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Brown, Roscoe

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Interviewee: Roscoe Brown
Interviewer: Mark Naison
Interviewer/Videographer: Dawn Russell
Date: October 30, 2008

Transcriber: Danielle Jakubowski

Mark Naison: Today is October 30, 2008 and we are here today at the CUNY Graduate Center with Dr. Roscoe Brown, who is the head of a Center for Urban Education at CUNY and has accomplished many, many things in his life, several of them having an impact on the Bronx. He was the president of Bronx Community College, has done youth work in the Bronx, has been profoundly associated with an important Bronx organization called "Sports Foundation," and many, many other things. So with us today is our videographer, Dawn Russell. I am Dr. Mark Naison. So Dr. Brown, tell us a little about, about your family and the world you grew up in Washington, DC.

Roscoe Brown: Even though I've been living in the Bronx for many years and working there, I didn't grow up in New York City; I grew up in Washington, DC during the Depression. My father was in Roosevelt's Black Cabinet; he was the doctor, he was in charge of health for blacks all over the country. I lived in the northwest section of Washington, DC on Girard Street, about four blocks from Howard University. I spent much of my childhood on the campus of Howard University because my father's office was there for a good period of time. I went to Dunbar high school, which was about a mile away from my home, where I had to pass two white schools because the schools were segregated. But the interesting thing about Washington DC is public transportation was un-segregated, and the public places, like the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian, were un-segregated. So I spent a lot of time in both of those places. I went to Dunbar High School, which was the most prominent of the segregated black high schools in the country, produced the first black federal judge, produced the first black candidate office, with

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several Congress people, and as well physicians, lawyers, and professors. Had an excellent education there, and then when I graduated from Dunbar High School, I went to Springfield College in Massachusetts. Springfield, which is known as the home of basketball, volleyball, and sports medicine - - I went there because I wanted to study both physical education and medical studies. I had a triple-major in Chemistry, Pre-Med, and Health and Physical Education. And from there, I enlisted in the Tuskegee Airmen at the beginning of World War II - - not the beginning, about 1943 - - and the day I graduated in 1943 of March, was the day I went to Biloxi, Mississippi to do my training as a Tuskegee Airman. There I took my introductory orientation to the military, which is interesting in that I had already earned a first - - a second lieutenant's commission by the time I was eighteen, because Dunbar High School and all the black high schools - - and the white high schools too - - had high school ROTC. And if you went to citizen military training camp in the summer, you'd earn a commission. So I had earned a commission before I was of draft age. So when they to call me to the service, active duty, I was in my junior year of college, but I decided to resign my commission, because I wanted to finish college and enlist in the Tuskegee Airmen because I wanted to fly - -

MN: Now - -

RB: - - and then after I completed my service as a Tuskegee Airman, I came to New York City because I had married a young woman from New York City and that's where I began my, my romance with the Bronx. And in my first job in New York City - - I had two first jobs. One was with the Department of Welfare as a social investigator; the other was with the Board of

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Education as a recreation leader. And there in that capacity I met **Eddie Younger, the famous New York Rens** basketball star on the playground at Morris High School where we ran that playground during the summer and during the evening hours, and that was my introduction to New York City and my introduction to the Bronx.

MN: Now this - - the Tuskegee Airmen has been immortalized in film and in books, how did you find out they were recruiting African-Americans as pilots?

RB: Well, during the time of segregation, the goal of blacks was always to prove how good you were, that integration should come along, that segregation was wrong. At the beginning of World War II, many thought that African-Americans should fight in combat troops; they should also have equal pay in defense industry. And they felt Randolph, who was the head of the National Pullman Porters Union, threaten the March on Washington in the 1940, that's many years before the King March on Washington. And out of that came the agreement by the administration that they would have a Fair Employment Practices Act so people working in defense industry would get equal pay, regardless of race or gender, and that that they would put blacks in combat units. And the principal combat union - - unit at that time, the most demanding, was the Air Corps. And so then they decided to create an experimental group called the Tuskegee Airmen, they didn't call them that at that time, it was the Ninety-ninth Pursuit Squadron, and they decided to train them at Tuskegee because Tuskegee was the sight of Tuskegee University, it was Tuskegee Institute at that time, founded by Booker T. Washington, the home of Dr. George Washington Carver, one of the most famous scientists of the time. And it was thought that putting African-Americans in that environment, rather than spreading around

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in some of the racist communities, would give this - - this experiment opportunity to be successful. Clearly it was successful; it was successful for two major reasons: one is they recruited the smartest, the most athletic, the most leadership-oriented people from the black colleges and some of the white colleges, and two we had as our combat leader Colonel Benjamin O. Davis Jr., who was the son of the only black general in the army at that time, general B. O. Davis who got his commission, again as part of this protest. In addition, the commander of the base where we were trained was a white colonel by the name of Noel Parish, who insisted that we be treated fairly, unlike his predecessor who was very, very prejudiced. So in that climate, we and the Tuskegee Airmen got outstanding training. Then the next question is: would we be able to go to combat? Again, some of the prejudiced generals didn't feel that African-Americans could do combat, and they kept us out. But again, because of the pressure of the black press, very important in all of this move back in the days of segregation, they decided to give the Ninety-ninth a chance in North Africa. They went to North Africa, and there, even though they were discriminated against and not given adequate instruction by their white commanders, they did well. And then finally, they created three other squadrons, the One-Hundredth Fighters Squadron, the Three-hundred first Fighters Squadron, the Three-Hundred Second, which together with the Ninety - - Ninety-Ninth, formed the Three-Thirty-Second Fighter group, the famed "Red Tails," where we got our reputation for successfully exploding bombers from southern Italy, over Germany, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, etcetera. And our record is, if we didn't lose many, if any, bombers and because of that, we became known as one of the best fighter escort groups in World War II and that is legend; that's the history that we know now.

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MN: Now you had mentioned that not only were, were people trying to recruit outstanding students, but also outstanding athletes.

RB: That's correct.

MN: What was your sport's background, as well as your academic background?

RB: My sports background was football, baseball, basketball, and lacrosse. I was one of the first black lacrosse players, maybe the first, prior to Jim Brown, who was the greatest lacrosse player of all time. Now I went to Springfield College, rather than Dartmouth College, where I was also accepted, because I was **light**, I'm about a hundred and fifty, fifty-five and 5'10", 5'11" and I'm the same now as I was then. And I knew that at Dartmouth they were bigger; and bigger at that time meant thirty pounds bigger. And I said, well I want to play in a district which I wanted to study Pre-Med, and I wanted to study Physical Education because I had always been interested in athletics and my mentor was Professor John Burr, who was the head of Physical Education at Howard University. And when I was a kid, he would bring us there and he had a group called - - Howard University, their team was the Bisons - - they had school - - a group of young people called the "Howard Cubs." So we would play ball, basketball, football, on the campus. And Professor Burr was from Springfield, and had gone to Springfield College and he suggested to myself, [inaudible] that we would go there because there were about three other African-Americans who had gone through Howard who were at Springfield College as well.

