

*Civil Rights History Project  
Interview completed by the Southern Oral History Program  
under contract to the  
Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History & Culture  
and the Library of Congress, 2013*

Interviewee: Dr. Clarence Benjamin Jones  
Interview Date: April 15 and 16, 2013  
Location: Palo Alto, California  
Interviewer: David Cline  
Videographer: John Bishop  
Length: 02:43:08

John Bishop: We're running.

David Cline: Good afternoon. Today is April sixteenth, 2013.

Clarence Jones: April fifteenth.

David Cline: April fifteenth, 2013. Thank you. And today we are in Palo Alto, California, on behalf of the Civil Rights History Project, supported by the Congress, the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, and this project is also supported by the Southern Oral History Program at UNC-Chapel Hill. My name is David Cline. I'll be the interviewer today. With me is videographer John Bishop, of Media Generation and UCLA. And we have with us today Dr. Clarence Jones, and I just want to say thank you so much for spending time with us today and sharing your story.

Clarence Jones: My pleasure.

DC: Thank you.

CJ: My pleasure. I'm glad to be here. I just, out of deference to my mother, I'd like for you to use my middle initial when you are putting it in the archives, Clarence B. Jones. My middle name is Benjamin, and so, she seemed to be very much endeared to that name. So, as an adult, I've carried it forward.

DC: Wonderful. Thank you for letting us know that. And so, let's start there, [laughs] since we're there, with your birth parents and a little bit about your childhood—

CJ: Okay, my—

DC: And how—where that brought you.

CJ: My parents were domestic servants when I was born. I was born [clears throat] over 82 years ago, 82 years ago this January, this past January, 1931, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. When I said my parents were domestic workers, specifically, my mother was a maid and a cook; my father was a chauffeur and a gardener. And they worked as a domestic servant couple for Eleanor Lippincott, of the Lippincott family out of Philadelphia, and into publishing, into grain, but a very established, wealthy family. And Eleanor Lippincott was one of the grande dames of the family, who employed my parents.

When I was born, apparently they did not have a home of their own. So, the home in which I came into was the home of the place where they worked. And I can remember before the age of about six years of age being placed at least with three different foster families. And by that, I mean, these were, these were adult friends of my parents, who my parents had made some arrangements, I guess, say, "Will you keep young Clarence? Let him stay as part of the family." And so, that's—I was placed with different families. This happened at least on three occasions before about the age of six years of age. Again, I don't know what prompted my mother and father to do it. Principally my mother decided that they would place me in a boarding school, a

boarding school for foster children and orphans, or specifically for indigent foster and orphaned colored boys and Indians, run by the Order of the Blessed Sacrament and, I think, also by the Order of the Sacred Heart.

The nuns who ran—the religious order that ran the Catholic boarding school for colored boys, orphans and foster children, also maintained mission schools in New Mexico on the Navajo reservations. And, as a consequence, as a young boy in this boarding school for colored and Indian children, [0:05:00] several of the boys there were Indians. And very early on, I got accustomed to seeing a boy with a long pigtail, a long ponytail, or sometimes his hair would be knotted or braided, and there would be a feather or a band. And I remember classmates of mine, people in school, having names like Little Bear and Running Bear and Something Deer, and those were their names. Okay. That's where I stayed from about the age of six years of age. By the way, this was a Catholic private boarding school.

Now, the interesting thing about this, you notice I said there were “foster children and orphans.” I was neither. I had parents.

DC: Right.

CJ: And it became clear to me that something wasn't right here—a little contradiction. Because what would happen—I was there from about the age of six until thirteen, almost fourteen. My parents would come to visit me, and they would leave. [Clears throat] And some of the other boys would say to me, “Well, why are you here?” [Laughs] “Why don't they take you with them?” And it was very hard for a young person to understand that.

During the summers, I spent three or four weeks in the summer with my parents, wherever they—in the summer, they usually—the woman they worked for took a house, as a summer house, on the Jersey Shore at a place called Longport, near Margate and Atlantic City.

So, they would be there all summer, and I would go down and visit them during the summer, so I had that break.

DC: And that's the only time you would actually stay with them?

CJ: Yes, that's the only time. I didn't have Christmas with them, didn't have Easter, didn't have holidays with them. But during the holidays I had with them—I mean, during the summer.

And, when I was in about the seventh grade, sixth or seventh grade, I developed a serious stuttering problem. And it was a surprise. They couldn't understand why I had begun to stammer so. And I think, as I look back on it, and as I moved on to public high school with the help of a speech teacher, and just different kind of pressures operating on me, I guess, I was able to overcome the stammering. You wouldn't know that I stuttered and stammered the way I speak now, the way I have spoken. But the fact is, and as I look back on it, I think it was that not understanding.

DC: Um-hmm.

CJ: Now, someone might listen to this story and have a certain degree of pathos and say, "Well, that's a sad thing that Master Jones, that little boy went through," and so forth. Well, yes and no. As I've gotten older, without question, I knew I was cared for and loved. Those Irish nuns loved me. They were my surrogate mothers. They loved me and had a sense of discipline that stayed with me during my formative years.

DC: Um-hmm.

CJ: I put it this way: Had I not gone to that Catholic boarding school, I probably would have been placed in a *de jure*, [0:10:00] meaning by law, or *de facto* segregated school, and I probably would have gotten an inferior education, compared to the education I actually received.

Because, as a result of going to this Catholic boarding school, our classes were maybe about 25 boys, but there were two nuns. Okay? I got exempted from taking Latin in high school because I had had so much Latin in private school, albeit religious Latin, but a lot of Latin. My publisher of the first book, *What Would Martin Say?*, Harper Collins, one of the editors said to me, “And aside from the organization and the story and what you’re going to say, Mr. Jones, we notice that there are hardly any errors, any grammatical errors. I mean, there are some writers, writers with big names—and we were amazed!”

And so, I said to them, I said, “Well, let me tell you, you should not be surprised, because I think that it is still today—it is congenitally impossible for me to write a grammatically incorrect sentence in the English language. And the reason that is so, is because I learned grammar by diagramming sentences, which in and of itself was not so special. But I learned to do it correctly, because when I did it *incorrectly*, there would be a *pointer* that would hit my *knuckles*, and they would say, ‘You know better than that, Master Jones!’”

DC: [Laughs]

CJ: So, I’m 82 years old, and I can still, over all those years, feel that sense of correction!

DC: There’s always a nun right over your shoulder.

CJ: Always a nun! But they gave me a sense of writing correctly, a great sense for the words.

JB: Can we pause for just a second?

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: David, we’re back.

DC: We’re back? Great. And I will say, because this is digital recording that we’re doing, we’ll pause every once in a while, just to save the files.

CJ: Okay, fine.

DC: So, we'll take some—they're very brief, but a few pauses.

CJ: Okay, very good. I'll do that.

DC: Okay. So, yeah, back to talking about this upbringing. And I wanted to ask, too, that this was a school for colored boys, right, but it was—I mean, you had the nuns there. It was sort of a multiracial world that you were exposed to.

CJ: Well, not so much—well, multiracial to the extent that the nuns were white. But the other students, they're also colored boys and Native Americans.

DC: Um-hmm.

CJ: Later on, we'll get a chance to talk about my later life with Martin Luther King, Jr., and I don't want to go there now. But I do want to use this as an example. One day, Dr. King made a comment to me, something like, "You know, Clarence, you really can get very angry at racism or racial injustice, and you really are angry. But you're not anti-white. And what do you account, being that angry—how do you account for that?"

And I said, "Well, I think it's because, as a young Negro boy growing up, spending more time, quantitatively, with Irish nuns than I spent, quantitatively, with my parents at a critical point in my life." Let's just break that down. The dominant interaction of love and affection and discipline I had was from white older women. Okay? And they made it *very* clear to me and to others when they were disciplining us, or whether I had hurt myself and I was crying, and they would hold me, they would comfort me, they would discipline me, but they did it with [0:15:00] unconditional love.

So, I'm not qualified to be a psychiatrist. I'm just looking at this young boy. But that's got to have had some impact, if during those formative years, my result is a positive one. My

result is to get nothing but love and affection from these white adult women. That's what I got. I didn't get hate. I got love and affection. I got love and affection from my parents when I saw them, but they were my surrogate parents for a period of time. So, that's my long way of saying, I said, "Martin, Dr. King, I think that's the reason. I can clinically, intellectually see racism for what it is. But it's the ideology of white supremacy. It's not the white person I hate, or I dislike." So, that's just a little bit of digression.

So then I went—but had I not gone there—so, the consequence of going there was I got a better education, right? So, when I went to public high school—as I said, I was exempted from having to take any Latin. When I went to public high school, I did very well. I was the president of the honor society. I had virtually all A's. The school was Palmyra High School, Palmyra, New Jersey, in Burlington County. I think it, maybe, I think my class—maybe of a class of about 100 or 200, maybe a class of a 150, 160, maybe, I would say, 40 percent of the class were colored boys and girls. This is now 1945 to 1949. In high school, 1945 to 1949, my classmates, 60 percent or more of whom were white, voted me as the most likely to succeed. The boy in the class most likely to succeed. And they voted some young white girl classmate of mine whose name I can't remember now. But I was voted most likely to succeed and was asked to be the class speaker on behalf of the honor society, speaking for my class.

In my junior year in high school, near the end of my junior year, beginning of my senior year, I went down to the Navy and I tried to enlist. The Navy had something called the V-12 Program at that time. If you enlisted in the V-12 Program, you enlisted, you went into the Navy for four or six years, but the thing is, they sent you to college for four years.

DC: Right.

CJ: I think it was six years. And so, I did that. Problem is you have to be 18. So, I went down and “enlisted” and signed before I was 18.

And so, I get called into the principal’s office one day. Said, “We just got a call from a Naval Recruiting Station that said you went down and enlisted. Why did you lie about your age?” “Well, Mr. So-and-so,” I said, “I did it because I want to be able to go to college.” And they said, “Who says you’re not going to go to college?” I said, “Well, I have—there’s no way I can. I have no money to go to college.” They said, “You are going to go to college, Clarence. We’re very proud of you,” and so on. The bottom line is the principal, my speech teacher, and my science teacher, they all took money out of their own pockets in order to pay for the application fees for me to apply to college.

So I applied to Syracuse, University of Pennsylvania, Yale, and Columbia College, Columbia University. I got into all of them. Syracuse, because I had been a musician, [0:20:00] offered me a four-year music, band scholarship, music scholarship.

DC: Um-hmm. What did you play?

CJ: Clarinet. I was a professional musician when I was 16. I was 17 years old. While I was in school, during the summers, I came to New York during the summers and I went to the Juilliard School of Music. I had become a fairly good instrumentalist. In any event, so—I lost my train of thought.

DC: Applying to college, and you got into Columbia.

CJ: Oh, yeah, got into Syracuse offered me a grant.

DC: Syracuse.

CJ: Right, sorry. Syracuse offered me—and I didn’t know anything about Syracuse. Somebody said, “Well, it’s very cold, very cold up there.” Plus, my mother’s brother—she had a



brother, my uncle, for whom I am named, Clarence—he lived in New York. And so, he was an influence in my getting into Columbia College, Columbia University. In order for me to go, I had to get a financial aid package or scholarship. In order to get a financial aid package or scholarship, I had to maintain a B-minus average, which was not easy to do.

And, in fact, I say to my friends out here in Silicon Valley, who are interested in computer science and physics, and I said, “I thought I was going to meet my academic Waterloo,” because I had two Nobel scientists for teachers. One was Linus Pauling for Chemistry.

