



NAME Volunteers, 1969

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Joan Beifuss: The 24th of July, 1969. This is a group of the sisters who are in Memphis for the NAME Project, that is being operated out of Sienna College. Excuse me, the group of sisters and one lay volunteer who are working with the name project. And, first we will just go around the circle and introduce ourselves.

Virginia: I'm Virginia (muffled) and I come from Louisville, Kentucky. I've got the profession of a teacher. I teach at Smyrna Elementary School in Louisville, Kentucky. I have been teaching for 6 years.

Joan Beifuss: What grade?

Virginia: I have intermediate grades, presently I'll be having the 4th grade.

Joan Beifuss: Okay, also say if any of you were involved in the project last year in Cleveland. Was it Project Bridge in Cleveland last year?

Yeah (muffled 1:11).

Sister Shirley Rhodes: And, my name is Sister Shirley Rhodes, and I am originally from Louisville, Kentucky. Right now at present I am teaching in Birmingham, Alabama, at Holy Family High School in the black community. And, I am a high school teacher in the departments of chemistry and mathematics. I worked on a project last summer in Washington D.C., which was a summer enrichment program, but one very different from the summer's program because it was in the black community working with girls from ages 15 to 12 from 9 in the morning until 3 in the afternoon.

Sister Diane: I am Sister Diane, and I am originally from Louisville, Kentucky. Presently I am teaching in Memphis in St. Anne's School on Highland. Actually it is the 6th grade.

Sister June Michael: I am Sister June Michael from (muffled 2:11), Minnesota, a primary teacher. I have been teaching for 3 years. Last summer I was involved in a project, a community project in the Center (muffled 2:22) area where the lower economic (muffled) people live. And, I functioned as a community aide going (muffled).

Sister Maureen: My name is Sister Maureen. I teach at the same high school as Sister Shirley does in Birmingham. I am a French and English teacher.

I am Sister (muffled). I come from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and I have been teaching the primary grades, but I will be teaching 6th grade at St. (muffled) in Milwaukee.

Sister Benedict: I am Sister Benedict, and I am from (muffled 3:16) Indiana. And, I have taught -- I sound like a veteran beside these people who have been teaching for 3 years and 6 years. I have taught 10 years at (muffled) High School, and I am going into

my eighth year at St. Benedict College. I teach in the field of Speech and Drama. Two years ago I worked in Appalachia, and my work there was different than this; however, last year I was in Philadelphia with an Outward Bound program, and at that time I worked with the Negro children. This was the first time I have ever worked with the white community, you know like the affluent element of it, but last year the program was Outward Bound. We took the children from the inner city, out and gave them experiences that they normally didn't.

Joan Beifuss: Let me ask you what the difference is working in the white community with adults and the black community with children.

Sister Benedict: Well, I think that this is more getting, taking the program better. Because when you're working with the child, you are only trying to heal something that is already there. When you go to the white community, when you go to the white adults, I think you're getting -- if you do make any progress, you're actually making some progress for basic changes I think can be made.

Joan Beifuss: Okay, (muffled) something (muffled) a few short, succinct things, what do you think of Memphis after 5 weeks, 6 weeks, 7 weeks.

Sister June Michael: Hot and friendly.

Joan Beifuss: Friendly?

Sister June Michael: Friendly, but not necessarily open.

Joan Beifuss: What (muffled 5:06) have you made?

Sister June Michael: Well, people can be very warm and friendly and welcome you into their house, and still not really listen to what we're saying. And I think this is, this I would say of many people. It doesn't register what we're saying. Nevertheless, they are friendly.

Joan Beifuss: Would you call that "southern hospitality?"

Sister June Michael: Some people probably would, I don't know.

Joan Beifuss: Has that been a common finding? People have -- have you had any doors actually shut in your face, or anything like that?

(All): No, we never have experienced any of that.

Sister June Michael: I have had several. I had one woman who told me to get back to Minnesota and take care of the Indians.

Joan Beifuss: Oh did she?

Sister June Michael: Yes, quite forcefully. The freezing Indians. You know because

the south takes care of its niggers, it's the Indians that don't.

(?): The hot Negroes.

Sister June Michael: It's the Indians that don't. They have heat down here, but up north, you know the Indians are all freezing.

Joan Beifuss: You know that is one thing I notice about Chicago. At least here really and truly people aren't terribly cold in the winter. I will say that. Well what did you say when she said that?

Sister June Michael: I told her that I came to Memphis to learn how the problems of the south could be solved, so I could continue working in Minnesota with the problems up there, and that there were a lot of programs going on up there, but no real leadership, and I thought that I, you know had to learn more about who I (muffled) agreeable leadership in the community where I feel I must. She ended up, after an hour and a half, she said, well you know good luck when you get back to Minnesota.

Joan Beifuss: She talked to you for an hour and a half (muffled)?

Sister June Michael: Right. And, at first she didn't want me in her house at all, and then she did. We talked a long time. I went back the next day, and we talked for a good half-hour or so, and I called her a couple of days ago and invited her to the workshop, and she was all enthused about it. She said I don't agree with what you say, but I would like to learn more about it.

Joan Beifuss: Oh really?

Sister June Michael: So it turned out well in the end.

(?): Is she coming next Thursday?

Sister June Michael: Possibly.

Unknown woman: Tell about (muffled). Wasn't she the one that had the friends?

Sister June Michael: Another friend in Minnesota?

Unknown woman: No, she had a friend she wanted you to go see, and when you went to see her friend...

Sister June Michael: Yeah, she sent me to a friend of hers from Minnesota, because she thought we would have something to share. So, I went to see her, and her friend didn't care much. She had been down here for 60 years.

Joan Beifuss: 60?

Sister June Michael: Yeah, and she said absolutely I am not interested. And, she said quite a few things, and she ended up saying, you know, "And that's that, get out." So, I

thanked her for her time and I didn't go back.

