

TRANSCRIPT – TIMOTHY GRANT

Interviewee: TIMOTHY EDWARD GRANT

Interviewer: KIERAN W. TAYLOR

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TG: - speaking, you know, different engagement. Like I do –

KT: I turned it on by the way.

TG: Oh, it's already on. Well, I do prison ministry. And I go up to the Detention Center and I speak with the guys who incarcerated because –

KT: Oh, it's on. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

TG: I – I once myself incarcerated. Not once, but numerous times.

KT: Uh-huh.

TG: So I know what – what being incarcerated is like. You know, being from the inside looking out, so I could relate to the guys and what they're going through being there myself. It's hard for someone to come and talk to the guys and, you know, if you ain't ever been on that side. It's hard to relate to them, so being in that position myself so, you know, it's easy for me to relate to them because I know the different issues, I know about, you know, you're concerned about your family and what's going on, and all kind of things going through your mind, you know, what's going to happen to me, you know, when I'm in here. How my family going to cope when I'm not there to help provide; you know? And, you know, I find – and me being incarcerated going back and forth [00:01:05] I wasn't only hurting me, I was hurting my family. But at the time I couldn't

see that.

KT: Right.

TG: You know? Because I was like in a box, man; you know? Like I just, you know, I – I didn't see the overall picture; you know? So it was a struggle for me for many years. And normally what I do when I go to prison ministry, I give a testimony. Say, hey, guys, I know about being in jail because I've been in jail, I was doing time. You know, since '73 I've been in jail. I start since '73. So, you know, I can relate back –

KT: And you were, what, like nineteen at that time when you first went out?

TG: Yeah. Yeah. Oh, nineteen – well, eighteen, nineteen, mm-hmm, at nineteen.

KT: Just for – for the sake of the interview, could you say your full name and when and where you were born?

TG: My name is Timothy Edward Grant. I was born right here in Charleston, South Carolina. Born at the Naval Hospital. I'm currently right now fifty-five years old. Born March 21, 1954. And born and raised right in here in Charleston. Raised up on Jackson Street, which is in downtown Charleston – on the East side of Charleston. During the time I was coming up, during that time we – we had a lot of things going on, you know, during that time in the 60s, 50s, 60s, Black Panther Party, things going on in different parts of the country. And some of the guys at – older guys than me decided they want to have a – a gang called the Jackson Street Panthers; you know? We protect our area, our community in whatever endeavor might, you know, might come our way. So we adopted that from the Black Panther Party.

KT: Right, right.

TG: Yeah. We started out as young men, didn't really have a purpose but, you

know, just trying to feel like a family, you know, joining gangs, but we never – never went – have no rival gangs, you know, like we going out and fighting, causing trouble. We were just supposed to, like, you know –

KT: Defensive?

TG: - defensive, yeah. You know, we – we defend territory, you know, because we – we had a, you know, a thing about territory during that time. You know, we on the East side. You can't come from the West side to East side, from the north; you know? So the territory was a thing, but as we get to know each other, say we might have a clash with one or two of the guys out of a different section – sector and that will cause us to get, you know, the bond just by clashing like that; you know? You have confrontation with, you know, not with knives and guns, but just fist fight; you know?

KT: But what year did you – were the Jackson Street Rangers formed? Panthers.

TG: Panthers. It was formed in nineteen – I would say 1971 or '70.

KT: Okay.

TG: Mm-hmm.

KT: So after the – the Hospital Worker Strike.

TG: Yeah, after the Hospital Workers Strike, yeah. I mean, we were formed, but we – we actually was, you know, we were formed, but we weren't that, you know, [00:04:47] talk of the streets because we were, like, low key.

KT: Yeah, yeah.

TG: You know, low key. And – but the hospital strikers knew as, you know, I got to say from the older guys, the older guys, and, you know, we were the younger guys, and older guys, they had a – they had a – their mentality were to get out and help people in a

community, things that they could have done. We younger guy, we – we looking for trouble; you know?

KT: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

TG: You know? So the older guys could, no, that's not what we are about. You know, we – this – this what we about.

KT: Yeah.

TG: And they, like, kept us in line, so –

KT: Well maybe, like I said, I was thinking that what we'd do is start with the present day and work backward, but this is too good. Let's – tell me – so you're born on Jackson Street. Tell me about your family a little bit.

TG: Oh, my family, my mother, I – I've got four sisters and two more brothers beside me, so we're a family of seven. Coming up as a young boy, you know, it was a struggle for my mother during that time because my father, well, I had a father, biological father, but he wasn't there. My mother was my mother and my father. She did all the providing, she had to go to work and go different place while – and sometimes she had to go out of town work in New York and different places. And during that time, my mother – my grandmother and my great grandmother were still living, so we had to – when my mother left and went to – to work out of town, we had to go stay with my grandmother, which is in a placed called Accabee. It's in the North Charleston area. Accabee's in the North Charleston. And we had to commute from, you know, catch the bus from Accabee downtown to go to school which was Sanders-Clyde. This was our school because, you know, we raised up on Jackson Street, and Sanders-Clyde is right on Jackson Street, so we could walk out our front door and walk straight to the school – be there in two

minutes, you know, but -

KT: What kind of work did your mom do?

TG: Domestic work.

KT: Yeah.

TG: You know, cleaning house, you know, maid type work, yeah. So, you know, that's basically the only type work she could have done. But she – somehow she managed. You know, with seven children doing that type of work with seven of us, just the older it was one, two, three, four – four – five of us. With the other two born later, you know, two youngers.

KT: Yeah.

TG: But it was five, you know, and like I say, it was a struggle for her.

KT: You're close to your grandmother and great grandmother as well?

TG: Oh, yeah, was. You know, they – they've deceased –

KT: Sure.

TG: - over thirty-five years ago, forty years ago – longer than that. Forty years ago, maybe more. Because I remember them when – when I was seven, eight years old, you know, my grandmother, my great grandmother, and, you know, they died when we were young. I know – had to die before I was ten years old, so –

KT: But your great grandmother, I mean, she would have been born in the 1870s or something probably.

TG: Yes, yes, she – she was old. She was a lady, man, she was a tough lady. Big, tough lady. Man, I remember her used to smoking pipe, you know, and smoked tobacco. She'd curse you every two words. She, you know, she – that type of lady, man. She never

take no stuff; you know? So my great grandmother, you know, after her pipe tobacco go, she'd get cigar and clip the cigar and put it in her pipe. I tell you, she was rough. I never seen a woman smoke no, you know, I can – I can remember that this is – this is as vivid to me today as it was back then.

KT: Yeah.

TG: A lady didn't – normally see man smoking, yeah, but a woman? She had to be a tough lady. But she was, you know, she was tough, but, you know, that's tough love, you know, trying to shape and mold us into, you know, to be men, to be, you know, to have purpose, to have a, you know, a goal, you know, vision, you know, and, you know, because during that time, you know, you know, she wasn't that education – educated, but she know how to survive on what –

KT: Do you remember, did she ever tell you stories come, you know, out of her past?

TG: Wow. Wow. So my – I don't know. I can remember vividly some of the things she used to tell us about how she had to work when she was a young girl in the cotton fields and doing things and that she wasn't pleased of but she had to do it to survive. How her – her father, how her father – she saw her father got killed at a young age; you know? Get – got killed in front of her at a young age, and some of the other things that she saw happen during her time, you know, doing what you call the Jim Crow and, you know, during that time.

KT: Right.

TG: Racial tension between the people and how she had to submit to a lot of things that she felt degraded her as a woman, you know, and, you know, and I know it

really was tough for her and, you know, I thought it was tough for me coming up, but, you know, as I look back, you know, and understand history that, you know, it really was tough. So you had to be strong, you know, to endure through all the things that she was going through, so it really was something; you know?

KT: Did you have a sense whether she came from the islands or whether she was born and raised in Charleston herself?

TG: I think she was born and raised in Charleston herself. The reason why I say that – no, I better back that up because I always thought my grandmother, my mother's mother – not my great grandmother, but my mother's mother, I remember seeing her, she was a – a bright skin woman, but hair, pretty dark hair - pretty black dark hair. And over my years I was, you know, I used to hear the talk say that your - my grandmother was part Indian, you know, because she looked like she, you know, part Indian. So I don't know how true that – how true that is in the family. You know, I – I've heard that when I was a little boy; you know? Part Indian. You know, that's something I need to talk to my mom about again. That's something tonight when I go over I'm going to ask her about. You know, I can get some lot of history from my mother, you know, about –

KT: But your grandmother was – was from Charleston.

TG: Yes.

KT: Born and raised in Charleston.

TG: Yes. Yes, yes. And she worked at the Medical University Hospital.

KT: Oh, she did?

TG: Before this – they had the strike.

KT: Was she working there at the time or had she retired from –

TG: No, no, no, no, she – during the part they had the strike she already – she already done pass.

KT: Oh, okay.

TG: Yeah, so she was there way before that.

