

INTERVIEW WITH JIMMY BOGGS--SELECTED SECTIONS

I lived when I first came, I used to live at 940 Theodore. That was between Hastings and Rivard. Then I lived at 420 Theodore, I want to call it Beaubien and Theodore. After that I must have lived a whole lot of places because in those days, people were rooming. When my first kid was born I was still rooming. I paid \$3.00 and the lady made me pay an extra 50 cents a week for the lights. The lights didn't cost no more than \$2.00 for the whole month so I paid the whole light bill but that's what they would do. They say you burn more light when you have a baby. At that time, most people in Detroit were rooming. Most men came here single and sent back for their families. Black and white did it. Whites were mostly coming from Europe at that time.

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(EM) You lived in a big house?

I roomed with people. You'd get a room in the house. I lived in one house where there was one man and his wife and daughter, then me and my wife and daughter and then the landlady. That's it. Anybody who got semi-profitable six room house could rent out two rooms or more to help pay the rent. Those days, people were still having rent parties to help pay the rent. This was the depression. People would go down to Eastern Market on Saturday afternoon to pick up all that food there free.

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They also had a lot of soup kitchens in Detroit in those days. That's the first time I ever saw white people who were hungry. Down south, nobody was hungry, not even black folks. We always had chickens, hogs and cows down south. Down south people

Boys 2 A
were ragged; We didn't have no shoes, no clothes much but you had food. When I came to Detroit people didn't have no food. They'd be in line at the soup kitchens and soup lines. They weren't segregated. The black community itself was segregated. TB CB.

The restaurants you went to in those days were downtown. But not over in the fancy restaurants, over on Randolph, over in that area they had lots of restaurants where for 25 cents you could get all you could eat. That was the only place you could eat downtown, right in that area. Of course, you could go on down to the Valley and eat but if you went there you were already back in the black area. That was the Monroe block area. On Monroe they had oodles of restaurants, cheap theaters. They let blacks go in those places downtown. East of Woodward. Everything took place east of Woodward. There was nothing for the blacks except up there on the west side, off of Warren Avenue and Grand Boulevard, up where that funeral home is.

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There was always a ^{enclave} ~~conclave~~ of blacks down there who went all the way, just about to ~~Epworth???~~ ^{Epworth} ~~They wasn't on Epworth???~~ but ~~just about to it.~~ When they started, ^A after you crossed Grand River going out Warren, that whole section was west side blacks. They were what we used to call the elite blacks. They weren't necessarily elite but because they lived on the west side they thought they were elite. They would come over on Hastings street and raise hell on Friday and Saturday and Sunday night and go back on the west side. These were blacks. Everybody on the east side was always looked down on by the west side in the old days. ~~To the day,~~ even though they still do it, it don't mean nothing.

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INTERVIEW WITH BOGGS

Around about 1969 I wrote a pamphlet called M"Manifest for a Revolution in the United States". In that pamphlet I summed up why I thought we was on the threshold of a revolution in the United States and also why. . .the idea at that time was based on analysis, there had been a terrific movement in the United States, the civil rights movements and movements were sprouting up everywhere in the United States. But they needed more and different kind of organization so that they wouldn't have to be spontaneous all the time. I was putting forth the idea of having a strong ^{CADRES} ~~cabinet~~? type organization in which all the peoples would be politically organized and that they would be capable of giving issued to a very serious trouble in the United States. It was around that pamphlet that some Philadelphia folks and myself and some people from Muskegon come together and formed that organization. At the time of the formation of the organization, we were betting on a black revolution in the United States. We didn't say American Revolution, we said Black Revolution. The pamphlet was based on primarily what had happened to blacks and blacks as a social culture. We formed the organization in 1969 and it last up until 1987. Which it grew at one time to be about 10-11 organizations. From Seattle, Portland, OR, San Francisco, Muskegon, Detroit, Philadelphia, New York, New Jersey, Boston, and Syracuse, NY.

