Mitchell Granger, Wesley Ha, and Isaiah Colton Thompson (editors)

"You either were a follower of Martin Luther King or [...] of Malcolm X": Joseph Milton's Memories of the Civil Rights Era, U.S. South, and Vietnam

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Project: Grassroots Politics.
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Oral Interview with Joseph Milton, conducted by Cambri Hughes,
October 25, 2011, [Los Angeles,] California.

Introduction

The oral history transcribed below belongs to a collection held in CSUF's Lawrence de Graaf Center for Oral and Public History (COPH), titled "Grassroots Politics." The interview with Joseph Milton was conducted by Cambri Hughes, on October 25, 2011, in [Los Angeles,] California. This interview is 1 hour, 5 minutes, and 50 seconds long, and is archived as a digital recording/audio file at COPH (see "Copyright Advisory" below). The verbatim transcript edited here was prepared in 2022 by Mitchell Granger, Wesley Ha, and Isaiah Colton Thompson.

Joseph Milton was born on June 3, 1945, in Pontiac, Michigan. At the time of the interview, he is the last remaining of ten siblings. Milton was raised in Pontiac during his early childhood years. Coming from what Milton describes as a poor upbringing, he provides insight into the everyday realities of racially divided Mississippi. In 1963 he moved to McComb, Mississippi, to live with his grandparents and finish high school. In the winter of 1963, he joined the military. During the Vietnam War, he served in the 101st Airborne Division. Immediately after completing his military service, Milton pursued higher education at Oakland Community College in Michigan. He later earned a degree in marketing from Walsh College, also located in Michigan. The interview features Milton's recollections of his early childhood, his years in high school, his time in the military, and his experience in college. The focus of the interview includes Milton's memories of the Civil Rights movement and his perspective of living in the South as an African-American during the 1960s. He recalls experiences of discrimination. For example, he was denied service in a restaurant despite wearing his military service uniform, and he was racially profiled by a police officer for riding in a vehicle with his white girlfriend. Milton's story adds to the many layers of American life in the 1960s and provokes thoughts of reorienting past social dilemmas to better reflect on present issues.

Milton's narrative offers a unique perspective on the Civil Rights era, the American South, and the U.S. military. His early travels throughout America showcase interregional prejudice beyond southern states. His recollections also

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depict efforts of the U.S. to "shield" itself from social division, which may have influenced Milton's own lack of involvement in the Civil Rights movement. The interview further provides insight on interracial relations during the 1960s, the influence of racial quotas in schools and employment, and the social experience between blacks and Jews. Milton's narrative situates the Civil Rights movement as one group or organization among many social organizations. He provides a diverse perspective of the 1960s that includes but also goes beyond the subject of the Civil Rights movement. According to Milton, the 1960s were a time of Malcolm and King, Love Children hippies and Detroit riots, Motown music and country western hits. Milton's depiction of American history is a rich cultural narrative that details the landscape of prejudice, pain, pride, and progress. From Michigan to Oklahoma, from Vietnam to California, Milton describes the American plight based on his own family and experience, offering his perspective on the broader American nation. Milton's interview is especially relevant for those researching the history of the Civil Rights era, social movements of the 1960s, racial discrimination in and beyond the U.S. South, and the U.S. military during Vietnam. The interview is also relevant for researchers of media and digital history.

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Verbatim Transcript (O.H. 4902)

LAWRENCE DE GRAAF CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

NARRATOR:	Joseph Milton [JM]
INTERVIEWER:	Cambri Hughes [CH]
DATE:	October 25, 2011
LOCATION:	[Los Angeles,] California
PROJECT:	Grassroots Politics
TRANSCRIBERS:	Mitchell Granger, Wesley Ha, and Isaiah Colton Thompson

CH: Alright, interview with Joseph Milton on October 25th at 3:30pm. Okay, um, when and where were you born?

JM: I was born in, uh, June the 3rd, 1945, in Pontiac, Michigan.[1]

CH: Okay, and, um, what was your childhood like there?

JM: I come out of a family of, uh, twelve. Um, my father, uh, was a, um—for lack of a better word—a garbage man. Worked, uh, for the city. And my mother, uh, prepared, um, salads at, uh, hospitals—St. Joseph Hospital.[2]

CH: Okay, and, um, you had a lot of siblings—how was that? (laughs)

JM: Yes, there were, um, actually about—there were ten of us. I—when I said twelve that includes my mom and dad, but there was ten of us. And currently, I'm the only one that's living out of that ten. And, uh, we range from, um, professionally from, uh, uh, registered nurses from my sisters, attorneys from my brother, and sales, uh, to, uh, incarceration, to drug use. So, it's a—from gay—so, it's, uh, the whole American plight within my family.

CH: Great. And, um, you said you also lived in Mississippi.

JM: I lived in Mississippi (clock chimes).[3] I went to high school in Mississippi. Uh, when I was a senior, um, 1963, I went, uh, and—January—and I graduated, um, in June of 1963, in a place called McComb, Mississippi.[4] And it was a population of, uh, in McComb—the area that I lived in, uh, it was called Bear Town, Mississippi,[5] but now they call it, uh, South McComb,[6] and there were probably about, oh, I would say, maybe thirty-five-hundred people in that, in that city.

CH: Okay.

