Civil Rights History Project
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Interviewee: Dion Diamond

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Interviewer: David Cline

Videographer: John Bishop

Length: approximately 1 hour, 35 minutes

START OF RECORDING

Female 1: From the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

David Cline: Okay, good morning. Today is Sunday, December 13, 2015. This is David Cline, from Virginia Tech, and working with the Southern Oral History Program at UNC Chapel Hill, also with the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. Today we have the honor of being with Mr. Dion Diamond, who I will ask to introduce himself in just a moment. Behind the camera today we have John Bishop, from Media Generation. We also have with us today Guha Shankar, from the Library of Congress.

So, Mr. Diamond, I just would like to say good morning and thank you very much for being part of this project, and if you could just introduce yourself I would appreciate it.

Dion Diamond: Good morning. I'm Dion Diamond, and I thank you for having me as a part of the project, and I look forward to seeing the outcome.

DC: Wonderful, thank you. So, I'd like to start just by, we're obviously going to talk about your involvement in the Civil Rights Movement, but I want to start with your childhood, and if you could just tell us a little bit about where and when you were raised. And I'll ask you a few questions about your family and the kind of influences that you may have seen as you got more involved in the movement itself.

DD: Okay, let's try this one. I'm originally from Petersburg, Virginia. The first 18 years spent in Petersburg, a totally segregated community. Segregated high school, elementary school, and even the state college was essentially all black. At least, I don't know now whether or not it was black, negro, or colored. We have come through so many iterations. [Laughs] At any rate, Petersburg, as I said, was truly a segregated town. And as I grew up, I don't know how I really got involved, but I was involved in sit-ins before sit-ins became a named item. I would go into the local five and dime store and see the colored water fountain and the white water fountain. I would see the lunch counter that I wasn't allowed to sit at, which I did. And of course, when the waitress or the counter person spoke to me and said, "You know, we can't serve you," I would continue to sit. And then she would call the manager.

The manager would come over and I would still sit. Then he would call the police. That's when I left. [Laughs] So, my sit-ins were very haphazard and spontaneous, and [at] the local library there was a colored entrance at the rear, and we weren't allowed to go into the stacks. And of course, I would go in the colored entrance but I would venture into the stacks. At any rate, I just thought it kind of crazy that I should grow up in an environment like that. I don't know where that influence came

from, because there was no integrated activity that I could look at in Petersburg and know anything about it.

I think when I was 16, I went to a town called Monticello, New York, to work, supposedly, in a laundry. That's in the Catskills and that's what they formerly called the Jewish Alps. And all of these big hotels would send their laundry to a laundry cleaning facility, and I went at age 16--well, soon to turn 17--but supposedly, to work at the laundry. There were many kids from my town [who] went there, and that's how I found out about it. Got there, no work available at the laundry. I'm walking down the street there, and here's this restaurant. The name of it was the Frontier. They were putting the finishing touches on it. It hadn't opened. It said, "Help Wanted."

I walked in and said, "Hey, look. I've had experience as a short order cook, and if you need a short order cook I'd like for you to consider me." The guy said, "Do you have references?" And of course, I said yes. I'm lying through my teeth, because I had no previous experience other than cooking in my family's kitchen. I ran to the nearest payphone, called my aunt in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Her name was Janet Morgan. I said, "Hey, if someone calls you and asks if I cooked in your restaurant, then you own Morgan's Restaurant now." So, I fabricated [Laughs] my experience. Anyway, I got the job. I think it was about a month later, the guy said, "You know, I figured out soon after you started working that you didn't know a darn thing about being a short order cook, but you picked it up so quickly, that was it."

But that experience in Monticello was my first [5:00] exposure to persons who were white, because, again, Petersburg, totally segregated. Monticello, rather antiquated community both religiously and color-wise. I started Howard University in September of

1959. I was a physics major. Shortly after that, when SNCC was founded and the sit-ins started in Greensboro, we at Howard--supposedly the epitome, the capstone in black education--were doing nothing because DC proper was not legally, or by law, segregated, even though in fact it certainly was. We said--

DC: Let me interrupt you just for a second though. So, you said you had this kind of gut reaction against the segregation that you had grown up with in your town. Did you ever talk about it with your peers or with your family? And then when you got to Howard, was that something that, even though nothing was happening immediately there, was that something that was discussed?

DD: No, it was not discussed until the sit-ins started in Greensboro, and that's when we started talking about it, because what are we doing about it? And as you can imagine, back then, if you cross the Potomac River into Virginia, you've got segregation. If you cross the imaginary line, or the district line, into Maryland, Western Avenue or Eastern Avenue, you've got segregation. And we said, "We've got to do something here in DC, at Howard." So, we organized this group called the Nonviolent Action Group, and we went over to Virginia, to the segregated drug chain lunch counter, and had our first sit-in. This is after, of course, North Carolina.

DC: So, do you remember first reading about the Greensboro, February 1?

DD: Yes, yes. And I said, "Well, again nothing in DC we can do." Even though, believe it or not, back then they didn't even want--you could go into the most expensive men's shop and they didn't want you to try on the clothing. I mean, so that was kind of a bitter thing. You might have had the money to purchase, but they did not want you to, I guess, soil their clothing. [Laughs] But again, our first sit-in was at the

Drug Fair in Cherrydale, over in Alexandria. We desegregated that entire area within two weeks, and I don't know if you've seen it, but there's this picture. In fact, it's in the closet. George Lincoln Rockwell, of the American Nazi Party, came in and surrounded us as we had the sit-in, and it was just amazing. I'm surprised that I didn't panic. It's amazing when you're young and reckless. I call it youthful exuberance. [Laughs]

Because I must admit, we were in some dangerous situations, and it never occurred that, hey, it's as dangerous as it is. Or was.

DC: So, I've seen the pictures. Your calmness emanates out of these pictures, and I needed to ask you about that.

DD: As I look at that picture today, I'm surprised. I may be getting ahead of myself, but there's this big debate--there was this big debate, and probably still is--as to whether non-violence is a philosophy or whether or not it's a tactic, or whether or not it's an expansion of religion. I'll let you know [Laughs]--well, into this one. I believe in non-violence as a tactic. I don't believe in it as a philosophy. My reasoning is, the police and the army have the guns and the ammunition and we had nothing. So, what good would it be to be somewhat violent? But off camera, and off the sit-ins, hey, if you smack me, I'm going to try to lose my shoe up your rear end. [Laughs] So, I truly believe in it as a tactic, and several of the people whom I give presentations with indeed believe in it as a way of life. There are three of us who usually combine [10:00] to give these presentations, and almost immediately one of us will say, "Well, unlike my two fellow freedom riders, I believe in it as a way of life," and then someone else will say--well, one is a minister. He believes in it as a philosophy and a religious path.