DC: Yeah.

CJ: I did reasonably well in Chemistry. But the other person was a man by the name of Polykarp Kusch. Polykarp Kusch got the Nobel prize for Physics. And I never knew up until that time what it was to go to class every day in sheer fear. I never was afraid. And I was afraid for two reasons. One, I was afraid I might be called on, and I didn’t understand. It was a very difficult course for me. And two, I figured that I had—I had to get a C-plus. I could not fail this course, because it would jeopardize my B-minus average. I got a C-plus in physics. That’s the only C-plus I got. [Laughs] The rest were B’s, B-minuses, and A’s, and so forth. But it was my Waterloo.

DC: [Laughs]

CJ: So, my teachers helped me do this.

DC: Um-hmm. Did you maintain contact with your parents throughout high school and into this?

CJ: Well, I was going to say, yes, when I—I don’t know what the economy was, but—I’m trying to remember. [Pause] I think that Mrs. Lippincott died at some point. And my father

stayed on as a caretaker of the place. But my mother took a job in Westchester County, New York, and she would come back home about twice a month. But when I was in Columbia, she would be in New York, and on her days off, I would be able to see her.

One of the more touching things I remember. I was always working. I worked at the dining hall tables for food. And then, for extra money, there used to be a chain similar to Starbucks, only Starbucks would probably be offended if I said—the chain was called Nedick's. It was a Nedick's hot dog and— If anybody talks about Nedick's, it's like Nathan's frankfurters, you date yourself. You date yourself and tell what part of the country you grew up in. So, I worked at a Nedick's on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and Lexington Avenue. And one day, I'm working behind the counter, and I look up, and there's my mother sitting at the counter. She came down to see me at work. Very, [0:25:00] you know, it was moving.

Now, I'm going to tell you something that probably—I would say that it's the—the education I got at the Catholic boarding school, Cornwells Heights, it was called, in eastern, in Cornwells, Pennsylvania. It was in eastern, E-A-S-T-E-R-N, geographically, Pennsylvania. I would say being at that school and then going to Columbia, or even before I got to Columbia, becoming an accomplished clarinetist filled in and gave me some sense of confidence. Because I was the first clarinetist in the orchestra, first clarinetist in the band, and then, the singular achievement—at that time, the state of New Jersey had an all-state, a New Jersey all-state orchestra, which you auditioned for. And in my senior year, I was the first clarinetist for that.

DC: Wow.

CJ: Now, there are some funny—there are some humorous little side stories. I had learned to play jazz. And there was a theater in New York called the Earl Theater that was like the Apollo Theater in New York. And the Earl Theater used to have Amateur Hour. And what

happens, you go in for one ticket, you see a movie and you see a live stage show. And then, they'd turn the lights out, because after they turned them out, they wanted to get a whole new—you couldn't sit through for a whole other show. And once a week they had what, in effect, was an Amateur Hour.

So, I had become very good—I was a very good classical clarinetist, and I was moving pretty good to become—I learned a little jazz. So, I'm on this Amateur Hour competition. There was a white guy there, an Italian guy from Philadelphia. He was *unbelievable* on the clarinet! I mean, he was just unbelievable, about a year and a half older than me. His name was Buddy DeFranco. Okay, I mean, when I heard him play, I said, "That's it!" I mean, he was good.

DC: [Laughs]

CJ: Now, Buddy DeFranco and I became friends thereafter. I mean, he was one of the great—he may be still living—he was one of the great clarinetists of our time. Alright, but he was great.

Now, during that period of time, I went to Juilliard School of Music twice during those summers, to be trained as a classical clarinetist. There was a place at that time in New York called—it was called Manny's Music Shop on 48<sup>th</sup> Street, 48<sup>th</sup> or 46<sup>th</sup> Street, I think it was 48<sup>th</sup> Street. But Manny's had a tradition, I think it was on Wednesday or Thursday, it may have been Thursday, late afternoon, they had a tradition of having musicians—it was a music store. It sold musical instruments, principally. At that time, the instruments were trumpets, saxophones, clarinets, trombones, and so forth. It wasn't like—it had guitars, but it wasn't like flooded with guitars. The dominant things were the reeds, the trumpets, the trombones, the clarinets and the saxophones.

And I used to go and have my clarinet serviced there, and I got to know Manny, the owner. Took to me like—just something, he just liked me as a young, Negro clarinetist. I think he also liked the fact that I was a classical clarinetist, trained, and as he was—and so, and I had learned a little bit of jazz. Well, one day, he says, “You know, Bird, Charlie Parker is here. He’s playing upstairs. And I told Bird about you.” I said, “Well, what did you tell him?” “I said you’re very talented, and so forth. He’s there upstairs playing now. Why don’t you go up?” I said, “No.” I said, “Yeah, I’d like to go up.”

And so, my clarinet was being fixed. So, I go up and I’m listening and I’m very shy. And then, Manny comes up, having done what he had done to my clarinet. He had put it together in a box for me, and so forth. And so, Bird says to me, “Yeah, he told me,” he says, “You got your axe?” And I said, “Yeah.” He said, “Well, just sit in.” I said, “No, no, no, I can’t. No, no, I can’t do that.” “No, no, no, no! Put that thing together, boy! Put that thing together!” [0:30:00] And I’m all shaky. [Laughs]

DC: [Laughs]

CJ: [Laughing] Shaking like this, you know, hands are shaking. And he’s playing, and so forth. And he says, “Well, what are you—what’s your favorite?” And, “I just simply, I can’t,” I said, “Mr. Parker.” “Don’t call me Parker! Call me Bird.” I said, “You just play along, and I’ll just sit.”

And then, as I got into it, I said, “Well, do you know ‘Way Back Home in Indiana?’” He said, “Yeah, I know! ‘Way back home in Indiana.’ What key?” and so forth. And then, he played “Way Back Home,” and then “Sunny Side of the Street.” And I was sitting there and sort of, uncomfortably getting accustomed. And then, when he switched to play “Way Back Home in Indiana,” which was a faster tempo than “Sunny Side of the Street,” they’re playing and playing,

and I'm playing along with them, and he's looking at me, and he goes to me [gestures] like that. I said, "Oh, my God!" [Laughs]

DC: [Laughs]

CJ: [Laughing] Frozen there! The best I could do was improvise, okay? The only thing—this is like an altar boy, being an altar boy for the Pope!

DC: Right. [Laughs]

CJ: But, hey! I did what I had to do. And then, of course, like any comforting, caring elder, he said, "You're on your way, boy! You're on your way. You're on your way, you're on your way." I mean, it was encouraging me. The man was an unbelievable genius. We could have an interview just about Charlie Parker. But I want to say this about Charlie Parker. Those people who may not be musicians who will see this, you have to understand, what Charlie Parker could do is that there would be a melodic line, and Charlie Parker had the capacity of improvising within the melodic line. He would improvise so that you could hear the line, but the improvisation would be so extraordinary. The classic example is "April in Paris," okay? You listen to it. That's what he did. I mean, just brilliant!

So, that had a profound effect on me. But when I was in college, I had to make a decision. I could practice a little. I was under great pressure to do well. I played sports, because I just—it was in my system.

But the most profound event that occurred in my life occurred when I was in college, which shaped me to be very much who I am today. And that event was this. It was the beginning of my junior year. It was in January. I was taking midterm examinations. And while I'm taking the midterm examinations, the proctor comes in and says, "Are you Clarence Jones?" And I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "Well, there's an emergency call for you. You need to go to the dean's

office.” Now, ironically, I was taking this midterm examination on my birthday, January eighth, 1952.

I go to the dean’s office, and they said, “Mr. Jones, we got a call from the hospital in Camden, New Jersey.” [Sound of siren in background] It’s Cooper’s Hospital, Cooper’s Something Hospital. And I said, “Yes?” “Apparently, we don’t know the details, but your mother is in the hospital. You need to call this number immediately.” So, I’m trying to decide—so, I call the hospital. And, essentially, my father was so broken up, it was really difficult to communicate. And so, a doctor got on the phone and said, “Your mother, we just operated on your mother, and we had to ask your father’s consent—they had to [0:35:00] take her bowel tract out to do a colostomy with a bag because she has cancer in her rectum, abdominal rectal cancer, and she probably has about three or four months to live.”

I mean, I’m—so, I go back and I say to the proctor, I said, “I want to try to see if I can spend 15 minutes to try to finish where I am in the exam.” So, I finished, handed in my paper, and I got on the bus and rode down to the hospital. And it was just—oh, this was a shock to me. And my father was just in inconsolable grief. So, [clears throat] we bring my mother home from the hospital. And I’ve talked to the doctor, and I’m talking to my mother. And she is very upset that I am there. She started to cry, “Why are you here? You should be in school.” I said, “Well, Mama, I—,” and so forth. She said, “No, no, no. Mama’s going to be alright. You’ve got to go back to school.” So, I mean, I talked to the doctor, and he says, “Well, Mr. Jones, this is what it is.”

I went in to see the dean of the college, and my attitude was, “I can always get an education. This is my mother.” So, I wanted to take a leave of absence. I wanted to drop out and take a leave of absence. He says, “No, I don’t think you need to do that, Clarence. Why don’t we

work out something where you just stay, and we'll work out something with your classes. You try to keep up." And I had some friends, and so what I did was that I stayed in school, but I set up—I put a desk at the foot of my mother's bed in her bedroom, and that's where I did all my homework. And I had to leave periodically to go back to New York. I also had to leave to keep some credibility with her, because she *refused* to believe that, in fact, I had permission to stay. She just refused to believe it. And she would cry, "Mama wants you to have an education," or something.

May fourth, 1952, she dies. She's buried on May eighth. [Pause] When they—she was 160 pounds about, five foot ten, 155, 160 pounds. When she died, she was about 99 pounds, less than 99 pounds. They took her body out from the mattress and took her to the undertaker place. And when they removed her body and were removing the bed things, I saw that there was a letter under the mattress that she had written to me. All during the time she was sick, she was carrying on this charade of Mama's going to get better, Mama's going to get—"I'm going to get better. It's not going to be as—it's different. I'm going to have to get adjusted to doing things. But Mama's going to get better." She was getting—she was losing more weight anyway.

So, she leaves this letter to me. And the essence of the letter is she's apologizing to me. She's asking my forgiveness for leaving me. She's asking my forgiveness and she's talking [0:40:00] about how proud I have made her feel, that "no mother," she says, "could ask for a son that could bring her greater joy." And then, my favorite. She was a cook, one of the best cooks in the world. And she—I was a dessert hound, so to speak, and she knew that the things that she homemade for me were crullers and a dessert called Floating Island. And she said, "Mama's sorry she can't be here to make crullers and Floating Island, but I wrote the recipe down for you. And I'm sorry to leave you, but I know that someday you're going to be a great man. I know

you're going to be a great man. And always try to be good and always try to make me proud, because I know I am so proud of you! And someday you're going to be a great man. I'm sorry I have to leave you. Please forgive me."

Well, let me tell you something. I was an only child. I didn't have any brothers and sisters. I spent a limited amount of time with my parents. But as I began going forward in my life, and I measured things in terms of how difficult they were, or how painful they were, it became very clear that my internal gyroscope was founded on the following: I had been to the apex and the mountaintop of pain. I couldn't conceive of anything happening in my life thereafter. I couldn't conceive of *anything* thereafter having a more profound effect of loss and anguish than the loss of my mother.

