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Eddie Jenkins, Memphis State University BSA, 1969

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Joan Beifuss- Alright this is January the 6th.

Eddie Jenkins- The 7th.

Joan Beifuss- January the 7th, 1969 we are doing Eddie Jenkins tape 2. Interviewers are Walter Wade and Joan Beifuss. At the conclusion of tape 1 Eddie was speaking about the establishment of the black student association at Memphis State.

Eddie Jenkins- I was talking about in the beginning we started out with so few people, who were the you might say organized so called, organized in a way because these were the people that were, what in they decided they were going to have a meeting and they had a meeting in the education auditorium. They elected people who were as I said did more talking than they did anything else, you know they were the most popular people on campus as far as black students go.

Joan Beifuss- Ed who was this? The Spring or the Fall? Walter Wade- Well the last thing this was year before that wasn't it? Or was it this past spring before the strike?

Eddie Jenkins- No this was towards the end of the fall semester. I think this was before Christmas.

Walter Wade- Of last year.

Eddie Jenkins- Yeah. Before Christmas of last year and what they did they went in and they elected these people and they were going to go from there, but it ended up with about I guess of the people they elected, they had maybe two or three people who actually stayed within the organization who actually went to work to actually do something. The other people they sort of filtered out I guess, doing their own thing you know.

Walter Wade- Looking back on it for example, it seems to me it is much better organized this year, they are doing so many more things in so many more areas. And don't you think any new organization like that in the beginning sort of gropes around to try, you know in terms of getting itself organized and then deciding what its program is going to be that there is bound to be a certain amount of well, let's say a false start or a experimental, or kind of groping around before they latch onto what they really want to do.

Eddie Jenkins- Well yes to a certain point because one thing to me the black student association as far as what they wanted to do, we always knew what we wanted to do because we began the whole organization originated around purpose to become a part of, an active part of Memphis.

Walter Wade- To really become truly integrated into the student activities rather than just sitting in the classrooms.

Eddie Jenkins- Right to actually become a part of Memphis State to be felt, to be seen, to really be a part of Memphis State to participate in every facet of campus life.

Joan Beifuss- Eddie let me cut in here and ask you something I can't, on some other tape and I can't think who it was we have referenced the fact that the black students had attempted to work through what's it called? Student Alliance I remember it was that group that was formed a year ago last fall on campus to bring in controversial speakers and what not and but the student government did pass it setting up and someone told me that there were black students involved in that and when that fell through then they decided to form the black student organization.

Eddie Jenkins- Well yes this was after the original threat. I guess that they discovered that we were interested and so some of the people that turned out to be representatives of the liberal club. Eventually went in and they started the student alliance and that wouldn't go off, I don't know why?

Joan Beifuss- That was after the black students had also started to organize?

Eddie Jenkins- Well yes, we had already started some. Some sort of organization, but then we after they started this thing around 2nd semester, we came back and we weren't doing very much of anything and some of them started talking about forming an organization and we started working from there and they started the student alliance thing and they couldn't get that off the ground. They outwardly rejected the charter. Some of the black students they had been around and they had worked with the people in civil rights that were associated with some of the so-called militants and so on and so on, they said why mess around and try to go in the whites (muffled). If we are going to have some thing we may as well control our own thing and do our own thing. So we decided, they went back and they decided again, by this time some of the people that had been in the original organization of people that was supposed to have had an active part who had not done anything they were excluded, this time they got people who were fairly you know, willing to work and (muffled) to follow it up and in fact they, we started out we had Ron Ivy, he started with the original thing and of course he kept up and he became the head of the black student association.

Walter Wade- President last year though?

Eddie Jenkins- Yes.

Joan Beifuss- Is he graduated now?

Eddie Jenkins- Yes he graduated last spring.

Joan Beifuss- What is he doing here?

Eddie Jenkins- I think he is up at Harlem. He went to work with the, who is it vista?

Walter Wade- Oh did he?

Joan Beifuss- Oh did he?

Eddie Jenkins- I think it is Vista? Anyway he works in this country.

Walter Wade- Yes that is Vista.

Eddie Jenkins- He went to work for Vista his sister was a social worker somewhere I think she was in Harlem too I don't know. I think he followed her lead and I don't know exactly what he is doing but I think he is teaching some sort of black school some where in that area.

Walter Wade- I know some of the things that the black students are doing, you know, because they have been publicized and because primarily of reading the paper. But would you like to for the benefit of the record would you like to summarize the different facets of their program this year?

Eddie Jenkins- Well it is kind of hard to say...

Walter Wade- One thing they have going all the time is a forum.

Eddie Jenkins- Yes.

Walter Wade- Let's talk about the forum just a little bit because I think that is certainly one of the best parts of the program. What is the purpose of the forum?

Eddie Jenkins- Well the forum originally the forum was to express, to give the black students a chance to express themselves. The black students and it was an open forum so they could express themselves not only to black students but also to white students so that after a while we found that we all had something in common, we really had something in common we all felt basically the same way and after so much expressing ourselves, of course there is still to express ourselves, now it is more of an educational thing.

Walter Wade- Well this was my feeling about it that it was being set up primarily to educate the black students in various aspects of black culture?

Eddie Jenkins- Yes...

Walter Wade- Past and present and that the way the programs have been set up each one was on a different topic but they were all related to various facets of black culture. Now one thing that I feel is that the white students don't realize that they are welcome at the black forum. I don't even think they realize that it is an open meeting.

Eddie Jenkins- Well I don't know.

Walter Wade- It seems to me maybe that the club needs to do a little publicity toward, if they really want the white students to come and here what they have to say.

Eddie Jenkins- Yes.