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MN: Now do those other young men also go to Dunbar?

RB: Yes, Dunbar was a high school in Washington where most of the achieving and middle-class black folks went. I was preceded at Springfield College by **Percy Pitts**, who was from Dunbar and John [inaudible], who's son is a famous photographer now. And then [inaudible], and **Bill Waters**, and myself went there so out of fifteen black students at Springfield College, six of us were from Washington DC.

MN: Now did your athletic background help you when you actually did get into flying in combat situations?

RB: Well, clearly flying is - - involves not only mental activity, but a lot of physical coordination and that is why - - and particularly for fighter pilots because you have to have those quick moves that have to do with athletics - - and that is why in recruiting the Tuskegee Airmen they gave us physical tests, motor-coordination tests, vision tests, intellectual tests, and they looked at our record of leadership, if we were leaders. So of the one thousand pilots, African-American pilots who graduated, there might have been another two thousand that didn't graduate that were equally competent. Unfortunately there was a quota system, again because there was only one African-American group, but he's going to have those people, outstanding people, and its reflected in their work after the service. Many of the Tuskegee Airmen became lawyers, doctors, professors. The mayor of Detroit, Michigan, Coleman Young, was a Tuskegee Airman. The council for General Motors Company, Otis Smith, was a Tuskegee Airman. Lee Archer,

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Tuskegee Airman became one of the first vice-presidents of corporate world at General Foods. Percy Sutton, who was our intelligence officer, became the borough president of Manhattan and then later ran for mayor, and established the first major black communications company: Inner City Broadcasting. That's just an example of some of the - - Bill Coleman, who was my roommate, became the Secretary of Transportation in the **Ford** administration. So it was, it was a highly selective group of people and because of that, and the mentoring we got from the whole parish and the leadership in that day was - - we were well-disciplined, well-skilled, and not only could fly airplanes well, but provide leadership in civilian life.

MN: Now how many combat missions did you fly when you were in Europe?

RB: I flew sixty-eight combat missions. At the - - when we first went over seas twenty-five was the number, then it was fifty, and then it was seventy and that's because they didn't have many pilots to replace us; there was a limited number of pilots. So I flew seventy, Lee Archer flew one-hundred and thirty-nine missions but he - - part of it is that I flew long-range missions which were five to six hours. When the group first started they were doing **hover** escort and the mission might be thirty-five or forty minutes, but I had a lot of time in the air.

MN: So you flew - - you escorted bombers to, to Germany?

RB: Well we were over the Axis area. Germany [inaudible], had conquered Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Greece, and we flew over all - - Austria - - I have the - - this **dubious**

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reputation of being shot at every European capital except London and Paris because that's what we did. Now the famous Eighth Air Force flew out of England and they flew to Berlin many times. The Fifteenth Air Force, which was in southern Italy, had a longer distance to Berlin and we very seldom went to Berlin, in fact we only went there once. We would go to Munich, and **Prague**, and [inaudible], but our principal mission for which the Fifteenth Air Force is best known, is the mission on May - - March 24, 1945, the Berlin Mission, sixteen-hundred miles round-trip, the longest mission in the world, and we were able to escort the B-17s there and I [inaudible] was to be the first to shoot down German jet planes over the center of Berlin. And that's why we are known for the Berlin mission, which led to our receiving a distinguished unit citation, which is the highest citation that a unit can receive.

MN: Now how many people were in your plane?

RB: The - - the fighters were all single-engine, single-pilot fighter planes.

MN: Single - - so one person per plane?

RB: One person per plane. See the bombers, the B-17s - - [coughs] excuse me - - and the B-24s had crews of ten, eleven people. They had gunners, they had navigators, and bombardiers. The planes escorting them, flying over them - - bombers were here, planes up here - - were model planes - - not model planes, they were single-engine planes, except for the B-38 with one pilot.

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So when we went on a mission, we would have sixty-four planes, sixteen per squadron, flying out. And then meeting the bombers, and then flying over the bombers, like a net to protect them.

MN: To protect them from - - from - -

RB: From enemy airplanes. We couldn't protect them from any aircraft because they came **in ground** and our job was to protect the bombers from enemy fighters. And the reason why Tuskegee Airmen is so well known is it is repeated we didn't lose any bombers, or well some people who say maybe we did - - but clearly we were the premier fighter-escort group and the reason for that is unlike some of the other groups who would leave the bombers to chase enemy fighters for victories, we stayed with the bombers. And by staying with bombers, we protected them, which was what our job was.

MN: Now had - - had any of the planes you've been in ever hit by, by gunfire?

RB: Oh yes. Most of us got hit one way or another. I got hit several times, but you know, basically to be - - let me clarify that, when you're in the air, we were flying at twenty-five to thirty-thousand feet, the height airlines fly, and any aircraft was aimed at the bombers, which below us, and we very seldom got hit by any aircraft fired there, but we also had what we called "ground support missions," where we come down close to the ground to shoot up air fields, shoot planes on the ground, shoot tanks, shoot railroads, and that's where I got hit two or three times,

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when I was [inaudible] trains and airfields, but I managed to make it and knocked off half my wing once, but I was able to get that back.

MN: Now so you had to fly and shoot at the same time?

RB: Oh yes, the [crosstalk] had a trigger on it so if you're flying and you wanted to shoot, you just put your finger on the trigger. And you had a gun sight, which was up here, where you put the gun sight around the target by - - hook it - - I mean you guide the plane until the gun sight was around the target and then when we got over the target you would - - if it's a bomb, you just press the button and the bomb would drop, and if you wanted to shoot, you just pull [inaudible].

MN: Now were these propeller planes?

RB: They were all propeller planes. The United States did not have any jet planes in World War II. They developed one at the end of World War II, but the war was over. The Germans was the first to develop jet planes with the ME262 and ME163.

MN: Now where were you stationed in Europe?

RB: We were stationed in southern Italy, in a place called Ramitelli, which was an old farm, which was close to **Foggia**, which is a major city on the east coast of Italy, close to Bari, another city south Italy, and we were close to San Severo, which is right on the tip of the Adriatic.

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MN: Now how much contact did you have with the local population?