KT: Oh, that's right. You said she died when you were about ten or so.

TG: Mm-hmm, yeah. So way before that, yeah. But I remember, you know, my sister be telling me – just matter of fact, my sister just was talking about it yesterday over to my mother house, you know, how our grandmother, you know, in – she used to work, you know, and come home real tired and – and my sisters ask her, well, how, you know, you tired, grandmother, you know? She said, yeah, but I got to – I got to keep going. You know, you – somehow you find that reserve to – to keep going, you know, so –

KT: What was her name?

TG: My grandmother?

KT: Mm-hmm.

TG: Lula – Lula Murphy.

KT: Lula.

TG: Murphy.

KT: Murphy. Okay.

TG: Yeah, that's my mother maiden name before she got married. Murphy.

KT: She was a Murphy.

TG: Murphy, yeah. And –

KT: That's not a common Charleston name, is it - Murphy?

TG: No, not really.

KT: Yeah.

TG: My great grandmother name was Maggie Murphy.

KT: Maggie Murphy.

TG: Yes.

KT: Now that sounds Stone Irish.

TG: You know, but I'll have to dig some more and find out about the, you know, the family tree and what's going on. Like I said, my mother could provide a lot of that information. But, you know, like I say, my mother was – my mother and my father, she did everything for us. And, you know, that time for – coming from a one-parent family, two boys, me and my older brother, we just a year apart, and we had a lot – we didn't have too much opportunities as having man in our life to set the path straight for us. So, you know, a mother can only tell you thing from a mother perspective. But if you got a father there, he can, you know, he has got the strong hand to keep you – keep you in line. So we didn't have that. So I guess that's why we – we kind of strayed away and got mixed up in all of different things; you know?

KT: Oh, especially if she's working twelve –

TG: Yes.

KT: -fifteen hours.

TG: You know what I'm saying? So yeah.

KT: Or up in New York for weeks; you know?

TG: Weeks, months. That's right. You know? So –

KT: Seven of you running around.

TG: Yeah, you know, you know, grand – we stay with our grandmother, so there

wasn't really no father figure there – uncles – I don't know none of them. And I can't really picture my mind where an uncle from my past coming to say, hey, you know, boy, this so and so; you know?

KT: Yeah, they weren't there.

TG: They weren't there. So I never knew why, you know, but they weren't there.

KT: What – what's your earliest memory? What's the first thing you remember?

TG: What, I mean, pertaining to –

KT: Anything?

TG: My childhood coming up or –

KT: Yeah.

TG: Well, I – I could say my earlier memory, I can go back to – to – I remember at my grandmother's house – my z grandmother house, like I say, Accabee is a little section in North Charleston off of Meeting Street Road. I don't know if you familiar with Charleston, but, you know, if you going down Meeting Street, Meeting Street extension, you know, Spruill Avenue this way and Meeting Street run this way, you keep Meeting Street on out until you come under the viaduct, after the viaduct [00:15:26], and soon as you come under the viaduct there's a little section on the right. That's Accabee.

KT: Okay.

TG: Before you come out to the road where – where King Street extension comes in like that, and that little part on the side is Accabee. When I was little, I always thought that we were in the country because my grandmother had chickens, a chicken house. You know, you had to go in and get eggs. That's what – in my mind I thought we were in the country. Actually, we in the city which her – her house, where she was living at, was like

– like I say, I thought we were in the country. I didn't see no goats and no cows and stuff, but chickens and, you know, things like that we had in the yard. We had to go out there. And – and right next door to what – to my grandmother's house was a – my godmother. Her name was – her name was Miss Jessie. Miss Jessie. I don't know Miss Jessie last name because she died – she died, too, when I was young. But I remember her, you know, being my godmother because every time they used to look for me, we go out to play, they looking for me and I'll be at her house. She had me in her house doing - you know? So yeah. Because she – she my Godmother. She the one named me. She – and she used to what I call kidnap me all the time. But there was a concern because they don't – they don't see me out with the rest of the family members. They knew I was –

KT: But she would put you to work around the house or just –

TG: Just – just have me.

KT: - just wanted you in the house?

TG: Just wanted me in the house. You know, the – you know, little kids, you know, that's just she – my godmother, she named me, she just want to, I guess, love on me and show me things, you know, give me things and things like that. So that was – that was part of my childhood then from, you know, I – from my grandmother being – living with my grandmother, you know, and – but as – as we – my mother got settled, got a job here in Charleston, she's working at the Francis Marion Hotel for a lot of years.

KT: Oh, okay.

TG: Until my –

KT: Housekeeping.

TG: Housekeeping, yes, working, yeah, at the Francis Marion Hotel. From my

days in elementary school up to – up to part of my days in high school my mother's working because I remember we, you know, on days that she get – like she used to get paid and – and she wasn't working, she would send one of us down to Francis Marion and get – go pick up her check. And we had to go in Francis Marion to Calhoun side and you walk down in the kitchen part. And, you know, I remember days – days like that, yeah. So, yeah, so when mother was – had a job here and we were pretty much, well, you know, finally was together and, you know, like I say, I – I was - during high school I had a – a lot of opportunities, you know, to – to excel in sports. Me and my brother, we had coaches from Burke High School, [00:18:33 Marty Richard] was trying to recruit us from over here at C.A. Brown to Burke. He want us to play football or basketball for him.

KT: Really?

TG: Yeah. Oh, yes, yeah.

KT: They could do that?

TG: Well, back then they could.

KT: They could recruit out of – out of district.

TG: Yes. Back then he could – he could have done it.

KT: Yeah.

TG: The only thing we had to show is –

K T: Because Burke had the better sports I'd assume.

TG: Better facility because, see, Burke been around long time.

KT: Right, right.

TG: C. A. Brown '62. That one is – goes - it last twenty – '62 to '82 – twenty years C.A. Brown was, yeah, was just a – but Burke was – Burke was around, you know,

we have family in Strawberry Lane which is on the West side of town. Somebody told us, you know, well, you use your family address, you know, because that put you on the West side.

KT: Right, right, right.

TG: Then we can get you over to Burke.

KT: They – they do that [00:19:27 crosstalk] yeah, they do the same, yeah.

TG: You know? So yeah.

KT: But they – they – the coaches noticed you even coming up as a – in seventh, eighth grade.

TG: Yes.

KT: Because of your size or just – or going to games and seeing you?

TG: Size and, you know, because we – we played starting off on the parks, and people notice you in the park; you know? We play everything in the park. We had all from track to football to basketball to baseball, ping pong, horseshoe, table – I mean –

KT: Yeah.

TG: What do you call the thing – table – you hit the ball with–

KT: Billiards?

TG: It wasn't billiard, but bumper –

KT: Bumper pool.

TG: Yeah, yeah. We – ain't nothing we couldn't do, you know, in the park, so we was active. Even my sisters, you know, had my sister in high school, we play sports.

KT: What was your main sport?

TG: Main sport, football and basketball.

KT: Okay.

TG: But I could have played any – any position on football, any position baseball, any position. It was just something that you – we picked up, you know, because my father was an athlete, my mother was a better athlete than my father.

KT: Uh-huh.

TG: That's what I was told, you know, when I was coming up. You know, people who know my mother just say, you think your daddy [00:20:41], your mother was the one; you know? Now didn't actually see her do it, but, you know, from people who knew her over the years and she –

KT: Had she by any – had she gone to Burke?

TG: She went to Avery.

KT: She went to Avery.

TG: Yes.

INT: That's interesting.

TG: Yes.

KT: That means her family had a little bit of money.

TG: Yes, yes, she went to Avery, yes.

KT: Enough to send her to Avery.

TG: Send her to Avery, yes. So I don't know whether it was on – I don't know if they had scholarship back then. But I know she was in sports, though.

KT: Yeah.

TG: Somehow she got to, you know, yeah, so back in those days

KT: Is she – is she still close to that whole Avery group then and –

TG: I'm not sure.

KT: Uh-huh. Because I know it's a pretty tight group if you went to Avery.

TG: Yeah, they're pretty tight group, yeah, so yeah. But I'm – I'm not sure because through her church that she goes to, which is here on Charleston on Gordon Street, which is called Greater Saint Luke, it's a lot of the people that she knew over the years when she was child. They attend the same churches and different functions they be at. So like I say, I'm not sure if – if they have some kind of affiliation still with Avery, you know, so I don't know. I'm not sure.

KT: Now did – but the family always had the – the place on Jackson Street.

TG: Yes.

KT: I mean, that was always your home.

TG: Yes.

KT: Coming up.

TG: Jackson Street, yeah, mm-hmm – 9C Jackson Street in the Projects. That's the, you know, about the cheapest place we could have lived during that time, so – so Jackson Street always been my – always been my home, you know, until we moved – because I said, we moved from Jackson Street onto America Street. That's right around the corner.

KT: Mm-hmm.