But at any rate, after that desegregation of within two weeks in Virginia, we said, "Well, what else can we do?" There was this amusement park right across the Maryland line called Glen Echo, and they used to bus white kids from the city out to this amusement park, but people of color could not utilize the facilities. Well, it wasn't as if we could have a sit-in inside the park, because we couldn't get in, so we put up a picket line around the outside of the park, and I think for that entire summer, for the balance of that summer, we just picketed. The people who lived--

DC: This is summer of 1960?

DD: Yes. That's it, the summer of [19]60. I think the most outstanding memory I have of that is, the people in Glen Echo, which is mostly a Jewish community, which had covenants that you could not sell your house to--well, you know what I'm saying. What I found the most interesting aspect of that was, I put on, I don't know if you'd call it a dashiki, but a traditional gown worn by persons of, persons from Africa. And including whatever the headband is called. A guy by the name of Hyman Bookbinder, if I recall correctly, who was rather high up in the labor movement, arranged for this big long black limousine and a white uniformed chauffeur, and a white female interpreter. I'm sitting in the back of this limousine, wearing this African garb, with my interpreter. We pull up in front of Glen Echo, and the chauffeur gets out, opens the door. I step out, and in my pidgin French, I'm trying to walk into the park and I said, "J'ai desir open the park maintenant!" And I thought I was saying, "I wish to enter the park right now," and I hope that's how it came out, but anyway, this security guard who had to be at least 65 years of age, and frail--I mean, had we charged him, that would've been it--but that entire summer, we picketed Glen Echo.

The following year when school started again, the Freedom Rides started. Well, they started I think, in March. When it almost ended, after the burning of the bus in Anniston, Alabama, several of us at Howard said, "Wait a minute. It's time we don't let this die." So, we ventured to Montgomery, Alabama, to continue the ride from Montgomery to Jackson, Mississippi. I don't know if you have seen the changing of the guard in Buckingham Palace, but as they shifted from Alabama to Mississippi, at least for 50 yards on either side of the highway, national guardsman. Two state police cars in front, two behind, and a helicopter flying overhead. We get to the state line, the bus stops, on the opposite side--on the Mississippi side. Two state police cars in front, two fell in behind, and the helicopter--this time, obviously, the Mississippi National Guard or the Mississippi state police--ushered us into Jackson, Mississippi.

I can only say that we didn't have time and didn't know at the time that a deal had been made between the governor of Mississippi and Bobby Kennedy. This was when we were having the big problem with Khrushchev and the missile crisis and all the rest of it. You can't very well have the president of your country going and talking about the duplicity, if you will, of the people of Russia, and yet here in America you've got the same problem. So, the deal was cut that [15:00] they would not allow us to be beaten, but we would be arrested immediately. And true enough, as soon as we stepped off the bus in Jackson, we were told to move on, and if we started for the white waiting room, you're under arrest. That's why this book, if I may, *Breach of Peace*? That was what the charge was. We were breaching the peace in Mississippi.

DC: Now, what did you think your relationship was at that point, or what was your relationship with the president and with the attorney general? You had no idea that this was going on behind closed doors?

DD: No. Our salvation at the time was the cameramen. The newspaper reporters. We just thought that as long as they covered us, the word would get out and the pictures would get out just like the pictures of Rockwell over in Arlington, Alexandria.

DC: You mentioned that before. I was going to follow up on that, that you could get up in someone's face, maybe, when the cameras weren't rolling. But when the camera was rolling, you would present something. So, this was very conscious. You were courting the media and thinking about how this would play.

DD: Yes.

DC: Do you remember those conversations--again, that's another tactic. Do you remember those conversations planning this?

DD: No. I had no--many people who went on the Freedom Rides or engaged in sit-ins had "non-violence training." My training was strictly on the job, and from my previous experience in Petersburg and in Virginia, and at Glen Echo. But I just knew that it was a no-win situation for me to try to start a fight. The people surrounding us outnumbered us and back then, hey, I'm still weighing 128 pounds. [Laughs] There's one picture that I don't know the date, but *Jet Magazine* had a photographer by the name of Larry Still, and we were in Nashville picketing a grocery chain. And I don't even recall the incident but the picture that appeared in the magazine was a non-violent punch, and it shows me--or what purports to be me--giving somebody a right cross. I don't

know how I could forget that, and I'm just wondering whether or not that picture was really not of me, but just someone looking somewhat like me.

No, there were no discussions. We had, I think, I don't know how long it lasted, but there was a guy who got a grant to have a month-long seminar for "civil rights leaders" and I was fortunate enough to be selected to attend it, and we talked about stuff like philosophy, tactics, et cetera, and even then I was very vocal in terms of what I believed it to be, as I've explained it somewhat already with you. I just can't imagine myself going through life turning the other cheek, if you will. So, that's how that one ended.

DC: And yet, there were those moments where you were able to do that, even though it must have been very, very difficult.

DD: Oh, yes. It was difficult. Again, I just knew that I represented more than me, and if the picture got in the newspaper or on television of my hitting someone, whatever sympathies we might have had, or good will, would be down the tube, and literally down the tube. So no, I was very aware of it. I'm not certain how much we actually courted the press, but I know darn well that there were times that I gave performances for the benefit of the press. I restrained myself for the benefit of the cameras.

DC: So, back to the Freedom Ride. Let's pick up where you were telling that story, the arrest, then.

DD: Well, first of all, when we went--I was on the bus that arrived in Jackson on the very first day of the continuation of the riot. What I found interesting is that one bus pulled in. I think we were there an hour later. I don't recall, now, how many of us

were on that bus, but there were national guardsmen with bayonets, [20:00] unsheathed, on the bus with us. And we used to think--I used to think, naively, that, wow, we're being protected. What I didn't realize was, hey, these national guardsmen, until they were put on active duty, were the same guys who were coming out of their neighborhoods jeering us and giving us holy hell. It didn't register.