RB: Well, me - - and Italy of course was, had already been conquered by the Germans, and we took it back. Many of the Italian **partisans** were very glad that we were there. And the other sea of citizens treated us with **first class**. Most of the Italian people that I met were low-income, working-class people and they looked up to us, they wanted to get cigarettes with whatever we could provide. And they would bring us eggs and chickens, and we actually had one young Italian guy living in the back of our tent who policed the tent, kept it clean, and so on. So we did not have the kind of discrimination you had in the United States. And even in the German prison camps, when our pilots were captured, they lived in integrated circumstance, and according to the military protocol, the highest officer in rank would be in charge of that particular prison **camp**. And in a couple of cases, they were African-Americans who were in charge. But, everybody's in the same boat and some of those artificial differences, like race, go away. Unfortunately, not everybody brought those positive attitudes back to the country and that's why we had to wait another twenty-five years for the Civil Rights Movement.

MN: Dawn, do you have any questions about the military aspect of - -

Dawn Russell: No, I - - I just wondered what was it like coming back to the United States
[background noise]?

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RB: Well I - - I tell the story that when we came back on the troop ship, which was also partially integrated in that there was some black troops and white troops - - we didn't necessarily socialize - - when we came down the gang plank, there was a soldier who signing white troops this way, black troops this way. And the press was greeting the white troops, and the black troops were greeted by one reporter from the Amsterdam News.

MN: Now what - - this was in what city?

RB: That was in New York City.

MN: In New York they - - they had signs that said "black" and "white"?

RB: See, because even in the north they - - military units were segregated. The Three-Sixty-Ninth was a black unit, but they were segregated - - trained at Fort Devin separately from the white troops because the military was segregated. Many young people just don't realize how - - they realize how stupid segregation was, but how rampid it was. When I first came to New York, you couldn't even stay in a hotel when I was a kid; you stayed at the YMCA and YW because of the racism and the segregation.

MN: Now, when you moved to New York where did you, you - - where did you and your wife settle?

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RB: I married a woman from New York and she was seventeen and I was twenty [inaudible] and she lived in what was called Sugar Hill [inaudible] **St. Nicholas Avenue**. And when I came back, I came back to St. Nicholas Avenue, and that's when I was working for the Welfare Department and the Board of Education, prior to either going to medical school or graduate school. But after I had been working in the city for about eight months, I got an offer - - no I, I decided to go to Columbia, that's what it was, for my Master of Public Health degree. But then when I got there I was treated with a certain amount of disrespect and after I went to one, one class - - I had been valedictorian at Springfield College, and I asked an intelligent question and the professor ignored me, I decided that was not the place for me. So when I got home that night, I had a letter offering me a job to teach and coach at West Virginia State College in Institute, West Virginia. **I'll go quick because I'm here anyway and try NYU**, but anyway, I went to West Virginia for two years to teach and coach. I taught Test of Measurements, I taught Kinesiology, I taught Physiology of Exercise, I taught Anatomy, I taught Coaching Administration, and I coached football, basketball, and baseball. And one other thing I'm very proud of is I coached the first black to play in the NBA, Earl Lloyd. I was the assistant coach for West Virginia State Yellow Jackets and Earl Lloyd was a young six-foot-five inch freshman from Alexandria, Virginia. And I was assistant coach, responsible for helping to coordinate the offense and I taught him to get off of his feet, because he was so tall he could just reach over people, to jump, jump, jump. Earl Lloyd was the first black to actually play in the NBA. You know Chuck Cooper, when he [inaudible] had been signed first. In addition to which I coached football, I coached the quarterback who was Joe Gilliam Sr., who was the father of Joe Gilliam Jr. - - ended up playing with the Pittsburg Steelers. West Virginia State was one of the first

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black colleges to participate in integrated basketball. We, we played Loyola California and a couple of white colleges. And in New York we played Yeshiva University, which was coached by Red Sarachek. And because the coach was sick at that time, I had the privilege of being the head coach, coaching against Red Sarachek, who I became very, very good friends afterward.

MN: I knew Red Sarachek from a sporting good store he owned in Brooklyn called Circle Sports - -

RB: That's Red Sarachek's.

MN: - - where I grew up getting my basketball, football, and tennis equipment there.

RB: And because again, even though New York was New York, there were very few black players playing on the so-called white college teams. Dolly King, who became a legend, was one of the first to play at LIU. George Gregory, who had a **Forest House** in the Bronx, when I was working in the Bronx, was the first black All-American back in 1932. He was the captain of the Columbia University basketball team. But basically, the basketball teams at that time were "ethnic". We had the original Celtics, which were Irish, we had the [inaudible] primarily Jewish, and we had the Renaissance - - the Harlem Renaissance, and they would play around the country, good basketball, and eventually they brought all of these pro-teams together for a tournament in 1939 and guess who won that tournament?

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MN: The Renaissance.

RB: The Harlem Renaissance became the first professional basketball team. Their main competitor was the Harlem Globetrotters, which did not operate out of the east, they operated out of Chicago [inaudible]. So that's, that's an interesting story. I was reading the other day that in the first years of the NBA, most of the players were Jewish, and that's because the basketball had blown up in the Jewish **settlement** houses and they had the skills - - it was a different game; it was a time game, you didn't have to get ten seconds over the mid-court line, [inaudible] passing, and height wasn't that important. Finally when height became important, then many of the African-Americans, some of the European players began to dominate. The big domination began with George Mikan, who at that time was 6'10," who today would only make him a small forward.

MN: [laughs] Now when you came to New York, did you get involved with the Pioneer Club at all?

RB: I knew the Pioneer Club people, but my sport when I was in college was not track. I later became a competitive Masters Runner working with Joe Yancey, who I knew in the Pioneer Club. But I was interested in football, basketball, and baseball so my sport interest went along those lines and when I coached, I did not coach track at West Virginia State; I coached football, baseball, and basketball.

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MN: Now what - -

RB: But later when I came to New York and I met people like Reggie Pearman, Larry Ellis, I became more interested in track. And when I stopped being able to play competitive against twenty-year olds - -

MN: [laughs]

RB: - - I started running and that's when I became a marathon runner and a Masters Championship Runner.

MN: Now when you were at Morris High School, which was what 1946 - -

RB: 1946.

MN: - - what was the neighborhood like, that was in the middle of Morrisania?

RB: [inaudible] you come up Boston Road and my high school was over here. It was a combination of Black-Jewish-Irish-Italian neighborhood. It would - - began to be the place where upwardly mobile blacks would move. Tinton Avenue, Forest Avenue - - as a matter of fact my wife's aunt lived on Tinton Avenue. So - - and then they had some great clubs there, what was it 845 club where **Dinah Washington** used to sing, and - -

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MN: - - what do they call it? Blue Morocco.