TG: You know, we didn't even have to use no truck to – to move our stuff. We just walk out one, you know, one apartment, run straight across, and walk into the apartment – the new apartment we moving in because it was more room, bigger; you know, more bedrooms, yeah, so –

KT: So do you know if a lot of people in the community worked in the tobacco plant at that point?

TG: Oh, the Cigar Factory.

KT: Yeah.

TG: Oh, yes. I had an uncle. My aunt's husband, my mother's sister, my mother old sister, her name was Maggie Murphy -

KT: Okay.

TG: - before she got married. She's Maggie Mulligan now. She's deceased. But her husband, my uncle, Arthur Mulligan, worked in the Cigar Factory. I had some - some cousin that I knew worked in the Cigar Factory. And a lot of people of this community worked at the Cigar Factory, so -

KT: Which is a pretty good job.

TG: Yeah, pretty good job if you could get in there.

KT: Yeah.

TG: At that time, you know, yeah. You getting in there was pretty - one of the, I guess, during that time the best paying job if you can, you know, Cigar Factory, yeah.

KT: Or, I guess, working on the docks.

TG: Oh, yeah.

KT: For the longshoremen.

TG: For the longshoremen, yeah, yeah. I've worked with longshoremen myself during my teen years and up to some time in my adult years, too, from school, you know, doing some - go down to the docks work. My adult years, too, you know, working. That's how I know [Leonard] Riley. I know him pretty good, too, you know, from

working out there, too, so –

KT: Do you remember developing any kind of political consciousness as a teenager or even, you know, as a young person? Political or racial consciousness – consciousness around the Civil Rights Movement, that kind of thing?

TG: Oh, yes, yes, I have.

INT: How did that develop?

TG: That developed from – from – from – well, actually from the Hospital Strike, seeing, you know, what developed, seeing the Civil Rights Movement from Dr. King, what's happening around different part of the country, how they striking in Memphis, how they doing things, that got me aware, you know, more – more conscious politically what's going on and how it was affecting me not directly but indirect on how it's affecting me.

KT: Right.

TG: And – and that what got me involved to, you know, how am I going to make a difference on what's going on. Suppose it home, what am I going to do? Then it actually – actually 69 it came home.

KT: Yeah.

TG: And – and being a young man and being around people with the older guys, just seeing what's happening in the community, we got to get involved. That's what the guys said. We got to get involved in this, you know, because those – those are our mothers, those are our sisters, those are our aunts, those are our, you know, we got to get involved; you know? In any way that we can, we need to get involved and support them. Let me know we – they got support of us. And – and that's really how I got involved; you

know? I got –

KT: So you were a little bit too young to have been involved in the – because in – in the mid-sixties there was some picketing on King Street and that kind of thing.

TG: In the mid-sixties, yeah, but – but 69 when I, you know, during that time, that's when I really –

KT: Yeah.

TG: - had understanding more what's – what's going on.

KT: Right.

TG: Just read about it, see what's happening on TV, you know, hearing about what's going on. It – it wasn't really – it didn't really dawn on me to get involved if I didn't had the older guys around me within the Jackson Street Panther to – to enlighten us what was happening. Then I probably wouldn't have got involved; you know?

KT: Yeah, yeah.

TG: Said hey, you know, you know, when I -

KT: So tell me how – how have you started hanging around this – the group that became the Panthers?

TG: Well, they started on –

KT: I mean, these are just neighborhood your friends?

TG: Right on my street. All these guys were right off my block.

KT: Uh-huh.

TG: Right outside where I – where I grew up at, you know, all on my –

KT: So you'd been knowing them from – since –

TG: Yeah, man.

KT: - the start.

TG: They know me, yeah, you know, right from the start because raising up right on Jackson Street, and that's where everything started right on Jackson Street. So raising up there and playing sports through the week these guys on the park and they know my mom. They know someone in the family, you know, and most of the guys we meet come from playing sports; you know? Basketball, football on the park. Normally when we playing sports on the park for, you know, we played against different – different parks, you got different age group, different weight groups, me and my brother didn't – we always play bigger than our group.

KT: Uh-huh.

TG: You know, we never played in the right age. We always would –

KT: Because you were a little bit bigger than [00:27:12 crosstalk] –

TG: Little bit bigger, little bit more athletic, so we be playing, just kicking it with the other guys on the park playing basketball and stuff, the only way you could play with the bigger guys is you had to prove yourself. If somebody give you a chance to prove yourself, you got to take advantage of the opportunity and prove to them. And once they see that you can play, okay, now, you good. You get to come in; you know? So basically that's how we got in, you know, was through athletics; you know? Seeing these guy playing, “can we play with you all?” “ Oh, you too little, man. You can't, you know, you're young guy. You can't. [00:27:45]”, so if somebody took a chance, man, let the guy play. They might didn't have enough people that day, so come on, let him play, man. Let's see what he can do. Well, I seized the opportunity, you know, and –

KT: Yeah, yeah.

TG: - and that's what got, you know, bind us with them guys and –

KT: Do you – but already even before you officially or before you began, you know, calling yourself the – the Panthers, did your Jackson Street group kind of have a reputation?

TG: Mm-hmm.

KT: On the East Side?

TG: Yes.

KT: As a, you know, kind of like, yeah, you know about, you know, those guys on Jackson Street.

TG: Yeah, they say – they say, you know about the guys on Jackson, yeah.

KT: Whether you were tough or whatever.

TG: And I –

KT: Because you kind of stand out on the East Side as opposed to, you know, the – the guys that grew up on Reed Street or grew up on [00:28:29 crosstalk] –

TG: Yes, yeah. Everyone had knew what part of town you been from.

KT: Right.

TG: You know what I'm saying?

KT: Even down to the streets.

TG: Even down to the streets we would knew what part of town –

KT: Why was that?

TG: I don't know. Because, you know, in your neighborhood, you only see everyday people in your neighborhood. And you know who lived in your neighborhood and who don't; you know? And when you traveling, like say, on King Street to go shop

or something like that, you might see some guys, hey, that's my cousin, this my – oh, yeah, he live on so-and-so street. So the association from being, you know, traveling different places – the grocery store, different, you know, like I said, King Street is the main street where you go do your shopping.

KT: Right.

TG: And we – we meet a lot of people like that. Over the years we – we – we had people like Calhoun Street. We used to call that the borough – Mexico – the borough. The West side of town, President Street, President Street, [00:29:41], Burke School area, that's back The Green. Where – where we live at on the East side, Jackson Street East side.

KT: You call it back to Green.

TG: Yeah. And the guys up on Mt. Pleasant Street, well, you know, we call that the North area, we – we [00:29:56]. So everybody had their little – little section off and everyone pretty much knew who – what side of town you were on.

KT: Yeah. And you – what was the reputation of the Jackson Street group?

TG: Well, like I say, our reputation was, we very defensive. We defend our territory like most group would defend, you know, defend the territory. Go – we didn't go outside our territory, not unless something happens like some – say something happened to one of the members in the – and some guys on our side might have jumped him for whatever reason, well, then you might get together and want to go over their territory just to find out what, you know what I mean, if we can't get no satisfaction, then it's on from there. But, you know, mainly when we go to different function like school function like basketball game to a gym, a football game or dance, well, you know, that –

that's when we have our clashes.

KT: Right, right, right.

TG: You know? They looking at our women, oh, their women, oh; you know?

One of those things. So it – it was –

KT: Do you remember when it – was there a moment where it started to get dangerous? When it moved beyond, you know, just, you know, fists and –

TG: Mm-hmm.

KT: - when the, you know, a moment when you can remember now these – this – the stakes are higher here. Somebody is either going to get real messed up or killed?

TG: Yes. We had a couple guys, older guys – more than a couple – about two, three guys on the Jackson Street Panthers, we call them loco because they – we didn't think these guys playing with a full deck. And these guys had pistols and stuff. On Martin Park a long time ago we had a – before they had all the playground and stuff, we just used to have red clay dirt on Martin Park. I can remember used to have mountains up before they could spread it out. You either get behind the – they guys had to get behind the mountains or the clay dirt and shoot at each other. These guys were crazy. We called the guys loco, man. These, you know what I mean? I'm serious; you know? And we know that these guys, they were, you know, these guys, they were ready to do – if they shoot at one another, you know they do – you know what I'm saying?

KT: Right.

TG: So – but, you know, the time that – when I went to Jackson Street I never carried no pistol, never carried no weapon because, you know, to be with the older guys, they wouldn't allow you to carry that. They're the one with take all the, you know, carry

all the weapon. They wouldn't allow you to, hm-mm.

KT: Yeah.

TG: But I – I could remember at a dance at the YWCA, was on Coming Street, this is about thirty years ago, that's how long that Y been – had been along that – thirty years ago – they had a dance and something happened. You know, different guys from different sectors but in a – and I know why this – know something going to happen, you know, you can just feel something going to happen.

KT: Mm-hmm.

