

**Cuyahoga County Community College**  
**Stokes Initiative**  
**Walter Beach**

*Good afternoon, Susan Hall interviewing Walter Beach, III, August 16, 2017, in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania at the Bethlehem Hotel. Good afternoon.*

TC: 13:26:56

Good afternoon, Susan, it's pleased to share these few moments with you.

*Could you repeat and spell your name for me?*

Sure. My name is Walter Beach, III. Walter is W-A-L-T-E-R, Beach B-E-A-C-H, and I'm the third. Third generation from slavery.

*What city was your birthplace?*

TC: 13:27:27

The city that I was born in is Pontiac, Michigan, and I was born in 1933. January the 30 - what did I say? The 31st, 1933. So Pontiac is a interesting city, and of course a lot of people may know that's where they used to manufacture the automobiles. The Pontiac automobile.

TC: 13:28:00

Then there was the Native American, Chief Pontiac, who was one of the Native American Chiefs and Leaders of the Indian Nations. He was a very powerful individual.

*In your book Consider This you stated that you were high born and well bred. Please elaborate on what the means to you.*

TC: 13:28:28

The statement that I made about being high born and well bred meant that I viewed my mother and father as royalty. So therefore, consistent with that word is that I would be high born, of a king and a queen.

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TC: 13:28:58

The well bred was probably as important as the high born. It's that my whole socialization was predicated upon what my parents believed was the correct response for human beings.

TC: 13:29:22

So I learned all the particular protocol of language and behavior, so I understood that whatever I did reflected upon my parents and my community. So therefore I was well bred.

*What are some of your earliest memories of your hometown (unintelligible)?*

TC: 13:29:52

Well, I was very blessed and the thing that I found the most comforting in terms of early memories was I was loved. Not only was I a child in that community, I was someone's child. So whenever I was in the community as a young kid, eight, nine, right up until I left to go into the military, you know. Is that everybody was interested and concerned about Little Beach.

TC: 13:30:34

I was my father's son, he was a big guy, and I was Little Beach. They were always trying to direct me in the right direction. Going to the pool hall, and they said, "Little Beach, get out the pool hall. We don't want you in the pool hall. But since you're here, let me show you how to shoot pool."

TC: 13:30:58

We don't want you to go to the gambling joints, but since you're here let me show you how they do this, you know? So that you could protect yourself. But as a student athlete and in the community, I was well respected. So my development and my ego, and that type of indoctrination, served me well. That's why I'm so race conscious.

TC: 13:31:34

My community showed me what it was like to be a man, and that voice that I got from those individuals around my father and me, my uncles. I was always excited. I was always excited as a

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young guy, because I knew whatever I was doing somebody was going to have some input into that relationship.

*What was life like in Michigan for your family and the black community during the depression into the 1960's?*

TC: 13:32:08

Well, it was my mother and my father, and my sister Shirley, and Pontiac was -- and I know you're probably familiar with this -- Pontiac was Mississippi in the north. You know?

Segregated, there was five movies. My father never went to the movie because he said he refused to go to a movie where he had to sit in the balcony, and sit in the back, and go up the back stairs, and pay for that.

TC: 13:32:39

He was kinda funny. He said, "If they let me see the movie free I might go upstairs and in the back. But I'm going to pay to be discriminated against? And to be segregated against?" As a kid, you know, I loved the movies. You know? I was the age where I'd pull for the cowboys and hope that the Indians fail. But that was before I became conscious. I didn't recognize that I was an Indian.

TC: 13:33:06

It took me some time to process that, you know? But no, it was clear lines. In Pontiac, once you crossed Orchard Lake to come to the west side, you were in the white neighborhood. My junior high school, Washington Junior High School, was in a all white community. Of course, we had to go to that school but we could only go down one street.

TC: 13:33:37

After we crossed Orchard Lake we could go down Menomonie. The reason it was called Menomonie, the community was called the Indian Village. No Indians or black people lived in Indian Village. All the streets was all those Native American words and terms was the names of the street.

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TC: 13:33:59

So it was very segregated, so I grew up in that and I got all of my strength out of that from my grandmother, and my mother and father, and the community.

*What childhood memories during your early education years impacted you the most?*

TC: 13:34:16

Well, you know, I think one of the experiences that I had, when I was nine years old, the 4th grade, back in elementary school, they'd have games in the gym. School would be out at 3:00, so from 3:00 to 4:00 you could stay in the gym. At 4:00 the 5th graders came in who were ten year olds.

TC: 13:34:44

So one time I stayed after the 4:00, into the 4:00 hour, and I wasn't supposed to be there. So one of the janitors, he chased me. Of course he couldn't catch me, but he chased me. I'd run down the hall, and he'd chase me down the hall. Finally, I was getting ready to go through the door, her shut the door on my head. Clamped my head in the door. I had a hickey on my head, and of course I cried, and I ran all the way home and told my father.

TC: 13:35:22

So like I said, my father's a big man, so I told him, you know, what had happened. So he said, "All right, let's go back up to the school." And my dad said, you know, I'll go talk to him. So they talked, and he come back. My father said, "Let's go." So my expectation was that my father was going to crack this guy. You know, he done bumped my head. So I thought, I said, well daddy's going to take care of him.

TC: 13:35:54

So we got home, and I'm still not understanding what had just transpired. So I said, "Daddy," I said, "Well, how come you didn't -- you know, he put my head in there." So my father looked at me, and he said, "I want to ask you a couple of questions." I said, "Okay." He said, "How old are

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you?" Which I thought was a stupid question. I said, "I'm nine." But he knows how old I am, you know? He said, "Nine year olds supposed to be in the gym from 3:00 to 4:00." I said, "Yeah."

TC: 13:36:32

He said, "Then when Mr. Clark caught your head in the door, was it between 3:00 and 4:00 or was it after 4:00?" Then it started to become clear to me what was happening. I said, "It was after 4:00." He said, "Then if it was after 4:00 you shouldn't have got your head caught in the door, because you shouldn't have been there." That was the first lesson that I got.

TC: 13:37:01

Then my mother, they used to call me June. She said, "June?" And I said, "Yes, ma'am." She said, "Wrong is right, and right is wrong. Wrong don't right nobody, and right don't wrong nobody." That was the message I got from my mother and father, so that's kind of how I lived. You know, if you're right you're right, if you're wrong you're wrong. You can't bring nobody to support you when you're wrong. You just have to accept the fact that you're wrong.

TC: 13:37:35

That kind of responsibility is kind of the way I live my life. That was an early lesson for me. I call them love lessons. I had a lot of love lessons.

*Speaking of love lessons, in Consider This you shared many words of wisdom provided to you by your grandmother, [Oda Beach Page]. Would you share some of those?*

TC: 13:38:00

Oh, wow. I would call her Granny. Granny had a lot of wisdom in the things that she was -- if we go to that one about representing, she always used to say, "Boy, you represent more than yourself." She'd say, "You represent me, you represent your mother, your father, your sister, you represent this community. So therefore, there are certain things that you can't do."

TC: 13:38:30

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I don't even know how to give this little analogy. You know. She'd always say, "Boy, you got to keep that thing in your pants." You know? That was one of the things. Not only that, she used to say, "Always make sure that your underclothes are clean." She said, "'Cause you might get hit by a car."

TC: 13:39:01

I mean, there's a lot of those little funny things that she said, but it was always that -- I was an athlete and I was a fairly successful athlete in junior high school and high school. I was a decent student, and in track I held the state record in the 100 and 200 in track.

TC: 13:39:27

My sister, and my aunt -- my father's sister, my aunt -- the three of us was at my grandmother's house and they came in and told my grandmother that I'd just broke the state record. They was excited and here's the champ, and my grandmother said, "Well, yeah, good. Congratulations." She said, "Now, go empty the slop jar."

TC: 13:39:56

Now, I don't know if people of this day and age, they probably don't know what the slop jar is. But if you had a outhouse, you had to go outside. But when you were inside, you used the slop jar. So she said, "You've got to empty the slop." She said, "I don't care how fast you run, or what you do out there, in here you're just like everybody else. You have to empty the slop jar." That was that aspect of a balance and measuring how she dealt with it. Her final point, the one thing she always used to say. She always used to say, "The Beach boys are good as gold."