Joan Beifuss: Have you always been in the same area? Have most of you been out here in east Memphis, or where have you been?

Unknown woman: Yes, we've all been, but in different areas of east Memphis.

Joan Beifuss: Have you found, in general going like that, have you found a lot of people that are not southern, in east Memphis? A few that come from some place else.

Unknown woman: Yes, I have found a few.

Joan Beifuss: A few, but not a lot? Did they respond any differently? Did the transplanted people respond any differently than the southerners?

Unknown woman: I found a man from Detroit who was very responsive, who had very positive ideas and views on the social situation. And, you know, he was much more aware of what was going on, much more verbal, you know, and knew much more about it than I did really. I guess because he had come from Detroit. And, he was a salesman and he traveled around quite a bit. But, I found he was one of the most open, as far as being able to express the need that Memphis had. But he said that Memphis is where Detroit was in 1947 (muffled) when you express the views of the society of Memphis.

Unknown woman: What year?

Unknown woman: 1947.

Unknown woman: Memphis is where Detroit?

Unknown woman: Where Detroit was in 1947 is what he said.

Joan Beifuss: What do you think? We said it's about, we figure it's just about 10 years back from Chicago, but I suppose it's really 15 or 20. Well, did he tend to feel that, that Memphis could possibly avoid the mistakes that were made by Detroit, or the northern cities?

Unknown woman: I think he felt like it, you know, probably would. I don't know. You know, he really -- I didn't really ask him that question. As far as rioting and burning, and all this part of it. I think he probably felt that it would, mostly -- you know, well I can't say he said this, but I am thinking this mostly because of the black community, you know from what I have experienced do not what this type of thing to happen here, and they are looking to the white community to work with its own to avoid this sort of thing, and they're going to work with their own. Because I know, I don't think they feel this would get them anywhere, or get anybody anywhere, it would probably separate us farther.

Joan Beifuss: What part of the black community have y'all met? Have you been into the black community at all?

Unknown woman: Well, I have been meeting more of the young leaders in the black community. Not the (muffled), who is the group?

Unknown woman: The Invaders.

Joan Beifuss: Did you talk to The Invaders?

Unknown woman: Yes, we talked to some of The Invaders.

Joan Beifuss: Who have you talked to?

Unknown women: Coby Smith and Don Pickford. Reverend Lawson, I think is, you know, I consider him quite a leader.

Joan Beifuss: Of course, we don't consider him an Invader.

Unknown woman: No (muffled). But, he associates with The Invaders, and I think that this confuses me, the white people in suburbia that I have met, that they don't know where Reverend Lawson stands. He is like a middle -- you know, I picture him as a middle man. He is trying to be a mediator between two groups. And, I think the white people I have talked to, you know, will label him as a communist.

Joan Beifuss: Is there a question on the questionnaire that mentions Lawson?

Unknown woman: None at all.

Unknown woman: Our questionnaire is a very broad, general thing.

Joan Beifuss: How does Lawson's name come up then, for instance?

Unknown woman: Well, they bring it up.

Joan Beifuss: Oh do they?

Unknown woman: They put him in a category with communists -- Martin Luther King. You know immediately they mention these...

All: Jesse Epps, oh yeah. (muffled).

Sister Benedict: (muffled) Luther King. I thought everybody would admire a man like that, and they call him a communist and a hater, and those are the same lies. They should read his book, and see what he writes about. One lady said that that questionnaire is really having it's effect here in Memphis. She said if they don't talk -- get in little groups and discuss it, at least they call each other over the phone and ask what they think about it.

Joan Beifuss: Do you have a copy of it? I have never seen it.

Unknown woman: I brought one for you.

Joan Beifuss: Very good, very efficient.

Unknown woman: Just so you promise to fill it out and give it to (muffled).

Unknown woman: (Muffled) one to her husband and anybody else to have those.

Unknown woman: Was that man saying that he thinks that the, that Memphis is where some of the larger cities are, as far as (muffled)?

Unknown woman: I think I would challenge that.

Joan Beifuss: Would you, why?

Unknown woman: Because in '47, I don't think there was the same kind of black leadership and black awareness that there is today. And, I think it -- it will go so much faster now.

Unknown woman: Well, I think he was referring to the white attitude though, you know. This is what I gathered he meant, that the people in Memphis are so settled more or less. You know, they are not disturbed so much as the people were in Detroit, you know, as far as settling.

Joan Beifuss: Have you found them, as a general rule, not disturbed?

Unknown woman: I don't find them very disturbed at all?

Unknown woman: Not disturbed about the black situation at all. Some of them are somewhat disturbed about the potential threat to their security, or the potential threat to their primacy, insulation, whatever you would. You know, there might be somebody black moving within 3 miles of them, or there might be, you know, somebody black might mess up their city. But, as far as the disturbed about the condition of black people, huh uh. You know, today we had Mr. Ben (muffled) and Mr. E.E. Redditt out at our convent today with a group of women that we had met in going from door to door.

Unknown woman: So, this is what a block discussion is like?

Unknown woman: Yes, it's a block discussion, but instead of having the whole block in a block, we had it a separate place and we used our convent.

Unknown woman: How many did you have there?

Unknown woman: We had 9, and it was supposed to go from 10 til 12, and at 1, I said, you know I want to announce for the third time that anyone who wishes to leave may. And anyway, the last one left at about 2:30, and then we gave -- anyway the whole thing was over at 4:30 and started at 10.

Unknown woman: Now what kind of policemen did you have?

Unknown woman: They are both from the Community Service Center, and the nine

ladies there, not one had ever knew the insides of this. And so now, I am going to arrange to take a group. Not this group, with another group. We are going to go down there now, a week from Saturday. I am going to check and make sure.

Unknown woman: Down to the...