Walter Wade- Or even to talk back or to engage in a dialogue of some sort because you know you drag me by the back of my neck one time but I was very reluctant to go. Because I didn't feel...

Joan Beifuss- Eddie does the forum meet every week?

Eddie Jenkins- Yes they meet every Wednesday at 4:00.

Joan Beifuss- Where?

Eddie Jenkins- In the student union building over here on the 3rd floor.

Walter Wade- Where the meeting rooms are they will sometimes be in one and sometimes be in another.

Joan Beifuss- How many kids do you usually get there?

Eddie Jenkins- They usually have a crowd anywhere from 35 to 50 people.

Joan Beifuss- Ok can you put an estimate of the number of people that are actually active in the black student's association?

Eddie Jenkins- It is kind of hard the black student association revolves around the (muffled) and that is made up of 13 members and from there you have a number of people who aren't on the coordinating committee who work, you might say from the outside in. I am not on the coordinating committee but I am you know if it really gets down I am contributing as much as possible.

Joan Beifuss- Do they have dues?

Eddie Jenkins- No the only dues that are required is just that we pay 50 cents a year for membership.

Joan Beifuss- If you are white can you join the black students association?

Eddie Jenkins- I don't know that is one of the things that it has never been really brought to the table.

Walter Wade- Nobody has applied for the question.

Eddie Jenkins- Right, right.

Joan Beifuss- Test case.

Eddie Jenkins- In a way it would be ironic for a white student to really be in the black student association. I just want one that is not denied participation but I don't know if one could really get membership.

Walter Wade- We ought to have a test case on this I think.

Eddie Jenkins- I don't know.

Walter Wade- Because I would just like to see black people discriminating.

Joan Beifuss- Ok pick out who you want to send over to the meeting.

Eddie Jenkins- And the one thing is that and possibly one of the reasons that white students might be denied is that the first thing they would ask is are you black? Are you a black student or what do you have in common with the black student or do you have a black mind, because it is not so much what color you really are it is more what you think.

Walter Wade- Yes I know I read so often in the paper, I can think of the name of it.

Eddie Jenkins- Black thesis.

Walter Wade- Black thesis. The rioters sang there are so many black students at Memphis State that don't think black or who don't know they are black and come on and stop trying to pretend you are white and join the black student association and identify with the group to which you really belong, come on and get with it.

Joan Beifuss- Eddie let me ask you something else, there was a black sorority established on campus at the end of last year or this year. Do for instance the girls that would join a black sorority would they also be in the black student's association or is your....

Eddie Jenkins- Well this is possible.

Walter Wade- By and large do they or do they get a sort of an exclusive, you know, we are too good for the black student association.

Eddie Jenkins- It seemed to a certain extent people have gone the way of the traditional frats. You know what frats are, frats and sororities ...

Walter Wade- They stick to themselves.

Eddie Jenkins- In a way they identified and they say yes yes yes. YOU know you have (muffled) so on and so on. But they don't really come in great numbers and actually come in and take a big part.

Walter Wade- They don't really get behind it.

Eddie Jenkins- No.

Walter Wade- The black student association and with any concerted effort on the part of the sorority or the fraternity. How many black fraternities are there here 2?

Eddie Jenkins- One.

Walter Wade- One.

Eddie Jenkins- Phi Beta Sig.

Walter Wade- They don't have a Kappa Alpha Si.

Eddie Jenkins- They might have another one it may be two I don't know.

Joan Beifuss- And there is one black sorority?

Walter Wade- No there is more than one.

Eddie Jenkins- 2 or 3. 2 or 3 black sororities here on campus.

Walter Wade- I know there is more than one.

Joan Beifuss- but there are no black people in any of the white fraternities or sororities.

Eddie Jenkins- Well there was some black pledges in sororities but not for fraternities.. I think there is one guy, he was in last year.

Walter Wade- Oh he was initiated because I actually remember that.

Eddie Jenkins- Yes because, this was last spring and I remember talking to him in the cafeteria, I mean not the cafeteria but the student center one day. He said we have got a cat over here that is in the fraternity, he has made it,. Sort of hassling the guy about it.

Joan Beifuss- Which fraternity was it do you remember?

Eddie Jenkins- No I really don't. I hadn't even looked into it. I don't really know but for some reason fraternities seemed to be becoming very unpopular in a sense that black people cannot afford to be exclusive, we have got to all identify. At this point we can't afford to run over here and greet a little group over here or over there and the people that do that we still identify with them.

Walter Wade- Of course there is on the college campuses generally across the country a great deal of movement away from them. Away from (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- Although not here, not in the south as much.

Walter Wade- Not so much in the south as in the north and other places. But they represent such a small percentage of the student body that to me I just, they are just almost not worth bothering about of course and that is why I got up and said at the black student association when they were yelling about they wanted to be in rush week and this and that and the other, I felt stop piddling away your time worrying about some groups that aren't worth piddling about, it is like saying well gee there is a girls crocheting club over here that doesn't have any negro members let's integrate the girls crocheting club...Well of course somebody got up and said I missed the point, completely. They put me down for missing the point.

Joan Beifuss- Well that is what you get for talking at the black student association.

Walter Wade- Well I had no business being there and definitely not now because they said I can't keep my mouth shut.

Eddie Jenkins- Well it is a thing that...

Walter Wade- I realize there is a principle of the thing.

Eddie Jenkins- Yeah the right to be there.

Walter Wade- Most of those people wouldn't even go if somebody walked in and said we are having a ruins party and you are all invited, they wouldn't even go.

Joan Beifuss- Eddie how about the black athletes? The guys on the basketball team and Richard Jones and Hilliard and James Douglas, do they identify with the black student association?

