

Interview September 24, 1970 with Vernon Johnston by
Harry Wells

HW. What particular organizations are you a member of, what is your position in these organizations?

A. I am at present President of the North Preston Youth Improvement Association, I am also on the Executive of the NSAACP. A number of these I have given up because too much involvement because of university purposes.

HW Are those all of your organizations?

A. At present, well there are some others, I didnt bother any more, I just cant attned to.

HW. Did you help to found many of the youth groups around this area?

A. Yes. I understand there was a group already in Hammonds Plains but I started a group in North Preston and also led the way for a group to start in East Preston and Cherrybrook.

HW What do you think Black power is? How do you start these groups in terms of being involved with black power?

A. Speaking of black power, this isnt black power. These people are black young people, their ideas have collected and when ideas are collectdd we try to use the ideas for the improvement of the community - this is black power. For example in North Preston we are trying to establish and we have and we the young people have done this ourselves. Several other things the other groups have been doing are black power as they are done by black people.

HW. You have talked to me before - the community is trying to get a gas station and things like that.

A. This is in North Preston.

HW Dont you find that black power in communities becomes stronger.

A. Yes but at this point I am rather dubious whether people actually feel the way I myself feel or many of the young people in our group.

The young people ideals are wholly different from their parents. But

in North Preston we are trying to establish a garage, maybe a restaurant or something of this type.

HW WHAT do you think of the BUF and how does that relate to the problems of black people around here?

A. I have no trouble in defining black power because even if it is done by black people, this is power because it takes social boost to move things and if this movement is what you call black power. If you want to be very dogmatic and you say black power is violence, it is up to you, but black power is very constructive when people want to make it constructive.

As far as BUF is concerned

HW How do you feel it relates to the problems of black people?

A. I am really dubious as it will get off the ground because the main reason is that the leaders who are on the interim committee of BUF - they don't seem to be leaders who most people would like to have. BUF is a great thing even in Preston, except that after you get off the ground, the leadership which people want in a so-called democracy country you must have leaders who are elected by the people and even respect the wishes of the people. In this case I don't think the leaders respected the wishes of the people who are supposed to be involved. Until then you won't have a constructive and a very good organization.

HW Do you think BUF could go somewhere if it didn't have this leadership problem?

A. Most definitely. BUF ~~is~~ ^{could be} a great thing for black people here and if it could work here I feel it could also be an example for black people in America and other places in the world.

HW In present terms of thinking about what you think of constructive black power, what do you consider community power - the distinctions you draw.

A. In dealing with black people there can hardly be any distinction.

H.W What factors have shaped your present position and thinking about black people? What factors have influenced you to make you ~~work~~ realize

you want to work for black people?

A. What has really influenced me is the fact that I have seen and studied and read much about black people. For instance every magazine I like to get the motivations and censuses. Ebony is a great thing because you dont see white ~~nation habits~~ knights and you know very well it is in the past we have always had white ~~nation~~ knights in armours and nothing about black people. It sorts of builds your ego up and your whole interest when you learn about something yourself. Everybody likes to hear about their own history, ~~y~~their own origination. I read a lot about black people and try to help them as much as possible and this helps me to build up my whole interest in the black people.

What books

HW. ~~xxxxxxx~~ have you read ?

A. I havent read too many about black people, I read articles, I read Ebony, Jet and everything. Also other books by Martin Luther King and Eldridge Cleaver.

HW. In terms of reading these books, do these books influence you and do you try to apply them to the Nova Scotian situation?

A. Being a black person, I automatically have to. I can see direct relationships between myself and other people in Africa, America, West Indies, anywhere. I dont know if other people can see it or not then it would have to have much affect on me. I just wish that other people would feel the very same way. Because this is the thing that helps to build up motivation and you are sure that somebody cares and somebody has to care in order to generate these things.

HW Has there been any local factors that influenced you towards your present thinking?

A. Any local factors that really have influenced me - the fact that i have seen many incidents that have ^{or} happened to many of the black people here which I dont like, even as a kid.

HW Would you give me some examples off these?

A. I have seen where people were educated and they didnt really get a decent job, a job they would like to have and this has happened in many cases and this is a thinkg that really hurts especially when you are young. You sort of build things up and want to go and go on and you cant achieve these things and something has to break down.

HW Can you think of any other local factor - I mean like living in which Preston ~~and~~ an organized community . Are there any factors out there that have ~~changed~~ influenced your present thinking?

A. Living in Preston, especially in North Preston, I seen where many black people from other communities who have looked down on the people of Preston, North Preston or New Roads what it is called, they think that the people of North Preston are really ignorant people and they have nothing to offer to any society or to anyone else but this is not so and we have to prove this to them. At the same time I am not bitter about this fact although it hurts and if I can do anything to help back people in other black communities I am going to do it. Also in Preston we can boast about having our own black councillor and we have had for many years, although our councillor has not as much power as he would like to have, we are still proud of the fact that he is a black man and he is one of the best. You look at these people for what they stand for as long as you know as to what type of person or leader the individual will be.

