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David Yellin- I think you were talking about Dr. King and the group.

Bobby Doctor- Oh yeah, he was being escorted they had him encircled. And I remember some of the people how were up in the windows of some of those stores on that street looking down. I just sort of thought at that time that he could have been killed just like that by somebody who was looking down on him. But anyway they did get him off to a car, I didn't see them put him in a car but they got him off. And I was moving up that street in that direction because I was trying to, there was gas and people running around with sticks and what have you and you know chasing people and all that bit. I was trying to get my self out of that and try to keep from getting hurt. And I ran into Rosetta Miller who was coming from Front St.. And we both decided we would go up to Front St. Then this police, this line of police men sort of stretched across the street sweeping everybody back down. She got through they didn't bother her and I attempted to get through and it was rather obvious if I had gone on through they would have attacked me so I went back into the confusion and when I finally got back in there you know there was just all kind of confusion. I finally made my way back down to you know where that building that, what is it right across from tri-state bank where they are building.

David Yellin- The new light gas and water.

Bobby Doctor- Whatever it is yeah. Well anyway I happened to get back down that far and then of course the policemen were still chasing people with sticks even persons who were trying to get back to the church.

David Yellin- Were they throwing bricks at the policemen or from there or were they throwing things.

Bobby Doctor- They weren't throwing things, not where I was at let me say that. I understand that a time or two persons might have battled the police with this stick that they had. But that was not the whole sale (muffled). So we got back to the church and of course after getting back to the church gas was sprayed at that time I was there in the hallway and of course it was filtering into the church and it was just impossible to carry on the meeting. Talking about what had happened and what was going to happen, and that is just about it. King did meet with...

David Yellin- Yeah maybe you can tell us about the meeting.

Bobby Doctor- I didn't attend that meeting and I only know that I think Cabbage was at the meeting I think he told me later on that he attended the meeting and one or two other guys the (Muffled) leadership guys were there.

Bill Thomas- What was this meeting?

Bobby Doctor- At the Rivermont.

Bill Thomas- Yeah well when though?

Bobby Doctor- That was the afternoon of the riot.

David Yellin- That same afternoon before the press conference.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah.

David Yellin- I think before the press conference.

Bobby Doctor- John Spence was over there at the time. I don't know whether he attended that meeting or not but he may be able to tell you.

David Yellin- I think he said he arranged the press conference.

Bobby Doctor- He arranged the press conference I know that, I am talking about the meeting with the militants.

David Yellin- I don't think he did.

Bill Thomas- In fact John said Dr. King was in his bedroom or something like this and then people were in there but there were also people in his living room and John was there. So he didn't know what...

Bobby Doctor- Happened. Well Cabbage can tell you about it. And of course King recognized, well first of all I think he sort of admitted in effect that they had made a mistake assuming that there was only one element of leadership in the community. And he assured them that he would send some people in here to meet with them and he recognized the fact that they existed, that's all. And of course after that they held a press conference and I think the (muffled) went back to them.

David Yellin- Was the contention of the young people then that even though they would not really join Dr. King they weren't going to stand in his way or do anything to obstruct him. Or what would you say was their attitude?

Bobby Doctor- I don't know at that meeting or what?

David Yellin- From that meeting on in relation say to the march.

Bill Thomas- Their plans.

Bobby Doctor- I think it was kind of obvious that first of all they weren't going to have anything to do with the march. Because of the implications of the march. They were opposed to the march from the very beginning.

David Yellin- Opposed to it because it was a nonviolent.

Bobby Doctor- Because it was said to contradict their philosophical meetings or concerns. They didn't think it was...it was an act of, you know it was a humble sort of in their minds and in my mind it was a humble sort of thing. Almost as if..

David Yellin- Do you mean humble or humiliating?

Bobby Doctor- Well I guess both. The fact that you are going down and in effect (muffled).

Bill Thomas- Begging yeah.