Eddie Jenkins- I think so. I think that I can say they readily identify.

Walter Wade- They probably don't have much time to be involved.

=They don't.

Walter Wade- The basketball practice and everything just takes all their spare time doesn't it?

Eddie Jenkins- Yes that is right, it is not a thing where they necessarily participate but I think they readily identify because you can look at Joan's hair and you know Joan is proud of being black.

Joan Beifuss- When he walks out on the court right?

Eddie Jenkins- Yeah and this is one of the, in a sense this is one of the accomplishments of the black student's association this semester because the coach wanted to make Jones to cut his hair, he was going to make all the guys cut his hair.

Joan Beifuss- Well I think Douglas is wearing an afro.

Eddie Jenkins- Yeah, there is three of them I know he was going to make them cut their hair and so they protested and the black student association came to their aid and they didn't have not get haircuts. In fact, I can't really see the necessity of getting hair cuts anyways because it doesn't weigh down there minds.

Joan Beifuss- It might weigh down there running.

Eddie Jenkins- I don't know Jones has a pretty good bit of hair.

Joan Beifuss- Well then it is possible if you are a black student on this campus to identify with the black student's association without participating in it.

Eddie Jenkins- Oh yeah.

Joan Beifuss- At least you know that there is the group there that will support you if anything.

Eddie Jenkins- Yes, well one thing about it...

Walter Wade- Don't you think this is tremendously good psychological factor?

Eddie Jenkins- Yes.

Walter Wade- For any negro who comes to Memphis state to even if he doesn't come to the meetings or anything to know that here is my group, the group that stands behind me and to which I automatically belong and which will back me up if I get into trouble.

Eddie Jenkins- This was the whole idea around the original plan. We didn't want to have any hang-ups about you had to be initiated here and you had to do this and you had to do that, any of this thing. All you had to do was be black you automatically identified. This was the whole realm of the essence of the black student association is that as far as psychologically speaking the black students, there is many black students on this campus that don't necessarily, they identify, yes they identify with the black because they have to. Well they are born with identification cards and the thing is they don't actively participate so they don't really know, they say what is the black student association doing but at the same time they have a certain amount of comfort from knowing that this is where I can run anyway to get it off my chest. I can go over her and I can share it with the brothers and they are going to say look man I have my own thing. So this is one thing even though many students don't, I think they identify more in a, let me see, universal way with the black student association being (muffled) and so by black people that arte proud of this and they don't necessarily, they haven't looked into it and they don't necessarily know the works of the black student association because they are not very much publicized and this is the one thing I have against that they don't, I don't think there is another publicity.

Walter Wade- How widely do they circulate the black thesis. It seems to me that if that was widely circulated among the black students this would carry all the publicity that you need.

Eddie Jenkins- This is true.

Walter Wade- But I only see copies because you bring them to me, but on the other hand that why would anybody else bring me one but I wondered how many do they print and how often does it come out?

Eddie Jenkins- Well it has been coming out something like.

Walter Wade- Once a month?

Eddie Jenkins- Well they were trying to get it out on a period of once every two weeks after it really got started but it took them a while to actually get off the ground and get started.

Walter Wade- Have you seen this Joan?

Joan Beifuss- I Have never even heard of it?

Walter Wade- It is a mimeographed 2 or 3 or 5 page paper on both sides, an 8 ½ by 13.

Joan Beifuss- No I have seen the Liberator now, this isn't the Liberator?

Eddie Jenkins- No this is a totally different...

Walter Wade- Black thesis.

Eddie Jenkins- This is an example, that black thesis was done last year.

Walter Wade- I have some of these back issues I think Joan and I ought to save them for you.

Joan Beifuss- Have we got them over here on file?

Walter Wade- Did I ask you Eddie if they had kept a file of every issue, does somebody have a file?

Eddie Jenkins- Well I don't know I have been trying to find that out but I have....

Walter Wade- You have almost all of them?

Eddie Jenkins- I have just about all of them and in the original form, I was the editor for two issues and that is one of them. This issue here, this is where Kenny Robinson started participating, I was involved in a couple of other stuff. And I was still in charge of the paper and he did the printing and so on but I was in charge at this time and to me this is where we really got off the ground and really came out with a paper right here.

Walter Wade- When was that was that still last year or was that Fall?

Eddie Jenkins- This was still last spring this was where we really came off the ground with something that was really...and this was the first issue of the black thesis that was to me really representative as far as the material was concerned. (Muffled) what we were trying to do and here in our first issue reflects the potential (muffled).

Walter Wade- I don't think I saw that issue.

Joan Beifuss- When is that dated?

Eddie Jenkins- It doesn't have a date.

Walter Wade- It isn't dated.

Joan Beifuss- Eddie is this distributed at all on campus or is it just available to the black students.

Eddie Jenkins- Well no what they do since we work with a limited facilities we don't have any financial backing.

Walter Wade- Who runs it off for you? Do you take, do you buy the paper and everything out of the club dues?

Eddie Jenkins- That is what we do see and what it is see we limit it to sometimes 500 copies, at least this is what I started with 500 copies and you can see that is quite small. And when we added the cover sheet and so on, I had a lot of pages, see what we did at first you know as you can see there we had everything printed on one page and we had tried a back and front page and so we started doing the back and front page the same paper. And Kenneth was running that thing off at his church.

Walter Wade- Oh is that it.

Joan Beifuss- That is Kenneth Robinson?

Eddie Jenkins- Yes, he is the editor of the black thesis now. IN fact, he is the head man in charge of the black thesis. But this was one of the things, we bought paper, we got paper anyway we could.

Walter Wade- Appropriated it from the church.