HW Has the American experience influenced your thinking?

A. I think the American experience has influenced people the black people all over the world, whether they are or violent people or what.

HW Why do you think this?

A. Because the mass movement in some parts of the States has had a hard time . I have read much about this - I have never been there. Being black

as I said before I can feel a certain relationship. If I were down there I would have just as hard a time as they have. Also in South Africa, Rhodesia and Angola - what is going on there has as much effect upon me as well and it should as much effect upon you and the other fact is that you are black.

H.W. What happens in South Africa, Rhodesia and all these places makes you realize that there is racism in Nova Scotia?

A. I dont need to go that far - I can see it around here. Not in my community as we have black people.

HW Are you on the executive of the NSAACP.

A. I am, I did mention that

HW I thought you had resigned as you were going back to school?

A. No. I also feel that it is very important that although a black person must get out of the environment in any case to achieve something as our conditions are not adequate to get a decent education. I still feel you must keep in contact with people within the community. Too often people have gone out to be educated - this wide gap has developed between the people left in the community and therefore for me to go back to my community you left to be educated and lose all my contacts just like coming into Halifax and going somewhere else to go to University- my contact between myself and Preston . It is a hard thing because when you go back people are going to say, hell who does he think he is coming in here to teach us this and tell us this. If you have a direct relationship between you and the people there, communicating with them as much as possible, I think this is not there as much.

HW What other sources do you use to get information or news about black people?

A. Naturally we listen to the radio, whether you can believe it or not but it is news- you can investiage for yourself if you really want to.

HW. Do you talk very much with friends and people about the problems of black people and do you do it regularly?

A. I guess I do, I used to do it too often and I used to come too

HW How many people do you think you have a chance to sit down and talk about the problems of black people? Do you have a small circle of friends ? quite frequently,

A. No I have no small circle of friends -/I think people get tired of it. I enjoy it as I feel it is the duty of myself, of any black people there are so many white people who dont know anything about these things. You cant really blame them as they have never seen a black person they dont know how to react with them. People are people and in most cases parents have not done this, therefore I think it is our duty to educate these people if they are going to learn.

HW I would like to know your reaction to a thing that happens quite frequently - when you see and hear about riots within the United States how do you react?

A. My interest is very high as I am wondering what is going on down there. I know why they riot and as far as I am concerned it is justified because something has to be done about these violences and even with the French Revolution this kind of thing evolved and we are no different from anybody else. I dont feel they should riot but wh n they do riot I can understand their reasons and therefore it is hard to me to look around and say these people shouldnt riot. There are many people who will never get anything unless they give their own message and this is their message, also it is wrong that people should be killed but this is the price one must pay for something which is beautiful.

HW. What effect did the assassination of Martin Luther King have on you?

A. Dr. King was a very and most respectful man and any person not only applies to black people, had much respect for him and during his death everything was very said about it. I found it very hard to believe. A man of his calibre could be assassinated just like that. I should have known that it could happen to any human being but I never expected it. I should have prepared myself for it. Whenever there is a black person

trying to lead a way something always seems to get rid of him somehow. Sometimes white people who are speaking on black people's behalf.

HW. Did his assassination make you bitter or did it make you sort of racist for the time?

A. For a short period when I went back to school, it really hurt me and I began to talk to the other kids that a white person killed Martin Luther King - how many others will they kill? Will they kill me if I should go out and try to speak up for what I really believe in and which they should believe in - will they kill me? I didn't really feel racist after all the kids in my class and in the whole school in Nova Scotia they didn't do it, so you couldn't really be bitter about the whole thing.

HW Even though Dr. King is gone now, are you still very interested in the ideals of the struggle of American Black leaders now?

A. Although I had much respect to Dr. King, many other people have much respect for him, still we can't leave all the work to be done in the hands of one person - there should be many black leaders. Many people who are willing to carry on this type of work because it is too much of a job for one person to do. We can't expect to sit back and let Dr. King or Abernethy or anyone else to do all this work.

HW Do you know any present leaders that you are interested in now?

A. Not especially. I don't care for criticizing people but in some cases you just have to criticize people. I feel that the leadership mainly in the States is not as strong as it used to be when Dr. King was head of the Christian Conference.

HW. I would like to get your opinion on some tactics - how do you feel about these tactics that may solve some problems? What do you think about letter writing and phone calls to officials as a means of tactics to solving problems?

A. To officials

HW. County officials, city officials

A. Letter writing is o.k. calling on the phone is o.k. But how often has this been done and what results have come out of this?

