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Coleman, Dennis and Harriet McFeaters Interview 3

Coleman, Dennis and Harriet McFeaters. Bronx African American History Project
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Transcriber: Greg Peters

MN: This is the third interview of the Bronx African-American History Project, and the third interview with Dennis Coleman. This is taking place at Fordham University on February --

NL: 23rd

MN: 20th ?

NL and DC: [in unison] 23rd.

MN: 23rd, and with us is Natasha Lightfoot, Dr. Mark Naison, and joining us shortly will be Harriet McFeeters. Okay Natasha.

NL: Okay, Mr. Coleman, I wanted to start off with just some background information on how you ended up moving from Morrissania and eventually ending up in Castle Hill. As I do know that you were a long time resident of, you know, the Castle Hill projects first, and then your home on [inaudible]. So just to kind of start out how you even ended up in the neighborhood.

DC: Yes, I was --I had applied for public housing at the new development of Castle Hill, and—

NL: Do you know what year that was?

DC: I'm not quite sure, I think it was 19 — nineteen sixty —1966 or '65.

MC: Now was Castle Hill then a new development?

DC: It was a new development, but what had been done was that, as a State Senator, they did a redistricting job on me, and placed Parkchester and Castle Hill in this new district which stretched all the way down to Soundview, Bronxdale, and a very small portion of--

yes — no — and a portion of Morrissania, so the districts stretched from Morrissania all the way up, taking in. What was done was that they, by drawing the new district lines, they changed the ethnic makeup of the district because all of Parkchester was in the district, and there were no minority tenants of any consequence living in Parkchester, and Castle Hill was being -- just being developed at that point. And even Castle Hill, the number of persons of color was limited to less than 25 or 20 percent at the time. It might have even been 15 percent, but I decided to move in and live in that area.

MN: We were talking about moving into the Castle Hill houses in 1966. Now one question I have was, at that time, was there any stigma attached to public housing?

DC: No. No. What was very interesting was that that particular new housing that had been put together was one that — quite — everyone expected great things, to be like the top of the line public housing, and I had dealt with housing before in the lower South Bronx, so I saw the possibilities there. However, as we all learned in, after, particularly in — in going there, that once Playland was shut down, and became Co-op City, the majority of the people moved out of Castle Hill, and moved into Co-op City. Not even that — the Co-op Board Amalgamated Housing that had Rochedale Village in Queens had a number of tenants who left Rochedale Village and moved into Co-op City, and today this still - we still have buses running from Co-op City to Rochedale Village in — in Queens. There's a regular bus route going back and forth between that - that housing development, and Amalgamated Housing had some other co-ops, so — over in the east Bronx by Van Courtlandt Park –

MN: Right. Those were the original ones.

DC: Yes, built by Governnor Layman and his family.

MN: What -- How big an apartment did you move into in the Castle Hill Houses?

DC: I had a two bedroom, because it was my wife and I, and two boys, and maybe when our daughter came along, we were entitled to a three bedroom, and we got a three bedroom. The interesting thing, because I had been active politically and community-wise, I became the Vice President of the Tenant Association of Castle Hill, and our very first meeting, I was elected. We had a running battle with the manager of Castle Hill, because the community was then in flux, we were pressing for the beach club, Castle Hill Beach Club, and the one on White Plains Road down at the end.

NL: Shorehaven.

DC: Shorehaven, and I remember that I was in the Reserves with the boxer at — middle-weight boxer, who was in the Naval Reserves at Bennett Field, and He was at Shorehaven and wanted to talk to me about making a test case in Shorehaven, but that did not happen because my friend Jim Foster, who was from St Augustine Church with Reverend Hawkins — he filed a complaint as a homeowner. He and his wife Trudy Foster lived literally feet across from the fence of [the] Castle Hill Beach Club, and filed a complaint with the State Commission of Human Rights and the State Commission of Human Rights ordered Castle Hill to give him a membership. In those days -

NC: Do you know when he filed it? Do you when Mr. Foster filed the complaint?

DC: No, I don't remember what year. His wife might. Trudy Foster-

MN: Now was this —

DC: -- She still lives there.

MN: Was this in the '50s or the '60s, do you think?

DC: In the '60s.

MN: Okay, because in the '50s there was a big issue --

DC: There was always an issue, not just Castle Hill Beach Club at Shorehaven. There was an issue even later years with the New York Athletic Club -

MN: Right --

DC: — which was on city-owned property, and had no athletes of color participate, and they had land that we were using in the northern tip of the Bronx just before Westchester.

MN: So the New York Athletic Club facility is actually in the Bronx, not in Pelham.

DC: It's a Bronx area --

MN: It's a Bronx area --

DC: — It's a Bronx territory, because if you notice where they call the Millionaires Row, the political row across the street where a number of politicians live going back historically, their children go to school in Pelham, but that's considered the Bronx if any number of court cases of politicians of the Bronx who live there.

NL: Was that North of Co-op City?

MN: It's — it's actually - it's closer to the golf courses. It's east —

DC: - On Shore Road. It's on Shore Road North--

MN: It's east of that.

[Inaudible]

MN: Now when you moved into Castle Hill, what was the racial and ethnic composition of the housing?

DC: I believe it was anywhere between 15 to 25 percent minority at West Perhoyt (?).

NL: And that was African- American and Latinos that had moved into that neighborhood?

DC: Yes.

NL: Okay.

HM: But didn't the New York City Housing Authority screen the applicants?

DC: Not only did they screen the applicants, they had a checkerboard pattern where only on certain floors did the African-Americans house ~ I know there were no two African-Americans or African-American/Latino apartments next to each other.

MN: So this was an attempt — this was an immigration plan that they had?

DC: That's what they called it.

MN: They called it.

NL: Right.

DC: However, it was a plan that was truly dominated by whites, and not only did — they insisted that the tenants could not use the community center.

MN: The community center was located in the neighborhood —

DC: In Castle Hill houses —

NL: In Castle Hill —

MN: So who --

DC: —Same place it is today, and we weren't allowed to use it, and then we found out that the federal government granted so much money per tenant as funds — resource funds, for the community center.

MN: So who was using the community center?

DC: At the time, Ira Robbins was the Vice Chairman of the New York City Housing Authority, and his wife had a senior citizen center, the Hudson Guild --

MN: Right.

DC: And the Hudson Guild would bus all the senior citizens and had exclusive use of our community center.

MN: Is Hudson Guild in Manhattan?

DC: There was a Hudson Guild in Manhattan, but there's one also — at that time, that had been over in the Bronx, I forget at which housing development — and they became so overcrowded with senior citizens.

MN: Right, now at the time you moved into Castle Hill, were you -- what church were you affiliated with, or were you affiliated with a church?

DC: I was at the — at the time I moved in, I left St. James Presbyterian and followed Reverend Edler Hawkins to the Bronx to Saint Augustine Presbyterian, and went to -- back and forth between Reverend Hawkins and St. Andrews as well as even Trinity Episcopal.

MN: Now, now, this is the Saint Andrews in Castle Hill?

DC: Yes, St. Andrews in Castle Hill.

MN: Now what year was that church built?

DC: I don't remember the year.

NL: I think — I think it was built in nineteen twenty --

DC: No.

NL: No, wasn't it —

[inaudible]

MN: So was — So St. Andrews was there when the Castle Hill Houses were constructed?

DC: No, St. Andrews was in — St Andrews was down — original St. Andrews was down at there at Shorehaven Beach Club.

NL: Right.

DC: And later came over to the vacant land, and the vacant land was built right at this current site.

NL: Castle Hill and Lafayette.

DC: Castle Hill and Lafayette. And about --

NL: — but the original one was built in the 1920s, right?