At any rate, when we arrived in Jackson and were immediately arrested, we were thrown into the Hinds County Jail. It was almost like a drunk tank. We were all there collectively, and we didn't know that there were any other persons who would follow us. We just thought we were it. Then we were moved from the county jail a couple of days later to the county prison farm, and from the prison farm to the state penitentiary, and all the while not knowing that the buses were continuing to come into town and come into town. What I was trying to explain previously, when people find out you're a Freedom Rider, they ask you, "Did you know so-and-so, who was also a Freedom Rider?" And once we were arrested, let me tell you. White males were segregated from the black males. White females were segregated. So, you didn't know everyone who's a Freedom Rider. You mainly knew the persons who were on the same bus that you were on, or who got arrested at the same time, but it was weeks before we found out that the reason we were being moved was because they ran out of space.

It was interesting, when they took us to the state pen. I was in the same--it was called, I think, Death Row. But there were two people to a cell. You couldn't see who was in the cell next to you, but you could talk. I shared a cell with Jim Farmer, who was then the director of CORE. You know, twice in life--or, perhaps more than twice, but twice in the Civil Rights Movement--I became somewhat humbled to be in a cell with

Jim Farmer, and my supposedly being a leader at the local level and being as vociferous as I was. You know, there were times when I would ask Jim Farmer a question and I'd get a monosyllabic response, and it was just quiet. And I was just humbled to be in the same cell.

The second person that that actually occurred with was Bob Moses. Bob and I shared a house in McComb, Mississippi, for some time. The same thing was true. I couldn't stand being in the same room and it just being quiet. I'd try to strike a conversation, and again, this mono-response. But those were two people that I just felt humbled by. Yes, and the other thing about it is, once again, talking about Petersburg, Virginia, didn't realize it at the time, but Bob Moses had relatives in Petersburg. I didn't know it until later, we started talking, that he's got cousins. He's got relatively close relatives, and it's just amazing how the intertwining, if you will, of people from disparate parts of the country ended up either in a cell or on a picket line together.

DC: Who else did you know in the movement who had grown up in Petersburg?

DD: Oh, Charles Sherrod, Wyatt T. Walker, Dorothy Cotton. The whole gamut. And they had no influence whatsoever on my involvement, because it happened post-Petersburg, because I never got arrested with those individual sit-ins that I had in Petersburg, and no one knew about it except for the people behind the counter, because it wasn't something that I went home and bragged about. That's the other thing. Sometimes people will ask me, "Well, what did your parents think about your involvement?" Well, many of the kids, because they were underage, had to have parental

consent. Well, I have--like, my leaving home at age 17 to go to New York to work. Who ever heard of a kid at that age [25:00] going to work in a distant location for the summer?

Anyway, I've always been rather independent. I've always been somewhat of a leader. President of my high school senior class, president--member of the student council, president of the freshman class at Howard. The whole gamut. I've been somewhat independent, and I never had to ask for permission to do any of the things that I did. When people ask, "What did your parents think?" they didn't even know about it until it appeared either in the newspaper or television or some reporter calling. And the same thing was true for several of the other Riders. There's a minister from Virginia Union--not Sherrod--but his name is Reginald Green. He's right here in DC, also, and he said his parents didn't know about it until a reporter knocked on the door and informed them.

I guess, to put it mildly, my parents were very proud of my involvement, but they just wished it was someone else's child. Yes, I don't know, that's--

DC: So, they wouldn't worry, right.

DD: I guess we can--.

DC: So yes, so, tell me about--because we have a lot to cover. So, but we left you in prison. [Laughs] The first of many, I'm sure, from the Freedom Ride. Did you eventually--and then you, how did that play out, then?

DD: I can segue into that one. After losing that semester out of school--I thought I was going for a long weekend. The long weekend lasted two years and change. When I got out of Parchman, I flew to Atlanta and said, "Well, let's see. The semester's gone. What can I do now that I'm already down here? And they had this project in

Mississippi based in Pike County, the whole area around McComb, and that was my first assignment.

DC: So, you had known some of the SNCC folks, but you had not formally been involved at the time that you were doing the Freedom Ride, or were you already part of it?

DD: Well, because of my involvement in DC, that made the connection, so yes. I knew a few of them. And also, from that summer seminar retreat in Nashville, that's where I met most of the Nashville people, and there were quite a few. But there were others from other parts of the country, and I still don't know how that came about. Because it was really a change moment, to meet the people who ended up in the newspaper. Diane Nash. Jim Bevel, Bernard Lafayette. I met all of them before the Freedom Ride.

At any rate, it's amazing that the relationships that were formed have been lasting. I mean, here we are fifty some years later, and every time we see one another--the Smithsonian has brought us together on more than one occasion. This is my first trip with the Library of Congress, but when we've had these gatherings, and especially the fiftieth anniversary, it's just amazing how we automatically just coalesce once again. The other thing that was amazing, when we were arrested for the Freedom Ride, there was not one African American on the police force. There was not one African American elected to public office. So, when I went back to McComb to do voter registration activity, the thought was, perhaps one day we might get a commissioner, or we might get an elected official. Never in our wildest dreams did we realize what we had unleashed. Never thought about a person of color being in the US Congress or the US Senate.

When we went back for the fiftieth reunion, the mayor of Jackson: African American. The warden at the state penitentiary: African American female. The police force--you know, I recognize now what happened. The town became gentrified. I mean, the other way around, I suppose I should say. The whites moved to the suburbs and the blacks became the majority, so that's how that transformation came about. But we did not realize that we'd have African American congresspersons, and most certainly hadn't [30:00] given a thought to an African American president. Times have changed, but still there's a lot more to be done. And I don't know if it's on the Library of Congress or, but somewhere downtown on one of the buildings, there's this Shakespearean phrase: "What is past is prologue"? I think that's, that's true. If you don't know your history, you should. You could very easily revert to what existed previously.

Every time I give a presentation these days, I make it a point. Most people under the age of thirty-five today have no idea as to what the Civil Rights Movement was about, what the Freedom Riders were about, and that's sad. Because if the kids don't know, we could very easily revert to what existed previously, and I try to make it a point. Education is indeed the most prominent way of clearing this up, or maintaining what we've accomplished.

DC: So, when you were nineteen and got involved in this, did you have a sense of--yes. [Recording stops and restarts.] --nineteen and first got involved in this, did you have a sense of what was at stake? Did it feel like a choice to you, or did it feel like something that you had to do?

DD: I think it's the latter. I had no idea where it was going, I just knew that I wanted to make my contribution, to make a difference. That might sound somewhat

nebulous, because I'm not certain that I could have defined, then, what I was contributing to. I just knew I wanted to break down the barriers of segregation. Didn't have any long-range plan. Had no idea, really, what the outcome was going to be. Of course, if we were as successful as we had been at Glen Echo--I'm sorry, at the lunch counter over in Virginia--I had an idea that we could make a difference. We could bring about change.