I think it is best that you converse face to face, and they they can see your expression. Just writing a letter and saying I want this and I want that, you are demanding. In certain cases people must demand they have the right to demand.

HW. What do you think about community organized tactics in solving the problems?

A. I think it is great - if you can have any kind of movement it has to be a mass of people and they should be really organized as much as possible to get a job done.

HW Do you more or less emphasize community organization in North Preston?

A. Most definitely

HW What do you think about marches as a means of tactics to solve the problems?

A. Marches are okay for making people aware that they have a problem and the people want a change, o.k. for getting things across but there are certain methods to use which should be used to get across certain things.

HW How do you feel about boycotts?

A. I think boycotts are more effective and they are really effective only if everybody in a particular place will participate in this boycotting.

HW. What do you feel about the idea of civil disobedience as a tactic to solve your problems?

A. It takes the same form as marches - people just have to stop - they say I don't give a damn about this and they are not going to stop when they are driving their car or what but the thing is if the traffic

is tied up they just cant keep driving or walking can they?

HW Of the two marches or civil disobedience - would you classify both of them as the same? Have the same amount of effectiveness?

A. No a bit more effect is shown when the civil disobedience ~~occurs~~ occurs because then people know that you really mean it - if you put your truck or car in the way and not move then you really mean business. You can march on that street all day long and people could say well these people are marching and it means nothing to them, but when you have a truck or car in the way or tied up or whatever tactic you are going to use for civil disobedience - it is more effective I think.

HW What do you think about violence as a tactics to solve problems?

A. I dont really believe in violence myself but I do understand that in many cases violence cannot be avoided. As a Christian if somebody hit me, I am not that much of Christian I am not going to hit back, if they hit me to hurt me. I dont feel they should go to guns etc. In the Southern United States or Angola violence is something which cannot be avoided there and this is the only type of thing which is needed, but as far as the problems here in Canada, I dont think it has come to a point yet where violence has to be used because our problem here is much different, not much different but different from the problem in the States, there are more black people than we have here and in many cases some of the are tried differently here, therefore we should try to get as much done by communicating with these people as possible before it can result in violence. With violence you know somebody is going to get hurt - who knows who it is going to be, it could be you or I. I can understand the people are prepared to die for what they believe in and this is good too but the thing is if you can save your life, why not save it.

HW Do you think that only black people should be leaders in organizations fighting for their rights?

A. No I think that any human being who calls himself a decent human being, he should go along with a black person or beside human rights especially where it is going to effect the whole world. It is better in these movements, it is not a black movement but it is a movement that black people have generally a movement where you have people fighting for their rights - because after we get these rights we should get these rights all settled for black people. Where do you say that black people have to learn with each other and we do not have a problem trying to live together with each other. They are no different from anyone else but the thing is if we fight for the rights of people regardless of their race, colour or creed, why are people fighting in this black cause black fighting in a red cause, in this case we are simply fighting in our own cause, haven't time to fight for the red cause that much, although we should try to fight for it., against these injustices because it is preparing the way for a better world.
HW Do you think that white people should be leaders in organizations fighting for the rights?

A. They can be involved but in this case - for instance in places where there are no black people and if there are white people knowing discrimination takes place if a black person appears on the scene, well naturally you should have a leader to fight against this thing in white communities and this sort of thing but in the case where you have a black community I think you should have your own black leader in a black community.
HW Do you feel that white people try to control ?

~~xxxxxx~~

A. If we can do it to improve and change outlook of black people or change their impression, why can't white people do it to change the impressions of white people.

HW If you were trying to solve the problems, rid society of prejudiced and discrimination who has to be changed the black or the white man?

A. I could say you know it you have white people - how can you actually blame someone else - you can't blame the black man. People talk about Carmichael, other people talk about the injustice of white

people afflicted by black people, red people or other people of the world who are not white and they don't like this but they must understand the reasons for all these injustices and why we have people such as Stogie Carmichael - he is great guy and we need people like Carmichael and guys such as George Wallace. I don't mean to say that two wrongs make things right but this is the way you have to work out in many cases.

HW. According to an example you just gave, you said that white, black yellow people you lump them altogether have problems with the white man. Do you see all the white people have similar problems?

A. Yes, ask any Red Indians of North America if their parents were allowed to marry blacks, they would say no their parents would not want to marry blacks. Discrimination exists within black groups, red groups, and white groups. You have black people in some cases refusing to marry Chinese or red people or whatever - the problem is prevalent and it takes place all over.

HW Do you see all white people having similar problems? Do you think that the Chinese, Indians in North America, Indians in the Far East, Black people - do we all suffer from the same problems from the white man?

A. Yes, I think that all the major races in the world have suffered from ~~sup~~^{su}pression and suppression has been inflicted by white people.