Eddie Jenkins- Well no, there were, we wouldn't, it was more like there facility was open and so we in some cases we had to help out, we were forced to help ourselves really. Yes I will admit it was (muffled) but I think it was what got us off the ground and we no longer (muffled).

Walter Wade- I think it is a very good paper in that it really gives those that have something to say it.

Eddie Jenkins- Well yes.

Walter Wade- I mean in print the forum gives them a chance to verbalize it all but to speak it but I have enjoyed reading the issues you have given me and it has given me tremendously more insight into the thinking of the negro students because I read things in there that I don't think any black student would say to me, unless I got them in a corner and said alright now come one.

Joan Beifuss- Then he couldn't say it for sure Walter.

Walter Wade- If I pushed him far enough he would, he would knock me flat on my back and then...

Joan Beifuss- Is there any kind of distributing it to the faculty?

Eddie Jenkins- Well I will tell you this is one of the few things that now that I am not really, all that I do is write a little bit for the paper. This is one of the few things that bothered me is that I didn't think the distribution was wide enough and it was not widely publicized. At this point I have no control and no solutions, towards the problem and so that is why I haven't said anything. But what we do, we started out and we still are sort of afraid to take a stack of maybe 150 and lay it down, or put it on the table. Because if we put a stack of 100 or 150 on the table who is going to say that you aren't going to get some redneck...

Walter Wade- Pick them all up and take them and put them in the garbage.

Eddie Jenkins- Yeah and put them in the trash or take them and burn them. They can take them over to a little furnace house and burn them you see. And the 150 copies of this thing, they represent a tremendous amount a total switch.

Walter Wade- Too much toil sweat and money.

Eddie Jenkins- Yeah and since we don't have adequate facilities we have to do the extra work you see. So this is what it comes to.

Joan Beifuss- but at any rate you do have a then a bi-weekly, paper coming out every other week.

Eddie Jenkins- Yeah.

Walter Wade- You know what you could do it seems to me something that could be a possible solution would be approach the faculty would they like to receive it or would they like to subscribe and get them to pay 2, or 3 or 5 dollars to receive it because alto of them would be willing to help you financially, I mean in small amounts like 5 or 10 dollars, and if they got the paper every day or every time it came out then they would feel that you know they were subscribing to it, At the same time you wouldn't be, you wouldn't have to feel that in any way because they are supporting the paper they are going to come in and try to tell you what to say. Too often if you accept money from somebody then you be holding them to it.

Joan Beifuss- No matter what you get out of the faculty I don't think...

Eddie Jenkins- I will tell you..

Walter Wade- But there is at least a handful don't you think of faculty members that would be willing to subscribe and that might be some help financially, why don't you suggest this to the=m.

Eddie Jenkins- Yeah I think they will. I will tell you something that we have done. As far as control, I will tell you what we said. You asked me a question and now I can give you the answer. We have told white students, white students have asked can

white students join the black student association? I told them yes, but you can't control anything.

Walter Wade- Oh well, I can certainly see why you would not want a great flux of white students who then tried to run the show for you. A replay of the old movie wouldn't it.

Eddie Jenkins- And if you get, see, if you get, let's say if you got the black student association to be venture 50/50 then it wouldn't be black.

Walter Wade- Well we have got the human relations club if we want an integrated group.

Eddie Jenkins- Yes.

Walter Wade- Where the white and the black students share the responsibility and the policy making and so forth...

Joan Beifuss- Ok Eddie let me get back then, then you have got the paper every other week and you have the forum weekly.

Eddie Jenkins- Yes.

Joan Beifuss- now what else does the, does the black student association for instance set up with a complaint committee? If you feel you have been discriminated against or there is discrimination going on in the campus is there some group that you can take that to and investigate it?

Walter Wade- Apparently the coordinating committee and if they feel that a complaint needs to be registered they go in a group and register the complaint. And they have gone and talked to all sorts of people about all sorts of things haven't they?

Eddie Jenkins- Yes this is true.

Walter Wade- The deans and the president and the provost and the editor of the Tiger Rag.

Joan Beifuss- Have you gotten any relief on any of the stuff that has been bugging you?

Eddie Jenkins- Well, really in a sense no. In a way. I can't really say because I am not, I don't think right now I am not enough in it you know...

Walter Wade- To hear what is happening about it.

Eddie Jenkins- Well I know basically what is going on because just about anytime something goes down I get it right off the top see.

Walter Wade- Yeah.

Eddie Jenkins- But I am not in the meetings so I don't really know about every time. But I don't think they have gotten alto of, they have gotten response yes, they have gotten, you might call promises a positive response but you can't actually say that they have gotten full positive response because some of these things are matters that have to take time.

Walter Wade- Well they talked about they want more black faculty members. Well you just can't go out tomorrow and hire 25 black teachers.

Eddie Jenkins- Well no.

Walter Wade- There aren't 25 qualified available people just sitting around waiting for you to....

Joan Beifuss- Well point in fact you could hire 25 black (muffled).

Walter Wade- What?

Joan Beifuss- I said in point and fact you could probably hire 25 black instructors.

Walter Wade- Tomorrow?

Eddie Jenkins- Yes.

Walter Wade- I don't believe that.

Joan Beifuss- You might not be bale to hire 25 black full professors or associate professors but you probably could get some high school teachers.

Walter Wade- Oh but how many, they can't leave in the middle of the year?

Eddie Jenkins- No not to bring them in tomorrow no.

Walter Wade- And yet some people seem to think that a demand like this there ought to be a response in the next ten days or something.

Joan Beifuss- No as a matter of fact the best position you can be in right now is a black professor. The need for them across the country is phenomenal.

Walter Wade- Well al the universities are out looking for them now.