DC: Oh way back, yes.

NL: Right, okay. And then the new one, when did that —

DC: I don't remember the year, but it wasn't long — it was right after 138 had been built.

MN: Right. Now, now was this a multi-racial congregation when you affiliated with it, St. Andrews?

DC: Yes.

MN: So you were moving between St. Augustine's, Trinity Episcopal in Morrisania, and St. Andrews.

DC: Yes and my youngsters at the time went to both St. Andrews and to a Baptist church that's still in existence over by Parkchester, just down the street from the Catholic Church.

MN: Now -- yes.

DC: -- Because some of their friends from the neighborhood attended school there, and were on this Little League baseball team.

MN: Right.

DC: But we had, very interesting also, our Little League baseball team, Castle Hill Little League, did not accept youngsters from Castle Hill Projects to serve in Little League --

Castle Hill Little League, which was right in Castle Hill, the yards of Castle Hill, so they could see all of these youngsters, mostly white youngsters, from the surrounding area, coming to play Little League ball there, and they could not play in that Little League, until—

NL: So there was a direct exclusion of youngsters of color in Castle Hill from being involved in the Little League —

DC: - from the Little League.

MN: And this was in the late '60s?

DC: Yes. Until the Tenants Association put up and said oh no, no, no, no, put a stop to this, and we went and begun arguing and demonstrating downtown, but at that point we had different politicians from Throggs Neck who dominated that Little League and so, eventually, a guy by the name of Rex Michaels became Little League Manager of teams in Castle Hill, and we had the field, took over the field and allowed, you know, to be integrated into the Castle Hill Little League.

MN: Were most of the people in the private houses near the Castle Hill Houses white?

DC: Yes.

MN: Was there visible tension between the homeowners and the people who moved in the development?

DC: Visible tension before Castle Hill was built. Petitions and everything else was built and Castle Hill had to be reduced in size because of the homeowners in the area and even residents of Parkchester who did not want to see Castle Hill built at the dimension that they had originally stated was trying to be built, so they — the housing authority reduced the construction to alleviate - to — to lessen, the continuous demonstrations of the

homeowners and all of the petitions that were going to -

[inaudible]

MN: How — oh, I'm sorry, Natasha?

NL: And I was wondering also, about, kind of, the schooling in — the schools in the area.

I'm assuming that a lot of white youngsters still attended the local public schools like

138, etcetera. I'm wondering how, you know, your children might have experienced, you

know, the kind of, if they did, any tensions between themselves and —

DC: 138th was closer to us, but we weren't allowed to attend 138. We had to go all the way down to P.S. 36.

NL: That's the one in —

DC: The oldest school was built in —

HM: Is it nineteen —

DC: 1905?

HM: Something like that.

MN: And where was that? Was that —

DC: P.S. 30, right by Cross Bronx Expressway.

HM: But it's on Castle Hill Avenue.

DC: It's on Castle Hill.

MN: It's further north --

NL: But it's further and further -

DC: Way down by the Cross Bronx Expressway.

NL: Yes. Where Castle Hill is, is further back from the Bruckner, closer to the water.

DC: Between Bruckner and Westchester.

NL: Yes, I'll --

MN: Draw a map.

NL: Yes, I'll draw you a map.

HM: Straight line from the — from the housing development.

NL: (sketching a map) So this is Castle Hill. Here's Westchester Avenue

MN: Right.

NL: Here's the water. Here's the Bruckner.

MN: Right.

NL: Here's the Cross Bronx.

MN: Right.

NL: 138 is somewhere around here. 36 is over here.

MN: And where is the - where's Castle Hill Houses?

NL: Castle Hill Houses are, like, this way, so like —

MN: Okay so they're crossing — they have to cross the Bruckner --

NL: Two highways —

MN: Two highways to go to a -- it's above the Cross Bronx --

NL: Actually, you know what, it's just before.

DC: Its right just before, [crosstalk]

MN: So I have to cross the Bruckner rather than go walk to a school.

NL: Yes.

HM: But the pretext of that had to do with transportation. Did your children walk the distance or did they — could they get bus passes?

DC: We got bus passes.

HM: Because -

DC: Only after we fought for it.

HM: But I know, in terms of, you know, I worked a little bit in terms of the zoning, and the idea that was expressed was that there was a direct route for the children who lived in the Castle Hill Houses. 236th and some of the buildings in the development, if they had to go to 138th would have been, you know, awkward to get to, and so rather than keep, you know, divide up the buildings in the development, they just zone a whole Castle Hill development to 236th, which really made quite a difference in the, let's say, the income level, of the school in terms of the parents because the Castle Hill Houses were low-income or middle-income families, and the houses around 138th —

DC: Jamie Towers in the houses — Jamie Towers was a co-op development, and the others were private homeowners around the area.

HM: Right, right. So they went to 138th.

DC: Yes, they went to 138th, and did not want it. Not only that, the middle-school level was selected for Castle Hill was 125 —

HM: Was 125, which was even further away.

DC: Well over.

MN: So where was the middle-school located?

DC: Way down here somewhere.

NL: Down here, yes.

MC: Above the Cross Bronx Expressway?

HM: No. down.

NL: Futher down, but, and —

DC: No, down below towards Westchester—

NL: And, and

DC: Towards Westchester — Towards Westchester Avenue, not far from Parkchester Station.

NL: Yes.

MN: Right.

NL: Yes.

HM: And the reason with that was given, I mean, this was the Board of Ed's thinking -
[crosstalk]

NL: So this is -- the Cross Bronx goes like this, and Westchester goes straight, so they kind of intersect.

HM: They wanted all the children to be zoned from [P.S.] 36, you know from each of the elementary schools, that all of the children were zoned to the same middle school, so I don't know what else -

DC: So our youngsters did not — did not get to go to a new school like -

NL:-131 --

DC: Like Albert Einstein School, 131.

NL: 131. I'll tell you where 131 is. This is now White Plains Road and 131 is just below

DC: —just below --

NL - Just below White Plains Road here, so again, two schools that are here --

DC: Two newer schools —

MN: Right --

NL: — that are newer, they are getting sent to schools here and here.

MN: Right, now how --

DC: We had to go to the older schools.

MN: Now how high were the Castle Hill houses? What was the -

DC: Twenty stories.

MN: Twenty stories.

DC: Some were, yes, twenty stories.

MN: And how many buildings were there?

DC: Twelve. Oh, it was then the largest public housing development in the Bronx.

MN: So this was a very large development.

DC: Oh yes.

HM: It still is.

DC: Yes, it represented a significant population.

HM: But how did they go about screening the people that lived in that one as compared to like the Monroe Houses, which was near to [P.S.] 131?

NL: Right.

DC: I have no idea.

HM: But I mean, you did have to have interviews and things like that, right? Or income evaluations, and —

DC: They checked you fairly well, and ~

NL: And did they--

DC: - Sending letters recommending, oh yes, we sent the letters and the applications --

[crosstalk]

NL: They only wanted family — they only wanted families, they didn't want two parent

families and that kind of thing. Were they looking for a certain type of family to come in there?

DC: I have no idea because when we went there, we wondered whether there was any screening of the white families, because we were shocked at the quality of the white families that were there.

NL: How would you describe the quality of the white families?

DC: They were very, very nasty. A number of them did not -- threw papers in the hallway and the floors, things of this nature. We who were there felt a pride in -- taking pride in the development, and most of them clearly indicated that this was just a passing phase for them until they can move out elsewhere, and it was true.

NL: I have a question. What were the ethnic backgrounds of the whites who were living in Castle Hill in the Castle Hill Houses?