RB: Yes. Both Latin and black coming up Boston Road and many of the Italian, Jewish families stayed there, and then eventually moved out as - - particularly Co-op City, so it drained out that part of the Bronx because Co-op City was built by unions and civil service workers, and many of them black and white who were living together just left to go - - and then they were replaced by people who were lower income, many on public assistance. And actually, at that time, the [inaudible] would actually guide people into a neighborhood, rather than dispersing them.

MN: Now what was the racial composition of the young people you work in the schoolyard at Morris?

RB: Black, predominately black African-American, a couple Latinos, and a couple Italians.

MN: Now was that - - who were some of the people you worked with that - -

RB: Well the people I remember most were **Joe Gallagher**, who later became a [inaudible] played on the City College championship team and Floyd Lane, who also played on that team and - -

MN: So how old were they when you met them?

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RB: They were - - I was twenty-four and they were like eighteen.

MN: So this was just before they went to City College?

RB: Just before they went to City College. And at that time, many of the street-ball players were better than the college ball players. And I was twenty-four, I was still playing, so I would get in and scrimmage with them, but they were better than I and I realized that they wouldn't go but if they had the opportunity. And Floyd and Joe did have that opportunity. And Eddie **Young**, of course, who was much shorter, was fast and skilled and we sometimes played against them, but Eddie was such a good shot he'd just throw that ball up there and [makes sound effects] just like that [makes sound effects].

MN: Now, did you - - what was Forest Neighborhood House like? That's a - -

RB: Forest Neighborhood House was prototypic of those like recreation centers. They had pool tables, they had a little gym, they had rooms where you could do games and arts and crafts. It was a - - and they had social workers. The idea of the old neighborhood houses, which we may have to bring back, was that you take kids from single-parent homes, or double-parent homes, if their parents were working, and after school they would have somewhere to do something constructive. The neighborhood **move** was started - - Jacob Riis and those people on the east side and many of the Jewish community helped us develop that, but the YMCAs and the YWCAs were the Christian version of the Neighborhood House. And in between you had these

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houses, like Forest House, that covered both the indigenous Jewish, Irish population and the black population. And gradually as they changed, the membership changed and the leadership moved over to African-Americans. And then finally when the youth board, the YMCA youth board, came **a lot** and started youth programs, they put them in the schools, rather than in the neighborhood houses. And that is because - - some of the neighborhood houses still exist though, like Riverdale where I live, Riverdale Neighborhood houses; they did a great job.

MN: Now you went down to West Virginia, you spent two years there and when you returned you went to graduate school at NYU?

RB: I had already applied to NYU and I got a Rosenwald Fellowship, Julius Rosenwald, who was the founder of Sears, Roebuck, had developed a program for blacks in higher education. They gave money to black colleges, they gave money to black students who wanted to become professors, and I got the last of those Rosenwald scholarships. So in addition to having GI bill, because by that time I had two children, I also had the Rosenwald fellowship, so I actually made as much money going to school as I did teaching, but it wasn't much. Just to get people to understand, the beginning salary of the Board of Education at that time was eighteen-hundred dollars. My beginning salary at West Virginia was twenty-three hundred dollars. The GI bill of rights gave me twelve-hundred dollars, so between my Rosenwald fellowship which was two-thousand - - twenty-four hundred dollars, I made thirty-six hundred dollars, which was enough to live comfortably with my children in, again, public housing. I lived in - - as - - after I came back to New York, it was too crowded for my mother-in-law's house, I got into Astoria houses when

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it was new over in Hallet's Cove in Astoria, which again, was an integrated neighborhood, primarily Greek, Italian, and Irish. And many of us in the housing **project** were veterans. And because of my leadership in **building F** and education, I became the vice-president of the tennis association and I helped to develop one of the first nursery schools in public housing. So this is part of that emerging part of the city at that time.

MN: Now when did you become a faculty member at NYU?

RB: I - - when I went to NYU, as I said I had the Rosenwald fellowship, but because I was good in science and physiology, I became a lab assistant in a research project which is a [inaudible] sports medicine. It was a physiological evaluation of the U.S. Army Air Force physical fitness test and I was in charge of the laboratory for the various chemical tests. And coincidentally that I was studying for my PHD and I did my thesis in exercise physiology. And at that time the university, the department of physical education, had a grant to continue to study the Air Force physical fitness test and I was then offered the job to teach part-time - - not - - to teach as an instructor and also work in the lab. And so I was an instructor for two years and then an assistant professorship became available. I was assistant professor for three years, and then I moved to associate professor. I was an associate professor for four years. So I was a full professor by the time I was what twenty-nine - - no, thirty-eight years old. I was an instructor when I was twenty-nine.

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MN: Now when did you combine this interest in research in kinesiology and exercise physiology with an interest in African-American history and culture as academic pursuits?

RB: Well actually, it's sort of a trail. I became involved in psychometrics testing because of my statistical expertise. I became an expert in school enrollment projections and I wrote a book on it and NYU had a center for school services where we would go to various communities and analyze their needs for new schools. The beginning of that began with a study of the population projections. And using my social research and statistical skills, I developed a method of predicting with ninety-eight percent accuracy how many students there would be so they would know how to - - how large they could develop the, the schools. Coincident with that, I was also active in Civil Rights because we were doing integration, so one of the first studies I got into was the New Rochelle school integration, which was the first court-ordered integration in the North. **Irving Kauffman**, where they had a segregated school for blacks, and yet they - - blacks lived closer to the white schools and so - -

MN: And, and what year was this?

RB: This was in 1952.

MN: Really? So there was - - now this was court-ordered integration in the North?

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RB: The first order, **Irving Kaufmann**. In addition of which I became involved with NAACP because I was an expert witness in the first Supreme Court case to desegregate recreation facilities. So I - -

MN: What was the name of that case?

RB: That's the Baltimore County case and it had to - - again it was supposed to be separate but equal. They had a black beach and a white beach and they tried to pass off the white beach as equal. So they wanted Jack Greenberg - - and Thurgood wanted somebody to come down and evaluate it, so they contacted the head of my department, Dr. J.B. Nash and he recommended me. So I went down to the - - do the deposition and I went to the beaches, and I went to the white beach and I swam and checked it out. I went to the black beach, which had rocks on it and cans, and I cut my foot. So in the afternoon when I made my deposition, I said the beaches are decidedly unequal, so much so I cut my foot. That went into the record and the local federal judge denied the suit, but it went to the Supreme Court, and the Supreme Court said that this violated the principle of separate but equal.

MN: Now was this before Brown?

RB: This was 1952, before Brown.

MN: Wow.

