

SS144.mp3

David Yellin- This is June 17th 1968 and we are at the offices of the Memphis search for meaning committee, June 17th, 1968 and we are interviewing Mr. Doctor of the civil rights commission united states civil rights commission this is David Yellin with Bill Thomas. (Tape Break)

Bill Thomas- Well I think probably first just sort of clue us in if you can tell us Mr. Doctor who you are and how you got to be who you are.

Bobby Doctor- Ok very good. First of all as you already know my name is Bobby Donald Doctor. And I was born in Columbia South Carolina back in 1939. I attended the public schools and in Columbia. Finished C.A. Johnson high school in 57. I left there to attend college at South Carolina State in Orangeburg South Carolina in 61. Upon leaving there I entered the U.S. Army for three years.

David Yellin- (Muffled) Yes I see what did you study in college?

Bobby Doctor- Social Science,. I majored in Social Science, of course you are familiar with the involvements there. As I said I went on to the U.S. Army where I spent three years two which were spent in (muffled) Germany. Which is really was a tremendous experience.

Bill Thomas- An education in itself.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah it sort of gave some focus on life from a broader point of view and of course being a southern boy I was a bit naïve on the experience as far as the world was concerned. But never the less I left Germany in 1964 I think that was June of 1964 and I returned to Columbia South Carolina where I was lucky enough to meet an Alice Spearman who was the executive secretary of the South Carolina council on human relations. And at the time she was seeking some person to fill a position she had with the South Carolina council. And it is my understanding that during that particular time the Eleanor Roosevelt Foundation along with the national association of intergroup relations officials which is commonly referred to as NAIRO. They got together on sponsoring an intergroup relations intern program. Of course interviews were being held throughout the country and Atlanta happened to be one of the regions in which these interviews were being held. I applied for the internship program and I was asked to report to Atlanta for an interview. Of course I went down and luckily enough I was accepted And when I got back to Columbia of course Mrs. Spearman did not have the necessary funds to hire me with eh South Carolina council so I eventually was employed with the Virginia council of human relations where I worked as an intern and the associate director of the council there for about 14 months.

David Yellin- Where?

Bobby Doctor- In Richmond Virginia. After I left Richmond, before leaving let me say this. I did some contract work with the commission on civil rights and the result of

this work I was asked to come on with the staff of the commission and of course I eventually did come on the staff. I have been here now in the city of Memphis for approximately 3 years it will be 3 years in September anyway. I served as the field representative for this particular agency covering the states of, well I covered about 6 states. For the first year I covered the states of Oklahoma, Texas, and Louisiana. For the past two years I have been covering the states of Alabama and Florida and Georgia. That is for the most part my background. I am married and I have three boys and my wife is from South Carolina.

Bill Thomas- And just really briefly could you tell us what your job is?

Bobby Doctor- Yes as a field representative, the field representatives are the southern field office here in the city of Memphis or assigned to a three state area and for the most part it is our responsibility to coordinate and erect commission programs through state advisory committees. And we have state advisory committees in all 50 states plus the district of Columbia and of course we direct and coordinate these programs through certain types of techniques. We have the closed meeting, we have the open meeting, we have an informational conference and of course the commission itself conducts hearings. Of course with full subpoena power. The overall idea behind our job is to assess the extent to which federal laws are being complied with and to also assess to the extent that federal agencies are in fact implementing their responsibility among certain civil rights laws, federal laws, so that is generally our cause.

Bill Thomas- Well during the period I guess we could say basically February 12th the garbage strike started in Memphis until April 4th and I am sure for your purposes sometime after that. Were you in Memphis much of this time and...

Bobby Doctor- Well I was in Memphis all of that time we sort of had to drop other responsibilities outside of the city of Memphis and we were sort of asked to concentrate on developments in this particular area during that particular period. Of course it was my responsibility to work with the negro community and the various elements in the community. To just sort of observe what was going on and their attempts to organize and coordinate the movement and as a result our men knew most of the developments.

David Yellin- Can you remember when you, it was determined that this would shove aside everything else and this would be your concentration.

Bobby Doctor- Well it was more or less determined, I can't recall the exact date but it became obvious after the first development, it became more obvious to me before that time, but it became obvious anyway to commission officials after the first development I think it was February 12th?

Bill Thomas- Yeah right that was the walk out day.

Bobby Doctor- Was that the walk out day?

David Yellin- You are thinking of the 23rd the macing?

Bobby Doctor- I am thinking about the macing.

David Yellin- That is May 23rd yes.

Bobby Doctor- It became obvious to officials with the commission that this particular situation was bound to mush a, it was my opinion (muffled) that I (muffled).