Unknown woman: Down to the Community, yes. And take white people with us, you see. But now, with one lady here, after it was over, you know the man said, he said I kept looking at her ring while she made her statement. She had a ring on that was about, you know, this big. She was saying, "Well now, I don't know for sure if I understand poverty in its real, down-to-earth (muffled)." He said I kept looking and he said, "I believe you don't (muffled)." But, she was trying so hard to. And then I said to her, I said, "Well, perhaps if you actually got a little closer to it." You know, then that, but she said, "But I can't believe that what you're saying here is true." If she said that once she must have said it about six times, you know. She just couldn't hardly believe that what he was saying was actually true. So then we said to her, well now this is very good, you can come with us. We will arrange the trip to go down. But anyway, the initially what I was going to say with regard to the police servant center, you know, like Mr. Redditt -- he was speaking about like Lawson, and The Invaders, and many of these things. Very often, the white community will call these people communists, or something, that is just an escape valve. It isn't, you know you've got to say that something isn't true, and so consequently he would put this on as, like as an escape valve, or it will be some way just to kind of get rid of the feelings that you have.

Unknown woman: Any type of guilt that you might have. Any real...

Joan Beifuss: Were these Frayser or east Memphis?

Unknown woman: They were in east Memphis, yes, they were east Memphis. We had some from Walnut Grove, we had some from south of Poplar. We had, oh they were pretty scattered around.

Joan Beifuss: Are you finding out you're getting better response from people, of course, affiliated with churches, or does it make any?

Unknown woman: No.

Joan Beifuss: Are people not associated with?

Unknown woman: Well, church is almost a way out. You know, that I spend so much time working for my church, that I am always sure I am doing valuable things. I am already sure that I am rendering service to community. See, this is -- we run into people who are already, you know you don't meet people who are not concerned with something. You know, it might be their grandchildren, or their crabgrass, or fluoridation, or getting the whole Bible read, you know, and making the little "X's" by the passage that you're supposed to read today, and you know, if your schedule is all filled up, and your mind is all filled up, well then you just don't get around to worrying, you know, about the race problem. And, you know, a whole lot of the people that we

meet are very, very much concerned with church, and they -- I don't know what they do. Whether they embroider alter cloths or, I don't know what they do. But their church activities are taking up their time, and haven't led them into social concerns.

Unknown woman: And I really would say that no churches are worse off than that than our own. I think that the Catholic churches are really involved with church, and the sort of (muffled). Have you noticed that? That we are in the same (muffled).

Unknown woman: Well, I think this is really the (muffled). You know the ministers doing, you know, in their church effort. You know, what is the apostolate. Where do they see their apostolate right now? You know, I feel like many ministers are afraid to confront the people with this question directly, more or less. And so now, you know, when we shifted for the last two weeks, it is going into an area where we feel like would be more worthwhile, you know, for the last two weeks. I felt like it -- you know, I would like to talk to some of these ministers, you know? And, I would like to ask them, what is their attitude because I am very confused right now about this. You know, there are so many people who, as you said, they are going to their churches, well what are they hearing in their churches?

Unknown woman: It is kind of weird. Their religious convictions end up convicting them, not that you're supposed to help out somebody who is hungry or doesn't have a job, but that the most important thing in life is that you be moral in a particular way, that you be willing to work 40 hours a week. You know, it's a code of ethics. I mean, a lot of the people I am meeting are not getting anywhere in the race issue because their idea of the black person is somebody who does not meet their ethic code, and cannot be "worked with" until he is willing, you know, to subscribe to the Bible, and to subscribe to this ethic code.

Unknown woman: Well, I feel like this is part of the problem, you know, with people. They have never really studied Negro history in our country.

Unknown woman: No, they tell me they've never met a black person, and they don't understand black morals. You know, I think we have (muffled) you know, in our country who subscribe to two different cultures, really, the black people, and that's what I'm talking about. How many of the people are really that well informed to cope with the situation? You know, for instance the ministers, how well informed are they in the black community, you know black history? I think, you know, we have to go to the base group and start informing ourselves.

Unknown woman: Yeah, but I don't think the base root is black history.

Unknown woman: If you are going to try to deal with white attitudes, you have to have something sound that you can chew over, you know? You can't just go in in a (muffled) way, and say let's talk about, you know, the race problem in Memphis. You know, because you don't have anything to talk about, except prejudices, which are so ill-founded, you have to get down to the, why do you feel this way? Do you know the history behind this? I have talked to so many people, you know, and this is one thing --

the moral subject. You know, we've mentioned welfare mothers, and immediately they start fidgeting, and they're really going to talk to me, you know. And I have asked them, what do you know about these people's moral history? They don't know anything. I think, you know, our problem is we are not very well informed ourselves, that we really have to understand these people, you know, to accept them. I mean, and I think Reverend Jackson the other night had a very good point. You know, here we say we have all this moral background, but how many people, how many white people are really moral, living up to their moral code? Not very many. So I really feel like we have a problem of education here.

Joan Beifuss: Education of white people?

Unknown woman: Yes, ourselves.

Sister Benedict: I really think the education of the white people is a really important thing.

Unknown woman: You mean just black history?

Sister Benedict: Well, I don't know if you would say it is black history, but what makes a person poor? They don't know -- we pulled ourselves up by the bootstraps, and so, therefore, they can do. And, I don't think that that is necessarily true. I don't think anybody has done this totally by themselves. In most cases they have had a good educational system that has helped start them and provide an awful lot for them, or else they've had a home in which something was going for them, and in many of these instances, there really isn't a home, you know, life, that this had all been to a pattern for -- to adjust to white society.

Joan Beifuss: And have you found that the white people that you talk to are not (muffled) this at all?

