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LEE BROWN

INTERVIEW of LEE BROWN
(BY RLA?)

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Lee Brown 10/27/95

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Interview with Lee Brown, 10/27/95

I: I have that. Let me make sure. OK, today is Friday, October 27, 1995. This is interview with Brother Lee Brown. OK. Today I wanted to ask you a little bit about your wife, Grace Oliver Brown. Maybe you could tell me how you all first met and came to get married.

R: Yeah. I first met Grace at the Fairmont Hotel. She was working there. I also was working there.

I: So this was in 19- , early Sixties?

R: During the Six- - I don't know the exact date, but during in the Sixties.

I: Cuz you worked there up until 1963, something like that.

R: Yeah. Then I left there.

I: Then you left and went over to the . . .

R: The Jack Tarr Hotel.

I: OK.

R: Yeah. I worked - we got together around about - we got acquainted with each other about in the Sixties, or the - or the late Fifties, early Sixties, somewhere along in that that she and I become very friendly because in the cafeteria they had a lady know me, one of the uh, one of the cashiers [inaudible]. She knew me. She and I used to talk, and I introduced her to Grace, my friend, and they had - you had to get those meal books, you know? And she told me to tell Grace she don't have to worry. As long as she's my friend, it's coming, pick up a meal and just go on and forget about taking out the book cuz she had to buy books, so I did

Grace Oliver

- cuz she knew me so she, she wasn't - she was from German, this young lady, cuz she hasn't been here. She says she was only going to stay here six months. And she wasn't lying, she say. Then I give her her book, One Hundred Years of Lynching. Then she read it, and she say, "How can you people go through all this?" Said one of those things. We discussed during one time of rest period, we sit out and discussed the issue because she said, when she got here, she stopped in Canada. I think they kept them there a month. Give them orientation and they tell them to stay away from so-called Negro, the Negro, because you get in trouble and you won't get your, your citizenship.

I: Oh, yeah?

R: That's what she told me. She said that's what they used to tell her. And she - she read the book. I told her, "You keep it." She say, "But I'm only going to stay here six months because I can't stand this," because she said, "when I was in," when she was over in German she had a soldier, used to bring her and her mother silk stocking, candy and food. She says if it wouldn't have been for him, she don't know if they would had a harder time surviving. So she and I got very friendly, and my wife and I, Grace. So we sit out and talk on Grace, and we talk. And so after Grace used to hear me talking, and she got concerned in trade union activity. I was telling her about the labor movement, you know?

I: Who is this you were telling this to?

R: Grace Oliver.

I: To Grace, OK.

R: Yeah, that was Grace. Yeah.

I: But she was not involved originally in the labor movement?

R: [inaudible] She and I start.

I: Till she met you.

R: Met me, yeah, right.

I: What was her, what was her work at the hotel? What did she do?

R: She was house cleaner.

I: House cleaner, and . . .

R: A room cleaner what you call it.

I: OK.

R: A maid or room cleaner.

I: And what were you doing there? What was your role?

R: I first worked - I first got there I was a dishwasher at night.

That's when I went on the union, sent me, that's what Miss Ward, the [inaudible] I had - but Johnny [inaudible]. He was the steward of the - [inaudible] - well, he put me on. He say, "Well, I can put you on till we get opening for dishwasher." I say, "Yeah, I take that [inaudible]," because I just came from New Orleans, and they give me a letter to come . . .

I: Right.

R: . . . to Local 110. That was on, that was on Sixth Street there. And Sam Daniels the one that called Mr. Ward and asked could he put me to work. And then a guy, he was - he was a dispatcher down there too, they call it, Willie Bible. The late Willie Bible. They both were - Sam Daniels was there too. He [inaudible]. And they put me on. I worked maybe no more than a couple weeks as a dishwasher working in the dish room. Then Mr. Ward say, "Well, I got an opening. Do you want to be a night porter, work?" I say, "Oh, yeah. I'm trying," I just got there and I'm trying to [inaudible] I was lucky to get a place to stay in the Bayview with a friend's

son. Joe Holmes, which was a longshoreman. So he put me to work. I was the - started from dishwasher to night, to night porter. Then from then on I was a ice man. Then I - then I become a shop steward. I told the brothers that, to sign the name on this paper. I got a sheet of paper, and I told them to sign it, and I brought it back to the union, to the late Sam Daniels. And they elect me for the shop steward. Send, send a letter into Mr. Ward, in the steward department, to let him know that I been elected by the night porters to represent them on the job.

I: So you were the first black shop steward . . .

R: [inaudible]

I: At the Fairmont.

R: At the Fairmont hotel.

I: In the hotel industry.

R: In the hotel industry there 'cause Carl Bloyce wants to interview me.

I: Carl Bloyce?

R: Carl Bloyce, yeah, cuz he did a couple of interviews. But the point about . . .

I: What year was that about? When you were elected shop steward? Do you remember? More or less?

R: [inaudible] It must be around '60-, say, about close between '65 or '70s, along that. I have all that.

I: OK, we can find it later. And get the exact date.

R: Yeah, I can get that date.

I: So when you met Grace Oliver,

R: Yeah.

I: now, now long had she been working there?

R: I don't know exactly. She was working there - I think she was working there - about the time - I think she come there in the Sixties, if I'm not - I'm not sure, but . . .

I: OK.

R: Where in the Sixties, [inaudible].

I: Yeah. So what appealed to her about you? What did you . . .

R: Sit down talking about trade union, the [inaudible] she had, children, and I used to tell her about . . .

I: She had children?

R: Yes.

I: How many children?

R: Let me see [inaudible]. I think she got five. She had three girls, three - during that time - I think it was six that she had. Larry, Jerry, and Alfred and Luke. And three - she had seven children.

I: Seven children.

R: Three girls, four boys.

I: And four boys, OK.

R: Yeah.

I: The children were - they were young children, or they . . . in the house or they were out on their own?

R: No, they were not on their own. Some of them going to school, and some worked in, you know, like around the store, grocery.

I: Yeah.

R: Most of them was going to school who wanted to go. Then she was glad that she met me cuz I help her the best I could.

I: You helped her with that.

R: I help her, cuz she used to come - I used to live at 20 - up on Third Street, at 26 Third at the Royal Hotel, and she would come. We got to be friends, and she would come. Sometimes she would cook meals and bring - but we become good friends - quite natural, I know she wanted somebody to help her with the children, cuz that wasn't no problem to me because I helped raise one family in New Orleans [inaudible]. Her name Rose [inaudible]. I think I got . . .

I: She got that [inaudible].

R: Yeah, and so Grace and I was very close together, and she become active after she start talking to me about - she - she work - I think, I, I think she got [inaudible] where she worked in the Mark Hopkins. Yeah, I think I told you - after she left the Fairmont, she went in the Mark Hopkins.

I: The Mark Hopkins?

R: Mark Hopkins Hotel, yes.

I: OK.

R: You know, [inaudible], I'm breaking down. Like I tell them at meetings, don't be concerned the way I'm saying it. Be concerned what I'm saying. That's important [laughs]. And we was talking about, and she got very active in the cafeteria. They was feeding the room cleaners the food that was left over. They would bring it in the cafeteria to give the room cleaners the food left over, or precooked, maybe it may be two days or whatever it was. And she was telling me about it. And I told her, told her what to do. I suggest what she do, I let her think for herself. I suggest that she should tell your room cleaners to bring a brown bag they food

from home and don't eat that food. Yeah. So they started that, and that was very successful. And they attacked [inaudible], which they did file one time, but I went to [inaudible], to Judge Joe Pilatti, because I was on the local joint board, and I was known in the union then because they know I was very active, so I talked to Joe and Joe say, "Oh, yeah, we're gonna put her back on to work, because that's just union activity." They can't [inaudible]. Joe used to be a big stick. He was the head of the joint board. He was a . . .

I: Of what?

R: The joint board.

I: Oh, the joint board. OK.

R: The local joint board.

I: And his name is Joe?

R: Joe Pilatti.

I: Joe Pilatti.

R: Yeah, he used to swing a big club there in the trade union, which he got five year contract, which wasn't too good.

I: So what did he do with Grace then? He . . .

R: He went to - see, after you get fired, you got to file grievance [inaudible] one, two, and three. Then you have two [inaudible] from the company, two from the union, and one the uh, what you call the - oh, I used to know all that. The negotiator, something . . .

I: Arbitrator.

R: Arbi-, yeah, that's the word. The arbitrator. That's what it was. He's still living [inaudible], and so the arbitrator, they - the union representative rule, and the company [inaudible], but the arbitrator ruled.

I: Right.

R: Yeah, so she won, got reinstated.

I: So they had fired - so they had fired Grace when she did this action at the Mark Hopkins.

R: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

I: They fired her and you went to arbitration.

R: Went to arbitration.

I: Mm hmm. And she won.

R: Right. They turned around and fired her again. And they - they didn't know that she had seizure, you know . . .

I: Seizures.

R: Yeah.

I: Oh, yeah.

R: When you fall out, you - and they said - one of the supervisors say that they find her laying behind the bed, you know, side where she's working. [inaudible] you need to have that if you've been drinking, you know? Don't stop something like that. And the manager supervisors say she was drunk, so they did charge her again. Got her reinstated because on this past practice for a union activity, she was reinstated again. They kept on harassing, trying to fire her. They fired her again the third time. She was reinstated again, you know, they used - the union - old Joe Pillati was smart, he being the big wheel. They wasn't gonna argue with him because he wielded the stick over all these hotels. So they put her back again. So the next time they fired her, and they put a slip for her to return. I say, "No, they oughta do worse than that. Just damn that, that job. Don't go back there. Not [inaudible]." Then I taken her down. She get

the - to get uh - to get the SSI. And that she called - and get disability, Social Security, because they'll leave you a - because if you sick and [inaudible] you can get on disabled. And also you could get your SSI.

I: Right.

R: Yeah. The doctor, too, I got all that. So I told the - and that's what started, and she and I kept - and I started to, you know, we come relationship, and she used to come to my house. And she used to bring me meals. Very good. She seemed to be a very good woman. And now every Christmas we would give a dance at the Fairmont, the - Ben Swig, the old man himself, would give a big Christmas party. And she liked to dance. I see'd her. Not me. I - I tried to dance, but she was doing the Jerk or something. Even Mr. Swig was clapping. [laughs] Nobody seen nobody. And she had on a black dress. See, that got to be too [inaudible]. She was shy to save myself. She looked sharp there, Brother. And we start - along we finally got together and got to talking, and thinking, you know. I was helping her with her kids, even talked to the kids, tried to get them to straighten up. Some of them did, you know, I [inaudible], and we finally - we finally got married.

I: Yeah, that was a . . . got married on . . .

R: Yeah, I went and got the license.

I: Oh, you just had the license.

R: Yeah, yeah.

I: January 21.

R: Yeah, that was Seventy-what?

I: 1976.

R: '76. So we must have got the ring between that. Looked like it was four years, in there somewhere.

I: Mm hmm.

R: Yeah, that's when we got married.

I: Yeah. OK. So, now, when you got married, she was - she was - then she was, she was [inaudible], she had gotten on - she was on disability?

R: Yeah, she get - I made it so she got on disability.

I: She was on disability. So she . . .

R: She wasn't working no more.

I: wasn't working then.

R: Wasn't no more. She was getting - 'cause, see, every time, when she went to get her SSI, we went on Mission Street. I'll give you the address. They had to sign up, and I told her always, you know, don't go there like some people go there, with one damned shoe or blue sock and green one, or a red one. Go there, you know, looking neat. Dress well. And she went there. You know, I [inaudible] because I'd been meeting people through my negotiating in the South and the way how to approach people if you want to, you know, be successful. You look successful. And I went there with the lady, and we got to talking. I explained some things to her that Grace didn't quite catch on, cuz I had a little experience. And the lady told her, say, "Don't you worry. I'm going to put you in right away." That's what she told her. I don't know if she told [inaudible], you know, I was there observing, because I had so many damned buttons on [laughs]. They knew I was coming. [inaudible] say, "We don't want no trouble." And we

got married. We got married and we had long - I think we been knowing each other about, about twenty years [inaudible], I think, so long . . .

I: A long time.

R: a long period of time, and we got along good. I never had to hit her. We never did have, you know, we had some little conflicts, arguments, family. But all that was over with. She was a jealous woman. Because she knew - I told her I was friendly people. One thing she actually got used to is people that used to call me up. My first wife in New Orleans used to call. My second wife here used to call me, Moselle. That was my first wife. She and I quit. And my wife in New Orleans. Well, I wasn't married to the one in New Orleans. That was common law.

I: Rose.

R: Rose. That was my - in Louisiana it's the same as a wife. It's common law. They recognize. You got to take a common law wife in New Orleans. You stay with her six months, that's your wife.

I: Yeah.

R: Legal. That's the law there, which is the same - that piece of paper don't mean no difference. You can have ten pieces of paper. You want to do the right thing, you can do it.

I: Mm hmm.

R: So. Well, ask me more questions about Grace and about . . .

I: Tell me, so Grace - tell me a little bit more about . . .

R: OK.

I: So she worked there after you met and started going together in the late Sixties, I guess it would have been then. So she was working at -

Moselle
2nd wife

she worked there for a number of more years. But by the time you got married, she was on disability . .

R: She had retired. Yeah. Yeah.

I: [inaudible]

R: No, she had retired.

I: Was she active in any way after she retired? I mean did she continue to work in community work or . . .

R: You mean work in labor?

I: Yeah. What did she . . .

R: [inaudible] she. No, she used to go to some community meetings, I think. I think she went to the union. And I'm trying to think, and I know she was church active. She got singing in the choir. Down there on uh - on Third, I believe the name of that street that you - [inaudible]. Did you ever get - I think you got this.

I: Yeah, I got this. Yeah, I got that. [inaudible] in my life. I got that. Now, she was active in the church. Now, how did you feel about that, not being a particularly religious man?

R: Well, I - you know, these - keep down conflict. We got along good.