David Yellin- On to whom? Washington?

Bobby Doctor- Washington. Well first of all the local office (muffled) and eventually Washington.

David Yellin- If I can you made a statement that might necessitate some explanation you said it was obvious to you long before. How do you mean that?

Bobby Doctor- Well as I am classified as a community specialist and I take a great deal of pride in that particular classification and I have seen other developments in other communities. They start out with a small issue and then they tend to develop they tend to mushroom into something beyond that. I just sort of just visualized the fact that Memphis had all the ingredients that Watts has and had, Detroit has and had and I could see certain things developing behind the scenes which would later be too the situation that did develop at a later date. I am simply saying that in many of the urban areas throughout the country today there are certain signs and there are certain immediacies which tend to paint a clear picture in my mind anyway that certain things are in store as far as the future is concerned.

David Yellin- Now what are those?

Bobby Doctor- Such as...

David Yellin- You know we are about to leap right in.

Bobby Doctor- Such as a lot of people refer to these refer to the situations which had developed as riots. I referred to them as rebellions, disturbances but that sort of thing.[

Bill Thomas- You mentioned some ingredients...

Bobby Doctor- Well deprivation, economic deprivation, political deprivation, social deprivation and so on.,

David Yellin- But it seems to me that these deprivations have been going on for many years.

Bobby Doctor- Yes they have.

David Yellin- What signs did you see if I am reading you correctly in the last couple years, or when did you see, that made the reaction I suppose different than 5 years ago or 10 years ago or whenever. Bobby Doctor- Well first of all you had a significant number of black people beginning to challenge, beginning to challenge the situation. The fact that you had sanitation workers who had decided that after many many years of living under certain situation they were going to challenge that particular situation and this in itself was a sign that something was about to develop. The fact that you had a the possibility of a confrontation taking place between this particular element within the black community and a certain controlling element in the white community.

David Yellin- You mean this particular element, the sanitation workers?

Bobby Doctor- Yes.

David Yellin- Was it because of their lowly station that made it different than others, or what about it made it different than others?

Bobby Doctor- Well nothing about it made it any different I thin the same thing would have happened if the middle class element of the black community had for whatever reason decided to challenge the...

David Yellin- It just so happens that somebody did challenge.

Bobby Doctor- Somebody in the black community, right, was beginning to challenge you know certain conditions which hadn't been allowed to prevail for a certain period.

David Yellin- It wasn't anything specifically that they were garbage workers as oppose to the retail clerks?

Bobby Doctor- No, not at all.

David Yellin- This was in essence then the first challenge of a group.

Bobby Doctor- Yes since I have been in the city of Memphis, now I understand there was some confrontation back in the early part of the 60's and the latter part of the 50's I believe, sit-ins. And anytime you have such a confrontation you are bound to have this type of situation developing you know. And for that reason I sort of predicted you know that it would mushroom and Memphis was due for some more days. And as it turned out...

Bill Thomas- But you did put this in a memo or report or something?

Bobby Doctor- No it was just a, I verbalized this to many friends.

David Yellin- I know Bobby this is real hard but what we are trying as much as anything is to ask you to go back that time and how you felt then or what you did then more than well thinking back now what you might have done then, or this kind

of Monday morning quarterbacking which we are all inclined to do and this is exceedingly difficult.

Bobby Doctor- It is it really is.

David Yellin- So that if at all when it is ever at all possible on this time you felt, on February 12th when you first heard about the strike or did you hear about it before?

Bobby Doctor- No I heard about it through the newspapers and I had not been in touch with the sanitation workers, I had not been working with them at this particular time. I think I heard and saw and read about it rather, I don't remember the date now but I remember seeing a picture in the Precimeter with hundreds of sanitation workers filing from or to city hall and that was when it really dawned on me that Memphis was about to have some problems.

David Yellin- What is interesting and this is certainly not to catch you but this is to further explain. When you say that long before, it probably was just an idiom. Or did this happen that on the 23rd or the date of the macing and so on and then suddenly what you had seen before came into focus would you say?

Bobby Doctor- Yes I would say, but when I say long before I mean long before the first confrontation, that is what I had referenced to. (muffled)

Bill Thomas- Which was what is that.....12 days something like that.

Bobby Doctor- It really wasn't a long...

David Yellin- Yeah well what we are trying to find out that certainly maybe there was a divine guidance you had....I mean that facetiously....

Bill Thomas- well it think the interesting thing here obviously is yeah somebody should have seen this and somebody did., you did.