David Yellin- (Muffled)

Bobby Doctor- Still going into your own community and developing certain power blocks that would in effect demand certain changes for the system. And so this was in strong contradiction to their philosophical beliefs. Of course they agreed with eh fact, and they were willing to individually I guess do everything they could to see to it that the thing was successful and that they felt that a great percentage of the black community was involved. Therefore, they had some responsibility to become concerned.

David Yellin- Didn't they see in this the possibility of getting joined with the community?

Bobby Doctor- Well first of all see you have to understand that, I am not sure the total community was that caught up you know in the problems of the sanitation workers you know. Many of those people were there to follow Dr. King and it was that sort of thing. I think the young guys recognized some of this. And they were under the impression that you know that the job of organizing had to be done. Getting people to you know to the philosophical stage you know, certain philosophical position before they talk about...

David Yellin- Did they, do they feel now or did they feel then that this was possible, or if they did how was it possible? Through education, met person to person not preaching I guess that is not the word but a sort of an evangelism?

Bobby Doctor- Well I don't, I guess education would more adequately describe it but not education in the traditional sense., Education in terms of exposing one to his background, of telling him about the fact that there was civilizations in Africa many many years ago long before there was civilizations in other parts of the world. That there was culture, the black people in this country played significant roles and there were significant contributions from black sides and so on. This sort of awareness, this sort of concentration on contributions of black people. Also black arts programs, dealing with the cultural aspect of our background.

David Yellin- You are now talking about the black organizing project that is the essence of the (muffled) program right?

Bobby Doctor- Right, well philosophical you know, philosophical base had to be developed before they could talk about programs. And once we it was developed into programs...

David Yellin- Did they look upon Martin Luther King as somewhat of an obstruction to what they were doing?

Bill Thomas- How did they look upon King?

Bobby Doctor- Well with a great deal of respect for King. They didn't agree with everything he did but I think generally speaking among militants around the country there was a great deal of respect for Dr. King. It was sincere you know and as I said most of them didn't agree with his approach and they didn't agree with, many of them didn't agree with the nonviolent concept, with the pleading concept, with the religious oriented movement because they visualize you know the fact that religion is really a part of the problem, the institution of religion is really part of the problem. Therefore, you had to go outside of that institution and seek solutions.

David Yellin- So they looked upon Martin Luther King as a man above the movement even or his own movement or his own organization.

Bobby Doctor- You mean the militants?

David Yellin- Yes.

Bobby Doctor- No I wouldn't say that now, they didn't look upon him as the average negro, they looked upon him as a saint..

David Yellin- No no I mean they were able to make a judgment about him as away from, as of separate from his movement. They were not for the movement but they realized that here was someone who was in essence a good man.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah.

Bill Thomas- They were judging the man and not the....I have never heard that description of humbleness on the march and I can see it now, now I can understand. But I think what Dave is saying is that they were judging the man and not the tactics not the movement.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah.

David Yellin- And that is kind of a unique thing to separate a man from these things, I mean that is a testimony to both to Dr. King and the people who are able to do this.

Bill Thomas- But one thing has occurred to me about your humble description of a march, you know it throws a whole new...it is like an open door now. But as I understood it Dr. King's plan was to bring the youth in and make them marshals or something like this, but did I understand you to say that they wouldn't have really participated in a march just for this humble reason?

Bobby Doctor- I think if Dr. King had requested they serve as marshals, they would have done it.

Bill Thomas- They would have done it.

Bobby Doctor- If they had gotten personal requests from him they would have done it and hey did it at his funeral you know.

David Yellin- Yeah, and they did it for the march when it came.

Bobby Doctor- That's right.

David Yellin- Of course as somebody euphemistically said it was a different ball game.

Bobby Doctor- I think they would have done it but they were very concerned that people were looking towards them to see that the next march would be a nonviolent march, and they repeatedly sought to point out to people that they could not insure this would be a non violent march. Even the fact that they represented a certain element of the community there were other elements that had to be recognize.