I: [laughs]

R: Tell her the issues, you know? Even my, my first wife I married here, she was active in church at Newhall Street, and she's asking me about, "Are you gonna send a donation to the pastor?" I said, "No way, Jose." I didn't send him nothing.

I: Wait a minute. Who's your first - this is your first wife, you say, here in San Francisco.

Murella?

R: That's my first wife. Moselle.

I: Moselle. What's the last name? Moselle what?

R: Moselle - Moselle May [inaudible].

I: Mayfield.

R: Mayfield. She was a Mayfield.

I: How long were you married to her?

R: Maybe two, three years, I don't know.

I: So that was when you first arrived here in San Francisco?

R: Yeah. Yeah.

I: OK.

R: Sam Daniels [inaudible].

I: How did you meet her?

R: She was belonged to the union too, but I didn't meet her on the job. She was working at something like the Holiday Inn place. So [inaudible] meet Moselle. I'm trying to think. I met her - I think I met her up on Third Street at her former husband, he's a run a barbecue cafe where he sell barbecue. Mayfield. And she and I got to talking, and she had another friend with her, a lady friend, who was roommates with her, [inaudible]. And I said, as we talking, Mayfield was separated because Mayfield was married again, and I asked her [inaudible] see to getting home? She said, "Yeah," her and her friend, so we got together then, and I think we stayed together - I don't think I put too much on Mayfield. I don't think I have . . .

I: No, this is the first time I'm hearing about it.

R: Well, that wasn't no big deal. That wasn't too long [inaudible].

I: How come you broke up?

Handwritten notes on a yellow sticky note:
A/so
1. 12
Moselle

R: Well, I mean, it was some things I didn't like, and I [inaudible] think she was, you know, it's one of these things that - when I used to go to, we used to go to the supermarket together, instead of asking me - I'm a person, I didn't like the - I don't know whether there's anything to it. I didn't like the attitude. I'm pushing the cart, the buggy, food whatever, and instead of she asking me what do I want, then she asks [inaudible] Candy, "What you want, Candy?"

I: Who's Candy?

R: The woman, the woman, the lady, the roommate when I first met her, when she's married. I met her up on, up on the hill, way up there close to the Navy base there. Up on the hill. So I didn't like that too well. Sam Daniels and I had a discussion about it, and that was my business agent then. He was very much concerned my welfare here because the president in New Orleans had sent him a letter too, you know, telling about some of my problems I had, you know, so he worked it out. He say he didn't think that was right for Candy to be living there and we getting on, causing, you know, conflict. So he come and talked to Candy. Then Moselle - then Candy agreed that she would move. She said right, cuz I don't think I, I was here when he got here, but that's not the point. They married now. Now I don't think I need to be here. But Moselle got angry. So she, "Well, if Candy going, I'm going." "Well," I say, "there's the door, Sister. Get to stepping."

I: So Candy was living with you after you got married to Moselle?

R: Yeah, for a while, yeah, on [inaudible] Street, and . . .

I: On LaSalle Street.

R: Yeah. Right off of Third. Was right near up that damned - she telling - she wasn't [inaudible] the things she should be asking both what you all would like to have. That's the way, but, you know, she, some people just don't think that way. Well, I think she should ask her husband, too, or say, "Candy, what you and Brown would like?" Like that. Like Grace used to do.

I: Yeah.

R: Grace and I used to go shopping there on Eddy at this hear Food Land, where we go. She - we would be collecting. And another thing, Grace was [inaudible] - that she would buy my clothes, even my, my shorts and suits. One time she went to Howard, used to be on Market. I don't know if you know about Howard's store. And she told me, give me a, a slip. I thought she was kidding. She say, "Go to Howard. I got something there for you." I went there. She had two damned suits they had put up, so I had to get [inaudible] and everything, and she went to another store and bought me a suit. And I got the corduroy. I don't like - it's too hot to wear corduroy. She got that from Roy Chester right on Third Street. I knew Roy Chester when he was on the right side of the street, and then he moved over on Mission to the left side. Where you get all them large clothes.

I: Roy Chester.

R: I met the old man, Roy Chester, himself. Him and I went, when I used to go there, I'd watch - Johnny Ward used to trade to him. I opened up an account there, but I never did use it. Sam Daniel opened me one at Howard's. I didn't use it because I didn't believe in, in buying on credit. Then they rip you off. Cuz that was - Elijah Muhamad used to say all the

time, "Don't buy on credit," cuz I - I [inaudible] too, you got interest, charge you interest, late charges, and whatever. They have three different things they could hook you on. So I - I didn't even use them accounts. That one at Roy Chester, I didn't use that myself. **[Note: When he says Roy Chester, he's referring to a store for large men called Rochester]** Or my wife went there. She paid cash. I got a corduroy suit [inaudible].

I: Yeah, yeah.

R: But I don't know if I done got too large for it. I [inaudible] put on no corduroy. But she used to buy - even when she passed there, at this here place, what they deliver, what you call them, brown trucks.

I: UPS.

R: UPS. And I got [inaudible] with [inaudible]. I got a card. I was living on 22nd and Third, and they say, "Come up. You got a package." Delivery man delivered, he left for me to come up there. I said, "I ain't ordered nothing." But I'm going to see if they got a package for you. Shit, I went up there to see. I signed, give me a [inaudible], brought it back home, opened, it had three pair of trousers. That was her la- - I didn't now it was coming. She bought my shirts, bought my shoes. Everything. She was very [inaudible], shop. I used to go with her to shop. But she, she helped me out a whole lot. Yeah, and she's very much missed, like it say on here. She very much missing. She was very good. And we didn't have too much [inaudible]. She was a little bit jealous. I don't know why, 'cause, people, the ladies, everybody would talk, but I was very friendly, you know? Especially when you dealing with people, you can't - but she learned, she learned.

I: Yeah.

R: Yeah, cuz my wife [inaudible] in New Orleans, Rose told her, said, "Brown know a lot of people. He's very friendly." And so that stopped that.

I: How did she feel about - now, you were in the Party at this time, and the you were in the ADNIP party.

R: Yeah. The ADNIP Party, that first . .

I: How did she feel about your political work in the Communist Party?

R: Well, let me see. I was - first, I was in the Communist Party, whereas she wasn't too cool about, about that. See? And she say - one time we discussed, she and I - I say, "Well, the Communist Party - I mean they don't," everything, I mean the - the what do you call it? The Federal Bureau Investigate, the FBI, don't bother us. "Well," she say, "because you all ain't doing nothing." Well, she . .

I: [laughs]

R: [inaudible] ain't doing nothing.

I: Uh huh.

R: But she didn't like for me being in there 'cause I be gone a lot of times.

I: Gone a lot.

R: Yeah. And another one was, what else did we say?

I: What did she mean when she said you all weren't doing nothing?. What did she think you ought to be doing?

R: You know, fighting around issues like they should be. A lot of time we wasn't doing what we, what the program and the principles said about the Party. We still had to come back to racism within the Party.

Grave + CP
feelings about

Now, I know that myself, even from the beginning. They didn't call it racism. Then they give it a nice word. Chauvinism, whatever that's supposed to be. Chauvinism or chauvinism. I'm not sure whatever the hell it was. And when I got in the ADNIP Party she was afraid because she said that we was exposing ourself to. Even the Chief of Police, to Cahill, say, "I don't know," say every time we go out, we see Al Sultan and his troops. That we don't bother them. Look like they bothering us everywhere we go. Well, we wasn't bothering them. Only time they had a meeting down by the hall, Chester's, and we demonstrated, and that's when Sam Jordan was running for Mayor, so Sam Jordan was running for Mayor, and we had a demonstration. A young lady by the name of - let's see. She was - it something that went down. And Chief Cahill got there to speak. And Sam was out there. Her name was uh - a young lady from New York. I sure hate to see her leave. Her name was Tracy. You ever heard anything about Tracy?

I: No.

R: Young sister, and she was a helluva activist.

I: Now, did you know Sam Jordan?

R: Yeah, yeah.

I: Did you know him very well or . . .

R: I go to his place.

I: Did you go to his place out on Third Street?

R: Yeah. When he the mayor of butcher town.

I: The mayor of butcher town, huh?

R: Yeah. I take it - I taken Ward, the guy from the Fairmont, the steward. He was the chief steward at Fairmont, and I taken him there one

night, and introduced him to Sam, so Sam introduced him there. The place was packed. I think it was a Friday night. So Ward liked to drink that Beefeater's [laughs], Beefeater's gin. Him and I got along good. They say - he used to be in the marine cooks and steward.

I: Yeah.

R: Yeah.

I: Yeah. What happened to - you talked about - one of the documents we have is about the fire that happened at the house where you and Grace lived.

R: Didn't I give it to you?

I: Yeah, but why don't you just tell it to me though? I have it written up. Just sorta tell me what happened and what - I mean if you want to pull it out, I got it here.

R: Yeah, I wanted to know - well, you got the date on it. [inaudible] that on there.

I: Well, actually it's not.

R: It should be on there. That's not it though. You must have put it - where you put that [inaudible].

I: Here it is. It's about the fire.

R: Are you sure that's about our fire?

I: Statement on the fire.

R: There's another one.

I: [inaudible]

R: Let me see. [inaudible] look through there. That's [inaudible].

I: Statement on the fire. I think that's the same thing.

R: Same thing. Sure. Statement on - that's the same thing.

File

I: [inaudible] activities. Yeah, it's the same thing. They just copied over . . .

R: [inaudible] raised [inaudible] my life.

I: But it was on three or four o'clock in the morning.

R: Right, right. And I was . . .

I: January 2nd, it says.

R: Yeah.

I: It happened. What year was that, do you know?

R: No.

I: It doesn't have a year down there.

R: [inaudible] And that was - a young lady was passing there, and she happened to see the flame, and she was hollering, some Caucasian woman [inaudible], and she went to hollering, and she woke us up. And the place was full of smoke, and Grace was starting out where the fire was, you know, she was ill. Then she'd got ill, was going to the hospital, and two of the [inaudible] was up - before I could get out and get - good thing I always - I'm the only one had lights, see, cuz all the lights had went out in the fire, and I still [inaudible]. And they - all the lights had went out, and I happened to have a light. And they was hollering to me, come knock on the door, so they said they'd taken Grace across the street and set her down by the store, because she would have got burned up dead if some guy - cuz she was going right toward the fire.

I: Toward the fire.

R: [inaudible] asleep and sick, and got upset, it emotion. And she was setting across, across the street. I think the fire, yeah, from 3:00 and 4:00.

fire at hour

I: Yeah, it says at 3:00 and 4:00 in the morning.

R: Yeah.

I: So was, was anybody hurt in the fire?

R: No, wasn't nobody hurt.

I: Nobody was hurt. Do you think the fire was set?

R: That's what I believe. And then - and after that it got set again in the same damned place.

I: Same place. Who do you think set it?

R: Well, I couldn't prove it, but I think one of them, they still alive. I don't want to say who said it, but I have a opinion. I think it was the man that used to own the damned place.

I: Oh.

R: Because he's - they claim he set his house on fire.

I: Oh, yeah? So, yeah, well, that's . . .

R: [inaudible] on drugs.

I: because of the insurance. Oh, no. You think it was because he was on drugs or because of the insurance?

R: Insurance. Well, he was on - [inaudible] you need money, you do anything.

I: Right.

R: Yeah, but, see, the reason I know the man wasn't too cool - he used to bring - he used to - he was trying to buy it then. He was the landlord, until the other landlord [inaudible] bought it. He went and got it 'cause this man couldn't keep up the note. So the reason I know the man wasn't too cool, he brought his little children, and I asked - the girl was about twelve years old. His boy was about eight. Then he had another

little bitty one. And he had them out sweeping, you know, they were - you know how kids are? The boy must be too [inaudible] to sweep, and he take the broom, hit him across the head with the broom. I said, "Man, don't you know better?" I happened to be looking down. I was upside, and I looked. And I said, "Man, now, you know better than to hit that child with that broom across the head." That was his own child. I said - I couldn't stand it. I said, "Man, you don't - you don't do nothing like that. You ought be throwed under the jail." Yeah.

I: [inaudible] hang onto this [inaudible].

R: Yeah, hang on that. And I had to get on his ass. He was off, Man, shooting down in the basement, and I sent a letter. I think you may have see'd the letter that I sent to Badina. After Badina turned or bought it, was buying it, then he - he hired him for the manager.

I: Oh, he did, huh?

R: Yes, and I couldn't stand that shit.

I: Yeah.

R: Let me see. What did they - A Tribute to Grace.

I: A Tribute to Grace. Yeah, I have that.

R: You got that [inaudible].

I: You and Grace were married for ten years, then, and then . . .

R: Maybe so.

I: Yeah, cuz she died in 1986.

R: Yeah, 'cause I think we've been together for about, knowing each other, maybe about ten, a little better than, but for a while, a long time. I knowed her for a long time. But you can find something [inaudible] in there.

I: Now, was she - so is she ill? What was . . .

R: I see, she was . . .

I: Just before her death?

R: Yeah. She had what you call uh - the lung. Through smoking.

That's what kept - see, the doctor [inaudible].

I: Lung cancer?

R: Lung cancer.

I: She had lung cancer.

R: Yeah.

I: Mm hmm.

R: See, the doctor used to tell her - Dr. Franken used to tell her, "Lay off that smoking, Grace." See, that's what killed my common wife in New Orleans.

I: Rose?

R: Smoking, yeah.

I: Mmm.

