

Q: This we, this is CORE?

A: Yes, uh-huh. We wasn't getting very much cooperation from the community due, again, because the people were very much afraid. During the time that we were canvassing, the canvassers were stopped and the list of names where they had canvassed from door to door concerning the people who were attending clinics and so forth were taken and these people, in turn, were intimidated and so they didn't come out any more to the voter registration clinics. We feel that these people were contacted by the power structure and were frightened and so they didn't come out any more because they were afraid. Also, in March, March 7th, I went to the library here in the East Louisiana Parrish town of Clampton. This is a public library, whereas I entered--I myself, Henry Brown and four more other persons--the other four was from West Louisiana. I was approached by the assistant librarian. She asked, "May I help you?" I said "Yes, please." I said "Do you have the book The Story of the Negro by Wendell Bontemps. She said "No, we don't have that." She said "I can order it for you and have it put on the Bookmobile and you can pick it up on the Bookmobile." I said "Well, do you have anything pertaining to the Constitution of the United States?" And she said "Yes, we have." I said "Well, I would like to read it, please. Something on it, please." She said "I will see that it is on the Bookmobile and you can pick it up there." So, I sat down and she said "Well, why

can I not read it here?" And she said "Well, I'm sorry, but you all cannot. We cannot serve you." I said "Why not? This is a public library. Negro taxes pay for these books as well as the white. Why can't the Negroes use it? The Whites use it." She said "Well, our rules prohibit me from serving you--our laws. I'm going to have to ask you to leave." I said "I'm very sorry. I'm not leaving until I'm served." So she got upset and so she went back and she got the head librarian. She said "Didn't she ask you to leave?" I said "Yes, she did." She said "Well, why didn't you leave?" And I said "Because I asked to be served and I refuse to leave without being served." She said, "Well, I'm going to ask you to leave." And I said, "Well, I'm very sorry, but I'm not going to leave until I am served." And, so, she in turn, called the Sheriff. He came in and another guy was standing there with his hand in his pocket. He was a big, stout fellow. He turned real red. So, the Sheriff came in. He said "Didn't the librarian ask you to leave?" And I said "Yes, Sheriff, she did." He said, "Why you won't leave?" I said "Because I refuse to leave without being served." He said "Now, I'm giving you a choice. You can go home or you going to jail." Now, I said "Now, Sheriff, I'm going to remain here until I'm served. If you not going to take me to jail, I'm still going to remain." Well, he said "Okay, you're under arrest." I said "Allright." So, the District Attorney, Richard Killburn, he told him to bring me to his office. He knew my name. He asked me, uh, he say, "Didn't the librarian ask you to leave?" I said, "Yes, she did." "Well, why didn't you leave?" I said, "Because, Mr. Killburn, I have a right to use that library as well as anybody else. The Negroes are paying taxes just as the white. They use it. The whites go in and they sit down and they use the books. Why can't we do the same?" He said, "UH, the law, our laws is that you're not supposed to use the library." I said, "Well, I know that I have a Constitutional right. I know, being a citizen of this parish, a registered voter, I'm entitled to use this library." He said, "Well, you can go home. You all can go home." I said, "Well, I tell you, you let me go home. When I go out of your office, I'm going right back to the library." So, he said, "Well, take them to jail." So, they took us to jail.

Q: What did they finally do in regard to the library? Is it still segregated?

A: No, they closed all three branches down as a result.

Q: Is that right?

A: Yeah. There's a branch in Wesleyville, which is in West Louisiana. There's a branch in St. Helena, which is in Greensburg. And there's the main branch here, which is in Clampton.

Q: So it's all closed down now?

0120-12

A: And my case is still pending.

Q: How long ago was it that you attempted to integrate the library?

A: I think it was the 7th of March in '64.

Q: I see.

A: I know it was on the 7th of March. Yes, it was in '64, if I'm not mistaken.

Q: How effective do you think that CORE is now being, given their community action program now in Louisiana?

A: Well, at the present time, I would say pretty well. Although we do not have the majority cooperation of the people.

Q: How do you view the summer project this year where the summer volunteers were brought in from the outside? Do you think that this has proved effective or that it was a good idea?