Sister Benedict: Well, I would say, if I was -- I think when I list that I'm, you know the biggest idea that I have gotten, I think, is we did it, and we did it by hard work, ergo if they work hard, they can do it. And, I think basically a black man feels this way, provided he's got the wherewith to do it. Now, like for instance, we were down in, well I don't know what area, I mean I don't know what the address area was, but it really a pathetic site. Agnes took us down to here. Here was these two girls, and the one had three babies, and the other one had four, and the one baby that I held was the one that Agnes had had at St. Jude where they fed the baby intravenously for days because of its malnutrition, and this is the little fellow that now had recuperated enough that he -- and in the home there was no, there was practically nothing except what they had had from the stamps program, you know. Agnes said, "Well now you've been thinking about getting a job. Do you think you're going to go on ahead and get the job?" She said, "Well they offered me \$27." And she said, "It's going to take 30 cents each way for car fare, and I'll have to get a babysitter, and I'll have to get some kind of new clothes, because I can't wear what I'm wearing here." So, therefore, she couldn't get out of this rut because she couldn't make ends meet on the other end.

Joan Beifuss: What, \$27 a week?

Sister Benedict: \$27 a week. Today (muffled) a restaurant worker. Well now today, this is the first that (muffled) today. He said, "You know think everybody's getting paid well." And, he listed people. He said, "I can show you this woman gets \$17 a week." He gave another one, "This one gets \$32 a week." And see, there are no men in those homes, and there they are with three or four babies, and you've got to have a babysitter or something. And so he said, "You don't need to say they can make it if they try." He said, "They can't make it, you know, without something to start out with." So, of course what he was talking about is he is trying to get a daycare center, and get -- this was part of the issue of what he was talking about. But these ladies were putting the same kind of question. Whereas just the one lady said, there is no reason of why the black community should be dirty. I can understand that they, you know, they don't have certain things. He said, "Have you ever been in one of their houses?" He said, "If you've got dirt right outside, you know the ground dirt, and you've got 10 children living inside, every time a child comes in on its feet the child carries dirt, it is bound to come in there." And he said, "You don't know how much money it costs for detergents and soap in your own home. You know, you've just somewhere in there you've got soap and detergent in your house. But he said if it is going to be between bread or detergent, you've got to spend it on bread. And, if you're on food stamps, you can't get soap nor detergent on food stamps. So this is consequently the thing that gets purchased the least is something like soap." And, so he was trying to explain to her that you can use this cry about being dirty, but there is really an explanation if you'd go down there and really see it.

Unknown woman: I think someone expressed it really beautifully, well, before I say the death statement, they said that Memphis has many black people who have come from the rural land Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee and are right in this area, and so they are people who have lived in these little shacks of dirt pads, you know, in the middle of cotton fields. And I don't know who it was, but one of those men on that panel the other night said if you take all these people here in Memphis who have come from places like that, and he said there grass wasn't a good thing because grass got in the way. You know all they did all day was destroy grass, you know, they pulled up grass. This was their work, you know, so there was no value in grass, in having grass around, it just gets in the way. Children, you just had a lot of children so that you'd have more help out in the fields, you know, picking the cotton that your family, you know the area your family took care of. So, naturally, you know, lots of children made this a lot easier. But then, all right, now these people have come into a city community, and no one has ever taught them (muffled). No one has ever taught them how to live in a city community. Nobody cares how they live in a city community; and, therefore, they can't adjust to city community life, even, you know, apparently they can't give an appearance of fitting into the community because they lived, so many of them right here, have lived in these little shacks. And they're right within, you know, 20 and 30 minutes of the city of Memphis. You can go to the most destitute areas, because I have gone there myself, to little shacks 20 or 30 minutes right from the city of Memphis, you know, up in the middle of a cotton field somewhere you'll see a shack with about 40, 30 people. You know maybe 6 adults, and just a flock of little black children who've come from some place, and then they live there. No windows, no glass, you know, nothing like that. Just a door and a little shack

and dirt and dogs and chickens running around. And, it is some of these adults are coming into Memphis and (muffled) going back out up these little dirt roads. And then this is the kind of people who would move into, you know, a ghetto area, and then they would not know how to live in a city. They have never been a part of it.

Joan Beifuss: I think what happens to these people when they stay in Memphis for 6 months, and then move on up to Shiloh after that, still don't.

Unknown woman: Reverend Jackson said, too, now how can you compare white immigrants that come from, you know, work themselves up with the blacks because they don't have the obstacle of color. They could work, they're white. They'd be accepted in any place. They'd fight their way up, but a black person would just be rejected because he is black.

Unknown woman: I really, I agree with you there sister. I really felt that was a remarkable statement he made the other night when he said, "You may say that your grandfather came over and could hardly, and hardly knew the English language." But he said, "I could also say that if my grandfather had come over and used seven languages, he still wouldn't have a chance against him. He still would have been (muffled)."

Unknown woman: And, no matter what his skill, he couldn't get a job in Memphis. They say this is the lowest, one of the lowest locales. It is very, very slow about putting skilled labor into use -- down here in the south. There are so many men, black men who are capable of performing are not given this opportunity. In northern cities they have a better chance. But, down here, they don't. Of course, this is true of women, you know of women in general and jobs, but the payment in the city of Memphis is rather low.

Unknown man: May I ask a question here? The people that tell you that if you try hard you can get out of poverty, and they know because they did it -- have you ever followed up on what this does to their parents? Because obviously if they lived in poverty as children, their parents either weren't trying hard, or there is something wrong with their argument. Have you ever followed up this idea at all.

Unknown woman: Well see, some of these people went through the Depression, lost everything, and then they realized once they hit that thing and it was all taken away, they think they've had the full experience of poverty, and yet there were many, many people of their type whom had that same problem, had white skin, and worked out of it. So it's not such a hard thing to have done. And, besides you've got whole, it's a whole outlook on life. You know, as far as this huge, I'd say, you know this measuring up, this performing, doing the work that is something that an oppressed people would not have because there is nothing for them to gain by this. So, they don't see that as a value.

Joan Beifuss: Let me ask you something. What is your reaction to the white people who say this? Do you understand their feelings at all?

Unknown woman: I pity them.