So, when I would study the, read the political history of China, and I would see that Zhou Enlai, one of the great China's political leaders, says, "The strongest steel is tempered by the hottest fire," I knew what he was saying. It also conditioned me to have the dialectic of compassion and strength. Okay?

JB: Could we pause for just a second?

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: Okay, we're back.

CJ: So, for example, the Korean War broke out June twenty-fifth, 1950. I was a student. As a student, fully enrolled student, I was entitled to a student deferment, and I did have a student deferment. Because, in the aftermath of my mother's death in '52, I was scheduled to graduate in '53. In order to sustain your exemption, your student deferment, you either had to graduate, or you had to be full time in school, and if you were nearing graduation, you had to



have made an application to a graduate school. And if you didn't have either of those things, you were not entitled to be exempt from the draft.

DC: Right.

CJ: So, my draft board snatched me because I was in this space. I was drafted on August twelfth, 1953. I was angry. I had also become politicized in college. I had also met [0:45:00] in New York, through my uncle, an extraordinary man, who I didn't even know who was. I went to see him in a Broadway play, but then I found out he was an actor. It was Paul Robeson. I went to see him in *Othello*, or *On Whitman Avenue*, or something—I went to see him in something with Uta Hagen on Broadway. My uncle had become friends with him. And when I was in Columbia, I had two instances with Paul Robeson.

One, I had been active politically in college. This was before my mother died. My mother died in 1952, but that whole area between 1949 and 1952, I had been active. And I loved football, in addition to all the other things. But if you loved football, you either played football in Baker's Field as a part of the Columbia team, or if you went to a football game. And I was not varsity, but I was in line to be on the varsity team. So, I would go to every football game. Every Saturday, I would be up at Baker's Field at Columbia in New York. And my classmates who were more politically inclined would say, "Well, when we have to hand out leaflets, you never hand out any leaflets. You're never there! You're never there. You're either committed or you're not committed."

So, I told Paul Robeson this story once. I saw him socially with my uncle at a party and I told him that story. He was tall and big, and he says, "You go back and you tell your white, liberal, progressive friends—I have lots of white progressive friends, but you go back and tell your white progressive friends who are student—that one touchdown on a Saturday afternoon by

you, a Negro, in Baker's Field, with that stadium filled with almost 50,000 people—one touchdown will have greater impact on getting white people to understand the equality of Negroes than anything they could ever write in those leaflets." [Laughs] I never will forget that.

The other instance that had influence on me is that he, at this time, was being summoned before the House UnAmerican Activities Committee.

DC: Right, right.

CJ: And I watched him on television. So, let me just—you go back and look at the archives. I would suggest you go back and look at Paul Robeson appearing before the House Internal—Security Committee of the House UnAmerican Activities—but it was chaired by Senator Eastland of Mississippi. And when Paul Robeson was being asked to be sworn in as a witness by the chairman, he stands up, six foot four, he says, "You!" He points his finger at him. "You, Mr. Eastland! You are unconstitutionally seated in that chair. You don't have the authority, the constitutional authority to ask me any questions whatsoever, because you are illegally sitting in this Congress. You were illegally seated because of the mass exclusion of my people in voting. You have no authority whatsoever to ask me any questions!" Meanwhile, they're saying, "Shut the witness! Shut the witness up!" I said, "Wow!" I said, "That was a bad dude!"

DC: [Laughs]

CJ: I mean, that influenced me, okay?

DC: Yeah.

CJ: So, my mother dies, influence of Paul Robeson, my anger, not getting exempted. So, when I report the night before the induction—by the way, I had some leftwing, I'm not going to say that they were Communists, because I don't know that they were Communists. They were

young friends of mine, but they were members of the Labor Youth League, which was supposed to have been a Communist-affiliated organization. But they were left. They were just great friends of mine.

DC: Let's pause just one—

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: We're back.

CJ: I had a—

DC: If I could interrupt just for a second, when you were talking about your friends that were leafleting, is this the same group, [0:50:00] or is it the same kind of politics that you were talking about?

CJ: Oh, no, no, no! These were different. Oh, no, these were different. They were friends. They were an extended group. They weren't necessarily—the Paul Robeson comments were meant to my friends who—yes, as a matter of fact, they were the same. They were substantially the same.

But I had become friends, and one woman by the name of Judith Treisman—Judy, I don't know whether you're alive, or whether you'll ever hear this or see this—but I have such admiration for her, and her family, who treated me like I was part of their family, great warmth. And I remember Judy Treisman, I mean, that was where she was, as a young woman at that time. [Laughs] I don't know where her head is today. But at that time, she says, "If you don't want to go, if you don't want to report, maybe you just should think about it. If you want to go to Canada, or if you don't want to go to Canada, I think you should go to Eastern Europe, Czechoslovakia, and so forth like that." And I said, "No, no, no."

And she said, “Well,” she says, “don’t get the wrong idea, now.” She says, “My parents like you and I like you. And, I mean, I really care about you, so all I’m simply saying, if you wanted to go, I’d go with you. It’d probably make it easier for you, and I’d find something to do.” And I said, “What are you talking about?” And she said, “Yeah, I’d do that, because I know you’re hurting and I know you don’t want to go.” And I said, “No, Judy, I can’t. I can’t do that.” But I seriously thought about it. I *seriously* thought about it.

But, as a result of the anger of being inducted when I didn’t think I should have been inducted— [pause] In my draft board in Mount Holly, New Jersey, aside from Richard Valeriani, who went to high school in Burlington, New Jersey, there were very few college students. And I still to this day believe that this prejudiced Mount Holly draft board said, “Well, we’ll send this Negro. We’ll draft him. Who does he think he is?” I mean, I think if I had been white, I don’t think I would have been drafted. I think they would say, “Oh, he’s enrolled in Columbia College. And, yes, he had a problem with this.” I don’t think they would have drafted me. “His mother died.” No, they didn’t care. So, I was bitter.

So, the night before I was to report for induction, I sat down and wrote a handwritten note, as to why I was *reporting* for induction, but why I was *not* going to serve in the Army. And, in the course of the note, I said, in effect, I said, “I’m willing to go and serve and give my life for my country as a member of the United States Army when my country treats me as a first-class citizen. I’m not willing to put my life on the line in a war that I have lots of questions about, the Korean War, lots of questions, but I’m not willing to do that. And so, therefore, I’m reporting for induction.” And I cited the First—I wasn’t a lawyer, I didn’t know anything. I mean, I was educated. I cited the First, the Fifth, the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution as the reason I was not.

So, I'm in Whitehall Street in New York. I report for duty August thirteenth, early in the morning. Now, if you've seen some of these military pictures, when you report to duty, the first thing the noncommissioned officer says, and it was a Negro noncommissioned officer, and he says, "Alright, sissies! You raise your hand, you're being inducted into the Army!"

Well, I didn't raise my hand, because I figured if I didn't consent to this, they couldn't—so I didn't raise my hand. So, I'm listening to all this rant about, "Your ass is grass now! You're in the Army. You belong to us!" And then Sergeant Somebody, he says, "Well, what's with you? What's with you, soldier?" And I said, "There's nothing. I just," I said, "I'm here. I'm reporting." "Well, what are you, some kind of kook or conscientious objector?" And I said, "No," and then I gave him my statement to read. And he read it, he said, "What are you, some kind of Commie?" I said, "No." [0:55:00] He said, "Well, get out of line!"

So, he puts me out of line, and then a captain, a white captain officer comes over and says, "What's the problem, Private Jones?" "What's the problem, Mr. Jones?" he said. I said, "Well, I realize I'm here because I want to show up, but I don't—these are my reasons why I don't want to serve, sir. I think I'm being unfairly treated. I don't want to serve." He read it. And that's when he says, "Oh?" He said, "Well, you better come over here." And they had some kind of conference for about two or three, about two hours. Whatever they decided—oh, yeah, whatever they decided, they were going to put me on the bus to Fort Dix.

So, I go to Fort Dix. And somebody at Fort Dix had been alerted that I was on the bus and coming. Now, at Fort Dix, that's when they get serious, because that's when they want you to sign up for your insurance, you sign that you're going to get paid, they issue your clothes. And so, they kept saying to me, "If you don't sign this, you're not going to get any money." I said, "I don't care. I'm not signing anything." "Well, if you can't sign, you're not going to have any

insurance, you're not going to get any paycheck, you're not going to get anything!" I said, "I don't care. I'm not signing anything." So, they issue me standard things and they process me to go for basic training. No, stop.

Before they process me, I take examinations, placement examinations. So, about three or four days after I take the placement examination, I find that they're putting me in a group that's scheduled to go to someplace in Maryland, because we're going to be part of some special forces team. It's a special forces intelligence team. So, I said, "Well, I think there must be some mistake."

So, I remember going to one of these orientation things, and I'm listening. And they're talking about how we're going to be trained as—go into this special unit. Some of us may go to California to the Army language school to learn Russian or Polish, principally that. I'm thinking to myself, and then I put it altogether that, because I talked to some of the other soldiers, who are all gung-ho about this. They're going to send you to Fort Jackson to paratroopers' school and so forth.

The bottom line is that they were being trained to be special officers who would jump at night behind enemy lines in the Soviet Union and pull on to Czechoslovakia. So, I laugh when I find out. This is after they go to the Army language school. So, I said, "Now, let's assume that I go through all of this, and I'm fluent in Russian. What am I going—how am I going to explain this black face of mine as I show up in the Russian countryside or Polish countryside?"

DC: [Laughs] Right.

CJ: I said, "This is crazy!" Crazy, right? I mean, that's how insane the military was at this point. But, anyway, so I'm in the holdover. And I was bitter, angry over the death of my mother,

and really—I really began to—I was influenced by Paul Robeson and I also was trying to find a way of getting out, not doing it.

DC: Um-hmm. I just wanted to ask—this is a good time, I think, to ask what other influences beyond Robeson? I mean, were there people that you were reading? Looking back, this is a very tough act. What do you think inspired that?

CJ: I think my friends. I had become friends with a lot of New York student leftists, who had become, in one case, a couple of cases, become very dear friends of mine. And one case I can think of was a fellow by the name of Robert Barron Nemiroff. Robert Nemiroff was getting a masters degree in English from NYU. He didn't go to Columbia. He went to NYU. And we became friendly through my political activities there in New York. [1:00:00] And Robert's family owned a restaurant, an Israeli restaurant on 46<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan called the Habibi, and it was a nightclub restaurant. And Robert introduced me to his parents, particularly his mother.

And when his mother found out that I was at Columbia, that I was working on tables, and I was skinny. And she says, "Well," speaking in Yiddish. She spoke very little English. And so, Bobby would be talking to her in Yiddish and talking to me in English, which, by the way, as a result of that relationship, three or four or five years of knowing her, I was fairly capable in conversational Yiddish, particularly when it came to food. I used to—people would say, "Well, how do you know anything about knaidlach?" I'd say, "I know knaidlach and matzo ball. I know it, because I used to have it all the time." [laughter]

And anyway, they had this nightclub, and she would have me come down and eat outside the kitchen. There was—right to the entrance of the kitchen to the nightclub, where there was the restaurant part, I would come anytime and eat. And I wouldn't do it except maybe on the

weekends. Weekends I'd come there. But anyway, I became very, very close to Robert Nemiroff. He and I became friends. And he ended up marrying Lorraine Hansberry, the playwright.

DC: Oh, wow.