HW Do you see the poor whites having similar problems?

A. Yes poor whites also have problems, even with white people. The history that I have read so far that so many people and it means that they would kill and sell their own mother - if a person is selfish they don't give a damn for anybody else. They want to get on top and tramp on anybody.

HW Do you see any poor whites as joining in/^{the movement}with black people for some problems? Do you think the poor people in the Creighton area have the same problems as the black people in that area?

A. the poor whites, it seems to me, ^{the poor white man.} his poor because of his lack of ambition but the blacks are poor he has not been given the opportunity

In most cases to advance, I can see a white man being poor because in most cases it is lack of ambition

HW. Do you see most of these people being exploited or suppressed by society?

A. They both have been exploited to a certain extent but the black man has been more exploited by white people than the white man, the poor white.

HW There are many words going around what we should call ourselves which word would you prefer.

A. I am black, if the white person calls himself white, why should I not call myself black and be proud of it. If they call me negro, I am negro - I do correct them in many cases I dont - this word black is just being accepted and it has not been fully accepted by all black people. If they respect me they can call me black, they can call me negro.

HW Do you ever perceive yourself as being an African living in Canada?

A. My really direct relationship with Africa - I was brought over here and my culture is Canadian because I dont know anything about the African culture and I could hardly call myself a pure African but by descent I am African.

HW. When people ask you your nationality?

A. I am Canadian .

HW You said you were influenced by what happens in the United States and West Indies - do you see the black people in these areas having similar problems as all over?

A. I think they are probably stronger - they are the majority there in South Africa, Angola and Rhodesia, therefore their problems would have to be stronger than ours. They can hardly do a thing they want to do in their own country. There are more white people in the country than they have blacks but it is about time the majority of people respected the wishes and rights of minority. I feel that any human being in any society

or any nation has something to offer and ~~man~~ it is up to that society to get what these people have to offer and use it to the best of their advantage, not in slavery and use it so everybody can be happy.

HW Do you see a militant self help program as being necessary if the black man is to succeed in the struggle ?

A. Militant in what manner

HW What would you think of this being a militant self help program?

A. I am not too clear on this. What I would call a militant self help program. is a different matter from yours.

HW What would you call a militant self help program?

A. To my knowledge a militant self help program would be a program where people demand the things that you are fighting for. In some cases it results in violence - demand for what they believe in.

HW. Do you see this type of occurrence as being necessary or this type of program being necessary for black man to succeed?

A. I think it is - when you are not complaining about anything, people think you are content. This has been the practice here in Nova Scotia for many years -/black people dont want any changes and they come and publize anything they see bad in the community, they dont publicize that which is also good and this is bad for the black man. It is time that these black people realize that these things are happening and they will continue to happen unless they get up and do something about it. As to the degree of militancy I am not going to say.

HW. You say in New Roads and North Preston there are a lot pf things happening - this seems to me to be a self help program.

A. I would not say the majority of people there = this is only an organization which/our young people/ organization in North Preston.
is improvement

H.W. I think this is a self help program.

A. It is to the effect that we in North Preston are trying to help ourselves but we have not reached the stage where we can call it the people are doing these things. The idea is to promote the motivation of these

people to get them to establish their own self help programs.

HW Do you think these programs are militant?

A. No I don't think they seem militant because we try to help ourselves and we haven't gone to the government for anything and we try to avoid this as much as possible, although the government can help us greatly if they want to. When you have the government sources involved there is always something attached.

HW In talking about your community of North Preston, which tactics do you prefer - one of strengthening the community of power, or the one of fostering individual excellence?

A. It is nice that we try to build individual excellence but to help the community is more important than to help one self. I feel that to help our community individual abilities can be improved, ability of motivation pass on to other people. It is more important to help one's community than to help one self.

HW What do you think are the most important qualifications of a black leader today?

A. The strong qualification should be that black people should be willing to make sacrifices - a leader and not to be selfish and to think of the people involved. It is not just good enough if I should think it good or even for me and not for my brothers and sisters.

HW Do you see the most important qualification is the black leader represents his people?

A. Represents his people - to the fullest ability and extent.

HW You think it is more important than him having a good education or that he can communicate with white people.

A. I think it is very important - at the same time we can be militant but we must also encourage people to be educated and we have to try and fight these people with the weapons which they use. Education is one of the weapons they have applied for many years, since the beginning of

time, and it is time we had education and be able to fight these people with the same power as much as they can do with us. Education plays a major part in any particular group.

HW. What effect do you think the visit of American black power advocates had on the Nova Scotian situation?

A. I think it had much effect. I am glad that they came here, although people really criticized and they said I invited these people here but I think many people even those you blame myself and our youth for inviting them, which we did not, I think these people are very glad these guys came. Because if opened the eyes of many people, black and white.