We had branches in each one of those locales. We would have conventions, on a national scale to decide what we were going to do as a national organization and then we would have a convention on a local scale to decide what the local was going to do and

that geo-fiscal???. That went the way we organized ourselves. In between there we may have special meetings based on certain things which might have occurred for which we might ??? some of the things we planned to do in order to follow that course. Most of all our actions would come from some kind of political evaluation or some kind of political analysis. We didn't do things just for the hell of it. We tried to keep abreast of what was happening in the country politically. We tried to keep abreast of what was the potential of the social forces to move in different directions.

(EM) I'm going to ask you to do something that you already did the last time I was here. I'm very short on experiences of people when they just came to Detroit from the south. I'd like to know again about when you came up from the south.

I came here in 1937 and I came here on the freight train as most people were doing during those days. I was 18 going on 19. I graduated from high school in Bessemer, AL in 1937. I had brothers and ~~offers~~ ^{uncles} and ~~???~~ in Detroit. This was in the period when it was the Great Depression. The way people would travel mostly at that time, you were a hobo. Black and white and everything else. ^{40s HAD} A very tough time being a hobo at that time primarily because they had had the ~~Scarborough???~~ ^{SCARBORO.*} case down south, and ~~it~~ ^{IT} that was a question of, if they caught black and whites hoboining together, they was just going to beat the hell out of blacks. It was tough. Nevertheless, my self and one of my friends from Alabama, he was from my hometown of Marion Junction, AL which is

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below Selma, him and I got on the freight train and hoboed up north. We had nothing but what we had on our backs, that's all. Didn't even have a change a pair of clothes, which we learned out later after we hoboed some more that you always take along several pairs of clothes. We had nothing but what we had on our backs. I had about 50 cents, he had about 50 cents. We ran out of money the second day.

How did you eat?

Bumped, like everybody else was doing. We bumped up to people and say, "would you please give me something to eat?" and people would generally give you some bread and a little meat. You'd go up to the nearest house and knock on the back door. I went over to a farmer's house and a lady gave us some cabbage and hamhocks. This is in the summer. In Cincinnati we went down to the bakery and they gave us some cinnamon rolls and stuff. Cincinnati was a bum town at that time, bums just by the hundred, lying around. Cincinnati had a coffee shop there and people built a shanty town there on the river. Everyday you'd go up town and bum. I asked some guy living down in a room in Cincinnati at the dump that lived in Cincinnati. They wasn't bumming but they hung out with all the bums that come in from all over the country. St. Louis was another town that was like that. St. Louis, people took cross-ties and made houses all down the Mississippi River. They even had houses made in bums. Sometimes you'd get on the freight train, there'd be 50 people on the freight train scat-

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* ^{FOOD} FREIGHT TRAINS.

tered all over, some sitting on top, some inside, some in gondolas, just riding where you could ride. The big thing you had to worry about was, when you come into a town and the freight train slowed down ~~and~~ everybody jump^{ed} off and walk^{ed} around the town to catch the train when it ^{would} leave out the other end of the town. ~~The~~ police was start realizing. Down south in Tennessee if they catch you, they put you on peanut farm to pick peanuts. ~~If you get caught in another place, they didn't want you at all. They'd want you to get the hell out of town. Because there was so many bums. That's the way I came here.~~

~~I got off at River Rouge ^{the Ford Plant} ~~out there. Detroit to ??? train, a four~~ train from Toledo. I rode here instead of riding Michigan Central. Got off at Ford Rouge ^{THE RIVER PLANT,} and I walked down Michigan Avenue to downtown Detroit, Asking the police in Dearborn and all down that route where was Theodore and Hastings. That's where my uncle was living. I come to 940 Theodore. Early day in June 1937. This is the first time I had ever been to a big city. I had been to cities like in Alabama but they wasn't nothing like Detroit. Detroit was the first big city I'd ever been to. My brothers were here, I had two brothers here and my uncle lived here. My uncle was the first black person that worked in Budd Wheel over here on Charlevoix. So all of us thought we was going to get a job over there. I don't know why we thought we would. We didn't get none. That's the year I came to Detroit, 1937. ~~from VA~~~~