TC: 13:40:36

That kind of, for some people, seem like it's kind of sexist. But she said, "The Beach boys are good as gold." She didn't speak on about the girls, which there were girls. So she handled that I guess the way she handled it. I guess if she was today, in the woman's lib, she'd say, "The Beach boys and the Beach girls are good as gold." That would have made everybody happy.

TC: 13:41:01

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But that wasn't what she said. So I always knew, I always knew, that I was as good as gold. So there was no relationship that I would ever have with another human being, where I didn't understand what my value was. I think that is so much missing today, with especially our young black people. Young black men. You know, they don't know what they value are, and they don't know, you know, "But I am the prize."

TC: 13:41:35

You know, they say keep your eye on the prize? Well, I am the prize. I think that when people recognize that they are the prize they deal with it differently. That's why people always say to me, say, "Some things don't bother you." You know, about race and racism. I say, "Well, I'm indifferent to racism because I understand it. It's clear to me." So I don't get upset by a lot of the stuff, you know? But I had to mature into that.

*During your high school years, you said you went to a integrated high school? Yeah. What were the expectations and the treatment of students --*

TC: 13:42:20

Well, you know, what I speak to is me and by that I was a star. So I could get passes. If I went to one of my teachers and told her I wanted a pass to go to the library or bathroom, they'd just write it and I'd go. But if you went up there and asked the teacher, it'd be a whole lot of -- so in terms of that, again, as I reflect on it, I'd gotten special treatment.

TC: 13:42:52

The only thing, how I benefited, was that my grandmother didn't allow that to become part of my -- so I never thought I was special. In that environment, I was special. You know, because all the girls liked me and everything, and I always believed that. In my senior year I asked this girl, Dot McCluster, who I liked. You know? It was kinda quiet, but I always looked at Dot and I said, "I like Dot." You know?

TC: 13:43:29

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So given that background, I asked Dot. We had a chemistry class together, and in the chemistry class you had to have lab partners. So you had to have a partner because you had one bunsen burner, and you know all that chemistry. So I asked Dot, I said, "Would you be my lab partner in chemistry?" And she said no.

TC: 13:43:53

I said, "Oh, wow." First of all, I had never heard a no in terms of like that, you know? She said no. I said, "Dot, why don't you want to be my lab partner?" And her exact words, she said, "Walter, you act too stupid." I said, "What are you talking about?" Because I was a peacock and I pranced around the school. Like I said, I had four letters. Letters in basketball, letters in football. You know, I bought into all of that.

TC: 13:44:28

Being a teenager, you know, I lived in it. You know. But I never thought that I was stupid, and when she said that, it just flashed in my mind. It made me look at myself. However, Dot and I did finally, we went to the senior prom and she became a girlfriend of mine, you know, but she was the first person in high school to make me aware of you've got to look at what you're doing and what you're saying.

TC: 13:45:01

I never had considered that, because that was my senior year. She made me aware of it, and then at the same time I had a teacher, Ms. Lucy Haden was the first black teacher in Pontiac and I had her for an English class. She brought me the same message, you know? She would say, "Walter, you should put more time into your studying as opposed to your sports."

TC: 13:45:35

So she would always say, "Go back, put more time into what you're doing." So those were the two people in high school and during that period, that when I reflect upon it they helped me a great deal.

*During high school what sports did you play?*



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TC: 13:45:55

You turn it around, what sports you didn't play? I'm sorry. The sports I played football, of course. I was a football player. I was a track man, I had the best rank, and I played basketball, and I played baseball. I didn't play baseball for the school, but I played baseball for the American Legion. I don't know why he had me on the basketball team, because I couldn't play no basketball. But I was on the team. I guess, you know, if I was trying out they'd find a place for me.

TC: 13:46:31

That was always funny, I said, "What?" I always knew I couldn't play basketball, but I played on the team and they had a spot for me, probably four players back, you know? But no, I played all the sports and I got all the letters, you know. That's what they call it, three letter man, so I got three letters for each of the major sports. That's why I said, I put them on. You'd wear them in high school, you'd wear them on your sweater.

TC: 13:46:59

So it was Central Michigan, it'd be a big C. That's interesting, yeah. I was into the sports.

*Did you ever think you'd play professional sports?*

TC: 13:47:11

Yeah, I always knew I'd play professional sports. But, you know, let's go back to high school because I think this is interesting. I played football, and one of the better football players on our team was a boy named Charles Twitty. Charles Twitty had transferred from Toledo to Pontiac.

TC: 13:47:30

Charles Twitty, big black fella. He played fullback. Big black fella. Charles Twitty was an excellent swimmer, and now that he went out for the football team and made football, when he went out for the swimming team they wouldn't allow him to participate. So this is the same

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school that gave me all the accolades about playing football. I couldn't swim that well, I wonder what would have happened if I'd tried to get on the swimming team.

TC: 13:48:04

They wouldn't allow him to go on the swimming team. They came up something of he'd just transferred from Toledo and -- you know that. But you know what that was about, that's that segregate.

*So what do you think was the reason?*

TC: 13:48:18

It's obvious what the reason is, and I should say what the reason is. It was just racism. I don't know, I think maybe the swimming coach didn't think he could swim. He has to validate it. But, I mean, if he couldn't swim and didn't make the team that would have been one thing. Sometimes we get confused about those merit situations.

TC: 13:48:37

We think, especially in sports, is that they're basically merit situations. We're in, what, 2017 and Kaepernick is an obvious example it's got nothing to do with merits. I mean, I done went through that and you're from Cleveland. You probably understand a lot of that. I didn't want to digress on that, the question that you had asked me before that was -- what was that question?

*Did you ever think you would play professional sports?*

TC: 13:49:16

Like I said, yeah. I always knew I would play. My journey playing professional football was kind of interesting. I played two years of professional football. Well, let me say, after I graduated from college I was drafted by the Giants. After being drafted by the Giants I went to the Canadian Football League, because I had a friend in Canada.

TC: 13:49:45

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So I went to the Canadian Football League. And when I went to the Canadian Football League, during this particular time they had a college All Star game. At the college All Star, all of the college All Stars would play the national football league champion. So whoever was the champion the year before, that was one of the big things.

TC: 13:50:05

So the college All Stars, I was invited as a college All Star to play in the college All Star game against the Baltimore Colts. So, of course, getting out of college, I wanted to do that. But I was playing football for the Hamilton Tiger Cats. So I asked them could I go play football, the All Star game. Of course, they refused, you know.

TC: 13:50:30

So when they refused, I left camp and went to the Giants training camp. I was drafted by the Giants, so I went to the Giants training camp. Then I was released by the Giants. When I got released, I got a telephone call from Lou Saban, and Lou Saban asked me, said, "I'd like for you to come into Boston, to play at the Boston Patriots."

TC: 13:51:01

Because Lou Saban was the college coach in Western Illinois. In Central Michigan we played Western Illinois. We were in the same division. So I played against Lou Saban when I was at Central and he was the coach at Western Illinois. So he brought me up to Boston, and I played two years with the Boston Patriots.

*I'm going to take you back a little bit. Before you went to college, let's talk about how you got to college. What was the way in via your time there?*

TC: 13:51:42

Yeah, it's the same situation. That's interesting. It's the same thing when I was talking about merit systems. It's about who you know, and whoever you know and how they -- when I got out of the Air Force. Because I come from that little small town, they ran an article in the paper that

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Walter Beach, you know, high school athlete, come home from the Air Force and is interested in going to college.

TC: 13:52:15

So I get a letter from Michigan State, I get a letter from Central Michigan, and I get a letter from the University of Michigan, inviting me to go play football. I didn't respond to any of the letters, because I just didn't know which school to go to.

TC: 13:52:44

Bill Kelly, at Central Michigan, who was the coach at Central Michigan, had been a high school coach at Saginaw Arthur Hill. So when I was in high school I played against him. So when he found out that I was interested in college, and now he's the head coach at Central Michigan, he came down to my house and he talked to me, my mother, and my father.

TC: 13:53:18

He said, "We'd like for you to come to Central Michigan." He made a statement, he said, "At Central Michigan," he said, "you could be a big fish in a little pond." My father's response is, "He could be a big fish in a big pond." You know? That was his response.

TC: 13:53:44

So he left, so I have to make a decision. My mother made the decision for me, because like I said she called me, she said, "June." I said, "Yes, ma'am." She said, "I like that man." She said, "He's a good man." She said, "I'd like for you to go to Central Michigan, because he's a good man." That's why I went to Central Michigan. My mother was correct, he was a decent human being. Because, you know, when I played football at Central Michigan I was the only black guy on the team.