HM: Weren't they mostly half-Italians? Many of them were Italians and —

DC: It was mostly Jewish.

HM: Oh, really?

NL: Jewish.

DC: Yes. Mostly poor, Jewish families, and so much so that a synagogue was at, I believe, on Homer Avenue at the corner of -- Havemayer — it was the first synagogue until residents in Castle Hill built the synagogue on Randall Avenue, and the shocking thing, of course was that — The Tenants Association, when they moved to — to Co-op City, they voted to donate 95 percent of the total Castle Hill Tenants Association treasury. 95 percent of all funds were donated to the synagogue, and there was nothing

other tenants could do, nothing that the manager could do, just turn over the money to the synagogue, because so many Jewish families were leaving to go to Co-op City.

NL: Wow.

HM: So that wasn't able to keep them.

NL: And that was when? What period — Around what period did they start to move to Co-Op City?

DC: I don't remember when Co-op City was built.

MN: It opened in the early seventies. Like 1970, '71.

NL: Yes, so I guess we're talking about the early to mid- seventies was when this —

HM: Was there a Catholic Church there on Castle Hill -

DC: There was.

HM: -- Across from the daycare center?

DC: Yes, on Roosevelt.

NL: St John Vianney?

DC: Saint John Vianney, yes, yes.

NL: That's where I went to school.

DC: Oh, yes?

NL: Yes.

MN: Now, oh, go ahead.

NL: I wanted to ask you when you actually started to see the change in the Castle Hill Projects, or actually, even before, you know, before I get to that, I wanted to know what — what made you eventually leave the Castle Hill Houses, and when?

DC: I — I never really wanted to leave Castle Hill Houses. I fought the management of the Housing Authority because I became the first African-American Director at the Housing Authority. John Lindsay placed me at the Housing Authority —

NL: When was this?

DC: — 250 Broadway. Nineteen [short pause] -1967.

NL: Okay.

DC: And the manager, because I knew so much, and was such a high level, the manager was then quite concerned that here was a tenant who knew rules, regulations, a new hierarchy, dealt with hierarchy, dealt with commissioners, and I was living at Castle Hill. So he tried to get word to the commissioners and others that I should not be living there as a tenant, and I simply said, "Are you going to discriminate against me? You are going to try to make me move out of Castle Hill? What is your reason?" So, no one would tackle that, and I insisted that I was going to stay there and fight because then, what the manager was doing, for instance, they took over the entire parking lot and said it was only for Housing Authority employees, and tenants were not allowed to be parked in that parking lot. Then they would come through, and take cars out of the parking lot, and just dump them on the street. If your registration had expired, and you're waiting for the Motor Vehicles to send you a new one, they would just take it and dump it in the street. So we had a running battle with then-manager Irving Golin because we had to fight for the Community Center, fight for, you know, the Tenants' Association —

NL: You said the manager's name was Irving Garland?

DC: Irving Golin. G-O-L-I-N.

NL: Okay --

DC: And his wife was the Manager of Mitchell Houses in the South Bronx.

NL: Okay.

DC: And this was like a family, you know, the whole public housing. Ira Robbins was the top housing guy, you know, always identified with housing causes. We had Madison Jones, prominent Civil Rights guy, who was the other commissioner, and the other chairman of the authority, was someone who was politically appointed by the mayor, but those two remained steadfast as the three chair - the three commissioners.

MN: What is the reputation of Castle Hill Houses today and what was it when you were growing up? What, yes?

NL: This is directed at me? Okay, well, Castle Hill Houses when I was growing up were definitely someplace where you didn't want to get caught around after dark. You know, one place that I can think of— there was one building that was called the Boot Building, which was on, I think, was that Olmstead? between Randall and, I think it's Tory -- no— not Tory — What is the next street, not Randall and I think —

DC: Seward.

NL: Yes, I think it's between Randall — I think it's between Randall and Seward, and you know, that was just notorious for, you know, drug sales and, you know, rooftop shootings, and you know - It was really, in the eighties, Castle Hill Houses were just a bad place to be. My dad -- one of my dad's really close friends had his family living in there, and I just remember the one thing that would - as soon as you would walk in, it was like the pungent smell of urine. You would see syringes openly on the ground. It was not the — you know, the best place.

MN: Yes.

DC: When I moved from Castle Hill, I moved directly across the street. I've always felt that there was a need to fight, to upgrade the quality of life in Castle Hill.

NL: Now when did you see Castle Hill Houses starting to decline into what it became in the eighties?

DC: Castle Hill - Let me say this. One of the things about Castle Hill - every Thanksgiving, every Christmas, Castle Hill would run out of water because any cooking or things that were going on or any big holiday like that -- the water pressure was so bad, that those on the upper floors could not get water at all, and the lower floors went through the very same thing, and for many, many years, that remained. The way that Castle Hill was allowed to deteriorate had a lot to do with the physical plans itself, and a number of things that were - the elevators, the front door, the doors for entrance, the balconies, after awhile, had to be closed, that began early because of the tension, the racial tension between families -- white, Latino, black - whose kids would be, in the wintertime, going just to the balcony to play because they couldn't play downstairs.

MN: Now these were balconies on the floor?

DC: Every floor.

MN: Had a balcony?

DC: Yes. A common balcony.

MN: And that was outside?

DC: That was - no, that was —

NL: Like, it was on the floor, but it had — it was gated so you couldn't, you know —

MN: Okay, right, and those were closed eventually because there was so much conflict.

DC: And even after, in later years, individuals found ways of getting from the balcony to

the two neighboring apartments on either side of the balcony to burglarize those apartments, but I moved right across the street, bought a house right across the street.

NL: And when did you buy your house in (inaudible)?

DC: Oooh, good question. I don't remember the year, I'd have to go back and check.

MN: Would it be in the seventies or the eighties?

DC: The seventies.

NL: Yes.

MN: And you still live there?

DC: Oh yes.

MN: So you live across the street.

DC: Right across the street from Castle Hill Houses.

MN: And did you ever feel like, in danger, as a result of living across from a housing development?

DC: Yes, oh yes. We've had times when youngsters were testing their armament, and they would go driving down the street, just rattattattatat like machine guns hitting all of the houses and glass windows to see what kind of reaction it was and cars speeding by. As you know, it was just last year they shut down, or two years ago, that they shut down Zerega as the hot rod testing, the hot rod -

NL: Yes. The drag racing.

DC: When they built the new, what is the new complex, I forget the name of it —

MN: Now were you ever tempted to —

NL: Home Depot?

DC: Home Depot.

MN: Were you ever tempted to leave as a result of these incidents?

DC: No, as a matter of fact, I participated, went, helped, identified the car and always stood up that we would stand up and try to fight to upgrade what was going on in Castle Hill, and identify the cars that were running up and down with ammunition, find it randomly. The police surveillance was set up where they could clearly watch from some of the private homes before they began getting apartments in the complex to begin to look out for those who were committing crime on the grounds or in the playground or places like that.

MN: What about your — your children? Did you ever feel them at risk as a result of things like this going on?