TG: The way the guys dancing with the girls, they, you know, they – things were – well, what happened, it did – something did break out. It was a fight. And I found ourself, we had some guy, well, I didn't know that our guys already had – had weapons and stuff outside. You know, me going in the [00:33:35], I didn't know nothing, you know, I mean, they already had the weapons so when something – things jump off, the guys – our guys ran around the corner, which is on Duncan Street right down the street, you know, street – if you're familiar –

KT: Mm-hmm.

TG: Duncan Street is right across – right into Coming Street.

KT: Coming.

TG: Which Duncan Street will run you straight into the YWCA. And right there, the – there were some houses there, and right in the alleyway, they run in, they come back, these guys had machetes. We had machetes. They pass us machetes, man. And we ran into the place getting ready to – to – thank God we didn't – we didn't – we didn't use them. We had machetes, man.

KT: - run or stand down or what happened?

TG: No, people start –

KT: Running all over?

TG: Yeah, yeah. And, you know, cause a big panic because they say, we coming there, you know, man, I mean –

KT: About when was that?

TG: Well, like I said, this had to have been thirty something years ago.

KT: Early 70s?

TG: Yes, yes, yes.

KT: Yeah.

TG: Yeah. So we – and I've been a lot of places, man. You know, a lot of guys talk but they couldn't go, oh, you can't go that way, can't go – no, no, I can go anywhere I want to. Because the relationship I had with people; you know? I had a good relationship, especially if you's a good ball player –

KT: Uh-huh, that will get you pretty far; won't it?

TG: - that will get you pretty far.

KT: Yeah.

TG: So I could go a lot of places because I didn't have that mentality. I wanted – I wanted to hurt nobody. Only when I around my –when I'm in my group.

KT: Yeah, yeah.

TG: And something jump off, then we, you know, you got to react because you, you know, so –

KT: We're – so you had said there was some older guys who kind of provided

leadership.

TG: Yes.

KT: Was there one person who was like a – A leader or some person that –

TG: Yes.

KT: - everybody kind of looked up to?

TG: Yes. Yes.

KT: Let me –

TG: Mm-hmm.

KT: You know, I'm going to just pause this real quickly because I want to say something to you.

TG: Mm-hmm.

KT: I was going to say, I'll – I'm going to – I'll ask you to – to mention names and that kind of thing.

TG: Okay, sure.

KT: But – but if you – I mean, if there's anything that you feel like you'd rather go off the record or, you know, something that still might be sensitive, you know, we can do that.

TG: Okay.

KT: Just let me know.

TG: Okay. I don't think it would be no problem.

KT: Okay.

TG: Mm-hmm.

KT: Oops. Let me see. Maybe that is on. Yeah. But if – if at any time, you know,

there's something that, you know, we – we can do that. But so who were – who were, like, the leaders? Who did you look up to? I'm imaging some of these guys aren't still with us; right?

TG: No, no, a lot of them, no. Most of the guys gone.

KT: Yeah.

TG: They – a lot of them passed away. Yeah. A lot of them passed away like – like [00:36:32 Cedric Hutchinson]. Used to call him Boom Bam. Boom Bam.

KT: Boom Bam. He was a – a little bit older than you or -

TG: Older man, older.

KT: Yeah.

TG: These guys I [00:36:49] and –

KT: But he was on the street with you and –

TG: Yeah, yes, he was on the street. Living on Jackson Street, too, man. I be in this guy's house seven days a week, man. Like I live in his house; you know?

KT: Yeah.

TG: That's the way his family were. You know, they could go into his grandmother, used to cook. Seems like she used to cook enough food to feed the whole community. You know, we was going to, you know, so I just pay more a lot of time than this. I was – more than my own; you know?

KT: Uh-huh.

TG: And he just died about a few years ago. Ced Hutchinson, Dexter Drayton, Bernard Drayton. These the older guys. Who else? Harry Hutchinson, Bernard Sumter, Boo Boo. So, me and them guys whole lot of guys. These older guys that I'm naming,

you know, they – they the one who – who really started the Jackson Street Panthers, you know, name a few.

KT: What was the – was there any kind of structure to the organization or was it still pretty informal? I mean, did you have meetings, was there a hierarchy?

TG: No, just informal.

KT: Yeah.

TG: It was really no structure.

KT: Okay.

TG: You know, only time we – we were trying to set some structure when – during the hospital strike.

KT: Uh-huh.

TG: Then that's when we was trying to get organized and trying to – right now today we still got the Jackson Street Panthers today. Oh, yeah, but in a different light. We – we doing things in the community on a positive note. Matter of fact, we got a function August the first of this year. We – we help – we got sponsors like Piggly Wiggly, CVS, Coca-Cola. You know, we sponsor events in the community. We have cookouts right there on Martin Park where the pool is. And like I said, we do everything on the positive. We –

KT: Yeah. Well, who's – who's left other than you to – to pull this together?

TG: Still got some guys that my age.

KT: You –younger people, too?

TG: Oh, yeah, or my age who – guys who my age who been there.

KT: Yeah.

TG: You know, we – we – they were here, we were – we were here. So we got guys that my age who came along who [00:39:21] –

KT: Oh, that's great.

TG: Yeah. So, you know, Ricky Peoples, Jerome – Jerome Williams, Salsbury, Lester Brown, James Wright. This – this a few names I name, you know, [00:39:53]–

KT: Were there issues with the police?

TG: Oh, we had issues with the police.

KT: Yeah, what were those?

TG: Oh, wow, clashes with the police, you know, on our – especially going back – going back when, you know, we used to stand out on the corners, and the police during our time, they didn't take no – once they tell you something one time, you – you better move.

KT: Mm-hmm.

TG: Next time they come around, they ain't – you ain't going to like it when they come around again. We had police like that. And they would have take you out right then and there. So we had a lot of clashes with the police because we, you know, we –he run us out of one corner, we go in another one. He run and we'd go, you know, we used to - we always like a thorn in their side. You know, we always was defying against authority on –

KT: Right.

TG: - Especially police, yes, yes. We wanted to do our thing when we want to do our thing, so –

KT: Yeah. So no, you know, the – the Panthers in California, that was one of their

big issues is monitoring and trying to prevent police brutality.

TG: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

KT: And making sure that, you know, but I don't know if you had any of the same kind of –

TG: Police brutality? Well, we – well, not in my – police brutality, no. Well, the police just –

KT: They never brought you in, tried to mess with you, –

TG: Well, yes, they have. They – they didn't beat us, though.

KT: No?

TG: No, just trying to – if something happened in the community, you know, they coming to us. But they pretty much, nine out of ten we know what was going on.

KT: Yeah, yeah.

TG: We – we know. And they know we do, but we – but we never did – I never heard none of the older guys say that they, you know, they –

KT: Beat anybody.

TG: - beat them up, nothing like that. I never did experience it myself. You know, I never experienced. I've been – when they – I could remember the police station when it was on – was it Phillip [St Phillip St] and – was it Phillips and Vanderhorst, the old police station used to be right there. And I can remember being in that bad boy back and forth. You know what I mean? So – and I – and I know all the policemen name from the detective to the – yeah, I know them. They know me by name.

KT: And they knew you.

TG: And I know all of them by name.

KT: Yeah.

TG: I mean, I can call them names out right now. All of them. I know them like that, yeah, so, you know, I've had my – my [00:42:15 wrestle] with, you know, my - my time with – with the cops, you know? And like I say, man, you know, I had a record dating back to '73 and my last bit was in 1992 for possession/distribution of heroin. I'm not ashamed to say it because I've gotten pardoned for it. I've gotten a pardon from the governor.

KT: Really?

TG: Five years ago. So my – my slate is wiped clean.

KT: Yeah. What was the first – first arrest?

TG: In '73, what I had been doing was – in '73, '79, '83, '84, '87, '89, you know, I –

KT: All drug – all drug related or –

TG: No. Resisting arrest. Always resisting and police [00:43:11], you know, resisting arrest, assault on a police officer, some possession marijuana, you know, just things in that nature, yeah, so – but I had a couple of distribution charges, you know, heroin, mm-hmm.

KT: So were you ever using or dealing – just dealing?

TG: Both.

KT: Huh?

TG: Both.

KT: Both, yeah.

TG: Both. I was using and dealing, yeah, so, you know, I've been there. I've done

it. Cocaine, heroin. I've used marijuana, I've used acid, mescaline, smoke hashish, you know, we – we probably pretty much done – the only thing I haven't did was shot drugs; you know?

KT: No.

TG: No, never done that because the people I've been around, I see what happen to them. And the guy – the older guys who have been around used to shoot heroin, they taught me how to – if they ever should go out, how to – what to do to try to bring them back.

KT: Mm-hmm.

TG: So if one ever – well, I've had numerous times I had to bring guys back, and they already told me – showed me beforehand what to do.

KT: What to do.

TG: Get the syringe, fill it up with water salt, hot water and salt, and shoot it in their veins. That –

KT: Somehow it stimulates them back, huh?