R: That cancer - and I tried to get - I told Dr. Coleman about it. Get to - go get the second opinion, and Dr. Coleman said, "Yeah, she should get a second opinion." I was thinking about trying to get her to Cuba. But they say they got good doctors. Somebody told me they got a doctor here, somewhere, must be across the Bay. Say maybe you can get over there, to study - maybe not to cure, but to steady, prolong her life. She probably would have been well if she'd a quit smoking, she could have last a long damned time. That woman used to smoke three and four carton a month. And you tried to - [inaudible] try to collaborate with her. She [inaudible] I had to live, live there, and I wanted to live in peace, so I bought the

damned cigarette. If I hadn't a bought it, hell, I wouldn't have been staying in the damned house. She'd a went out and got them herself. So I stopped her from drinking. That's one good damned thing. She stopped that alcohol. I got her on that, but I fought like hell to stop her from that damned smoking. And that's what killed her, that cancer. At least I believe that's what killed her. [inaudible] Cuz you can fight any kind of sickness if you fight it. If she'd a quit a smoking soon, Dr. Franklin would have told her, I believe she woulda - and taken her medication. I know lung cancer's hard, but you can overcome anything if you've got faith to fight. Don't nobody tell you you can't cure things. People with all kinds - one man died 97 years of age. They take [inaudible] autopsy over it. Goddam, he had everything. How in the hell they tried to figure how in the hell did he live. Determined to live. Look forward they self. Like I'm looking forward to 120. Going to make it. Shit, if things ain't right, I'm going to make - stay a little longer.

I: [laughs]

R: Man got power, Brother. You got to fight it. But these people [inaudible] all this propaganda and bullshit, makes you think - the main thing is stay out of these damn hospitals and doctors. You got - some doctors you got to have confidence to talk to you. I say a patient is doctor. Got to have good relationship. But don't let - these doctors are out to make money. How do they make money? Off sickness. And they gonna get you. The spend all that money bullshitting and tell you - all doctors ain't bad. They make our your, they diagnose your case, write out your prescription, take them to the pharmacy, and the pharmacy take a look. Now, some of that medication they give you, Brother, make you sicker than what you

are. They're like that doctor telling me, over there when I - that Chinese doctor gonna tell me over there, he's over there in Dr. Coleman's office, building, he gonna tell me, "Oh, [inaudible] you got - the x-ray show you got something on your lung." I say, "What you say?" "I'm going to have to take a needle, and [inaudible] and draw the fluid out." I say, "What you say, Doctor?" I wanted to make sure what he say. He say, "I gotta stick a needle on - you got fluid on your lung." I say, "You say fluid?" I - they gonna stick a needle in there, it gonna stay on me. And he said, "No [laughs]." Those x-rays don't tell the truth all the time, 'cause the reason I know they lying - I went to Kaiser. I gone to Kaiser and they never find nothing on my lung. Now, you got to watch it. If it's on there, goddam, they're gonna stay on there. And I feel good like a champ. Gotta push on.

I: So Grace died of lung cancer.

R: Lung cancer.

I: She died on January 13th . .

R: Yeah.

I: '86.

R: At the General Hospital.

I: At the General Hospital.

R: Right.

I: Had the service on January 16th.

R: Yeah, on [inaudible] Street.

I: At the Metropolitan Baptist Church.

R: That's right.

I: And she was buried out at Colma, huh?

R: Yeah.

I: Olivette Memorial Park?

R: Yeah, I spoke at the funeral.

I: And you spoke, and this statement, Tribute to Grace, is that what you spoke?

R: I don't think we put that down, what I spoke.

I: No, this says, "We're here to pay tribute to Lee Brown." You paid tribute to her, so that's not what you said at the funeral.

R: Oh, yeah. Tribute to Lee Brown. I know I ain't [inaudible] my damned eyesight, [inaudible], I don't know what I put it exactly. I had it somewhere.

I: Yeah. Well, maybe we can find that . . .

R: Yeah, we can find that Tribute [inaudible].

I: OK, I'm going to stop the tape here.

Lee Brown 11/13/95

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Peace + Freedom
Party

Lee Brown, 11/13/95

I: So today is Monday, November 13th, 1995. This is an interview with Lee Brown. How about telling me some about your involvement with the Peace and Freedom Party?

R: Yeah. I first - I first got involved with the Peace and Freedom Party when Edward Cleveland [he means Eldridge Cleaver] was running for the President of the United States.

I: This is when Eldridge Cleaver was running, yeah.

R: Eldridge Cleaver running for President of the United States on the Peace and Freedom Party. And I happened to talk to his wife, Kathleen Cleaver, and she asked me about joining the Peace and Freedom Party. So that's why - from then on, I say, well, I would think about it. Then, later on, I don't know exactly how long, maybe a couple months maybe or so, I joined the Peace and Freedom Party. I left the Democratic Party and got into Peace and Freedom Party. Then I . . .

I: But you were still a member of the Communist Party through this too, right?

R: Yeah, right.

I: OK.

R: Right.

I: What persuaded you to join the Peace and Freedom Party.

R: Well, I was dissatisfied with the Democrats Party because when I left Los Angeles, in 1944, I went down south to New Orleans, went back to New Orleans, to do some trade union organizing down there, and I went to - I used to - I registered under - I was a Democrat before I went back, and

I was registered, and I last vote, I voted for Roosevelt, and when we had them tin, them tin boxes. And I taken all my vacation. By the end of vacation I went back south to - and I went to register, I brought, I told them, I showed him my ID, everything. And, well, he say you got to fill out the paper. Now, the paper, the form was, you had to give your mother's name, your father's name, where you was born at. I was born right there in New Orleans, [inaudible], very simple. And when you fill it out, you tell him what day is your birthday, and before that - when I fill that out, I take it up to him, you know, to the registration. And he look at it, say, "Oh, you didn't make it." Well, I say, "What is wrong?" So I say, I come back, give him another form. So [inaudible]. I went there sixteen times before I finished. I wouldn't have did that if I haven't called in Dr. O[inaudible] Johnson. He used to teach school at the [inaudible] University there in New Orleans. he as - during that time he was head - he was head of the local civil rights congress there, and I told him, explained it to him about it. So he went down there with me. And the guy turned me down that day again, but he didn't know Dr. Johnson was with me, and Dr. Johnson went up and questioned that, what was wrong, what qualifies you to register because, see, Dr. Johnson said he know people couldn't even read and write, to write, were white, and they had proof that one man did come up. His name was Nick Sutton. Where he witnessed that he couldn't even read or write. But yet and still he was registered. And so Dr. Johnson was going to attack things like that. So that day he didn't register me, so I went back again. I went back by myself. Dr. Johnson, "Now, you go back by yourself." So I went back and got the - he give me the form, and I fill it out, same damn way I been filling it out. I know my father and mother's

name, where they was born, where I was born, the place I was born at, birth date. Hell, I still think of that. The fifth day, the fifth, I mean the fifth month, the 28th day, the year 1921. I put that down. They was there. Well, he looked at me. He probably realized that he, that Dr. Johnson spoke to him about it. And he reach - I seen him, he turned around, he reached and got the big book, why he said [inaudible], and he told me, "Sign your name here." Well, I said to myself, 'I got it.' But I told him, during the time I was still going, I said, "You're not going to stop me, 'cause next time I'm going to bring my lunch, until I get registered." I say, "You're not going to wear me out." I said, "I already was registered vote as a Democrat." I say, "What's wrong with you people here?" I say, "I register - I registered in Los Angeles, didn't have no problem." A lady that registered me, you know, be on the street with the card and the -

I: Yeah.

R: She registered me and I voted every time. So that was a hassle. So that made me angry. And I say, "Well, the hell [inaudible]," with the Democratic Party if I had to fight that hard to get a Democrat Party. So when I come here, I joined - before I came here I joined the Henry Wallace Party.

I: The Progressive Party.

R: The Progressive Party. And I didn't join up, but I worked . . .

I: You worked with it.

R: I worked with it in '40, 1948.

I: Yeah.

R: That's when I had the opportunity to meet Paul Robeson. I worked his security. That was when he was traveling to support Henry

Wallace and speaking, to cover the area down south in New Orleans. And I'd take him around to different newspapers, churches, community leaders, famous restaurant like Dukie Chase, and Mr. Hayes, Hayes Chicken Shack, Mr. Poach, and I had another woman. She would sell - yeah, I think she would sell gumbo. People would be standing in line on Friday. What her name? I forget her name. [inaudible] But the main thing, I - now, when I came back here, see, I came here at 19 uh, uh, '60.

I: Mm hmm.

R: And I had a transfer from the local in New Orleans because [inaudible] had changed after they throwed me out the penitentiary, wherever I - and I joined the Progressive after I met Kathleen. So I wasn't thinking about, you know, getting in, in the Peace and Freedom Party till I talked to her.

I: Talked to her, yeah.

R: Because I wasn't going to - I wasn't intending to go back. I was still in the Party for a while, because I had got out the Party here.

I: You left the Communist Party too, yeah.

R: Till Sam, Sam Gold.

I: Gold, yeah.

R: Yeah, talked me back in, see?

I: Right.

R: He'd been in too long. Asked me to come back in.

I: Yeah. How did you know Kathleen Cleaver?

R: Well, I happened to see her or be talking, you know, we just happened to meet in there at . . .

I: At Mission High School.

R: At Mission High School. And then, you know, people would be going around. When people be going, getting refreshments, and I happened to be talking. I don't know how she and I did - [inaudible] connect [inaudible]. I reckon she seen some of my buttons on [laughs].

I: Yeah, it's hard to miss the buttons, yeah.

R: Let me know where I'm coming from. Yeah, and so she started - she was very - very friendly, very nice. She give me her phone number, her home address. But I never did get around to home address. I called up a couple times.

I: Yeah.

R: Yeah. That's during the time I met Tracy Simms, from New York, was here during that time.

I: Who's Tracy Simms?

R: She was from New York. She was a youth when she worked in the Peace movement, singing. She went with us to the - to when the Chief of Police - what his name was? [inaudible] We had a demonstration. That's when Sam, Sam Jordan, was running for Mayor. His name was - the - Chief Cahill.

I: Cahill, yeah.

R: So we marched down there with him, Tracy Simms, she was leading, she was singing. She could sing. But she wasn't the most [inaudible], raised more hell, and I had to gave him the [inaudible] went dry. And I'm right behind. I used to go set down and talk to her. She be setting on it, they gave her a hard time. We used to meet here on Sutter at this El Beth - not El Beth [inaudible]. This church, I forget. The minister died, and I - but I should have all these things. So, so I stuck to the Peace

and Freedom. And, you know, I - I'm not active in, but I got to become central committee. I got all that stuff somewhere.

I: Well, what - now, so Tracy Simms was in the Peace and Freedom Party.

R: Yeah, she - either she's [inaudible]

I: Oh, she was very, OK.

R: Active.

I: Now, you told me what you didn't like about the Democratic Party, but what attracted you to the Peace and Freedom Party?

R: Well, after I started talking to Kathleen Cleaver, and I think she send me some material to talk, and she and I was talking, she - and Eldridge Cleaver was running for President. I say, "Well, help the guy." Black man running for President. I'm going to try this and see what he's talking. And I met him [inaudible] time. I met him at the - had a meeting one time, so I talked to him. And the last time I met him, I met him out there on Third Street. So he was talking a whole lot different than when I first, first met him. So that's one of the things. So I hung on. I still go and vote Peace and Freedom. [inaudible] people don't know what the hell I . . .

I: Yeah.

R: And I go over there, and I say Peace and Freedom. I go to any one of those - if you gotta - I don't know if the Peace and Freedom now is independent, but if you're independent, you should have independent machine, but I don't. I go to any one of those machines.

I: And vote what you want to, yeah.

R: And vote, yeah. They . . .

I: So what did you in the Peace and Freedom Party then?

R: Well, I was active. We meet. Then I went out for the three days at this place where we was, I - what you call it? I . .

I: Retreat?

R: Retreat. About three . .

I: This was in . . .

R: days.

I: This from January 31st to February 1st, 1981.

R Yeah. That's when Tom, after I made that helluva speech, the guy was director. He told Tom - he say we're at places where we sleep. We sleep [inaudible]. No, I think we [inaudible] for Tom, I, and Manny and his wife, and his child. And they told Tom, told Tom, the director told Tom that, you know, regard - see, Tom didn't sleep that night. He stayed on the outside. You know ,the case. But I didn't know what the damned town - and I didn't ask for it. The guy say, "Well," it wasn't too many Blacks there. They had one Black from Los Angeles, him and his wife. He was from the Party. He had a Caucasian wife. And I don't think - I think him and I was the only Blacks there at that retreat. Yeah.

I: This was at Rancho el Chorro in San Luis Obispo County. Now, you were in the workshop on the anti-Klan, anti-Nazi work.

R: Right.

I: And there was a proposal to ban the Klan.

R: Ban the Klan.

I: And what position, what happened in that meeting?

R: Well, it - won the group of progressive - I don't know what you can call them. They supposed to have been with the Peace and Freedom Party too. They brought in their resolution from San Diego somewhere.

And they wasn't for banning the Klan. They say they had the freedom of speech. I said not when nobody murdering your children, nobody, and putting hoods on their damn face. How do they have a right to go around? I say I'm opposed.

I: Mm hmm.

R: The Klan. Well, I fought like hell [inaudible]. But I don't know. I don't think that their resolution passed neither. I'm not sure. Been a while. No, you can read that . . .

I: Well, it says here that this is, this is your report.

R: Yeah.

I: You say, "After I heard the pro and con, I must report that the majority of the committee was opposed to banning the Klan."

R: Yeah.

I: "I feel that was an insult to the black community in this country. I feel glad that there were so few black people at the meeting, so they did not have to hear this racist insult against banning the Klan."

R: Correct, that's right.

I: "I want to say to those who were opposed to banning the Klan that they should look to the history of the Klan. The Klan is against every right, all human rights." That was a quote from your report.

R: That's correct.

I: So they did not, they did not vote apparently in favor of banning the Klan.

R: No. I don't think the resolution, that their resolution went through neither. I'm not sure. I think they was find some loophole.

I: So they just didn't do anything.

R: They didn't do anything. Have the option to throw . .

I: Yeah. So did you work directly in the campaign for Eldridge Cleaver?

R: No, no. That's when I just first . . .

I: That had happened before you . . .

R: He was campaigning . . .