DC: So, you went, just to bring you back to McComb, and take you back to that time. So, you went to Atlanta, you got assigned to Mississippi. What was Mississippi like in 1961? Because you were telling us about the change, but can you paint us a picture of what was--.

DD: Nineteen sixty-one?

DC: Yes.

DD: Didn't get a chance to--oh, you mean after I got out of jail. Because I most certainly didn't see Mississippi while I was in jail. [Laughter] I don't know how to describe it other than the fact that it was just as--it was worse than Petersburg, but it was also more fearful. I was more fearful. I was aware of the danger as opposed to Petersburg. The only thing that could have happened in Petersburg is a white cop could've picked me up and taken me home, and said, "Hey, your son is downtown raising hell." Which would've been true. But I mean, Mississippi, yes. I was fearful. The other thing that's interesting is, the house that I was in with Bob Moses, the lady's last name was Carton. We used to call her Mama Carton.

She was independent, had a house, and I don't know if you can gather this one, but the house had a two-car garage, but where the doors for the two-car garage might have been was transformed into a lattice window. Do you know what I mean by--just

window panes above, say, bed level. My bed in this lady's house was parallel to this latticed window. At night, we'd just pull the curtains, and like most southern towns, persons of color lived near the railroad tracks, and almost every night around eleven o'clock you could hear this freight train going up a grade. This one particular night--once again, remember, I had something like a twenty-four inch waist, not like the present state of pregnancy that I now look like--but a shotgun blast came through the window. Passed over my body. Literally, if I would have had this girth then, a part of my body would have been shot off. But that really [35:00] made me realize, yes. The danger that we're in, now.

Unlike the stuff that happened after [19]61, [19]62, Freedom Summer, Bob Moses and company up in the delta. I got pulled out of--well, I got sent to Holly Springs, Mississippi, from McComb, to do the very same thing. Voter registration. Well, just after I'd gotten there, there was a guy by the name of E. Felton Clark [Felton G. Clark] who was the president of Southern University. Now, the kids in Baton Rouge had started having sit-ins. While I was at Holly Springs, the president closed the school and kicked out a bunch of "leaders." Well, Holly Springs is just a short jump from Baton Rouge, so I went over to Baton Rouge to get some of the kids who--school is closed, this is almost like over the Christmas holiday period--to come back to Holly Springs to work with me on voter registration. As soon as I get there, I'm already calling the bus company to charter a couple of buses to bring them to Holly Springs.

Now, the fallacy that occurred while I was getting the kids organized to come to Holly Springs, or to go to Holly Springs: I hadn't arranged for any type of living quarters for them. [Laughs] But at any rate, while I'm in Baton Rouge, the guy re-opens the

school, and everything that I was over there trying to do is now down the tubes. When he reopened the school, he suspended several of the students who were supposed leaders. So, since everything had been wrecked, I started organizing the students on Baton Rouge's campus to boycott classes until the president re-instated, allowed the leaders--I think I was there for about four days, going in and out of classroom buildings, opening doors, telling people, "Come on, boycott, boycott!" And within a very short two days, whatever, I somehow ended up in somewhat of a leadership role on a foreign campus.

I mean, the people in Baton Rouge had never even heard of me prior to this activity. Well, I guess they figured they'd had enough of this, and they sent the state police plus the campus police to get me, and they got me. I was charged with trespassing, vagrancy, disorderly conduct. The main charge--those are all misdemeanors--the main charge they got me on was criminal anarchy. They said I was attempting to overthrow the State of Louisiana, and in fact, that's true. I mean, I was. [Laughs] If you get enough people to vote, you can change the Constitution and all the rest of the stuff.

But at any rate, here's something that I didn't realize until Baton Rouge. Every time that I'd been arrested previously, it had been with a group of people. Okay? And there's safety in numbers, but when I got arrested in Baton Rouge, they threw me in a cell with the general population. Here's why that one stands out so much: because one, I didn't know a soul. At the East Baton Rouge Parish Jail, if you're convicted of anything that's a misdemeanor, you're thrown in the same cell block as someone who's already been convicted of murder, but waiting for transportation to Angola or the state penitentiary. And while in there, I saw a couple of kids who stole a car, went joyriding on a weekend, and by the time Monday morning came around, they had been raped.

Once again, I was a frail, skinny kid. My voice was at least an octave higher than it is now. [Laughs] What was interesting about that was, somehow word got [40:00] in the population that I was a Freedom Rider. Now, the term "Freedom Rider" became synonymous with civil rights worker, and when they found out what I was in there for, I gained a certain amount of respect. The thing that was also interesting is that the white guards that told--once again, it's an all-black male population--had told them, "Hey, if you give him a rough time, we'll see if we can get you time off for good behavior." So, [laughs] that's when I became really concerned. I mean, if you're convicted of murder you're on your way to the state pen for a long time. You've got nothing to lose!

At any rate, I did get a chance to talk to the local lawyer who represented the NAACP. Somehow, he was able to contact the FBI and they moved me to solitary confinement. Now, one thing I'm pleased with about myself, and I didn't find out until this particular time: I can deal with solitary, and my own solitude, very easily. But if you can imagine, I guess that cell was about eight feet by--well, it wasn't a square. Eight feet by six feet, probably. At any rate, they would leave the lights on for 24 hours a day, or turn the lights out. The only way I could tell the time of day, was there was a steel door in the middle of one with a--the stuff you see on TV. I knew it was Saturday--Saturday is when they give you tours, give the general public tours of the jail, okay? "See that commie?" Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, just parading through and showing me off.

At any rate, the only way I could tell the time of day was, breakfast was somewhere around 5:30 or a quarter to 6:00. Lunch was around 11:10, 11:30. And dinner was around four o'clock. That's how I could tell the time of day, but other than that, I had my imagination to keep me going. Well, I survived it. I think when I got out

of there, I'd been in other registration activities in Maryland. I don't know if the name Gloria Richardson has come up in your travels, but now I'm blocking, for some reason, this little town on the eastern shore of Maryland where, once again, the local folks put me up in their homes and treated me most kindly, and we went about voter registration.