TC: 13:54:18

So when we go on trips, I used to think nigger was my middle name. If we had to go to hotels and restaurants, we'd sleep in busses. We'd have a whole football team sleep in a bus when we

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got to Champagne, Illinois, because they said I couldn't come into the hotel. Bill Kelly would say, "If Walt can't go into the hotel, none of us go into the hotel."

TC: 13:54:48

That's the type of individual he was. We'd go to a restaurant, and we'd go, you know, whole football team. I'd be the straggler, I'd come in and I'd see Bill Kelly talking to the owner at the restaurant. And then Bill would say, "All right. Let's go, we're leaving here." Because he said, "If he can't eat here, none of us can eat here."

TC: 13:55:14

That's why I understand what it is, and I deal with that all the time.

*Let's talk about that a little bit by going back. Prior to that, you went into the US military in 1952. Just a few short years after Truman -- The Executive Order? To integrate the military, or desegregate the military for a better term. But the US was still governed by Jim Crow laws and the fact of segregation. What was your experience in the Air Force at that time, especially with (unintelligible)?*

TC: 13:55:56

See, yeah. Well, I went into the Air Force because my uncle told me, I was drafted to go into the Army and Uncle James said, "Man, you should volunteer and go into the Air Force." You know, I'm a young guy, I said, "Why?" He said, "Because you won't have to fight. You won't have to go to war." You know? So I joined the Air Force from Pontiac, Michigan. I joined the Air Force and got on the train in Pontiac, Michigan, and got all the way to right outside of Chicago. Someplace Indiana. Gary, Indiana.

TC: 13:56:32

In Gary, Indiana, they came on the train and said, "All the black people got to go to the back of the train." Because they were crossing the Mason-Dixon line. So I had to go to the back, not just me. They said all, not just me. So I had to go to the back of the train from Gary, Indiana to San

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Antonio, Texas. So that was something that I hadn't been that familiar with. Because in Pontiac there was segregation but I always knew where I belonged.

TC: 13:57:06

I was in the Air Force now, the United States of America Air Force, I had to go to the back of the train. Then we get to San Antonio, that's where I took my basic training. I took the basic training, got in some trouble. Someone called me a black nigger bastard, and of course I hit him, because that's just how I responded to him. You know?

TC: 13:57:30

They bringing me up on charges. So that process of going through the charges, the Colonel told me, and my Drill Sergeant told me, he said, "Walt," he said, "you've got to learn to control yourself." "Yes, sir."

TC: 13:57:59

He said, "If you hit everybody down here who call you a nigger," he said, "you won't have a fist." I thought about that, I said, I didn't know everybody down here was going to be calling me a nigger. You know? But that was my experience with that briefly, you know. Then from then on I went to tech school.

TC: 13:58:26

I went to Cheyenne, Wyoming. I went to the clerk typist school. From Cheyenne, Wyoming, I went to crypto school. They give you a battery of tests. The battery of tests, you know, like firearms and wrenches and things of that nature. I didn't have no talent for any of that. My talent was basically I was academically sound. So when they tested me, I was a cryptographic operator. I went to crypto school.

TC: 13:59:03

So I had a top secret clearance and I was four years in the Air Force as a crypto operator, enciphering and deciphering messages. So those were my four years. I spent three years in Germany.

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*It sounds like that experience helped prepare you for some of the experiences at Central Michigan. Were your fellow students and fellow athletes amenable to the discomfort that they faced because of your presence on the team?*

TC: 13:59:35

You know, I had a lot of friends on the football team. Like I said, they'd call me these names. I didn't fight, they fought for me. See, when I played and they called me a name, I'd see a fight going on. It wasn't me fighting because they called me a nigger, it was my teammates fighting because they called me a nigger, you know?

TC: 14:00:01

I'm very comfortable with the use of the word, outside of the present connotation. I don't use no n-word or nothing like that. I used the word because it is what it is. I'm intelligent enough to know what a euphemism is. So when somebody say, "Well, why don't you say the n-word?" I always say, "Now, never, next. Those are n-words." You know? So I'm not confused, I'm clear about that. I don't want nobody to be talking to me and saying nigger, but I ain't going to say nigger, I'm going to say n-word so you'll feel comfortable. That, to me, is absurd.

TC: 14:00:39

That's why I use it in the correct way. I don't use it. My wife has asked me, she says, "You ever call somebody a nigger?" I say no. I don't call people that, so I don't refer to it. Therefore, I have no illusions about it.

*I'm going to jump ahead. In 1960 you were also drafted, like you said, by the teams in the American Football League, National Football League, and Canadian. How did you come to join the Cleveland Browns in 1968?*

TC: 14:01:16

I was drafted by the Giants, and got released from the Giants. Lou Saban took me into Boston. I played in Boston for two years. I come into training camp and they had a roster, and we were

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going to New Orleans. At that time, they had merged the leagues. This was an exhibition game. When I saw the itinerary, it had all of the black ball players staying in one place and all of the white ball players staying in another place when we were going to New Orleans, I wasn't comfortable with that.

TC: 14:02:02

So I talked to some of the players and they said, "Yeah, we should go talk to management about that." I was the spokesman for the group, so I said this is the way we feel about going to stay in a segregated quarters. You know? But just that's the way of the south, you know? My position was, "Why don't you just fly us in, let us play, and fly us out? Why do we got to go down there and stay two or three days?"

TC: 14:02:33

I mean, the logic's kind of absurd. "Well, we've got some players from the south, and that's their home and they want to be down there." So we'll make it nice for the "white boys" who live down there, they can stay, but y'all have to go and (unintelligible). Anyway, I spoke on that to Mike Holovak, who was the coach. Lou Saban had since left the Boston Patriots, Mike Holovak was the coach.

TC: 14:03:03

When I spoke on that, and I shared that with management and everything, because I was the spokesman. The very next day I was on waivers. They sent me home. Gave me a check and told me to go home. So, '62, I went back to teach school. While I was teaching school, a friend of mine, and you might know Jim Shorter?

TC: 14:03:29

Jim Shorter said, "Man, they need some players in Cleveland, and you ought to contact." I contacted Cleveland, I sent them all my papers and stuff, and they sent me a contract. Then I went into training camp. The strange thing about, they released Jim and kept me. Jim went on to play with, I think it was the Steelers or the Red Skins. He played with both of them at one time.



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TC: 14:03:57

That's why I wound up playing in Cleveland. Well, I really didn't wind up playing. Cleveland was going to cut me, too, for the same reason, you know? You talk too much, you're a trouble maker. One day we were coming from town where we took our laundry. I had just taken my laundry and it was time for the afternoon practice. They called me in and told me, "Well, Walt, we don't think we're going to go with you." What can you say? You know, when your boss said they didn't want you, you just have to leave.

TC: 14:04:37

So I'm upstairs packing and Jim Brown comes by. Jim used to call me Doc. "Hey, Doc," he said, "let's go to practice." I said, "They just put me on waivers, man. You know, I'm no longer on the team." He said, "Aw, stop joking, man. Let's go to practice." I said, "Jim, you see I'm packing." I'm, you know? He said, "What?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Man, wait here."

TC: 14:05:03

Jim went down, about 40 minutes later he come back, he said, "Let's go to practice, man." I said, "Man, look. I've done spoke to the owners and management, and they told me I ain't on the team." You have to know Jim, you know? He grabbed me with his big hands, and drags me down to the locker room, and when I get to the locker room they're putting all of my stuff back into the cubicles, you know?

TC: 14:05:31

Then I get out there, and it's the most awkward moment I've ever had in my life. Because I've got on a uniform and I'm out there doing exercise and calisthenics and the owners had said, "You're no longer on the team." So I don't know what I'm doing. Yeah, I'm in limbo. You know?

TC: 14:05:56

Then when they call out the starting defensive for the secondary, they call out Bernie Parrish, and Ross Fichtner, and Larry Benz, and then they said Walter Beach. So I just go out there. I went out there, and never heard anything from any management or owners until they finally released me.

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TC: 14:06:23

I read in the New York Times that Jim Brown said he wasn't coming back to play football because he was making a movie. And Art Modell said, "Well, if you make the movie we're going to fine you \$100.00 for every day you miss." So Jim said, "You don't have to worry about fining me, I won't come back." He said, "I ain't going to play no more." So he quit.