HW Do you think it made the people more militant?

A. It made some, I think it made more of the young people more militant?

H.W Do you think the young people in North Preston are more militant than they were before these guys came ?

A. No I dont think they are - yes some of them are.

HW. Some of the girls were ~~speaking~~ wearing hair in the Afro style?

A. Not all the girls, but many of these girls were from East Preston

HW Were they doing this for the black power guys?

A. No . To wear ones hair in the Afro style is not being militant.

A sense of pride but not militant.

HW What effect do you think Stokey Carmichael had when we came to North Preston?

A. This is all tied in together- when the other guys came Mr. Carmichael came with them - these guys came with him. Many people wondered at first who this guy was. I felt it very hard to believe that here was Carmichael in North Preston - I read about him many times and saw him on T.V. I never expected to see him in North Preston.

HW. Do you think he affected the kids at all?

A. I think it had some effect on some of the kids. They change their whole way of thinking at times. I find that when the kids went back to high school they seemed to appear more militant than ever before. this kept developing even after the people had left. They were more

willing to stand up for what they believed in even if it meant a fight.

HW What do you think are the major problems facing black people in this area?

A. I think education plays a major part to help to broaden the minds of people to be able to observe these things, black culture and black history. I cant see a person having grade 4 or 5 education being interested in black culture and so on. It appeared to me that it is those who have gone to high school who are most interested in black culture and helping to change things.

Living in North Preston in Africville
HW Do you think one of the major problems is the idea that the people dont have deeds?

A. This is a mjaor problem that exists in the Preston area and has existed in Africville and this is why Africville was so divided and torn to pieces and destroyed. It is essential they should have a deed.

HW Do you think many people are trying to get their deeds in the Preston area?

A. They are many people trying to get their deeds - they are many people building new homes and AI am quite sure they dont want people to come and be able to take these homes away from them. We have had a lawyer in the community helping to provide ~~legal services~~ legal services for the people there and through him I understand that many people have applied for their deeds.

HW Could you tell me what happened in Africville had any effect on some reprecussions in North Preston?

A. Yes, not only in North Preston but also in other black communities. They figured that if Africville was gone people also wondered ~~if~~ which community was going next - all the people in North Preston were afraid they would be next. I am quite sure these people want to stand up and fight for their homes and so on.

HW. Do people talk about Africville very much in North Preston?

A. Not now, Africville seems to be a lost topic.

HW. I need your reaction to these statements - most whites want to keep blacks down as much as they can, would you agree or disagree with this statement?

A. A good portion of the population is comprised of young people although some young people have prejudices but it is possible that they are not aware of these things because if they haven't had a chance to educate some of the people - naturally they are going to believe what they are told. It is too general to say most people, if you want to say most people are willing to hold back it is only fair that you could say that.

HW. If you took the whole Canadian society, do you think that most Canadians would want to keep black people down as long as they can?

A. Most of the Canadian population is made up of younger people.

HW. Some people have said that there are white stores who take advantage of black customers/? Do you agree with this?

A. Yes, and they don't show black customers the same respect they do to white customers in many instances.

HW. Do you think that most of the stores like to take advantage of black customers?

A. No I would not say most of them.

HW. Most white who take part in ~~in~~ ^{civil} rights demonstration are not really interested in the ~~problems~~ problems of blacks. Do you agree?

A. This is a very hard statement to endorse because you have to examine and there are many whites working with black people in black organizations for years and they do more work in them than some black people. If they are working along with us, as long as they are not doing anything which is harmful, why should be criticize and talk about them.

HW Do you think the whites on the board of the NSAACP here are really interested?

A. I think they are really interested, and sincere. Altho their method would be somewhat different from a black person.

HW. What type of neighbourhood do you prefer -if all these neighbourhood were equally well kept up.? Would you prefer mostly white, mixed, mostly black.

A. The only thing if things were equally kept up for everybody - equal rights - it is up to the individual where he wants to live. If I want to live in a white community and people treat me as human being and not as a black person, as long as my family will be enjoying themselves, it shouldnt make much difference, if things were equal.

HW. If the physical aspect of the community was the same, I would say that you would prefer to live in a mixed community?

A. I think that I would. I think that people of different races have something to offer, and you can learn from each other. By being in North Preston I dont know anything about what is going on in Halifax if Halifax is all white and Preston is all black. By living in a mixed community in most cases you can find out what is going on.

Second side

HW. How did you first become permitted to work for your community?

A. Ever since I was old enough to realize we had problems in our community and were lacking many things which other communities enjoyed I have been involved as much as possible.

HW. What particular factors - what influenced you to become involved why did you become involved?

A. The fact is that I have been able to get ar^ound and meet various people and I have seen their reaction to other black people, although they treated me very nicely in most cases. I could see when they

talked to other people ~~back~~ the approach was somewhat different even as a young kid and it became clearer and clearer and I knew that we had to do something to change some problems.