Bobby Doctor- Well I thin that when I first came to this community and I guess every community you go into people who are natives of that particular area want to get your opinions or your impressions you know about their city. And I have had many arguments with federal negro employees to the effect that Memphis was a bad place. That my first impression of Memphis after I had been here a few months was that Memphis was really a big non-progressive rural town. Sort of a melting pot for non-progressive attitudes for rural areas of Mississippi and Arkansas and Tennessee. I thought, or they thought at the time that I was rather harsh in my criticism. I didn't think so. I think it helps to have a fresh mind come in and give an objective view point of a given situation. I think many people I had run across during that particular time was sort of operating under the illusion that Memphis was (muffled).

Bill Thomas- Peaceful yeah.

David Yellin- (Muffled). I mean I think that is what we both meant when you said ingredients.

=Yes.

David Yellin- What were the ingredients, they were these things. Maybe we have to even explore this even further.

Bobby Doctor- Yes well the fact that Memphis you know was, had one of the highest if not the highest, my understanding "illegitimate" rates in the country. Was one of the ingredients as far as I am concerned. I don't like to use that word illegitimate as it relates to children because I don't think any child is illegitimate, I think society is extremely cruel to label a child as such, but anyway we will use that to try to get the point across. It became obvious to me that this was one of the main ingredients you know you had situation where black people were being denied equal opportunity as far as the job market was concerned. You had an educational system that was not really relating to the needs of the black community. You had a housing situation which restricted black people from certain areas of the city. And you know just to name a few and not to mention the psychological damage being done every day and so when I came to the city being in the business of intergroup relations and that sort of thing, social science, I readily recognized you know these ingredients.

David Yellin- And you readily recognized mostly from the negro community?

Bobby Doctor- Yes I think so, not only that but I did recognize it from the white community as well. When I came here you had an administration in that was in my opinion very sophisticated in dealing with the negro community. I can remember going into a barber shop some many months before the present administration was elected and saying in effect that this administration would be elected and that this would be the greatest thing that this community could do for the black community. Because it would tend, it is like George Wallace down in Alabama, he has done more to solidify and unify that black community than anything else I can possibly think of in the state of Alabama. I think that you had a man who was, or an administration who was coming in who was sort of comparable to that administration in the terms of the symbolic, symbolic outlook,....

David Yellin- As a symbol.

Bobby Doctor- A symbol of segregation, and oppression and it was my opinion that this particular administration would do more to unify, solidify the black community than anything else. And so I was also very critical on the fact that the prior administration had developed a certain degree of sophistication in dealing with the black community and for that reason you did not have the black community with a demanding attitude or a challenging attitude but a community which had been sort of psyched into believing that administration was doing something for them. And so when the present administration came in, it was rather obvious at that particular time did not intend to do anything for the black community. It had not done anything in the past and I thought that this would bring about some confrontation. Anytime you have confrontation you are going to have problems. So sure enough the administration got in and no sooner than it did get in we had a confrontation.

David Yellin- It is interesting since you have been gentle about it and not mention names. This is really no secret.

Bobby Doctor- Yes I think...

David Yellin- Mr. Ingram's sophistication that is a charming word and the use of it and of course you equate it with deprivation etc.

Bobby Doctor- His abilities and I didn't want to get into personalities but his ability to let's say, to have the black community disillusioned you know itself into believing that some progress was being made. It was really an astounding sort of thing. I recognize it you know right after I first got here the fact that this particular administration you know could corner off certain leadership in the black community could sort of appoint certain leaders within the community (muffled) and what have you and have that act or these acts you know in themselves serve to bring about a certain degree of contentment you know within the total community was really amazing to me. And I readily recognized the fact that this could not happen with the present administration. And I think I am repeating myself here.

David Yellin- No it is a fascinating observation and one of course I think is very (muffled).

Bobby Doctor- But I think for those of us that had some experience in working in this particular area, I think it is too an advantage in many cases to have a symbol of segregation, a symbol of oppression you know, an obvious symbol of oppression and segregation, in office than it is to have a sophisticated moderate or a sophisticated conservative. I believe in the fact that social change comes about only after disturbance has been created, only after confrontation has been brought about, And if you got a group of people over this particular community that believe that their particular situation is good, then you aren't going to have this confrontation.

David Yellin- Only when the issue is clear and stated.

Bobby Doctor- Well the issue has been the same. There has been no change in the issue from let's say 4 years ago to this date in fact you have superficial attempts to deal with the situation. And even after the sanitation situation you had even more superficial attempts to deal with the situation. But there has been no genuine attempt as far as I am concerned anyway to really deal with the problems which confronted....