It's been an interesting life. It most certainly has. You know when you, when you apply for a job, it used to be if you apply for a federal job, but now it's almost if you apply for any job, they ask you, "Have you ever been arrested?" And with tongue in cheek, I put, "I've been arrested approximately 30 times, connection with civil rights activities. Please check with the FBI for dates and location." Because I most certainly don't remember all of them. [Laughs] But no, I think, to culminate this, we were [coughs] excuse me. We were preparing for--the year is now 1963--we were trying to raise funds for SNCC activity, voter registration activities, and I was sent to Columbus, Ohio to go to the annual congress of the National Student Association, which I said annual, so yes, it's once a year.

We thought that we could get college campuses in the North to get kids to volunteer for the following Freedom Summer and voter registration activities. I was standing next to a guy who was reading a newspaper, and I was just looking over his shoulder, and I was seeing--my college class was the class of [19]63. Kids were graduating and getting decent jobs, and I said, "Wait a minute. I've been down here for two years and change." And I don't know why I said it out loud. "I think it's time for me to get back in school." Well, I [45:00] happened to be standing next to the guy who was the president of the student government at the University of Wisconsin. He said, "Would you consider coming to Wisconsin?" I said, "Are you kidding?"

Now, if you remember then, Berkeley, Ann Arbor, and Madison were the hotspots. This is August of [19]63. He says, "Don't move." He ran across the gymnasium floor that had been set up for the congress, came back with what I thought was a fairly elderly man. He must have been in his mid-thirties. You know, back then, you're young, you think anybody over thirty's old. At any rate, this is late August. The guy asked me--he turned out to be the dean of students--"I understand you might be interested in Wisconsin." I said, "Yes." He says, "How are your grades?" I said, "A-, B+." "Can you get a transcript?" "Yes." He said, "Get me a transcript." I went running to the nearest payphone, called the registrar at Howard, had my transcript forwarded to Wisconsin. By the ninth of September, when school started, I was enrolled.

Now, you're talking about serendipity. This was truly it. I was a physics major at Howard, but when I got to Wisconsin, and because of my civil rights activities, I wanted to know, why did it take fifty years, approximately, from the Emancipation Pro--I mean, a hundred years since the Emancipation Proclamation for there to be an organized protest? So, I changed my major to history and sociology. Civil War Reconstruction. I still can't answer that question today. I guess it merely takes a few folks with either stupidity or insight, as the case may be, to just say, "Well, maybe if we do this we can create change." That was my first serendipitous college transfer. In 1966, I came to DC to work for the local anti-poverty organization, the United Planet Organization. Back then, of course, that was when Johnson and all of the money was being poured into anti-poverty, Sargent Shriver, and that group. I'd been working here until [19]68, and one of the people that I worked with was working for OEO, which was the national Office of Economic Opportunity, which funded the local groups.

I guess for some reason she was impressed with the way that I worked with her. I'm almost certain this had some influence, but she said, "Dion, would you be interested in going to Harvard?" Now are you talking about [laughs] what I considered a silly question? Of course. Well, at any rate, I ended up at Harvard, and once again, still trying to figure out what was the answer to that question. I got into race relations and sociology. Still can't answer that question, but here's the funny part about Harvard. I'm almost certain that this was during the period of time when they were trying to diversify the student population. I would like to think it was also because I had grades, and I was deemed to be competent. But what surprised me at both Wisconsin and at Harvard, because this did not change: at Wisconsin, I think out of about 18,000 students, there were less than fifty African Americans, and most of them were either on the basketball team or on the football team. You get my drift. They were athletes.

When I got to Harvard--oh, and the same thing. I'd sit in the class and I'd be the only person of color. And somehow, they became aware of my civil rights activities, and they would look at--the teachers, the profs--would look at me for verification, as if I can speak for all persons of color. I got to Harvard, and several of my classes you had to provide a resume [50:00] in order for them to choose fifteen students who they thought would make the best class. In almost every case I was the only African American in the class, and every time, they would defer to me to verify something and call upon, as you're interviewing me, call upon my civil rights experience and my being a native Southerner to speak for, to ratify, justify, however you want to put it, [laughs] what they were teaching. I felt uncomfortable in that role, but by the same token, I feared I was the only one in there who could either verify or refute. So, I just assumed that role.

The other thing about Harvard--I don't know how this is going to come across. I think the hardest thing about Harvard is to get in. Okay? Once you're in, and you're able to show what you know and what you're capable of doing, it's fairly easy. And I made one mistake of many, I think, but the biggest mistake I made at Harvard was almost the same one I made at Wisconsin. I didn't form any lifelong friendships. I still relate to the kids I went to school for three semesters with at Howard more so than anyone I went to school with at Harvard. I meet kids today who say, "Yes, I got to Harvard. It was after you, but I heard about you. Yes, I went to Howard." I guess, again, this has been a heck of a trip. All in all, I would say it's been a good ride. [Recording stops and restarts.]

DC: I was just going to say, there was a lot to separate you from those other students. Not just race, obviously, but you had lived, and these were kids. You had been out there. A lot of life experience can happen in a few years.

DD: Oh, that's true. It was a few years. Because only two years between Howard and Wisconsin, and only three years between Wisconsin and Harvard. I guess I was overwhelmed to be a student at Harvard. Many of the kids ended up at the business school, and then I'd bump into people that I did not know were Harvard grads who said, "Yes, we didn't go to the same school, but I knew you were on campus." Now, that's a big campus. So, how they knew, I don't know. I mean, there's obviously a grapevine. Or, was obviously a grapevine.

DC: So, what degree did you leave with, then?

DD: My degree is in education. Harvard has an agreement with MIT. I guess you call it a consortium. Most of my classes were either at MIT, Harvard---well, I guess, basically those two, and they were not--out of all of that, only one course do I

recall as being at the grad school of education. That was, indeed, Race and Ethnic Relations. That's what I did my thesis on. It's kind of wacky. I don't know how many people--I don't know how many people who experienced some of this stuff that I experienced have had the opportunity of these serendipitous segues, if you will. I know some kids who stayed at Howard and graduated, ended up going to an Ivy League business school, but they didn't have the civil rights experience that I had. Again, as I said in Columbus, Ohio, I got kind of peeved when I found out my class was graduating and they had credentials and I had none. It was time for me to get back in school. [coughs] Excuse me.

DC: So, I want to ask about what you did in your career after Harvard, but I want to dip back very quickly before we get too far away from it, to one particular arrest and time in jail. And this was when, I believe it was in Nashville, when you were jailed along with Stokely Carmichael. If I could ask about--you know why I'm asking this story, [laughs] about this story. But could I ask you to tell that, and by way of contrast, [55:00] too, to some of the first stories that you were telling, about the lunch counter and walking quietly outside Glen Echo.