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RB: So that is the trail of which I was moving. I'm also doing research in comparative physical performance of blacks and whites, intellectual. I developed a system to integrate intellectual achievement, social achievement, and so on and I showed that there was no real difference between blacks and whites. So with that long history of research, when the Great Society opened with Lyndon Johnson, we had an opportunity to do something. The four little girls were killed in Birmingham in 1963 and I was Chairman of the Faculty Committee on faculty status at that time and people started praying and saying "let's send this telegram, we're sorry." I said, "We got to do more than that. Let's do something at NYU," because NYU had relatively few black students because of the economic and educational level. So we then developed a project called "Project Apex," which was funded not by the education department, by equal opportunity program of Sergeant Shriver. I became the research director of that program, and again, we recruited sixty youth: ten low-income whites, twenty-five low-income African-Americans, twenty-five low-income Puerto Ricans. And where did we recruit them from? Benjamin Franklin High School in East Harlem and Morris High School in the Bronx. And that became the basis of this program, which is the basis of the SEEK program at the City University.

MN: Now what, what year did you start this, sixty-three?

RB: That was 1964.

MN: Sixty-four?

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RB: Yes. It took us a year to get it organized.

MN: And did all these students end up going to NYU?

RB: Yes. It was just a NYU program. We raised money from the **Office of Equal Opportunity** and Silver, who had built Silver Hall at New York University, and the Ford Foundation provided some money for this experimental program which made the basis of the SEEK program.

MN: Now what was the name of this program?

RB: A Project for Excellence. APEX.

MN: A Project for Excellence.

RB: We called it APEX.

MN: Now did these students all end up going to college?

RB: They - - well it was a college program. Basically it was for people who graduated from high school in the general curriculum [crosstalk] and so we set it up the first year would be like the SEEK program: orientation, reading development, math development, science development.

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So then after first year they would go into the regular courses. It worked out so that half of them actually graduated, and those who didn't ended up taking Civil Service jobs. So it was a successful program and evaluations, something else I got to write about.

MN: Wow.

RB: So - - and that was the basis of my becoming involved in the student movement for more black students. So when King was assassinated, again being the leader - - at that time I was the leader of AAUP, I was the president of the AAUP chapter, which was the largest in the country and the only one where a white university has a black leader. And so - -

MN: Now did you have collective bargaining at NYU?

RB: They didn't have it and I, I did the bargaining and my committee did the bargaining - -

MN: [laughs]

RB: - - and the union sort of - - the people who weren't the union said, "well look, let's make AAUP a union." [inaudible] because we were making progress. I had gotten raises for faculty, we got benefits, we got the housing, now we can do better. So they got people to sign up and they got certified and then the university stopped negotiating with them. So the progress I had made, we didn't make. See my position was, that so long as we had the threat of a union, we

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would do better [crosstalk] and stop negotiating. So at the time when King was assassinated, President Jim Hester, who was very supportive of APEX and other programs, said, "What should I do?" So I said, "Well let's have an **assembly**, bring people together that next morning and so they're given a chance to heal." But he said, "What else can we do?" I said, "What you could really do is to show the NYU deans by setting up scholarships to bring a thousand black students here. So out of that we developed the first Martin Luther King Scholarship Program for - - I think we had a thousand students. We started with a hundred-thousand dollars and that's where I became involved with the black student movement and out of that one of our demands was if we have a Black Studies program and I decided, rather than to have one that was outside of the university structure, that we have one in the university structure whereby the professors would be in the departments like Sociology, Psychology, History, rather than isolated, which is now the model all over the country. Initially some people said "that's not right," "It's not [inaudible]," but that's what we did; I did that for nine years.

MN: And it was called the Center for African-American Studies?

RB: Institute - -

MN: Institute

RB: Now we didn't use - - by the Institute for African-American Studies, I triple A. And there we had the courses in the various departments, but again, autonomously we could do our own

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research projects and we had several publications. We had a publication on black creation, a literary publication. We ran film festivals, we would run major lecture series, every major black from Paul Robeson Jr. to Sydney Poitier to James [inaudible], to Ozzie Davis was at our, our program. So it was very successful and because of that I became involved with the City University to help the City University because the City University was way ahead of NYU now in terms of status for blacks but that **time it** didn't have a lot of status. So Franklin Williams, who was the Vice Chair of the Board of Higher Education got me on a committee to advocate for better programs for African-Americans in the City University, both the SEEK program and the College Discovery program and then we wanted more professorships. And our **Latin** interaction, it was suggested [inaudible] at Bronx Community College that I apply because at that time there was only one black president at the City University system and that was James Colston who retired and then I was recruited both to be the president of either Medgar Evers, which was getting started, **or the** Bronx Community College. I decided Bronx Community College because Bronx Community College was located on the up - - uptown campus of NYU and I had roots there at NYU in the Bronx, and that's why I went to Bronx Community College to lead college.

MN: Now when did you first meet Bob Williams and get involved in Sports Foundation?

RB: Well I met Bob Williams when I was a professor at NYU, when he came in, in the class of 1960 as a young basketball recruit. Being one of only five black professors at New York University at that time, I was like the mentor for many of the African-American athletes because

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there weren't many African-Americans in the general stream. So I met Cal Ramsey, I met [inaudible], and I met Bob Williams. And in my classes, because I'm not a professor who just talks about the subject, I talk about the meaning of the subject and our relationship to the world: fantasy, equity, excellence. And Bob Williams got that bug because I used to say, "Well look, you're sitting in class now, look to the right to the left, and if you don't study hard, you won't be here." And Bob took that so when - - Bob graduated, became captain of the basketball team, he instead of going to Pros, went to Italy to play basketball and over there worked with the Italian kids - - and Spain too. He developed this idea that you can work with kids and help them to get interested in education. And then in 1969, that's when he and Buddy Young, who was head of - - the "Great Buddy Young," football player - -

MN: Football player.

RB: - - who was a head of player relations for the NFL. And all of us had this dream that we could bring people together and help them improve their academic work through sports. And that's where we started this sports foundation whose motto is "Building Social Responsibility through Sports," started with some money from the Poverty Programs, some from the Board of Education, and some independent money, and then the leadership of Bob, who did this tremendous job bringing the people together. Now Bob had developed in Harlem what he called the "**New York 42**," the "Harlem 42". He got the gang leaders together to work together to help ease the violence and help - -

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[END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE; BEGIN TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO]

RB: - - stay in school. So between that activity, and the activity of having basketball lessons related to school lessons, we developed that. And out of that he developed a city game, which was a first all-star high school game in the city back in 1969, sixty-eight, sixty-nine, but he brought the top players from the parochial schools together with the top players from the public schools together where students who didn't have a scholarship could be interviewed by perspective coaches and watch them play, and out of that bracket every major basketball player from New York City who went to Pros played in the city game and got the experience of not just basketball, but how it relates to helping your community.