Unknown woman: (Muffled) he said, you know, that she was a very racist person. You

could hardly talk with her. You know, her whole bearing was just rigid, and I just asked, I kept looking at her, trying to penetrate, you know, some human warmth or feelings, you know, for the black community. And, she said, "Well I grew up in the black community." She was Italian. Evidently her mother, they must have come from Italy, they were immigrants. And she said she grew up down on Linden Street with the black people. And, after I looked at her, I felt like if there is anybody who should have had compassion or feelings, it would have been her, you know? And, but she never would admit that she had, that she contributes this to being white and being able to, you know, walk out of it. You know, she never would admit anything of this sort. I just felt like she was just frozen in this attitude.

Unknown woman: But (muffled) that wasn't her question. She said, "What is our attitude to the white people that we are meeting?"

Unknown woman: My attitude toward her was to try to bear, you know, to bear with her, and I could have many times gotten up and just walked out, and said lady you're hopeless, you know, like that. But I felt like I couldn't just cut that woman off. She was a person too, you know? And that, in a way, she was worse off to me than, you know, the black people because she is frozen in a deadly attitude. Which will, you know, really kill her as a person -- she was de-humanizing herself all the time she was sitting there. She was turning more into a, you know, a -- I don't know what you'd call it, a block of something. But, my attitude was that I just sat there and tried, you know, I was able to, you know, she knew I wasn't with her, and we were at odds almost on everything. But, I felt like that, you know, if I didn't stick it out, that I would lose her. You know what I mean?

Unknown woman: Yeah, but I have been wondering a whole lot of late if we, as a group, are compassionate? I don't know exactly how to say this, but I was wondering about it the other morning. You know, I feel so often that we are almost sitting in judgment on Memphis, that -- I mean, not that these attitudes should be condoned, but I don't feel that we are agonizing over it as Jesus agonized over Jerusalem. I feel more like we're, like we're taking a sociologist's view of the city or something instead of a Christian's -- I don't know. Instead of -- instead of hurting real bad because, you know, because...

Unknown woman: Because people won't...

Unknown woman: Well, not just people, but I mean we, because our people are not what we have to be.

Unknown woman: Well, you know, I think we have to make a decision there. I don't feel like they're mad people, I feel like because I'm white and you're white that doesn't make you my people. I feel like the whole idea of humanity is going toward a new stage, and I really -- and I really, I guess it goes back to (muffled)...

Unknown woman: But how can you lose somebody who's not yours?

Unknown woman: That we are becoming like, what do you call the world of people that

are bound up in racism? That we should be evolving toward one people. You know, and this is, you know, I think the moon, going to the moon brought this out in my mind that the Americans did this, or I am an American, that if we could attribute this, if we had done away with some of the symbolic parts of it to make it distinctive as a nation, you know, if some congressman could have just let our American men who landed there take all their flags and put them on the moon that would have made me much happier over that. It would have made me feel more like I belong to mankind than I belong to the American nation.

Joan Beifuss: But, let me ask you something. Can you belong to mankind if you don't belong to the people out of whom you have come? And I assume that the white people in east Memphis are the type of people out of which you have come. These are your root people, really I would think.

Unknown woman: Well, I feel like, you know, we are separated in our intellectual grasps -- the world of our outlook on life. And, because I am an American doesn't make me any more bound to an American person. It's more of how I feel with people that makes me more one with them than because I am born in the same country as they are, I have the same skin. It's more of an outlook on life, I guess a philosophy of life that makes me feel more one with people.

Unknown woman: I agree with that, too. You know, what makes you feel one with people, but nevertheless I feel a real sense of relatedness, or a sense of fact that I am part of all mankind, and I try, you know, the best I can to be open to all points of view, although I know I'm not, and I am trying. And, I don't -- let's say I accept these people as they are, and when they say the thing, if I don't agree with it I let them finish to think. And then I say, are you aware, you know, that such-and-such is a fact and try and talk with them about it. But, I don't know, maybe I'm not reacting to them or confronting people with different points of view as strongly as I should. I think it is just a matter of the way I relate to people. And, I don't feel I can alienate myself from any segment of society and say, you know, I'm not a part of them, because I feel that we're all a part of one another.

Unknown woman: Well, as far as the alienation goes, I don't think any of us here, you know, would alienate, or would want to alienate ourselves if we are to help. As Sister Maureen is saying, I think just the fact that we are willing to work with this shows that we have some feeling for people, no matter what their views are in life, you know. But I don't want to ditch the thing and go off and live in my (muffled). I am willing to stay and bear with people and that they would bear with me. It's a give and take. That's what I'm talking about. I don't feel like I alienated myself and this woman, because I tried to let her know by just looking in her eyes that I accepted her, but I still didn't agree with her.

Unknown woman: Yeah.

Unknown woman: And she accepted me, after a while. You know, I don't think she wanted me there. I made her uncomfortable, and I was wasting her time, and she got up

several times and went to the phone. And I would say, well I'm taking up your time, and she would say, well, you know, she would just sit there in a relaxed position. So, I really feel like, you know, I built up something there of a relationship, even though we were (muffled) and thought.

Unknown woman: I am finding it very difficult not to want separate (muffled) from some of these people, very difficult because of the fact that they seem to lack so much compassion for anyone other than themselves, and I know that this is the wrong thing to do. I am aware of this, but I do find it very difficult. I do not want to just completely turn away from them, and it just seems to be almost, well I don't know what the percentage would be, but an overwhelming number of people whom I have met might be interested and might be concerned, but it's so much, as you were saying, about their own security. And, so many of them, so very many of them completely forget that other people are really dehumanized. And, when you say, I say this word, people being humanized, and I mentioned it begins with (muffled), and right away they're on the defensive of another point of view about this same thing. It is just that each is so defensive of a point of view, and I just want to say, well forget it. Okay, I won't bother you, but just go on and be concerned about yourself. But, you know, leave me alone, too. It just really, it's so overwhelming. You know, you just feel like you're knocking yourself against the wall so many times, because people in general in east Memphis are not really concerned. And I understand what you're saying, but I just, I find it very difficult.

