

1.

Q: ONE QUESTION I HAVE BEEN INTERESTED IN LOCALLY IS THIS - HOW MUCH INTEGRATION IS THERE, IF ANY, IN CHURCHES IN BRIDGEPORT IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD?

A: Very, very little. I think it would be as small a percentage as 1%. This would be on both sides of the city. Isn't that true, Jim? Yes. There's one noticeable exception. There's a church - Newfield Methodist - on the corner of Central Avenue and Stratford Avenue, which has about ten negro families in membership. This is a white church. This is very large and even the large churches like the United Church downtown have only one or two.

Q: HOW MUCH OF THAT IS THE RESULT OF JUST RESIDENCIES ON THE PART OF THE PARISHIONERS? THAT IS, IF THERE ARE TEN NEGRO FAMILIES, ARE THEY IN THE SAME NEIGHBORHOOD? IS THIS THE NATURAL PLACE TO GO TO CHURCH OR NOT?

A: Not necessarily. With Protestant churches you know, our area churches aren't very much the rule of home so in the case of these people at the Newfield Methodist, for instance, some come from Stratford.

Q: HOW DID THIS GET STARTED?

A: They just wanted to go to that particular Methodist Church and that's where they've gone. I think there may be other reasons sometimes. For example, there may be a shift - the atmosphere - a negro has a white friend and he goes to church or -- this is just off the cuff, but sometimes there may be something interesting they talk about and they want to

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go there. That may be one out of ten families -- I don't know about this case.

Q: ~~WHAT'S BOUND TO HAPPEN I IMAGINE, SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE~~
~~ANYWAY~~ -- IS THERE ANY RESISTANCE THERE, DO YOU KNOW?

A: It's wealthy, that's all. Apparently it's just a few different methods, different from other churches where there is this kind of small division. I've heard since I've been in Stratford of several situations where negro families were present but the resistance isn't open. It's just the feeling -- what are you doing here?

Q: THIS WOULDN'T BE TRACED BACK YOU'D SAY, TO THE PASTOR -- THE PARTICULAR PASTOR IN ANY CASE?

A: I shouldn't think so. I happened to be talking to the Pastor of the Newfield Methodist just yesterday and he was saying that these people have been a part of that church for a long time.

Q: UNDER VARIOUS PASTORS?

A: Yes. They change every two or three years. I think the Pastor has a lot to do with it sometimes. I think, for example, in churches where there was no integration, the Pastor, while he was there, ^{SA} would recommend changes.

Q: I KNOW THIS MOTHER WHOSE CHILDREN PLAY WITH OUR CHILDREN ALL THE TIME AND SHE TAUGHT HERE IN BRIDGEPORT. SHE WAS DIVORCED SHORTLY AFTER THE BIRTH OF HER YOUNGER CHILD - HER YOUNGER CHILD IS ABOUT EIGHT, THE SAME AS MY YOUNGER CHILD - SO AFTER

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SHE WAS DIVORCED SHE LOOKED AROUND FOR SOME JOB AND SHE WENT INTO TEACHING, WHICH SHE HAD NO SPECIAL TRAINING FOR BEFORE BUT SHE PICKED IT UP FAST. HER FIRST JOB WAS IN A SCHOOL IN BRIDGEPORT, I FORGET THE NAME OF IT -- SHE TOLD ME ** WHICH IS IN THE MIDDLE OF A NEGRO SECTION OF TOWN - WHAT SCHOOL IS THAT?

A: Elementary school?

Q: It was elementary school -- she teaches 4th grade.

A: It could have been any of these. It could have been Waltersville -- it could have been on the other side of town. Bridgeport doesn't have a negro section as such, see. There are several sections with a heavy negro count.

Q: SHE SAID HERE THE STUDENT BODY WAS ALMOST COMPLETELY NEGRO. 90% -- ROUGHLY 90%.

A: Probably Lincoln or Waltersville or the one over near Black Rock. Even there it's very difficult to tell if you got a Catholic School in the community.