TC: 14:06:46

So that left me on a team without my Rabbi, without my Godfather, which was Jim. You know? So I got a phone call that said, "Walt, come in. We want to talk to you." Well, I knew what that was about. You know? Yeah, so I knew what that was about.

*What was your relationship like with team owner Art Modell?*

TC: 14:07:11

It was a difficult relationship. Because in professional sports you can't play with the Boston Patriots and think that their behavior is predicated on racism and you speak out against it. That somebody else in the league ain't going to know what you said, or how you feel.

TC: 14:07:43

So when I played with the Browns, when I was with the Browns, Modell told me in our first meeting, he said, "I know what your reputation is." I said, "Well, you know." "Well, you a race man." I said, "Yeah, I'm going to speak out against the injustices." Modell said something that lent itself to my understanding about what I think ownership is, and about slavery.

TC: 14:08:13

He said to me, "Walt," he said, "I've done more for black people than they've done for themselves." My response was, "I doubt it." But that's his attitude. That was early in that relationship. I said, wow. I said, this is deep. Then we were on an airplane, flying to California to play the Los Angeles Rams at that time, and I was on the plane and I was reading a book.

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TC: 14:08:45

The book was, The Message to the Black Man, by the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. Modell, he came down the aisle. I was reading the book, he said, "What are you reading?" I showed him the book. The book with Elijah Muhammad with his kufi on and everything. He said, "I don't want you to read that book." I said, "Okay, Art."

TC: 14:09:13

He left, and about half an hour later he came by. He said, "I thought I told you that I didn't want you reading that book." I said, "You did." I said, "But I thought you were joking." He said, "I wasn't joking." I said, "You have to be joking." I said, "Mr. Modell, a man can't tell another man what to read. I'll play football for you. If you don't want me on this team, when we get home give me a check and I'll leave. But don't you ever think you can tell me what to read."

TC: 14:09:49

He took it literally. He actually believed he owned me. Not only me, I think he believed he owned all them guys. Jim Brown, it didn't matter. That's that ownership mentality. That's the mentality that I was dealing with. So that was a contentious relationship, because I wasn't walking around there worshipping that stuff that they want you to worship.

TC: 14:10:13

You asked me earlier how come I don't watch sports. That might be one of the reasons, too. I never thought about that. But I don't watch sports because I'm just not that interested in it. But now I think maybe Mr. Modell corrupted my sensibilities about watching sports. I know y'all going to cut a lot of this stuff out.

*In 1967 you were again put on waivers. Why? What happened?*

TC: 14:10:42

Well, Jim wasn't there. I'd been the starting cornerback, and they put me on waivers. After going on waivers, I wrote all the footballs teams asking for a tryout. None of them would give me a

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tryout. Then I went to the EEOC, Equal Employment, and brought a charge against them and took them to federal court.

TC: 14:11:14

When they were in federal court, the ruling was in my favor and I didn't get reinstated for the football team but I got paid for the seasons that I would have been playing football for them. So they blackballed me. That's why I'm so familiar with Kaepernick's situation today. Yeah, they blackballed me. One of the letters that I got back was from the Detroit Lions.

TC: 14:11:45

When they put you on waivers, that means that all the teams have an opportunity to select you. So the Detroit Lions selected me, and when the Detroit Lions selected me the Browns took me back off waivers. We're not going to waive him, we're going to keep him. He's our property and we want to keep him. That happened a couple of times. I think with the Atlanta Falcons and with the Detroit Lions. That's how I won my case. There were teams that wanted me to play, but there was a loophole how you could get around it.

*So much is made of winning championships. What were your feelings about winning the 1964 Championship? In light of things that were happening?*

TC: 14:12:29

Yeah. Well, you know, winning the Championship was just one of those forever moments. I mean, I was euphoric. When I walked off the field, I felt I was walking on air. I remember it. I was so excited and so happy. Because, you know, we were considered underdogs in that particular Championship game. Nobody thought we would win, you know?

TC: 14:13:02

Nobody but us. You know, as a team we believed that we could win. But no, I was very, very happy and felt honored. You know? For me and the rest of the team. Today I'm very excited about it. I don't want to suggest that I'm anything special, but I think there's a lot of things that we do in our human experiences better than just winning a football Championship.

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TC: 14:13:34

Now, that's just me. I was reading the other day some football player, he loved football, he said, "If I die, that's how I want to die." Well, I never thought about dying on the football field. Life, to me, is far more important than playing football. That's how I kinda deal with it. Football is what I did, that ain't who I am. A lot of guys, that's who they are.

TC: 14:14:02

If they couldn't hold up, or get some sense of psychological or emotional comfort for being a football player. You know? I think that's one of the real messages in it. You should appreciate your talent and your blessings to do that, and share that, but that ain't who you are. In fact, you won't be known, 30 or 40 years, about you playing football. You'll be known about whatever contributions you made to humanity.

*With that, the next question shifted to the next phase of what you were involved with. When did you first meet Carl Stokes, and what was your impression of him ?*

TC: 14:14:47

I met Carl Stokes, it's interesting. There was a black unity conference. I worked for legal aid, and in that job with legal aid I did a lot of community work in the Hough area. Then I was a member of the Hough Area Development Corporation. That exposure in that community, I just got to know a lot of people and do a lot of things.

TC: 14:15:22

In that aspect, I got involved with Ahmed Evans, Harllee Jones, Baxter Hill, Rabbi -- I can't think of his name, but I was in the community. This was during the 60's, and of course they're going to have a black unity conference. Sitting in on those meetings, the groups of the Black Nationalists, and the NAACP, everybody that was going to be part of that black unity, they choose me to put that together and be in charge of all of that.

TC: 14:16:10

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Well, at that time Carl Stokes was just beginning to run against Mayor Locher. That was his first chance to run against the Mayor, become the mayor of the City of Cleveland. So Carl thought, or believed, that there would be negative feedback from having a black unity conference in Cleveland and it would interfere with the overall attitude about what it would be like to have a black mayor.

TC: 14:16:44

So Carl called me, I was working in legal aid and he called me and he said, "I'd like for you to come down, I'd like to talk to you." So I went down and he said, "I'd like for you not to have that black unity conference because it's going to create too much racial animus in the city." You know? I said, "Well, Carl, I can't call it off. I didn't create it, I didn't bring it together." He said, "Well, I want you to do it." I said, "Well, I didn't -- "

TC: 14:17:16

So we left, and I just told him, I said, "Man, I can't do that." So he called me a couple of days later, and he said, "I thought I wanted you to do that." I said, "But I told you I couldn't do it." And he told me, Carl said, "I'm going to have your f-ing job." Because I'm working for legal aid. Well, Bert Griffin was the Director of legal aid.

TC: 14:17:42

So I went to Bert Griffin and said, "Well, the Mayor just called me and said if I had the black unity conference that he's going to have my job." So Bert Griffin said, "He can't take your job. I'm in charge of your job." You know? Make a long story short, that's the way it went down. We had the conference and everything went well, and then Carl became mayor.

TC: 14:18:10

That picture I was showing you about the Nationalists and everything? They said for them to get behind Carl, then he would have to give me a position in City Hall. Give me a job. I became the youth coordinator, his Administrative Assistant. And we had a excellent relationship after that.

*Did you work on his campaign?*

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TC: 14:18:30

No, I didn't work on the campaign. No, I did not work on the campaign. I was involved with all of the other stuff going on, so I didn't see any reason. But I became his administrative assistant. Carl was this kind of a guy, I'm going to share this with you. Carl always counted, what he called counting the house.

TC: 14:18:55

He said, "Man, I always count the house." I said, "What do you mean by counting the house?" He said, "When I count the house, it depends on who's in the house. If they're more of these kind of people in the house," he said, "that's what my discussion is." So when he would talk on the west side, his discussion would be a lot different than when he talked in Hough. But he was a shrewd politician. When he wanted something done for black people, I was part of that technique instrument.

TC: 14:19:30

Carl, anytime he took his cigar out, he loved cigars, he'd take his cigar out and he'd lick his cigars around and then he'd light it. That was a signal for me to take the militant position in the discussion. So when we were at the foundations, or wherever we were, we got that (unintelligible) Cleveland NOW to get that \$11 million, when we'd be in those meetings I was the bad cop and he'd be the good cop.