DC: Yes. Yes. My -- at one point, my oldest youngster went to 36 graduated from 125, and he received a scholarship for Browning. At the same private school at sixty — sixty fifth Street or — in Manhattan. Probably sixty third, I don't remember, and at the same time they had another vacancy for seventh grade, and my — his — my other son had just graduated from 36 and was getting ready to enter 125, and they offered him a scholarship, so both youngsters got scholarships to go to Browning private school, and I thought good of it because the youngsters that they would play ball with or basketball were getting too rough and I was afraid for their lives. My daughter attended Head Start in the South Bronx at Saint Margaret's Episcopal Church. By then I was in the Episcopal Church party, and left from there and attended PS 130, then he got C's in school. She didn't stay in that school very long because she also got a scholarship opportunity to go in the private school, and because she was a year ahead of other youngsters normal age, she went to Chapin, and I want to tell you that a lot of good things occurred because all of us were on top of education. Seeing what was going on

in the private schools, and what the youngsters were able to accomplish at an early age, my daughter graduated and had a full scholarship to Stanford University in California. My oldest son graduated high school at 15- years- old. Could not find a college that would accept him anywhere here, and eventually found one at — in California, United States International University, where he had been able to go in and get in there at 16. In September he was born, but at that point, city colleges , no one was taking anyone that young an age group, and they moved along so well in the private school system, [it] made me feel, without a doubt that our youngsters in the public school could achieve just as well if they had been directed, if those in the public education felt that they could be motivated to do better. So I had quite a bit of experience as a result of not having them hang out in Castle Hill.

HM: I wanted to ask you about your experience -- you were on the local school board, which was in — was it an appointed position?

DC: Yes.

HM: Before the decentralization when the community school boards were, and until they dissolved things last year, you have remained, let's say, you have remained, let's say, in the policy-making level —

DC: Yes -

HM: The local policy-making level. And of course, you want to comment about your role in school issues? In the governance issues of the school?

DC: Well, what I had was that, because I remain active and knowledgeable about the curriculum that was going on in the private schools, and what youngsters in private schools who lived in Castle Hill could accomplish, I continued to press and see to it that our public schools had an accelerated curriculum. That was my main fight because, to me

MN: Right -

DC: Seeing what they were doing, and particularly youngsters of color in the private schools, I felt, without a doubt, that I could bring that knowledge right to the policy level and press. I never believed that youngsters in the first grade and second grade should be taking a nap in school in the day. That was going on for many years - that the early childhood experts continued doing that. They had a mat for them to go to sleep on, and this was -- [It had] become ridiculous.

MN: Now one of the questions is how did you keep getting elected to the school board? Like in Castle Hill, what was - How did you reach people, when you were living there, in terms of getting elected to the local school board?

DC: Well, by being active and continuously fighting on behalf of the tenants and representing tenants; lining up rallies to go to City Hall to fight for more resources. Lining up with parents, even during the strike, and opening schools and getting the schools open. Parents and people in the community felt that I represented the community and was supporting their efforts. It's — it was on, and let me say this — it was only one union that supported me during the elections, and that was district council, local 372, and one year, local 1180 of CWA, Arthur Chilliotes.

MN: Right --

DC: Supported me in addition to-

MN: Now 372 is the Union of what workers?

DC: They are the school aides —

MN: Oh, okay -

DC: — that support workers of the Board of Education.

MN: Now, how important was Saint Andrew's Church in terms of people becoming aware of your educational philosophy? Was that an important area, or was the tenant activism more important?

DC: Oh, let me say that Saint Andrew's was a very mixed viewpoint. You had an immigrant population whose viewpoint was that the thing to do was to always send a youngster [to] what they called "private school," because out of the immigrant population, private schools were perceived to be better than public schools. Father Errol Harvey was knowledgeable, and he ran for the school board and the community school board elections because he felt that the school boards were the places to be, and the public schools were the places to be. He opened up the parish hall, and we had four classrooms in the parish hall at the time the schools were overcrowded, until he became disillusioned with the Board of Ed in finding out that they were not paying their bills to places that were rented, and he felt that places that were rented to the minority community -- that they were quite lackadaisical in paying their bills, and he said, stop this, put an end to it, the same way you rent and pay your bills for other white establishments, you'll do the same or else, and the bills need to be paid on time, or else you will be out, and eventually he put the Board of Ed out of the building.

MN: They were renting classrooms out of Saint Andrews and not paying in a timely fashion for the rent?

DC: Oh, no.

NL: Not just Saint Andrews, obviously. In other places —

DC: Yes, in other places as well.

HM: Were those children that were in the Saint Andrew's classes —was that an annex of

36 or - ?

DC: I don't remember if it was an annex of 36 or 138.

HM: Because I don't remember 138 having an annex, because they used to have the buildings in the schoolyard at one point.

DC: I know that, but I just don't remember which it was an annex of.

MN: Is there an ethnic difference between today — between the homeowners in Castle Hill and the people in the Castle Hill Houses, or they're from the same ethnic background, but different —

DC: They're all people of color, overwhelmingly people of color. They are still a number of elderly whites that are still living in the Castle Hill area — Castle Hill homeowners' area.

MN: Right.

DC: We had the Homeowners Association, but it became - people of color dominated.

MN: Right.

[End of tape 1, side 1. Beginning of tape 1, side 2]

HM: Almost everybody is brown or black.

MN: Yes, would you -- what are some of the -

HM: The difference has to do with income levels, I think.

NL: Yes.

MN: What are some of the immigrant groups in the community today in the Castle Hill neighborhood? Where — from which countries and parts of the world are —

DC: At junior high school 25, 125, I think that there were 19 different foreign languages spoken at home.

HM: The largest group was the Dominicans.

MN: Oh, so it's --

HM: When I was there.

MN: And in the Castle Hill Houses, would you say is it more Latino or black?

DC: It's now, that's interesting -

NL: Yes.

HM: Because the Latinos are Black, some of them.

NL: Yes, I was about to say. Yes, that's another thing --

MN: Right, right, that's also --

[laughter]

MN: In terms of self-identification as opposed to --

HM: It's interesting —

NL: Because I could say -

DC: I do say that there's still preponderance in Castle Hill and in Soundview of surnames that are not Latino, surveys that represent the majority of voters. Soundview houses in Castle Hill and Bronxdale.

NL: Still have large African-American populations.

DC: We look at the Hispanic surnames and the — those surnames are not in the majority of voters.

NL: I would say there -I mean, just from my experience too, there has been a lot of West Indian migrants in that area too.

DC: Yes.

NL: Some of whom are — some of whom are homeowners, moved into co-ops, and the

homes around there as well as some in the public housing, too.

HM: But the largest West Indian community, I think, is up in the Williamsbridge area.

NL: Yes, yes, definitely.

MN: But there is a sizeable West Indian immigrant community in Castle Hill.

NL: Well, I would say Castle Hill going into Soundview, and some of Parkchester. It's kind of spread out.

MN: So this is --

DC: It is a mixing of --

NL: It's a mix of them, I would say.

MN: Now what about African immigrants. Is there much?

DC: There are some African immigrants now.

NL: In the last, like 10-

DC: Within the last 10 years -

NL: 10 to 15 years-

HM: But a lot of them are non - not non-illegal there is another term they use, they're here on visitors' visas and then to stay, and it would be difficult, I would think, for them to get into public housing. The reason I know that is because when I was sick and I had a woman who was an African immigrant who was my home attendant, and she was explaining to me how the people come here from West Africa and stay with relatives until they can get apartments and the difficulty they have. So they are in the neighborhood and they are very visible in the Parkchester area.

NL: Yes.

HM: Where you see them on Westchester Avenue and so forth, but I don't think they live

in the public housing too much.

DC: The private taxi service on -at Parkchester station — overwhelmingly Africans who ran that public taxi.

MN: Yes.

DC: Even to the point that the police could easily seize their cars and get away with it because-

HM: Because they're not licensed —

DC: Some of them were not in the country legally, and they — the police would come and raid their cars for illegally taking passengers when they weren't.

MN: Now, now you're been involved in education for well over forty years. Are you optimistic about where the New York City public schools are going at this moment?