Q: IN THIS SCHOOL SHE SAYS, SHE HAD RATHER HORRIBLE ENCOUNTERS. IT COULDN'T BE VERY LONG AGO SHE WAS THERE, PROBABLY SIX YEARS AGO SHE WAS TEACHING THERE. SHE SAID SHE COULDN'T TAKE ONE MORE YEAR OF IT BECAUSE OF THE BRUTALITY SHE ENCOUNTERED -- SHE SAID THE TEACHERS JUST WENT THROUGH THE DAY WAITING FOR THE TIME -- JUST WAITING FOR THE TIME TO PASS -- THERE WAS A COMPLETE LACK OF ATTEMPT -- AND THIS ONE PUPIL IN PARTICULAR -- SHE NAMED ONE -- HE REALLY MADE LIFE INTOLERABLE FOR HER --

A PUPIL IN THAT SCHOOL. SHE SAID SHE JUST COULDN'T TAKE IT ANOTHER YEAR. THE POTENTIAL WAS TOO GREAT. NOW MY QUESTION IS THIS -- WOULD YOU FIND THAT KIND -- OR DO YOU KNOW OF THAT KIND OF SITUATION IN A SCHOOL IN BRIDGEPORT NOW, WITH EVERYTHING INCLUDED, WHERE SCHOOL ON THE PART OF THE NEGRO IS JUST A WALK-THROUGH, WITH THE FACULTY DEMORALIZED AND I THINK SHE SAID THERE WAS NOT A SINGLE NEGRO TEACHER THERE WHEN SHE WAS THERE. IT WAS COMPLETELY DEMORALIZED AND AS FAR AS ATTEMPTS TO UNDERSTAND AND TEACH A CHILD -- IT WAS AT A BARE MINIMUM. THE LADY WAS TRANSFERRED THE NEXT YEAR AND SHE SAID, THANK GOD FOR THAT, BECAUSE SHE SAID THE STRAIN WAS JUST TOO MUCH FOR HER.

A: There are a lot of problems. We've got not only the Negro situation but also Puerto Ricans and I know that Bessie Farr, for example, she tells about language difficulties she's had in classes of 35, 40, 45. But she says, as far as attempt to get through to them, I'll talk to them; I'll try and I'll try to make an attempt -- I don't know this woman you speak of, covering such a radically different situation.

7 Q: ~~WELL, SHE THOUGHT, YOU KNOW.~~ WELL, SHE'S STILL SHAKEN BY IT. AND IT IS A FEELING THAT IT IS A QUESTION OF SYSTEM AND WHETHER TRULY A SYSTEM, AND THERE IS NO HUMAN CONTACT - NOTHING HAS BEENWORKED OUT IN THE WAY OF HUMAN CONTACT. SHE WAS SAYING WELL, THIS IS IT. SHE WAS SICK OF BEING SOLD ON NOTIONS SHE COULDN'T DEMONSTRATE -- HE RESENTED THE SCHOOL. SHE SAID THAT TEACHING IN SCHOOL, IS DE FACTO SEGREGATION. SHE SAID YOU GOT CHIEFS AND INDIANS.

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A: They're in Lincoln School.

Q: IT MAY NOT BE THE SAME SCHOOL NOW?

Peter
A: I think Roosevelt's worse than Lincoln for them. Of course, my feelings and reasoned opinion have always been that when it comes to this whole question of de facto segregation, the main thing that we are striving for is equal education; that so often a school being in a predominantly negro area somehow becomes last on the totem pole. Lincoln School, of which we were speaking a moment ago, for instance, has the third floor condemned. The building -- I know a lady who went to school there -- a lady on several of our committees who went to school at Lincoln thirty years ago and she said it was an old school then. The records show it's over a hundred years old. She said it was always an old school -- that was her expression. She said now, right today, the third floor is condemned. They have split sessions in all of kindergarten, all of 1st grade, and all of 5th grade there and they are about to expand it even further -- the split sessions -- because of limited space. From the teachers I found out that they are low on various supplies, and certain things they have to buy out of their pockets. Well now, to my mind, this is the biggest argument against de facto segregation and while I will always agree with some of the theories of some people who say -- put them in buses and carry them somewhere else -- what they really need to do is make the education equal in every school, or else they will have a lot more complaints about this because their education isn't equal.