TC: 14:20:02

I'd go off and say, "Well, you know, this is this." You know? Carl said, "Oh, wait a minute, Walt. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Maybe we should try to just -- " So that was his method of operations, his MO. He was a shrewd politician.

*As far as the youth initiatives, those were implemented by you, were they developed by you and the mayor? Or --*

TC: 14:20:29

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Yeah, the Mayor did. I was in charge of the initiative, but we had to go to Cleveland NOW to get the monies. So I had two staff people. We developed what we called Drop In Centers, and getting Cleveland NOW monies. I'd received a letter from Leona Beevis, from the Welfare Federation, because I was in charge of the Cleveland NOW monies.

TC: 14:21:04

I didn't put her into the budget. I didn't put her into the budget because she had programs, but she didn't have any black camp counselors. So the Welfare Federation didn't have any counselors. She told the Mayor, she said, "We've been getting money from this for 30 years." From this Welfare Federation. Carl said, "Well, you should be able to get some now." She said, "Well, Mr. Beach said that we didn't meet -- " I said, "Well, all I said was I thought you should have some black counselors in your organization.

TC: 14:21:38

Her response was, "Well, we can't find any." I said, "Well, go to some of the black colleges. They've got social workers in those colleges." Finally she did and we gave her \$40 million.

*That's when you were able to accomplish the --*

TC: 14:21:59

We created what they called Drop In Centers. The Drop In Centers were instrumental in getting young guys off the street and getting them into positive kinds of things. We had to do that, and we did that on the west side, which was kind of unusual in Cleveland. You being from Cleveland, you know that side of town was the white side of town.

TC: 14:22:24

The west side of Cleveland was the opposite from my hometown in Pontiac. Because in Pontiac the west side was where the black people lived. In Cleveland, the west side was where the white people lived. Up there in Murray Hill and all that kinda stuff, you know? You know, they played football with the Cleveland Browns, but we didn't go to Murray Hill. We went over to the west



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side. Might be 80,000 out there rooting for you, but if you went over there it was a different response. Yeah.

*What do you think is the lasting legacy of the Stokes Administration and your role with Youth Unlimited?*

TC: 14:23:07

Yeah, well I think Carl's legacy should be a positive legacy. One of the things that we talk about in legacy is no corruption, that's obvious. You know? That's the negative aspect of it. Then the positive aspect of it, he brought the community together.

TC: 14:23:37

He demonstrated in what at that time was the largest major city, that black people and white people, in terms of the coalition he built, could elect public officials and could get things done for communities that had often been left out. I thought that he had a positive impact on the politics and on the community.

TC: 14:24:08

He helped us bring, I was a board member of Cleveland Economic Foundation, and we got I think several million dollars from the Humphrey. Humphrey was, I think he was the Vice President, and we got money to do some housing and economic development in the Hough area. The mayor was very instrumental in that.

*What do you think the legacy and the impact has been on youth programs in the City of Cleveland from the Mayor Stokes era?*

TC: 14:24:46

Well, it was positive. I think the impact that the Mayor had, and I'm saying this and it seems strange. You know, like the Nationalists. The Afro Sect, Ahmed Evans. Although some of that turned out to be negative, but those people had never been addressed in Cleveland. What Carl did was let them into the political and economic stream. That was very positive.

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*Talking about Ahmed Evans and others in the Nationalists Sect, what was your role via the Mayor's office during the Glenville shootout and riots?*

TC: 14:25:37

I was right on the scene, with Ahmed, moments before the shootings occur. George Forbes, myself, and Harlrel Jones had been to Ahmed's place. We had a discussion, and the discussion was such that Ahmed had all his people there and the place was under surveillance.

TC: 14:26:11

It shouldn't have been under surveillance, and when I called -- at this time, we didn't have cell phones. So I went to the corner and called the Mayor's office and told him that Ahmed was concerned about the police surveillance and the police around. The Mayor said, "Well, I'll get them to remove the police so there won't be no trouble." I said, "Well, these guys," talking about his group, I said, "you know, they got guns and ready to go."

TC: 14:26:47

So he should call the police back, get them back. You know, I don't know who fired the first shots, but my feeling in discussion is that Ahmed and them didn't want no part of no riot, no shootouts. But once the shooting start, they were not afraid to pursue the shootings in a way that warriors pursue it. You know? So some people got killed.

TC: 14:27:16

I think three police officers got killed in that shootout, and seven or ten of the Nationalists got killed.

*What impact did the Glenville shootout have on the youth in the City of Cleveland? Then and maybe now?*

TC: 14:27:35

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You know, that's an interesting question because I don't know exactly how to assess it. Because of my beliefs and my philosophy. Any man's death, or death, diminishes me. But sometimes situations occur where people find that maybe death is more important than living under certain conditions.

TC: 14:28:10

That's what I think comes out of those particular uprisings. I don't see them as riots. In fact, this particular country, they call it the Boston Tea Party, that was a riot. It was taxation without representation.

TC: 14:28:37

Well, I think it's a difference for one to say there's taxation without representation. So if you can make that statement, and then you add to it taxation without representation and abuse and oppression, then I don't think you're talking about a riot. I think you're talking about people trying to liberate themselves in the only way that might be possible.

*What impact do you believe that the uprising, the racial animus in the City, had on future administrations?*

TC: 14:29:24

You know, I wasn't around after that. Bill Pickard was the President of NAACP. Frank Anderson was the Executive Director of CORE. I was the Mayor's Youth Assistant. Bill Pickard always thought about this.

TC: 14:30:01

He said, "Man, I was on the NAACP. I was the President. You were on the Mayor's Youth Council, and Frank Anderson was the Chairman of CORE." I went to Yale law school, Bill went to Ohio State, Frank Anderson went to Harvard.

TC: 14:30:29

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So Bill said, "They got us out of there, man. They sent us away." Because by sending us away it created a whole different genre for people to come. You know? I don't know who became a youth coordinator, I don't know who ran CORE, and I don't know who ran NAACP.

TC: 14:30:55

But he said, "That's what happens when they want things to change. If you can be productive in one area, then they send you somewhere else." So, I never went back to Cleveland. I don't know if Frank ever went back, I know Bill didn't go back.

*Based on this animus and change in atmosphere, in 1968 when Dr. King was assassinated and unrest and riots broke out in response to his death in other cities, what tactics and strategies did Mayor Stokes employ to quell the unrest and violence in Cleveland, and what role did you play in --*

TC: 14:31:32

Yeah, what Carl did was he brought all of the divergent black groups with the counsel at churches, he brought all of them into City Hall and the collective participated in to do the kind of things that could quell the riots.

TC: 14:31:55

Now, in the nights of the riots, I was in the streets. I was in the streets when they were burning the buildings. The guys I just named, we were all there and we were trying to make the correct appeal to stop the disturbance.

TC: 14:32:25

I participated in a interview with one of the television stations, and I think it was called the Black Peace, Night of the Black Peace. In that Night of the Black Peace, I think I was on the program, Paul Cheeks, Deforest Brown, Cecilia, it was several of us.

TC: 14:32:53

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The program was built around withdrawing the black policemen out of the disruptive areas. I mean withdrawing the white police and sending only the black police. I was instrumental in that, because the comments were, when we were talking about we were going to go out in the streets, this group, and I think the council of churches, a lot of the churches, said, "Well, let's go out and walk the streets." Well, I had already been in the streets.

TC: 14:33:31

My position was I wasn't going back out in the streets as long as there were white policemen, because of the experience I'd had. I had an experience where there was a shooting and some black individuals had been shot and killed. If you wanted to use the term murder, murder's a legal term, but that's what was happening.

TC: 14:33:57

Carl Stokes, myself, Harlrel Jones, and George Forbes, went to the police precinct. As we entered the police precinct, police officers on the roof and at the door with shotguns told us, "Don't go any further." You know Carl was bold. Carl kept on walking and said, "I'm Carl Stokes, I'm the mayor of the city." I heard the guns get loaded and they said, "Nigger, we don't care who you are."

TC: 14:34:40

So I went back to the car. Harlrel went back to the car. George Forbes went back to the car. And Carl moseyed back to the car. He didn't go as quickly as I did, because I was ready to run. You know? But that's one of the experiences. So the next day, when we got into the discussion at City Hall, my position was I'm not going out there as long as there are some white policemen out there.