DC: Absolutely not, it has gotten worse. What has gotten better is the ability of the current mayor and the Tweed education administration to manage stories that are going to the media. They have had a tighter control now than ever before about what gets to the media and how it gets to the media, and their quickness to respond to anything that's in the media. What has happened that's been devastating to the public school has been from the Board of Regents, I believe, who have appointed non-educators to run the Board of Education. This was done, and the last two heads of New York City public schools have been non-educators, and very interesting was that even in days when persons like Shirley Chisholm, who herself taught in the public schools, was a librarian and whatnot, she wasn't qualified at all to head the public school system in New York, according to the Board of Regents. Robert Wagner, who became president of the Board of Education and ran the Board of Education - he was found not to be qualified to be chancellor, but he made decisions, educational decisions for then-chancellor Richard Green, and Mayor Koch told the different chancellors they must do

whatsoever what Robert Wagner Jr. told them to do. This was - from that day on, this whole thing was a sham, because Robert Wagner was the one who closed public schools, and then later, when we needed the growing population in New York City for public schoolchildren, he couldn't reclaim the schools that he had closed. Same is true today. We have buildings that were built as public schools, and it is difficult to try to reclaim those buildings.

HM: PS 39 is one of them, is it?

DC: We just got that back by my efforts and Dr. Betty Rosa, who we have a correspondence fighting to get it back from then-housing development administration, and even to that point, tenants that are in PS 39 — State Senator Diaz fought to see to it that those tenants remain rather than having public school youngsters utilize, have full utilization of the building, so he went to the chancellor to say you can't put out those programs and those other agencies that are there. Leave some of them there. Are they servicing the community and — but no one was building new schools in that area.

HM: I wanted to ask you one of the most important issues that I think you accomplished in public education was to help to recruit and identify minorities to be principals and supervisors in the school system, and I guess today there are many of them in the system now. Do you think that the — that your fight and your efforts to make sure that that happened, at least in the Bronx area, of course it was a national problem, has made a difference, or -- How do you feel about that?

DC: Well, let me say that the question before Professor Naison had asked about the current situation today -- one of the good things about this was that under Dr. Betty Rosa, we were able — she came in with a lot of - the word got out in the educational establishment that the hierarchy had changed from superintendents, and therefore people of color would apply and

get accepted. Under the prior superintendents, this would not happen. They were somewhat under a quota system, reducing the number of people of color in the supervisory category and for the longest time, kept four principals of schools who were African - American. The current situation with Tweed, before I get to your answer also — what's terrible about it is that state-wide exams that are being given to public schoolchildren are worse than it was before they came in here. They are not getting any better, but what they have been able to do is to hold back the results of those statewide exams -- fourth grade and eighth grade, and to lump, and to give their own tests to all the other grades, and the test that they give to the other grades, the youngsters in our school system, had better scores than the statewide, and the issue — theirs coupled with the state, said that the two grades for the state are buried, and the public is not fully aware or knowledgeable of how bad public schools in New York continue to decline even under the Bloomberg administration.

MN: Now you -- yes?

NL: I had a question about your work in later city politics because I know that you also were still active in education but you did work with Jesse Jackson, you also worked with Al Sharpton. What was -- what was the state of, you know, local politics under, you know, Koch as mayor and, you know, how did you involve yourself in the various battles that blacks had to fight during that period?

DC: That was — Jesse Jackson , Al Sharpton were individuals which were lightning rods to the educational system and to the system in New York, They weren't long term. See, what we found out under, after fighting for my friend Dave Dinkins to become mayor, was that the print media so controlled everything that was going on, that David Dinkins and his staff were so fearful of what the print media had to say, and they would give in to the print media, and

not fight to reform or bring about changes that were needed and still are needed today, and it was unfortunate that things like opening the library six days a week that Dave Dinkins did and kept during his -- was never highlighted or no one ever -

MN: No one knows about that.

DC: Knew it or gave him credit, and the point that Giuliani came in and begun changing those and making -- no one cried out, you know.

MN: The police force was expanded under Dinkins, and community policing was introduced.

DC: That's right, yes, but no one gave that much credit, all they talked about was that the youngsters that -- the squeegee boy youngsters who were always wiping the windshields, and trying to hustle money in the street, and things of this nature, but — so we found that even in politics, the lightning rods like Jesse Jackson and Sharpton served a purpose in bringing an impact to an immediate situation or immediate issues, but it was not a long-term sustaining — you had to continue to revive these lighting rods to come in and to get after the politicians and to stir up the — the —

HM: The pot [laughs] --

DC: — the media to — then stir the pot to get things done.

HM: When you say "we," do you mean you and the NAACP?

DC: Oh, NAACP, everyone -- all of us had to --

MN: Now, now was there an NAACP chapter in Castle Hill? Did you -- or where were the NAACPs -

DC: Yes, we had an east Bronx NAACP chapter.

MN: And where was that located?

DC: We met at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, and later, the chapter became anti the leadership of Hazel Dukes, the current president, and she would not allow the chapter to be revived again because they did not vote or support her at the convention, and hence you have the East Bronx NAACP child daycare center on Colgate Avenue or Evergreen in that area -- near Watson, down by Watson Avenue, and so the chapter remained with a daycare, and even after awhile, because you weren't allowed to use the NAACP unless you were affiliated with it, the daycare center itself downplays the name East Bronx NAACP.

MN: Now, do you know, when you were involved in the NAACP, did they correspond with a national organization?

DC: Always.

MN: Okay, because that means then that the Bronx chapter should have records in the national NAACP papers.

DC: Sure.

MN: So that would be the place to look as well as with whatever local documents exist.

DC: Oh, yes.

MN: You know, you've given your comments on education. What about housing? What do you think about the evolution of housing policy in New York City over the last --

DC: I became intimately involved in housing — New York City Housing Authority came to Reverend Edlar Hawkins and -- They were building a housing development that would be more expensive that would be higher rental, monthly rental costs, then say, Mary's Houses, was paying, and then St. Mary's Houses was a middle-income housing development -

MN: Right.

DC: - that was the highest cost for buildings, and that was a public housing of two buildings from 163rd street to 161st street from Tinton Avenue to Forrest.

MN: Is that what they call Woodstock Terrace?

DC: That's the Woodstock Terrace.

MN: Now that's a public housing, or Mitchell-Lama?

DC: That was a public housing.

HM: I thought it was a co-op.

DC: It was a public housing.

HM: Because St. Mary's was the public housing —

DC: Yes, but listen. That was a public housing, and Reverend Hawkins, Reverend --

HM: Folks.

DC: Mount Carmel Baptist.

HM: Yes, Reverend Folks.

DC: Reverend Kenneth Folks, myself— we served on the transition board to go in and convince the public to purchase apartments as a co-op, and that's where we became the first co-op —

HM: Co-op, yes.

DC: In the South Bronx at that time, and I sell more apartments than anyone else without commission, you know, convincing people, showing people the equity in having — being in a co-op, and so, it was named, because the Woodstock Library was just a couple of blocks away, it was named Woodstock Terrace to go with the community.

MN: Well, also, Saint Augustine's was originally Woodstock Presbyterian Church, and it

was renamed when Reverend Hawkins came.

HM: I didn't know that.

MN: Yes, but --

HM: But that housing development is right across the street from Jane Addams High School.

MN: Right.

HM: And then — but at that time, I think they had this philosophy, I don't know, city philosophy —

DC: [inaudible]

HM: Where they were trying to have —

DC: It's across the street from junior high school 120, now three twenty — no three —

HM: Yes, whatever the number is.

MN: Right.

DC: McKinley houses are across the street from Third Avenue.

MN: And the Forest Houses -

[crosstalk]

HM: Yes, and the philosophy in housing at that time -- wasn't it under Mr. Weaver? federally —

DC: Yes.