Johnson : I would like to add one footnote -- I agree with what you say,

but about the system itself in Bridgeport. I don't care whether it's a negro child in a predominantly negro school or a white child. I think these towns surrounding Bridgeport have got them beat by far in many respects. In the Methodist and Congregational churches where they sometimes draw kids from Bridgeport for Sunday School, the same as in our church where we draw them in from both cities, the Stratford kids will stand out much more than the Bridgeport kids. Very definitely -- there's no comparison.

Q: WHY IS THAT?

A: I think they have a better system in the surrounding towns -- Fairfield and Stratford. It has become rather obvious that most negroes settle in the big cities. More and more it's true and more and more, the people -- same as the money, the people of influence move out of the cities into the suburbs and inevitably they build better schools. They pay the teachers better wages, they have a better system and the child in the city which is invariably the person in the lower economic groups, suffers. This isn't true just here but all over.

Q: HOW MUCH PROTEST IS THERE ABOUT THAT HERE IN BRIDGEPORT?

Johnson A: I can sum it up in about three words - Jim Peters #1, Andy Devoe, #2 and John Staple are a few of the individuals who stand out who are really pulling, I think.

Q: OTHERWISE THERE IS NO ORGANIZED --

Johnson A: There is, isn't there Jim -- but it's hard to get people to act. There's a committee for the Improvement of Bridgeport Schools -- all the schools -- I mean this particular committee

I refer to is in Bridgeport, it's all for Bridgeport and it's called the Citizens' Committee for the Improvement of Bridgeport Schools and they're frustrated awful by the city government. The city government doesn't consider schools a #1 issue, they consider keeping the tax rate down, the #1 issue, and in accord with that many of the parental workers and a lot of effort they've been giving -- they begin to see that they have an outstanding superintendent, but everything he asks for that would improve the system, they cut it out every year.

Q: HOW MANY GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS HAVE YOU GOT IN BRIDGEPORT?

A: At one time we had no full-time counsellors in any of the high schools. This in a big city like Bridgeport. This is unheard of in some big cities, you know.

Q: YOU RAISED THE QUESTION A MOMENT AGO -- YOU SAID THE

SYSTEM, THAT DOESN'T APPLY HERE, I SUPPOSE, BUT MIGHT AT SOME FUTURE DATE BEGIN TO APPLY -- I'M VERY UNCLEAR IN MY MIND BUT I HAVE MY OWN FEELINGS ABOUT THIS. I'M CERTAIN THAT THE SEGREGATED SCHOOL, IN THE PAST ANYWAY, HAS BEEN A BAD SCHOOL AND I'M CERTAIN THAT IF I WERE, SAY IN SCHOOL "B" AND THIS SCHOOL "A" WAS PREDOMINANTLY A NEGRO SCHOOL AND THERE WAS SOME SHIFTING NOW AND I WAS WELCOME TO SHIFT INTO THAT SCHOOL, I THINK I WOULD RESIST, PROBABLY, INSTINCTIVELY RESIST. NOT AS MUCH TO PUTTING A BALANCE SOMEWHERE CLEAR ACROSS TOWN -- I WOULD ARBITRARILY RESIST THAT. BUT I THINK THIS IS SORT OF READING MY OWN FEELINGS NOW. HAVE YOU ANY NOTIONS ABOUT THAT?

Check

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Peters

A: I have some very definite notions and I hope you'll make it clear that many negro leaders will disagree with me on this although there are those -- I personally think as I suggested a few moments ago, that the main thing they are after is equal education. I personally feel it's the Supreme Court decision that's really gotten on the wrong grounds. We don't care what grounds they're stomping on, we're glad that it came through, but I think the real grounds for it should have been the fact that the separate education wasn't equal. Well, as you know, the Supreme Court decision was what southerners called and rightly so, a sociological decision. It was based on the fact that it is inherently wrong for students to go to school with _____ race. From my own experiences in going to school in Washington, D.C. and things that I have seen in ^{definitely} other places, noting that the education was/not equal, it makes me realize that here, in my mind, the big question is not the one of transporting students from one place to another to have a sort of balance -- in my mind this isn't the big question at all -- the big question is, do we have equal education and with this in mind my thoughts would be then to improve the education of our schools in predominantly negro areas, rather than to toy with this idea of transporting them. I think this idea of transporting them is a drastic and perhaps dramatic appeal for equal education -- for that reason then if people were demanding such things I would probably support them. Not that I agree that this is the answer to it, but in order to provoke those in authority to the extent that they would really make the education equal.