A: Uh, yes, I think that it's a good idea. Because the Negro now, they're getting used to working along with the whites. I think that this is very good. I think we should be so as we can sit down and express our views with one another and come to an understanding.

Q: Right.

A: This summer mainly we're working on organizing the community, whereas the community will be able to handle their own problems. Whereas they can sit down and discuss things with the white power structure. It hasn't got to that stage, yet. The whites in the South still feel that they're being intimidated when they're asked to sit down to the conference table with the Negro.

Q: Yeah, I see. What about the future? What do you think CORE should be aiming at, say, next year and the year after? Do you think that they'll have to expand beyond the community organization to more direct action, such as Bogalusa, for instance?

A: Well, this is hard to say right now. As I see it, organizing the community would bring on--would, uh, accomplish a great deal. Therefore, the Negroes then, wouldn't have to depend upon Core to give them advice or tell them what to do and how to do it. They become organized. They can discuss among themselves what they want done and how to do it.

0120-13

This is somewhat how I see it.

Q: Right.

A: But there is still a great deal to be done.

Q: Do you think that CORE has enough workers in the State right now or do they need more?

A: Well, it has been rather difficult getting the Negroes to work because to some extent, some schools, some colleges don't see eye to eye with Negroes working with CORE and these organizations.

Q: Is that a general thing in Louisiana, in other words, or just certain schools?

A: Yeah, right. Certain schools, I'd say. Because of the white power structure, again, this is the cause. Yeah, uh, and true, I think that once the Negroes get out of their heads that they're solely dependent on the whites--that they can't do anything for themselves--I think a great deal will be accomplished. Because for a long time, the whites have been doing the thinking for the Negroes and they haven't had any opportunity to do any thinking on their owns. A majority of them you know that haven't gone beyond the third grade, you see, and those that haven't gone to school, you see. The whites have been doing all their business for them and doing all their thinking for them and it's coming to a time now that the Negroes are going to have to start doing their own thinking and have to start standing on their own two feet. Because it's getting to the time now that the whites are, they are just beginning to get more prejudiced against the Negroes.

Q: You think that that has happened?

A: Yes, it has happened here in East Louisiana parrish.

Q: What about--do you think that it's desirable that the Negroes attempt to form a political party of their own or do you think that it's more desirable that they try to work within the existing power structure? Within the Democratic or Republican Party?

A: I think they should work, right now, on the level that--you know, as it is set up now. And if things doesn't work out then it's up to them to take other steps.

Q: I'm sure interested how you initially got into CORE two or three years ago. You mentioned one of the workers you talked to about voter registration and did it just take this one meeting to get you into the organization and working or was it a longer process?

A: Well, I talked to him several times, because when I first talked to them, they ~~w~~explained the voter registration to me, whereas what it would mean to the Negro community, whereas they could obtain through the power structure by being a registred voter, you know. You could get more, whereas there are plenty of poor people here in this parrish. Whereas, your surplus foods, once they had it here, but the whites, they had it cut off because they felt that the Negro --that they had gotten this and the little bit that they were making, well, they knew that they wasn't going to spend it in the stores so they, they saw that the food that they get here--the food that they was getting here--that the few nickels that they made, that they would have to spend it here in the town. For instance, those that work in the fields, they get \$2.00 a day. They work from seven to five--five-thirty or six--some work from six to six for two dollars a day in the fields. Even some of the domestic workers work for \$6.00 or \$7.00 a week and this is five or six days a week. They get \$7.00 a week and they ~~ge~~ have children. But, mainly due to the fact that jobs are done to the scales here, they have to take what they can get so they can eat. In order to survive. So that they're children can eat. They have to survive they have to live.

Q: Yeah. So, it was primarily a realization that economic conditions were getting worse, or that they were bad and that something had to be done and that CORE might be an organization that might do it?

A: Yes. That's why this community relief fund came in very handy. Because a lot of children was cut off welfare...

Q: Yeah, mm-hmm.

A: ...during the time of '63. Mostly because some of them went to meetings that are ours, just to listen to what was going on.