Unknown woman: Oh, and I do too.

Unknown woman: They do not want to separate.

Unknown woman: I do, too, Diane. You know, when I am sitting in a woman's house and she has had a cataract operation for her doggone dog, you know. And, I've got 200 black kids in Birmingham, and I look at them and they're you know totally beautiful people and I know that within three years they're going to have to be saying, "Yes ma'am," and, "No, sir" to somebody, just to have a living. But, I just, I mean it just seems to me that if I don't let white Memphis also create a tremendous restlessness in my own heart because of all that is missing and all that should be there, you know it's not condoning their attitudes at all, not -- you know, not necessarily wanting really to be (muffled), they don't want to be worked with, but there's...

Unknown woman: Well, I mean I really haven't...

Unknown woman: (Muffled) with yourself, I think each person.

Unknown woman: No, I think it's a very -- I mean, I feel that within myself. I had to do that in myself, what you're asking, as a group. I had to settle that within myself, and I have to do it over and over again each day, and I think every person has to do that. You just can't come together as a group and say we're going to be this, you know. I think each person has to do this.

Unknown woman: Wait a minute, I'm not following you, I'm sorry.

Unknown woman: You're saying, you know, are we going to alienate ourselves for the people that we are trying to bring a message to. Do we have to consider them, and do we accept them.

Unknown woman: No, I'm not saying they're -- okay, go ahead.

Unknown woman: You're saying do we consider them, where they are, and try to accept them? This is what I hear you saying. Now, to me each person has to do that for themselves. I feel like I have to do that for myself. Do you see what I mean? Now, I don't understand what you're trying to say from that (muffled) so, you know, where I stand.

Unknown woman: Um, that I'm not confident that as a group we have come to terms with ourselves on this particular point.

Joan Beifuss: Who is the we in "we have not come to terms?"

Unknown woman: Participants of NAME project.

Joan Beifuss: And, probably considering that NAME project is operating as a group, and it's community image is projected as a group thing really.

Unknown woman: Well, we have a very complex problem, and in order to do that, I think you're going to have to -- it takes a lot of time. You know, the group came together, we were kind of thrown together right, from all over the country, from different backgrounds, different ideas. And, you know, I felt a certain mistrust in the group, because I didn't know these people, and we have a very complex social problem here, it's not just (muffled).

Unknown woman: I don't think it's...

Unknown woman: You know, I would say that we were not a compassionate group.

Unknown woman: Yeah, see the thing that grabs me, Virginia, is I keep wondering, you know when we get together and we talk about whether or not we're having an influence on a city, I am not convinced it is possible to influence any other person unless you are equally willing to be touched by that person's position.

Unknown woman: All right, now, would you say NAME project prepared us to be this, you know, in the organization of the program? I feel like it failed in that aspect of it. I felt like it was very much one-sided.

Joan Beifuss: What do you mean by that?

Unknown woman: What she is saying, that we didn't really have an understanding of the white -- we didn't have an orientation presented to us as a group from the white community.

Unknown woman: But I don't know of anything except the New Testament that could have given us that orientation. Now maybe I'm being a little...(muffled).

Unknown woman: I don't think there's any way (muffled) of that, except, you know, a person's orientation to that. And most of the time (muffled).

Unknown woman: Well, what are you saying then?

Unknown woman: Well, I was going to say that we would not give a compassionate image if there were many instances of us belligerently attacking people in our discussions with them, and this has not taken place. I think most of us here when we find ourselves overwhelmed with anger have held that and have stopped and thought, in our conscience, I think we were coming into the program -- we came into it knowing what kind of program it was, knowing what we were going to have to face, and yet we, you know we try to have ideas really, you know, thoughts ready to come back to convince. We know -- it's not like we don't know where these people stand. They always use that (muffled) where we came where they stood, and that we'd have chide within ourselves and with the orientation that we have been given, and so we could have gone on. I think that the groups have tried to leave these people at the doors with answers that will help them change that attitude, and I don't feel we have sat in judgment. I don't feel that we do this as a group at all.

Joan Beifuss: Let me ask you something. What do you do with the anger after you hold it in?

Unknown woman: Well, I have encountered this on very few instances because I don't regularly knock on doors, but I have encountered very belligerent things, and there is nothing logical that you can say because you're dealing many times with a person who has very illogical reasoning.

Unknown woman: Prejudices.

Unknown woman: Yeah. You know, if you can't -- if they don't have this background many times they are illogical. For example, one woman told me something about on Good Friday they went out honoring Martin Luther the King instead of Jesus Christ the King. Well, I mean now exactly what intelligent could I say in response to that little thing? You know, that little quip that she jumped out of her car.

Joan Beifuss: But what happens to your anger after you take it away from the door?

Unknown woman: Well, you have to do something with that.

Joan Beifuss: What do you do with it?

Unknown woman: You know...

Unknown woman: Personally, what do I do with it?

Unknown woman: Bring it home.

(all talking)

Unknown woman: Well, we had a (muffled) you know that they come across they share this, and it's a lot of...

Unknown woman: I usually get beaten every night, or something of that...

Unknown woman: You, know, every other day.

Unknown woman: You know, I have found that, well I have visited I guess it's now maybe over 200 homes, maybe 210, I don't know. But I really haven't had any hostility, you know, greeting me at the door. But, there is such a lack, you know as we have been saying, of compassion, and I find myself, you know, really very nice to these people -- nicer than I wish I had've been, you know, when I get out on the street. (muffled) When I get out and get back in the car, then I think, oh I wish I would have thought of this -- you know, trying to think, trying to sort of get over my point, but then I think, well maybe this is the way, you know, the Spirit really wanted to work with his time, because I (muffled) without really asking for His help because -- but anyway. It just seems so that -- what do I want to say? That, you know, I find myself almost being too nice, not being realistic with them, you know, that they need someone that's not going to be, you know, so nice and so understanding with them. I don't know if sometime you can be too nice and too understanding, you know? And, I try to sincerely be this way with them, but then, and you know, I don't try to be hypocritical either. But, it just seems that, you know, even I'll bring up things when I have the opportunity, and then they go on and they say their little thing and I'll try to respect that but it seems like that they always, that I always leave them with the idea -- or they, when I leave they always seem to have the impression that, oh well you know she really is nice and that was really a nice visit. And I don't want them to actually feel that way. I want them to get just sort of like this, but it just never sort of works out that way.