HM: — was, I think, that they would have low-income and middle income people living in the same communities and trying to mix and match -

DC: Yes, the same idea as so-called education park -

HM: Yes --

DC: That they developed in Co-op City —

HM: And Woodstock Terraces —

DC: The Woodstock Terraces was then viewed above the middle-income —

HM: Because they had the terraces —

MN: Yes -

DC: Yes, yes --

HM: The people in the community could look and see oh those are special because they have terraces -

NL: Wow -

DC: And so we were able to sell that to the community and develop it as a co-op. It was going to be the Van Buren Houses — that was the public housing name that had been given to it.

MN: Ah, okay, and then —

DC: Yes, we met with Mr. Reed, the then-chairman of the authority, and Madison Jones and Ira Robbins to convince them to —

HM: That was a success.

DC: Yes.

MN: Yes, an anchor for the neighborhood.

HM: To this day, it's still -

MN: Right --

DC: It's still a top-level co-op.

HM: Maintained nicely, I think.

MN: Natasha, you have any other questions?

DC: But in housing, I want to also say that one of the interesting things from the NAACP's standpoint was that Metropolitan Life Insurance owned housing. They owned Stuyvesant Town.

HM: Riverton -

DC: They owned the Riverton in Harlem.

HM: And Parkchester -

DC: And Parkchester in the Bronx, and Riverton was supposed to be the minority housing, not only Stuyvesant, but Peter - Peter Cooper was also another high-income in that area by Stuyvesant Town.

NL: What's with the housing now?

DC: It is — it is a tough fight for us to be able to push to get people of color into Parkchester —

HM: Even now? But not now —

DC: We did with — NAACP led that fight and let that demonstration — Bernard Jackson, who later was president of NAACP, later became Supreme Court judge.

HM: When was this that the protests against Parkchester were led?

DC: I don't remember.

NL: In the sixties, or --

MN: It may have been earlier because --

HM: It was soon after they developed it --

[crosstalk]

DC: It ended later.

MN: So, in other words, it opened in '56, I believe, and I think Paul Robeson was

involved in protests at that time, but may not have been successful, so you're talking about something that is later that worked.

DC: Yes.

MN: So that is something we need to look up.

NL: There were continuous protests against Parkchester. Okay.

DC: Yes, I remember Bernie Jackson was leading demonstrations then.

MN: Were you in the Castle Hill Houses when this was going on, or this was before then?

DC: This was before.

MN: Okay.

DC: Parkchester residents fought against public housing being built because they wanted no public housing in the area at all.

HM: And I remember a lot of the people who lived in the Parkchester Housing were Jewish — middle-class Jewish teachers. Some of my colleagues lived there, and --

DC: And Irish --

HM: And Irish, yes --

[crosstalk]

DC: Very strong Irish -- Eileen Ryan was the City Councilman for many years. The assemblyman oh, geez —

HM: Tall fellow -

DC: Tall fellow — lives in Throggs Neck, has his own TV program, cable program on St. Patrick's Day.

HM: He stayed in office a long time.

DC: Yes, representing —

HM: But the blacks, in terms of the Metropolitan Housing, the Riverton was considered, you know —

MN: Right.

HM: — like the cream of the crop lived there. I mean, very distinguished black families lived in the Riverton, and I don't think they cared about integrating in the Bronx. I mean the Bronx was still a stepchild at that time, and still is, of course, but I'd like to say that Mr. Coleman has given quite a few interesting highlights and filled my history in terms of how you were involved, which I knew some of, and the one thing I — I wonder is do you see on the horizon any young people that seem to be stepping into the gap for leadership in the African-American community in the Bronx, or is that a sort of a passé idea?

DC: There are some, yes. You see, part of the problem is the — for the longest time, Harlem was viewed as the African- American political structure, and in order to get an advance on a city-wide or state-wide structure, the leadership in Harlem always just abdicated to Latinos in the Bronx to determine what they wanted to do in the Bronx, and ignored the African-American population in the Bronx, and did everything they could to downplay and not even have African-Americans participate in city-wide issues that the Harlem community would participate in moving.

NL: So --

MN: So you think that there was almost a deal cut between Hispanic politicians in the Bronx and black politicians in Harlem?

DC: Without a doubt. Oh, absolutely.

HM: To this day --

NL: And I have a question about then what your thoughts were on the transformation of Bronx politics when - when, you know, the Latino "machine" came into power. What were your — what are your thoughts on that?

DC: Well, I welcomed them. I served with Herman Badillo and I became state senator the same year Herman Badillo became Borough President of the Bronx. We were all in the same team together from NAACP, and at that time, Herman, two years before, was from East Harlem -- registered voting and activist in East Harlem. He just came up to the Bronx, and they were organizing the Latino population, and a guy by the name of Oroy Chalke, who runs an airline in the Caribbean, Paradise Island and other places, was printing the — I think he was printing a Latino paper. It might have been El Diario at the time he owned, but it was a Latino paper, and he was one of the big money people behind Herman's campaign to become borough president.

NL: So there was, in the 60s and early 70s, do you think [there was] more collaboration between African-Americans and Latinos.

DC: Both, we needed each other.

NL: Okay. So when did you see the transformation into --

DC: The problem became when, basically, we had differences where the Latino population always felt that they should have the top positions and -- whether it be for Supreme Court Judge, no matter what it is, whether it was Congress, mayor -- for instance when Percy Sutton ran for mayor, the Latino population in the Bronx did not support Percy Sutton. We -- we — to those of us who supported Percy Sutton, even Shirley Chisholm came up and spoke on his behalf that I know I was able to get audiences when Shirley Chisholm came up and championed his cause, this meant nothing at all to the

Latino population in the Bronx.

NL: And this was in the 80s?

DC: Oh, no this --

NL: -- Percy Sutton ran for mayor in the 70s? Okay.

DC: In the 70s, yes, but when, and once Dave Dinkins came up and became mayor immediately after that, the Latino community felt it was their turn to go and to have a Latino mayor, hence this is why you've seen currently the differences between Freddy Ferrer and the Harlem population going at each other.

HM: One of the issues among the Latinos was the status of the Puerto Ricans — vis á vis the other Latinos, I mean, there was a cleavage within their own community about, you know, the fact that the Puerto Ricans were citizens and the other immigrants were not. That seemed to make a difference, and also, for some reason, which I am really not clear about, Herman Badillo fell out of favor with the Hispanic community, I don't know whether it had to do with his marriage or -- or what, but he --

DC: It couldn't have been his marriage.

HM: [chuckles] But in any case, he was very instrumental in getting the bilingual education programs introduced into the school system, and at first, it was considered an excellent thing, because it enabled the children who were new arrivals to have a program, but after that, or since then, there has been a lot of controversy about the effectiveness of it.

NL: So — you're — I think, correct me if I'm wrong, but you're linking some of the cleavages between African-Americans and Latinos in terms of Bronx politics with the falling out of favor of Herman Badillo with Latinos.

HM: Well, I think that he was like a very influential politician.

NL: So he was a bridge between the two communities.

HM: And then after he then lost the position —

DC: No he didn't lose it --

HM: He stepped out --

DC: Herman decided that --

HM: He went to Congress —

DC: The borough presidency was not a big thing. We had a United States Supreme Court decision which ruled that the office of Borough President was a minor administrative position in the City of New York, and did not, in effect, their appointees, in any way had to do the one-man-one-vote issue, and once that was done, Herman switched over and decided he would run for Congress, and then when he became one of 450

Congresspersons, he realized how much more minor that was than what he had left —

NL and HM: [laughs]

DC: [Laughs] ~ and he accepted the position of Deputy Mayor, and he served as Deputy Mayor until, I think, during one entire term.