DD: I think I have to disappoint you on that one, mainly because of the fact that wasn't in Nashville, if I recall correctly. I think that was supposedly at the state penitentiary in Mississippi. I may be wrong, but the reason I think I'm going to have to disappoint you is, I have read and reread Stokely's account of our being in that cell together. And I can neither confirm nor deny that that occurred. I am capable of what he described. I guess--for the record--I guess you really have to read it to appreciate it. Supposedly Stokely and I were in the cell together. Supposedly this guard was halfway

high. Supposedly he was bleary-eyed, and he had a shotgun. According to Stokely, I verbally engaged him and just said, "Go ahead, shoot." I just don't remember that. I'm capable of it. Especially as a ploy, because I knew darn well--I knew darn well there was no way he was going to kill us in a cell, with all of the people in the block, up and down. So, if I did, I just mouthed off. But I would recognize it. When you lynch someone, you don't do it in a public view. If you're going to murder someone, you don't do it when you've got a whole bunch of witnesses, so that's the only way I could explain it.

By that particular time--I've never been considered dumb, and I'm sorry if this is going to come about as braggadocio. I've known since I was either a junior or a senior in high school what my IQ was, and the only reason I know that this because after we took the test the teacher starting pointing at me. "That Diamond boy." And I didn't know what I'd done. Because I mean, [laughs] I can remember one escapade when we were--I found out that supposedly my IQ is up there. But again, I didn't know why they were pointing at me, at the time, because previously we were to be given a standardized test. Standardized, of course, means across the country. I was frightened. I knew there would be no way for a kid in a totally segregated school to compete with white kids and black kids from all over the country on a standardized test, and this was to be a geometry exam. I couldn't fathom taking this test.

So, my geometry class was just before lunch. Right next to my English class. So, I unlocked the window. You've got to picture this. My class was on the second story. There was an auto mechanic shop with a roof that was right at the step out of the window, on the second level. I threw a baseball out of the English class window onto the roof of the auto mechanic shop. Went out and mulled around, picked up the ball, but re-entered

on the next room over where the math class--I stole the standardized exam. The teacher's lounge is a couple of windows away, and they're just sitting there, looking at me. The math teacher knew what I had done. She gave me a zero on the final exam. I still passed the course, because I had nothing but A's for the semester [1:00:00] anyway. It was the worst thing I ever did, maybe because of the fact--I aced it, without--I aced it, without the having stole the standardized test.

And that led me to understand that I underrated the teachers and the education I was getting in a segregated environment. And I think--I've said this several times before--I think because, in a segregated community, everybody knows one another. The teachers know your parents, your neighbors knew your parents. You could get a spanking between home and school, or school and home, and it was just a given. I mean, it was understood. But I've said several times since then that we underrated the education that we got because teachers just took more of an interest in you. They talked to your parents more frequently. I don't know how valid that statement is, but I think that's about right.

DC: So, let me ask you, then--

DD: By the way, I'm not suggesting I'm proud of what I just explained. [Laughter]

DC: No, I appreciate your candor.

DD: Just another thing in life.

DC: But I at least want to ask this question about the obvious advances of the Civil Rights Movement, and yet there are some things like desegregation of schools that could, perhaps, be seen as bittersweet, and I wonder what your thoughts are on that.

DD: Yes, I agree with you on that. I mean, based upon what I just said. Teachers don't take as much interest in the students today as they did in this small, segregated community. It is bittersweet, because teachers are underrated, and I don't think, with the way technology has advanced, teachers have the time to devote to students as they formerly did. You look at movies that depict school life today? I mean, it's kind of wild. I don't know how you learn anything in an environment like that. Schools are now too big to be personal. I'm not certain how many teachers today really know anything about the home life of their students, and that makes a difference.

DC: Are there any other losses, do you think, that came along with the gains, in civil rights?

DD: [pause] Yes. I think there's been a lack of... Cohesiveness in forming friendships. You may say, "Well, what's that got to do with anything?" I don't know if people have the binding friendships they had, that they experienced in a segregated system. That's also related to my talking about the teachers. Maybe what I'm, maybe the fallacy of my logic is that I'm comparing small town USA with the big city. All of the civil rights experience from my high school education through my civil rights stuff were small town oriented. Even in DC, when I got there to go to Howard, it was relatively isolated. It wasn't the big city; it was just that small campus. So, you get closer to people.

Again, with the Civil Rights Movement and how the colleges today [coughs] excuse me Have really grown in terms of student population. Unless you're living in a dormitory, you really don't get a chance to interact. I will say this. I know, at historically black schools, [1:05:00] they're called HBCUs, colleges and universities,

they have been robbed of their most gifted athletes. The big 10, all of your big schools, have recruited the cream of the crop of athletes. If you look at any professional football team these days, when they run out on the field and tell you where they went to school? It's almost always a huge institution. The caliber of athletes that now go to historically black schools has decreased.

Well, that's the social and educational aspect. Other than that, hey, we made inroads, but I think the bittersweetness, again, is, lots of us have forgotten from whence we came, and don't recognize some of the barriers that still exist. I mean, there are still--they talk about a glass ceiling for women? There's a glass ceiling for any person of color. And I truly believe that and then every time I say something like that, I look and, geez. The president of American Express, or the CEO of American Express, African American. The president and CEO of Holland America cruise lines, African American. So, you look at that and you say, "Wait a minute, you made strides." Okay, but look at the rest of the infrastructure. You've got one or two persons at the top, but how does that translate as you go through the ranks?

I have not done a study, yet, to verify what I'm saying, but I get so confused today when I look at athletes who--athletes and entertainers--I don't understand how this society can put such a premium on those persons as opposed to persons who are educated and persons who, for lack of a better word, the intelligentsia, because we pay through the nose for guys who are fluent in no language, but can play football, and how you find out after the fact that, well, they were making all that money and now they're broke. I don't understand how people who hit the lottery or people who get paid these exorbitant

salaries, who can go out and buy five automobiles when they can only drive one, who buy two and three or four houses, the next thing you know, so-and-so is broke.