David Yellin- Well and of course this is interesting too, Mr. Ingram was this way as you call in his sophistication and able to trip certain people mint he crowd in order to stop any crowd movement in various critical areas, was uncanny. Yet, did he represent your conception of the white community. Where the white people aware of this in this city that he was doing this and if so why did they not elect him, why did they go back to a man who was certainly a vowed segregationist or whatever you want to call Mr. Lobe.

Bobby Doctor- Well that is an amazing thing, and I really had not, I was not here before Mr. Ingram was elected and I know very little about his background as far as his political life is concerned. I only know that when I got here 3 years ago, that it was rather obvious to me that he did have this ability to bring about this air of contentment in the black community. I am inclined to believe that the white community was very much offended in this obvious, obvious ability to superficially relate to the black community. And that was why he was not re-elected.

David Yellin- You mean they misunderstood him really in a sense when he sat through the negro services until the end. They thought my look at what he has done that is awful.

Bobby Doctor- Well I think you know they might have thought that he was over doing it a bit and certainly some other factors entered into the whole thing. But I believe here today that they thought he was over doing it a bit. I don't believe that the efforts were genuine, in fact I am sure they were not. He is a politician and you I know he was thinking about re-election you know.

David Yellin- He managed to however to deceive a good deal of the negro community.

Bobby Doctor- Yes.

David Yellin- I mean where they deceived or were they kind of almost tickled?

Bobby Doctor- They were sort of lulled you know.

David Yellin- Lulled?

Bobby Doctor- Lulled.

David Yellin- Yeah.

Bobby Doctor- It is a very funny thing because I can't think of many other communities you know which you might do this sort of thing, but the negro community is a very religious community. The southern black community.

David Yellin- The whole south is Memphis any different?

Bobby Doctor- No I don't think Memphis is different from any other area of the south. There is a difference in the northern black community and the southern black community in this regard. But the religion... Black people tend to look towards their religious leaders you know for leadership in every area. Political areas, you know and every other area for that matter, educational area. I am sure you are probably aware of this, but Memphis is no different and is no different from any other southern area in this particular regard. I just think that certain ministers in the area were used and they were used in effect to bring about discontentment in the black community.,

David Yellin- That is a good word that lull, well it is an interesting (muffled).

Bill Thomas- Did they still feel the same way when Ingram fumbled the poverty program so badly?

Bobby Doctor- Well I think certainly there were some concerns from the element of the community that let's say was on top of that element of that particular situation, Those persons who were socially inclined, persons who were aware of the problems existing in the community, certainly they were offended and they were concerned about this you know hassle with the OEO people. But I think the total community, the total community which is really evidenced by the fact that this black negro leadership, negro leadership that was corralled by Mr. Ingram supported him even in that (muffled).

David Yellin- They didn't know what they were missing in a sense.

Bobby Doctor- Well it was like, you know I will stick with you until death that sort of attitude.

David Yellin- I think we can make that a neat transition here because implied in what you are saying is that Mr. Ingram was able to lull obviously the older people. And the people who had been here, but along come the young people and he did not lull them.

Bobby Doctor- That is very true. Not only that but see Memphis was a very disorganized, or unorganized community, the black section of community anyways. In most of the urban areas I have never been in there have been youth groups. Youth groups which have been organized and had the more moderate organizations organized. And when I got tot his city the only civil rights organization which was moving at all doing anything at all was the NAACP, let me say that. Therefore you had a moderate type of leadership pushing moderate ideas, pushing for moderate change and you had no young progressive minded people in this city. I think that is due in part of the fact that you really had no black institutions of higher learning, progressive black institutions. Of course you had Lemoyne and you had Owen at that time. But they were more like elevated high schools, community colleges which did serve to stifle any developing young leadership. For example if you had any progressive minded students on the campus that were inclined to raise questions about social conditions and these persons were sort of stepped on, on the college front and they are still the same way at this point.

David Yellin- Yeah I think that is an unorganized, not disorganized.

Bobby Doctor- Right unorganized.

David Yellin- And that is a very sharp distinction.

Bobby Doctor- The difference now you do have...

David Yellin- Now tell us about the difference.

Bobby Doctor- The difference now...

David Yellin- Tell us about the evolution of, if you could.

Bobby Doctor- You have these black groups on Lemoyne's campus on Owens campus in the city and in the high school and eventually they filter on down to the junior high and possibly the elementary schools. You have young people who are beginning to raise certain issues, young people that are promoting a certain amount of their black consciousness, black awareness, young people who are developing a certain amount of dignity and pride. Young people who are unwilling to accept conditions their forefathers accepted. Plus you have this national emphasis on black consciousness and awareness. Therefore you have a new attitude among the young people in this community and when I say I am staking all of my hopes in the young people I mean just that. Young people are going to bring about the confrontation, young people are going to make the demands, young people are going to challenge the existing system, the existing institutions. And therefore, young people are going to spearheading the confrontation. As I said any time there is confrontation there is going to be change one way or the other.