I: came in.

R: He was campaigning before I got in. No, I didn't do any- - I don't think I did anything. I maybe voted for him after I got - because I could - see, you can vote even if you're a Democrat, you can vote for Peace and Freedom, for a candidate you like, if you want. So I think I voted, and I may pass out some literature. I don't know. I know I met Cleveland a couple times in the meeting on Market Street. He was there, the Socialist Party meeting, I met him. Talked with him. I met him about twice as a . . .

I: Mm hmm.

R: So I didn't do too much because the last time I met him, I met him on Third, and I forget what he was talking about. I think he had joined the church, the Moonie.

I: The Mormon Church, yeah.

R: Or Moonie, or somebody. Moonie, I mean what did you call that? He's a Morman.

I: Morman. He joined the Morman Church for a while.

R: Yeah, I thought he was some other.

I: So did this - did you become disillusioned with the Peace and Freedom Party when they wouldn't ban the Klan, or when they wouldn't vote to ban the Klan?

R: No, I still voted, but I wasn't active.

I: You didn't become active.

R: No.

I: You [inaudible] being active in it?

R: Yeah, when I used to attend meetings, and I find out some of them - we used to attend meetings even at the, I think at the City Hall. When I find out they was racist attitude, some of them, and I met there with them one night. I was the only brother there. And they had some Party people. Some CP people. And very few to come to my rescue. They wanted, they want to try to - they want to drown me out, didn't want to allow me to talk on issues, you know? They try to block me, but the, our Party people, they made me angry too. And I told them, I say, "Why," I didn't tell them [inaudible], but after that when we met again, I told them, I said, "Why in the hell you all didn't come to my rescue?" I was the only black man in there. And when I told the other Party people that they agreed, I was right. But hell with it. It was them, [inaudible], see, that's the trouble with some of the, our Party people. When the thing is done, it's done. You understand what I'm talking about?

I: Yeah.

R: No way. So that just put me out. If I listen at Wilson, Wilson record, but the program, I still say I'm very active [inaudible]. I like the program, but the members got me. You know, we was fighting that chauvinism also, white chauvinism.

I: Yeah.

R: And so that's one of the things [inaudible]. So I think that political situation is in the - even in committee of [inaudible], I think it's no

different than they were, was in the Party. [inaudible] mistake made. I told McHenry about it. We set up a steering committee, about thirty or forty people for the steering. You know, so the steering committee would meet and set up the agenda, you know, the programs and whatever we was going to do. And when I find out the, they called a meeting, and the only - they called - they name a little committee they called the *ad hoc* committee. I say, "What the *ad hoc* committee about?" They going to draw up the agenda. I say, "What the hell you got the steering committee for?" We supposed to have some input in the goddam thing. If you don't draw - don't get no six, seven people to lay no, draw no agenda for me to follow. Supposin' I got [inaudible] to bring up African Americans [inaudible]. Yeah, goddam, if we're going to be Party people, that's the way I feel. What the hell? They don't need to be doing it if I can't, can't fight for my people. That's the way I feel. They can call it the nationalism or whatever. They call it Black Nationalism. They ain't called it - I'm not a racist. I'm a realist. That's the way I feel. [inaudible] the way [inaudible] much conditions my people. We got a crisis. We got problem. So why in the hell, we going to be Party people, let's do it together. If goddam this, if you don't, tell me, I said, I can get my hat and get to stepping.

I: [chuckles]

R: That's right. I ain't got time for no bullshit. And I'm telling you to the truth. So we got work to do, Brother. To say it's a shame we ain't got - right here, this the worst, even, even our people, it's crazy as hell. We ain't even got a decent - nothing here decent. We ain't going to - this is where I just got this, this month or sometime, this bull . . .

I: What's this? Some

R: shit.

I: . . . [inaudible] on the Peace and Freedom Party today?

R: Yeah, they up to date.

I: They're still active.

R: Yeah, they . . .

I: Well, you know, when you look back on the Peace and Freedom Party . . .

R: They here now.

I: How do you feel about it overall, looking back on your work in the Peace and Freedom Party?

R: Well, I ain't been to none of the meetings, see. They getting so bad. The first time I met with - I mean it's a different group than the [inaudible] I learned. A different damn group. But I ain't went back. And I - and I got so much to do, I can't go back and spend all my time, and when I got working on senior issues.

I: Mm hmm.

R: Trying to work, try to mobilize and move NAACP. I'm trying to move the California Legislation Council for Older Americans. I'm trying to move the - another group. We got a national group. This candidate, they send me a list to pick out the candidates, the - the central - the national - the national central caucus, agent incorporated, a national organization for black seniors. Then I belong to the National Council of Senior Citizens. I belong to the Legislation Council of Older Americans. [inaudible] Belongs to the retired union, which I belong to SAN. But I can't . . .

I: You got a full agenda with working, doing senior work.

R: Then I try to do some [inaudible], finish educating myself, try to get my book out, get something to tell the people, what went on, because I got - I put on a lot of work, can't let that go by.

I: You retired in what year? What year was it you retired?

R: I forgot now. I got it on - I been retired, oh, about 27 years almost. I first retired on dis-, on disabled. Yeah, I was working at the Jack Tarr then.

I: So you retired from the Jack Tarr then.

R: Yeah.

I: OK. Now, when did you get involved with the NAACP here in the Bay Area?

R: Here? I got involved - cuz I already was involved with it in 1939.

I: Yeah, I know about Los Angeles. But I mean here in the Bay Area?

R: No, [inaudible] in Houston. That's the first.

I: Oh, in Houston.

R: Houston, yeah. In the Bay Area, let me think. How did I . . . It exactly [inaudible]. I [inaudible] Hoover is President, Dr. Burbidge. Dr. Burbidge. That's the man out here. When we marched on the Cadillac row, down on, on Van Ness.

I: Oh, yeah.

R: Dr. Burbidge. He was from New Orleans.

I: That was the early Sixties.

R: Yeah, around in there. Yeah, cuz I come here in the Sixties, so it must have been around '61 or '62, because I was very active when I come here. Then I had Dr. Burbidge was president, and then I - Miss Jewel

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Anderson. She was president. Then [inaudible] Pitcher, he was there. [inaudible, laughs]. And I come under what her name? [inaudible] I don't know why.

I: Mrs. [inaudible]? The [inaudible]

R: Lulann McGriff. I served under her, president. I think that - I think it was four presidents.

I: Four presidents.

R: Burbridge, Pitcher, Mrs. Jewel Anderson, and Lulann McGriff, so that's four I know. But they had a lot more before that.

I: So what's your - what - in the NAACP, you mainly did work around the senior issues, or?

R: Not all the time. I, you know, I - Miss Jewel Anderson had me. She appoint me to work with seniors. And - and I been working on that. I used to go make talks with the seniors, place over there. But this - Lulann, the, you know, she didn't appoint me. She tried to kept on the low, low profile, you know? Maybe I was too militant. That's what, you know, too outspoken for that. That's what some people said. They didn't have the - they didn't like to hear me speak because I speak the truth. And a lot of people don't like to hear the truth. So if they don't want to rock the damn boat, cuz I told her some things that we need to do here in the city, for jobs, the Safeway, and whatnot. And she say, "Well, before we do it, we got to call the National." And I say to myself, long as I been in the organization, when I was in Los Angeles in NAACP, we didn't call the national. We could picket, local [inaudible] rights. I don't know, regardless, as long as you're not violating the national Constitution, you got a right for local [inaudible] rights.

I: Local what?

R: If you wanted . .

I: Autonomy?

R: If you wanted to picket Safeway about jobs, you ain't got to go ask
- but this man was - Hooks, whatever his damned name.

I: Benjamin Hooks, who was the president.

R: Yeah.

I: So how do you feel about the NAACP today? The new leadership?

R: Well, I got the faith in its [inaudible]. I got the faith in . . .

I: Oh, it just means it's recording, yeah.

R: I got faith. But you got to, to - the membership has got to be active to move. You can move leadership if you, if the general membership move, the rank and file. It's the rank and file you blame, just like the union. You blame rank and file, 'cause the rank and file, they have the power to change things if they do it, they're afraid. Just the same way what's going on now on this here signing the budget and everything. These seniors and people has got to, got to move. People got the power. They can't set by, wait on people's going to do. Same way the NAACP's a good organization. I know the record. But, see, that's past tense. We have to forget about and begin. And I felt like this Million Man March, that wasn't just on account of Farakhan and them. This was the million people or more didn't go to Washington on account of Farakhan. They went on account of conditions. They need to do. There was a call on issues, confront people, is in - they got problems, and they going there to see the strength. That's the power, the strength of people. They wasn't thinking about just Farakhan. But Farakhan was one of the organizers and help put

it, but it's a lot of people. Ells was behind that because they need to go, they need to - black folks need to do something, need to gain strength and stop being afraid, stop selling out one another, stop being a, dammit, they opportunist. Now, you got to stop that. Got to learn to respect yourself, respect your women, not only respect black women, respect all women. Man got only friendship could save the world. Goddam, this ain't no question about - a man, a person is silly when you look at another man and hate him on account of the color of his skin. That's silly. That's ignorant I call that mean speaking, Lee Brown himself. That's ignorant. It's human beings. That's - all this race is in the mind. Other people. That's in the mind [inaudible]. It's a idea of talk, you know,

END SIDE A, BEGIN SIDE B

R: on there, Brother. I done got wind up now. And I wanted to jump brief on the trade union movement. And long as that - we maintain a racism in the unions, here in America, we're going to have crisis after crisis. The bosses use that to divide the workers. And I think that the rank and file should know that by now. If you keep people divided. Same way in hotels. Culinary. That could be one of the strongest unions in this nation if they would abolish racism in this country and work together. The power of the union is the rank and file. It's the sole power of the union, and that's the tool the bosses use. I think I made that clear in Grammers and Reserve, Louisiana on this sugar refinement strike that I was out there nine months, speaking of both parts. Racism is destroying America. America is falling apart on account of racism. And who profit? The ruling

class. [inaudible] this system, probably the people - and particularly Afro American and all people--white, black, brown, yellow, and red--should study their history, know their history, know one another, know how to relate to one another, because as long as we got [inaudible] we be divided, and I think that was the only thing - when they come down on - coming down on some leaders, that's [inaudible] to block unity, black unity, not only black unity, but working unity, people's unity. You have to tie these things in they - it's the same struggle, same fight. And another thing I'm looking forward to that southern Africa is, and black Africa - black America, the same struggle, it's the same fight. We must unite as [inaudible] Kwame Nkrumah say Africa must unite and that means that the whole world, Central America, South America, throughout the world, just have unity, even the people in the Soviet Union must reorganize themselves to become victory. Socialism is the solution, 'cause socialism is right. Cuba must maintain her stand. Socialism is right. Free education, free homes, low income homes, free health. The whole world, and I repeat, only friendship can save this world, and it's time for the American people to wake up as a whole and get rid of this evil force, which is racism, that is destroying America, and destroying it. Even the time is now that we must wake up. We must move for a new movement, new struggle, and new unity. That is it.

I: All right. [applauds]

Note to Robert: Mr. Brown is wrong about the date of the demonstrations against Cadillac, which were mounted by CORE. They took place in the spring/summer of 1963. I was very actively and directly involved with planning those demonstrations.

Also, Eldridge Cleaver was, in fact, in Rev. Moon's church before he got into the Mormon Church. Mr. Brown spoke about his membership as a Moonie, and you corrected him. But he was correct. Eldridge was very much a Moonie! (smile)

Lee Brown 9/21/95

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ADNIP / CP
Party

Lee Brown, 9/21/95

I: This is an interview of Mr. Lee Brown on September 21, 1995. What I want to talk to you about today is that period in the late 1960's when you were here in San Francisco and you left the Communist Party and you joined the ADNIP Party, the African Descendants Nationalist Independence Party, I believe, was the name for it, the ADNIP. Tell me about that. How is it that you came to join that party, and what was the dissatisfaction that you had with the Communist Party that led you to leave them.

R: And when I got into contact, I asked them to talk to some people, and I heard about the ADNIP Party which we called it, ADNIP Party, United, United, United African Republic, that's what the name [inaudible]. It was on the corner of Fulton and Fillmore. So I joined that. I come talking.

I: Why did you join?

R: I joined them because how I see the program, and it was, seemed [inaudible] to be concerned about, by building up economic program of black people, and I figure that was one of the solutions to the problem. And after I was in the Communist Party for a number of years, and I studied the program, it was still a problem. Ever since I got in there.

I: In the Communist Party?

R: In the Communist Party. We used to fight, what you call, what you call "white chauvinism." That was one of their tactics. And I felt I didn't have anything against the Party program, but now I still say that today. It was the leadership was bad, and I didn't feel that some of the

things that they wasn't, was doing when they - when we had, we had this - when it was something like twelve states tried to get it this way, close as I can. I [inaudible] and it started [inaudible] the program that we [inaudible], it was twelve states within the United States.

I: Now, who was saying that?

R: The . .

I: No, what organization?

R: Trade, the Communist Party.

I: OK, right.

R: After, during the time of, of Stalin.

I: Right.

R: The program.

I: The idea of black self-determination . . .

R: Self-determination, the black belt [inaudible], I forget his name. I got his book in here, whatcha callit.

I: You were in favor of that.

R: At that time, yeah. I still in favor that black people [inaudible], not as a separated, but I think that we should have our own community within our community, why we have our own stores, hotels, and whatever, laundry, daycare center, within the community because, because I - it's through my studying, I believe that the - in the Soviet Union that they did have - or were - there's some community they had, a Jewish community and other community within the Soviet Union. And I feel that we would be better if we would have a community, something that we could identify ourself, or we could have and what - on top of that too, that would give us the right to teach our history, particularly our ancient history. I don't

believe that in these schools, in the educational institutions yet, that we were getting complete history. We wasn't getting our ancient history.

I: OK.

R: Go back into Africa and the Sudan, Ethiopia and the . . .