Q: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT?

Johnson
 A: I think I would reject the idea in my mind. This, of course, is my feeling -- of taking my kids, for example, and transporting them somewhere just to make the situation say, integrated. If it's a chance for them to get a better education there, I would push the idea of getting my kids over there if I could, and I certainly could respect anybody if they simply did not want to be transferred to a certain school that wasn't quite up to the level of the school where the kids have already gone. I say this with a good deal of amount of background because I was transferred when I was in High School, for example. They had enough count from there to go

and in the Junior High School they figured what High School you ought to go to. It just so happened that all the high schools weren't equal in the city -- they just weren't. And those concerned would go to certain ones and say you probably will make out better here, you there, you there -- regardless of their color, race, etc.

Q: AND REGARDLESS OF THEIR HOME LOCATION --

Johnson
 A: And regardless of their home location. My traveling distance was something like eighty some blocks from my home. It took an hour and a half to get to.

Q: That's a lot of time out of a kid's life.

Johnson
 A: Of course, the thing that came out - in this particular high school where they had about 2200 boys and no girls -- about two thousand of the kids were Jewish kids. It just happened to be that the Jewish kids in Philadelphia were in better schools and were better scholars than the Italians, Negroes and all the rest of them. They could make the better grades

and pass the tests better, so they all got sent to this school. Somebody might have hollered right away, what are you doing, you ^{re} segregating the Jews over in this district school. They would have said no, we send them there because we feel that this meets individual treatment, rather than anything else.

You made a brief mention of the time element. I just want to mention here for the record that my wife went to high school traveling 23 miles one way every day. The bus left at 7:30 and made about a forty mile trip around picking up other students going from Middleburg, Va. to a place called Leesburg. There was a school much closer ~~and~~ ^{but} in Virginia schools are segregated and this was the closest negro school.

Q: THAT'S QUITE A TRIP EVERY DAY.

A: Every day too -- one way. Amazing.

Q: WHAT ABOUT LOOKING AT ANOTHER ASPECT OF IT. SAY A CITY LIKE WASHINGTON WHICH IS PREDOMINANTLY A NEGRO CITY NOW. HOW CAN POSSIBLY YOU/THEN WORK OUT BALANCED SCHOOLS?

Johnson
A: This is your town, Jim. You can talk.

Q: I WAS SPEAKING, YOU SEE, OF TRANSFERRING BY MANDATE FROM THE WHITE SCHOOL BOARD, SAY FIFTY OR SIXTY/PUPILS SUPPOSED TO GO TO THAT SCHOOL. WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO GET THEM IN WASHINGTON? IT IS A SENSITIVE THING, YOU SEE. HOW CAN YOU DO IT?

Peters
A: Of course it couldn't be done in Washington, there's no question about it. The school system in Washington -- the last figures were something like 76% negro.

Q: I READ THE FIGURES LAST YEAR.

Peters
A: It's gone up every year. So this definitely couldn't be done

in Washington and in many other places, where it would be not only illogical but rather impractical. Again I say, I think that the people who are pushing for this really want what I want -- equal education. I think this is just a mechanism they're using in . I don't think anybody would quibble about going to Howard University or Tuskegee, if they thought they would get an education equal to what they'd get at University of Alabama or somewhere else. If they thought it a top-notch college.

Q: THAT REMINDS ME OF SOMETHING THAT FRANKLIN FRAZIER HAS IN HIS BOOK [^] YOU KNOW ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE AMERICAN NEGRO COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY IN THIS CONNECTION. HE EXPRESSES SOME DOUBTS ABOUT ITS FUTURE.