Bill Thomas- Bobby were the young people on the rise and I am thinking now in some kind of organized way when this began?

Bobby Doctor- Yes young people were I don't know how much of this I can reveal because I am personally involved.

David Yellin- If you don't who will?

Bill Thomas- I hope you can reveal (muffled).

Bobby Doctor- Well let me ask you this. What point (muffled) I have no hang ups about you know telling you about my activities at all (muffled).

David Yellin- What would you answer, we couldn't say I think would be my immediate answer.

Bill Thomas- However I think...

Bobby Doctor- What I am saying I can tell you exactly what you know has happened in this community for the past two years and I would just hope that....can you turn that thing off for a minute. (Tape break)

Bobby Doctor- I will just point out that in this city for the past two years long before any groups were organized you had young people who were meeting. Young people who were for the first time in their lives beginning to raise certain questions, certain philosophical questions about the need for promoting black consciousness and black awareness, black dignity, black pride. About the need to organize and bring about some degree of unification within the black community, These young people met as I said for about two years, well actually for about a year before they officially organized themselves. Out of these talk sessions grew an organization called the

black organizing project. The black organizing project which has about 5 affiliate groups throughout the city, the most popular which would be the invaders which I am sure you have heard of by now. The afro-American brotherhood out at Memphis state. Two other black groups, (muffled), two other black groups on Owen's campus and Lemoyne's campus. Then these city organizers which too is a part of the black organizing project. Anyway as I said all this discussion all these philosophical discussions grew this organization. This organization at this point is composed of, it is hard to say in terms of figured, but I would say approximately, I would say approximately 400 people in the city of Memphis. Young people who are beginning to find themselves, young people who recognize the black community must develop a new self image, an image of strength and of dignity and pride. And that certain types of power and control must be developed within this community is to make certain demands of the total community, demands that would speak to the needs of that particular community. And these young people recognized these things, these people are out there daily organizing black people. And it is a healthful, or healthy thing I should say sort of thing. It is not a destructive thing, it is a thing that really speaks to the need of what I say, a new image, a new self image. And so these persons organized, they have been organized now for I would say about a year. And before this time you had no such organization, you had no young people who were organized, you had no young people who were progressive minded, you had no young people who were placing themselves in a position during confrontation, you have that situation now and therefore you are going to have more change in the city.

Bill Thomas- So Memphis in Memphis history there was probably never ever a situation like this until about a year ago.

David Yellin- You mentioned afro-American group at Memphis state. Is the black students association part of that or is that nothing to do with that?

Bobby Doctor- Let me, I have some notes down in the car you want me to go down and get them.

David Yellin- Yeah.

Bobby Doctor- I can give you the names of the groups. (Tape Break) I had it mixed up but the black student association is here on Memphis state's campus and of course as you know they publish the Black Thesis, which is a newsletter, weekly newsletter they were during regular school session anyways. Which was a newsletter speaking to the need for black consciousness and black awareness. On...

David Yellin- Just for the record I have a meeting at 8:30 with the black student's association we are involved in a project and I wanted to be sure.

Bobby Doctor- Well you understand now that they aren't terror groups you know, not terror, but society in general.

David Yellin- No they don't understand.

Bobby Doctor- Well I guess that is the problem.

David Yellin- That is why it is so important that we know this.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah and of course on Owens campus has the Afro-American Brotherhood. Which has a weekly newsletter and it is called the Afro-American Brotherhood. Of course you are familiar with the invaders and for the most part they are composed of high school students and high school drop outs with a very strong attachment to the black organizing project and its leadership.

Bill Thomas- Well now did they have a leader as such, would that be Cabbage for example?

Bobby Doctor- Well actually they had two leaders with, I guess what you might call equal recognition although John Smith is the chairman of the black organizing project and Charles Cabbage is the executive director and the programming director. They both for the most part for all practical purposes are on an equal level.

David Yellin- Now are they members of the invaders, is that how they became to the black organizing project?

Bobby Doctor- Well the invaders were in the city before the black organizing project, I might point that out. They were a bunch of young people who for the most part were very disorganized. There was no attempt to bring about any philosophical meaning behind their activities and of course John and Cabbage were always affiliated, there brothers were very, well Cabbage's brother anyway was one of the leaders, so there was always this connection, but after the black organizing project brought about this philosophical awareness it was at this time that the invaders affiliate themselves with the black organizing project and then took on some philosophical meaning as well. So this is some background.