CJ: Who also became a friend of mine when I was in school. Lorraine Hansberry was an African American playwright from Chicago, became good friends of mine. She married Robert Nemiroff. And the other good friends of mine were the D'Lugoff brothers. Art D'Lugoff was an entrepreneur and owned the Village Gate nightclub. And his brother Burt owned the nightclub with him, except Burt went to medical school at Johns Hopkins. So, while Art was running the nightclub, Burt was in medical school at Johns Hopkins. But those were my good friends.

And then, I go through the military experience. First of all, there are a couple of people in the military, that when they found out— Oh, I'm in the military in 1953. This is '55, okay? The military only desegregated beginning in 1950, Executive Order, late 1949, by Harry Truman. So, only had an integrated Army for three years. So, I was in Company D, 47<sup>th</sup> Regiment, at Fort Dix. And I just remember it being about, I don't know, maybe it was 40 percent black, maybe, yeah, about 40 percent black or more, 40 percent black. My company commander was from Mississippi, captain. The noncommissioned officers were virtually all Negro at that time.

So, I'm in the military. And I become very, very close—I develop some close friends. One, when word spreads that I'm going to be here indefinitely, or more specifically, I am not going to be shipped overseas after basic training, guys came up to and say, "Well, tell me how you did this," because they wanted to revoke—they wanted to be in the holdover status. They didn't want to be shipped out.

And if you didn't—the only way you can get a discharge in the Army is a dishonorable discharge, a Section Eight, being crazy, or an undesirable. So, all of them wanted out to be a



Section Eight, crazy. I had a good friend of mine, who says, “Oh, I’m a Communist.” I said, “Well, —” His name was Felix. I said, “Well, I’m not a Communist.” “Well, no, I’m going to go back. I told them—I mean, I didn’t even look at that thing. I signed that loyalty oath.”

I didn’t sign the loyalty oath. I didn’t make that clear to you. When I handed my statement, I also, as part [1:05:00] of the various series of papers you sign, consenting to being in the Army, there’s a whole lot of papers but also attached to those papers was a loyalty oath for 400 organizations that the then Attorney General Herbert Brownell determined were either Communist or Communist-run organizations, including a lot of organizations I *knew* were not Communist. The Young Progressives of America, they were not a Communist organization, but they were there. And so, I didn’t sign it. So, word spread that I had not signed it. And so, some of the soldiers were saying, “We didn’t know whether, what you are or not.”

DC: [Laughs]

CJ: And then, the other word spread. It’s like being in the military is a little bit like prison. Word spread that I had—somebody said to be careful, because the word spread that somebody said I needed to be taken into a shower and taught a lesson in loyalty. “So, you better watch yourself.” And when I developed a very good friendship with a guy, he was a big guy, like a football player, we became very close friends. And he was somewhat protective of me, too. His last name was Hinton, big guy, very good friends.

Fast forward. I’m sitting in a bar somewhere in Harlem on leave, talking to Hinton. We’re drinking, trying to see what girls we’re going to get, and so forth. And he starts to cry. So, I figure, it’s too much liquor. He’s starting to cry. He’d had a lot to drink, a lot of beers, and started to cry. And then, he told me, he said I had treated him like a brother. I had taken him to my family, and he is so sorry. I said, “What are you sorry about?” He says, “My main job here in

your platoon is to report about you.” I said, “What do you mean, report about me?” He said, “I have to write reports about you.” I said, “What kind of reports?” “About whether you ever said anything against the United States, whether you’re a Communist. And I said, ‘Well, the only thing he likes is sports and girls.’” [Laughs]

DC: [Laughs]

CJ: “‘Sports and women, that’s all he talks about.’” No, he says, “‘Sports, girls and women, and music, that’s all he talks about,’ and you’ve introduced me to some of your good friends,” and so forth, and he had a lot to drink and he just unburdened. So, that was over a weekend, right? I go back, we go back to camp, report to formation on Monday. Monday afternoon and Monday evening, I’m looking for him, and he’s gone. I never saw him again, never saw him again. I’m in the Army for 21 months.

DC: And where did you serve again? Where were you?

CJ: At Fort Dix.

DC: At Fort Dix the whole time.

CJ: Fort Dix for 21 months.

DC: So, what were you doing? What was your daily work?

CJ: I was trained in telecommunications, Army signal communications, teaching me the intricacies of how to operate signal equipment on the field and so forth, map reading. I went through the whole basic training. I went through everything that you go, bivouac, marches with 26 pounds, I did the whole thing.

But 21 months, I’m in my barracks one morning, getting ready to go to what I normally do. And an MP comes in, two MPs come in, and one of them says, “Are you Private Jones?” I said, “Yes.” And they hand me this paper, and in a sense, it’s like a summons and complaint. It’s

a notice that they're bringing me up for court martial as a security risk, with this whole series of allegations. One allegation being that I had refused to sign the loyalty oath. The other allegation being that, [1:10:00] since 1938 up until the present, I'm a member of the Communist Party. Well, of course, I was only seven years old in 1938. [laughter] The other was that I had lived, which was true—after my mother died, my last year in college, I had lived in a housing development that was run by the ILU, International Labor Union, one of the labor unions that was deemed to be a Communist front—that I had lived there. That's where I lived. And the other was that I had maintained a very close friend, which was true, with a doctor, who is still today—he's retired, a doctor at Stanford University, who at the time, had been a vice-president of the International Union of Students. Been a member of the Communist Party since I was eight, didn't sign a loyalty oath, lived in the Allerton Houses in the Bronx, and that was it.

And so, I'm assigned a defense counsel, and they have this field board of inquiry at Fort Dix. And my commanding officer is called. The principal evidence they put in are the allegations! And we rebut the allegations. He said, I'm not a member of the Communist Party. "Yes, it is true, he did live there. Yes, it is true, he knows so-and-so. Yes, it is true, he didn't sign the loyalty oath." And even my adjutant general lawyer said, "Well, these are all—you're—"

He put my commanding officer on the stand, he said, to testify to whether I was a good soldier or not. "Bottom line, if you could have Clarence Jones in your company—?" He said, "He was the number one soldier. I would be honored to have him serve at anytime. I have never heard of nothing but glowing remarks." Plus, I had been chosen as soldier of the month. And soldier of the month—let me tell you how you become soldier of the month. To become soldier of the month for the 47<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Something Battalion, you stand before your footlocker in your neatest clothes, and your footlocker is in perfect shape, and your bed is made so they put a

quarter or something, and your shoes are shined. And then you are asked to disassemble your M-1 rifle and reassemble it, blindfolded. I did that and got a perfect score. And as a result of that, I was given the good conduct medal. So, I was chosen as soldier of the month, given a good conduct medal, and a special three-day leave, and all this is in the record. And I'm being court-martialed.

The verdict comes down the very next day. I have been found to be an undesirable, a national security risk to the United States government and to the United States military, at which point two MPs took me back to my barracks. They supervised me packing up all of my things, put them in a duffle bag, put me in a Jeep, with a one-way ticket to Port Authority, and they waited until the bus—They escorted me to the exit, the gate of Fort Dix, under armed guard and put me on the bus under armed guard. I was given an undesirable discharge on August thirteenth, 1955. I was inducted—I think it was August fourteenth. I think I was inducted on August thirteenth, but I was returned on August fourteenth.

So, as I'm riding in on the bus, I'm smoldering. And I'm thinking, "They don't know what they've got their hands." So, I go and I'm staying with my uncle. I discussed it with my uncle, and my uncle says, "Well, I think you ought to [1:15:00] go see the American Civil Liberties Union." So, I go down to see the American Civil Liberties Unions and I tell them my story. And they have me meet with a lawyer named Stanley Faulkner, God rest his soul, Stanley Faulkner. We filed an appeal.

It was the first time I went into the Pentagon. The Pentagon has something called the Army Discharge Review Board. The Armed Services Discharge Review Board, sorry, the Armed Services Discharge Review Board. It consists of, like the Supreme Court, all of the uniformed

services are sitting there in bunk. The Navy, the Marines, the Coast Guard, the Air Force, they're all sitting there, military officers. And it's like the Court of Appeals.

Excuse me, I need to go to the men's room.

DC: Yeah, yeah, take a break.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: We're running again.

DC: Okay. Great.

CJ: So, I said—so, I went to Stanley Faulkner on second appeal, and he subpoenaed, and my military commander and everything was there. To make a long story short, as a result of the appeal, they awarded me a general discharge. They moved up my discharge one notch. Stanley Faulkner says, “No, that's not satisfactory. He's entitled to an honorable discharge.”

And I wasn't thinking about what I was going to do, but I decided I wanted to go to law school at that time. And I considered—I went to Columbia College and I was considering about making—I went up to talk to the Columbia Law School and I told them the problem I had. They didn't get to the question of grades and applications and so forth. They discouraged me, because they said that, “While you have this problem—I think you ought to get this problem solved before you consider entering law school. You don't know. You're not going to be able to be a lawyer if you have this thing hanging over your head.”

Meanwhile, I had become friendly with Judge Hubert Delaney and some other lawyers, and they suggested I go and talk to Boston University Law School. So, I talked to Boston University Law School and I told them the issue. And they said, “Well, listen, if you want a legal education, we'll give you a legal education. You decide whether you're going to ever practice, but we'll admit you. You'll get your papers. The mere fact that you have currently an undesirable

discharge, in general, and you don't know how it's going to go in appeal, that's not going to stop you, so you're welcome to come."

But the key thing, of course, I needed an honorable discharge because, as an honorable discharge, I qualified for the Korean G.I. Bill. So, Stanley Faulkner—we sued. He brought a writ of mandamus, I believe. A writ of mandamus, for those people who are not familiar, it's an administrative proceeding that's brought against an officer of the government agency to compel that person to perform the duties that he or she is required to do, according to the statute. So, Stanley Faulkner's thesis was that the Secretary of the Army, he had a *constitutional* duty, he was *compelled* by the nature of the authority to issue me an honorable discharge.

I'm at Boston University Law School. I'm registering, knowing full well that maybe I'll win the case and maybe I won't win the case. But Boston—they were already working out a situation where, if I could come up with just a modest little amount for the down payment, they'll carry me and so forth. They're working out the best arrangement they could. I haven't completed registering in law school, hadn't gotten my books, when I got this urgent message to call Stanley Faulkner.

So, I called Stanley Faulkner, and he said, "We won! You've just been issued an honorable discharge. And this is what you must tell me. I'm going to get in touch with the Veterans Administration office in Boston [1:20:00] and tell them that we're going to have your copy of your order and so forth, so that you can get your benefits." That's what happened, is that the Veterans Administration was notified I had a honorable discharge. The VA then notified the bursar of Boston University, and they then activated me as being going to school and getting my tuition under the Korean G.I. Bill. And, lo and behold, I got a check for, I don't know, several

thousand dollars, it may have been about \$12,000, or maybe about \$13,000, or something, for all the back pay.

DC: [Laughs]

CJ: All the back pay, which I didn't get.

DC: Wow.

CJ: I didn't get any paycheck—

DC: That whole time?

CJ: That whole time.

DC: Yeah.

JB: Amazing.

CJ: So, that—but I introduced this by talking about the death of my mother. Because her death made me fearless. I didn't have any brothers and sisters. I didn't have anybody, or brothers or sisters, to comfort me. It became very clear to me that we are all, to a large extent—the challenge is to what extent can you control your own destiny and not have it be determined by a third party? And what are you prepared to put at risk? What are you prepared to—? Now, my attitude, I'd lost my mother. I didn't feel I could lose anything. I didn't feel I could lose anything. I wasn't afraid of anything. I was angry.