There's depression all over. So what you do, you get a job washing cars or like bums do now. Or somebody pick^s you up and you go out in the country somewhere and work in cabins where people had their summer cabins. I had never heard about that

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before until I come here. Or you'd do a little painting with somebody. Get about \$3 for a room to paint in those days. I finally worked with some painters for a little while that summer. I lived with my brother. But mainly I went to car washing places. That time, blacks who worked at Ford and a few worked in different foundries. Weren't many black working in the auto industry at all. Ford was the one where blacks worked and the only place where blacks in large amount and they worked in foundry at Ford. I used to have a cousin working at Ford even at that time, they was big shots. Big shots because they was always the ones who had a paycheck, getting about \$25-\$26 a week. At that time was lots of money. Most people had them \$10, \$11 and \$12 a week jobs.

From ~~Mdberry~~ ^l back down to Forrest was the area I lived in back during that period. This was the period which a large numbers of blacks was coming into Detroit from the south, primarily from Alabama and the whites that was coming in was coming from Tennessee. And a few from Kentucky. Didn't many whites from Alabama at first. Whites didn't come from Alabama much up here. In fact didn't none of them come until finally World War II a lot of them come that worked on World War II but whited didn't leave from Alabama. They left from Tennessee though, like mad. That's cause Tennessee was a mountain type land and you didn't have no big farms there. Alabama you had plenty of big farms because the land was flat. Whites did better in Alabama. They left like mad from Tennessee because Tennessee they was as bad off as the blacks were.

(EM) When did you get a job?

I went and worked on the WPA, Works Progress Administration. I worked on Orangelawn, Greenlawn, Cherrylawn, Southfield, State Street and all those streets, digging the curbstones for they put in the curbs and put in cement streets cause most all the streets was dirt roads in those days.

I went back south in 1938 and got married. Come back and still was on the WPA because there wasn't nothing here to do. Then I got transferred in WPA from WPA outdoors working to paint. Then I painted. I painted Denby high school, Herman Kiefer Hospital, it was all under WPA administration, working with the city of Detroit. They loaned us all out to the city of Detroit. Then from there I went to George Trade School. That was WPA too but they was teaching people different trades and I took up machine too. They had instructors from Ford working down there at George Trade School on Russell at that time, right in there about Mack Avenue. Did 18 months in George Trade School. Pattern makers and all that stuff. Well it was about that time the war industry was starting and I got called to Aeronautic Tool Company out on Ryan road but I wouldn't take it because I had got called to Chrysler so I never did get any work in my trade. I got called to Chrysler and I thought I'd make more money at Chrysler because they were going to give me 60 cents an hour as a template maker, pattern maker at this here aircraft plant. That was an apprentice program whereas at Chryslers I got 68 cents an hour as a factory worker. Most factory workers in that day, tops, they

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was getting about \$1.10 an hour skilled trades. I eventually worked up to 98 cents an hour at Chrysler and then from 98 cents an hour to \$1.02 an hour. I worked for \$1.02 an hours from 1940 until the war was over in 1945. The highest wages in Chrysler at that time was running about \$1.36 an hour and that was for a tool cutter or gear cutter in the machine shop and the skilled trade workers were getting \$1.42. All of us got less than \$2.00 an hour throughout the war with lots of overtime. Cost of living was lots cheaper. We had lots of money comparatively speaking. In fact everybody saved some money during the war. That's how they bought all those houses when the war was over because people had 4 years there when they just worked and there wasn't nothing to buy. Didn't make no cars so didn't nobody buy them new cars. Nobody bought refrigerators and stuff like that or big heavy appliances. Nobody bought nothing but house furniture. That's why when the war was over, because they had all them long hours and they'd all accumulated a little money. I accumulated some and I didn't have all that fancy a job. That's during the war. This town was booming because everybody was working.