A: Of course, they're just about filled to capacity all of them. They're not wanting for students now.

Q: NO, THEY'RE NOT WANTING FOR STUDENTS.

A: Like West Virginia took in negroes before this segregation movement , I think if not just exchange students. I think the future of the negro college . We'll always be pretty well We got roots there for the negro that he can't possibly get if he goes to Yale or if he goes to any other school. I feel he misses something when he misses the chance to feel the sense of warmth of his people, his history, a chance to feel the proudness of the negroes from all over the South. As long as there's a negro in this country I think he'll welcome a chance to send his kids to a negro college.

Q: WHERE DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL?

A: Virginia U in Richmond. *Howard*

Q: VIRGINIA U. THEN YOU WENT TO HARVARD, DIDN'T YOU? *Howard*

A: No, then I went to *Crozer* in Chester, then I went to Harvard.

Q: DID YOU HAVE ANY COURSES WITH MR. FRAZIER?

A: Just once. Back in -- it must have been twelve years ago.

I'll welcome the chance to send my kids to a negro college for their undergraduate education. I think that would qualify them for any graduate work they want to do, so long as I know the college I send them to will be credit enough for the chance

Q: I HEARD HIM LECTURE, IT WAS BACK IN THE LATE 40's I GUESS, AN INFORMAL KIND OF A SEMINAR ~~THING~~ FOR ABOUT TWO HOURS, HE WAS VERY IMPRESSIVE.

A: They say he was a lot better when he was younger - you know, they say --

Q: WELL THIS WAS ABOUT 17 years ago - SIXTEEN OR SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO. HE WAS WONDERFUL.

A: And this is odd, too. A lot of the negroes who were born in the north or had been there for a long while, will ask a guy like me, or ask a guy like Jim, why did you go to a negro college? And they'll wonder why do I send my kid there? ^{for one thing} Maybe tuition was lower/or I think beyond that, maybe grants to negro colleges. They feel very keenly and deeply the need for a sense of roots among the negroes, their history, their past, their heritage and for the most part, with very few negroes teaching history or anything else, or anything else

for the law, for the most part, I don't think they get into it except into a good negro college myself. I think that makes the difference. Almost every one of our leaders ^{in our} has had to struggle

has spent some time in a negro college. And many of them didn't have to do it. I mean today. I think tomorrow --

Retrying

Q: THIS RELATES IN KIND OF A BACKHAND WAY, DOESN'T IT, TO THE FABRICATED HISTORY THAT THE MUSLIMS PUT OUT -- THEY HAVE A FALSE HISTORY -- A MADE UP HISTORY, I MEAN -- ISN'T THAT RATHER THE CASE THERE, OPPOSED TO THE LATE HISTORY OF THE NEGRO RACE, RATHER THAN TRUE HISTORY, BUT IT APPEALS -- THE BIG THING "APPEAL" TO THE NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY YOURSELF AND --

A: It's the same thing as Proctor --

Q: WHAT WAS THAT?

A: Read the article by Sam Proctor who was president of and now is with the Peace Corps. Sam Proctor studied there too. He studied for a while and imitated the white man's ways. He had a sort of doll-house society life. Really he was saying we had no sense of our real roots and our real heritage, no sense of any kind of pride. He said we lost our identity and I'm quoting Proctor on this -- we lost our identity, our names, our songs, our past. We knew no world but the white world of North America. So for years one imitated its institutions, its culture and its sins. Across the tracks on the other side of town, we had a little of everything they had and until World War II this was the story, these two communities existing side by side, with the same trappings

and the same veneer.

Q: YES, THAT'S UNDOUBTEDLY TRUE, BUT NOW COULD YOU TELL ME WHAT THE DIFFERENCE IS NOW IN DETERMINED AWARENESS OF THE NEGRO'S HERITAGE? WHAT IS THE NEW AWARENESS? WOULD YOU UNDERTAKE TO SAY THAT?