Joan Beifuss- Yeah you can probably write your own ticket now...

Walter Wade- And in the south this is something I have told a great deal of people and they don't believe me. In the south most of the teachers that formally are negro and still now predominantly negro state colleges are making more than the teachers in the white state schools. This is 4 or 5 years ago but a friend of mine went to a convention and she talked to some negro teachers that taught in the Alabama State college in Montgomery. And she said how do you stand to live in Montgomery Alabama. She said well we just have our own little group and all this, that and the

other. Then she found out what they were making. They were making \$15,000, with salaries like that...

Joan Beifuss- I would expect that would be an exception rather than real...

Walter Wade- Well people at A and I were making more than the other state colleges and A and I was getting more money per pupil than any other college under the state board of education. At least up until a few years ago.

Eddie Jenkins- And they need it.

Walter Wade- Well bring the students up to date.

Joan Beifuss- They are behind aren't they. Eddie can we go back then to the time of the garbage strike here. The black students were already organized when the garbage strike started last February right.

Eddie Jenkins- Yes we were organized, we knew basically we were thinking in terms of campus programs at the time and airing our views on campus and we were sort of, I guess you could say this was our groping around stage after having a formal organization where we had established a 13 member coordinating committee and decided on a certain procedure and that we would have forums and so on. We were sort of groping around in a sense, for something that would really, we were looking for some way of really uniting black students and the garbage strike came and many of the black students on campus who had not even at that time identified with the black student association or took part were downtown marching.

Joan Beifuss- Was this almost from the beginning or did it take awhile?

Eddie Jenkins- Well we had been discussing and we had been watching and halfway keeping up with the thing from the beginning. You know only an individual basis, we discussed it some as a group and we encouraged the student sit go down and march and as many of them as possible went down and marched. There was students like me for instance who could not go down and march because I had to work see, and all I could do was follow. And the thing that really arouses was that as we began to discuss the matter we came to places where we found that there was discussion on campus, there was dialogue between white and black students and the white students were expressing, to me it was a lot of ignorance of the situation because the reports in the papers were vastly distorted and so on and they were expressing views that there were actually incompetent to the situation but they were competent as far as from the paper viewpoint. All what they knew was what they read in the paper.

Walter Wade- (muffled) and they would come to conclusions on that basis.

Eddie Jenkins- Yes.

Walter Wade- But the newspaper was so distorted that they really didn't understand the situation.

Eddie Jenkins- Yes, and until you had, they were reflecting many who still they were still reflecting he view of their parents, which was bad.

Joan Beifuss- Yeah right.

Eddie Jenkins- Rather than coming to their own conclusions and they were taking the, they were typifying the black people they would come in contact with which was the students and they couldn't picture students, I mean they couldn't picture the students who I guess dressed as well as they did and went down the road in cars as good as they did, they couldn't picture these students, they couldn't see why they would defend the garbage strike,. They didn't realize that these were the people, that some of these were the people that considered themselves to be of the middle class and some of them were working 6 days a week 34 hours a day not 24, 34 hours a day to maintain some sort of, I don't know, to look half decent.

Joan Beifuss- Eddie do you recall late in February when the garbage strikers and the ministers were maced on Main St., do you recall that?

Eddie Jenkins- Yes.

Joan Beifuss- Do you recall your own reaction to that?

Eddie Jenkins- Well this was one of the, one of the things that we built up our concern around grievances. This was one, some of the students were there and they saw it, there were various incidents where the people marching were pushed and so on, many students were pushed. And these are the, the students began to rally around the grievances, they began to discuss the grievances, the situation, the procedure the reasons, the so-called reasons and so on and so on. And this drew more student concern, the students became less, very much less apathetic and they began to identify with these people because many of these people were neighbors and many of these people were friends. Even in my case, I had one very good friend of mine his father was a striker, which means and I guess he looks like he has a million kids and to see him down there getting maced and pushed around and who knows what the results might have been. This might have been, his health might have bee damaged permanently and he still had a family to feed. So I was, so I was concerned not only about the man but I knew what he had behind him and by the same token there were many, you know, it seemed that poverty tends to breed population and we know that these people in poverty and so therefore you know behind them there is population. So if he was a typical striker and then I knew the potential, the possibility of what could happen to the others and so that made me and many other students vastly, we were greatly concerned about it.

Joan Beifuss- Let me go about it again. On the day that the march was maced on Main St. late in February, did this surprise you that this would happen?

Eddie Jenkins- No.

Joan Beifuss- Why?

Eddie Jenkins- Because at some time or another basically, most black people who live in the ghetto have seen spontaneous unnecessary incidents of violence, unprovoked incidents of violence towards black people, police whether black or white. So, this sort of thing becomes not necessarily accepted but the expected but typical thing. This is so, this just goes to show you they say well I told the only thing black people would say is I told you so, I knew it would happen. Because I myself heard them when I was, I guess maybe I was 15, 14 or 15 somewhere between 14 and 16. We used to go to cotton field and me and my buddies when we were coming back..

Joan Beifuss- you used to go over to the cotton field to pick?

Eddie Jenkins- Yeah.

Joan Beifuss- Where over in Arkansas?

Eddie Jenkins- Yeah, plus go around the city picking some. The bus travels through the ghetto and picks up the people and takes them to Arkansas and lets them off at night.

Joan Beifuss- For weekend?

Eddie Jenkins- This is what we did on weekends yes. So....

Joan Beifuss- What kind of money did you make then picking cotton?

Eddie Jenkins- Well I started out inexperienced they were paying something like \$2.50 a hundred. So I guess maybe I started out making maybe \$3 a day. It went from there to I made as much as 8 dollars a day.