Out around Chrysler there at them old house they used to rent out, they used rent the houses by shift, rent the rooms by shift. You slept in the bed during the morning shift and somebody else slept in it that night while you was at work. That was the flow that people was coming in because people was just pouring in. You could get a job anywhere you went to, everybody would hire you. They was getting cost plus. If Chrysler was paying you \$1.00 hour, the government would add a dollar to it so they made

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\$1 off of me every hour that I was getting paid. That's what the war was doing. That's what you call cost plus, whatever it cost the company plus. Therefore the companies wanted to hire lots of folks anyway, even if they wasn't doing much work, you hired them. They was getting so much a head for every one they keep. In fact, it was hard to get fired in those days because they all wanted to keep you.

← From 7B. " "

I worked throughout the war in motors at Chrysler. When the war was over in 1945, V-J day, we just went back to making cars. In 1943 we had a big rebellion here. I was working at Chrysler then. That was during the war. That's when they had the big ??? there was lots of tension in the air at that period because blacks were mushrooming out of the little small ghetto that they were in from Brush Street over to Russell. From Midberry Street over to downtown, you know where Black Bottom's at. So in 1943 they had this hell of a rebellion. I was living on Palmer at that time between Brush and Beaubien. That is when 43 people got killed in that rebellion. That's when a lot of black troopers taking about they was going to come home and fight for it at home rather than go to war.

I was working at Chrysler. I didn't get to go to work in over a week because I couldn't get anywhere. People were fighting, pulling folks off streetcars. You went through the white neighborhood, the white would attack the blacks and you went through the black neighborhood, the blacks would attack the whites. In my neighborhood, there was lots of shooting. People would get bricks and get up on their roof and protect their buildings. Some of them had shot guns. There was lots of kill-

ing. There was lots of looting in certain areas but in lots of areas there wasn't no looting at all. Then for weeks and weeks after that it was dangerous for a black person to go into a white neighborhood or dangerous for a white person to go in a black neighborhood. So the breadman, milkman, whatever they had in those days was afraid to come in the black neighborhood and vice versa. That's when they brought in all the troops. Where I was there was lots of tension and lots of killing.

(EM) Did you get involved in any of these. . .when did you become an activist?

I was active in the unions. I belonged to the goon squads. They called us blind squad. Our job was when there was a strike or not when there was a strike, we was trying to make people join the union. Our job was to force folks to join up to the union, threaten them and certain things. More people joined the union because we forced them in the union than joined automatic. Because they didn't want to pay no dues. We told them they had to pay. Every once in a while we'd have a dues push. We'd line up out at the gate and wouldn't let them in unless they belong to the union. They'd go around the back and jump over the fence and go to work anyway. The next day or so, we'd go out to their house and throw bricks through there or beat the hell out of them and they'd join. That was a part of the organizing. Then we used to go out and help other locals organize. I helped ~~???~~ organize. FORD ROUGE. Finally the great strike at Ford right after the war. That was

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rough. We had to fight them old polices in Dearborn because
Dearborn police wasn't ^{CONNECTED} to Ford because Ford had his own
police force. They had all those horses out there and they would
utilize the horses to ride around and knock the hell out of you
with that long truncheon stick they had.

I was very active in the union in the period of when they
was organizing. I guess you would say I was in the old left-wing
group. We was Thomas-Addis?? machine. Thomas and Addis. We had
come in after the old preacher from Tennessee, Homer ~~Mudd~~ ^{MARTIN} ~~Mudd~~??.
Homer ^{MARTIN} ~~Mudd~~ was the head of the union ~~man~~. There was lots of
preachers who was active. Then at the convention I think in
Milwaukee, Thomas-Addis machine which was much more political
than they was, took over. I was ^{WITH} George Addis and R.J. Thomas.
R.J. Thomas was nothing but a ^{WELDER} well... (??? I have no idea).
They was all political activists because they belonged to lots of
little political organizations at that time. Gotta remember
there was the ~~FIVE~~ ^{IST} Social Workers party, communist party, the
labor movement, Shackmanites, Olerites, the Wobblers, IWW. All
the ^{SE} different groups were in the union. There was three or four
different political machines inside the union struggling for
power in the union. You had lots of factions, All fighting over
who was going to ^{have} give leadership. They wasn't divided being or ^{were} NOT
~~anti~~ ^{STAND} ~~union~~ ^{were} for coming. They was divided on which direction should
the union go. Some was a little more militant than the others.
Thomas-Addis was a very militant group. ~~We would strike all the~~
~~time.~~ After Reuther come in, even all the Reuther bums was
~~already in GM.~~ ^{Came} Before Reuther come in we used to strike all the
time, but when Reuther come in he cut the strikes out, most of