MN: So Bob was a really a - -

RB: He's a visionary.

MN: - - a visionary and had this tremendous charisma with the young people. Now when did Sports Foundation move from Harlem to the Bronx?

RB: Well, it moved from Harlem to the Bronx probably in mid-1970s. We had been supported by some money from the Board of Education and some money from the Poverty Program, and that money was running thin, so we looked around for a place that - - well Bob knew; he grew up in the Bronx, a place where it was needed and we could get some support. So we got some

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support from the Ford Foundation and a couple corporations and we moved to the Bronx and set up business on Willis Avenue - -

MN: Yes, I know it, I know it well.

RB: - - and then we began to get programs from other agencies and our main funder became Oasis, the organization for alcohol and substance abuse. We saw [coughs], excuse me, the merit of using sports to bring people in for counseling, get them involved in schools. And between that organization, the Ford Foundation, and other businesses, we've been able to keep the Sport Foundation going for a long period of time.

MN: Yes, and I think it's just moved to Prospect - -

RB: It's moved to Westchester Avenue near Prospect Avenue.

MN: Now, did you keep a connection with the Bronx for all those years that you were at NYU?

RB: Well actually, when I was at NYU I, I - - my family group up in Queens, my children, and I got divorced and I lived in the Village, so I was active mostly in the Washington Square political area, the anti-war movement, and the social movements. But then when I went to Bronx Community College in 1977, my whole professional and personal life turned to the Bronx: working with the Bronx Arts Museum, working with the Botanical Gardens, working with the

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zoo, working with Fordham University, working with Lehman College, working with Hostos Community College, working with friends of Van Cortland Park, and so on. So that is - - from mid-seventies on, much of my political activity and social activity was in the Bronx, so much that I was elected as a Jesse Jackson delegate in both eighty-four and eighty-five representing the Bronx. So that has been - -

MN: And did you move - - move to Riverdale at that time?

RB: And then I moved to Riverdale about maybe in the late eighties.

MN: Now in the early and mid-seventies large sections of the Bronx went through this arson disinvestment crisis and - - including neighborhoods not too far from Morris High School. What, what did you feel when that was going on?

RB: Well actually, I went to the Bronx in the middle of that. I went to the Bronx right after Howard Cosell said "The Bronx is Burning." So my idea was first of all, let's establish a campus as an oasis of excellence, an oasis of beauty. So I raised money to rehabilitate the campus, rehabilitate the hall of fame to bring people there - - developed a climate among our students that we're proud of our parents, we're proud of our community. We had no graffiti on the campus, that's not a place that should be. Everybody would pick up the trash and the garbage, **even the president**. So we developed an atmosphere of support. And then we began to use the atmosphere of support to reach out. Many of the houses around campus were vacant, or had

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went through arson, and I worked with the mayor, Ed Koch, and Tony [inaudible] to get city-funded housing, to rehabilitate some of the areas around there and gradually began to reach out. In addition to which, I became a board member of Phipps Houses, which also has done great work in the Bronx in rehabilitation houses.

MN: Now Phipps - -

RB: But I saw this as a **college** community, that's the key word. We worked with job training, we worked with housing, we worked with placement, we worked with youth, and gradually we spread it out that way. That was my **contract**.

MN: Now was the Phipps - - where - - I, I knew of some Phipps Houses near the Bronx Zoo - -

RB: Yes, that's the area, Southern Boulevard.

MN: Southern Boulevard.

RB: Yes. Well they have houses throughout the Bronx now. As a matter of fact, I know Boston Road, I think on Third Avenue they're going to have a three-hundred, four-hundred unit house development named after Roscoe C. Brown Jr. in tribute to my work as a board member there.

MN: Really?

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RB: Yes.

MN: When is that going up?

RB: They - - I guess the **ground break** is going to be some time this, this fall.

MN: That's pretty cool.

RB: Yes.

MN: That - - so that's going to be at the bottom where Boston Road hits Third Avenue?

RB: Yes, just a little bit above that, yes.

MN: Wow. That, that's - - that's something. I mean that's, that's wonderful. So how - - so you saw part of your mission as bringing the Bronx back?

RB: Yes.

MN: And through that vantage point and then all the different - -

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RB: Well I had the advantage of - - the president of college has tremendous **visibility**, and then I used the visibility. I brought all the great celebrities: Arthur Ashe, Andrew Young, and so on because I was actively involved in politics. I was a - - I worked in Jimmy Carter's campaign, worked in the Kennedy campaign, worked in the Jessie Jackson campaign, and because of that I had visibility with the political establishment and also I became president of 100 Black Men in 1985 and I used that network to help not only schools in the Bronx, but to help education, and help the City University. So my concept was that - - use the political and social and economic power that African-Americans and Latinos have to make the same responses, and I helped to elect Dave Dinkins; I was his largest private fundraiser for Dave Dinkins - -

MN: Wow.

RB: - - when he ran for mayor. And we worked in his administration and so - -

MN: Now did you find that those political activities, like in a city-wide or national level, came back to help the Bronx?

RB: No question about it. Basically, how do you separate your academic and your political? Well, my academic is my profession; my political is my commitment as a citizen and I did - - did not deny Republicans or anyone that wanted to the campus, they could come just like Democrats. And I would espouse positions. We did research papers; we worked with some people in the Pataki and in the Republican to get projects that would help. I became chairman of the

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employment training planning council, which had many people from the business community to help take federal monies to job train for jobs that actually existed, rather than no-show jobs. So those - - that's, that's basically my philosophy and that is the philosophy that Freddy Ferrer founded because I worked with Stanley Simon and then he was replaced by Freddy Ferrer. We worked very closely with them to get projects for job training, I helped to develop the Bronx Net TV network - -

MN: Oh, so that - - so that was something you helped develop, Bronx Net?

RB: Yes.

MN: Which is now at Lehman right?

RB: Because basically we wanted to develop in our training program - - we have a TV training program. Just like those who have aviation training program. So the community college gives you that [inaudible] to do those kind of things. We're working with the borough president, we're working with the Congress person, **Joe Serrano**, we're working with Senator Moynihan, we're working with Senator D'Amato, we're working with Senator Schumer, we're working with Senator Clinton. That's where the political helps you to develop your own organizations. You just have to be careful that it's just not advocating for a particular person, that it's advocating for the outcome, which is to do with making a better city, a better community for everybody.

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MN: Now did politicians ever try to over-step their bounds in dealing with you?

RB: No. I was - - I was asked to run for Congress one time and I decided that it would be better if - -

MN: That - - that raises an interesting question: do you think you can accomplish more from the way you operate from within a university into community organizations and non-profits than by going into elected office?