David Yellin- And what are you, you are saying Bobby that if there was violence in the march 28th march the young people that you are talking about didn't instigate it or in anyway have anything to do with beginning it or encouraging it and so on. Are you saying this?

Bobby Doctor- I am not saying that. I am not saying that. I am not saying that the black organizing project or the invaders were responsible for the violence. I am just simply saying that elements in the community which were left out of the planning, which were left out of the whole thing were responsible for the violence.

Bill Thomas- Yeah but I hate to keep pursuing that but it is an interesting area of the march which I consider one of the great extraordinary tactics of all time. You don't now obviously I can see but I guess it is not a difference between age. I thought it was extraordinary I guess, I thought the nonviolence thing extraordinary because a guy could stand up to dogs and firehoses and all that sort of thing and not just get madder than hell, that impresses me.

Bobby Doctor- Well see for people who have a poor self image, for people who are already depicted you know as humble people, as a religious people in my opinion it is bad to do anything which perpetuates this image, I don't care what cause. I think that the, one of the greatest mistakes that the civil rights movement made back in 1960 and 59. Was to all of a sudden wants to deal with the question of integration you know ad to also, you know here are people who have been drifting along on certain philosophical concept for 300 years and all of a sudden over night you talk about doing some things that are in sharp contrast to everything they have been taught and exposed to. It is like building a house without foundation, sooner or later that house is going to fall under the pressures of weather and what have you and the house is bound to fall. That is what happened in the civil rights movement we did build a foundation.

Bill Thomas- Well what I think I was getting at and I see your point very clear, but based on this I think what I am getting at is that the march is not the tactic, the method of the new youth and so what? Sosomebody should have known?

Bobby Doctor- Well you see nobody has taken the time to relate to young people in this community especially, in other communities as well. But I think more in this community. So you have a new concept, making over here new thinking and new ideas over here which are really not known by people over here. I sort of view my role as a bridge between the two and I don't think any genuine progress is going to come about until the entire black community comes together. I don't think the black organizing project can do it by themselves, I don't think any more or thought that the NAACP could do it by itself. I think all these groups have to come together on some mutual ground and eventually come up with relevant ideas and relevant programs which will invest themselves to social change.

David Yellin- Do you think that any group can come together without a crisis?

Bobby Doctor- Well, I, it has been my experience anyway in the city that it is going to be quite rough bringing them together because the whole movement was issue oriented. And there were those of us who were attempting to put some program at it and some meaning behind the thing and perhaps extended it beyond the sanitation....but there were certain elements and certain oh leaders in this community who for some strange reason or another wanted to keep it on this particular issue. I know what it was, again this threat, this feeling of insecurity. You have got all these political and civil rights enemies for the first time in their lives coming together and talking (muffled). And to have anybody sit down and mention moving this thing beyond this cause you know would serve to put a feather in somebody's hat. And at that time Jim Lawson was one of the guys who was pushing to extend it beyond this, some of the other people were not and I think they sort of viewed this as Jim Lawson's attempt to sort of gain control, or maybe some other people. People's attempt to gain control of the black community.

Bill Thomas- Let me ask you, I am sorry, go ahead.

Bobby Doctor- No I am through.

Bill Thomas- Oh, you know the thing has been said over and over again that the strike and Lobe what really united the black community of Memphis for the first time historically and all this sort of thing and yet what you are saying I think probably is no it really didn't there was a part of the community that it still didn't unite?

Bobby Doctor- Well no, I think I am saying both. First of all, you had to have that symbol, that symbol of oppression, that symbol of segregation. That sets the stage. It doesn't necessarily mean that you are going to have some action because you have this symbol it just means your chances are better.