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them. We used to have Wildcats, they called them. We sometimes had maybe 150 strikes in a year. Anytime we didn't like something, we'd walk out. That's the way we forced the issue, ~~at~~ them.

(EM) How did the name wildcat strike?

That's what a wildcat is, unauthorized. It wasn't authorized by the union. We'd walk in in the morning and say "It's too hot in here. Let's get the hell out of here. It's too damn hot to work." Everybody started walking out. "We're going to walk out at 10:00". We walked out. The company said we're going to fire somebody who caused this walkout and we said "Fine, then nobody coming back to work." So we'd wrangle around there for a couple of days and then we'd go back to work. Guys would get reinstated. The next week something else would come up, come and try to fire somebody, we'd all walk out. Or they wanted to speed up the line, we'd walk out. We used to have wildcats. I remember you had ???, they 156, they had the most of anybody. And Hutchinson plant down there, they had a lot of strikes. That was during the period of what we called "selling everything on the point of production". You want to sell it right then and there. So the foreman say to do so and so we say no , we ain't going to do so and so. They'd go up and get the superintendent. Superintendent come down and say you got to, we say we ain't doing it, we're walking out.

That was during the period when they had to padlock at the

Ryan gate?? You had to sign before you called a wildcat and the committee man. Johnny Zupan wrote that pamphlet because that was during the period of wildcats.

Wildcats are unauthorized strikes when people just spontaneously walk out over issues. They want ^{ced} to kick so many people off the line, ^{and} you say "Like hell, you ain't taking nobody off. We need some more."

(EM) Wildcat strikes don't happen anymore, do they?

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No, they outlawed wildcats, made them illegal. For years we only had wildcats, that 's when the union was at it's best because there was pressure all the time. Then once they got check-off, when you had to be in the union whether you wanted to join or not, which we fought for, it was kind of a bad thing at the end because as long as everybody had to pay their dues each month instead of out of their pocket, they was always complaining. *A* Once they had checkoff the union didn't have to do nothing and it's still going to get the dues, it changed the whole tempo of the whole thing. Department would say "Look we ain't paying no dues this month unless you all get something did". That kept the union jumping like hell. ~~Once we got checkoff, even though we fought for checkoff,~~ The idea of having checkoff was to have everybody be in the union. You had to be in the union from the day you walked into the plant and got hired. The union would have not only a steady income but we had everybody being a unionized worker whether they wanted to be or not. But it also had a bad side to it. The negative side was, once everybody was in the

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union, the union didn't have to be militant no more. Because they ^{were} was going to get the dues whether they was doing anything or not. So it had it's positive and its negative effects.

My early experience was in the union, and that's where I got my really organizing skills. ~~in~~ strikes, wildcats, picketing, goon squads, stuff like that.

(EM) When you were in the goon squad, you're kind of small to be a goon. You must have been pretty tough.

Smaller guys than me was goons and there was smaller women. One of the best fighters I knew, a little old woman named Corine Smith, she was smaller than you. ^{were} ~~Fight~~ ^{FIGHT.} like a tomcat out there on the line. We had all different sizes.

(EM) What did you think when you were in the goon squad? You probably think differently about it. Would you be in the goon squad again if you went back?