RB: Well it depends on the circumstance. At that time it was clear I could have accomplished more because Democrats were in the minority, the country had economic downfall, and by using my contacts to get education programs, job training programs, and housing programs, I was cycling that money into my community. Now it's a - - it's a balance. The City University has much greater status now, has much better funding now, much better recognition. So it's a balance. The politicians want to use the university, rather than the university using the politician. So that - - I'm very pleased and gratified with my decision not to get into elected politics. My thing was, you got to be in Congress for at least fifteen years to have any power, so I - -

MN: Well clearly you know Charlie Rangel - -

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RB: - - I didn't want to spend my time, you know, getting the power. And of course some of the rules in college have changed now, but at one time everything was seniority. Now if you are involved with the leadership, even a junior person might get a good assignment.

MN: Now that brings an interesting question because Barrack Obama has had this meteoric rise without - - and this, it almost seems like John McCain resents him for not being in Congress that long. Given your knowledge of and exposure to this, how did he do this?

RB: Well my theory on a lot of things is "right place, right time." I didn't get killed because I was in the right place at the right time in the military. I got my first [inaudible] at NYU because they needed me: right place, right time. Barrack Obama is right place, right time and remember he stands on the shoulders, not only of the Tuskegee Airmen and Jackie Robinson and Martin Luther King, but he stands on the shoulders of Jesse Jackson and Andrew Young. So in that sense, he had an advantage, in addition to which he was running against a very **politically** regarded administration. So whether it was Hillary, or Edwards, or Dodd, or whatever - - Biden, change was it. And being very articulate, very skilled, he was able to move that. And the thing is he clearly has a multi-racial, multi-generational committee. He - - I was with Jesse Jackson, we were basically an African-American and a few liberal whites. Now Obama has liberal whites, moderate whites, African-Americans, etcetera. So he's a question of right place, right time.

MN: Now - -

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DR: Can we cut? I - - I want to change the tape.

MN: Okay. Well we've also - - let me just turn this off for a second. Yes, we - - okay wait a minute so we have another - - we'll start - - it'll be two tapes, that's okay. So you managed to - - you had a conscious plan to be able to operate with the, the highest levels of power in several different spheres.

RB: Well see I come from the generation of African-Americans who were very fortunate. We had good education, many of us from middle-class backgrounds, and our job result was to be the best we could be, because being the best we could be - - it could change the minds of many whites and those who were **fair** and would understand would join with us in the progress. And so that's the Tuskegee Airmen, that's the Rachel Robinson, that's the Jackie Robinson. The - - our children, and our children's children - - a new generation who have the privilege of integration, but they still experience the **specter** of prejudice and stereotype. Now how do you break those stereotypes? In my generation you break the stereotypes by excellence, you're going to be better. In one philosophical sense, you shouldn't have to be better to earn the rights of equality. So therefore, my role, and the role of many of the ministers, the Adam Powell's, the Martin Luther King's, the **Charlie Rangel's** of the world, was to make it possible for African-Americans not to have to be the best, not to have to do this, but to be a part of the general flow of a society. And this is true of almost any group, any immigrant group, any group that's been indentured. It's a story of the Irish, it's a story of the Italians, it's a story of the Jews, it's a story

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of the Latinos, it's a story of the African-Americans, and a story of the Asians. The idea of the

“Super Asian,” not all Asians are “Super Asians.”

MN: [laughs]

RB: But on the other hand, many were, and are, and use that to open the door; it's about opening the door. And one thing I might say that's - - the metaphor of sports probably is the best metaphor. On the field of sport, you are judged for what you can do and many times the field of sports has teamwork, and you have to work with your teammates, you want to work with your teammates, regardless of where they can come from, provide that they can perform. And the other part that grows out of this idea of [inaudible] or [inaudible] or sound mind and sound body, you project your physical powers of success with a sound mental and emotional balance of success. So that many of our great leaders had been people who had balanced lives, intellectually, artistically, physically, etcetera. The unfortunate thing is that because we now channel people, the sports figures are not supposed to be smart, and they're not - - if they are smart they keep their mouths to themselves. And that's why you have to admire somebody like Paul Newman, who advocated and kept his art moving at the same time moving ahead. Admire somebody like Jackie Robinson, who realized his [inaudible], if you realize what Rachel Robinson has done. Realize what Arthur Ashe has done, realize what Tiger Woods is trying to do, but he's a transformative, he doesn't see himself as a role model for African-Americans, he sees himself as a role model for people. Which is good, except that African-Americans and poor people still need role models because there are some stereotypes - - it's what **Paul Steele** calls

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“stereotype theory,” and stereotype theory affects those been affected by the stereotype as well as those projecting the stereotype.

MN: Do you think that people - - that Tiger Woods on some level helped prepare the way for Barack Obama, for how certain segments of the white population looked at him?

RB: Yes, in a minimal sense. I think that yes, Tiger and Michael Jordan, the two most prominent athletes in the world, but again you have to make that bridge from sports to the intellectual and the political life. So I think if everybody is built on certain things that - - there was the success of Jackie Robinson, the success of Colin Powell, from the Bronx, the success of Condoleezza Rice, even though you may not agree with her politics. All of that helps to undergird the fact that you look at a person’s ability, not that people are not looking at Obama’s color and so on, but they look at his ability. And of course you got the idea of misogination, and mixed-race, and so on, which is part of the society of people who like to think that they are one hundred percent European, when they’ve done the genetic study [crosstalk] - -

MN: [laughs]

RB: - - when they find that most of them, ninety percent of them have some African genes in them. Just like I have some Italian genes in me, I don’t know where it came from. So that - - that’s the world. But class and structure is, is an impediment. Both African-Americans and Latinos, any minority group, Jews, Italians, have to be careful that class doesn’t substitute for

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recognition of one's background and the impact that it has on a society. And deep down inside people are where their roots were. On the other hand, in a competitive society which tends to do deny those roots, is sometimes more difficult than to adhere to. And that's why the housing programs, the social service programs, the affirmative action programs in education, the affirmative action programs in arts, are so very important. If you put together a sport and art and politics, you see the evolution of a society.

MN: Now - -

DR: I had a question - -

MN: Yes, sure.

DR: - - it just kind of related to the class issue because I think that young African-Americans now don't see a person like you as their role model - - maybe, maybe yourself because you are involved in the community, but because I **was struck when you were** talking about in the fifties and so on it seems that among people of color, people of different classes, had more access to each other, maybe were living in the same communities. And I find that younger African-Americans today, they admire only the hip-hop artists and the sports figures because that's what's on the TV.