HW Did the church influence you at all towards your thinking or ~~xxxx~~ towards your commitments?

A. Well the church influenced me also. I was involved in many of these church activities. I was on many of the boards of the church and I was really concerned with trying to get the people of the community themselves to change. By being in these societies it also give you the sense to know you want your society to function as proper as it can possibly be or more proper than somebody's else's organization of the same type.

HW I still dont understand how you say the church influenced you?

A. The church did as the church also helped me to get around and meet various people. As far as my thinking, the church had little to do with that outside Christianity. I am a Christian- being a Christian this had some effect upon me. I dont want to see people being killed if it can be avoided - I believe in the Christian faith so it is wrong for me to say that the church didnt have some effect upon me.

HW If you are a Christian some of the many doctrines as I am your brother's keeper and do unto others as they do unto you, did these doctrines help shape your thinking what you should do - that you are all brothers?

A. I can see that things are better solved when people are doing things together - I can see better results. You dont call it the Christian way of looking at it but there is nothing I have to be ashamed of if I happen to be a Christian - I am proud of it. I am not highly religious but the church has some effect upon me and my thinking. I only wish many other people ~~think~~ feel like I do.

I do believe that we should always put God first and then try to get things to work out - we have to have faith and faith ~~xxxxxx~~ becomes a whole wide section. Having faith means that a person should really believe what he is doing without actually believing in the fights of people. I believe that the church has some effect on anybody. Some people say they have left the church but deep down even as a young kid the church has some influence upon what they do right now. Black people are really religious people - maybe they are turning away more from God now because of the scientists which change our opinion about God and christianity.

HW You say many of the black people are turning away from christianity - I find this in the States, the black youth are rejecting christianity. ~~xxxxxx~~ Most people say christianity has spoiled the system, - the slaves and oppressed people -, why is this?

A. I can't see that - because God is superior to all of us. God it not going to influence you to be a racist. God is not coming down here to tell you to be a racist or you should hate somebody else. The churches in America, in Canada - if they are going to discriminate and become racists well it not because of God, of belief in God that makes you do this. I believe in God too and it is not going to make me go and be an Uncle Tom. I believe in these things, I told you I believe - I cant see that this is means of holding me back.

HW. The point is this some of the racists I found in the United States are some of the southern Baptist leaders, like Rev. Billy Walker

A. You cannot blame it on God the fact that Rev. Walker ~~do~~ anybody else - you cant blame God for these people, they make mistakes, they use it for their own interpretation, they use their tools and their weapons to be racists for the human dignity and pride, not God.

HW. In other words peace in the world is lost.

A. You are really a Christian by your actions. I say I believe in God but if I dont act can you really say I am a Christian.

.I think there is a mistake that too many people make - they say I am not going to church but dont lose your faith in God because of certain people in that church. People take the bible and use the bible to get across their messages and the thing they want to do whether it is racism or any other thing.

HW Do you say that the Bible and the church are all relevant?

A. I am not saying that, I am saying that people should not blame God and should not blame the Bible for the fact that things are not working out and somebody should use the Bible and use God's name to say they are working for God and not doing it. These people are hyproctites .

HW Even the slavery in Africa was done by missionaries - how can you still be involed when you see all these historical facts happen?

A. These historical facts were done by man - they used the Bible to say I am here to make you people Christians - they have used the Bible.

HW If God really loved people, why would he have people enslaved for 400 years?

A. This is one question which is very difficult to answer - even the theologians. What I am saying is that God works on his own time and has his reasons for eeverything as you and I would have our reasons for everything we do. I think that God is so superior to us that we cannot question the things which he does.

HW. Between the ^{to} ~~from~~ Africa ~~and~~ The West Indies was over 25 million people died.

Aa Also there is Satan too. I also believe in Satan and who is to say that God is having a continual battle with Satan or not and who is to say. It is very difficult for us to say.

HW. Early today you were telling me you care more about other tpeople than you care about yourself? What has caused you to think this way?

A. If I can help somebody else anything that comes unto meand people are going to bless me later on. I feel we should do good works to help

others first of all.

HW Do you think this is a good Christian feeling, this attitude of letting other people go before you ?

A. That means you should open the door for anybody and say you go before I - you~~s~~ must specify but when money is to be given out, I am not going to let any old person go before me if their needs are greater than mine. Put people before you in the sense that if you can help them as much as you possibly can.

HW Most people are after for themselves - I am going to get mine before anybody else, What you are saying, well I will let everyone telse, in terms of well being, I am willing to let people go before me, I am not just selfish.

A. Their need is greater than mine.

HW What factors have caused you to think this way?