TG: Bring them back. But I – I've had one of the guys that, you know, we tried it. We put ice under the – underneath the balls, put ice - you know? One guy, we had, he was so far gone we had to stick his hand and put it on the fire – to turn the stove on, stick his hand on the fire, almost burn it up, but it brought him back. His hand was all burned. His four fingers were burned.

KT: Oh, man.

TG: Yeah. But it brought him back. It brought him back, so I've done some stuff.

KT: So when did the drugs start coming in?

TG: Oh, well, when we started getting into drugs, I mean myself, I was getting –

KT: Like, I mean, during the – like was it before the hospital strike that – where you guys messed around with drugs at all?

TG: Well, not – maybe the older guys were.

KT: Uh-huh.

TG: But, no, but the young guys, we [00:45:36] too much, no, no, no. I could think – if I think back, after the hospital strike, I went in – I went into – went to Job Corps. I was in Edison, New Jersey, a place called Kilmer – Kilmer Job Corps Center. It was in Edison, New Jersey. And I was there and I had a cousin, an older cousin, me and him been at the same camp, and we used to commute to – from New Jersey to New York every weekend because we had family in New York. And when we would go to New York, my cousin – my aunt used to grow the – the marijuana in the yard right in her back yard. Right off the trees, go to the tree, pull it off and- so that - that's when I start smoking and drinking – drinking wine in – in Job Corps.

KT: That's when you first started getting high.

TG: Yeah. Mm-hmm. Well, that's right after the hospital strike.

KT: Mm-hmm.

TG: But I was gone in the early 70s, still was '69. No, '70, '71 up in there.

KT: Mm-hmm.

TG: Mm-hmm.

KT: Do you remember like when you met Bill Saunders?

TG: Mm-hmm. Yeah. I met Bill Saunders at the – at one of the rallies we had during the hospital strike. Yeah. I met him, you know, cause during that time we were

talking about SCLC – Southern Christian Leadership Conference. We were trying to organize a BSCLC – BSCLC.

KT: Which is?

TG: Black Student Christian Leadership Conference.

KT: Uh-huh.

TG: And we were about to organize that. But somehow, like, Robert Ford who was Robert X at the time, this coming out of college. No, he still might have – I think he still was in college. He was going to Grambling. I think he graduated from Grambling, Louisiana. Reverend [00:47:57 James Orange]. Another guy – what's John name is? I can't remember. He's another guy named John [Reynolds]. I remember these people trying to help us organize, but I don't know exactly what happened, why we didn't ever get it off the ground because we were busy, you know, we – we started it, but we never did – got the whole, you know, got it to where we can, you know, go – go with it. But I think – I think we – we – when we getting ready to start it, we [00:48:34 went to Frogmore] we had classes. We doing workshop in Frogmore. From Frogmore we went to – they had a strike in Florida – Cocoa Beach, Florida. And we went there for several days in Cocoa Beach. And another part of Florida we been in, they had a strike to when we [00:48:56] they used to commute us in buses and take us to place, you know, students so we could show support to wherever –

KT: Right.

TG: Yeah, and – and we used to do that, so –

KT: How about Georgetown, did they ever –

TG: Oh, yes.

KT: - Meet up in Georgetown for the steel strike?

TG: Yes.

KT: What do you remember about that?

TG: I remember being in Georgetown in – in the – in the – the people that were on strike, the steelworkers that were on strike, standing out picketing in front of the – the gate as you go into the inter – and we were all out there, and something – and the police, you know, they – they out there, too. The steelworkers, they shouting back and forth to the – what they call them – a scabs.

KT: Scabs.

TG: Scabs, no, don't go – you know, scabs and – and they – they would act like a face each other, the scab, they going back and forth, back and forth, and it seemed like tensions building. And something went off that sound like a – a gunshot.

KT: Mm-hmm.

TG: I don't know if it was a firecracker or – I know that that – something went off that caused things to – to escalate to another level. So when – when – I guess when the cops heard that, they figured they were under fire or whatever, so they drawing down and they started pushing people and start, yeah; you know? So normally where we reacted, you know, ain't going to be, you know, so we all went to jail and for a couple days, then we went out. You know, they come and get us out. But, you know, man, that – that's what remind me, you know, and I still [00:50:33] what it was that caused it. I mean, I don't know whether it was a gunshot or somebody shot or –

KT: Right. That set everything off.

TG: That set it off, man. It was a time out there. You know, it was a real time out

there, man.

KT: You know, they still have that union.

TG: Yes. Yeah.

KT: And they're just hanging on because that – that plant's not doing so well.

TG: So well, man. Seemed like –

KT: They close it, then they open it, yeah, yeah.

TG: The plant, close, open, they close. Yeah, I know. And –

KT: But that was the beginning of that – that mill; right?

TG: Mm-hmm.

KT: It was brand new then.

TG: Mm-hmm. Yeah, that's right. Man, I remember a time when – marching from – during the hospital strike, during the nurse's strike, when – when we march from MUSC coming down Calhoun Street, all the way from MUSC coming down Calhoun Street to King Street, we coming from Calhoun coming back this way. We got in front of what used to be Condon's. Condon's used to be right on the corner of King and Warren? Right on Warren St. there. King and Warren Street. Now I think it's John Street. Now they call it John Street. But back that time it used to be Warren Street.

KT: Okay.

TG: Did you know that?

KT: No.

TG: Yeah.

KT: They changed it from Warren to John.

TG: To John. Because Condon's used to have a – like a – you could come from

one – one side of – one side and then they had [00:52:07] to – the street run through right until they had a corner. You go one – walk across the corner and come on the –

KT: Oh, okay.

TG: - other side [00:52:15] other side, yeah. And right there, when we was marching with the hospital. So, like most of us stood, we were, like, almost in the middle. The – the nurses were in the front. And they stop us right there and, you know, we trying to figure out why they stopping. And we hear the – the nurses arguing [00:52:33], they're arguing. So as we get closer, man, they guys started – these were highway patrolmen had sticks taller than you and started swinging out on the nurses. Well, you know, we rush up there and we saw what happened, so we jump in front of them. So we, you know, we – we went to battle. So – and, you know, we all went to jail and, well, jail been a common thing then. You know, we would go to jail in a heartbeat; you know? So it don't matter. Take us to jail; you know? We go to jail. But that's what it was; you know? And –

KT: Yeah. Was it – it was understood then that your role was to – to do what for the hospital workers?

TG: To protect. My role, that's what I understood my role was, you know, to show support – support and, you know, because the more people, the more – the more people you got, you know, like I said, there's – there's power in numbers. The more – so mostly to protect and to, you know, support.

KT: Yeah.

TG: That's why I'm still [00:53:37] –

KT: Ms. Moultrie remembers you.

TG: Oh, yeah.

KT: You know? She says what, you know, at the – at the union hall –

TG: Yeah, yeah, union hall, yeah.

KT: - where they had to keep moving her around so –

TG: So she was, like, yeah.

KT: - keep her safe.

TG: Keep her safe. And that's what she used to, you know, she used to – she and who else? A few more of the nurses stay at the union hall, and that's where we were at. We, you know, we stay there, we – we said we'd take shifts at the windows. We watching; you know? And we got guns. We protecting.

KT: Yeah.

TG: You know? Yeah.

KT: So who did – I mean, do you remember who – who had the – the weapons? I mean, who provided that?

TG: I had to say – I had to say the man who owned the D.P.O. Hall was Mr. Bennett. I forget Mr. Bennett first name.

KT: Isaiah Bennett.

TG: Mr. Bennett, he had a son named Robert Bennett. I remember Robert had mostly provided the weapons.

KT: He was the one, uh-huh.

TG: Yes.

KT: So he knew where to go to – to get weapons.

TG: Oh, he knew where to go, yes, yes, Robert knew exactly where to go.

KT: Yeah.

TG: And he provided weapons and ammo that we needed. I'm fortunate, thank God, we didn't had to shoot no one, but we were prepared if we had to.

KT: Right. Because, I mean, the Panthers at that time, you – you didn't have that kind of weaponry necessarily; right?

TG: No, just pistols.

KT: Right.

TG: You know, 32, 38 pistol, you know, things like that, but not weapons and [00:55:17] rifles, you know, no, we didn't have that.

KT: And was everyone aware of that? You know, because I know that there were some within SCLC you had sort of a, you know, a nonviolent orientation.

TG: Yeah, yeah.

KT: And then you had others who were much more pragmatic about it.

TG: That's right. Right.

KT: Did – did you ever have any discussion or clashes around that issue?

TG: No.

KT: Yeah.

TG: No.

KT: You don't ever remember Andrew Young kind of saying, hey, you know, I'm not comfortable with this or any of the ministers?

TG: No, hmm-mm. As a matter of fact, I didn't think they were aware.

KT: You don't think Andrew Young would have known -

TG: No.

KT: - how you were protecting [00:55:56] –

TG: How we were protecting and protecting know nothing. I don't think they knew. Because I believe if they knew, they wouldn't have let us – I don't think they would have let it go down like that. They would have probably would have had them in a – in a different – you see what I'm saying?