Unknown woman: You're too nice for the project.

(all talking)

Unknown woman: But I don't really, you know, when I get out though I (muffled) about it. You know, but it is just...

Unknown woman: There are two instances in scripture that we have to balance with our kindness and our gentleness, and I think we feel sincerely that there is an element, you know, an area of Christianity that has sort of been neglected, namely real love for one another. You know it is sort of the essence of Christianity, and I think that's what brings us to knock on doors. We feel that this is kind of like a real preaching of the gospel, that -- you know this knocking on door bit. And, there are two instances, one is Jesus when he, in anger, saw what was done with the temple, and that it was profaned, and I sort of think that an area of anger is very important here because the Christian message -- you know many of these people are saying they are Christian and they haven't really got the

heart of it. And, uh, and that's what we're trying to bring out, is like the heart of Christianity. And, anger has a place there, you know, a just anger has a place there. And then two, there is a place in St. Paul, I think's St. Paul, somebody can correct me, talking about you're shaking the dust of your feet from a town that will not hear the word of Christ. And so, there is just -- there is a balance that you have to get when you're nice (muffled) and your gentleness and your anger, and your shaking the dust. You have to get a balance in all of that. And you can't, to me, you can't forget even one of those things, that you have to be kind and you have to be gentle, and you have to also remember that there is a place for just anger, and there is a place to shake your feet from the dust of the town.

Unknown woman: Let me add to this, because I, you know, Shirley, (muffled) I really don't agree with that.

Unknown woman: You don't think there's a balance?

Unknown woman: Oh yeah, but I don't...

Unknown woman: Well, that's all I'm saying.

(all talking)

Joan Beifuss: But your balance is between anger and shaking the dust (muffled).

Unknown woman: No, I don't think I said that. I said between being nice and gentle (muffled).

Unknown woman: Rather you need to be gentle and strong, because I don't like -- I don't care for anger, and I don't react that way. No matter how negative a person may be, I don't get angry, I, you know...

Unknown woman: You know, but Jesus got angry.

Unknown woman: Well I'm not saying -- I'm not Jesus, yet.

Unknown woman: But anger is good.

Unknown woman: Shirley, there can be wrong kinds of anger, and I told that minister that day (muffled), "You know when I hear those rioters and those (muffled), I would tear them limb from limb." I said, "Is that the way -- you're a minister -- is that the way Jesus would talk?" And (muffled), "Do you think Jesus was a sissy?" He said, "Don't you know he said (muffled)?" And I said, "Yeah, but who did he say that to, 'you'll (muffled)' to? Those who were overtaxing people, who were not kind and compassionate. They were soft and easy with themselves, but hard on others." He talked for about an hour preaching to me.

Joan Beifuss: You got to a minister's house?

Unknown woman: He was by his car and stood there. And he talked with me, and he would have preached much longer if I had (muffled).

Unknown woman: I will tell you one reason, you know, we don't have all that compassion that you're speaking of -- I don't know if I'm really understanding what you're saying exactly, but...

Unknown woman: It's not the same as patience.

Unknown woman: No, but see I don't get that anger either, as typical (muffled), I never -- but I feel like I don't just because, you know, I identify very much with the white community, you know, suburbia, because in my own standing I am one of them, you know?

Unknown woman: What good would that do for me to, um, I am never judging these people as I go in, you know? I am never looking at the things they have in their house and (muffled) their diamonds and all this, because I am part of all that.

Joan Beifuss: You know, (muffled), it always occurred to me that if it really came down to the whites and blacks across America, I am not at all sure that I wouldn't stand with the whites, I have never been sure of that, and I have marched with Dr. King and whole bit, so, I still don't.

Unknown woman: Well, that's what I mean. You can't say (muffled)...

Joan Beifuss: I am saying I wouldn't trust myself that far.

Unknown woman: Yeah, every day, that's what I'm talking about, every day. I have to, you know, go back and say where I am and, you know, I have to look at myself all the time because I am part of this, you know? We can settle that with, you know, our own white community, too. So, we go back, you know, this is a summer program remember.

Unknown woman: You know, but I think that where I have gained compassion this year, this summer, is for the white community. But I -- I don't know how you, what you mean by anger, whoever is using that. What is that that you're really saying when you say you feel anger (muffled), whoever used that?

Unknown woman: Well, I just get a little upset, bothered, and mad when I get out of a house because I just feel like that some of these folks are too concerned about their own security and not really at all compassionate about the problems of their city.

Unknown woman: But you know, I didn't know until this summer that the white community was so afraid. When I see them sitting there, for the first two weeks, I don't think we rang a doorbell, or at least the one out of two had a big dog in the house. Now that has to be for protection, because you can have a dog that greets you friendly and a dog that barks, and so this was for protection I think.

Unknown woman: And the people to peek out of the window and see someone there

and don't open the door.

Unknown woman: And then they also have those little seeing eyes that they can look at you first.

Unknown woman: I hate those.

Unknown woman: Very many of them have these screens, these (muffled).

Unknown man: Muffled.

Unknown woman: Yeah, I have one of those at my house.

(all talking)

Unknown woman: Well I didn't realize until this summer that the white community is to be so sympathized with for their fear, and I really think when we're working with the black people, I don't know how much you've gotten to work with them, but I got to go down to Canton, Mississippi for that 4th of July weekend, which was really an experience. They have an optimistic view, I think, of we've got no place to go but up. And, I think in the white community it looks like we're up, and we're going to have to fight like everything to stay there, but in all probability we're going to come down. And I think there is a certain -- that there is an overriding...