Bill Thomas- It is there.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah. Because the stage is set, right. So I am saying then that the stage was set with the election of Mayor Lobe. I am simply saying if the leadership in the black community was really progressive minded and if they had really been thinking and really been listening to the people in the community they could have solidified, they could have unified this black community and they wouldn't have to worry anything about the various splits and the fact that there is no more unity and the fact that the issue is gone now and that (muffled) was gone. So I am saying that you know there are many factors which contribute.

David Yellin- Isn't it hard Bobby to interest people in an extraction?

Bobby Doctor- I don't know, I, if you use traditional approaches yes. I guess it would be.

David Yellin- Yeah well that is what McClullen says looking at the world through a rearview mirror. If you try to interest him in a new idea by the old ways you are never going to do it.

Bobby Doctor- I think the young guys,...

David Yellin- This is a sophisticated notion however.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah right.

David Yellin- And you have to have non Ingram like sophistication however. Or sometimes Ingram like sophistication in order to sell this.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah that is true.

David Yellin- I mean you can't just be bland and open and honest and fervent only. You have got to realize what you are doing.

Bobby Doctor- Well Memphis you know it's you know I have found that this city intellectually speaking the king. (muffled). Just when I first got here the city has a population close to 700,000 people and you just look at the city, even the layout of the city nothing new is being put up, in the heart of the city. There is no life, the politics of the city is dead, they were operating on an old outdated system....

Bill Thomas- Crump thing.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah. The educational system you know was dead, rotting, Young black people were not being taught anything relevant. For example, I discovered, I guess it was about 2 months or so ago and this was in the congressional records and so it has to be true if its in the record. (Laughs) it doesn't have to be true but it is in the record, I will say that, That a black man invented the stoplight, the traffic light. I hadn't known this yet.

David Yellin- Which the red light or the green light?

Bobby Doctor- I don't know which one but you know, the traffic light that is all I know. That was interesting to me because that was the first I heard of it and I thought I was on top of things. Also, a black man invented the...

David Yellin- In your own state, blood plaza.

Bobby Doctor- I wasn't even getting none of that. (muffled) I wasn't getting that yet, there were many other contributions even before that. A black man invented the first refrigerated car. You know the trailer the moving...

Bill Thomas- the van.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah, right. Many many contributions you know the black people made that young black people aren't being exposed to and I think it would be good to have young white people exposed to these things because we are talking about building and creating new image you see and it has to start with self.

David Yellin- Alright then I am going to ask you then therefore, unless you have any a....and that is where do you think the emphasis should be because you...should it be towards the young black people or towards the young white people or both or separately or, I mean the answer is obvious it should be both.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah.

David Yellin- Let's be practical. What do you suggest is, if you had your brothers and you were objective about it.

Bobby Doctor- Well first of all I am basically an integrationist. A lot of my friends disagree with me on that but I maintain that black people aren't going anywhere as much as my brothers say they are going back to Africa and as much as we say we would like to have separate states, these thing aren't going to happen. I am an integrationist because....

Bill Thomas- A reality.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah reality, more than anything else. And therefore, I feel that we have got to find a way to leave with each other black and whites, because we are going to be stuck with each other whether we like it or not it is just that simple. So I am basically an integrationist. Now I maintain that I think there has to be a point where the black community pulls back to redefine it self, to develop a new awareness, a new consciousness you know. To being to, when I say define it self I mean you know form the very beginning to define itself in terms of kinky hair black skin and large facial features and all of that, because these things represent us. We have got to say a fact that we will not allow white society to define who we are, we will not allow white society to say in effect that if you don't curly hair or straight hair than you are not beautiful.

David Yellin- Should the term kinky hair be changed?

Bobby Doctor- Yeah well nappy hair, or natural hair.

Bill Thomas- I am sorry the first term?

Bobby Doctor- Nappy hair.

Bill Thomas- Nappy.

Bobby Doctor- And you know I think these things must be before any genuine change, or any genuine relationship can take place between whites and negroes. I think when this is done then I think integration can take place.