A: There's one thing, and I certainly felt this. Here's the difference, for example. I'm walking down the street in the south and there's a man, colored like I am. I speak, he speaks back. Up to about four or five years ago, I walked in the street in the north, I speak to a man and he may or may not speak to me - you see what I mean. But now, I speak as almost everybody speaks, and it's all right to feel the passage of time based on the fact that no one begins to feel so outside of this earth. We all feel that we're part of this time. I think this is part of this new feeling. And that sounds like a little thing but this has been a big job for some folks who don't walk in picket lines and didn't used to want to be identified and still some don't. Just as Jackie Robinson - the token demand. This really

Q: TELL ME THIS - THAT'S A LITTLE BIT LIKE WE'RE BACK TO FRAZIER AGAIN -- HIS DESCRIPTION OF THE CLASS STRUCTURE OF NEGRO SOCIETY, REMEMBER, AND THE AMBIVALENT FEELING THAT THE UPPER CLASS HAS ABOUT THE WHOLE QUESTION OF INTEGRATION. THE AMBIVALENCE HE POINTS OUT INDICATES IN THE NEGRO UPPER CLASS, WHERE IF YOU HAVE INTEGRATION, THERE IS A FEAR OF LOSS OF STATUS ON ACCOUNT OF INTEGRATION.

A: But this fear, I think is -- I'm in a doctor's office, I pick up his Medical Journal. The doctors are out there marching and fighting ^{for} integration -- they're not thinking of losing -- they're going to gain. The teachers in the south, they say the heck with the schools, the heck with the system, if I lose my job I'll find another. You find you don't have any choice, if the kids march, they're going to lose their jobs anyway.

Of course, you find more of this in the south, of what you're speaking here -- this oneness of identity than you do in the north. What we referred to a few minutes ago were some people who wouldn't dare go to Birmingham under any circumstances and hear about the King or anyone else and these people wouldn't even go to Washington in the march on Washington. But when Jackie Robinson had Martin Luther King and Roy Wilkins out on his lawn on a Sunday afternoon last month, they were there as a sort of a social set apart from the people fighting. But they are in the minority. They are in the tremendous minority. Even in the north.

Q: EVEN THAT'S DWINDLING NOW?

A: Definitely. Even they are sort of moving to the edge of the circle. They're not committed, not really. It's more of a social matter. When they see guys like Dr. Anderson, a fine physician, they see outstanding lawyers, they begin to think. When they see outstanding personalities like Lena Horne, Sammy Davis, Jr. --

Q: LET ME CUT BACK JUST A MOMENT ON THE SAME LINE OF THOUGHT TO THE SAME HERITAGE AND HISTORY, AND THE WHITE PROFESSOR OF HISTORY IS OPPOSED TO THE NEGRO PROFESSOR OF HISTORY IT WOULD BE OF SOME DIFFERENCE. THE QUESTION IN MY MIND ARE WHAT YOU MEAN BY THE - SO MUCH THAT IS NOT, YOU SEE, IN THE WESTERN JUDEO-CHRISTAIN TRADITION, YOU SEE, AFTER THE NEGRO'S TRANSPORT FROM AFRICA, WHAT DID HE MAINTAIN, WHAT DID HE KEEP? I KNOW THIS IS A DEBATE -- I'VE READ *Debra* on THIS, I'VE READ FRAZIER -- I KNOW IT'S A REAL DEBATE BETWEEN NEGRO HISTORIANS. JUST TAKE FRAZIER AND YOU GO -- DIRECT DIFFERENT VIEWS.

A: Do we know how much?

Q: THEY TAKE DIFFERENT VIEWS ENTIRELY.

A: A fellow comes here from Africa, for example, Sam -- anyways he's from Ghana *John* if it's Monday in Church, he's sitting there on our organ, he's playing songs. He can play the piano, too. He's been a teacher over there. And suddenly he feels the tension of the music that we're playing. It's an amazing thing, he says. This is it. And there's something in the soul of the African I think that's in the soul of the American negro that hasn't quite been covered up or hidden by the fact that they imitate the white man so well. And I think this is something you can ^{it} quite put your finger on or quite isolate or quite characterize with words, but I think it's there and I think you feel it more than anything else.