Joan Beifuss- \$2.50 for hundred what?

Eddie Jenkins- Hundred pounds of cotton. Of course I got pretty good.

Walter Wade- (muffled)

Eddie Jenkins- I think my all time high was 278 in the fields in fact, I got so tough at it until I couldn't wear gloves I was very comfortable in gloves and it still shows on here but I got so that I was so good that when they started snapping and pulling everyone else tears in gloves to keep from tearing up their hands and I just pulled my hands and hit the bottom of the stalk and came straight up. And it never bothered me because by the time, I had been working hard ever since I was 12 anyway. So you know there wasn't any problems just adjusting to another thing. I got pretty adept at it. But anyway we, some of us yelled once or twice and this cop pulled out. He had a dog with him and the guy stopped us. I was walking ahead of the other guy and they had on this hat and he had it...it was a cocky looking hat and they had it cocked over really cocky looking and I was walking up ahead of the other people. And so they stopped and they called and I turned around and went back. So a cop comes out of the car and he walked up and he said who did all that so and so

hollering. And nobody said anything. So he turn on, hey you didn't you hear me calling, I was on my way back. So I said no. And he walked up and he slapped me upside my head and knocked my hat up off my head.

Joan Beifuss- Where was this?

Walter Wade- In Arkansas.

Eddie Jenkins- No this was right here in Memphis this was right down the street from my house, this was right up on the corner. We were going back to my house see and we were, just as we passed the corner he was sitting at the service station we saw him. Then he got out and eased on down the street behind us because if he hadn't we would have gotten away and ran you know. I didn't even see him, he had stopped everybody else before I even knew he was there because I was walking in the front and one of the guys he was behind a post and he never saw the guy, never saw him. The guy saw him first and just stood up beside a post and he never saw him. But he walked out and he, this was the first time I had even been talked to rough by cops because this was the usually procedure you know at one time of another that if you ever come in contact with them they usually they talk rough to you and they are trying to find out some information and blah blah blah. They always say boy, and run through this business like they are going to tear your head off. This was the first and really the only time that I had violence, how you say, pushed off on me, a victim you know. So I mean the guy he hit me like he was hitting a man. Wham. And when he hit me the force of the slap knocked my hat off my head and it went off to the side. He might have hit me again but I turned around and said look man I am a minor are you crazy? What you hit me for. So he stood there and looked at me for a long time and of course by this time he thought I might retaliate and had his flashlight all like this like he was going to nail me again. So then he started wanting to know who was hollering. I thought the usual black procedure talking to white people, he asked one question and then he asked another one. I would answer the one he asked the last time. I never answered who was hollering. Of course it was me. There was another guy but I never told him who it was and one of the bigger guys one of the older guys, he unsnapped his gun like he might pull his gun and he turned and sort of made a rush like he was going for this guy. And this big guy he as usual with big guys he backed off and halfway faked out (muffled) It was one of the little ones. His little brother was out there and he pointed him out for everybody else. And so he grabbed the guy, well he got the people that were hollering. The little guy that hollered he grabbed his arm and he just picked him up and grabbed his arm. Yeah he slapped me and I hollered and this other guy hollered and he grabbed the guys arm and said I am going to stick his whole arm to the dog. The little guy is used to running with us big guys in the neighborhood used to idolize me almost. He and I were very close. The big guy used to mess around with him and you know keep him off (muffled). He was standing there you know, so I like gave him this bold, if he had told I really wouldn't have done anything to him but he was just shaking you know. And he was common sense should have told him that man couldn't have stick his hand in with that dog and get away with it, Because all the

time I was sitting there thinking ok what can I do and I finally concluded that this is what happens all the time and there really wasn't anything I could do, but if he had stuck this boys hand there with that dog and we were all there, we knew that something would happen to that we would have had a case against the guy. And by that time people out in the street they heard the boy hollering and they were looking out see. They saw him slap me and so on and so on, but you know they have always got a case for all that stuff and he didn't really hurt me anyways so I said forget it. Anyways the kid never said anything and so he threatened to take us all to jail and blah blah blah. I knew he was lying and I knew he couldn't do all that either.

Joan Beifuss- Was this in the day time or night?

Eddie Jenkins- This was early in the morning before daylight. I guess maybe it was about 4:30 in the morning. Because we used to get up about 3 something and usually the bus came by about 4 or 4:30 or 5:0 and of course it had other rounds to make. And so you know this was getting back to it as far as violence being afflicted by the police. This is nothing new, this is something that basically all people in the ghetto, they expect it and it is a reality to them. This is not his say, this is usually reality because at sometime they will see somebody be handled unduly violently at one time or another often for no reason at all. Because I have seen people who have been kicked and beaten simply because they refuse to answer questions they were asked or possibly things they couldn't answer. They didn't know anything about it and they were beaten and kicked for not knowing. I had many friends who have been at some time or another pushed around by the cops for basically no reason at all. They said they were trying to be smart or funny or something.

Joan Beifuss- So it was no surprise when the strikers were maced marching?

Eddie Jenkins- No in fact, eventually we said probably it would happen, and eventually we expected something that is worse. It just so happened...

Walter Wade- Actually it seems to me that macing is a fairly mild thing compared to what they might have really did.

Eddie Jenkins- Well eventually it was, that little deal was mild compared to what happened in the so-called riot.

Joan Beifuss- Well before we get to the riot though, then did the black student association make any kind of contact then with the COME organization?

Eddie Jenkins- Oh yes, see we were in a sense we were a part of COME by the fact that there were students that were attending these meetings all the time. See this is how we kept up, students like me this is how we kept up, there were students in the meetings all the time.

Joan Beifuss- Yeah. Did the black students have any kind of official representation in the come committee?