*At that time did the police report to the mayor?*

TC: 14:35:15

Yeah, they report to the mayor. Chief of Police report to the mayor. [Inaudible]. I used to sit into those meetings, until they got to certain stuff. I'd sit in the meetings and the Chief of Police and

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(unintelligible) would whisper something and they'd go talk to Carl and then Carl would ask me to get up and leave.

*What was the aftermath, or was there any of that whole incident?*

TC: 14:35:44

Buddy James was the Law Director. I don't know what the outcome was of that. Nobody got fired. I know that the Police Union and the Police Department was upset with Carl for taking the white policemen out and putting the black policemen in. I was overjoyed. Why was I overjoyed? Because nobody got killed.

TC: 14:36:15

When the policemen went in, the black policemen went in, nobody got killed. Nobody got murdered. So that was a benefit. They said, "Well, they kept on burning buildings." But that's property, and that's what policemen do. Policemen protect property. Yeah, but when they went in that was a big one, and I think Carl felt good about it.

*It's been suggested that that moment in his administrative time was a turn for his popularity and why he may not have run for a third term. What are your opinions on that?*

TC: 14:37:03

No, I agree with that. I think he understood that there are some things that politics won't overcome, and racism is one of them. Yeah. So he would never view that in a positive way. He knew that he didn't have any power at that point because the cards are stacked against him.

TC: 14:37:36

You know, I can say this and I can say this is a personal opinion. It's not to offend anybody, but it's a personal opinion. For me and my philosophy, or my belief, or whatever you want to call it, when it comes to racism and white supremacy, I think there is the biggest aspect of coming together.

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TC: 14:38:01

So that aspect of people finding a way not to do something, it's easier if you're using those kind of labels. If you're talking about, you know, "All these black people." Or black. You know? I don't know how far this thing want to go, this discussion, and it's about that period but it's not unlike the period that we're dealing with today. That's just my opinion.

*[Inaudible] a mirroring of today, you were a member of the Negro Industrial Economic Union. Later named the Black Economic. Right. Please share what the organization was about, what was Carl Stokes' role, and how he became involved in the [Inaudible] Summit?*

TC: 14:38:53

Yeah, well the Black Economic Union, again, was founded by Jim Brown. Jim Brown brought some brothers from the business schools and it was these individuals were supposed to put together a group of people so that there could be an economic approach to the communities.

TC: 14:39:21

Carl, like in most cities, mayors have really influence in that aspect. In the business communities, the Kiwanis, the Chamber of Commerce, things like that. That's what the Black Economic Union was trying to do. I've always marveled and thought about that, because most of the time when we talked, we talked about what we could do if we could amass our money and funds.

TC: 14:39:53

We'll say as athletes we had limited kind of resources. I played football, what, six years. I think the most money I ever made was \$50,000.00. You know? I guess during that time it sounds like a lot of money. You know? But if I could go out there today and pull down \$3 or \$4 million at 74, I might even try it. I'd try doing something, tackling somebody, if y'all give me \$4 million. You know?

TC: 14:40:26

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The reality of that, and Jim and I talked about it, the reality of that we said, "Suppose you had a Black Economic Union, with all of the black ball players today putting their financial resources in one organization." So when a Katrina happens, you wouldn't have to go to the federal government. Who you know what the attitude about black folks is anyway.

TC: 14:41:00

We'd have our own. We could take care of that kind of a crisis. We could take care of the kind of crisis that black people are confronted with, if we had that kind of a union. But at that time, that's a hard sell. You can get a few people on, and Jim knew who those individuals were. So Jim had a personal relationship with Muhammad Ali. We didn't call him Muhammad, we always called him the Champ.

TC: 14:41:28

Jim had a very personal relationship with the Champ, and the Champ was one of the individuals that we respected. Probably one of the most admired individuals for me in my life, you know? This was before everybody knew he was right. This is when he was more or less considered Ali from the Nation of Islam.

TC: 14:42:00

So when the issue came up about Ali, there were some people that you know was in that picture, Jim contacted. So we just come together to support Ali in his particular position. Most people don't realize, we weren't supporting Ali. We were supporting the correct principle. Ali was the one that was expressing the correctness of the position, and we supported the correctness of that position.

TC: 14:42:34

Again, you know, Ali was more than a boxer. Boxing was, again, is what he did. That wasn't who he was. Bill Russell played basketball. That's what he did, but that wasn't who he was. Lou Al Cinder played basketball, that's what he did. That's not who he is. That's what I think a lot of young people in the sports today is missing.



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*As a veteran of the US Air Force, how did you feel about Ali's stance to avoid the draft on his religious beliefs?*

TC: 14:43:09

Yeah. The way that I addressed that is that I volunteered for the United States Air Force. Like I said, I was a cryptographic operator. There was a point in my life, as a member of the Air Force, that I would have given my life for the country. But that was before, to use the term in the vernacular, that's before I woke up.

TC: 14:43:48

You know, at one time I was a good American boy and I was down for what that myth of the American Dream really meant. Then the reality of my experience made me recalculate and make another assessment. So self abuse if the first abuse.

TC: 14:44:15

So if that who you're supporting don't support you, so I found it very difficult to talk about giving my life to a country that don't care nothing about my life. So that was me. My whole philosophy had changed. You know, I was in the Air Force. As a crypto operator, in my belt I carried a cyanide capsule. The cyanide capsule was, "If they overrun this facility, you bite down on this capsule. Don't give up no secrets."

TC: 14:44:48

That was when the reality came to me. I said, "Man, I ain't going to kill myself. I can't even go back to Pontiac without somebody putting me on the back of the bus." Or wanting me back on the bus. So when I deal with race, I don't deal with it in the abstract term. I deal with the existential reality of it.

TC: 14:45:12

I know I can just leave here in a moment and I can get shot. People think that that's just some hypertalk or discussion. No, that's real. That's real. I think that Ali made us see that that was real. You know, the most disappointed I've ever been was when Ali passed.

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TC: 14:45:41

Because when Ali passed, I used to see all these people on television talking about Ali and what a wonderful person he was. George Bush was President then, I think. The other President, Clinton. All of them was at the ceremony of Ali.

TC: 14:46:06

But when Ali took that stand, George Bush, Clinton, and the rest of white America was not in favor of what was happening. They took three years of his life. Of his natural life. But then when it's time that it depends that he's correct in what his vision is, and what it is to live near that particular document that they talking about, the Declaration of Independence, all men created equal.

TC: 14:46:35

My wife and I had this discussion earlier, yeah. That's the Declaration of Independence. The Constitution wasn't like that. They had to amend the Constitution. They had to give you the 13th Amendment. But the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, two different things.

TC: 14:46:53

So when they're talking about all that, "We all created equal," and all that other stuff. Yeah, it sounds good. You know, it sounds good, until you try to put it in practice with some people who hate. Now that's when it becomes difficult. You know, that's become different. So about me, personally about me, I had to wake up. You know, that's just me. That's me. I had been fortified in a lot of stuff from my parents and my experiences earlier, you know.

*What do you think the youth take away 50 years later, or that the Mayor can take away today?  
Fifty years post the election of Carl Stokes?*

TC: 14:47:45

Fifty years? Okay. I'm glad we're talking about the first personal pronoun, I. What do I think. With the third person you say you, but it's the first person, I. I personally think that things are

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worse today than they were then. That's just my, you know. That's my personal opinion. I think it's worse today than it was then, and I think what made it worse today than it was then is Obama.

TC: 14:48:28

I think what happened in this country, talking about going to sleep? They went to sleep and Obama got in. After Obama got in, they said, "We got the right to ship. We got to put the nation back the way we originally wanted it to be. Because we can't let this happen. Not only do we not want black man to run this country, we don't want a woman to run this country. So what we'll do, we'll get anybody to run it."

TC: 14:49:07

What happened, they got the least qualified person to run it. Man, if we done had a black guy do it, we'll let anybody do it. That's who they chose, anybody. They call him Donald Trump, but he's anybody. I mean, I don't care what your politics are, I don't care what your race is, I don't care what your religion is, if you're intellectually sound you know he doesn't know what's going on.

TC: 14:49:37

If you don't get confused by all that other stuff, you can look and know it's not an intelligent individual to run a nation. He might be popular, he might, you know, and people, in my opinion they missed the big boat because they be just talking about there's just a few people who support him. This country supports Donald Trump. Not just a few people.

