

CARTON 7:33

INTERVIEW w/ BROWN

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Lee Brown, 8/25/94

My name is Lee Brown. I was - been enacted as liaison for Local 2 in the community. A few years ago, I don't know the exact date, but we had a hotel contract convention at the Moscone Center, on Howard and Third. The seniors who had played an important part in the Lam administration and the - Shirley Key Hazel administration - the president who did not run in 1994. We as seniors have played an important role in helping to keep the union strong and work with the union for the interests of the seniors or the retirees of Local 2, the retirees' association of what was founded, and I, Lee Brown, is one of the founders. To know that it was very important to work with Local 2 membership to keep the union strong - one reason of the pension and health and welfare. So we always did work in and like to work and we used to attend the general membership meeting when we was called on by the president to come and support - cuz we know it was in the interest of the retirees on that pension plan, which is very important. They cannot afford to lose their little pension after they come up this far with it, and the health and welfare for them, which they claim now it is much better on the Medicare, the health and welfare. But I want to say I was disappointed on August 10th, 1994, 11:00 a.m. or 4:00 p.m. they had a hotel contract convention at the First Congregation Church at 495 Post at Mason. The union make us strong. That was the title. But I was disappointed that the first time that we met at the Moscone Center we retirees was honored. We spoke. We was there. We was a guest. This time on the 9th, August 10th, '94 at 11:00 a.m. or 4:00 p.m. we was not invited to this convention. On that particular day, I don't know how it happened, that the seniors had a picnic, and that could have been avoided



so the seniors could have been at that particular hotel contract convention. Always believe after my fifty years in the labor movement working with the rank and file every union that I know, that call upon the building their rank and file movement, would be success. I raised the question about a young fellow who says that he was in charge. His name is Kevin. He say he was in charge of putting this together. And I still feel disappointed. I always say I feel that racism - I have went back. I got documented facts, proof that Blacks is still in the low membership at Local 2 hotel and restaurant and international bartenders' union. [inaudible] I went back and did research. I asked them now - I talked to the young lady now who is in charge of the community. Ah. Action. I wanted to work with her, work together to build a strong union. That you can be success. You must work with the - all members, the rank and file, even the Black, not no one or two Blacks got one setting up here and one setting up there and make a [inaudible], that's a whole, that's been did, or done for years. I say we want to put some black people in this union, break down this race discrimination. If you want to succeed in this struggle, you must break down creeping racism. I have see'd it. I have been here, and I have raised the question. When we organized the affirmative action committee against creeping racism in this union. I have held back a long time. I talked to a number of the representatives. I talked to Cherokee Hazer. But I've been patient in holding back until they get their act together before we raise any question of racism cuz I know that's what the boss's game is. That's his weapon. That's his tool, to use racism to divide the union, to divide the rank and file, to keep from having unity. I recall back a number of years ago when the - uh, late '50s - that we had a grammas and reserved the sugar refinement in Louisiana. At 1:00 o'clock I spoke at Grammas for the



- every day for nine months they had a mass rally. Both grammas and reserved. At 1:00 o'clock I spoke the other meeting at 3:00. Grammas or reserved. When we first started off in the union there, the packing house workers' union, I asked the president could I be - will I be able to come and speak at the union because I've been in meetings with them before, and anniversary meetings, and they - and I was one of the guest speakers, and they wanted me to come and speak at the strike, at the strike place. So I went. When I first went there, I observed it very closely. This is scientific facts. This - when I first observed it close, I see'd signs there - white, colored - at the drinking fountain. Looked at the restroom, white lady here, colored lady there, white men there, colored men there. And they was setting in separate - white on one side, the black on the other. And I say that I had a little experience in the labor movement, and read quite a few books and met quite a few oldtimers in the labor field, and I begin to discuss with them. Then I talked - those times they were using the phrase "pork chop." I said we all victims of the same system. We must stop the most dangerous weapon that keeping us divided, keeping bread out your children's mouth, keeping out education, keeping out decent houses, decent health needs. I'm going to show you - tell you when [inaudible]. First is yourself, because you're divided. This is not a black-white issue. This is a pork chop issue, an economic issue, call it what you will. This is your enemy. And they using that as a tool, racism, white supremacy. And I spoke every day. I hit on that. You got to get together. You got to unite your forces. Together. To fight this most dangerous enemy. To [inaudible] sugar cane. Unity. Togetherness. You showing that you're not together. Anyone could come in here from the company, you don't know, could be an informer, see all these different signs. You don't