I don't know where I was instilled with an appreciation for, I don't want to say money, but that probably is [laughs] what it boils down to. I always feared growing old and being broke. I must admit, thankfully, that hasn't happened, and I don't know why I was instilled with that. My parents were not, were not wealthy by a long shot. My dad was a mail carrier. My mom was a housewife until the kids were raised. I had one older brother, then there's me, and I'm the first one to get out of college. I've got two siblings younger than I am, so we never had--in those days, a mail carrier was equated the same as a schoolteacher. You get kids graduating from college and they become the schoolteacher. You also had kids who graduated from college who ended up being a mail carrier, so they were like almost on the same plane. I can't say that I've been frugal, but I haven't been a spendthrift. I guess, as you look around, you can see I'm not exactly poor, living here. [Laughs] [1:10:00] [Recording stops and restarts]

DC: Two questions, and maybe they're a little bit related, but one is, if you could just tell us a little bit about your career going forward, after you finished your education. The other question is, sort of curious about, we've met a number of SNCC people who are here in this area, in the District, and I'm wondering about how people ended up here and whether those connections continued that you made during the movement.

DD: I'll deal with the latter. Marion Barry is the reason so many of us are here. If you recall, this used to be called Chocolate City, and Marion, when he was mayor, brought more college graduates and SNCC people who ended up in professional

positions in city government. That's one of the reasons. Now, as to whether or not the relationships that we forged back then still exist, they exist but we don't socialize. It took the death of Julian Bond or the death of Marion for us to really just be together as a group, and you're right: there are quite a few of us here. Again, it's almost like you don't have to talk with someone in order to maintain a closeness, and I think that's true in this case.

In terms of my career, helter skelter. Upon completing my education, I came back to DC and took a job as--the US Department of Labor, my first job out of grad school, and they had the same problem that some of the colleges had. I.e., they didn't have any African Americans of high enough rank. And one of the--this shows you, again--one of the women who I met out at Glen Echo had a father who was high up in the labor department, and she introduced me to him, and he introduced me to someone else, and straight out of school I ended up with a job that was a GS14, and I don't know if you know the government rankings. That's pretty high. From there, I think I was at the labor department for about two years, and I went to a nonprofit that dealt with training African Americans from all over the country, but mostly from the South, in economic development. Many of those students back then whom we had, we trained at--I was at Berkeley for an entire summer, training some students from North Carolina, Durham, Chapel Hill, et cetera, who eventually went back to their hometowns and did economic activities, economic development activities.

After that job, for about three years, I started my own consulting firm. Between that and the economic development activities and financial analytical skills that were developed, I've been a consultant to HUD, to HHS--what used to be HEW--and perhaps I

can just tell you. At HUD, it was again, race and ethnic relations. Dealing with segregated housing and how block grant funds were being expended across the country. From there, I went to HEW and I helped, as a consultant, designing an instrument for determining fraud and abuse in the Medicaid, Medicare program. We designed and tested this instrument all over the country to find out how come some doctors and some dentists and some pharmacists were getting away with a whole bunch of theft. That worked. Then I, again, with my consultancies I did training for several government agencies in [1:15:00] race and ethnic relations, discerning segregated patterns and then how to have a more diverse clientele.

I again reverted to a job with the DC government in their Department of Housing and Community Development writing grant applications to be funded by either [coughs] excuse me, funded by HUD or whenever I could pick up the money. I have been essentially semi-retired for almost 15 years, and I still have a couple of clients. I'm now 74 years of age. I still have a couple of clients that I deal with, regarding financial advisories, and when I say almost 15 years, in 2008, when we had this financial collapse, I kind of collapsed, and I'm leery, now, of advising anyone on dealing with the stock market, investments. It's enough for me to try to hang onto what I've acquired, and my spouse, on the other hand, whom you met earlier, cannot stand the thought of retirement. She continues to work and work, and I keep saying, "Hey, I thought retirement was going to allow us to travel." Well, we do travel, but not to the extent that I had in mind. I hope that answers your question.

DC: So, do you perceive--because I certainly do--but do you perceive a through line from the Civil Rights Movement through your work, of focusing on reform efforts of various kinds?

DD: Well, let's put it this way. I'm certain, had I not been in civil rights, I would not--well, three things. Number one, I would [not?] have gone to Wisconsin. Two, I would not have gone to Harvard. Three, I don't think I would have the credentials that allowed me to deal with racial issues. Hell, I would have been a physicist, I'm certain. This shows you how my life has changed dramatically from being a technician or scientist to being somewhat of a social scientist. I mean, I loved physics. So, the straight line that you're talking about, I don't know if it's straight but [laughs] it's definitely--right. [Laughs]

DC: Can I ask you, too, because it's something that's personally curious to me, I'm interested in historically, is that period in the early [19]70s, I guess, in terms of black economic development. That was such a crucial period, and you were right in there.

DD: Yes again, I don't--it's that line that you were talking about. One thing leads to another, and I still feel that not enough emphasis is put on it. You know, people today--indeed, even me--appreciated a job with an income, as opposed to trying to create income, and I think that's the next hurdle. Most people today, irrespective of race, they merely want a job that's going to pay a decent salary, put in their 20 or 30 years, and retire. I don't know if--I was just reading *Barron's Magazine* this morning, --the tech firms, the bond sellers. There's an article in the paper regarding how this guy got an $800 million bonus. Can you imagine that? I mean, for making money at a Wall Street

brokerage. The tech guys whose, Facebook? He's giving all of his money to--and that's laudable. But by the same token, I don't know if you follow Yahoo and the other tech firms that are now having problems, the article suggests that it's a cycle. Tech firms get created, we make advances, and then something else is created and what the first firm is, has reached its plateau. So, you've got to keep creating wealth, and I don't know if enough people recognize [1:20:00] that, or don't feel comfortable trying to create. They just want safety and they want, want what? I guess security is the word I'm looking for.

Now, here's the way this one works. When I was 19, people asked me how did I get involved? Would I do the same thing over again? If I knew then what I know now, probably not. But again, being age 19, not having a house note to pay, okay, not having to put food on the table for anyone other than myself, yes, I would do that again. But with age normally comes responsibility, and responsibility can curtail a lot of what you can accomplish and what you endeavor. So, again, I guess combine your question. Would I do it again, and two, is the line that shows a progression in terms of how my life has become?

Yes, it's definitely there, but again, with economic development, someone has to keep creating wealth, because wealth just does not stay the same, and as I said, in 2008, I made some bad choices. [Laughs] And I guess some of you can relate to that also. [Laughs] It's funny because when that occurred, my spouse said to me, "Well, Dion, you know, the way you play with this stuff, you'll make it back." And 2008, that's what, seven years ago. Well, guess what. I did make it back. But if it happened again, I don't have that much time left to make anything back. So, that's why I've become more

fiscally conservative. When people ask me what are my politics, I say, "Oh, I'm a fiscal conservative." [Laughs]

DC: A lot of people. So, let me just ask you a few more reflective questions as we get towards the end, here.