And during the period, I go to the New York Public Library the day after I get into New York. I was staying at my uncle's place, and he's telling me to go down—I go to the New York Public Library, because I was trying to decide what I'm going to do, and ended up going to the library to read papers and so forth. And I hear somebody call my name. I figured, "Who the hell knows to call my name?" "Clarence Jones, is that you?" I turned around, and there's a woman. And I hadn't seen this woman in like five years.

Her name was Anne Norton. Anne Norton had gone to Sarah Lawrence. And when I was at Columbia, occasionally, a group of guys from Columbia would go up and party at Sarah Lawrence. And Sarah Lawrence at that time, the women lived in houses, lived in different houses. So, it was a big thing to be able to go on a Saturday night, to go to Sarah Lawrence, because that's where you had all these girls. Well, Anne Norton was—they had parties, and I knew her. She was white, and I knew she would—she was one of those active, progressive, very nice people. And the last thing I heard, she was living in Chicago, working for Spiegel's and so forth. No, no, she's in New York now, working for the American National Theater Company. "What's that?" "Oh, it's, the American National Theater Company. What are you doing?" And so forth and so on. And I just told her, I told her the story about what happened in the Army. She said, "Oh, my God! Well, where are you staying?" "I'm staying with my uncle."

And she says, and this is—I never will forget, she says, "Well, what are you doing tomorrow?" I said, "I don't know what I'm doing tomorrow." And she said, "Well, the American National Theater is having our annual thing on Broadway. Would you like to come? You've been in the Army. Would you like to come? I think it would be good for you." I said, "Sure!" So, I go to the American National Theater Company's production of *Damn Yankees*. Gwen Verdon. It was the second Broadway play I'd ever seen. The first had been with my uncle when I had seen Paul Robeson—

DC: Right.

GJ: In maybe it was *On Whitman Avenue*, something with Uta Hagen. That was the second time, okay. But this time—I mean, I had good seats there with Paul Robeson with Uta Hagen, but this time, I'm with Anne, so I get the very great seats. [1:25:00] And I didn't have a tuxedo. My uncle and I are about the same size, so I had to go and borrow his dark blue suit, and



I wore a bow tie, a black bow tie, a white shirt, and a dark blue suit, and a pair of his dark shoes, black shoes. I didn't have any clothes that summer. I had to wear my uncle's clothes. We went to Sardi's.

She began, with a friend of hers—this was all during the appeal process. And during the appeal process, you had to type up—you had to provide copies of the transcripts. It was before a lot of photocopying and so forth. So, she—Anne and a woman friend of hers, they spent hours typing up my appeal transcript. And during that whole process, we became romantically involved. And then, I married her. And that was a major turning point in my life.

JB: Can we pause?

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: We're back.

DC: Okay.

CJ: And so, my father had remarried, married one of my mother's best friends, whom I liked and so forth. And so, I let my father and my new stepmother know I was going to get married. And I had become friendly with a couple, Charles White and Fran Barrett White. Charles White was an artist, very distinguished artist at UCLA at one point, one of the, before Romy Bearden, one of the great artists. He was my—he was the best man at my wedding to Anne, and Fran Barrett was, I guess, the maid of honor to Anne. We became very good friends.

And my in-laws, my wife's parents, were reconciled. They were not unfriendly. They were sort of matter-of-fact, protocol friendly. But not hostile in any way. They were at the wedding. We had a reception at the Belmont Hotel, wedding cake and all of that. When Anne and I were dating, I learned—I mean, I knew in general but I didn't know the details until I got closer to her—I learned that, yes, her parents had founded the W.W. Norton Publishing

Company. Her name was Anne Norton. The Norton was because Warder Norton founded W.W. Norton Publishing Company with her mother. And so, she came from a publishing business. And that her father had died. Her father had died when she was 18 or 19.

Her mother remarries. Her mother remarries a banker, an international banker from Holland. His name is Daniël H. Crena de Iongh, C-R-E-N-E-A, small D-E, capital I-O-N-G-H. He was the head of the banking industry in the Netherlands, the number one bank in the Netherlands. He became—he was also one of the early, if not one of the first, treasurers of the World Bank. But affecting *my* relationship, if not those, was that his very best friend in the world, whom he vacationed with and, when he married Anne's mother, whom they vacationed with, in Johannesburg, South Africa, was Hendrik Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid. My stepfather-in-law is the banker for not only the Netherlands, but is the banker—[1:30:00]

DC: For South Africa.

CJ: For Hendrik Verwoerd and that whole National Party. Now, he treated me with protocol warmth and courtesy. It was something almost like out of *Downton Abbey*. I mean, it was like—he treated me as a gentleman. There was no hostility toward me. It wasn't a question of whether he approved or disapproved. He accepted it as a fact. I was married to his wife's daughter, and he treated me with great friendship initially, and then it eventually became affection and respect. And we had a kind of annual ritual. He was a member of the Netherlands Club in somewhere near Rockefeller Center. And every holiday he would take me to lunch at his Netherlands Club, where other international bankers would be. And he would proudly introduce me as his son-in-law.

And the breakthrough in the relationship with my in-laws came when my wife's mother, who was a classical chamber music violist, when her daughter had told her that I played the

clarinet, suggested that I bring up my clarinet one weekend, not knowing how well I could play. And she heard me play, warm up. The best thing I can tell you is that it blew her away. Because I sat down when she was just watching, I said, “Well, why don’t I—why don’t I play for you the Mozart Clarinet Concerto in A for you to listen to. You just sit over there, and I’ll play.” She was stunned!

The next week—this was in Wilton, Connecticut—the next week, she arranges for there to be a chamber music grouping, in which her son-in-law is going to be the clarinetist, in which we played Brahms, Mozart, things for clarinet and strings and cello and flute, primarily written by Brahms and Mozart, Beethoven writing some things. And then, of course, I would perform solo pieces, like Flight of the Bumblebee. That single act made my mother-in-law go out of her way to tell other people about how she wanted them to meet me and how “he’s busy, but we want him to come up here every weekend because you have to see him,” and so forth and so on. And I write in one of my books, I write in one of my books about how when she heard me play the Mozart Clarinet Concerto, it was a whole—

DC: Now, had—

CJ: She heard me play this before we had any children. Because normally children—

DC: Now, had you and Anne talked about what life might be like for you as an interracial couple at that time, or did you have other examples of couples that you knew?

CJ: Well, Charlie White was a black artist married to a white woman, Fran Barrett. Anne, and I say this not in criticism, Anne went to the Brearley School, private girls school. She went to Sarah Lawrence, and in high school, she was raised by a governess. In addition to having a home in Wilton, her parents had a townhouse on Gramercy Park, and at that time, everybody who owned a townhouse had a key to the park. So, we lived— Their townhouse was 17

Gramercy Park. [1:35:00] And Anne had tremendous deep idealism, but also had a certain kind of patrician-ness, a certain kind of attitude that she was certain she was right.

The classic example—this is after—we’re living in Boston. My oldest daughter was a baby. We were shopping at a food place, at checkout, and Anne had to go back, and so Tina, Christine, was in this little bassinet, and we left her right up on the counter, near the checkout counter. And I was standing there nearby, and the checkout counter—I must have turned, and somebody said, “Well, whose little baby is this?” Not in a negative way. But my wife saw this, and like a lioness, this is what I’m saying. Her way of dealing with this, so she’s white, fair-skinned, blonde hair, gray-blue eyes, attractive, five foot, ten and a half. But the way she looked at that white woman behind the counter was like—it was like that’s what she could do. It was like she looked at this other white person like she was a piece of dirt, and how *dare* she question, how *dare* she even think about—that’s the other side of Anne. She had this natural kind of instinct. She could become very patrician.

So, but my answer to your question is that she loved me. The answer to the question, that I think that she felt that she didn’t have to ask anybody’s approval. She felt she had the resources and the stature. She was raised in an environment where she was part of the upper class. Okay, she was part of the upper class, so she tended to look down on everybody else.

Classic example, and I say this just as a classic example. Her best friend was a woman by the name of Fran Damon. Fran Damon was the daughter of the Dole pineapple people. They were very, very close friends. In fact, when I got out, graduated from law school, Fran Damon tried to convince Anne that we should just move to Hawaii. And I said, “No.” I said I didn’t know what I wanted to do. Move to Hawaii? She says, “Don’t worry about it! My family, we’ll just—Clarence and you, we’ll build you a house and so forth.” And I didn’t even appreciate who

Fran Damon was until Anne began to tell me. And then, I began to understand that aside from some king's trust [laughter], aside from some trust in Hawaii, that the Damons are the second-largest landowners in Hawaii. And that was Anne's friend.

Now, the other thing was that Anne had lots of leftwing friends, too. And I think she was, objectively, I would have to say that we were all living in a state of rebellion, but she more than I. And I loved her. I think that she was rebelling against the fact that she did not like her stepfather. Or really, to put it very bluntly, she liked her stepfather, but she couldn't reconcile who he was and what he did. And one of the arguments we used to have, she thought that I was too nice to him. [1:40:00] Or she would say, "He's only being nice to you because he wants you to overlook." And I said, "Anne, hold on." I said, "He's your stepfather." I said, "All I know, your mother and Dan, they have their life. They're treating us—." In other words, I wanted to defuse it. It became very clear, however, that Dan tended to be more friendly to me than he was to Anne. [Laughs] Okay? They had a separate kind of antagonism going on there.

But anyway, in answer to your question, well, yeah. We accepted that as part of the reality. Sometimes that reality would be forced on us. For example, when we went to Boston and we were looking for a place to live to go to law school, one or two or three places, once they found out that we were an interracial couple, suddenly the apartment was not available or something, and so forth. So, Anne was not dumb, smart, she says, "Well, this is one apartment that I really would like and I think we should have. So, what I'd like to do, let me go and see it. Let me go and look at it, and if I like it, you trust me. I'm going to come back. I'll show you the diagram and then I'll go back. And if I like it, you'll have to trust me, we're going to sign. I'm going to take this apartment, and I'll tell them that my husband is a student, a lawyer, and he'll

come up and sign the lease later.” So, this is because we had already had two, at least two, maybe three instances where we’d had an apartment fall through.

So, finally, I go to this apartment at 857 Beacon Street. And there is an Irish superintendent, and he is a little astounded to see that I am the Mr. Jones, okay, that he has rented to his wife, okay. And he has this thick Irish brogue. The first thing I said to him, I said, “Mr. So-and-so,” I said, “that brogue you have is music to my ears. I haven’t heard that since I was in boarding school with Irish nuns.” He looked at me. He said, “You were what?” I said, “Yes. I was in boarding school.” And I said, “In fact, the one that I had the most love was Sister Mary Patricia, and she said to me—she made me promise when I grow up that I would one day go to visit Ireland. And she used to sing to me. She used to sing ‘Danny Boy.’” And he listened to me. And he said, “Oh, really?” He says, “Well, let me show you around the apartment.”

DC: [Laughs]

CJ: So, he showed me around the apartment and he asked me some questions. And I told him I had been an altar boy, an altar boy at the Midnight Mass and at Easter Services. And I kept saying how much I owed to the Irish nuns, and that’s why I was so—it was music to my ears to hear that. He said, “Come on downstairs! I want to introduce you to my wife.” He’s the superintendent of the building, now! So, his wife isn’t there. So, he takes me downstairs, and he goes to the refrigerator and he opens up some beers, and we sit and talk. So, we have a couple of beers. And as he’s drinking, he’s becoming more loose and so forth. He says, “I think they’re probably going to shit a brick!” That’s what he says, “They’re going to shit a brick when they find out that you’re a Negro. But this is *my* building [taps table]. I’m the superintendent of this building, and your wife has signed a lease, and I approve of you, and you’ve got a good lease. Welcome to the building!”