Eddie Jenkins- No not at that time. No not at that stage of the game no.

Joan Beifuss- How about were you in contact with students at Lemoyne, Owen..

Eddie Jenkins- Yes, yes yes. We were, from the beginning because the first thing they did was once we got formed they sent us a, we got some papers first from Owen and then from Lemoyne from the black, the afro-American brotherhood. And we, I looked at the papers and to a certain point I was impressed. This is one of the later prepared and then at the same time I wasn't satisfied. I couldn't be satisfied with to me the intellectual level of the paper and so I started knocking, that is how I cam in control of the paper, they said you knocking, you want it this way, here it is. I am tired of doing it anyways, here it is, Before then Edwin Herald had been doing the paper completely almost by her self. I mean like she was a secretary here and she would....gee whiz it was quite I know a heck of a job but you know.

Walter Wade- Sure she had to write it all and then type it all and then run it all off and staple it all together this is a lot of work.

Eddie Jenkins- _Yes so she did volume one number one and two and I did volume 1 number 3 and 4 and Kenneth took it from 5 on. So I took the paper and I went through it and my wife being an English major I got her to look over it and to g over grammatical errors and I am not too bad in spelling. And so then we got it typed up soon and we eventually came out, by the way I got it the first one that is typed up here, I think it came out so good because I went over to Westminster house and it so happened that the stencil I had, I had some stencils for it to be typed up on, they couldn't use the....no I had all of it typed up and they couldn't use that stencil and so Dick Moon's professional secretary typed it over.

Walter Wade- I was going to say that is extremely duplication on that one, that is better than most of them. I realize that when they are working on them they are working in a hurry and a lot of times they don't have time to go back and correct everything.

Joan Beifuss- I am a little confused here Eddie. This is the black organizing project, this was put out this summer?

Eddie Jenkins- Well now this was one of the papers that came through from Lemoyne from last...

Joan Beifuss- During the strike?

Eddie Jenkins- Well yes, yes. Last Spring, I don't know really where it came through, where the strike came through,. It came through somewhere...

Joan Beifuss- Ok then so you were in contact with the...

Eddie Jenkins- Yes, yes,yes and then too we lived in the same communities so we maintained communication.

Walter Wade- How about that.

Eddie Jenkins- You see, this is just examples of, to me , this is examples of how the nature our paper is over there. This is the same thing if you will look at that last page it is the same thing and you have to start reading it before you know the point of it. You have to really read it to se.

Joan Beifuss- Oh I see.

Eddie Jenkins- And so you know this was the kind of thing that I didn't want, that I was shooting for. I was shooting for something, we were going to have something that was going to be representative.

Joan Beifuss- Right (muffled).

Eddie Jenkins- Of....yeah.. we were going to have something that was going to be representative of black students, one thing at that time, one thing I was still interested in was white attitudes and I would have had something that no matter even if the white man couldn't appreciate it he would have to respect it you know. That they wouldn't look through and say well, them niggers can't even spell. How they going to do this and how are you going to do that.

Walter Wade- Oh yeah I think you got the right idea you want a certain level of professionalism and confidence in the very layout, typing and printing and everything.

Joan Beifuss- (muffled).

Eddie Jenkins- Well you see what happened was I reads a paper from Owen and they called Owen little Memphis State. You know the nigger Memphis state because that is where you went to Owen if you couldn't pass the entrance exam, you went to Owen a semester and transferred from Owen to Memphis state.

Walter Wade- That is what they would do?

Eddie Jenkins- Yeah. But I read a paper from Owen and they were knocking the professors and how hard the professors were and professors were making the work too hard for them to get. (muffled) that they were failing them intentionally so that they could not go out into the black community and aid the other victims of poverty and white racism in American and so on. And I looked at the paper. And the paper said that to me it said that these people are, they don't know it and while they have the right ideas going through their heads, they aren't ready, they aren't qualified. Educationally they aren't qualified to go out and do t his and this is what made me realize the pathetic situation of the high school. Because and evidently a pathetic situation at Owen because evidently they weren't getting the message over in English.

Joan Beifuss- How about did you find this true with Lemoyne?

Eddie Jenkins- Well, I think this...

Walter Wade- I imagine (muffled is higher aren't they?)

Eddie Jenkins- Sure well you don't find a bunch of errors here in speaking but would you got a poem here where you got the same lines, it is almost prose.

Joan Beifuss- Yeah.

Eddie Jenkins- Even Lemoyne and they have fairly high standards, I have a great amount of respect for Lemoyne but even Lemoyne I don't think they have progressed to the level and yes in their thinking but I don't think Lemoyne has attained no matter what student organization they have at Lemoyne I don't think they have attained the sophistication of the BSA at Memphis state.

Joan Beifuss- Ok well now a lot of students marched on campus during the garbage strike didn't they?

Eddie Jenkins- Yes at first this was a spontaneous thing. The way it all came about was that I had been pushing, we ought to march.

Walter Wade- it was a spontaneous thing inspired by Eddie Jenkins on top of the cafeteria table.

Eddie Jenkins- Ok cafeteria table. It really started with the white students. I had been, see Ron Ivy was doing the student teaching at that time. And you see I knew Ron man I knew Ron, he knew the historical deal and I knew he had time because he wasn't working he was just going to school, to actually keep, he was going down and marching and he was going to meetings and every thing and he had time to keep up with everything and he knew what was going on and everything I was getting was basically second handed. And I was in the, the ROTC glee club at that time and so they had the national conference I think of Christian and Jews down at the Rivermont Hotel.

Joan Beifuss- Yes.

Eddie Jenkins- And we were invited to sing down there.

Joan Beifuss- Oh were you?