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Yeah, sure. What the blacks did, when the black movement come along, you didn't have stuff like that because you didn't have a captive audience. Workers are a captive audience. They work here in this plant so you can easily say "If you don't join the union, goddammit, you ain't getting into work". Now in the black movement, you couldn't say that. all we could do was call them Uncle Tom's. In the union we called them a scab. A scab was a bad name. Nobody wanted to be called a scab. Now they're

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scabbing everywhere, folks doing it all the time. You'd be at someplace on strike and nobody would dare go up there to work. In fact, if somebody would go up there and try to break the line, they'd send the goons out there from all the locals and beat the hell out of them. Or they'd have a march on the plant trying to get scabs to come say they hired. We'd send the goons out there and beat the hell out of them and route it. That's the way it went.

With the black movement coming on you call them Uncle Toms. You give them a name, that's all you could do. Tom or scab was practically the same thing. One was that you want to work without being in the organization, the union, without supporting the organization. The other one was that you didn't want to help do nothing in the struggle about blackness, but you wanted to benefit. Or that you tell the man everything, which is what a scab did too. So that is where I came from out of the labor movement and just a lot of that stuff transcended over in the black movement when the black movement started. Then also, some of it came from the Fair employment Practices committee which we had at all the meetings. In 1946, the UAW set up the fair employment practices committee. The purpose of that committee was to break up discrimination in and around the plant. And also the hiring policy of the company. Not so much the hiring, because at that time everybody could get hired but putting all black people in one particular classification or in one particular section of the plant. We ^{were} also trying to upgrade people to different skills. It was always based on seniority then. We didn't have what they got in affirmative action. We just meant that if say I

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been working at the plant for a year, I should be able to go into skilled trades before somebody got hired off the street could go into skilled trades. So we had the fair employment practices committee that fought against discrimination in and around the plant and also inside the plant. That started in 1946.

We used to go out on a Friday night downtown though and picket all the different restaurants downtown that wouldn't serve black people. We had to go up and down Woodward Avenue. Ernest Dillard, me and him, we used to work together. He was in the ~~NAACP~~ ^{FOLLOW W/ DILLARD INTERVIEW} I used to work there too. I think I was out of there at that time. The Social Workers Party. He was in the social workers party but he worked at Cadillac, Fleetwood. So the Chrysler local fair practice committee and the Cadillac fair practice committee used to function together. We did that out of the NAACP. We used to meet downtown at the NAACP on ^{ELIZABETH} ~~Livernois~~. ^{near the} ~~At~~ they YWCA. We carried on the struggle both from the NAACP in relationship to what was going on in the plant and what was going on in the streets too. So we broadened the fair practice committee to work both inside and outside of the plant. In the outside of the plant we was working more with the NAACP. Inside the plant we was working just with the Fair Practices Committee.

(EM) So when did you start going to the restaurants?

It was in the 40's. Around 46, 46, 48, 49, 50 the fair practice committee was very active. We'd go up and down Woodward Avenue to different bars and they tell us, "we don't serve black

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folks in here". So we'd file a complaint under the Diggs Act. The Diggs Act was, there should be no discrimination in Michigan under land sea or air and all that stuff. We would go in and we would be refused service, so we'd call the police and we'd tell them we'd want to file a complaint. They would say "What you complaining about. If they don't want you over here why don't you go over on Hastings Street and get yourself something." We said "We don't want to eat on Hastings. We want to eat at this place." He said "Well the man said he don't want to serve you." "Yes but the law says he has to serve us." So we'd have an argument with the police but he eventually would write up the case. Then we'd go down to 1300 Beaubien that Monday and follow-up the complaint and file the case on them. Then finally they would have to agree that they would serve us and then we would have to send back a team to see that they did serve you. ^{we would} Keep going back until we'd break it up. But at that time we'd have lots of people that didn't want us in there, even the customers in there would say "We're going home get our guns and run these niggers out of here" but we still stayed. This was up and down Woodward Avenue. We broke up all the bars and eating places from downtown up to Grand Boulevard and then we went on up as far as Clarendon because there was lots of white restaurants up on Woodward in those days that wouldn't serve blacks. We would go in and ask to be served and they would refuse use. Or some places we'd go in, we went to the Hotel Detroit. They even disagreed not to serve but they put salt in our food. We called the manager and say it was full of salt and he'd say "It don't taste like no salt to me". He knowed they put salt in it. Lots of time

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we'd go in and they'd deliberately break the glasses up in front of us to let us know they wasn't going to eat out of something some nigger ate out of. All of this took place under fair employment practices committee working with the NAACP. This went on throughout the 50's. At the same time, we were still active in the union.