I: But the Communist Party.

R: They didn't teach us that.

I: Yeah, but the Communist Party now was advocating black self-determination and,

R: Self-determination.

I: up until, I guess, into the Sixties.

R: Yeah.

I: And then their policy changed. So is that what caused you to leave the Party then, because they changed their policies? They abandoned that old idea of self-determination.

R: Yeah. What I did say - exactly when I started here, when they got confused, when they expelled or the name - Charlie Mitchell. They and - Angela Davis and also Herbert Aptheker at this last [inaudible]. I think they were - there's a lot of conflict came up, and I started doing some research and studying that [inaudible]. Then I went back and I did some research, taking a quick, the plans that Wilson record, a book about the [inaudible].

I: No, go ahead and talk.

R: The Negro in the - I think what the title of it, The Negro in the Communist Party. And I would see why we - and I would begin to thinking again that they wasn't concerned - they was in the trade union movement, they wasn't fighting directly and not see why they - we was

Problems in CP

Wilson Record
book

supposed to been working - those members of the Party and members of the trade union, we supposed been by fighting for to build a left center and move the, the Party, you know, to the left. I mean not the Party, but the trade union movement. Trade union movement. And that wasn't being done. Instead of that, they were - the Party was not [inaudible] - I'm talking about the National was not working with us direct on that. Not even the national porter. Only one person was concerned of the senior citizen at the, at the staff, and that - that we discussed with him. That was Henry, Henry Winston. So it's a number of reasons that I got out that Party. I felt that the leadership was not [inaudible], so the leadership, not all leadership, but some of the leadership were not carrying out the program working with us to fight discrimination, fight for certain things.

I: Now this is the national leadership you're talking about.

R: All your national leadership.

I: Who are you talking about here? You talking about Gus Hall, or who are you talking about?

R: I'm talking about the national as a whole was up they. I mean the program wasn't carried out like it should have been carried by the constitution, the bylaws of the Party, the program of the Party, the principle of the Party were not helping the grassroots, only was serving some of the intellectuals. Then the final analysis they, they got the, they got down on the intellectual. They just - they, they - [inaudible]. It's one of the things that [inaudible] I didn't felt like the Party was serving the interests of the masses, of the black workers.

I: Now, did this have - did the Party support you when you had that trouble with the Jack Tarr Hotel, which was 19- - what was that? About 1968?

R: You mean here?

I: Yeah.

R: Yeah. [inaudible]

I: That was 19 - 1969.

R: Mm hmm.

I: The day the Jack Tarr . . .

R: [inaudible] think.

I: But at that time - actually at that time you were already in the black security guards.

R: Yeah, because . . .

I: You were part of that.

R: They were part of the ADNIP Party, yeah.

I: Part of the ADNIP Party.

R: Yeah.

I: So actually you were already in that at that time.

R: Yeah.

I: So then actually the Party wouldn't have had anything to do with that.

R: No. See, I [inaudible] the - the guy that used to write. What was his name? He interviewed me, I think, several times. But his name was Carl Boyce.

I: Mm hmm.

R: I think was his name.

I: Carl Bloise.

R: Bloise, yeah.

I: Yeah.

R: So I - that's when they was up there - I forget the name of the street. I'm trying to think. Off of Second Street, somewhere in the [inaudible].

I: So you, you actually then withdrew your membership from the Party. Is that what you - how did you do that? What did you say to them?

R: What I'm trying to [inaudible] - they - I told them - well, let me see how in the hell - it's been a while. I should have been studying up on doing some research [inaudible], but the point about it was [inaudible], I told Gus, when I come here, when I first got here, they - I supposed to contact, contact some of the members here. One of them was Archie Brown. And [inaudible] Archie Brown was - I forget what name he give me. They sent a - they give me a number, and they sent a number of a dollar. I brought a dollar bill when I first got here. That shit I went through, and I contact Archie Brown. And [inaudible] that was one way of starting, and I met - we used to meet - I got into the culinary club. They had what they call a culinary club.

I: Within the Party.

R: Yeah, within, in the Par- - we used to meet. I'm trying to think of the guy now. He work - I don't know if he still work or retire. So I happen to be, you know, just go working in culinary. We used to meet at a private home, and I happened to have one lady there, and I happened to see her one day on Seventh Street. I would got you - I'm just throwing

what I [inaudible] what I can think of [inaudible]. And I happened to meet her on Seventh Street. She - I was coming to Market, and she was going back to the Greyhound Bus station, and I spoke to her. And, and, you know, she wouldn't even, even speak, you know. She completely ignored me. Now. And I learned that there was some racist.

I: She was white.

R: Yeah. I [inaudible]. And I wanted to make sure, you know? So I ran back, and I caught up with her when she was on her way to the bus station. I was on my way to Market. And I never will forget that. And I spoke to her again. She act like she didn't know me then, you know. After I had - I know she must have enough intelligence to know that I must know her, to come and tackle like that to tell her. "I was at the meeting with you. And why you act like you don't know me. Is there a reason that," you know, but I thought they had some kinda code that [laughs] that you meet Party people. Maybe you, you do that in certain meetings. You ignore. But just walking on the damn street. Nobody don't know what it - would be least can speak. I know that wasn't against the Party principle. So a lot of these things. So I brought it up. I, I brought it up seeing and in New Orleans we used to have what you call a D.O.

I: D.O.

R: A District Organizer. So we didn't have that here. We had - I brought it up before - you had a state representative here, or a county, whatever they called it. I brought it up to Archie Brown in a meeting I went to, and I - it seemed like they would - they wasn't too much concerned about bringing upon the - we used to call it in the South, when a

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comrade was, was violating the principles of the Party, we called that - we call that bring it on the carpet. Bring the Party up on the

I: On the carpet.

R: The Party member, carpet, to find out what the hell, so we could solve the problems. Make some kind of concession with the problem. Do something with it. And so I didn't like the way that worked out. So I said, "Well, hell, I'm gonna - I'm gonna get out of it. I'm just going to be a fellow traveler." [laughs] A friendship, whatever it [inaudible]. Then I told Sam Gold about it. What he say he didn't like it neither, but he say, "Well, no, you been in the Party too long," so he kept on asking me when I went to this - I used to go to the store, you know, up there on, on Valencia.

I: Valencia.

R: Yeah, it was 510 Valencia.

I: The book - the book center.

R: Yeah, the book center up there. First, I used to go to the bookstore on Market. It used to be on Market. Then they - again, they had it up on Turk. Right, right on the corner of Jones and Turk. I forget the guy's name. He - Hank. He used to run it on Turk. So the one on Market, I - she was a - the first was a tall guy, but I forget his name. Tall comrade. He left, and then another - a lady came, and that was Roscoe [sounds like Froster's] wife. You know, she just passed, I believe, last year, and she . . .

I: Yeah.

R: Yeah, Roscoe Parker.

I: And what's her name?

R: I forgot her name.

I: Yeah.

R: I know that was his . . .

I: His wife.

R: His wife. And so Sam - they asked me not to leave, say, "You better not." Say, "Well, I give you all support, I'll be a fellow traveler." That's something else they used to call it. You know, you be with it - you don't carry [inaudible] I knew some people who were supporting the Party didn't carry no card. None [inaudible] Party - carry. So I decide - Sam talked me back then, you know, but I - I still - I used to - would start over, then I attend the school. The, the Party. Every year we used to have a [inaudible] five days of schooling.

I: So you - so you actually left the Party. What? You turned in your card, or what, what does that mean?

R: No, I didn't turn in no card. I didn't - we didn't get - I didn't bring no card here when I started to getting the cards here. Yeah, I got all my Party cards.

I: So you didn't actually turn it in then.

R: No, I didn't . .

I: You told - you told them you, you were leaving.

R: Leaving, and I would take - I don't know if I went to the meeting. I was telling the other guy. [inaudible] Cuz Sam continued [inaudible] after Sam continue begging me so I didn't and follow through and turn it in, you know.

I: So you didn't do it . . .

R: No.

I: You didn't do it officially.

R: No.

I: But you stopped going to meetings.

R: Stopped going to meetings.

I: Yeah. So then you found out - you came across - did you know about this ADNIP Party before you . . .

R: No, I'm trying to see. I did [inaudible] contact. I met Al Sulton somewhere. We was, I think, had a meeting.

I: This is . . .

R: [inaudible] Al Sultan Shabazz.

I: Al Sultan Shabazz.

R: Whatever.

I: He was the leader of the ADNIP Party.

R: ADNIP Party.

I: And what was his name before?

R: I don't know. I forgot his name. I don't know his name.

I: OK, but he was - what was his title in the Party?

R: What you mean? In the ADNIP Party?

I: Yeah, in the ADNIP Party.

R: He was the Al Sultan Shabazz was . . .

I: He's the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister . . .

R: Yeah, the Prime Minister.

I: Prime Minister Al [spells] Sultan [spells]

R: Yeah, right.

I: Shabazz [spells]

[Talk about a doorbell that just rang.]

I: So did you - how did you encounter the ADNIP Party then? When did you first hear about them or meet them or what?

R: I'm trying to think. First I met Al Sultan I don't know if I met him at a meeting in the community or something, that's when I met him.

I: OK, you met him first.

R: I don't know . . .

I: And what? He told you about the Party, or?

R: What'd you mean?

I: How did you know . . .

R: About ADNIP Party?

I: Yeah.

R: Yeah. I think I attend some, some of the meetings, I read about it or something. I say, "Well, I'm gonna go and talk with him." After I talked to him - I'm trying to think who introduced me to Al Sultan. How did I get in contact with him? That's the main thing. I'm trying to go see, just it's been a while here.

I: Yeah. Well, we can come back and pick that up.

R: Yeah.

I: Let's just go follow the sequence of things.

R: Yeah, I'm trying to get some of the highlights, but . . .

I: Yeah. So you met him at a meeting or some gathering.

R: Yeah, some g-

I: And he told you about the Party.

R: Yeah, we started discussing about [inaudible] they talking about - we started discussing the black nationalism, and so they were telling me, yeah, that we should have something within our community, which he was

telling - it's true. I'm trying to think about another [inaudible]. I started attending some meetings, and I - one I attend - I'm trying to think of that. So we started talking about black nationalism and Africa and whatnot. And so I got interested. Anything would come down, talking about helping the economic of, of black people, fighting against racism, not only did - not racism, but white supremacy as well. And I know that we wasn't getting a fair shake, or no fair deal, or no kinda damn deal was for black folks. And I knew, but I knew a little bit of my history. I was studying it when I was in L.A. before I went to South. I studied black history. I studied conditions, the state of the black people in this country, and I know we wasn't getting - a long way from getting a fair deal because nobody [inaudible] a square deal. Just like I mentioned this [inaudible] at a meeting, and some lady made a statement about forgive them, for they knoweth not. Oh, I say, "Oh, yeah," I don't know who she's talking about forgiving they know not. I say that those people who're doing wrong, there no question about forgive that they don't know. I say, "Oh, yeah. They know. They know what the hell they doing." They kinda pissed me off, forget. I know she was referring. Like some of them here they got their Bible mixed up. Forgive them, for they know not what they're doing. Any time a sonofabitch mistreating people, he know, he know he doing wrong.

I: Right.

R: Don't give a damn. [inaudible] my grandma, because I was subject to hit her. I say, "Grandma, you know better," talking about, shit, forgive them, all because they know not what they doing. Shit.

I: Now, the ADNIP Party, actually what they wanted was a separate black nation.

R: Yeah, that what they . . .

I: That's specifically what they called for. They said they wanted a separate . . .

R: Separate black nation, yeah.

I: Nineteen states they listed here.

R: Yeah. I thought they was - all the Party . . . twelve.

I: They had nineteen states listed in the South,

R: Yeah.

I: they said they want these . . .

R: Well, that was the ADNIP Party program?

I: Yeah.

R: [inaudible]

I: So separation, physical separation, into two separate republics, one for Blacks and one for whites.

R: Yeah, all that was discussed too. Like I say, it's been a while. I was on the - then I become the Minister of Labor, and I was part of the staff [inaudible].

I: The Minister of Labor or the Minister or . . .

R: The Minister of Labor.

I: [inaudible] OK, now, how did you - you just started going to meetings, and all of a sudden you're Minister of Labor. How did that happen?

R: [laughs] Well, I was - [inaudible] I kept on the trade union movement.

I: Yeah. And at that time you were still working at the Jack Tarr.

R: Yeah, [inaudible] still in the union. When I went South, [inaudible], when I went South, I stopped working. I got transfer out, out of Local 12 in Los Angeles, and went to New Orleans, because they, they give me a transfer.

I: I know. We talked about that. Let's just stick with San Francisco in 1970.

R: Yeah.

I: Because we talked about New Orleans already. Let's focus on what, how you, your involvement with the ADNIP Party now. So you -they - you started going to meetings.

R: Yeah.

I: Now, did they - so how did you become Minister of Labor? Did they . . .

R: Well, I attend meetings, and Al Sultan, you know, I told him I was in the union. I was concerned. He [inaudible] - then he had the black security guards. [inaudible] he put on. And I used to go on the [inaudible] - then if they had problems with the guard, he sent them to me. I had to solve. What kind of problem did they have? And I saw the problem, cuz I, being the Minister of Labor, I would took care that department, with labor.

I: OK.

R: See to them going . . .

I: So he appointed you Minister, Minister of Labor, or you were elected Minister of Labor?

R: No, he appointed . . .

I: He appointed you, OK. So he . . .

R: He was Al . . .

I: Al Sultan . . .

R: He was a Shabazz.

I: The Prime Minister appointed you . . .

R: The chief.

I: appointed you to this position.

R: Yeah.

I: And that was - approximately - so approximately how long did you, were you in the ADNIP Party?

R: Oh, I was in the ADNIP Party till they - let me see. Till labor broke up, till Al Sultan left - yeah, he got into some trouble here. And he, he - he left. [inaudible] told me he was leaving, and he left word with brother - a brother he called - a Brother Walker, a blind brother. See, him and I didn't meet together. We talked through somebody else, through Brother Walker. He told Brother Walker he was leaving.