Q: I see. Well, were you in school or out of school when you first joined CORE?

A: I was out of school. I finished shcool in '56 at East High. That's how I know the conditions at the schools here in East Parrish and they haven't changed at all. Where they're still using the same type books that they were using when I was there in '56. They don't have any modern books at all.

Q: Did you have any contact with colleges and so forth outside the area that you might compare with East High and with the books and so forth?

A: Well, I has seen some of the whites' books and they're different from Negroes' books. They're modern books and

they're up to date on everything. But, the Negroes, they're still left behind in a lot of ways in the educational field.

Q: Right. Do you think, by the way, that CORE is pretty well united on their present course of action such as community organization or do you think that there is a push to spread out into more wide fields, such as direct action that would stress voter registration and perhaps freedom schools?

A: Yes, I think freedom schools is vitally essential because you know whereas Negroes don't know anything about Negro history. This isn't taught in the schools.

Q: Right.

A: In some of the schools in the South they are taught, I understand, they are taught a certain portion of Negro history. Now, I think that it's important that the Negroes are taught something about their ancestors and what they had to contribute to these United States. And, also, it is good because I have talked to a lot of people and they can't read or write but they are very interested. In learning. So, this is why I think that it is very much necessary that we have freedom schools. Whereas in certain parrishes, things are very bad. Children do not have clothing. They do not have food. Whereas we have, in some parrishes, we have clothing distribution centers, where we have written letters up North and asked people to send us clothing and food if possible. For to assist these people because it's very much needed.

Q: I'm interested, by the way, how do your parents feel about the movement and CORE work and so-forth?

A: I think all of the people are very much with CORE, but to a certain extent because they are very much afraid. Some people have no place to go. They are with us, but they can't participate. A lot of them have given contributions, but they are afraid to come out in the open.

Q: How do you feel about a group like the Deacons as a means of eliminating fear in the community and so on? Do you think that the organization of a group such as this is a good idea?

A: Yes, I think that it is very good. Whereas in the South the Negroes, as far as justice is concerned, they haven't gotten that. They've always had, for instance, they've always had to appeal to a higher court in order to obtain justice. Here, in the South, whatever the whites feel they want to do, they do. They make the laws and they break the



0120-16

laws.

Q: Right.

A: They use the laws to their own advantage.

Q: I see. Do you think that a group like the Deacons here would get the group really moving, in a sense as active as they were, say, two years ago?

A: Yes, uh, in a certain way because it would cut down on the Klan activities, uh....

Q: The Klan is very stron around here?

A: Yes, all over the South. The Klans are very active. For instance, right here, a cross was burned right here on this front yard at the freedom house right here.

Q: That was a year ago was it not?

A: Yeah. And not too long ago, here last year, the middle portion of last year, crosses were burned. And the people are getting so now they're not going to stand for all this type thing. When things like this happen, the Sheriff conveniently be's out of town, you know, be's somewhere, you know. When everything is over with, they show. They're always out of reach when we need them. You see, they believe that the Negroes is getting uppity because now they're beginning to speak up, especially at how the way things are. They're dissatisfied. And this is somewhat to them, what they're saying that the Negroes are getting too uppity--sassy.

Q: Yeah, I see.

A: A few Negroes here, well, a few middle class Negroes. We have some that are pretty well off. They could do, but they're afraid to because, having--you see, in the South, all the jurymens are white, and they're all Southerners. And a Negro just doesn't have a chance, you see.

Q: Right.

A: So, what this means, you see. They have to get favors from the white man. And if they get favors from the white, they're going to have to do what the white man says, although they're not dependent on the white man for a living.

Q: Yeah. And these people are either hurting the cause or are not participating, right?

A: In a sense they are hurting the cause. They are hurting

0120-17

our people in the community because they are talking about it. They don't see why these people don't stand up. They are not dependent on the whites for their living. They are well-off. And this is somewhat confusion, you know, to the poor people. They're looking at anyway--that person have it allright. They're not doing anything dependent on the whites, still they're not doing anything. You see, Negroes look at all these type things, you see. And this is somewhat the cause that things are moving somewhat at a slow process.

Q: I see.