GORDY.

Then we had the ~~???~~ murder trial here in Detroit. That's where the cops went up one Sunday and chased some black guys and chased them to their house and their father came out with his Winchester and shot two cops. Then we had this big trial called the Gordie murder case. That was a big issue because they finally gave Gordie some time. We said he did it in self-defense. We had several different big cases in Detroit that had something to do with police brutality or discrimination in the city. That was very active from 1946 all the way up into the 50's. Then in the 50's, stuff started happening again down south. Emmet ~~Real~~^{TU} murder case. Lots of UAW members began to kind of transfer their interest from the union to working in the civil rights movement. None of us thought it ever would have got to that point at that case. We thought that racism was going to go on forever like it would. All was happening then was most black folks would leave the south coming up north because it was supposed to be better. Though up north here it was just as segregated as they were down south. The difference is at least they could talk back to folks and raise hell and nothing would happen to them. In the meantime, the police force had lots of southern cops on it in Detroit and on a Saturday nights there were raids in the black community,

beat the hell out of folks. Put them in jail and turn them out on Monday morning.

Nevertheless, I would say from 1943 on there was lots of tension in Detroit that remained. That was in the air for all that period. That was the first time there was an expansion where people got out of the ghetto. Up to then, blacks was confined on the east side , lower east side and a few on the lower west side. All inside the Boulevard. There wasn't no black living outside the Grand Boulevard circle. After the rebellion, people began to move outside. Some, well particularly Jewish people moved from around Linwood, ~~Claremont~~^{Claremont} and in that area and black moved into those places. It was mostly Jewish people moving and blacks moved in because the Jewish weren't going to move. Then the FHA made it possible for lots of poor whites to get a house because they could get a loan with \$50 down and move into a new house, an FHA house. Blacks couldn't get it. We couldn't even get an FHA loan on anything inside the Boulevard. All these things made tension in the air. When the Emmett ~~For~~^{the} thing come, there was already up north tensions in the air.

Down south, the tension was so many of the soldiers from the south, blacks in particular, had went from the south to the army. So down south these boys was coming back from the army and they was deciding they wasn't going to take the crap they used to take before the army. At first when they came home there was lots of incidents but down south, the conductors and motormens on the streetcars and buses all carried guns, just like they was police. There was lots of serious trouble happening in the south. Then at that period the Ku Klux Klan had started bombing blacks who

they thought was getting "uppity" as they called it. They were moving in neighborhoods pretty close to white neighborhoods even though down south, blacks and whites had lived pretty close together pretty much all their life. I remember when blacks lived up here and whites lived back there. Black street and white street. Then lots of blacks also worked for those white people so it was a much closer relationship than it was up north. But they had also a place for black folks. Now, I would say, there was tensions in the south and there was tension up north. Tension in the south was the young blacks as they come back from the army was not going back to the old way. The tension up north was more of blacks moving into neighbors which could have been all white. Seeing around them whites having the better jobs than they had and the inability for them to go into fancy restaurants and shopping centers to get clothes and things like that. And the fact that Hudson's, Crowley's and all those big department stores only would employ real mulatto blacks. They wouldn't employ no dark-skinned blacks.

In the late 50's lots of people who was active in the civil rights movement, whether they were in the plant or the NAACP outside the plant, we began to have a little picketing of Kresge in support of the folks in the south. We had lots of little strikes downtown. We'd go in different big restaurants and raise hell because if it was a national chain, down south they didn't let blacks in so we'd picket them up here. This was in support of the south. And a few black people began to go down south to support the folks down south. Now the movement began to shift.