MN: Are --

DC: He served as the - He served as Deputy Mayor for awhile.

MN: Are you optimistic about the future of the Bronx?

DC: The Bronx — there are too many ethnic clashes currently in the Bronx. The biggest ethnic clash - not just with adults but down to the students - is between the Dominican population and the Puerto Rican population and the African-American population. With the gangs, it's tearing up (Adlai) Stevenson High School.

MN: Oh.

DC: Right now.

MN: And these are ethnic — the gangs are ethnically divided?

DC: Oh yes. Oh yes.

HM: Does Stevenson have a significant African-American population now?

DC: Yes. The African-Americans and some Puerto Ricans —

HM: Minorities —

DC: The Bloods.

HM: No, I'm saying that population in the school —

DC: —are a significant minority.

HM: —they are the minority. I mean, if you divide the Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, and the African-Americans at Stevenson, the Dominicans are the larger group.

DC: I wouldn't be surprised. I don't know exactly what the count is —

MN: Yes. So you're saying that the Puerto Ricans and some African-Americans are in the Bloods? And what are the Dominicans in?

DC: Oh, they are — I forget the name of their gang.

NL: Crips? Are they Crips —

DC: Maybe that, but they also have another one, but that's definitely Dominican.

MN: Right.

HM: What is interesting —

DC: Dominicans Don't Back -- What is it?

MN: DDP. Dominicans Don't Play.

DC: Right, Right.

HM: But it's interesting that in politics, the Dominicans have elected officials in the city

government anyway in Manhattan.

MN: But not in the Bronx.

HM: But not in the Bronx. The Latino politicians in the Bronx, I think, are Puerto Rican.

MN: They're overwhelmingly Puerto Rican from the Democratic leader —

HM: They seem to be —

MN: José Rivera to the borough president to the congressman.

HM: Yes, but I don't know about the borough president. Is he Puerto Rican?

MN: Adolfo Carrion, oh yes, he is —

HM: Oh, he's Puerto Rican?

NL: Yes, he is.

HM: I was going to say though in terms of the Bronx and housing and so forth, I've noticed they have this policy now that they're not building the huge housing developments like they used to. There are lower-rise buildings, and I don't know how in your area over in Castle Hill, but in my neighborhood, it seems like overnight they're building these —

DC: Every area of the Bronx is the same —

HM: These two-family or one family low rise —

DC: Every area of the Bronx - every vacant land is being built. They're building up vacant land everywhere in the Bronx.

HM: I mean like, overnight you know, you're pass -

MN: So you're seeing the same thing in Castle Hill?

DC: Castle Hill, in Morris Park, in Throggs Neck. They just had a new zoning put through in Throggs Neck to stop the building of new houses.

MN: Now these are market housing or they're subsidized?

DC: Market, oh yes.

MN: This is market housing?

DC: Oh, yes.

HM: Do you have any idea how much they're charging for that -I mean we get, since we're homeowners, and I guess you too, we keep getting these letters from realtors —

DC: Half a million dollars —

HM: -- to come and they'd like to buy your house.

DC: Half a million dollars for each home.

NL: And the house is build overnight, and they look cheap —

DC: Yes -

NL: That's the thing that I marvel at.

DC: Half a million.

MN: Right.

DC: For new homes —

NL: Otherwise they could be blown down.

MN: Right.

NL: [laughs]

DC: And some of them --

HM: They're not subsidized?

DC: No, and some of them are a whole lot smaller —

NL: Yes -

DC: Than the current one-family structures in space.

HM: So that's going to have a very interesting effect -

NL: Impact -

HM: On the whole culture of the Bronx —

DC: Of course-

HM: Supervise those houses and who —

DC: That's what everyone is — that's why the politicians in the Bronx are — want to stop the building of housing, worst of all in Throggs Neck-Pelham(Bay) area. They're — they're very frightened ~

HM: That's why there's homeowners --

DC: Very frightened and don't want any more housing to be build in those areas.

HM: That would affect the schools and everything.

DC: Yes, it will upset the voting population -

HM: Oh yes, they don't know those people that are coming in though?

NL: [laughs]

DC: Voting population. But going back to housing, we —we continue to have ethnic change in housing. It's just even as I tried to say St. Andrews in our own, when the immigrant population came in - they're a lot of issues that they should be fully supportive of-- not really. I took the registry of the members of St. Andrews, and checked it with the home addresses. I was shocked to find out the number of people who are not even registered to vote. Shocked.

HM: There is a jump in the deacons in the church --

NL: But a lot of them aren't citizens —

DC: Some of the loudest mouths are not -

NL: But a lot of them might not even be citizens.

DC: Quite true, because some -

NL: That's the other problem. A lot of them are still green card holders.

DC: They did not want, and were afraid of the children who were born here to be involved in politics in supporting my campaign, I remember a mother telling me about her kids she didn't want her son helping me because she didn't want him — she still, as a citizen of a foreign place, she wasn't a citizen of the U.S., and she wanted him to be considered a foreigner and not involved in politics, because he would then be eligible for the draft, she felt, if there was a draft that came along.

MN: Right.

NL: That is something a lot of West Indians — A lot of West Indians came here and didn't get citizenship because they were worried about getting into things like the draft but also, they saw themselves as just passing through, and going back, they were here just to work —

DC: That's quite true.

NL: ~ And not to stay.

DC: Yes.

MN: Yes.

NL: So, that's certainly an issue.

DC: My parents eventually went back to Jamaica.

NL: Right, right.

HM: Oh, did they?

DC: Oh, yes. I was reading even Constance Baker Motley. She is now in Nevis —

HM: That's right --

DC: Federal judge -- Federal senior judge of the Southern District.

MN: Yes.

HM: In Nevis?

DC: In Nevis, which is where she came from originally.

HM: Really?

NL: And she lives there permanently?

DC: And she's a federal judge. Senior federal judge.

NL: And she's still on the payroll here [laughs].

DC: She's still senior federal judge of the southern district.

NL: Well, wow.

MN: Okay, this was, you know, a fairly powerful set of issues you raised. Are there any other things, in looking back, that you would like to put on record that we haven't covered?

DC: I want to say that we have an issue right now in terms of bringing about a change in the community that is very, very expensive to do so unless you can afford to advertise on the electronics medium because if you — no matter what you advertise in the print media, the editorials and the stories that are written are written for advertisers, and advertisers tend to not to cater to people of color, per se. They cater to just a broad economic pop —you know, a population based on economy, and the stories that are written are written to sensationalize issues against people of color in both the print media and the electronic media, but in advertising on the electronic media, somehow or other, individuals have been able to make changes in the youthful population that we have today, and it costs quite a bit of money to advertise and not many individuals are aware of the web networks and things of this

nature that so many young people use to bring about a change. The Bronx needs to have a significant change. Nobody in the Bronx gives up power. Power has to be taken away, and the Bronx will continue to remain a creature of the Voting Rights Act under federal regulations of the Voting Rights Act, despite the fact that over 70 percent of the Bronx are people of color because they continue to be too many ethnic clashes currently, and no attempt to mobilize, and it's as if individuals continue to look on the black population as if there were still slaves and that they ought to be treated as slaves, and to be held back and left back in most of the things that are going on. The gains that we made in Morrisania have been shunted aside — shunted aside to the point that individuals are willing to ignore and change the names and change many things that we have established and developed as new cultures moved into the area. It is — I do not see the growth pattern for the Bronx to be going about for the betterment of the majority of the residents of the Bronx because of the power structure that remains in the Bronx. Small place like City Island — those residents tend to control a significant policy-making level of what goes on in Bronx County. Small section like Riverdale — northern Riverdale. Every member of the central Board of Education came from northern Riverdale. Every member of the central Board of Ed. All during the years of decentralization came from the northern Riverdale section so that the rest of the Bronx - their views were never brought into the mainstream of the people representing the majority of people in the Bronx.