I: Yeah, he told Walker he was leaving, and Walker told you.

R: Yeah. He was going to, called it Guyana, I believe.

I: So he left the country.

R: He left the country.

I: What kind of trouble was he in?

R: I think the first thing they say, they was - he, he had guns under the, under the ground, right there. Now, I never did see no - claim they find no gun. I know they, they had a stool pigeon in there. They, they claimed that here. And I never see him no more. Then they claim that.

I: So about how long - let's see. You said you were in the Party till they broke up, and about how long was that? Are we talking about a year, a few months, or . . .

R: Oh, it was more than a year. It was, say, about [inaudible]. I'll try to get close the best I can. We'd have to figure out - about - [inaudible] - about, let's see. My, my stepdaughter was young then because I was in there, I used to take her out to the beach. And, oh, I would say about four, five years to me.

I: That long?

R: Off the top of my head. Yeah, I was in the ADNIP Party. We was a - they was the Garvey - [inaudible] guard that Martin Luther King [inaudible]. When they was building that, we had guards out there, and we had guards on Geary Street. We used to have guards everywhere.

I: This was the group that was called the Western Addition Black Security Guards, Incorporated. So that was a business.

R: Yeah. That was the - but it still was run by the . . .

I: ADNIP Party.

R: ADNIP Party. United People's Republic.

I: OK. So they hired people to be security guards

R: Yeah [inaudible] . . .

I: or they hired only their own members to be . . .

R: Those who wanted to be, they - there be ad be in the paper. We had ad [inaudible] be in the paper. A person, you know, see it, figure - you ask him a question, did he drink, or whatever, what kind of background he got. [inaudible] you couldn't put everybody on there. There sometime you would, you would miss. You'd pick out - but you wanted somebody was

dedicated, would stay on the post. He had to be trained, and training, times - in the ba-, we had a basement down there to train. People you talk to, know how to defend themselves.

I: Yeah.

R: Well, the community say, so [inaudible] that they was, that they were a whole lot much better, the community people. Could go to - people was afraid to leave, would go with you - leave church at night, and they were saying, you know, you can tell rumors. Within the community they were much safer with the black security guard, cuz we used to be everywhere. Sometime I be on my way going home, and I - sometime I walk. We be walking, and the police pass and ask me one day - I was on Market and Church one night. The bus was slow. I said let me walk [inaudible]. And they ask me, "Are you all guarding down here now?" I say, "No, I'm on my way home." See, we just took care of the black community.

I: Yeah. And so it was like community guards then.

R: Yes.

I: But who paid for it?

R: Hm?

I: Who paid for this?

R: Well, there's - let me see. We had some funds come from somewhere - Al Sultan had some kind of fund [laughs] he'd bring, cuz I got paid.

I: You got paid.

R: Our secretary got paid, Dorothy, got paid. And Al Sultan got paid. Then some - on the holiday that's some of the companies that we was

guarding on Geary, that big apartment house or whatever it [inaudible], they would send in checks to give all the staff. For a donation. What they would call it.

I: So you guarded in the community, but you also guarded certain businesses?

R: Yeah, certain businesses also.

I: And they would pay . .

R: They would pay off, yeah. Then they had a guy used to be there on Gough Street come there, I know. He came from New York. He was one of them tall Al Sultan and I went to see. At, you know, that tall building on Geary and Gough, you know, right off from the cathedral.

I: Yeah, right. The big apartment building.

R: With their [inaudible], with that big tall [inaudible] there. There's two there. But we was at the first - that's the first time I went there. Al Sultan say, you know, he take me with him everywhere. So we work close together. The thing, I think he was picking my brain [laughs] too. He always asked me a lot of questions about. So we went up there to meet that brother. That was a tall - I forgot his name - a tall, brown-skinned fellow, and he was talking about - he was from New York. They - and made some kind of financial arrangement to put in the fund, you know, to help - yeah, but I don't know. I didn't question Al Sultan on the deal on financial, you know. That was his - he worked from the top. Then . . .

I: But what did you know about Al Sultan though?

R: After we got to talking, he was from New Orleans.

I: Oh.

R: He was in the Army. Told me he was a crack shot in the Army.

[laughs] [inaudible] that's all I knew. [inaudible] through talking.

I: Had he fought in - had he been in the Korean War or something?
You know, World War II? How old was he?

R: He must have been World War II.

I: Was he about your age, or?

R: No, he wasn't quite old as I was, and maybe he was. He wasn't in
the Korea War. I don't think so. But I know he was in one of the wars.
Yes.

I: What kind of guy was he? How would you describe him?

R: Oh, he - you know, he's a nice fellow. He was concerned about the
struggle of black people

I: What did he look like though? I mean how would you describe
him?

R: Can you see his picture up there?

I: No, you describe him. We need a description here.

R: Oh. Oh, he was kind of - say, he about - maybe about five feet,
brown skinned.

I: Wait a minute. Five feet what? Cuz five feet is very short. Five
feet - oh, your height? Is he about your height?

R: About five feet, nine - something around that. Yeah, five feet
nine. Brown-skinned fellow. Very intelligent, well informed, read. Very
read. And he was concerned about the struggle of black people. He was
definitely against racism. He wanted equal opportunity. He wanted decent
education. He wanted - he wanted to, to teach the ancient history of his
people. He wanted to know about the, the battle of the Nile.

I: [inaudible] of the Nile, mm hmm.

R: Sudan, Nubians, Ethiopia, Egypt. He was - he was a very good reader. He had lots and lots of books in his office.

I: Was he a speaker? Did he speak at meetings?

R: He'd speak sometimes, yeah.

I: What kind of speaker was he?

R: He wasn't the best [inaudible] speaker, but he come out. That's why [inaudible].

I: You do a lot of - did you come to do a lot of speaking in the Party, in the ADNIP Party?

R: Yeah. Different places we would go. And they introduced me to speak.

I: Yeah.

R: On their behalf. The little speaking that I know, cuz I speak from - I never did take no notes. I made - to myself I may go get a topic out of old - out of [sounds like clothes], something like that. You know, I watches my audience, what type of audiences I have.

I: Yeah. So, now, so the party - this is a party that advocated black economic development. And what were they doing? They had the black security guards, which was a business. What else were they doing in terms of economic development? Did they have other businesses?

R: Mmmm - well, he used to have a - a bookstore.

I: Mm hmm.

R: That was before I got there. Then he had a moving business.

I: Moving, OK.

R: [inaudible]. See, I didn't get here till in '60. All this was going on before I got here.

I: So that was before you joined the Party.

R: Before I got in.

I: Yeah.

R: To the Party, yeah. So he knew I was [inaudible] my statement. He knew I was in the Party, in the Communist Party.

I: Oh, he did?

R: I told - yeah, I mean, after I told him. We discussed it, you know? But he never did oppose me being in the Communist Party. He never did say - and, you know, like people bad-mouth [inaudible] - that's one thing he never did do. He was broad-minded, like I told you.

I: But he . . .

R: Very good fellow.

I: He knew you were dissatisfied with the Party though.

R: Yeah, he knew I was dissatisfied. [inaudible] Damn right, I was dissatisfied, and I tell Gus [inaudible]. I got on Gus here, I think, at 150 Golden Gate at the ILWU one night.

I: Gus - Gus Hall?

R: That's right. Gus - I had a meeting something I wanted - well, he say you had to take care of it local here. Well, I say, some of the local people, they ain't doing a damned thing about the issues that - I mean and not just mine, it was not the issue, it was the issue of the condition of our people. Like more housing, more jobs, fight against racism. They wasn't coming up strong against racism. They do a lot of that damn lip service, and I didn't see - to me, I know, that was my opinion, that they wasn't

fighting like causing what I was reading, the principle of the Party. And they wasn't doing what they supposed to do. And they was using a lot of our people, intellectual [inaudible], but they didn't get to the grassroots. What I mean from the trade union movement. And educate the rank and file. I, I do a lot of reading. I know that the Party should have been much affected against these right wing unions, racists, union leadership. And it wasn't. I had a lot of reasons to get out. I made a mistake I stayed in that that long. Everybody listen at [inaudible] Wilson [inaudible], book. About a lot of thing he said was damn true.

I: Now, when you were in the ADNIP Party, this is in the late Sixties, the Black Panther Party was also organized in Oakland.

R: Yeah.

I: And I noticed the Black Panther Party, which has a ten point program, and the ADNIP Party has a twelve point program, did you all have any relationship with the Black Panther Party? What was your - did you know about the Black Panther Party?

R: Yeah. I think I had even taken out a membership in the Black Panther Party, but I wasn't active. I used to meet with a guy used to call him B.C.

I: [inaudible] Cox.

R: I don't know the name.

I: Don Cox.

R: I used to meet him right there where - I met with another fellow, this brother dead. We used to meet upstairs. We had a good relationship. Then we met one night, the staff, you know, we met one night to discuss - I take my wife, [inaudible], and the we had the Dorothy, the secretary at

BRP

the ADNIP Party. We met, and then we had - Rip was acting - the chair. He chaired the meeting that night, and my wife would say every time each Party member come in there, she was laughing. By the time I did, she could feel it, could hear the sound of the briefcase where they had these guns [laughs] . . .

I: Mm hmm.

R: in there. She - when I got there, I grabbed my briefcase down. Dorothy, she went home. She said, "I'm going home, getting my gun" [laughs]. And Rip, he was the chair. We're all sitting on each side of the table, and Rip, he chaired the meeting, you know. We all better than see us fighting one another, they tried to pitch us against. D.C., we had this other guy. He got killed in Detroit, this fellow. That was my, my future brother-in-law. What his name was [inaudible]. He got killed by the - maybe two years ago.

I: This is Grace's brother?

R: No. He, he . . .

I: You say he's your future brother-in-law.

R: He was - marry Grace's sister.

I: Oh, OK.

R: They ain't married yet. I just call him . . .

I: Yeah.

R: I still . . .

I: So Grace was - you were married to Grace at this point, and she went with you to this meeting.

R: Yeah.

I: So that makes it after 1976.

Grace Oliver

R: Yeah. Yeah, it must be.

I: So you were in this party, then, from at least 1970.

R: That's what I say. I . . .

I: till 1976.

R: Like I say, I can't pinpoint it, but I know that Grace and I was married then.

I: And was she in the Party too?

R: No.

I: She wasn't.

R: She just was a trade union.

I: Trade unions, but she was not in the ADNIP Party.

R: No. But she used to use - you thought she was in ADNIP Party.

She stayed there and she was very active . . .

I: Very active.

R: Yeah.

I: Yeah.

R: And she was the most active as in the union.

I: Right, OK.

R: Where she was the . . .

I: And she never joined the Communist Party either, did she?

R: No. No, she didn't. Cuz she say there's something I'm meaning [inaudible] discuss. We had good relationship. One thing I say, something about the Communist Party one day, and she say, "What the hell," she - I say, "Well, they ain't - they ain't bothering us," like [inaudible], she say, "Cuz you ain't doing a damn thing."

[Both laugh]

Yeah, she said . .

I: She said who?

R: We were talking about - I was talking about the Communist Party.

I: The Communist Party was not bothering you [inaudible].

R: [inaudible]. No, I mean the FBI wasn't bothering us, the
Communists,

I: Oh.

R: during that time, and she said, "Hell, cuz you all ain't doing a
damn thing." [Both laugh.] Yeah, she used to tickle me. Yeah, but we still
had good relationship, what she used to criticize that we wasn't doing
nothing in the party.

I: Uh huh.

R: I tried to get her to join, and she said, "Hell, no. I ain't joining, cuz
I don't like the way I hear you be talking." Yeah, shit.

I: I see.

R: Yeah.

I: So, so, so during this period in the ADNIP party, then, which is a
good five or six years,

R: Mm hmm.

I: you were Minister of Labor, and . . .

R: Labor.

I: and that meant that you were paid for the work.

R: I talked to people, yeah.

I: But you, you were still at your full-time job though.

R: Yes.

I: And the

R: Then . . .

I: at the Jack Tarr.

R: Yeah, sometime, yeah.

I: Now, when you had that trouble with the Jack Tarr, when they brought those charges against you, drinking on the job and so on, what - did the ADNIP Party help you in that, or were you pretty much on your own?

R: The ADNIP Party picked up some forms, did some - made this, you know, whachoocall - press release, and whatnot.

I: So they tried to support you then.

R: Yeah, they did what they could. I'm trying to think what they did. Uh. I don't think the Communist Party did anything, I don't believe. All the time I got any help from the Parry when I tried to call a meeting with the room cleaners, and I got Roscoe Prosker to come here, and we met. And we called a meeting there one night, only about five room cleaners turned up.

I: Who called a meeting?

R: Me and Roscoe Prosker and I.

I: So the Party didn't call it?

R: Yeah, we run a - see, Roscoe [inaudible] was a Party member.

I: Communist Party.

R: And I was a Communist Party member. But, but I was working with the - I don't know if I still was in the Party. Yeah, yeah, I went back in the Party after I talked to Sam, yeah.

Jack Tarr
Prosker

I: OK. So when did [inaudible] - so you were in the ADNIP Party from 1960, or 1970 up through 1976, cuz Grace, you married Grace in January,

R: Yeah.

I: and she at least went to one meeting with you.

R: Yeah.

I: Now, Sam Gold talked you into coming back into the Communist Party.

R: To stay in the Communist Party.

I: To stay.

R: Yeah.

I: To not officially leave.

R: Not officially leave, yeah.

I: Now, who was Sam Gold?

R: You didn't know Sam Gold?

I: No. Tell me.

R: Oh, yeah. Oh.

I: Who is Sam Gold? You're talking to your audience now.