Eddie Jenkins- And so after we sung I happened to come out and I was looking for a place to sit and all the guys sit down and we were already nervous this was the first time I had ever been in anything like this and people had on a formal bid and all this. And I was looking at all this different stuff on the table all these folks and such and I was halfway confused, so I wanted to sit with some of the guys you know and I knew some of the white guys and the black guys who they waited tables who we really knew what was going on and what to do and so I went to sort of pan myself out with them. So they all crammed around a table and there wasn't a place for me. So I said

oh I will it over here. And I sit down and looked around at Henry Lobe's face and I had been reading the papers and....

Joan Beifuss- You mean you were at the table with Henry Lobe?

Eddie Jenkins- Yes Henry Lobe and Jerry Worth was sitting across the table.

Walter Wade- Oh Jerry was (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- Lobe had taken Worth tot hat meeting.

Walter Wade- Yes that is right and you sat down with them?

Eddie Jenkins- Yes and he was sitting right here actually on my right here and so he turns around being a politician. My name is Henry Lobe, you know. I ma proud to meet you and all this bit.

Walter Wade- (Muffled).

Eddie Jenkins- Well I turned around and shook hands with the man and just to show you how far you can progress in so little time, a year's time I turned around and shook hands with the man and I was proud to meet him and all this business. And I even stood up and clapped for him with all of this contempt in my heart, you know lying for the white man again I stood up and clapped for him when they introduced him over the mic and you know finally made him stand up.

Joan Beifuss- He got a really rousing ovation that night.

Eddie Jenkins- Oh yeah, and you know yeah. The whole bit, I noticed that Jerry Worth didn't stand up he didn't clap a lick.

Joan Beifuss- how about when they introduced Jerry Worth what happened then?

Walter Wade- I bet there was a few polite claps.

Eddie Jenkins- They didn't really know him but oh Mayor Lobe there was a bunch of token niggers down there yeaaaaaaah almost doing that.

Walter Wade- That is your role in life Eddie being the (muffled).

Eddie Jenkins- Well it has been so far, I am putting that away. Anyway so why do (muffled). You know who that is come over here, you don't want to sit over there. Why man? Because that is Lobe. I said what's wrong with that? I said no I may have a chance to get some information over here. So I said well here we are, this is an opportunity to really get it right off the top. I said I can really get the info off the top right here.

Joan Beifuss- What did you get?

Eddie Jenkins- I asked him, I told him we were sitting there and he asked me where was I, he was very interested asking me where was I going to school and how was I

classified and so on and so on. What a good school Memphis State was and he and Humphreys were very good friends and blah blah blah. So I turned around and asked him, I said, I would like to ask the question. He said oh yes go right ahead. So I said, why are you holding out on the strikers. He said I can't hear you with all this noise in here. They were constantly introducing people and clapping and so on. So I said why are you holding out. Jerry said, you heard him he asked you why are you holding out on the strikers. He made some slight remark about Lobe, that Lobe hahaha kind of went through that thing. So he talked, he said two or three words and he didn't say anything else. He said, I can't hear you in here, we can't really talk in here.

Joan Beifuss- He said why don't you come to my office on Thursday?

Eddie Jenkins- No he told me he said, I will tell you what I will call you later tonight. So he pulled out this little pad and he took my number and everything and he told me he would call me. Well that night I didn't go home I went to my mother in laws house and stayed all night with my mother in law. And he called.

Walter Wade- He actually did.

Eddie Jenkins- I was very much surprised you know and I said gee whiz maybe the guys wasn't so bad after all.

Joan Beifuss- What was your conversation when he called.

Walter Wade- (muffled)

Eddie Jenkins- I didn't talk to him I wasn't there. After this he wrote me a letter.

Joan Beifuss- Do you have the letter?

Eddie Jenkins- Yes, I think I do here somewhere. I have got so much stuff.

Joan Beifuss- That is alright we can look for it afterwards.

Eddie Jenkins- I think you saw that.

Joan Beifuss- We can look for it once we turn the tape off.

Walter Wade- Yeah we can find it later Eddie don't worry about it now.

Eddie Jenkins- Anyway he wrote me this letter and I said gee whiz maybe this guy isn't so bad after all. Maybe he is trying to be you know, relatively fair and square and maybe he we just got him all wrong. And so he wrote a letter, and then I opened my letter and read it and I started looking for the stuff that was on the letter and I said oh boy, I can just putt hat away as far as he is just being fair and square and that bit.

Walter Wade- Because it was the same old routine wasn't it?

Eddie Jenkins- The same old bag.

Walter Wade- The same thing he had said publicly many times or had been in favor of.

Eddie Jenkins- And you know and his bit about being fair and firm. I just couldn't buy that, it just, this didn't stick., This to me knowing what these people were going through, living with these people I couldn't accept this thing about being fair and firm as really being (muffled). He wrote this letter. Dr. Mr. Jenkins, I am sorry that I missed you when I called and spoke to your sister, that was my mother. Enclosed is a copy of a letter I have written several times within the last day or two, to people wondering why I took the position that I did, After reading the letter if you have any questions please let me here from you sincere best wishes yours truly and it was personally signed. Then he went through the letter thing, he says I appreciate your letter of February 22nd and your thinking expressed therein. Just as I respect your opinion I ask that you respect mine which is different. And he is saying and this is ironic, I went down to talk to the man, he told me he respect my opinion. And my opinion was the same as 1,300 other people an the union people and he respected it but he didn't even consider it. So how can he, he was lying to me this is the reverse thing where whitey lies to me and I am too dull to understand and he says I immediatly to agree local number 1733 AFSCME, AFLCIO and all of this...(Tape End)