A. I guess it is all part of my Christian belief.

HW You think you learn this from the Bible or ~~from your~~ your parents have taught you this?

A. My ~~parents~~ taught me not to be selfish - my mother is not really religious - she is a member of the church and of the choirs and church groups. But mother has some great principles which she has filled us ~~up~~ with and I respect her very much for this.

HW How many years ?

A. I have many years in office because I have been working out of the area and have been to Acadia

HW. ~~How many years~~ I dont want to pry into your personal life, but what I am saying is one of the reasons I think you are not going to return people in the church made some false charges against you and said that you had done this and had done that. Do these people have any Christian understanding?

A. Right that is why I feel I dont go back there because I know no matter how I talk to the people they are not going to change their attitudes. If I feel if I am going to be a stumbling block to these people, and If I am going to stand in their way, they cant be true Christians realizing that these people are not true Christians, why should I go there just to hinder them more but the fact that I am there and they figure I am a Black power advocate or black panthere which means violence in their mind. Why should I sit there in the church knowing that these people cannot worship by having me there? I feel I am a Christian myself and I , should not be a stumbling block for anybody.

HW How can you depend so much on Christianity if you see these people doing you this way?

A. Again I see these people as being human beings and people and not being God.

HW You say God is working in all of us.

A. Yes, God is working in all of us, a bit of God is working in all of us and also a bit of Satan is working in all of us.

Methodist

HW I have a friend who is a minister - he has been attacked by Black power and is interested in black power and says that the church has really been used to exploit the black man and to suppress the black man - he constantly being asked to answer these questions. Do you see yourself as having to go through the same thing/? I think black people are turning away from Christianity, do you see this as a problem for you?

HW A. If all the black people want to jump in the lake, should I jump in the lake because I am black. People should be themselves and be individuals. I am not going to give up all the things in my believe just to lead somebody else - a leader can lead people today.

HW A lot of people make the statement that history is our only judge. Historically is that the reason to burn someone's house down. If we have to reject Christianity....

A. I dont think we have to reject it, People take religion and use it to their own liking. How can I actually blame God, why should I turn away from God for the bad things the people are doing themselves.
People must realize that it is not God who is doing it.

HW Another friend of mine has this expression - Christianity is a sort of novacaine to make black people willing to accept their place but look heaven is up here so you take all this punishment and all these abuses on earth and pray to get to heaven.

A. A lot of people would say this but they cant prove it. I dont go for philosophy having fear on earth if I believe in that I wouldnt believe in God and heaven.

HW All the prayers say oh dear God take us out of these terrible situations and out of our misery and let us ascend to Heaven.

What people were saying is
A. This Christianity was that would make a lot of people accept their place in society. If this is so, it is also said in the Bible that God helps those who help themselves . People are afraid to attempt to get out and to change the whole structure. I feel that so many didnt help themselves and those who tried didnt succeed because they were killed. Many of these black people are afraid to take chances in business, industry and so on. They dont take chances , they feel they are going to lose everything if they take chances. As a rule black people are not going to take chances and this is the kind of thing that has much effect on any community.

HW If Christianity has been used as a tool to make black people accept their place, why not throw this tool out and get something else?
Who can prove that

A. ~~xxxxxx~~ Christianity has been a tool - people take Christianity and they twist it as they see fit. It means that they ~~xxx~~ are going to take it and they can get you to go along to their way of thinking by using Christianity. The same with a gun, a gun is only destrutive

when people use it in a destructive manner. These things are there.

HW I think what has happened the leadership of the Black Power Movement has changed from the hands of old ministers , now the leadership is in the hands of students or the black youth, like Carmichael, Cleaver, all the young people more associated with the student side , of the movement than with the religious side of the movement. Would you being a student and also a Christian, what kind of problems are you going to have - as a student we see there is no scientific foundation for religion, we see that this idea of Christianity hasn't helped us and we reject it, what position are you going to be in?

A. Some people also believe that people really made from evolution and I can combine the two myself but the thing is that they try to make out black people as more of an animalistic type than white people or any other people, you must always be very careful but me I can take and combine them. I can say here is God and even question yourself and say why where did this come from and why and why and go back to infinity. If you accumulate them both I think the bases are stronger, much firmer when you relate the both of them together. But the reason for this great change coming within young people is the fact that they have more education, even some of our ministers, but with the mass of black people being educated today, it is hard to get one person to be spokesman for the people.

HW Still don't you see the difficulties occurring as a student and the Christians, do you see the chance of you lessening your belief in God by being a student, don't you see that you might go along with the students right now?

A. No, only if the students arguments can prove to be stronger than the belief, as yet it has not proven to me and to many people with Ph.D's.

HW. I know a lot of guys myself who are highly religious and you get all these other arguments presented to you and it makes you confused

and it puts your thinking in a dilemma. You dont know if you really believe in these things, whether your previous beliefs are really true or if you were wrong all the time.