R: Sam Gold was the one that was the - he came from Chicago, him and his wife, Molly Gold. Sam was the runner of the bookstore there at 522 Valencia. That was Sam Gold. He's been around a long time in the, the Party, and him and I had a discussion about - cuz I told him how the things were running, was going in the Party. And he begged me to stay in the Party. To don't leave the Party, but which I knew that the Party - some program they did very good, but I wasn't complete, satisfied the way

CP

L.H. reports
"were" as was

that black people was being treated, particularly working class folks from the [inaudible], but from the grassroot level, blue collar workers.

I: So you feel that the black working class people in the Party were not being treated well, were not being treated the way you'd expect, or . . .

R: They wasn't fighting against racism like they, like the program say.

I: And how did you feel about the way the black intellectuals came across in the Party, cuz there were a lot of black writers and teachers and so on.

R: Yeah.

I: Did you feel there was a class division in the Party?

R: It was - separated. Some of them - a very few that was relating with some of the grassroots members of the Party, very few.

I: Very few. Now, are you talking about the black intellectuals, the white intellectuals?

R: No, the

I: Both?

R: Both.

I: Both.

R: Both. And you had a few white intellectuals who relate - you had some black, people like - what is his name? He's very good. He came down South. Jim Jackson.

I: Jim Jackson, yeah.

R: And we had Winston - I met . . .

I: Henry?

R: Henry Winston, yeah.

I: Henry Winston.

R: That's the first time I met him here in San Francisco.

I: Yeah.

R: Cuz he used to tell Franklin, every time he'd come on, how we got, got - yeah, I think we was talking one time, and he tell Franklin to come and get me when he come. And Frank would come get me. Even in the meeting he asked Frank and them here, and Frank would come and get me.

I: What about somebody like - did you know Herbert Aptheker then? Was he out here? No, he was in New York, I guess, then. He hadn't come out here.

R: Yeah, I think I met him out here. That's why I got - talked [inaudible] - about, he told me to come to his home. I wanted to talk with him, because he couldn't hear too good over the telephone. So he - he seemed to be very honest. And you had some white and - where he - one by the name of Lorina. She passed, and Sam [stutters] when I was in the culinary group, we had one we called Sam [inaudible].

I: Sam what?

R: Cutten. Sam [stutters] Cuttin, I guess, they pronounce it Cuttin. Sam Cuttin. Cut it off. [inaudible] Sam Cuttin. His wife is name Lee Cuttin. She's still alive, but Sam passed. He was good. He was in the culinary group. Then I had a little Chinese living in - he was in the culinary. His name was uh - [inaudible] - can't think of his name. But he was - he was one of - he was a honest fellow. And there's one woman I never did get a chance to meet. She passed [inaudible]. After I got here, she - Helen Wheeler.

I: Helen Wheeler?

R: Yeah. And I heard about her. She's the one that fought in that Local 110 to get, to get on black - businesses to appoint black business agents.

I: Black business, huh.

R: And Sam Cuttin, it wasn't Cuttin, Sam Daniels was appointed, and another uh African American was appointed. Her name was Susie Bakter or Barclay.

I: Susie Barclay.

R: Yeah, Barclay.

END SIDE A, BEGIN SIDE B

I: OK.

R: Yeah. That was Helen Wheeler. She was a, a Party member [inaudible], was a good one.

I: And she was appointed a business agent.

R: No, she got them [inaudible].

I: Oh, she got them to appoint . . .

R: Appoint black business agents.

I: OK.

R: Yeah. Helen Wheeler. Let me see. Who else was there?

I: Well, let me ask you this. Now, tell me a little bit more about Sam Gold. So Sam Gold, you regard him as a friend. He ran the bookstore.

R: Yeah. And we used to talk a lot.

I: You talked to a lot.

R: We used to talk a lot, too, about different subjects.

I: Just in the bookstore? Or did you go to his house? Did he come to your house?

R: No, I didn't go to his house.

I: So it wasn't a social thing. It was just . .

R: No. Then I used to meet him at meeting, like we used to have general membership meeting, till one time I was ill. Him and uh, him and Molly brought me some chicken soup. [inaudible] I was living on the [inaudible]. I was living up further there up on, up on uh - [inaudible] - Third - 20's on Third, up there, and he'd come, brought me - that's the only time - they brought me some soup, chicken soup, him and Molly.

I: So what did he say when he was trying to dissuade you not to leave the Party?

R: Well, he . . .

I: What did he say? What was his argument?

R: Well, he told me to - what the Party have did and what they trying to do, and mistake - he say the onliest way you correct it, you have to remain in there. Which he was true. Was some of those people [inaudible], they, you know, we've been fighting since I've been in there and before that [inaudible], cuz I read the, the history. We've been fighting chauvinism and race, whatever they called it then, we was fighting it. It wasn't in prin-. Like I told him and still tell them. The program of the Party is good. The principle of the Party to me is good. But it's the leaders, some of the members, was racist. I know that cuz I [inaudible] - they had - one time we was having a convention with elect - first we had the state convention and I won't call the woman's name, cuz she's still in there. She's still crooked. I know she are. And I asked her, I say, "Are

you gonna vote for me?" And I don't know if she [inaudible] - she say, "Hell, no. I ain't votin' for you," with her head like that, and she wanted to - she came to my house, and been to my house since I [inaudible] out of the - I'm not - I'm not tending the committee [inaudible] yet, but I will support it cuz I can't go through them change. I got on it before. When I - I didn't - the committee of [sounds like correspondence].

I: Is she still in it?

R: Yeah.

I: That's why [inaudible]. So she's in the committee [inaudible - sounds like correspond].

R: Yeah.

I: Oh, OK. [inaudible]

R: And I'm going to tell you - the point about it. The first - they set up a steering committee, about thirty people.

I: Yeah.

R: [inaudible]

I: Well, let's hold that because we're going to get to the committee of correspondence. But let's, let's finish up what we're talking about here with the - the time of the ADNIP Party.

R: Yeah.

I: So let me - what was the day to day life like for you as the Minister of Labor? What did that mean that you did? What was your responsibilities?

R: Well, to check on the guard. If they have problems, they would come to me. If they had problem on the job or wasn't doing the job, I could suspend them, or give them a few days off, but I had to know both

responsibilities
in ADNIP Party

sides. And then if they had problem with the community, like a family. We had families come right there over in the office. And [inaudible] going, he didn't want to go [inaudible]. People didn't want to bring his problem to the policemen and things like that, you see? Black people have enough intelligence to solve their own problems. They need help. So they would come there. I know I worked with about three or four families come there [inaudible] we helped to solve their problems, they got back together. So that's the kinda - we was building that black folks can do if they want to do something, [inaudible] being honest. You understand what I'm talking about?

I: Yeah. I understand.

R: And we can do it. We don't need the people do it. We would - people wanted to - work [inaudible] - I can work [inaudible] - as long as they honest. I don't give a damn what color a man is. Even some of my own people I give help when they ain't right. But I don't give a damn what color is - if you're Jewish or Gentile, any kind of tie, black or white religion, as long as you - cuz I'm going to do right to you the best of my ability, the best of my knowledge. Say like [inaudible], I'm going to do the best I can with what I know. That's - Thurgood Marshall said that. Do the best with what I have. But I'm going to treat you nice. Why? Cuz I want you to treat me nice.

I: Right.

R: Respect me cuz I'm going to respect - first I respect myself. Gotta get knowledge. If you get knowledge, then you will know exactly how to treat other people. And how you want them to treat you.

I: Yeah.

R: Then if they'd all treat - and you kinda [inaudible]. You don't get angry with [inaudible] if they broad minded, I believe. Listen at you. When you get violent, you get [inaudible]. If you know how to talk to, relate with people, when they get violent, you know, how to get to him, put him back. You ain't got to see [inaudible]. I learned that from my grandfather. He used to teach me when I was six years old. I remember him saying, "When you get into violent, brother, you ain't gonna solve the problem." That's my opinion. You gonna make it worse. Before you get [inaudible], if you, if you and I were going to arguing, you'd say a few words. I'm ready to stop. Because if we keep on, then violent. Cuz you got - you think if you can't think, that - the next thing you're gonna sink to is violence. You move [inaudible]. You broad minded, you got intelligent, knowledge, you know how to - to call and say, "Let us have a recess. Let us table this." So we cool off. Then we come back and solve the problem.

I: Right.

R: See, that's the kind of man I am. I may not be - now, it's a lot of things I don't like, a lot of people doing things. It's no good, and I know it is wrong. But so far as me hating, cuz I don't hate, cuz you can't call yourself a man, a righteous fellow, you may not - you don't like some of the damn ways they do. They make you mad as hell. But you got to go along with them, stay cool.

I: Mm hmm.

R: And work on it to try to - maybe one day they wake up and see themselves. I see some people that did wrong, and some of them down there doing good. Their [inaudible], like to talk about my comrades, [inaudible] Henry [inaudible] problem. One time I [inaudible] tell him

about the labor movement, about - and that's when I find out that, that Gus wasn't right, you know? Coming from others. So they was more closer to Gus than I was, you understand?

I: Other sources, or was - they knew what was going on.

R: The grapevine or whatever you call - the rumor - whatever it was, was telling me about, [inaudible] Gus. And I was - we used to talk - I used to tell Kindra about the labor movement.

I: You're talking about Kindra. This is . . .

R: About the labor movement.

I: Kindra Alexander.

R: Yeah, Kindra Alexander, about the labor movement. Cuz I see - Kindra was a very nice person, to my understanding. I liked her when I first see'd her. And I think cuz she was a, you know, I think she was qualified. She know how to relate with people. That's what I [inaudible]. But she didn't want to accept, after I found out that - I told her, "Be careful." She was telling me about how Gus this and that. I say, "I learned now that Gus was bad news." And when I got there, that didn't come from just, just anybody. People very more close know [inaudible] people that were more close to Gus. And you'd be surprised, cuz, for instance, [inaudible] say he didn't like to build a senior movement, that Gus didn't like to build a senior - but we tried and get the national to set up a national senior movement. So we had to get Gus down here. We - not Gus. I'm sorry. We had to get Winston. When Winston come, we met with Winston over across the Bay at some apartment house or motel, whatever it was. And I met with him. Carl Grosby, and his wife, his late wife. What the hell her name was? Cuz she came to my house when I was living at

22nd and Third, Carl wife. She - that's a damn shame. [inaudible] And we met with Winston and Winston's wife at this, at this motel. I believe it was the motel. Goddam, what the hell was her name? Cuz she passed. I spoke at the - the [sounds like morris, but I think he means mourning] service. I'd been knowing her. She used to come - cuz she used to come by. You know, she would say she wanted - her and a guy by the name of Jim Wright, old Party member, he used to being marine cooks and stewards. He come along.

I: So all of you all met with Henry Winston?

R: Not all of us.

I: Well, this - the . . .

R: Carl [inaudible] and his wife

I: [inaudible]

R: And myself.

I: [inaudible].

R: And Winston's wife. That was . . .

I: So you met with Henry Winston,

R: Yeah.

I: around this question of building a senior, a movement . . .

R: Senior, a national senior movement.

I: A national senior citizen movement.

R: Yeah.

I: He was in favor of that.

R: Yeah. He was gonna appoint - he appointed some guy, but . . .

I: But Gus Hall . .

R: Huh?

I: But Gus Hall didn't like that?

R: He told me Gus Hall was opposed.

I: Opposed to it.

R: He say he he wasn't no senior or something, I don't know. I'm trying to think of this damned woman.

I: It'll come to you.

R: Yeah.

I: When we, when we edit it, we can [inaudible] do that too.

R: Yeah.

I: Now that - back to . .

R: Her name, oh, Esther . . .

I: Esther.

R: Esther, yeah. Yeah.

I: And this is the wife of Carl . . .

R: Carl [stutters].

I: Grosby.

R: Carl Grosby. I saw him yesterday.

I: OK. So in the, in the - coming back to the, the community guards, the black guards here - in the community doing business, guarding businesses, you supervising . .

R: That's exactly what it was. Supervising.

I: You were supervising.

R: I would, would go around to the guards at night, check to see if they were on their post,

I: OK.

R: or they drinking, was they still on post, or wasn't not?

I: Were there many guards? I mean are we talking about a dozen people, a hundred people?

R: All out there. We just have certain - every time we get a - if we get a new job, we said - go where we had member. We look on the book and send them out, because we had to have about - altogether I know we was using all of them all the time. We had about twenty members of the black security guards. All of them wasn't [inaudible] party.

I: Yeah.

R: Yeah, we just was the staff.

I: OK, so the staff of the black security guards was about twenty people.

R: No, the, the - the black security were about twenty.

I: About twenty.

R: About twenty people.

I: OK, and not all - and not all of them were members of the ADNIP Party.

R: No. I don't think it was nothing too many. We had, we had a - we had a few [inaudible], sergeant or whatever, you know. We had the leadership.

I: You had some ranks.

R: Ranks, yeah. We had some ranks.

I: So how many members of the ADNIP Party were there?

R: Altogether?

I: Altogether.

R: Being that Gold was not that - I don't know. We had a few business people. [inaudible] and one guy, two, three guys I know was

business, and other people was supported, you know? We had people - even some of the Japanese representatives come there. They wanted to make our uniform. I was sitting in the meeting with Al Sultan Shabazz in the front office. He was [inaudible] after he left. I says, "No [inaudible]." But Shabazz said, "No. I ain't gonna start [inaudible]." That's one thing I liked about him, cuz he [inaudible], but they use it. They wasn't just coming there for nothing. They wanted - they came from Japan. They came from Japan. They wanted - and the Chinese, some of them represented. I don't know if you seen that. Do you ever see that, where the Chinese try to organize black security guards?

I: Oh, yeah. Your organization?

R: Yeah.

I: No. Tell me about it.

R: Well, [inaudible]. Check on that [inaudible].

I: We're just looking at a document here in which there's a stamp that says that the provisional government, that is, of the ADNIP Party, that this was founded October 14th, 1962.

R: 1962, right.

I: So that's two years after you arrived in San Francisco, and it's before the founding of the Black Panther Party.