David Yellin- So just again not only curiosity but these little moments of history. The black organizing project, do you recall when it started at some body's ice cream parlor?

Bobby Doctor- Yeah it started, I don't remember the exact date but I do remember that perhaps the first significant meeting which was held, was held at Coby Smith's house. I don't know if you have heard of....but it was held at Coby's place and I don't remember the date now, I am all mixed up now as far as the date is concerned.

Bill Thomas- Would it be before this period or during thee period?

Bobby Doctor- Oh no it was a long time before. It was a long time ago well before this period. But out of that meeting came other meetings.

David Yellin- Did Coby Smith call this meeting? This is what I am trying to get who gave, who suddenly got the idea...

Bobby Doctor- Well let's just say a group of people got together and they decided they would call such a meeting. They had been in touch with other people who were thinking like they were thinking and found that they had a great deal in common. And they just all decided they were going to hold a meeting. And of course the meeting then took place at Coby's.

David Yellin- Was he then a student at Southwestern?

Bobby Doctor- Yes.,

David Yellin- So it was within a year or two?

Bobby Doctor- Oh yeah, all of this took place within a two year period and of course I would say, and I could be wrong about this, I would say that this took place about a year, maybe a little less than a year before the organization was actually formed. So my point is that there were many philosophical discussions and meetings, organizing meetings and that sort of thing.

Bill Thomas- The organization itself just didn't suddenly bloom over night.

David Yellin- And you say philosophical and again this is your word which I think is a good word. Their philosophical concerns was of course the plight of the negro.

Bobby Doctor- Yes.

David Yellin- and particularly in Memphis or the whole country or?

Bobby Doctor- Well at that particular time in the city of Memphis. Although the group could not you know, could not and cannot help but relate to the national situation but at that particular time they were more concerned with the situation in Memphis and the possibility of organizing around that situation.

David Yellin- Now we have got this thing sort of started, when the black organizing project came about. Where did they go with it or where did they think they could go with it?

Bobby Doctor- Well first of all you know the idea was to organize I guess the disadvantaged or the poor people as they are commonly referred to. I don't think there was another group in the city, beginning to speak for the disadvantaged, the poverty stricken, the ill educated, the mothers with the illegitimate children. The group started out as you know attempting to organize persons in these categories, the young kids, the drop outs, the guys who hung around the pool halls, the pimps, the whinos. The prostitutes, the persons who here to fore had not in anyway had a piece of the action so to speak. The persons who were sort of all out of the mainstream and that was the over riding idea. Of course that with the fact that there was a new movement to organize young people. Young people still had fertile minds, minds which were not in ruts so to speak. (muffled) which were searching for an identity not minds which had already been developed beyond help so to speak. Now these are the targets so to speak.

Bobby Doctor- Now what was the philosophical motivation behind three obviously fairly stable individuals to be concerned about the unstable. Why did they want to do that? Why did they take care of themselves first?

Bobby Doctor- Well first of all Cabbage you know you have to understand Cabbage background. He left this city and he played a key role in organizing the group. He left this city going to Atlanta while he attended Moorehouse. And while at Moorehouse he was influenced that if you have ever been to Atlanta and if you have ever been on the Hunter St. I think it is the West Hunter St. the Northwest section of Atlanta over near the university complex. You will see that there are organizations in that city, SCLC the student nonviolence coordinating committee, persons who let's say were philosophically in tune to what was going on in the country and I can imagine that he was influenced by much of this. Of course after getting you know this initiation so to speak one cannot help but to tend to find out more about what is going on, more about his past, the past of black people, the history of black people. The heritage of black people and once you being to have this yearning, this yearning sensation to find out where you came from, who you are, and what you are, then you can't help but to move on to other things, you can't help but to progress. And he came back here after finishing Moorehouse and of course Coby Smith through some (muffled) at the same time was developing this same philosophical awareness locally. I don't know how it happened but it did happen, because Coby got together with Cabbage and they were the key factors in the initiating of the group. Now other people were brought in persons who had not reached the point that they had reached and these persons were later on educated tot hat pointy and they educated others and they educated pothers until eventually they had an organization.

Bill Thomas- Was this a formal type organization, and I am thinking new of membership cards....

Bobby Doctor- If you know anything about civil rights groups and especially young, especially groups that are made up of young people, they are highly disorganized, highly informal let me say that. They tend to reject all this weird organization, this organization tends to remind them of the structure, which is their concern of changing. The formality you know again part of the structure. So you know keep in mind of course there would have to be some structure to keep the whole thing together. It is not the same kind of structure it is not the same kind of organization you know that is traditional, or traditionally speaking.