DD: Yes, I've gotten off the civil rights beat, right? [Laughs]

DC: Yes, that's the one thing I wanted to ask, and we've gotten at it a little bit, but what do you think about where we are now and what remains on the table?

DD: Well, I'll tell you: personally, I'm disappointed in myself. Because I have become somewhat of a recluse. I do nothing, now, to advance civil rights in America today. I do nothing to help kids start businesses. In fact, I guess I'm just out of it, and I think I still have something to offer and I don't know why that I've become so satisfied, so complacent, so, well, you get my drift. But then, too, when I look at many of my compatriots and old civil rights activists, they aren't either. This stuff should be generational. It should keep progressing, and that's why I think I mentioned to you earlier, whenever I make a presentation, I try to instill some type of vigor in our youth. Because we are not of the same generation and I really can't even relate to some of the stuff the kids today relate to. Everything from my choice of music. I don't even know how to use [Laughs] I can use that computer, but I can't--I can't even use an iPhone. I purchased one a couple of weeks ago, and it's right up there on the shelf!

I don't know, again, I'm disappointed in myself in that I do no volunteer work, and I should. But then, too, when I say I should, again, I get back to, I don't know how to provide any assistance to the youth because I can't relate to what they relate to. Does that answer your question?

DC: Yes, sure, very much so. But when you see things like just recently you know, the Black Lives Matter campaign, how do you respond to that? I mean, it shows, obviously, that there's still a great need, but it also shows --

DD: Yes, but you know something?

DC: --folks responding in some way.

DD: I'm not certain how my compatriots might respond to this response. I [1:25:00] don't think there's anything to be gained by saying Black Lives Matter. Lives matter, and until we get to a point when we see our relationship to one another, there's no need in just going back and saying, "Hey, black, white." I mean, I think those distinctions should be made, but the point is, I see you use the term Black Lives Matter, kind of segments the issue, and I don't particularly relate to that. I think it follows as, when I see what happened in Charleston, i.e., the--and I said, "Wow, that really shows where we are in this country." I mean, we still haven't cured the problem, if you will. Every time I hear Donald Trump--I don't mean to--well, I do mean to get into politics.

But here we are talking about putting barriers all over the country and keeping a particular ethnic or religious group from even coming here to visit? That bothers me quite a bit, but what bothers me even more, and what I find--I wish I could pour it out--but people who show up at Trump rallies, it kind of tells us something about where we are in the country. There are a whole bunch of people who don't vote. There are a whole bunch of people who do vote, but if indeed--it's almost like a Klan rally. It kind of shows that we still have a long way to go. America's a hell of a lot better than it was in the past. And I must admit, every time I leave this country, whenever I get home, I

always say, "My God, I'm so glad I was born here." And that kind of sounds like a person is satisfied. But that's not what I'm trying to convey

This country has indeed come a long way and to my knowledge, it's at the forefront of progress compared to other countries in the rest of the world, and I think I've travelled rather extensively. I don't know. I mean, every now and then when I turn on, the UK, you know, the one that shows all the British programs? You know, you look at Britain or the United Kingdom and it looks as if it's a very integrated society. But recently, some racism is becoming apparent there, also. So, I don't know. I give accolades to America, but I say we still have a way to go. And I don't know--if you look around this house you'll see a whole bunch of books on race and ethnic relations and civil rights, and every time one of my comrades calls and says, "Hey Dion, I'm trying to verify so-and-so. Do you remember?" And I'll say, "Yes." What my biggest regret is, I never kept notes. Because I could have written a book. [Laughs] But now every time a book comes out, and this shows you--every time a book comes out, one of the first things I do is look in the back to see, in the index, see if my name is in there. [Laughs]

I think that answers your question about progress we've made, and what I think of America, but it frightens me, again. What is past is prologue. If we don't watch out--I've tried imagining not only if Trump could become president, if the things that he is professing and advocating were to come about, it's just frightening. And again, what is past is prologue. He could make the whole past come back. Put up a fence with Mexico and make them pay for it. He forgets Ellis Island, right? What this country was based on. What it was made of. Okay. Once again, I digress.

DC: No, I don't think it's a digression at all. [1:30:00] So, I'm going to ask one final question, but I wanted to see if the folks behind the camera have any questions they'd like to contribute.

M1: No, we're just cheering you on. We feel the same way. [Laughter]

DD: Well, again, I didn't check with you first. [Laughter]

M1: Well, we would've turned the camera off.

DC: That's right, he's got some power. So, let me just ask the final question, which is, is there anything that you expected me to ask today that I should've asked, or that I didn't ask, that you'd like to address?

DD: No, I think you got me talking and I went a long way from civil rights, and again, I apologize for all of my verbal pauses, but--

M1: What was your most memorable moment, back from all those years ago, that you can say, "that encapsulates my moment in the civil rights struggle?"

DD: Probably when the Civil Rights Bill of 1964 was passed and, to look at all of the elected officials who are now African American, who--one thing I didn't bring out, and it was very fleeting. In 1966--I'm sorry, 1968--I had been offered a job running the anti-poverty program out of--the Marshall Islands, okay? I had been admitted to Harvard, and I got a job working on Bobby Kennedy's campaign. I had three options. One, I figured if I were to go out to the Marshall Islands in Micronesia, even though they said, "You can come home once a year and you're only ninety miles from Japan," or something like that, I figured I'd probably end up marrying some Micronesian woman and I'd never get back to the States. The other thing was, I said, "Well if Bobby

Kennedy's elected president, I might end up with a job in the White House." And I said, "If none of this stuff falls out, I've still got Harvard in the hole."

Well, you know what happened. I didn't go to Micronesia, Bobby Kennedy got killed, and I ended up at Harvard. Now, all of these things--I paint a hell of a mosaic. I don't say that braggingly. I only mean that most people have not had the experiences that I've had, and again, it was civil rights that got me into this wavy line. And I have benefited, obviously, and I think the Civil Rights Act and the election of Obama have to be the highlights, because again, when I--who the heck expected--you expected Jack Kennedy to do something in connection with civil rights. You never expected Lyndon Johnson, a Southerner, to be the guy to implement it. I never expected to see the elected officials at the level that has occurred. I hope that answers your question. I mean, that covers a hell of a period of time, but nevertheless, all of it had its roots, if you will, in my participation in the movement. Best I can do.

DC: Wonderful.

F1: This has been a presentation of the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

END OF INTERVIEW

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