Up until the big march here in 1963 which come after the killing of the 4 little girls in Birmingham, most black folks up north was doing things to support folks down south. Lots of them who had been up here for awhile kept saying "I wouldn't live down there. I wouldn't take that stuff down there". But they had just left from down there. The sentiment was in support of the folks down there. They wasn't doing nothing yet about what was happening here. Only after 1963 did they begin to recognize "Hell, we need to do something about here." Then the movement became both the north and the south. It broadened. The movement didn't come until after 4 little girls was burned in Birmingham. That was 1963, that's when we had all the big marches all over the country. I was in all of them. I was in the march here with Martin Luther King.

Civil Rights Movement

That was the biggest march they ever had in the United States anywhere. Bigger than the one in Washington. They didn't say that but we knew we had over 300,000 people. That day I was just with family. All of our friends were together. I think the union marched too with a different group but a lot of people didn't go with the union, they went with their own families and their block groups. What had happened, the blacks had organized all over the city and the churches. Rev. ~~Clair~~ ^{Cleage} did lots of organizing. All of the preachers agreed that they would have a rally and every one of their churches had a pre-march rally. That's what got out so many people. The day that they had it, from Warren Avenue and Woodward to Downtown, from Woodward over to Brush Street on one side and to Cass on the other side, it was a solid wave. Now all these people wasn't black. Lots of whites

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were there too. I'd say the bulk of them black. Then people came from the suburbs and joined in so it was a tremendous march. They marched down Woodward Avenue. It was a like a Thanksgiving Parade. They marched Cobo Hall where Reuther spoke and where King spoke, but none of us could get near there. It was just impossible. The only people who marched up there with them actually got in at that time. I don't think that place held many people back in ^{those} days. So people stood out there on the street, on Jefferson, and all the streets up there and listened to it over the loud speaker.

TAPE BREAKS--NEW TOPICS

movement starts
The black ~~movie stars~~ in the labor movement. I think it was coming from out of the south with the belief that peoples ought to relate to each other better than what they were doing and a sense of believing in fair play. I was put on lots of times when I didn't want to do something I did it. The call got bigger than me myself. I think, I was always thinking of something bigger than me so I didn't get limited by "Hell, all I have to do is take care of Jimmy ~~W~~". I always knew that the world could only be made better if a lot of other people was involved in it. That I was not going to change the world by myself and therefore it was my responsibility to work with others or try to give some leadership to others for both of us to participate. I was well aware of how divisive things could be when one group is torn against each other. I think by being in the labor movement around, particularly the ~~W~~obblers, I learned a deep sense of what I would call at that time class struggle, which meant that I recognized

See also

See oblog

that it wasn't just a black struggle, Blacks and whites ^{were} in the struggle. so I come out of that too. . . .I knew that it was important that all the different ethnic groups should struggle together. It didn't always happen that way. Those were the things that I think motivated me to try to always broaden horizons.

(EM) When did you meet Grace? Did you meet her in one of these groups?

In the 50's. In 1949 or 50's. After the war was over lots of group from New York and around spreaded out all over the country. Prior to the war they had been active in the early formation of the labor movement. Then the war came and everybody was working and that thing got kind of gobbled up. Then the next great organization took place in 1945. Now they were going to organize all over the country, it didn't happen but that's what the idea was. People came from New York who all had more skills in the organizing people. People from the garment workers union and the miners from out of West Virginia and they come in and brought their skills in and helped organize. It was in that period that I met Grace because Grace had been in New York. Then we was in the same organization which at that time was Johnson Forrest. ??? James and Rieu?? Donayesky. She was a Russian woman out of Chicago who had been secretary for Trosky. Theolaura James had came from Trinidad and went up to England. He was a writer, philosopher. Theolaura James was the leader of our organization and it was called the Johnson Forrest ??? Rieu

Donayesky's party name was Fanny Forrest but her name was really Rieu Donayesky. Then Theolaura James' name was Johnson so it was the Johnson Forrest ?? we called it which was a group that split from out of the establishment. That's where Grace and I come from, out of the political organization.

END OF INTERVIEW