TC: 14:50:01

Because we don't want to acknowledge it. Got to come to terms with it, or deny it. Don't want to acknowledge that most of the people ain't really that upset with Donald Trump. I ain't just talking about white people, I'm talking about most people. You know, and if you're black and you're in Hollywood making \$4 million, what you care about Donald Trump? And if you white somewhere and you making \$4 million, what do you care? He ain't hurting you.

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TC: 14:50:32

But it boggles your imagination that these guys can put together something where poor people who actually suffer will vote for a billionaire, or a millionaire. What kind of magic trick do you think they doing? You mean I'm going to believe in the cat who makes, they tried it with Romney, too.

TC: 14:50:57

You going to believe in somebody who got millions of dollars, that he's got your interest? And you're some sharecropper, or you're working at McDonalds, or even if you own the McDonalds. You know? That's just the way I view it, you know? Because I don't separate that aspect of it, in terms of oppression. Palo Ferrer, in his book, he said, "Oppressed people are not in opposition to oppression." He said, "They in opposition to who's doing the oppression."

TC: 14:51:36

See, I ain't upset with oppression. Let me do what they doing to my people. You know? So I feel good about my position. That's why I said, when my book, it's Consider This, I don't ask nobody to believe what I believe. If they don't, they don't. But I don't have to believe what somebody else believes, either.

*You also served as a Director of the Mayor's Council for Youth Opportunities. Please share when you did that, and what were your job duties?*

TC: 14:56:23

Okay. What we did is that we canvassed the community and the neighborhood in terms of youth opportunities.

*I've got to stop. What was your role as the Council for Youth Opportunities under the administration of Mayor Carl Stokes?*

TC: 14:57:59

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Okay. When I was the Youth Coordinator for the City of Cleveland, and the Mayor and the Cleveland NOW Foundation, what we had to do is to develop some programs in reference to getting a broader participation from the total community in cultural activities, in sports activities, in musical situations.

TC: 14:58:35

So that was primarily what we were, under the Mayor's tutelage, to bring to the communities. We wanted to bring those, we called them Drop In Centers, we wanted to have Drop In Centers throughout the city where young people could get exposed in a corrective and affirmative way in sports, in academics, as well as in the arts and those kind of things.

TC: 14:59:08

The Mayor's program of Youth Opportunity came up under the larger program of the City of Cleveland, the Cleveland NOW Foundation. So we were funded, and when I say we, I along with my two assistants handled money and -- is that my phone?

*You served as the Director of the Mayor's Council for Youth Opportunities. Please share more about that initiative.*

TC: 15:04:41

As Director of the Mayor's Youth Opportunity program, there was a new initiation of trying to broaden the city's response to the youth in Cleveland.

TC: 15:05:00

In broadening that, the Mayor brought together individuals from the business communities and the social agencies and the churches, and they raised I think in the neighborhood of \$12 or \$15 million to do that. That was primarily designed to give those individuals in the community the opportunity to broaden their experiences in sports, athletics, art, science.

TC: 15:05:43

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So my staff, we had to put together a proposal in talking about specific outcomes so that when we went into communities we'd be able to come out and say this is what we had. So Carl Stokes was very instrumental in broadening the whole horizon of a community and neighborhood. Young people in the City of Cleveland.

*Can we do it one more time? I can take out the coughing, but I want to make sure I can take out the -- Do what one more time? Just answer the question the same way, again. Please. Close to, you don't have to (unintelligible). Okay. Just that last one.*

TC: 15:06:35

As the Youth Coordinator for the City of Cleveland, I said the Mayor brought together several organizations. Religious organizations, social community organizations, business community, to broaden the experiences of young people in the City of Cleveland.

TC: 15:07:02

That new initiative was to expose them with a horizon far beyond what some of them had expected, or had been familiar with. Carl was very instrumental in providing the impetus for that to happen.

*Okay. When you were talking about the Glenville Riots, were you there just prior to the shooting? Is that what I was understanding? You were there just prior to the shooting?*

TC: 15:07:48

Prior to the shooting, and during the shooting, and then the next days.

*So can you explain what happened while you were there at the Glenville Riots and how the choices Carl made to stop the white police from coming in? How that made a difference? Okay. I got it. You've got it? Yeah.*

TC: 15:08:18

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During the Glenville uprising, I was at the house where Ahmed Evans and his group resided. George Forbes, myself, and Harllel spoke to Ahmed prior to the outbreak.

TC: 15:08:49

Ahmed had indicated that they were being harassed by the policemen, and that he had some members of his organization was upset with it and was ready to go to war and throw down around it. Ahmed indicated to me, as well as George and Harllel, that that wasn't his preference. In fact, when we left we thought that Ahmed didn't want to have any kind of confrontation.

TC: 15:09:22

We did not get two blocks away before we started hearing the shooting. And when we had the shooting, I was hiding behind cars like everyone else was hiding behind the cars. We went back to the immediate area and the police were hiding and shooting. So when we got there, they waved us off so we had to kind of get out of the way for the shooting.

TC: 15:09:49

While the shooting was going on, we left and called the Mayor. George, myself, and Harllel, a block or so away at a public phone, we called the Mayor and we informed him that there was an outbreak of shots and he made us aware of the fact that he knew.

TC: 15:10:11

So someone else had already informed him, and he just told us to come back to City Hall so that we could have a conference and a discussion about it. That was the immediate aspect of it. Later on, Harllel Jones, George Forbes, myself, the Mayor, and Buddy James, we were in different cars and we went to the area where they were having the disturbance.

TC: 15:10:47

People milling around, cussing, throwing bottles, turning cars, doing those kinds of things. Buddy James, who was the Law Director, Buddy and I went into an area and we heard some shooting. Of course, we ducked out and police officers came out of the alley and when they came out of the alley we went back up in the alley and it was two people dead.

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TC: 15:11:17

I testified to all that subsequently. Then we went with the Mayor to the police precinct in that area and that's where that interesting experience that we went to the precinct and we got out of the cars and they told us to get back in the cars and Carl said, "I'm the Mayor." Then that exchange went on about, "We don't care who you are." And they clicked the guns and we went back to the City Hall.

TC: 15:11:53

The riots were still going on. The next day is when the Mayor had the large group together to try to find out what we could do to quell that particular experience, that circumstance. At that discussion, a lot of things came on about what we should do. The National Council of Churches, the Kiwanis, all of the interesting organizations in the City.

TC: 15:12:34

I made a comment that I would not go back into that area as long as there were white policemen.

*You're good, sir.*

Okay. Ultimately everybody voted on it and they decided to take the white policemen out and just send the black policemen in. I know a couple of the policemen, we walked the streets.

TC: 15:13:08

When we walked the streets that evening it was a totally different response. Because we could make some personal appeals to this not being the appropriate way to respond to situations. The majority of the individuals accepted that. I think I mentioned the fact one time that we were on television .

TC: 15:13:38

Someone on that program said that they really appreciated what we had done in what they called Black Peace, the Night of Peace. My response was, on that television program, that people



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misunderstood. Because we didn't do anything, because I wasn't throwing Molotov cocktails anyway.

TC: 15:14:02

What needed to happen, they needed to thank the people who were throwing Molotov cocktails and setting fires, not to do it. That's not the way we operate in this country. We'd rather get a few people that help quell it and say well, we'll give you all of the credit for what happens. But my position has always been clear. I didn't throw no Molotov cocktails. So if you want to thank somebody for not throwing a Molotov cocktail, it shouldn't be me. It should be the guys out in the street. But how could we ever thank them for not doing something that we thought that they should not have done in the beginning. You know?

TC: 15:14:42

So that's the experience I had with that Glenville Riot. I use the term disturbance, and I've tried to do that in most of my comments, because riot has another context in the language. You know?

*If I can ask a follow-up. You know, if you can speak to Susan. But how do you feel the relationship between Carl and the police changed after the Glenville disturbance?*

TC: 15:15:19

Well, you know, the nature of human interaction and relationships would suggest how the relationship between the City of Cleveland Police Department changed. The Police Union was in opposition to it all the time, of taking white policemen out and replacing white policemen with black policemen.

TC: 15:15:55

Because that particular move suggests one, that white policemen can't police the community, that I think the Police Union rejected. But the more fundamental thing was, it was not the fact that white policemen couldn't police a black community, but they policed it differently. That was the point that I was trying to make. They policed it differently.