have to be a Philadelphia lawyer to see that you're not together. You must be together. You must take down these signs. That will prove to you that you're not united. You can rid of this evil force that is keeping you economic slaves. And finally one time I went back to the - one of the union halls, and the first one was in Missouri. I did not see - walked in, I didn't see any signs up there, looked around. Again, the white ones set on their own, the black side, and the black was setting on the white side, together. I say that's a sign of victory. Go to the other meeting, the last - the 3:00 o'clock meeting, the reserved. And I see the same thing had happened. People were laughing. Blacks were shaking hands with white working brothers and sisters. And they was bringing their children out to hear me talk. To talk about the issues. The man's name was unity. Pork chop issue, the economic issue for you and your family, for health and welfare. The onliest way you can get it is with unity. The most powerful in your union is the rank and file membership, and I told them, "Don't you forget that." And that's what we be here in San Francisco. I know they've had some problems in San Francisco in the union. We had problems and still have problems in our union. I read my national magazine. Sometime I may - sometime I maybe see one, no more than three Blacks in the national magazine. And this - very important to understand. I looked at the magazine, I see'd organized, directed. I [coughs] look at the president, I look at around the table, where the people are discussing, and I don't see not even one black face. You got [inaudible] May 19- and June in '44 at the - in the - that progress report and Las Vegas delegate, out of a number of delegates there I see'd one black man in May-June, 1994 at Las Vegas delegation. One black person in that - look like was a female. One of the delegates. At Las Vegas. You do not build a union. You must - don't forget



the first hotel was built by a black man in San Francisco. That should give you - I said if you - why they're not trying to get black people hired - to fight for. I know the past practice, and the people were getting fired. The union did not fight for them. The representatives, not the union. I correct that. Some of the representatives did not fight for the rights, and this Dorothy Lane or the room cleaners. They should have [inaudible] black room cleaners, when they had Local 283. That was the room cleaners union down on Turk Street. And since they merged, I will lose a lot of Afro Americans, people. When the [inaudible] of America retired, they were not replaced by Blacks. That was disappointing to me. And I was wondering why the hell that that particular day, that the member was not informed that that was, that the retirees should have been to that meeting and been recognized because we helped to play a part. Even in this '94 administration election, that the retirees played an important role for their vote counted. They was invited - the administration, both administrations were invited to speak before the retirees' association of Local 2. And the big event like this, 'cause it's important to the retiree members - their pension. They health and welfare activity, health needs, for themselves and for their families. And I feel as Lee Brown, individual, [inaudible] for unity and for strength, to take back to the bosses, the bosses had their informers there to find out did you - where is the weak - you know, what [inaudible]. Where is the weak chain. We're in there. That he going to raise. And he can use that question. But I want the new administration to wake up now. Going to give the boss an opportunity to use that wedge, that tactic. That's the wedge to buy [inaudible] for them to wake up. Let us see some more Blacks in that union. Even in the administration. We don't have very many - you can count on one hand, I said, and see who's