Unknown woman: (muffled) You know as far as the white community's fears, it is easier to be up.

Joan Beifuss: Psychologically?

Unknown woman: Yeah.

Unknown woman: And I think the white community (muffled) afraid.

(all talking)

Unknown woman: (muffled) I mean it's easier to be afraid you're going to lose your money than to have a doggone helicopter hovering over you.

Unknown woman: And you know, a 3-to-1 police force in your area. I mean I think those things -- I do, I have a good (muffled) compassion for the white people, but.

Unknown woman: But, I didn't know that I should before. I did not know until this summer that the white people were afraid like they are. I am not a part of the white community; and, therefore, I don't have any knowledge of that.

Unknown woman: It's (muffled) right here in Memphis because when we walked in here, you know, they threatened to strike and all sorts of weird things in the suburbs, and that's why there's an unusual, you know, fright right here in this city, and I think it is probably (muffled). But I think when we first came in here they were really scared.

Joan Beifuss: Memphis is more scared than other places?

Unknown woman: Yeah, because of that strike, that impending strike. See, we walked in, you know, when everybody was just sort of in an upheaval because of it.

Unknown woman: And the threat of the rats, you know, that might seem like a little thing to some people, but that really was the fright of the white people.

Unknown woman: And members of the black community have told us they have hit upon a good thing, that as it is spreading the misery, because the white community does not want that misery spread among them. But actually there are going to be rats anywhere, not, why shouldn't they be spread equally among the populace. Nobody is going to pay attention to them, you know, in one area. (muffled) pay attention to them. So, they found out this is a very good technique, you know to make people aware.

(muffled)

Unknown woman: An area of the (muffled) spreading the misery.

Unknown woman: That white woman said that, "Just think, Mr. Epps said, you could have.."

Unknown woman: And she is not (muffled) about those rats some place else in that town, that is what makes me so angry.

Unknown woman: She is concerned about them, only when they get beyond the low border.

(muffled)

Unknown woman: Yeah, so what.

Unknown woman: I heard one lady say, "Well let them bring the rats." She said, "We have rats here, too." She said, "And our rats are bigger than their rats."

Unknown woman: Oh, so absurd.

Unknown woman: Let's say something on behalf of the good people we've met, too.

Unknown woman: Yes, I agree.

Unknown woman: Because, every day I never cease to be amazed by the beautiful people that we do meet, of all varieties, and this is from them that I take heart to go on. You know, maybe in the next house there will be someone who is feeling that, too.

Unknown woman: Do they feed you, wine you and dine you as you come by?

Unknown woman: Well, yes there are beautiful people who will give a coke on a hot day.

(all talking)

Unknown woman: My idea of beautiful people are people with very open attitudes, and they're warm people.

Unknown woman: If they're not involved I don't think they're really open.

Unknown woman: Yeah, but there are some that are involved.

Unknown woman: I can go into a home where maybe a mother has a little child hanging on her, you know, her apron and she looks weary and tired, and she might be the worst racist I have talked to, but I still see beauty in her, you know? So I don't think you can just say these are beautiful, and these aren't beautiful.

Unknown woman: I think they're all beautiful in some way.

Unknown woman: Okay, all right.

Unknown woman: Everybody is beautiful.

Unknown woman: Yeah, I just would like to look on the positive side a little bit now, because we really have been rather negative.

Unknown woman: About how often do you find that you leave a person that you feel is far enough along in this evolution of thinking, you know, that they're concerned beyond their neighborhood?

Unknown woman: Not too many.

Unknown woman: (muffled) statistically that I have met on an average of at least one every other day that I have taken their number and called them, and they have come and we have had two meetings, and they have either come to the last one, come to this one, or are going to come next Thursday. We have a group now that is going to be working on a Christmas project. We have another group that is going to be going out to this (muffled) center. Now these are people that really are open to -- and, many of them are uninformed as to what procedure to take. Well how do I get involved? How do I do something? -- that are really actually open to this. Now is this about the average of what...

Unknown woman: What's that, one every other day?

Unknown woman: I have found that one -- I have looked at my numbers, and when I was having this meeting for today, I called 13 homes that I personally had met.

Joan Beifuss: About how many people do you see a day?

Unknown woman: That's 13 homes.

Joan Beifuss: You see about 13 people a day?

Unknown woman: No, no, no. I said of the 13 people that I actually felt were far enough along that I could say to them -- and, you know, are generally in a home 15 minutes or 20 minutes, and you can immediately spot and say, "Would you like to do something beyond your neighborhood?"

Joan Beifuss: But I'm saying, if you can find one of these people, one every other day, about one out of how many people that you've talked to?

Unknown woman: Well, I would say that there's never a day that goes by that I don't talk to about 10 or 12. And I would say one that is far enough along of actually wanting to do something positive beyond their own neighborhood and church and, you know, then you'd have, I would say 50% of them are already involved in their church, or at least the ones that I have talked to.

Unknown woman: (muffled) I think you'd still (muffled) who you think is far along. Some people are physically unable to go out and do things, but you can't just say they're not that far along.

Unknown woman: (muffled) That's the reason I'm asking you, about how many would you say?

Unknown woman: I mean I (muffled) -- I felt like, and I was doing this for a while, trying to get people to come out and do something, you know, but uh, I have found that many people are, you know, they have their families and some people have handicaps.

Joan Beifuss: Especially mothers who've got children, they might have openness.

Unknown woman: But really, you know, they can't do things like that.

Unknown woman: But you know, now I tell them that they can. I tell them that -- I say, every time you speak...

Unknown woman: This is my point, I am not going to tell them, I think they have to know this, you know.

Unknown woman: You know, I say to them but you are talking with people all the time, (muffled) like you say you're in your church groups, or you're in, you have (muffled) circles here.

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