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RB: See one of the consequences of integration is that it broke down our integral black community. When I grew up, we didn't care what white folks did. We had our bankers, we had our barber shops, we had our beauty shops, we had our theaters, we had our schools, we had our hospitals. And a physician or a lawyer could live three blocks from somebody who was a construction worker. They didn't necessarily socialize, but they were in the community. And now, with there being so much class and economic differentiation, many of the most successful African-Americans, who could be role models, aren't in the African-American community. However, there are people like I'd say myself, who spend most of their time doing something in the African-American community. And it has to be in the African-American community, rather than just writing a check. And it's true that when you're in the larger world as a [inaudible] whatever, a lawyer, you don't have time, but somehow or another some of us manage to make time, generally by being in service on boards or a program for [inaudible] or program. And so we are bridging that, but the proximity issue is an issue. That basically our African-American communities are not African-American, and if they are, they are so monolithic. For one of the things that I used to campaign for when I was - - first came to New York in forty-six, in my lunch hour when I was working for the Welfare Department, I was the vice-chair of my union chapter, we would go out and get petitions for public housing. [Inaudible] Antonio, East Harlem. And we got those housing projects, and all of a sudden they became economic ghettos because of - - and part of that was social policy, as I said. When I first came to New York I lived in a low-income project in Astoria, brand new - - one of these programs, veterans and so on. But they had a rule that when you made a certain amount of money [crosstalk], you had to move. And I had to move twice because I made money in two different projects.

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MN: [laughs]

RB: And that was bad social policy. It looked like good economic policy, but it was bad because it aggregated people with low skills, and low economics together, and you didn't have to ask for **racial** leadership, you didn't even have the leadership in that community. That was - - that's one of those "you got to be careful what you wish for" things. And right now, they're trying to figure out how do you do that? Now in some of our developed housing, like with **fixed** houses, affordable housing, you had the eighty-twenty. Eighty percent of **multi-grade** and twenty percent of the people with limited incomes. But that's a lesson that we should of learned a long time ago and that's been the sort of public housing throughout the country. They're aggregating large numbers of people in tall buildings, that's, that's the other thing, the height of the building. The Astoria building I lived in was six floors; we knew everybody in the building. Now you live in a thirty-two story building and you - -

MN: I was yesterday at a public school in the middle of the Claremont Houses, which is like this huge concentration - -

RB: It's a big community.

MN: - - of thirty-four - - thirty and it's a disaster. It's become a concentration point for very poor people who were neglected and - -

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RB: And sometimes anti-social behaviors will go along with it.

MN: Yes, and - - and it's been there since 1965, so you have several generations so - -

RB: Well what's going to happen, which some of the people in a conspiratorial sense say, they're going take all these good housing projects and put the poor people out and middle-class people in them, which has happened in some places, or knock them down. And there is a problem, but what do you do when you're knocked down like when - - you had Urban Renewal was "Negro Removal." They went into the inner cities and they tear them down, and rebuild and push people out of the suburbs. So now they have to move back from the suburbs into the city. So in a society to plan for equity is very, very challenging. Because when you talk about tax equity, you talk about housing equity - - for example up in Riverdale they're concerned that they cut back on the gifted and talented programs, which really means programs for middle-class people who's kids are fairly bright in order to bring in minority kids. And they say "**well and then we have to go somewhere.**" So that is a push-pull between a socially desirable end and the willingness of society to accommodate some inconvenience. The advantaged people can't have the disadvantaged people being advantaged without some dislocation of the advantaged people. And that really - - that's, that's really what part of what the presidential situation is, although some of the disadvantaged people, the poor white working-class don't understand - - they understand it more now because when they can't get credit they realize - -

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MN: Well there - - there's been in the last month - - I, I've worked with some union organizers in Pennsylvania and people are starting to get it.

RB: Yes, **fortunately**.

MN: Well what - - one of the things the - - there's this great speech that a union leader gave in Pennsylvania. He says, "Every time that you start feeling prejudiced slap your wallet." [makes slapping sound]

RB: That's a good one, that's a good one.

MN: "Slap your wallet every time you feel the prejudice." He said, "That black guy is in your corner and you better vote for him or else you're an idiot." I mean that's - - they're, they're talking turkey.

RB: Well not only that, equity on the - - on the assembly line for a white worker or a black worker means equity for a white worker.

MN: Yes. So is - - there's some exciting stuff going on, but it's tough.

RB: Well the world's changed. If you really look back at sixty years, this country has really changed in sixty years. And you look back sixty years before that, and it really changed. You

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know the immigrant move, and so on. You look back sixty years before that, the breaking down of slavery. So change does happen, it's guaranteed to happen. The concern is hopefully it will be in the direction of empowering people. And because the United States has such great physical resources and such a large population, and does not have the challenges of other countries in terms of ethnocentrism and so on, we're in a **powerful** position to do something, but we better take advantage of it because it isn't going to be that way forever - - **those airplanes that narrowed the world very closely.**

MN: So in looking back on - - on all of this, do, do you feel that you - - since that time you entered the air force - - that you've seen a change which makes you feel that you're - - all your work has been validated?

RB: Well I think change is what we hope for, what we work for [inaudible] much, and quite honestly what I expected. Because I believe, having read history, that if people with good ideas come together, that things will change. And if you strive for excellence, excellence, your effort, your interaction is very, very important. That's what I learned from DuBois, and Booker T. Washington, and [inaudible] Johnson at Howard University. My father - - because my father's from a first generation of people who got college degrees and [muffled]. I hope that we can extend this to the generation right after me, and the generations after that. You know the grandchildren and great-grandchildren. And it is happening to a certain extent, but there's a winding **gulf; there's a bimodal** distribution. And what I think about all the time is how can you break that bimodal distribution? Because as I said, when I went into service there was

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thirteen million African-Americans; there are forty-one million African-Americans today. That's - - the problems that African-Americans face, and prejudice is really that much more numerous because there are so many more people. We can do something about it and I don't believe that adding an African-American president is going to make the world change at a right angle, but I think it might make it change fifteen degrees. If you change fifteen degrees, by the time you do it six times you got a right angle.

MN: [laughs] Okay, are there any final words? You know this has been a wonderful and - -

RB: Well, what I'd like to say - - I want to complement you, Mark Naison and your videographer, for doing what you're doing because one of the things we know is that if you don't remember the lessons of the past, you're bound to repeat the mistakes - - that's **Santiago's** famous statement, Santiago's famous statement. So I'm glad you're doing this and I hope more and more people will interact with you, and more than that, I hope somebody will listen to, and view what you have to say, and finally have a discussion about it, with interactive discussions. Whenever I taught, I was considered to be a great teacher, I always had interaction. It isn't me-to-you, or you-to-me; it's us. And that's what this helps us to do.

MN: Okay. Well thank you so much Dr. Brown and this was wonderful.

RB: Good, thank you.

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