working in administration. The only one I see'd, the male and the female Afro American. But we could keep them all over, and we got people that been working a long time. I see them like come and go. I don't know why they get away, but they - when I look, and then they gone. I want to say that it's time. Yesterday on the 18, August 18, I walked the picket a while with them at [coughs] St. Francis Drake Hotel [coughs]. In San Francisco. [clears throat] Where I joined the support of these St. Francis Drake workers by joining Local 2 rally yesterday, August 18, at 4:30. The new owners came in. That is the old game. I've heard it before. And they hired all new workers. Non union. To my understanding. This is the green light to break up union, and particularly in the culinaries. The hotels, the restaurant and bars, which the union have been very weak in. After they broke up the employees, hotels association, the restaurant association, and the [inaudible] loosely, so that mean you must organize and also not only the boycott, St. Francis Drake Hotel, but we must fight hard, and I'm going to [inaudible] be knowing our voices be heard. I was there, and I said it's creeping racism. And do not let it divide the union at 4:00 o'clock it - I was - first, I went to Petaluma. Local 2, retirees' association had a picnic on that particular day. I can't under- - that's another day. I can't understand it. Why was we sent? Why did we choose that day or something I can't figure. I've been trying to find out what happened. I spoke to the fellow who claimed that he put it together. He said, "Well, I made the mistake." Well, the mistake is made now, Brother. We wasn't there. What I would like to know, and the retirees association, why that we wasn't invited at the hotel contract convention on Wednesday, August 10, '94 at 11:00 o'clock or 4:00 o'clock. At the First Congregated Church at 495 Post at Mason. And I still say the title, "The



union make us strong." Those are retirees still pay they dues. They are part of Local 2 and also part of the retirees association. They was still members. And I felt deeply that they should have been invited, invited. If you didn't get but one or two people come, be honored, at this hotel contract convention, to speak in the behalf of the strict of what the intention of the seniors feel, how they feel, how - someone should have been there to express the feeling of the retiree. And I want to know - because these retirees, the too black, too many Blacks in there, and they didn't want to - they had people - I was told this. That they had people invited, wasn't everyone was at that hotel contract convention on Wednesday. Tech. [inaudible] members [inaudible]. What reason that they could not invited the retirees and let them be honored like they in the past at the Moscone Center a few years ago. At the convention. Same time I also spoke at both session. Morning session and afternoon, speaking for the behalf of the retirees association members. Maybe some degree, but no one individual do not run, a few do not run the retires. Other people got - I want them to remember the freedom of speech. I been a trade union man ever since I was 16 years of age. And I have learned unity. You [inaudible]. The voice of the rank and file is the power of your union. Even don't have unions. I don't want to [inaudible] and Arizona, but we didn't have union. All we had - we was organized. We had unity. And had a brother replaced on the job in less than time, than a half an hour, Unity. You be the [inaudible]. And I want to say to the Local 2 staff members, let us build unity. Let us uproot racism and racist and white supremacy. And we can rebuild our unions. We have plenty of workers, particularly in San Francisco, not organized. We've got still in the culinaries, the restaurants, bars, some hotels, our job is just beginning.



Struggle. I want to say I will work with you in the community as I've been a liaison with a number of staff members and representatives who have given me authorities to [inaudible], given me a letter to become the liaison, to work with the community. But [inaudible] have not called me back, made, to make a report what's going on in the black community. Time to wake up. Wake up.

I have studied the important events in the American labor history from 1778 to 1975 on up to 1994. Studying history of labor. I have said and will say it again that I am - some people that say that you are brilliant teacher and leader of the working class, Brother Lee. I say I have a lot to learn. You are my best teachers, the people. Some have said that you a great fighter for the workers' cause. I say, "Without your strength and your support I would not be, while I try to do the best I can with what I have." I always say that the rank and file is the strength of your union. You need caucus, workers' power in the trade union. You need to organize. And set a caucus committee to keep your union strong. Educate your shop stewards. Educate your executive board members. And also have staff meetings and the staff should always meet with your shop stewards, your executive board, and discuss issue about building within your union. Strength, education, invite labor leaders, even Blacks, of all, brown, yellow, whatever you got. I've studied the history of black workers. I, Lee Brown, I want you to do that. Studying American Negro life, about the labor movement. I want to say I've also studied the black labor and the American legal system of race, workers, and law. And I want to say here again, it is a crisis in the working class. We must have an argument that we must have a new labor movement here in America for the rank and file. And I want to say I've studied and I make it my business because I'm