Okay, alright. He then, that couple became two of our—they were the superintendents! And the other thing that they liked was that all the other people, all the other tenants in the building, they didn't fraternize. But because he was so nice, my wife would frequently ask them, the superintendent of the building, to come and have dinner with us, come and do something. So, this man just fell in love with me, and he fell in love with Anne. And we used to talk a lot of baseball. We used to talk about—Fenway Park was just a couple of blocks away from my apartment. [1:45:00] And he developed a certain pride in me. And they used to babysit for us. And he would say—we would eat dinner. He said, "You're the only—I've never sat down and drank—I never talked to any—I never talked to any Negro before. I just never talked to them. I don't know why I don't talk to them. I don't have anything against them. I just never talk to them!" I mean, this is the way he was.

DC: Right.

CJ: But that's the reason we got that apartment. So, I got that apartment—we got that apartment because of those Irish nuns.

DC: [Laughs]

CJ: Because I said—when he spoke in this brogue, and it was very distant, I said, "Jeez, I haven't heard that. It's music to my ears." And that so startled him to hear me say that. And so, I said, here again, the Irish nuns were looking out for me. That's how I got—by the way, it was a magnificent apartment [laughter] on the top floor of 857 Beacon Street. You could see all of—it was like the top floor apartment. And that's where I went to law school.

DC: And then—

JB: Let's stop.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: Okay, we're rolling.

DC: And I think just in the interest of time, to move forward into your entertainment law career, and then your introduction to Dr. King.

CJ: Okay. Well, when I was in law school, as I said, Fran Barrett and Charlie White— Fran Barrett was my wife's closest friend, aside from Fran Damon, who lived in Hawaii. They moved from Riverside. They moved from New York City to California. And when they moved to California, my wife began to long, she really missed them and said, "We've got to go out and visit them."

And in my senior year in law school I took a course in copyright law. And during that time, copyright law, they had an essay competition called the Nathan Burkan Memorial Copyright Competition, in which students taking copyright law would write on some esoteric topic. The country was divided into four quadrants, the Northeast Quadrant, and so forth. So, in the Northeast Quadrant was Harvard, Yale, Boston University, Dartmouth, University of Pennsylvania, Syracuse. Because I was a musician, I wrote a paper called, "The Judicial Criteria Employed to Determine Musical Copyright Infringement." I mean, I wrote the paper showing how the courts, I mean, did it, rendered a decision. The paper didn't win for the Northeast Quadrant, but it got honorable mention. In other words, there was a winning paper in each quadrant, and then, one paper was chosen from among the four. But in each quadrant, there was always a second one, so I got the honorable mention.

So, my copyright professor was blown away. And since I was a little bit older, I had gone to law school three years later than if I had just gone from college to law school. And so, we became friendly. We became friendly. It wasn't just professor and student. It was like Donald, Clarence. And one day, we're having coffee, maybe drinks, I don't know. He says, "You know,



Clarence,” he says, “You’ve really got a real knack for this.” And he says, “You know, in the entertainment business, most Negroes are before the camera or in the footlights or on stage, and I’m not in any way trying to diminish that talent.” He says, “But that’s not where the real power is. That’s not where the decisions—if you’re interested in the entertainment business, it’s behind—. It’s the people who make the decisions. It’s the people who finance, the distribution agreements, and so forth. And you’ve got a real knack for this, and I think you ought to consider going into entertainment law. I have a friend who’s a general counsel of Review Productions by the name of Leslie Sharlow, and I’m going to suggest that you go out there and work. [1:50:00] And so, you go to California.”

And that’s what I did. I went to California to go to work in the office of Leslie Sharlow as a—just starting out. I had to take the California bar, which I started to study for, but I had to do—. In fact, the thing I remember is Sandy Dennis and Bobby Darin, they were two stars. They used to come sit on my desk in the Review Production lot. And Bobby Darin had a very kind openness. He says. “Now, Clarence, where did you come from?” He says, “They don’t even have Negroes sweeping the stages. Where did you come from? Did you drop from Mars? How did you get here?” I said, “Well, you go and talk to Les.” “Well, Les told me I should go and ask you!” Leslie Sharlow. So, they were trying to befriend me, and Sandy would say, “You’ve got to watch your back.” Sandy Dennis would say, “You’ve got to be above.” She would say to me, “You see all these cuties around here looking at you? You’ve got to be above. Watch your back.”

I’m there like three, four months, somewhere between one and six months. Leslie Sharlow dies of a heart attack. I’d come all that way out here to go—so, he dies, and he’s the power. He’s the general counsel. He’s the guy. He’s Donald Shapiro’s friend. So, it’s like my godfather is gone. And people around him also wonder, “Why is this guy here anyway?” Nobody

complained about my work. They complained about my—it was made very clear. It was very uncomfortable.

So, I left, and I was thinking about what I was going to do when I get a call in February of 1960 from Judge Huey Delaney. Much of what I'm going to tell you has been repeated. You've probably seen interviews, not verbatim, but essentially the same subject. I tell people how I met Dr. King. It's in the book! If you read the book, you'll see how I—? He had been indicted by the state of Alabama for tax evasion, for perjury, lying on his income tax return. Judge Hubert Delaney, a Negro judge, lawyer, was the chief defense counsel, along with three other lawyers. Two of the lawyers were from Chicago, very elite tax attorneys. The other lawyer was a local lawyer by the name of Fred Gray, civil rights lawyer. He was a local person. But they needed a law clerk, a clerk who would go down and coordinate.

So, Judge Delaney says, "Clarence, I know you, and we're defending this, and I'd love for you to come down and be our law clerk or help us with the defense." And I said, "Judge, I'd love to do it, but I'm here in Altadena, California. I can't. There's no way I can do that." "No, no, this is a—have you met him?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, this is a very special time, and I'd like for you to—." Anyway, he made a great—and it was *very* difficult. This is the man that recommended me to Boston University Law School. This is the person who was a judge senior. I mean, he was very very powerful. And for me to say no to him? It was not easy. Okay, but I said no. I said no for practical purposes. I couldn't go. My wife at that time was pregnant with our second child. I wasn't comfortable going.

DC: And you knew, obviously, Martin Luther King from the news and—?

CJ: No, I did not know.

DC: No?

CJ: No, I had never met him before. I had vaguely heard of him. I tell everybody I was in law school from 1956 to 1959. I didn't know anything. I mean, I knew about the Montgomery bus boycott, but I was *studying*. I didn't have time to follow a little Negro preacher, what he was doing. I mean, I was really not focused on that.

So, the judge was very disappointed in me. The next thing I know—that was on a Thursday night. On Friday morning, I get another call from the judge, and he says, “Clarence, I did not know it at the time of our conversation, but Dr. King is on his way to California right now. He has a speaking engagement at the World Public Affairs Council on Saturday evening, and I told him, if he does nothing else before he goes to the speaking engagement—and I think he's also going to preach out there, he says—I told him he has to find a way of meeting and talking to you.” So, I'm thinking to myself, okay. You know something? I listen to the judge. And I'm thinking to myself afterwards, “Now, why would the judge do that?” He figures, well—anyway, maybe just [1:55:00] Martin King is going to change my mind.

So, Friday night, doorbell rings. Martin King comes to my home in Altadena, California. [Laughs] He comes in and he says, introduces himself, and comes in with a fellow by the name of Bernard Lee. He comes into the—sits around the coffee table. Now, by the way, at that time, February 1960, under all classic criteria, he was a celebrity. He'd been on the cover of *Look*, *Life*, and *Time* magazines, plus he'd been successful in the Montgomery bus boycott with Rosa Parks. Plus in addition the Supreme Court in 1957 had handed down a decision outlawing segregation in the interstate bus transportation, so he was riding high, this preacher from Montgomery, in 1960. So, when I told my wife that he was coming, you would have thought, in classic current terms, that an amalgamation of George Clooney, Denzel Washington, Matt Damon, Matthew McConaughey, Michael Jackson, whoever!

DC: [Laughs]

CJ: She was like, “the greatest!”

DC: Right.

CJ: She was *very* impressed. So, he sits down and he says, “Mr. Jones, we have lots of white lawyers who help us in the Movement. But what we need are young Negro lawyers.” So, I said, “Dr. King, I hear you.” I said, “I told Judge Delaney I’d be willing to work on your case in any way I could, but I just can’t go down to—I just can’t travel.” And then, I told him why. And he asked me some questions about myself, and I told him what I told you about how I was raised, my mother’s death, and so forth. I’m shortening it. And he leaves.

Now, my wife turns to me, and with an unexpected attack dog syndrome, and she says, “What do you *think* you are doing that’s so important that you cannot help this man that came all this distance to ask for your assistance?” I said, “Now, hold on, Anne. That’s not quite true. He had a speaking engagement. He did not come out to see me. And besides, because a Negro preacher got his hand caught in the cookie jar stealing, it’s not my problem.” Well, that sort of like sent her over the top. That’s Friday night.

Saturday morning, I get another call. This time the voice is saccharine sweet. “Mr. Jones?” “Yes?” “My name is Dora McDonald. Mr. Jones, Dr. King enjoyed so much his visit with you and Mrs. Jones. But, Mr. Jones, he forgot to invite you to be his guest at a church tomorrow in Baldwin Hills. He’s going to be the guest preacher, and he would so like for you and Mrs. Jones to join him.” So, I told my wife what the message was. She says, “Well, you may not be going to Montgomery, but you’re going to that church.” She didn’t want to go.

So, I go to the church. And I had never heard Dr. King speak before, never heard him. Didn’t pay any attention to him. I was one-third from the front of the pulpit. And he gets up and

he says, “Ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters, the text of my sermon today is the role and responsibility of the Negro professional in aiding our less fortunate brothers and sisters struggling for freedom in the South.” So, I said, “One smart dude.” [pause] Then, he begins to speak and he begins to describe what he’s doing in much more detail and texture. I had never heard or seen him speak before. More accurately, I had never heard another human being walking on two legs on this earth speak that way before. It was mesmerizing! It was like, [sighs] you could hear a pin drop, and he was, he was so intense, melodious.

And then, he pauses during the course of his sermon. And he says, “For example, there’s a young man sitting in this church today. My friends in New York who are lawyers, for whom I have *great* respect, my friends in New York tell me that this young man’s brain has been touched by Jesus! [2:00:00] They tell me that when this young man, a lawyer, does any legal research, he goes all the way back to the time of 1066, William the Conqueror and the Magna Carta. And then, my friends in New York, for whom I have *great* respect, tell me that when he writes down what he finds in the law library, the words are so compelling they just *jump* off the page.” So, I’m thinking to myself, “Hey, he’s not looking at me, and I can’t even—inconceivable he could be talking about me.” I’m thinking to myself—I’m a little bit of an opportunist. I’m saying, “When this church is over, I want to find out who that man is, since I need to network.” I’m not at Universal Pictures anymore. I need to network and find out, because this brother, this person is going to help me if he’s that good.

And then, he continues. He says, “But I had a chance to visit with this man in his home the other night in Altadena.” And I said, “Oh, my Lord!” He started talking about me, never looking at me. And then, I use the example of Roberta Flack has a song, “Killing Me Softly With

Your Song.” Now, what I told Dr. King about myself was not state secrets or private, but I didn’t expect him to tell 1,500 or 2,000 people. So I was a little embarrassed by that.