KT: Right.

TG: Where they were needing protection that we were providing, they probably could have provide protection some other way being – being, you know, out of mind out of sight you can't, you know, so where nobody knew who they were.

KT: Right.

TG: But, you know, people knew about the D.P.O. Hall and – and I think –

KT: When you – when you say, I'm sorry, the DP –

TG: D.P.O.

KT: Which was –

TG: That's – you know, I don't know exactly what –

KT: DPO Hall.

TG: DPO Hall. You could ask Ms. [00:56:46 crosstalk] –

KT: The – the union hall.

TG: Yeah, it was the union hall, but –

KT: Yeah.

TG: - I didn't know – I was, you know, I didn't know exactly what the –
[00:56:52] –

KT: Where it –

TG: - you know, what it stand for.

KT: I can find that out.

TG: But I – I knew D.P.O. because we used to have a lot of different function – dances and things like that, and I’ve been there [00:57:01] still didn’t know why, you know, why they called it D.P.O., but, you know, I’ve been there. You know, I’ve been there numerous times before that before we had the, you know, had the strike there, so – but –

KT: So, but, yeah, somebody like – or, you know, or maybe – maybe they kind of knew but really didn’t want to know the extent of it; you know?

TG: Yeah, that’s why – yeah, that’s why I say they – they might have knew, but I didn’t – I wasn’t sure that they knew.

KT: Yeah.

TG: Because no one ever came up and said, no, y’all can’t, you know, if it was conversation about it, well, you know, I didn’t – I wasn’t aware of it. It wasn’t in – in my –

KT: But how about somebody like Warren; would he have known? Because he was closer to the young people.

TG: Oh, yeah. I believe [00:57:48 Big Orange] might have knew.

KT: Okay.

TG: He was kind of radical; you know? Big Orange, man, he – everybody liked him, man. He was kind of, you know, I believe – I think –

KT: But you weren’t going to bring it up with [00:58:00]

TG: No, no, no, no, no, no, no.

KT: Certainly not Mrs. King.

TG: No, no, no, no, no. We had opportunity to go to Atlanta for a few days and we went to Hosea Williams' house, Andrew Young, Coretta Scott – who else? Abernathy – who else? I don't know, about four, five of those houses we went to in Atlanta during that time, yeah. And it was something, man. I wish I had took – had a camera, take some pictures during that; you know? Man, it would – yeah. But I got, you know, in my mind I can – can see, you know, [00:58:44] –

KT: You know, I know that – what about – I mean, any other kind of, you know, because I know there was a lot of – a lot of things were done to put some pressure on businesses and, you know, the white community to – to settle.

TG: To settle, yeah.

KT: There were some things happening behind the scenes, but I was wondering did the – did your – was your group at all involved in any of that kind of stuff?

TG: I can say basically the – the older guys were involved in more than that.

KT: Uh-huh.

TG: We the young people are more involved with, you know, what we were doing concerning the nurses and –

KT: Protection.

TG: - protection, stuff like that.

KT: Because, I mean, Mr. Saunders has – has told me a little bit about how he was at the center. You know, he had different people working with him.

TG: Yes.

KT: And those people didn't necessarily know even one another that they were all wearing, you know, that it was –

TG: Mm-hmm.

KT: - it was - secrecy was maintained, you know, for a purpose.

TG: For a purpose, yeah, yeah, that's what I'm saying.

KT: But that a lot of things were kind of happening that weren't a part of the official campaign but that were –

TG: Necessary.

KT: - necessary, yes, yes.

TG: And that's why I say –

KT: But as a 15-year-old you wouldn't have known necessary what – what that was –

TG: No, no, no, no.

KT: And if people [01:00:04 crosstalk] –

TG: That really wasn't my concern.

KT: - and they wouldn't talk about it.

TG: My concern about, yeah, they wasn't talking about us, you know, among but when I say the older guys, they were –

KT: Some of the older Panthers –

TG: Yeah.

KT: - would have been privy to that –

TG: Yes.

KT: - kind of thing.

TG: Yes, yes. And they would pass along information to us that – what we should do; you know? So they kept a lot of things that they figure that we – we shouldn't know.

KT: Uh-huh.

TG: You know, this – this is what you need to do, you know, this is your part you playing, and that – and that's [01:00:32] and we were satisfied with that, you know, so –

KT: Do you remember being scared at any moment?

TG: Most of times. Most of times.

KT: Yeah?

TG: Yeah. Especially when we guarding the hall because we heard a lot of rumors, oh, man, so-and-so supposed to be coming. Y'all got to be awake now. Don't go to sleep; you know?

KT: Right.

TG: And, you know, because we – we heard, say, something supposed to happen, so we, you know, we got to be on guard.

KT: Mm-hmm.

TG: So, you know, anticipating something going to happen and don't know what – how you going to react, you know, it actually do happen, but, you know, you had to – if something do come up and, you know, whatever situation, if I got to fire, then I got to do that is the mentality that I had then, you know, because –

KT: Had you had any training with, you know, shooting a rifle at that point? Any experience?

TG: Well, not really.

KT: No?

TG: Just no, no, no. Shooting BB gun, you know, but no – actually firing a rifle, no, no. I fired a pistol, but rifle, no, not really.

KT: And would – would it just be one of you to – to stay up all night and
[01:01:36 crosstalk] –

TG: No, no, no, no.

KT: - two or three would keep watch.

TG: No, no, no, they didn't.

KT: You're counting. No worries.

TG: I'm trying – counting in my mind people. Had one, two – like four in the front, two side window – two side. This been a big building.

KT: Oh, man.

TG: So you had about, yeah, I say around six to seven people.

KT: That's a whole security detail.

TG: Yeah. Because we – we had to, you know, maintain not only looking in the front, but side and back building, so we – yeah, mm-hmm.

KT: What did you do right after the – the hospital worker strike?

TG: Well, after the – like I say, after hospital strike I went to New Jersey, went to New Jersey and went in Job Corps. I went and got a certificate in under – in welding. You know, finish my time on Job Corps, came back. After that I got – got involved in some – into – into C.A. Brown what they had a – a class where – where they were teaching about – about – it's a special class that they had during that time. It was – it was called – it was called getting youth involved into – getting youth involved into – try to forget the name what they say – but they – eventually this was – was about – it was about getting youth involved into every day matters pertaining as to what's happening with them.

KT: Mm-hmm.

TG: Community, country, any of the country, especially from a – a perspective being a young, young black youth, male youth so much as – as, you know, young lady because during that time, too, we figure – they figured that the younger youth were being targeted, being exploited, you know, as – as being – being non-educational, don't have no education, wasn't concerned about where they were going, wasn't concerned about we – we didn't have no directions, we didn't have no – no guidance and stuff like that, so –

KT: So it was like part skills building –

TG: Skills building.

KT: But then also they're trying to get you to be kind of socially engaged.

TG: Socially engaged and – and to –

KT: And they were running it out of the high school?

TG: Yes.

KT: After – after regular school hours kind of thing?

TG: After regular school hours, yes, mm-hmm.

KT: Okay.

TG: After regular school hours then we would come after school hours and enter the band room – that's what we had, the band room, C.A. Brown. And they would have lectures and whatever have you there. So I always liked when – always involved in, you know, once I got involved and it seemed like I never] [01:04:59] anything I hear about – about organizing, about someone being oppressed or, you know, something that we need to get to, you know, get together and make some changes happen then, I would get involved.

KT: Yeah.

TG: You know?

KT: I want to – I definitely want to come back to that and talk about the 70 and 80 and, you know, all that stuff, but I want to – to jump to the City and tell me how long you've been working for the City and what department are you working in now?

TG: Okay. I work – I working for the City of Charleston now for three years.

KT: Mm-hmm.

TG: I work for the Streets and Sidewalks Department.

KT: And what are you doing for Streets and Sidewalks?

TG: Streets and Sidewalk, we repair streets, you know, mainly sidewalks, driveways long as it's on City, you know, we got a – we got a – a perimeter where we go to, how far we can go to on – on someone's property to repair. The City only goes about so far. And right there where we stop at, that's how far we go to repair, you know, on your property to repair, so sidewalks and – and driveways, that's mainly what we do.

KT: So they don't – they don't contract that – so it's a lot of laying concrete and –

TG: Yes, concrete finishing.

KT: But – and they don't contract out for that. They do that all in-house in the City.

TG: In-house for the City. That's –

KT: That's City labor.

TG: Yeah.

KT: How many in the department?

TG: In our department, Streets and Sidewalks, I think twenty-five, thirty split up

into different crews.

KT: Uh-huh.

TG: And we also got crews that do blue stone, what they call blue stone. I've done cobblestone, I've done Belgian blocks, I've done, you know, but – but –

KT: Had you done any of that before or is this – did – did you come in, you know, I mean, have you learned all this on the job?