gain knowledge of the labor movement and earn a degree, and that degree is D.W.C. The doctor of the working class. D.W.C. Meaning Doctor of the Working Class, and organized labor and black workers from 1619 to 1973, and I've studied the labor history, black labor history. I have studied the black workers, the title "black workers." And I want to say to you now I've studied the history of Negro members in American labor unions. Because I'm concerned that all workers get a fair chance. And I want to say to you that the black workers have been abused. They not have been following a Title VII, that not putting a - or one or two black workers. It should be much as 25 percent. We have been denied the rights. Even the AF and L and CIO program, equal rights for all members. That's including black members. Talking about Title VII, and there are things there was a federal civil rights legislatures was passed a few years ago, and we still is being behind. You want to say you can rebuild the unions. It can be done. And I want to say not least black workers and white unions, and I want to say to the white workers and to the leadership of these white unions we must have equality. We must be recognized in this union if you intend to survive in the labor movement in this country, you must wake up and call on all members and put black people and make a [inaudible] place in they fight and black workers should fight who are members of white union, fight to get rid of that racism, fight to get rid of this racist and white supremacy, cuz it's a system that rob you, your family, rob the white workers as well and any other workers. I'm going to say to you this is my report, and I still say creeping racism, which will divide your union and take bread out of your children's mouth. Deny them a decent home, a decent education, a decent health needs. This is - like I said before, you must listen at the voice of black workers of the world, who have struggled



- even during the time of slavery, black workers one who - if you know your history, black workers who [inaudible] task folks. They do so much on the plantation, some of them - some plan- - not all plantations. I never like to use the word slave. Workers was not - they was run off and hide in the swamps or the tree or wherever they could hide until it get dark, and it was too dark for them to work. Then they come out and go back to their plantation. They stood up. They was against. They organized during the period of slave, black workers. I have documented proof. I don't say nothing if I can't prove it, because I'm not going to be made ridiculous. Lee Brown is telling you, I been there. I struggled. I read. Knowledge is knowing all about a thing, knowing how is a technique. I have learned it. And I'm still learning, cuz I'm concerned. I've studied history, of my people have been exploited, have been robbed from the beginning of slavery, 1555. It was ships, a lot of my people have [inaudible] high the cost. We lost millions of people in the middle passing. Tell them to read history. Read it. Study it. This is a [inaudible] hour. You want to see a change in this country? You want to see a beautiful life, economic and beautiful and happy, a long life and healthy life? Learn the treat black peoples right. Give them justice and equality. Give them the things that they have helped accomplished and helped to make. They need justice.

Testing, testing, testing. Lee Brown is testing. Lee Brown is testing. We testing on union democracy, union, what makes the union work in - what makes democracy work at labor unions and other organizations. Testing democracy. Testing democracy. Thank you.

You can't see what's going on - injustice. Injustice. Lit the fire on the Rodney King case. Injustice lit that fire, and I want to say now to Local 2, it is time now that you must raise that torch light, freedom, justice,



and equality, all members of Local 2. Black, white, brown, yellow, red. Let us - cuz a lot of work need to be done in the labor movement, within the culinaries, [inaudible] them all. Bankers need to be organized. Watch [inaudible], security guards, a number of other things, but focus on culinary, that we can be. And we can be successful. And I want to say that we can win, will win, shall win, but this most dangerous pollution [inaudible] come back, will be removed, that we all will be successful and happy for our children, not for ourselves, but for our children and our children. Get rid of this most dangerous system, racism and white supremacy. That's the system that the boss uses against you.