David Yellin- But trying to think that I think would be very vital if we could get at it. Here are thee two guys plus others that come in, who are philosophically directed at truly what they may probably blanch if this is the phrase that the idea of a truly Christian notion of almost selflessness and of, I wonder why and I can understand why, I am not really questioning it in opposition I am questioning almost in admiration. And how come then that they couldn't get anywhere with this? I mean where did, that is why I am interested, where did they go to implement their ideas, and why did they go where they went and hwy couldn't they get any help from, or is this a wrong...

Bobby Doctor- First off, I am not sure I understand you but first of all you have to, the leadership in the black community is much like the leadership in any community. You find young people coming along, young people with progressive ideas, young people with progressive inclinations and they actually pose a threat to the old line leadership. The old line leadership won't work with them, they won't help them to develop anything, they reject them at everything...

David Yellin- Because they are out of hand.

Bobby Doctor- Yes in every term, so where do they go. And so they continue to meet and they continue to sit and talk about the needs for certain change and the need for certain types of programs and emphasis.

David Yellin- Bobby are you saying that these young people had an idea and the ministers would have wished that they would have belonged to their church and joined their youth groups in the church rather than form their own?

Bobby Doctor- Oh they would have stuck them away in some your right they would have stuck them away in some youth group of an existing civil rights organization.

David Yellin- And this is what was rented.

Bobby Doctor- Where they could control them, right. And they were you know certainly not going to buy that.

David Yellin- SO we have to really get the core of this, this could very well be...

Bobby Doctor- So really your right, not only that but the black community and the white community for that matter was very much afraid of this concept of black power. As far as I am concerned I simply, well I can understand it too so I wouldn't go into that. The cry of black power and the whole philosophical concept of black power posed a threat, not only to the white community, to the white political, social and economic structures here of our society, but it also posed a threat to the black community and the old leadership. And therefore, there was the same degree of rejections in the black community as was the case in the white community. I can remember some of the black leaders, some I guess two years or a year and a half ago saying to me that they couldn't buy the concept of black power. You know and even in its, in the original state and form Carmichael said on the fact that black power is a legitimate attempt by black people in this country to serve ourselves politically, economically and socially in order that we might exercise some control over our own destinies. This is the same thing in effect that Florida Kissing said. But the black community you know for some strange reason or another, this was a middle class community now, could not buy it. They could not buy it because they have values and their interests were the same as the values and the interests of the white community. Therefore they interacted the same. So this was the leadership that felt threatened and this was there leadership which said in effect that we can't have anything at all to do with you,. So there were young guys, with the pressure coming from the white community and the pressure coming from the black community you

know you are forced to improvise, you are forced to deal with what you have, no resources, no money, no buildings to meet in and that sort of thing and so you do the best that you can. And as a result they come up with a pretty good organization in my opinion, an organization which is going to play a very key role in this city.

David Yellin- Do you know if the, what is now called the neighborhood organizing project, are they going to cooperate with that?

Bobby Doctor- You mean the ghetto organizing project.

David Yellin- Well it is called the neighborhood now.

Bobby Doctor- Is it the neighborhood now?

David Yellin- Yeah they thought that ghetto wasn't a nice word.

Bobby Doctor- (muffled) I didn't know that thought.

David Yellin- in addition it will be GOP which would be....(muffled)

Bobby Doctor- But I was unaware that it had been changed I was aware that the councilmen had voiced some concern about the ghetto organizing project, but again this poses a threat, the ghetto. You are organizing poor people to challenge you know the system which is controlled by those who are not so poor. You see the councilmen reacting much the same as the middle class negroes. So it is a game of power and nobody wants to give up power and one of my favorite statements is that for comments anyway is that power conceives nothing without force or pressure and power reacts to power.

David Yellin- Power reacts to power is the thing that people forget.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah and so when poor people are attempting to organize themselves and to bring about some power within their own group then those who have been told continue to say well you can't do that. You can't develop this power which will challenge our power.

David Yellin- We are going to be powerful so that you can have your power.

Bobby Doctor- So it is still a game which is controlled by the existing power structure. It amazes me that the poor white community has not awakened to this fact that they are being used that they have no more power than the poor black community and one of these days when they wake up this country is really going to go through some change.

David Yellin- Do you think it will happen?