A. It makes you think but if you have any Christian faith in the beginning you should never lose that because the very people you converse with in universities they are white and most cases white people and you cant say they are using a different method since we are changing from one method to hold us back. I am not saying that this is so but I wont say they are not. People will just have to weigh these things for themselves. It is awful hard to be contradictory at times because some people can weigh things out in a different way of thinking - like people believe that the Bible says ~~xx~~ an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth means if something is wrong you should and the Bible says do unto others as you have them do unto you. People use their own interpretation. The same thing applies. But we must learn to be individuals and think for ourselves.

HW You say that this new method/^{of religion}is given to us by white people do you agree with that ?

A. I dont think I said directly given by white people. In most universities are white and they have white teachers and white philosophers and scholars, most of them think there is no God. It now seems to be dropping even among black people.

HW. So you think it is wrong among black people.

A. Because our teachers happen to be white

HW. If you solve the problems of black people, in a community power, as you said earlier, well ~~xxxxxxx~~ if you want to get the problems solved you see the people with the power who dont believe in God, why dont you not believe in God, may be you get some of the power too.

A. If they dont believe in God, it ,is not helping me. For instance the people here in Preston after the war of 1812, I think they were put here to die but as I think they had believe in God and it made them stronger. The people in the States and they had a very hard time, harder than they had here. If they hadnt their strong religious belief they would have been wise off and may have been extinct today.

HW You say that God will solve all problems.

A. I cannot see that we just should get rid of God and say there is no God.

HW You say that God will solve all problems.

A. I am not saying that God will solve our problems - it will depend on the individual and his communication with God. Also I do believe that you must help yourself.

HW As things occurred in Preston with Stokeley Carmichael coming there and you being President of the Youth Group and you want Stokeley in and the key to let him in.

A. No I just opened the door to let the kid come into the meeting.

H.W You were branded as being a Black Panther and a Black Power advocate - How has this effected you, what have you done to make the people who have known you all ~~thru~~ your life, change their minds about you.

A. I havent done anything about it. If they want to think I am a Black Panther, let them think it. It is a free world and people are allowed to think and believe in what they want to believe.

HW. Your father questioned you on this - what did you do to convince him?

A. I just told him I ~~wasnt~~. Even now I wasnt because the truth is I wasnt. I dont think we have any Black Panthers in Halifax - they dont know what it is all about even, but if anybody asks me about it, I am going to say I am not.

HW Have you tried to show your parents there is nothing wrong with Black power?

A. What about my uncle - I am not going to show my uncle anything. If he is so interested in helping black people, I think he should go out and investigate these things for himself.

HW Have you tried to help your parents ?

A. My mother understands the whole situation and is very proud about it. She has gone to _____ and seen the conditions there for herself and she is very liberal minded in many ways and there is no need for me to tell her. My father is interested

HW. ~~Do you~~ What kind of argument do you present to your father to make him realize that there is nothing wrong with your involvement in these issues involving Black power?

A. It depends on what you mean by black power. The argument depends on what he means by black power. I show him my interpretation of black power in contrast to his and he can take it or leave it, it is up to him.

HW. What interpretation has he of black power?

A. At first my father's interpretation of black power was violence as many other people of the old community of Nova Scotia, but I havent questioned him since about the issue. I notice that every time something black is on T.V. since I am not interested, he calls me in and is interested in what the people have to say .

HW. Have you had any influence on your parents?

A. I think I have.

HW. In what way

A. Awareness - that we need a change

HW How ~~have~~ you brought this awareness?

A. By discussion and by the things you get involved in

H.W. Are they interested and do they approve of everything you are involved in?

A. I havent seen any incidences where they haven't approved yet.

HW Do you think that most of the youth in North Preston have created this awareness in people there.

A. I think we have done more than anyone else to create awareness there and even now my uncle would say that black power is destructive and dangerous.

HW. What kinds of things made them change their minds? What do you use to make old people think that black pwoer can be ^{con} ~~de~~structive ?

A. I told you the plans we had for a service station and other types. These are the things that we use to try to show people that what black power really is. Is that good enough to tell people that black power is not violence but black power is constructive which will benefits the whole community. You have to show these people, it is not just good enough to tell the people, and this is the tactics we use.

HW Are you saying that the greatest way that the youth affect the older people is by showing them that they are proud and willing to stand up and go after things that they want?

A.A. It shows them that they can also be constructive as well as destructive.

HW. Do you think the older people are trying to say if they can get it we can get it now?

A. Right, I also believe it. This is why we try as much as possible to direct our thinking and our projects along thesee lines.

HW. Do you think your uncle is more or less in tune with what is happening?

A. Was he in tune or not, it is hard for me to say.