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TC: 15:16:24

Wasn't no brothers shooting no brothers for saying, "Hey, man, I ain't going away." "What you want to do?" So I'm going to base off at you, and what you want to do? Black police officers said, "Man, get out of my face. Keep on moving." White police officer shoot you. That's not hyperbole. I'm not exaggerating that, we know that's what happens.

TC: 15:16:49

So if we know that's what's happening, so that's why I thought taking the black policemen, putting them in the community, as opposed to white policemen, save lives. Don't save people's image. So Carl didn't have any police support after that. Carl was operating in terms of that relationship like a lot of people do, he was impotent.

TC: 15:17:19

He was impotent. He didn't have any collective thought. You know? I don't move away from the race issue, but there are lines drawn between the white/black experience that people don't want to accept. There's just some real lines drawn, and that's based on the history of this country.

TC: 15:17:52

So Carl, you know, I can imagine what would happen if that was going on today. Someone would say that, you know? I didn't know if y'all wanted me to explain anything in terms of popular, the existence of culture today and what's going on. You know? Whether there's a direct relationship or not.

TC: 15:18:16

Because I have no doubt that at a candlelight vigil that took place the other night, that if that candlelight vigil had took place the other night, and then the next day some black folks turned out to be that, it would be a whole different story. A whole different story.

TC: 15:18:47

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Because of what I call the white male chauvinistic murder cult. That's how I view it, and they call them Alt Right, and white supremacists, and so I'm very clear on it. And it's a white male murder cult, for the domination of the European population.

TC: 15:19:19

You can't even join it, Susan. Not because you ain't white, because you ain't a male. Yeah. So, you know.

*In 1968, Dr. King was assassinated and unrest and riots broke out in response to his death throughout many cities in the United States. What tactics and strategies did Mayor Stokes employ to quell unrest and violence in Cleveland? What role did you play in their implementation?*

TC: 15:20:54

Well, in 1968, after the assassination of Dr. King, the dynamics in that particular situation for the city was rather interesting because Dr. King had been into Cleveland, and Dr. King and the Mayor had shared some time together.

TC: 15:21:23

I think you know that Jesse Jackson and a couple of other individuals that was part of King's group had met. I had no involvement and I was not personally involved in that particular meeting. After the assassination, I know that Carl was very shaken by the death of Dr. King.

*Again, in 1968 Dr. King was assassinated and unrest and riots broke out in response to his death. What tactics and strategies did Mayor Stokes employ to quell unrest and violence in Cleveland? What role did you play in their implementation?*

TC: 15:23:17

Dr. King was assassinated in 1968, and it had a rather interesting impact on Carl. I think the impact that it had on Carl was I'd say had nothing to do with non-violence in any real sense.

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TC: 15:23:46

Because I think that was one of the problems that Carl had with the non-violence movement. Carl was not a non-violence type of a person, he wasn't going to turn no other cheek. So he was kind of disturbed that if they're going to kill the King of Peace, what would they do to me? Or to those like him.

TC: 15:24:15

Why I was not involved in the immediacy of what was going on with the meeting that they had had prior to his death, I was definitely aware of the fact that Carl Stokes was not a non-violent person and that non-violence was any way that he saw.

TC: 15:24:41

I'll share this with you, why he said that. Because on one occasion, when they had the initial meeting, Carl said Dr. King was coming and they was going to have the meeting. I was not part of that meeting and the reason that I was not part of that meeting, I was not a non-violent participant. He used to laugh about that, and I'll tell you why he was laughing.

TC: 15:25:06

Because I was a defensive cornerback. As a defensive cornerback on the Browns, my whole model was bump and run. So if you come out, I'm going to bump you and we're going to run. So when he used to sometimes call me the Bump and Run Man. So he said, "Man, Dr. King's coming in." He said, "I know you don't want to be around." I said, "No, man, because I bump and run." And he said, "Me, too."

TC: 15:25:30

At the same time, he took the responsibility of his office and he knew that he had to participate in that and he had his meeting. I think that he was really kind of taken back. He said, "Man, if they'll kill King, they'll kill anybody." Said, "They'll kill anybody, they killed Dr. King." He hit the streets, and we walked the streets. I walked the streets with him after that, and I had a pearl handle automatic that I walked the streets with.

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TC: 15:26:05

Because the police was out there, and it was more or less for show and my ego. You know? That's saying if y'all come at me, I'm going to shoot back. But no, Carl was very, very moved by Dr. King. He almost took it personal. That's how hurt he was.

TC: 15:26:32

But the person, the non-violent movement never appealed to me because I think if people really knew where the non-violent move started, from the Mahatma Ghandi. If you read any Mahātmā Gandhi, if you read his earlier works, when they asked him, "Why non violent?" He said this, and this is a quote, Mahātmā Gandhi said, "I wish my people had the will and the skill to kill." He said, "But since they don't, we have to take a non violence approach." That's Mahātmā Gandhi.

TC: 15:27:10

Yeah, he said if you ain't got the will, you know, to bump and run, then you've just got to kind of take a different approach to it.

*So in addition to the Mayor and yourself, what other strategies and who else was involved in walking the streets and I believe there was also an address somewhere that night. I can't recall exactly.*

TC: 15:27:38

Yeah. Of course, and you know Buddy James, he was the Law Director. Oh, wait a minute. Was it Buddy James or Otis Davis? Maybe that's something that I'd have to check out. The Law Director was either Buddy James, or General Benjamin O. Davis. So I'm not familiar with which one it was in 1968.

TC: 15:28:13

I could do some research and find out specifically. But it was Benjamin O. Davis, or Buddy James, but they were instrumental in providing the strategy to address that particular experience

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with Dr. King's death. If you are aware of my choice of words, that I'm very conscious when I start talking about that, not to talk about riots and things of that nature.

TC: 15:28:49

Because sometimes human behavior is just not defined in the correct way when you respond to certain levels of conditions. I address that now. I'll say this, in terms of that aspect of circumstances and conditions.

TC: 15:29:15

Today we're confronted with conditions in what they call black on black violence. If people who are familiar with the human dynamics, abused people abuse others. So if you're talking about a lot of violence, people who have been violated become violators. People who have been abused, become abusers.

TC: 15:29:44

So a lot of it you just can't dismiss. There's a lot of black on black crime, a lot of black on black killings, there's a lot of black on black abuse. A lot of black on black suffering. Out of those kind of experiences you get those. So it's the byproduct of society. Stuff don't just happen in osmosis. People just start killing people, you know? So in understanding that, that's what I think that dynamics was when we were talking about King. You know?

TC: 15:30:22

Why you going to kill the Prince of Peace? My wife is over there cringing now because she don't want me to take it into no religious thing, because I could go there, too. That's not part of what this discussion or meeting's about.

*I'm good. I'm great. Thank you. Is there anything you want to say? I mean, you've talked about a lot. No, no, I've said what I wanted to say. I always say what I want to say. I just didn't want to interfere with the flow, or the thought, of what y'all are trying to do. That's the only thing that I didn't want to do. So we haven't missed anything? We've covered everything? Well, there's been a lot. We're good. I was curious as to what you and the Mayor did that evening to calm the --*

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TC: 15:33:10

We just walked the streets and people coming and you just -- Carl was very good at that. Carl was very good at making people feel comfortable. Because if there is a philosophy or attitude about anything in America, it's about what I call heroes. This country worships heroes. Carl was a hero.

TC: 15:33:42

So if you've been denied and you've got low self-esteem, and low presence, when the man comes around and you can shake his hand, or he asks you how you're doing, you feel good. So when we walked the streets, you know, I mean if I walked the streets in Cleveland during that time, and Carl's walking the streets during that time, if I come up to some guy he said, "Man, you Walter Beach. You played with the Cleveland Browns." I said, "Yeah, man, yeah. All right."

TC: 15:34:10

Because he puts more weight on that than I do. "You Carl Stokes." He puts more weight on that than I do. Because individuals coming out of denied communities, or oppressed communities, whenever they can raise their image of themselves it makes them feel good. So if Carl's walking by and a guy's getting ready to fill a Molotov cocktail, "Hey, man, what's up?"

TC: 15:34:38

He might drop the cocktail and say, "Oh, Mayor Carl Stokes." I'm sorry I didn't have that in place with Benjamin O. Davis. I know it was Benjamin Davis, I just didn't know at that time which one it was, Buddy James or him. So Benjamin was after the Hough Riots.