David Yellin- Otherwise go back to your corners.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah, but integration you know not as we know it today, this is merely (muffled) we are talking about now the white community absorbing the black community. We aren't really talking about the exchange of ideas and exchange of assets and exchange of values and exchange of culture. We are talking about the black forgetting everything that is associated with this blackness and accepting all the values and the culture and the ideas and the beauty traits of a human. That is what has happened thus far.

David Yellin- That has been the integration this far.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah that is the integration we are talking about, we are talking about integrating white schools, we are talking about integrating white hospitals, we are talking about integrating white establishments you see, we aren't talking about an exchange, we aren't talking about black people moving to an equal level with white people and then dealing with the questions of integration, we are talking about black people out here moving over here to accept these stances and then moving up a ladder. And that is called absorption, not integrating.

Bill Thomas- So this step, the black power step I guess, is a protection of the black culture.

Bobby Doctor- Sure, right. And just as white power (muffled).

David Yellin- Sure but most social movements are defensive anyway.

Bobby Doctor- You are absolutely right, segregation, the greatest defensive move this country has ever known.

David Yellin- Well what is going to happen, oh seer. (muffled) get hell when you go home tonight.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah I am leaving tomorrow. Well...

David Yellin- You know clean up your own back yard.

Bobby Doctor- Well I, what is going to happen tomorrow and the future. That depends on a lot of things. It depends on whether or not this power, this existing power we are talking about is going to become concerned and all of a sudden share itself with other concerns in the country. And we are talking about a sharing of power we are talking about more proportionate power, we are talking about the need to have black people control their own community and the need to have black people develop power you know within your own communities. For example, you know black people are I think about the only group in the country which do not control the economics of its own community, immediate community, the politics of its own community, even the social structure of its own community is defined by the white community. I think we have got to move to a point where black people gain political, economic and social control of their own communities. And when this is done we talked about white power (muffled) and I think we already agreed that is going to be hard. Power is not willing...

David Yellin- It is not so much white power as in the overall, it is just a little fragment of white power conceding in the negro neighborhoods.

Bobby Doctor- It is white power, because see you know I tend to look at it from its broad point of view, and I tend to lump it....the total white community has some vested interest in seeing to it that the economic situation in the black community remains where it is. I think so many years ago when TBA fist came down into this area or Alabama or Mississippi one of the two. When they came in there talking about paying like people are saying money they were going to pay white people, then white people said no you can't do this because you are going to upset the economy in this particular area. Where are we going to go to get our maids and our other domestic workers and our menial laborers and that sort of thing. So the white community has a vested interest in seeing to it that the economic situation in the black community remains the same. So we are talking about the total community, we are talking about certain people now who project the interest through their own little personal interest of the total community, back here the white community. We talked about the two communities just as we talked about the total community as it relates to politics.

David Yellin- Did the black community ever see this difficulty in Memphis as union trouble?

Bobby Doctor- Well, you know, it is impossible to look in anything in this country, to ever look at anything in this country beyond the race and the class questions. Anything of significance, anything controversial anyways.

David Yellin- Which is more significant race or class in this country?

Bobby Doctor- If I had to, I couldn't say that one is more important than the other. Being a black man I just couldn't do that, if I were white I could say class. But see, I have seen you see (muffled) because you see you know I was poor at one point. Other middle class negroes were poor at one point. And they moved out of this

vacuum of poverty into the middle class area. I don't think there situation is any better than the one that are out on the street. Their economic situation is better, they eat better, they live better houses and they drive better cars and that business but their situation in this country as a whole is no better and it is no better because the image of the black man...

David Yellin- You mean philosophically it is no better.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah the image of the black man, like a PHD, he isn't any more acceptable tot eh white races than the whino is, because he is viewed as a negro first. So you got people who really believe in that I get all these degrees and my situation is going to improve. He isn't more acceptable. Economically speaking he is better of but (muffled). SO it is impossible for me to say that one is more important, it is impossible for me to say...(Tape End)