TG: I learned all this on the job, pick it up just like that. You see, I have worked – I helped build the MUSC parking lot is on President and Cannon Street. I helped – I helped build that from the ground up tying rebar, [01:07:20] dumping cement, you know, from that on up to, you know, I – I helped [01:07:26] I had a lot of experience.

KT: Were you working as a contract – for a contractor –

TG: For a contractor during that time, yeah.

KT: Yeah.

TG: But, you see – excuse me – during that time, we would feel like the type work that we doing, it's not really compensating us for the type work we doing. Now they contracted this type of work out to a contractor. Talking big bucks. So we saving the City, like, thousands and thousands of dollars; you know? One of our crews did some work with the blue stone on Broad Street. If they contract that work out, thousands of dollars save the City. Something like on that – on that particular project, like, \$33,000.

KT: So –

TG: But we don't get compensated for it.

KT: - twenty-five people broken up into crews.

TG: Crews.

KT: How about what's the racial breakdown? Any non-African Americans on the – in the department?

TG: On the crew? In the department? On the crew? Only one. That's the one we dealing with about, no, [01:08:31 crosstalk] –

INT: Okay.

TG: - we ain't – other than that, yeah.

KT: Any Latinos, Asians?

TG: No.

KT: No, it's – it's basically a black department.

TG: Yeah, that's exactly right.

KT: So what's the – what's the – what's the – tell me the – you started to tell me that story with the – the one – the one white worker [01:08:47 crosstalk] –

TG: Oh, yeah, okay. Here's what it is.

KT: What – they have him, like, targeted for – they want him to move up to management; is that where they're going with this?

TG: I don't know where they're going with this, but they, you know, they – they put him in a position that he – the only reason he's in this position because he have a CDL license. He don't have a – an inkling about the type work that he's doing. He don't know the job. Like I say, he been there a couple years now and he's transferred from three different departments. He've had working for environmental services, which is sanitation, he've had about three wrecks that we know of because we're – one of the guys in our department's on the board and he say this guy, ain't no way he's supposed to have been even driving doing, you know –

KT: Now why would a CDL be important to Streets and Sidewalks?

TG: Because drive a certain trucks that they got dump trucks you –

KT: You got a cement mixer?

TG: Yeah, well, not a mixer, just –

KT: Dump trucks.

TG: - dump trucks. Yeah. You know, I could drive anything they got on the lot, but I don't have a CDL. I could drive heavy equipment because I've been there, you know, but I don't have a CDL. When I first came to the job I told them on my resume, I've done heavy equipment work before. They had the supervisor, the foreman who was over heavy equipment supposed to take me in the back and show me and let me work. I've been here three years. I ain't did it yet. [01:10:15], you know, so that was my first setback. Now they know I know the job because I – I list it on my resume that I done concrete work before, so it wasn't – the only thing I just pick up how they were doing what they were doing.

KT: Uh-huh.

TG: It didn't take me a couple of months. I already knew what they were doing. I got this. Well, they know I can do the work, but they still try to put – a few months ago our assistant superintendent told us four guys were up for the lead man position.

KT: Each crew has a lead man.

TG: Yeah, each crew supposed to have a lead man.

KT: How many on a crew?

TG: Well, right we short-handed. Some two, some three. And supposed to been – supposed to be at least four to five-man crew.

KT: Should be, okay.

TG: So – yeah. But we shorthanded. Some crew got two, some crew got three, but no more have more than three.

KT: Everyone else is a crewman or a laborer?

TG: Yes.

KT: Okay.

TG: Yeah. So when the position come up, you know, he told us, okay, when you – when you get – when – if you get to this position, we going to give you six months to get your CDL license or we going to cut you back – put you back to where you previously were. Okay. Now they come back two weeks after they told us that and say, you got two weeks to get your CDL. I say, wait a minute. Where this come from; you know? They couldn't tell us where, you know, that come from. They also told us before – before that that they [01:11:50 weren't] going to hire nobody in the foreman position. Say they didn't have no opening for the foreman position. Well, all of a sudden they go – they got this guy coming over [01:12:00] we question why you told us you weren't going to hire nobody because you didn't have any opening. Well, he tried to explain, which he's – he's black, too, say, well, they told me, you know, they made me do this, they made – well, okay. That's when I say my fight is not with the guy who's the foreman. That's not – my fight is with the guy, you know, with the – the director and those, you know, because they allowed this to happen.

KT: So who – what's the relationship – foreman and – is there – how many foremen in the department?

TG: Each crew has a foreman.

KT: So they have a foreman and a crew leader?

TG: A foreman and a lead – lead man, yeah.

KT: Okay.

TG: That's the way it's supposed to be. That's why we were go - filling these four-

KT: But right now things are all messed up.

TG: - position.

KT: I see.

TG: Now they still don't have these position full because of what that transpired now.

KT: And they're trying to – to push – have they already done this, pushed this white guy with the CDL?

TG: Oh, he's a –

KT: He's a foreman.

TG: He's a foreman. He got [01:12:52] he's a foreman.

KT: Okay.

TG: But they want each crew – crew to train him. That's what they're trying – like I tell, he been with us four weeks in a row. Now next week supposed to go somewhere else, but when they first started, say every week he's supposed to go with someone different. Well, like I say, he been with my crew four weeks. And I question, say why? I thought we was supposed to rotate him. They had no answer for me.

KT: And then over the – over the department what do you have a – he's a – a – considered a superintendent or assistant superintendent?

TG: Who's that?

KT: Who's the head of the department? Or is he just [01:13:28 crosstalk] –

TG: Right now we don't have a superintendent now. They still, you know, that position is over. We got the assistant superintendent for our position, yeah. Mm-hmm.

KT: So – oh, you have an assistant superintendent.

TG: Yes.

KT: Who's acting essentially. He's the acting superintendent right now?

TG: Yes, I guess for our department, Streets and Sidewalk, yeah.

KT: Yeah.

TG: And also has assistant superintendent for stone water. That's the department right, yeah, so we really – the superintendent, he's the head over both departments, stone water and Streets and Sidewalks, whoever that is, when they decide – when they get a superintendent for the job, mm-hmm.

KT: So what – do you have anything in writing? Any of the – like this promise that, you know, they – they'd bump you if you got the CDL?

TG: Only part – the only thing –

KT: Is there documentation of it?

TG: No, only the rest of the guys who were –

KT: Who were there.

TG: Who were there who can tell you the same thing that I'm telling you.

KT: Right.

TG: Yeah. And that's one, two, three, four – four, five guys.

KT: How strong do you think, you know, do you – if you think about, you know,

the – this department of 25 people, do you think – how – how many of them would be solidly behind you? Could you get them all to – to – first of all, could you get them all to sign union cards?

TG: We have it, only [01:14:50] you saw who –

KT: The three guys – the two of your friends.

TG: There's four altogether.

KT: Uh-huh.

TG: Four – four of us altogether on the Streets and Sidewalks; you know? We try and recruit the other guys to come on in with us; you know?

KT: What do you think their [01:15:04] –

TG: They's afraid of job security.

KT: Yeah.

TG: That – that's mainly what it is.

KT: And then what's the – the profile – like how long have people been around in that department? Do you have some old timers or is it mostly –

TG: Yes.

KT: Yeah?

TG: One of the guys, [01:15:15 unintelligible] been there twenty-two years. The other guy, Clayton Singleton been there eighteen, nineteen years. We got guys been there still in our department, Irvine been there twenty-three years. We got some of the operators, the heavy equipment operators twenty-five; you know what I mean? These guys –

KT: And they've never been bumped up to – to crew leader or to foreman?

TG: Hmm-mm. Hmm-mm.

KT: Have they pushed for it or asked or –

TG: Some of them have.

KT: Yeah.

TG: Yeah. Some of them have. The guys who have been there, yeah. Yeah.

KT: Who is this guy – I mean, why is it that they're so anxious to get this guy into a foreman slot?

TG: I don't know.

KT: Is he connected?

TG: He – he got to be.

KT: What's the last name? I'll run some checks on him, see -

TG: His name is Rusty Woehnig.

KT: Rusty Wallnick?

TG: No, Woehnig, W-O-E-H-N-I-G. Woehnig.

KT: Sounds German or something.

TG: Yeah.

KT: W-O-E -

TG: E-H.

KT: - H-N-I –

TG: N-I-G.

KT: N-I-G.

TG: N-G, yeah, Woehnig.

KT: Woehnig, Rusty.

TG: Mm-hmm. Real name Russell, but we call him Rusty. Russell Woehnig. Mm-hmm. He and the guy –

KT: I'll see - I'll see if I can find out anything about him.

TG: He and the guy for stone water, they - the assistant superintendent, stone water is – you see what I'm saying?

KT: Uh-huh.

TG: He the one [01:16:53] over there. Which is a guy named assistant director name is [01:16:59 Mike Messenler].

KT: Mike what's the last name? Mess -

TG: Messeler.

KT: Messeler.