And then, he took poetic license. The author, poet Langston Hughes has a poem called “Mother to Son.” And the lyrics in that poem talk about a washerwoman, a domestic. She’s washing the stairs, and she pauses on the landing and says, “I’m doing this for you, son. Don’t you give up. Life ain’t been no crystal stair. Don’t you give up.” Dr. King changes the lyrics and puts my mother as the actor in the poem, instead of the washerwoman, at which point I begin to cry, because I get disturbed by—I knew that she had—the greatest pain I ever experienced in my life, and then, I began to recognize how much she loved me, how much she had sacrificed, and she didn’t see *any* of the things. She didn’t see me graduate from college, didn’t see me graduate from law school, didn’t see her grandchildren, didn’t see any of that. So, I was moved by that.

Sermon’s over. Dr. King is a celebrity, so he’s out signing autographs on the steps of the pulpit. As I walk over to him, he says, “You know, I never mentioned your name, Mr. Jones. I never mentioned your name.”

DC: [Laughs]

CJ: He says, “Sometimes we Baptist preachers,” he says, “I never even mentioned your name.”

DC: I just walked up to him, took his hand in my right hand, my right hand in his right hand, and I grabbed his shoulder like this, and I said, “Dr. King, when do you want me to go to Montgomery, Alabama?” That was a major turning point in my life.

[Recording stops for the day at 2:03:30 and resumes the following day]

INTERVIEW CONTINUES THE FOLLOWING DAY

John Bishop: And we’re rolling.

David Cline: Okay. Today is April sixteenth, 2013.

Clarence Jones: Right. You got the days—that is correct.

DC: Okay, today I got it right. I knew we were going to end up on a second day, somehow.

CJ: Okay.

DC: So, today is April sixteenth, 2013. We are continuing with Dr. Clarence Jones here in Palo Alto.

CJ: Dr. Clarence B. Jones.

DC: Clarence B. Jones here in Palo Alto, California.

CJ: Right.

DC: So, thank you again for spending even more time with us.

CJ: Oh.

DC: What we'd like to do, because time is limited—

CJ: Oh, yes, that's right.

DC: Is jump ahead a little bit to the background of the March on Washington—

CJ: Okay.

DC: And preparing Dr. King's remarks.

CJ: Okay.

DC: So, if you could tell us a little bit about how you all planned for that, and how his speech came about, and what went into it from sort of behind the scenes.

CJ: Okay. Did I set the backdrop about what was happening in the months following the Birmingham demonstrations to the March on Washington? The bottom line was that the success in Birmingham became the spark that ignited a prairie fire of nonviolent protest across the

country. Between May and late August of 1963, there were over 1,300 demonstrations, 200 cities, [2:05:00] 36 states. Dr. King—we recognized that something qualitatively had happened, was happening to the country.

So, when the civil rights organizations announced at the Roosevelt Hotel in June that they were going to hold a March on Washington, I was surprised. And one of the reasons I was surprised is because I knew that Dr. King had been exhausted. He had been in jail for eight days in Birmingham. Then he had a big rally in Detroit, Michigan. And I was surprised that he would so readily consent.

And apparently, he didn't consent. He was slated to go on a vacation with his wife and children, as he customarily does, to either the Bahamas or Jamaica. And it became clear to—I wasn't part of the discussion, but when it became clear that that's what he was thinking about doing, Stanley Levison and Bayard Rustin said, "Hold on, Dr. King. You can't go. You need to stay here. And what we'll do, is we'll give you a vacation in the states. And we'll ask Clarence and his wife to vacate their newly constructed home so that you and your family can stay there." The only problem is that nobody asked. Nobody talked to me.

DC: [Laughs]

CJ: Well, the next thing I know is that Stanley Levison says that he and Bayard and others had decided that we had to leave our home so that Coretta and Dr. King and their four children could stay in our house. And the principal *political* reason was that we would have access to him domestically and he would be able to have a vacation while still being available to March on Washington. And so, during that period of time, he was writing a book, among other things.



And during that period of time, Stanley Levison and I, particularly—even though, again, two months earlier, on June twenty-second, Stanley had been the subject of a private conversation between President Kennedy and Dr. King. And that conversation very directly was that the President told him that he had to get rid of Stanley Levison and Jack O'Dell, that they had reliable information with the FBI that Stanley Levison was a high-ranking member of the Communist Party, and blah-blah-blah, and so was Jack O'Dell.

And so, that was like a time bomb, not a time bomb, it was like a major explosion that somewhat derailed things. But the point is, as the March approached—although it was decided that Stanley would step back, with his consent, with his urging—Dr. King did not want to reduce his oral contacts with Stanley, did not want to sever direct contact. He was very much adamant against it. But Stanley, his attitude was, “Listen. The Movement you're leading is more important than me or the relationship you and I have. If this is what the President and Attorney General want, let's give it to them. Let's move on. We've got more important things to do.”

But meanwhile, Stanley and I talked virtually every day on matters involving Dr. King and, at some point during those discussions, what he would say at the March came up. And the question was really a policy question, of what kind of speech? Are you going to give a public sermon? Are you going to give a political treatise? What kind of speech?

DC: Was it known from the beginning that he would be the last speaker of the day?

CJ: Oh, no, no, no! You asked a question that maybe you don't know how pregnant it is with controversy. Okay, as a matter of fact, there came a time when some conservative clergymen in the March Committee, through their organizations, they put a proposal out that there should be X number of speakers, let's say twelve speakers, or ten speakers, and that each should have no more than eight minutes. And they had proposed that Dr. King be in the middle.

And I heard that this was going to be the proposal. When I heard this, and Bayard Rustin had shared this with me. And I persuaded Dr. King, “I don’t want you to come to this meeting of the March Committee. It’s better that you not come.” And I’m listening. And they said, “Well, we think that this is the way it should be.” And I clearly got the sense [2:10:00] that there was an effort—I’m not sure, other than ego, what the reason was—that they wanted to marginalize Dr. King. They wanted to prevent him from being the last speaker and they wanted to marginalize him. So, Dr. King wasn’t there, so I could say things that he certainly wouldn’t say at this meeting.

DC: And who is “they?” Who is the leadership?

CJ: “They” is Bayard Rustin, Wyatt Walker, A. Philip Randolph, Cleveland Robinson, representatives from the UAW, representatives from CORE, representatives from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, representatives from the NAACP, and representatives from several of the local black churches and representatives from the archdiocese, Catholic archdiocese of New York, and someone from the American Jewish Congress. But the black clergy representatives were the ones who were trying to manipulate the power, in my observation. They made a proposal that each person be allowed the same amount of speech, and they had proposed that Dr. King be in the middle of that.

So, while this discussion was going on, I just said, “Excuse me, gentlemen.” I said, “You’ve all heard Dr. King speak, have you? Have all of you in this room heard Dr. King speak?” “Yes.” “Well, tell me something. Do you really want to follow Dr. King?” I said, “Now, in my—when I’m not doing civil rights work,” I said, “I have a law practice with two other partners. And we do a lot of entertainment work and represent several artists, performing artists.” And I said, “In the concert business, there’s something called an opening act and a major act.”

And I said, “Do you really want to follow Dr. King?” And they said, “Well, why do you say that?” I said, “Well, because quite frankly you run the risk that after he speaks—.” I just turned it off.

DC: Yeah.

CJ: “After he speaks, people will—.” So, with some begrudging consent, and what tipped the discussion was A. Philip Randolph says, “Yes, I think that Brother Martin should come—and I agree with Clarence Jones, most of these people—and I don’t want to offend anybody in this room—but most of the people are coming from all over the country, they’re coming to hear Dr. King, and we should have him as the last speaker.”

The preparation of the speech was—some people think that Dr. King came to Washington, sat down and just going to write this speech. He was at the Willard Hotel, working on his speech, but the speech he was working on incorporated, or we—I provided him with information that he could use if he chose to in the speech that he was preparing. I did not know until I was standing 50 feet behind him, and he actually spoke, and I listened very carefully, I did not know that after his perfunctory introductory remarks, that as he began speaking, the first opening six or seven paragraphs or more were the draft paragraphs which I put in summary form for him to use. Whether he was tired, whether he liked it, or whether he just—he was pressed for time, but he didn’t change a sentence, not a word, a paragraph, or a comma. He spoke verbatim what I had prepared. But what I had prepared was a summary of what we had discussed several times about the kind of things that he should say.

I just used a certain degree of drama, because I had had the problem of raising bail money. And I remember going to the Chase Manhattan Bank to raise some bail money, coming up to New York and going in and seeing money from floor to ceiling. And so, when I drafted

this, I said I can't believe—drafted the suggested paragraph, the language—I said I can't believe that, “We have assembled here today to redeem the promissory note to which the signers of the Declaration of Independence all fall heir. And which the present generation is an heir to this promissory note. I cannot believe that in the vaults of justice in the United States that there are insufficient funds.”

DC: Right.

CJ: In general, okay? [2:15:00] So, he's speaking. That's the first time I had any idea that he was going to incorporate the actual suggested language, had no idea until then.

DC: Because your normal process is you'd give him a draft, and he would work with it, right?

CJ: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Right, right, right. And the normal process, too, he didn't use *everything*, he didn't use *all* of the paragraphs. But he used the first six or seven of the paragraphs, and then he added his own paragraphs. And then, as he is speaking from this written prepared text, his favorite gospel singer, Mahalia Jackson, shouts out to him—she had performed earlier on the program—“Tell them about the dream, Martin! Tell them about the dream!”

And I'm watching him. In real time, he acknowledges her. But then, he takes the prepared written text and moves it to the left side of the lectern, and grabs the left side of the lectern, and starts to speak. And I turn to the person sitting next to me, standing next to me, whoever that person was, if they're still living. I said, “These people don't know it, but they are about ready to go to church.” And I said that because I saw Dr. King's body language change. So that, the part of the speech, that speech that the nation and the world celebrates, the so-called “I Have a Dream Speech” was completely spontaneous, was completely extemporaneous.

And but for the last part, where he's looking at notes in the end, about this Negro—he was quoting a poem about a—“free at last, free at last,” which is from a hymn from a Protestant clergyman many years earlier. Everything else is spontaneous. Everything!

Now, as I say in my book, *Behind the Dream: Making the Speech that Transformed the Nation*, I heard Martin and saw him speak many times. I'm not suggesting—well, whatever your belief, whatever your religious belief, if any, whatever your belief in spirituality or transcendentalism, if any, I can only tell you what I experienced and what I saw. And what I experienced and what I saw, I had never, up until that time in my life, anyone, including Dr. King—I had never heard Dr. King speak that way before. It is as if some cosmic, powerful force came down and took over his body, that there was this same body I was looking at, but something had taken it over! Because the *words*, the way he said it, was so powerful!

And I think it was the combination of the beauty of the day, two or three o'clock in the afternoon, the beauty of the day, the situs, the venue, the Lincoln Memorial, the more than 250,000 people. You have to remember, at that time, no place in America had that many people ever assembled in one place at one time, peacefully, 25 percent of whom were white—no place! And something happened in the interaction between what Martin was saying and that audience. So that never, ever again, never, ever again in his lifetime had I heard him speak that way.

Now, people will say, “Well, he gave a very moving speech on April third, 1968, in the Masonic Temple,” moving speech, depressed, talking about, “I've been to the mountaintop.” In terms of the political content, the “Letter from the Birmingham Jail” was a much more profound political statement. The speech on April fourth, 1967, the “Time to Break the Silence” much more political profound statement on nonviolence, both internationally and nationally. But the

power of his simple message, because he was calling for America, he was summoning America's conscience so that the nation could be as good as it was intended to be.