R: Yeah. Well, you keep . . .

I: OK. Yeah. But let me go back. We were talking about - so when you would have meetings, general membership meetings of the Party, I mean . . .

R: Of the ADNIP.

I: would you have a lot of people there or would you . . .

ADNIP Party
Founded 10/14/62

R: No, not no whole lot. The only time we'd get a lot of people there
- when we would give food.

I: Yeah.

R: We served dinners.

I: You served dinners, yeah.

R: And we'd pass out flyers within the community. We passed from
- from Hayes Street all the way back to, to Post, [inaudible].

I: Post Street.

R: Yes. Or go beyond like Sutter.

I: Yeah.

R: And back - it's within the community.

I: Right.

R: Put flyers out.

I: [inaudible]

R: And we couldn't hardly - we had four or five turkeys and they
were gone [snaps his fingers] like that, and [inaudible] other tings.

I: So the Party was not what you'd call a mass party. This was more
of a small cadre.

R: Small, yeah. It's small, something to advocate, to clean up the
community. We had another fellow you call Green. They threwed him in
there to try to offset the ADNIP Party.

I: Who was he?

R: The [stutters]. They set him up - I got his records, and they set
him up - to set up a security [inaudible]. Security.

I: Oh, he set up a security guard company too.

R: Yeah. He was the [inaudible] in this community too. He was backed by other people. They called it Reverend Green.

I: Reverend Green. OK. So he had a security guard company too.

R: Yeah. That just for the, you know, to put that divide and conquer.

I: Oh. Mm hmm.

R: That's during the time when Chief Cahill was the Chief of Police, and Chief Cahill say, "I don't have nothing against the black security guard, but everywhere my police go, they sees them."

I: They see the black security.

R: Black security, yeah.

I: Do did you have - so you didn't have problems with the police then.

R: No, had no problem with the police. Like i told you, that night when I was going, walking home and they were asking me, "Are you guarding here too?" I say, "No."

I: Well, that's interesting, considering how much trouble the Black Panther Party had with the police.

R: Yeah.

I: How come you . . .

R: But the Black Panther Party - what they say - now, you know what they were saying. I used to attend some of the meeting outside, right in front of the City Hall, they be all, "Kill the pig. Kill the pig." Oh, Lords. Yeah. I mean I don't think that was the way to approach it. You don't approach nothing that way. Get knowledge in you. And you're trying to educate the other man away. Some of them have changed too. You got - if they want to survive. If you want to survive, you got to change. Because

the way you're going now, where they just - you automatic will destroy yourself. You understand? You see where I'm coming from? I mean that's my - that's my opinion. Through studying with people. Like I say, I study my people, particularly the - but in uh, for to know to help your people you gotta have some knowledge in you. That's why I study a lot of black history. I study psychology of black people. And I study black psychology, and I go around and study from slavery, from ancient history of my people. You've got - if you're gonna help people and try to do the best you can working with people, you try to understand your people. By working with them you can learn. That's how I learned about the, about the labor movement. I gained knowledge by working in the labor movement, by reading labor history. [inaudible] we don't have too much black labor history, but [inaudible] so that's why these books got to be exposed now.

I: Yeah. So when the, when the . . .

R: They got a few black labor history, the union.

I: Coming back to the ADNIP Party again, now, when, when Al Sultan had this trouble, and was accused of having hidden some guns somewhere, buried some guns somewhere, and then he fled the country, went to Guyana.

R: Because he didn't want to go to court.

I: Yeah.

R: Stay out of court.

I: So the Party - what happened? The Party just fell apart? Or did anybody try to continue it, or what?

R: No, no.

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I: It just . . .

R: You know, it just - the chief had gone, you see?

I: Yeah.

R: Even he left word with Mr. Walker, say he will be back. But when he finished, he [inaudible] two books, in what do you call it? Guyana or Ghana?

I: Ghana is the one in Africa. Guyana's in South America.

R: That's the one that Jim Jones was at.

I: That's Guyana.

R: That's Guyana.

I: That's the one in South America.

R: South America.

I: So Al Sultan went where?

R: He went to . .

I: Where, where?

R: Ghana, Ghana.

I: Well, Ghana. In Africa, OK.

R: No, not in Africa.

I: South America.

R: South America.

I: Guyana. [spells]

R: Yeah, I'm a slow thinker, Brother. [laughing] Give me a chance to think.

I: But he didn't have anything to do with Jim Jones, did he?

R: No, no. He went there to write . . .

I: Books.

R: books. He written two books. He open up a bookstore over there.

I: He did? Is that so?

R: Yeah, I seen . . .

I: Have you seen his books?

R: No, he didn't get them back here. They throw the - the confiscate them when they killed him over there.

I: They killed?

R: Yeah, they killed him over there.

I: Who killed him?

R: Now, we don't know that, Brother, [inaudible]. I have one book here long time ago that one of the - there was a minister. He was with the CIA. And they had the woman he was living, who Shabazz was living with [inaudible]. She turned him up when he got through his books. They were fixing to come back and spread the truth. And that's why they - they run - they say they run him down cuz his son went over there. I give his son some [inaudible] book to go over there. I had that book. I got the book and give it to him. They priest. This man was some kind of priest - not a priest, but he was a spiritual leader or something for the CIA. And he wanted - the hell that were.

I: So Al Sultan fled to Guyana, opened a bookstore.

R: Right.

I: Was writing some books.

R: He written two books.

I: He wrote two books.

R: Was ready to come back.

Al Sultan
fled to Guyana

I: And was going to come back to the United States, and then he was assassinated.

R: He 'bout was coming back. Well, his son went after - his son went over there. He tried to get information. He trying to find out the grave site.

I: He tried to find out what happened.

R: Yeah. And they didn't tell him that. But I told him when he come back, I say, "Man, you was in dangerous territory. All them people there was dangerous." Say, "You lucky you back here."

I: Now, was this after the People's - the Jim Jones?

R: [inaudible]

I: It was . . . when the . . .

R: After the Jim Jones. That's when he went, yeah.

I: That's when his son went?

R: He went to - no. Al Sultan went over there.

I: After the . . .

R: After the Jim Jones, the right to get, to write the books, two books he say he was going to write two books and come back.

I: And he never [inaudible].

R: After he finished. No, that's why he opened up the bookstore, cuz he had a bookstore here too.

I: Yeah.

R: And never did come back. The woman snitched on him. Now, we had all of them name. I got the book somewhere there because I give his son one. Uh, shit. They was working for the CIA. They tricked him out of life. And they - his son gonna say that somebody told Al Sultan was

running when he got killed. Say that he got killed somewhere running.

That's bullshit. The guy got killed standing up.

I: Oh, that he was trying to get away?

R: Shooting, yeah.

I: But they said he was trying to get away.

R: Yeah. He wasn't gonna run, yeah.

I: So he was shot?

R: He was killed, yeah, shot. He wasn't gonna run. Not, not - I know him. He wasn't - he's a man that stood up, brave. He didn't give a damn if there was fifty police. [laughs] He was gonna stand up. The [inaudible] had to shoot him down like a man. That's the way he wanted to die, like a man.

I: Yeah.

R: Yeah.

I: So after this happens, then you, you started going to the Party meetings again, or how did you get back involved with the Party, the Communist Party?

R: Well, I never did left the Communist Party. You know, I didn't [inaudible].

I: But you stopped going to meetings.

R: I stopped going to some meetings, yeah.

I: I mean you withdrew your personal support.

R: [inaudible] support, whatever you call it, I stopped.

I: Now, so what happens now, after the ADNIP Party's falling apart?
How do you reconnect with the Communist Party?

R: Well [inaudible], I started going back, become more active, you know? I hadn't had nowhere else to go, fight for the rights of the people. I wanted something this [inaudible], [inaudible] fighting. Try we can see something that we ain't got nothing yet. I'm concerned about, about California here. You got this, the city - you got the history of California, I mean the history of San Francisco with black people in it. You got the history of the state and everything, and, and they ain't, they ain't doing a damn thing. The people here. They're selling out so-called leaders. I ain't gonna say all leaders. They're [inaudible] majority of the leaders, selling out. That's my opinion, Lee Brown's opinion.

I: OK, but you thought that the Communist Party was, despite its problems it was doing some good work.

R: Doing some good work. I still say they did some damned good work.

I: OK.

R: [inaudible]

I: And organizations like the Black Panther Party, because of their philosophy of picking up the gun or something, you didn't think that was the way to go.

R: No, no. No, I didn't say that. I didn't think it was the way. But they had - they attacked it by - you should not let the people know everything you do.

I: You do.

R: You organize. Get yourself together. Organize your people. You can't give a man no gun, he go out there and [inaudible], turn around and

shoot the man that give him the gun. You gotta give him some knowledge of why he picking up the gun, the reason to be picking up the gun.

I: OK.

R: Like a [inaudible] in your book.

I: So it's a question - it's not just a question of picking up the gun, but why you pick it up.

R: Yeah. It's sometime you, you may get to that stage. You got to pick it up, with people being oppressed. You like to have to pick up a gun during Roosevelt, on the 29th. People were starving to death, and people had to hit the deck. [inaudible] had to fight back. Sometime you may have to fight back, because if the country go into fascism, that's the first thing you're going to have to go in to come out of fascism into a social program, because the man gonna try to hold on to what he got. If he got to kill, try to kill the people. The people back get to the wall, Brother, they gonna fight back. I don't give a damn who he is. White or colored. They - see, that's the [inaudible] - well, I should not be telling you this, because you know more better about this. When you keep the people divided up, using that word or color, [inaudible] and religion, that's a lot of bullshit. The ruling class. That's me talking. The ruling class takes advantage of it. Got - when you got masses divided and then you got problems. You got to forget about your religion, forget about this color, forget about [inaudible], yeah. Except I don't know about the Klan. Or [inaudible]. I don't know. [inaudible] Oh, brother. But you got to - you got - the most dangerous thing we got now, that racism. White supremacy. And that's the people. I, I go along with the [inaudible] in Washington. After I [inaudible] played the tape. So I hear what she's saying. It makes sense - when people out

here saying it makes sense cuz I got a clear [inaudible] understanding. I'm slow to think, but I got a little understanding. How human beings should live. When you have knowledge. When you read that poison book, if you have the knowledge of your ancient history, you know what's going on. That's right. Because we know that book's been tampered with. You know what book I'm talking about. Because in them days there wasn't no [inaudible] blond haired people with their [inaudible] they painted their own image in there. We got no business looking up in no religion, people will follow it. We have no business looking [inaudible] the enemy, talking about "Save me." He gonna save you, all right. But you gotta to change - a lot of them ain't gonna change their mind. A lot of them changing. Even in the South. Some of the people in the South is not as bad as these, some of these racist people. They [inaudible], Brother. Why are they racist? But you got a racist society. A racist system. A racist program. America is a racist society. And Lee Brown tell you, through my studies, struggling, America is racist. The people. The people got to be re-educated. If they don't, that's a sickness in their minds destroying them. Destroy their children's children if they don't change. Cuz we could be much better. As large as this universe were, people got no business going to bed homeless. That's what I've been saying that all the time. No child got no business going without a decent education, without decent food, decent clothes, decent housing. That's a human right. And while the few people control, like they went into Africa. With this guy, Rogers say about it.

I: J. A. Rogers.

R: Yeah. And this other book by [inaudible].

I: How Europe Underdeveloped Africa.

R: Developed Africa.

I: Rodney.

R: Rodney. Rodney Williams?

I: Walter Rodney.

R: Walter Rodney, yeah.

I: Walter Rodney.

R: And say, and this other guy, about capitalism, capitalism and slavery, right?

I: Eric Williams.

R: Eric Williams. You read those books, and thing - and particularly the J. Rogers. Books - now we got this other guy. What is Van [inaudible]?

I: Van Sertima.

R: Van . . .

I: [inaudible] Van Sertima, yes. [spells]

R: Yeah.

I: What's that book of his?

R: He got two [inaudible],

I: About Blacks and discovery of the Americas.

R: Yeah.

I: Nation history. Yeah.

R: Then he got one, Blacks - black [inaudible] in early America.

I: Right.

R: [inaudible] Africa.

I: Africa, and [inaudible].

R: American, early Europe, early Asia. Yeah, they was [inaudible] them. And that's - the ADNIP Party, while they out there - after Al Sultan

left that day, we was speaking on it when he coming back, after he get his business straight, the two books, which he coulda did a lot on. Organizing. That's the reason I felt like they killed Huey Newton, cuz he was gonna reorganize the Party. But I don't think the Party's dead now. It's not - to my understanding. It's not dead. You know that. They ain't coming out, you know, like [inaudible] Huey Newton [inaudible]. Huey Newton had some knowledge. I met him one time. With Beverly Rogers. You ever heard of Beverly Rogers? The NS and P give her - what they call it?

I: And award?

R: Reward, trophy or whatever she - she the one that went to Mississippi one time. They put her in jail and made her strip naked. When she come back here, her husband, he separated from her. How do you know that, Brother Lee? I was working at the office where she was. On Franklin Street. And the last time I see'd her, she showed me her son. Her son got to be big size now.

I: So you and her met Huey Newton?

R: Huh?

I: What's the relation-

R: Huey Newton came to meeting with her one night. They had a meeting. Beverly Rogers was there. That's how I get to meet Huey Newton. And Eldridge Cleaver.

I: Eldridge Cleaver, yeah.

R: Eldridge, [stutters] Kathleen Cleaver and his wife. What her name was?

I: Kathleen Cleaver.

R: Kathleen. She the one got me to join the Peace and Freedom.

I: Ah, OK.

R: And then she - I had her phone number and address, but I never did get a chance to go. We used to talk over the phone. The telephone.

I: I'll tell you what. Why don't we take a break, and then we'll continue this at the next meeting, maybe talk about the Peace and Freedom Party.

R: Yeah. In that time I see can I . . .

I: And you see if you can . . .

R: put something together there.

I: OK. That's the end of this tape for today then.