TG: Messeler. M-E-S-S-E-L-E-R. I think that's the way he spells it, Messeler. You know, they – that good old boy thing they got them, [01:17:18] to get them over there, so mm-hmm.

KT: Have you tried any sort of organized response to this or, you know –

TG: The only, you know, bringing it here.

KT: Yeah.

TG: You know, because I was getting ready to go to [01:17:34 crosstalk] –

KT: But if you were to write something up, you don't think you could get the other guys to sign the – the other fifteen or twenty in the – the department?

TG: It would be hard, no. I know I could get the other four [01:17:43]

KT: Right.

TG: Oh, yeah, yeah; you know? Mm-hmm.

KT: How – have you been – have you pursued the CDL? Are you thinking about -

TG: Sure, yeah, I mean, [01:17:55] but they discourage me. I was pursuing it.

When I heard this done, now they – they renege on what they saying, so we –

KT: They pulled the offer, uh-huh.

TG: Okay. You know, I didn't pursue it no more because I want to know what's – what's going to happen, you know, what's going to happen now, you know, since – since all this done transpired? So ain't nobody pursued it, you know, because we don't know where we at.

KT: Yeah.

TG: You know, because you – you say to us one thing, then you saying something else, but you never did come back and let us know what's going on. They just cut off communication off that altogether, so – so that's why we – we here where we at, I mean, you know, so we –

KT: Yeah.

TG: We trying to get some more – because I was going to HR to the City and file a complaint.

KT: Uh-huh.

TG: But I said, no, let me come here first.

KT: You think you're –

TG: That what my initial – that – I'm going to find discrimination.

KT: Yeah.

TG: So I said, no.

KT: Are you going to follow up with that?

TG: Oh, I mean, I'm trying to wait to see what –

KT: What comes of –

TG: Comes of this.

KT: Yeah.

TG: What my next step should be. I'm going to, you know, wait to see if they, you know, what kind of feedback I will get, should I go with this or how should I take this?

KT: Right.

TG: You know, then – then – and that's why I haven't moved further because I want to consult –

KT: One thing I would – I would definitely do is start to document it; you know?

TG: Mm-hmm.

KT: If you can come up with dates when specific conversations were held and promises that were made, if there were other people – other – if there were witnesses to conversations –

TG: Yes, yes.

KT: - then you could get those statements and get those notarized by a – a, you know, a notary.

TG: Mm-hmm.

KT: And all that would be useful for your case.

TG: Mm-hmm.

KT: Because it's – it's tough when there's nothing in writing, you know, because then it's just –

TG: Yeah, yeah. I know, man, yeah.

KT: - you know who they're going to listen to.

TG: Mm-hmm.

KT: Who – like thinking back, who – who was it that – where did you learn to organize people?

TG: Through – excuse me – [01:19:53] during hospital strike, through the SCLC doing – doing my time with them. That's how I learned, yeah.

KT: Who – like were there specific people? What – what did they teach you?

TG: Yeah, [01:20:06], Robert Ford, they were teaching us how to organize. We, you know, at youth, yeah. That's why I say, we were getting ready to start the – the BSCLC, they was teaching us how to organize then, yeah. So those were specific people. James Orange and Robert Ford.

KT: You were close to Ford?

TG: Mm-hmm.

KT: Do you still see him at all?

TG: Oh, yeah.

KT: Yeah.

TG: I got his number in my – I can call him right now.

KT: Uh-huh.

TG: You know? Senator Robert Ford. I still tease him. I say, Robert X, what's going on, you know, because that's what we used to call him, so I tease him every now and again. But he know me personally. I know him personally. We still – yeah. Yeah, he knows where I come from [01:20:42] we don't talk all the time, mm-hmm. Yeah.

KT: Do you – yeah, we should probably wrap it up.

TG: Yes, because – yeah. See [01:20:55] –

KT: Let me ask you, well, I – I'd like to – I want to continue this because I think –

TG: Sure. [01:21:04 crosstalk] we can continue. It's no problem.

KT: I mean, I'd really like to – to get in and, you know, into -

TG: There's plenty more I got to say.

KT: - the 70s.

TG: Yeah, plenty more.

KT: I believe it. I believe it.

TG: There's a lot more.

KT: But I'm just wondering if just for the sake of – of this discussion, is there something that we might have touched upon that you wanted to say a little bit more on or maybe something that's really important that people need to know about that – that we should include here? Anything you could think of?

TG: I don't think not at this particular time.

KT: Okay.

TG: I don't think it's any more I need to add on. Nothing, you know, not at this particular time.

KT: Like – like I said, we could – we can come back to it.

TG: Yeah, we can come back and we continue [01:21:53 unintelligible] –

KT: But quick, if – if – one of the things that I – I do want to do is – is I want people who are kind of on the bubble about the – the union organizing drive and I want them to – to hear from union supporters, you know, why it is they think it's important,

you know, what – why have you – why did you get involved with this group and why do you think it's important for the workers of the City of Charleston to stay together and, you know, come together and organize a union?

TG: Because I – I've personally – personally witnessed that the union gets results. They – they've – all [01:22:38 the toil] and sweat and tears over the years, and, you know, I – I've seen what they had to go through to – to fortify [01:22:46 their strength] in this union, and from seeing that, I know that they – their perseverance and they – they staying power is to, you know, once you got a hold of staying, you got to see it through. And once you stay – if you can only get unified and stay together, then you can make changes happen. But you have to be together. And I – I've seen this union do that. And that make me so – that's why I've got so much respect for them. You know, I've seen results. And all the results were, you know, positive results. They got what they accomplished to do to this union. And, you know, and then – and anybody who can see us would know this is a – you know, look at their longevity; you know? And that's another thing, too.

KT: Yeah.

TG: Yeah, so –

KT: Especially when, you know, looking at Ms. Moultrie and –

TG: Oh, yeah, Miss White and –

KT: Uh-huh.

TG: Yeah, then other, you know, then – yeah, and some other names. Miss Jessie, she's in there now, but, you know, most of them I – I know by name.

KT: Right.

TG: I still see these people from –

KT: So – but you remember Ms. White from back in the day.

TG: Oh, yes, yes. On the hospital, yes. That's right.

KT: They were some hell raisers, huh?

TG: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Yes, indeed they were. They were – they were women that wasn't going to take no for an answer. You know, they believe in what they were doing and they were adamant about, you know, seeing this thing through.

KT: Mm-hmm.

TG: You know, I respect them for that. You know, they're strong. You know, they, you know, I – I've seen these – these women, man, you know, under a lot of pressure, man, stand strong [01:24:36] from being together, you know, being together. They held each other up. They kept each other going. And, you know, that – that's remarkable, you know, that show me strength. There's strength in numbers. You know, that's what it showed me, so that's something I've – I took with me all through life, you know, until this day. And I really believe that. That's why I trying to the guys to see on the job, there's strength in that once we got the numbers, man, we, you know, we – we got the - we got the ball in our court.

KT: Mm-hmm.

TG: You see what I'm saying? The only way we can get the ball in our court, we got to come together in numbers. Stand firm; you know?

KT: There's something that I – I've observed in, you know, coming to – to some of the meetings is that it's my sense that – that at different times, the sanitation workers' spirits have kind of dropped a bit and they start to doubt themselves and, you know, they

kind of not sure where this is all going and whether it's all worth it. But when you begin coming a few weeks ago, I know that immediately it picked up Ms. Moultrie's energy, and – but it also picked up the – the workers' energy. You know, that to have somebody from outside of the department come in and, well, you know, someone who's particularly, you know, militant and – and encouraging like you are –

TG: Yeah. Well, see, I see these people every day on the job.

KT: Uh-huh.

TG: We right by each other.

KT: Yeah.

TG: We come out the same building. So I see them every day on the job. They see me every day on the job. So they know what I'm like. And, you know, I come in, I, you know, this – this – see, I've learned over the years, people don't – people not going to listen. They'll listen to what you're saying, but they listen – see whether your – your talking is – is commiserate by your action.

KT: Right.

TG: Got the line up; you see what I'm saying?

KT: Mm-hmm.

TG: So – so I understand, you know, I understand exactly how what I do, what I say, how it going to affect people, especially when in this type of arena things that we trying to accomplish.

KT: Mm-hmm.

TG: Be that Ms. Moultrie and them know me. They know where I'm coming from. They know, you know, and I guess that – that just help let them to see somebody

who they can identify from way back that still going strong. And they know I – how I believe they believe that I can have a great impact on – on what’s going on, and – and that’s what I sensed, too, so –

KT: That’s my perception.

TG: Yeah.

KT: And –

TG: I kind of sensed that, too, so –

KT: That’s helpful.

TG: Yeah.

KT: Because, you know, we – we need everything –

TG: Yeah.

KT: - we can get; you know?

TG: Mm-hmm.

KT: So, well, good. Thanks a lot for –

TG: Sure, man.

KT: - for doing this.

TG: Sure, no problem, man.

KT: And –

End of recording.

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