I don't know whether I've said this to you before, but the genius of [2:20:00] Martin Luther King, Jr., the political genius, was that he knew and we knew that no matter how compelling or how fair the case for ending racial segregation was on its merits, there was no way that 12 percent of the population was going to impose that point of view, *no matter how fair and compelling on the merits*, on 88 percent of the population, in spite of our friends on the black left and the white left, who said, "The only thing the white man understands is a gun and a kick in the butt." Anyone who wanted to counsel violence on the part of 12 percent of the population against 88 percent of the population is counseling political suicide. Yes, we were students of the revolutions of the undeveloped countries. We were students of the Algerian War and Zimbabwe and Kenya and Ghana and Egypt. We understood. But we understood the peculiarities of the American experience.

So, therefore, the genius of Martin Luther King was that he would summon the conscience of America through peaceful nonviolent confrontation with racial segregation, so that the conscience of the 88 percent of the country would be forced to see the contradiction between the way in which it treated 12 percent of its people, people of color, and the commandments in the Declaration of Independence and our Constitution.

But guess what? To Dr. King, it wasn't a constitutional or legal question for America. It was a moral question. And he raised the level, raised in the level of the 88 percent, raised the question in their minds, as whether this is the kind of nation they want to be. Is it morally right to deny 12 percent of the population full access to equal protection of the laws, equal opportunity to vote, solely based on the color of their skin? That was his political genius.

JB: Let's pause on that.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

CJ: I guess I told you the phrase from the boys about the lions telling the story.

DC: Um-hmm.

CJ: I've told you that, okay. I think it's important for future generations that they be unambiguously clear as to the power and the meaning of the "I Have a Dream" Speech and the March on Washington. I don't want people to get caught up in the so-called nostalgia of commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the March and overlook the centrality of what that was about. Was it the greatest speech? In terms of political content in his career, I've already said I don't think so. But what Martin King did is that—did I talk about him having taken America on a journey to overcome its—?

DC: Um-um.

CJ: Well, what he—you have to understand—to appreciate the commemoration of the March on Washington, the fiftieth anniversary, you have to understand what happened, what America was going through. Now, what was America going through? America had to come like a dysfunctional alcoholic or a drug addict. It had become addicted on racial segregation dependency. And it tried unsuccessfully to break its addiction and dependency.

And Martin King took American conscience by the hand and said, "I'm going to take you on a road of peaceful, redemptive recovery to recover your soul. And I'm going to do this nonviolently. I'm going to do it, telling you I love you every step of the way. I'm going to do it to let you know no matter what you say to me, no matter what you do to me, [2:25:00] you can call me all sorts of names, you can put me in jail, you can bomb my house, you can threaten me. But at the end of all those things, I'm still going to love you, because my compassion and love

for your soul and for you to redeem the best of what this country can be, my compassion, my commitment to do that is greater and stronger than anything you can do to me, greater and stronger because I believe in you, America. You may not believe in yourself, but I can believe in you, so that when I tell you, I have a dream, I'm not speaking about the present tense. I'm speaking prophetically in the future. I know, I have absolute confidence, not now maybe, on August twenty-eighth, 1963, but I believe that *one day* my four children—I may be alive, I may not be alive, we may not be around, you don't know—but one day, this country that I believe in, my four children will be judged by the content of their character and not by the color of their skin. It may not be happening today and it may not happen tomorrow. It may not happen in your lifetime or my lifetime, but one day your conscience will come to see the immorality of racial segregation, the immorality of racism, so that one day the great-great-grandsons of slaves and the great-great-grandsons of slave owners will sit, *will* sit down one day at the table of brotherhood. I believe that that will happen, America, even though you may at this time may not believe it yourself.” That's—you want to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Martin King, that's what you've got to remember.

You've got to remember in 1963, Martin King in Birmingham put a moral stake in the ground. And on top that stake was a mariner's compass, and that mariner's compass became a moral compass. And what he did was to show the way of how we have got to live up to be the best that we can be. Otherwise, the country is not going to be governable. It's not a question of white, of black people having power over white people. It's not a question of white people having power over black people. It's a question of co-equally participating in a power based on the indestructible commitment to the uniqueness of the specialty and the dignity of the human personality. Everybody, *everybody* is somebody.



So, that in 2013, when I hear, particularly people from the African American conservative church community, tell me that, “It’s against God’s will,” that, “Homosexuality is a sin, it’s against God’s will, and I’m not, I am never going to be in support of same-sex marriage. I’m never going to be in support. Homosexuality is a sin.” So, I say to them, “I was raised in a Christian religious principle, and I was raised to believe that we were all created in God’s image. So, tell me, those of you who are so opposed to the LGBT people, isn’t it funny that God must really love gay and lesbian people, because otherwise, why would He keep creating so many of them?” I rest my case. [2:30:00]

The commemoration of this anniversary is a commemoration to America’s quintessential preeminent apostle of nonviolence. And just as the nation had to deal with asking itself what kind of people are we, when it looked at, on the front pages of its newspapers, fire hoses slamming little black boys and girls against the walls in Birmingham, Alabama, or police dogs against black boys and girls who were demonstrating peacefully. Just as the nation had to ask itself, “What kind of nation are we that we would do this?” After Newtown, Connecticut, when you have 20 babies and 16 adults killed, you want to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Martin Luther King’s legacy, knowing that he was the preeminent apostle of nonviolence. You have to ask yourself, “What kind of nation are we that we would permit this to happen?”

So, I don’t know what different people are going to be doing on the twenty-eighth of August, 2013, in Birmingham and Cleveland, Ohio, and Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia and all the nations throughout, all the countries, and communities across this nation. But I can tell you one thing: There can be no more true commemoration to his legacy than if this nation, like the network executive, like the executive in the movie *Network* [He might mean *The Newsroom*.] If an overwhelming majority of American people on the twenty-eighth of August, 2013, say,

“Enough is enough! I’m sick and tired—we’re sick and tired of violence! I’m not going to take it anymore!” Violence is destroying this great country. It would be a sacrilege to go through the motions of commemorating his legacy without tying the legacy to the existential violence that is in our country today, the ubiquitous presence of violence. And we can do something about it. We can do something about it.

Martin King would say, “Come on, America! You’re better than this! We don’t have to continue gun violence, just like we don’t have to continue racial segregation. We can end it if we want to.” So, I don’t want to hear “We Shall Overcome” and I don’t want to hear all these commemorative songs. What is going to be done 24/7 August twenty-eighth, 2013, to deal with the question of the ubiquitous violence that is affecting our young people, particularly, and the unevenness of the effects of that violence? In some cases, regrettably, it has to be clinically described as “black-on-black” violence. What do I mean? I mean young black men using guns to kill one another over some failed drug deal or over somebody stepped on their sneakers or some crazy nonsense.

You want to honor the memory of Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech? Then you have the courage to recognize the fundamental qualitative changes that have taken place in many of the households in the African American community, and that is the substantial destruction of the family structure with a male in the house on a constant basis. I’m not talking about husband and wife. I’m talking about a responsible male and a responsible female. [2:35:00] So that, for example, here in San Francisco, you have an organization called the Omega Boys Club, the Omega Boys Club run by Dr. Joe Marshall. He recognizes this. He recognizes that if you ever want to have a chance of saving the generation of current urban youth, you’ve got to find a substitute equivalency to the parental structure of discipline, which they don’t have. So that, in

effect, the program that he offers at the Boys Club is a program of parental or adult-structured discipline that they don't get at home. But that adult-structured discipline is enough to keep them alive and free.

I was once having a discussion with Dr. Marshall, in which I said, "You know, Joe. The most important historical dates in the history of the African American people is 1619, when slavery was introduced in the United States and 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation." He said, "No, no, no, Clarence. You omitted a very important date." I said, "What's that?" He said, "1980." I said, "What happened in 1980?" He said, "That's when crack cocaine was introduced into the African American community." That's so fundamental a change.

"To be a good preacher," Dr. King once said to me, "you not only need to know your Scripture and you need to be conversant with the underlying teachings, but you have to have the ability to tell your audience a story." You've got to tell them a story. And the story can be any number of things. The story can be about redemption. The story can be about—but you've got to tell a story people can buy into. So, I am suggesting for those people who listen and read about this time in American history, as we approach the fiftieth anniversary of the "I Have a Dream" speech, that the story of this generation is the story of this extraordinary man who sought to save the soul of America. That's the story.

DC: Thank you.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: We're back on.

DC: Unfortunately, we only have about five more minutes.

CJ: Okay.

DC: So, by way of wrapping up, I wanted to ask what other—

CJ: It allows me enough time to sign. I can sign—

DC: Oh, great. What other parts of Dr. King's journey, as you were talking about his journey, and his legacy do we need to honor as we think about him at this time, approaching this anniversary? And I'm thinking in terms of other work, such as his antipoverty—his work against poverty.

CJ: I was just going to say. What you have to honor is his unshakeable commitment to end the inequity of wealth disparity. At the time of his assassination, he was working—the template that he was involved in, of course, was the garbage strike. But that was just a template and example to highlight the issue of wealth and income disparity in this nation. Ironically, the movement of Occupy Wall Street in 2011, that's what it was about. That's what it was about. And, by the way, this was not a movement of impoverished black people. This was not a movement of impoverished white people. This is a movement of largely middle class, principally white people, who somehow began to see that there's something very unfair about a system, in which they play by all of the rules. They go and get a good education. They keep themselves out of trouble. And they try to apply their skills, and they recognize that even if they do everything that they're asked to be done, they're going to have at best a marginal participation in the benefits of this country. And that's not [2:40:00] morally right. Listen to me: That's not morally right.

So, what other things should we think about his legacy? His unshakeable commitment! What prompted his public opposition to the war in Vietnam was not only his opposition and detest of the application of violence on an international scale. But he was not stupid. He recognized that no matter what Lyndon Johnson said in his heart about the War on Poverty, there was no way a War on Poverty can be fought when you're taking the resources, the dollars, of the

Treasury of the United States, and you're taking those dollars to buy armaments. There's no way! There's no way! So, it's a sham.

So, again, the reason that he opposed the war was a moral reason. He realized, aside from his absolute opposition to violence, he realized that it was just impossible. It was politically and economically impossible for the President of the United States to utter well-meaning words about fighting poverty when there was no money to do it. It was being spent to kill North Vietnamese. That's the other part of his legacy. And, of course, militarism.

I think, and this is controversial, because it's *my* interpretation. I'm asked directly, "What do I think Martin King would say about same-sex marriage?" And I say, "I don't know, in fact, what he would say. But I can interpret his body of work. And I can interpret what I think he would say." And I think he would come down on what I said earlier when people would say, "Well, homosexuality is a sin," and so forth. And I think Martin King would go beyond that and say, "It's not about all the things you object to. It's about an elementary thing called love and compassion." Remember the principal founding injunction of his Christianity was "Love thy enemy." That's what it was founded on.

DC: Um-hmm, agape.

CJ: So. I'm very pleased that you spent this time with me.

DC: Thank you so much.

JB: Hey, it was wonderful.

DC: Really.

CJ: This is one lion that wanted to tell a story so that the hunters won't get all the credit.

DC: Right on.

JB: Amen.

DC: Thank you very much.

[Recording ends at 2:43:08]

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Sally C. Council