HM: I know that the issue of integration was taken on, you know, another complexion since it was fought for in the early days, but the fact that there is such a multicultural pluralism in the Bronx and in the city and many of those people are not citizens --I think that is contributing to the lack of influence — political influence. You mentioned City

Island, which is a pretty homogenous kind of community where everybody is a homeowner -

NL: And everybody is of a certain descent —

HM: I mean, they're homeowners, but they're all white also.

DC: Yes.

HM: And the bridge is what is sort of, like, interesting that the bridge is there and that the bridge — that is where the integration stopped, so that, what you're saying is that representation — the political representation and influence of the African-American influence of the African-American, in particular, I would say, is being diminished because the upward mobile African-Americans have moved away from the Bronx, most of them. The ones that remain are newcomers to the community. They are moving into the new housing, I would assume, and they haven't gotten connected, and I don't know what connections there are that are really influential anymore.

DC: But you know, I want to tell you that, for instance, Riverdale, historically, had been - - the individuals living in Riverdale -- we were always proud of their involvement in the Bronx, and continued, because they continued to bring about the changes that were needed. Not many people are aware that Robert Morgenthau, the District Attorney of Manhattan—

HM: -lived -

DC: - lived in Riverdale, prominent in Bronx. I first met Robert Morgenthau when he created the Association of Bronx Community Organizations involving our youth counselor in the NAACP, and Jack Bingham, who had been a congressman there —

[End of tape 1, side 2. Beginning of tape 2, side 1]

DC: A number of those people were very, very influential in standing up for the rights of all of the people of the Bronx, and involved the minority community in uplifting and seeing that their schools were better. I first met Robert Morgenthau going down to fight Borough President Lyons about the building of new schools in the Bronx. That's — that's - that's — before he became U.S. attorney, before he ran for governor. This is how involved the Morgenthau family was in the Bronx, and so that Riverdale slowly changed and no longer — it was as if they were almost a separate island.

MN: Yes.

HM: Well, that's still is true, isn't it? I mean, I know that that there is a significant Jewish community - upper-middle class community in Riverdale, in some of the, I guess the co-ops or -

DC: Lately there was, yes –

HM: -- condominiums up there, and — DC:

It wasn't originally.

HM: Well, but I'm just saying at this point a lot of the teachers who retired and supervisors are still there.

MN: But — but see, I'm intrigued by what Mr. Coleman was saying about the way, you know, print and electronic media manipulate news to the advantage of advertisers and established interests, and then looking to the Internet as a vehicle where young people can organize independently of that, and I mean, I've seen this in other areas, you know, like with this whole -- our historians campaign, you know, to move a convention from a hotel, which had discriminated against. It was all done on the Internet, but —

HM: Did you do it?

MN: Yup --

NL: Yes, I signed the petition.

MN: Yes, but, you know, to me, it's a very intriguing possibility of trying to create communities which cross some of these ethnic lines and mediate some of these disputes and start creating, you know, networks that, you know, that empower people.

DC: Not today.

MN: - But, you know —

DC: That's the only way for the future for us.

MN: Yes, but it's going to mean people like, you know, Natasha and Brian and other young people who have skill and charisma and a command of the media to try to, you know, to do those things, and —

DC: I think it's going to happen when our young people graduate from college and cannot get jobs because of the outsourcing of jobs —

HM: [inaudible]

DC: -- and this is where so-called change in the media is going to be facing the wrath of the young people in this nation, particularly the fact that more and more young people are paying exorbitant amounts to go to college and it continues to rise, tuition in all the different colleges, going so much higher, and then they find that they're counterparts from foreign countries are able to put their resumes on the Internet to apply for the same jobs they're applying for, and they're able to leave their continent and come to the U.S. to get those same jobs, and the American-born, American students still can't get those jobs. Eventually, there's going to be a mobilization by young people throughout this nation to do - to bring about a change of the media.

HM: Well, I think that, you know, I think you're right about that. The only thing is I don't know of the success of it for a very long time because I know quite a few of the college-age young people who are about to graduate from very prestigious schools, and — but they're not — they don't appear to have been involved in organizations in the colleges, you know, like the NAACP or student government -

DC: That's true.

MN: Yes --

HM: — They're sort of diversely interested in a lot of other things, and -- and they don't see the power of unity on issues, and also, they're work ethic in terms of passion for causes — It's not the same — it's not comparable —

DC: Harriet, I'll -

HM: Do you agree with that?

DC: I'll differ with you. I see some of these things beginning to formulate. I saw a program recently where people were mobilizing against credit card companies and the huge interest that they charge to credit cards. These were young people who, in college, had credit cards, and how that, despite the fact that they have graduated and are employed, what that credit card and the damage that that credit card had done to them in the terms of credit rating, in terms of interest rates, and they are mobilizing --

HM: Oh, that's right --

DC: To fight the high interest rate, and it's starting with young people who were using those credit cards -

HM: To buy cars —

DC: — and go to college, and if it starts there —

HM: Well, that's a good --

DC: It's going to go to other issues as well, but the ones who are going to be hurt in this will be the print media, because the print media, they are the ones who go out and create these so-called leaders whom sometimes none of us recognize as leaders in our community.

HM: They select the first -

DC: And we wouldn't even be caught marching with them or behind them, yet they make them a leader. We use those individuals for other reasons, maybe lightning rods or other things of that nature, but don't really consider them to be leaders and to gain issues or to gain turf in the culture. We have no problem with the lightning rods going out and creating —

HM: Lightning [laughs] —

DC: — Issues and doing things to bring attention —

HM: But the -

DC: But they are not necessarily, for instance, some of the leaders of our religious institutions, whom we look to provide leadership in developing young people in the religious institutions. They differ quite sharply. As an example, Reverend Sharpton, on Martin Luther King's Day, hosted a meeting of politicians. He took that from the Greater Baptist Minister's Conference of New York, who has been hosting that meeting on Martin Luther King's Day for many, many years at the Convent Avenue Baptist Church, and still continues to do it until this past day, but he has gotten the electronic media to come out and support him at his meetings, while the print media and others go to the Convent Avenue

Baptist where the hordes of Baptist ministers from all over the metropolitan area belonged to.

He does not belong to that.

HM: Well, the print media, no doubt about it, is going to be obsolete very soon, probably much sooner than later because, as far as young people are concerned, they're definitely electronically geared, but the — the electronic — when you are talking about television or Cablevision or those - there's such biased reporting in terms of what the news is, so that so many of the issues are not broadly spelled out. I think that the young people, like you say, if they create their own issues and then go for it, that's a very good thing.

MN: I'm going to have to cut this off because I have to be back in Brooklyn, but I just, you know, we've — we've covered an incredible amount of ground, here. One of the things I just want to say is, you know, this is, you know, a tremendous missing piece of history, and now, what we have to do is find documents -- print documents which back this up, because scholars cannot depend on oral history alone, so I want to say, once again, to Harriet, that we definitely want to look through your files. We're going to follow up with the NAACP files, and, you know -

NL: [inaudible]

MN: Yes, absolutely. All of these files - nothing should be thrown out.

HM: I wonder -- Have you touched any of the St. Augustine's Church --

MN: Not -- not for the moment. I mean, we're --

HM: They have files that would be of --

MN: Right, I'm going to shut this off.

[End of session]