END SIDE A, BEGIN SIDE B

First, I had on the agenda to attend, which I am vice president of Local 2 retirees' association. We met at 10:00 o'clock, and I had appointment with the president of Local 2 at 11:00 o'clock, with Mike Casey, president of Local 2. But what I wanted to meet with Mike about, the president of Local 2, in 1984 we had a minority breakdown, with 17,878. Asian at that - in 1984, was 4,424. Blacks was 1,476. Caucasian was 5,672. Hispanic was 3,260. Others unknown, no code, was 360. At that particular time we had the male - was 11,383. Females was 6,236. This was unknowing. They had 259 unknowing. And what I asked the president of Local 2 to give me a minority breakdown of 1994. Not only the year of '94, but to follow up on it--'94, '95, '96 and beyond, so we can keep up. We felt at that particular time we only had 1,476 Blacks in the union. And on the staff here in 1994, the year of 1994, what I'm talking about the staff - we only had two Blacks, one male and one female. You have on the staff 30 pro, 34. That mean you have 32 people with only two Afro Americans. And I want a breakdown. I felt that we been trying to



get back to even up, to put - and not only we want Blacks on staff, we want Blacks in the union. So we can get support from the black community. That's what we need and we want. Breakdown and come back racism, and we have to help to organize the hotel and restaurant in San Francisco badly needed, needs to be organized, and to - and to organize these places we need to work together. We need to build our union. I also support that - I also told him that you need to educate your shop stewards. You need to educate your executive board members and also educate your staff how to come back and fight this racism that is very much alive in Local 2. And you can see by the minority breakdown. So we wants to have these minority breakdowns so we can move in and be, and help to organize these hotels and restaurant and bars, whatever you got, and we don't have too many even. The last time I see'd a lot of Afro American females was during the time when Local 283, room cleaners, and I fought for them to get meals, and the mistreatment and the union refused to fight hard for them when they get discharged, and these are thing that I'm, will propose. These, we wants to tighten up the rank and file, its power. Work together, and you can't have race discrimination. I told them about the grammas and reserved in early or the late '50s at Louisiana. And the packinghouse union had a strike with the sugar refinery. And the representatives of the united packinghouse workers knew me because I spoke at the anniversary, see, down south the union have every year an anniversary at someone's church in the community. Oh, they have heard me spoke, and the representative from the united packinghouse workers' union come over and asked Brother Nelson, which was the president, Andrew Steve Nelson, could Brother Brown be an assistant to us to go down and grammas and reserve. I spoke at grammas at 1:00 o'clock and



reserve at 3:00. When I first went there, we had signs, ladies here, colored ladies over here, water fountain, colored here, white there. They were setting separate in the union hall. And I know then that the boss know and anybody with any understanding, common sense, know they was not, was not together. You don't win strikes separated with signs say we separate. And the issue that I talked about to educate the striking brothers and sisters who attend the meeting, I emphasize on the pork chop issue. You need unity. If you want to win this contract, you want to go back to work, the pork chop issue is, is the economic issue. Decent food, decent houses, decent health, decent education for your kids. What did you [inaudible] to obtain that and to achieve it and become victorious you have to be together. Pork chop issue. You cannot win it when racism exists among you. And finally one day I went back and I was surprised, shocked, I looked - sign on the door - ladies' restroom. The other was no sign that it had men, women. All was setting from each other. I looked over on the white side and I saw black sisters and brothers. Looked on the white side, I saw - or looked on the white - I saw white sisters and brothers. They all was mixed in, blend in together. And it shocked me. And I went down to the next one at 3:00 o'clock, [inaudible] same thing. I say we [inaudible], we kept [inaudible] pork chop issue. I say it's not the struggle for yourselves, but it's the struggle for your children and the future of your children, and then about three weeks later the sugar refinery refine has signed a contract with united packers union, packing house union. It was - unity was the key to their success. Racism, the boss used that against the workers, and I was telling that to [inaudible] about the hotel workers here, in San Francisco, it's the culinary. It's the tourist industry, the biggest industry we got for poor working people here, and



they going to be more hotels, be more restaurants, be more clubs, but the union got to do the job within, and I say you must educate your shop stewards on the job, you must educate your executive board, and you must educate your staff. Unity, the rank and file, is the power of the union. The rank and file is the key. Talk on trade union democracy. Trade union democracy is your key. United principle. United, stand up, forefront. Build caucus within your union. Build a rank and file. Democracy, principle, trade union democracy. Together we will win. Thank you kindly.