Bobby Doctor- I think it will happen, it is not going to happen soon you know because the poor people have to have some thing to cling to. Like I the black community it is religion. In the white community I think it is religion plus the fact

that nobody likes to be on the absolute bottom of the totem pole. So the poor white community continues to wallow in the fact that they (muffled). Which you know, and once they discover that their situation is no different from the poor negro situation then I think we will see some real change in this country. Because you see the problem is not only a racial problem but it is an economic problem as well.

David Yellin- It is a problem of poverty.

Bobby Doctor- Yes, right, and we continue to, I don't know if I should make this statement or not but I am going to make it anyways, we continue to say that this country is built around the free enterprise system. Well as far as I am concerned free enterprise is just another word for exploitation. Smart exploit the weak and first of all the strong take from the weak and the smart take from the strong. And that is called free enterprise. It is really for exploitation.

Bill Thomas- You are right that is the way it works.

Bobby Doctor- And the minute you know people wake up to this and people begin to organize the power blocks and they begin to challenge the existing systems which do not really speak to their needs then we are going to see some real changes.

David Yellin- Would you say that the young people and particularly the young people in Memphis this is our focus. How much they are in tune with the rest of the country at this point, we can ascertain. Would you say they are defeated, optimistic, hopeful, angry, how can you describe them as of this...

Bobby Doctor- I don't think there is any question about the fact that they were angry. Very frustrated, frustrated over the fact that they aren't being listened too. Frustrated over the fact that they visualize certain things happening in this country and nobody else, no other generation or the older people cannot visualize these things.

David Yellin- Yes now I do want to (muffled) for this reason, do you think the young negroes think that they alone as oppose to other young people including the whites have this feeling are they the only ones privy to this? (muffled).

Bobby Doctor- No, no, I think though, I think it is rather obvious to me that they are the only ones in the city of Memphis who have reached this degree of awareness. You don't have any hippy movements on Memphis state's campus to speak of. You don't have any progressive movements, young movements in the state of Tennessee. So I think it is obvious to them in this city and in this general area that they are really the only ones that know what is going on and would have to go on if we intend to survive as a country. (Tape Break)

David Yellin- You can stop with this, no it is okay it just shoots up the power fine. Well I wonder if the point that I am making is that if the young black people think that they alone, this exclusivity, tends to alienate or give them a feeling of alienation. So would they accept any help from the awakened white, even poor whites?

Bobby Doctor- I think yes at this point because this particular group has not moved to the degree where there is absolute rejections of the white community. Now in many of the urban groups in the north many of those groups have moved to that point. They started out at the point where this groups started out or maybe just a notch or two above that. But they have not his local group has not moved to that point. For example, they are going to work with this neighborhood organizing project. They are also working with a young white fellow who is a theatre expert.

David Yellin- Yes good man.

Bobby Doctor- You know him?

David Yellin- Yes.

Bobby Doctor- So that there is not the absolute rejection that is characteristic of many other groups. For example you know the group on the campus here is going to be working with you.

David Yellin- Yeah and we hope to be doing films with that theatre group and so on.

Bobby Doctor- So I think though I could foresee that this group could move tot hat point.

David Yellin- (Muffled) so on.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah repeated rejection, your right.

David Yellin- Well now then I have sort of gone around I guess and now we could go back and say what was there relationship with Martin Luther King?

Bobby Doctor- Well when first of all you have to understand and I would hate to have you use my name in this particular, but I will just give you this information.

Bill Thomas- You are on record as saying (muffled).

David Yellin- (Muffled).

Bobby Doctor- The, when the incident, when the whole movement first started, the sanitation movement, the community on the move for equality which is made up of mostly ministers in the area, negro ministers in the area. But prior to that, let me point this out. First of all I would say approximately 15 or 20 people met one Saturday afternoon in a session which was concerned with the plight of the sanitation workers. Out of that particular session grew or came a night letter to approximately 300 ministers in the area. Many attempts were made to get the leaders of that particular meeting to send out invitations to other elements within the community as well. In effect the letter was saying we invite you to a meeting tomorrow, to organize and to see what sort of support we can win to the sanitation workers.

Bill Thomas- Is that the meeting would have been the 5th after the macing during the march?

Bobby Doctor- Yeah and I was at that meeting and this 300 light letters went to ministers and the next afternoon there was approximately 100 ministers attending that meeting. I was very critical of that particular move because it was doing the same thing that had done in the past it was saying only the preachers could lead social movement that only the preachers had leadership qualities. It was my concern that there were other elements in the community elements which were not religious, elements which were for the most part not a part of the action which had been excluded all along. Among these elements were the younger people.

Bill Thomas- And they weren't contacted?

Bobby Doctor- They were not contacted in spite of attempts to encourage persons to contact them. (Tape end)