JM: Little small town.

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[1] Pontiac, Michigan, located twenty miles northwest from Detroit, Michigan.

[2] St. Joseph Hospital, founded in 1920 in California.

[3] Clock chimes every fifteen minutes in the background.

[4] McComb, Mississippi, located eighty miles south of Jackson, Mississippi.

[5] Bear Town, located in southwest McComb, Mississippi.

[6] South McComb appears as Bear Town on current maps.

CH: Alright. Awesome. So, growing up, Mississippi's obviously one of the southern-type states. What was that like growing up as an African-American?

JM: It was extremely different from coming from Pontiac, Michigan, uh, from, uh, very industrial city that, uh, was more so di—the diversity was more so European, uh, blacks, and very few Hispanics. Uh, going to Mississippi, at that time in 1963, it was segregated. So, uh, I left a, um, uh, inte—integrated, uh, high school, uh, where I'd grown up, uh, with, uh, whites and other diversities and going to school, and then going to a school in Mississippi where it was all black. And, uh, there was real, uh, extreme, um, divisions between the races, uh, in, uh, Mississippi at that time when I went to high school. I mean, for—as, um, the, you know, the drinking water situation,[7] for going to the movies, or just little things people don't think about—going to the cleaners, uh, or going to a jewelry store. Uh, everything had a different perspective for a black and for a white. It was completely different. So, uh, I was, um, school pretty much—I was going there to, uh, live with my grandmother. My grandmother, my grandfather—my grandfather was, uh, approaching his, uh, uh, hundred years old. And my grandmother was, uh, uh, late in age also. So I was going more so to assist them. Been a senior in high school, uh, to kinda live there. And also, there was reasons why I went there, just to get out of the real turbulent situations there in Pontiac, Michigan, um, growing in the inner city. Uh, they felt that it was best for me, based on my behavior at that time, to go and live with my grandmother to get out of a city environment to live sort of, um, in a farm, farm community area.

CH: Oh, okay, and you said that your grandpa was reaching a hundred, so did he live through any slave era or anything?

JM: He's a Choctaw Indian.[8]

CH: Okay.

JM: And, um, and I don't know—Indians were treated differently, uh, you know, the Choctaw Indians is probably *the* more, the largest tribe that, uh, in Mississippi. You had, uh, Choctaw, uh, Chickasaw,[9] and, uh—And I can't think—there's a couple other, other ones, uh, that were in that area. But, uh, they, they could sort of tend—or blacks tend to have, uh, uh, moved, uh, in conjunction with the Indians. They sort of cohabited together, so I don't know—they were never in slavery, you know, as far as the

[7] The segregated South featured separate drinking fountains for whites and blacks.

[8] Choctaw Native Americans originally migrated from the Mexican region and settled in the Mississippi River Valley.

[9] Chickasaw Native Americans resided in Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, and southern Kentucky.

Indians. They were never in slavery, but they were indigenous people, and they were, they were not white.

CH: (mu-hm).

JM: And so, they also didn't meet the same guidelines—not as severe as blacks—but not the same guidelines as whites. So there was a—there's a class distinction (dogs barking).

CH: (um-hm).

JM: Yeah.

CH: So, you said the jewelry stores and the cleaners and—

JM: In the cleaners, uh, if you—just for simply—if you had some new clothes to take to the cleaners, there was, uh, uh, a separate, uh, uh, window for blacks, and there was a separate windows, uh, for whites.

CH: (um-hm).

JM: Or if you went to a grocery store—and a lot of times we take things for granted—but if we were in a grocery store and I was first in line, (screen door or window closing) if you walked in as a white person, you automatically would, uh, uh, be ahead of me, even if I was being waiting on. I would have to wait until that person was served. And, um, those were things that you sort of took for granted, eh, you know, with slavery, you know, being x-number of years in the United States for, you know, three-hundreds of years in the United States. You, you grew up and, and that was a norm. It was not out of ordinary because it, it is something that had continued for so many years. You didn't know any different.[10] But, uh—and, and you didn't think of it as being—in terms of the Civil Rights[11]—you didn't think it was something that was intolerable, because when you lived in your own community you didn't have contact with whites. And, so, uh, you had your own interreactions in your own community. It was only when you went outside of your community that there were s—different rules on how you had to act and how you had to talk when you were interreacting with a white person. You couldn't look a white woman in her eyes, or you couldn't, uh, look directly in a white man's eye with any kind of defiance, or if there were any type of disagreement. Uh, there was, um, acceptance—part of the rule—of being struct, you know, when you had those type of encounterings. But, uh, you know, and these are things that people don't understand how that could be, but when, again, you have three-hundred years of something that is the norm, you, you don't think of it as being out of the ordinary if it's something that you grow with—grow up in. So, you know, so, I, I, you know, I lived within the Civil Rights, you know, during that period of time. I wasn't, uh, one of the ones that were, uh, protesting,

[10] Dogs stop barking.

[11] Movement in the United States from 1954 to 1968 to abolish racial segregation and discrimination.

uh, I wasn't, uh—I had a certain amount of disdain for certain things, but I wasn't vocal, or I wasn't, uh, you know, putting myself out in any situation where I would stand out as, uh, you know, why I wouldn't accept something. But, uh, you knew that, uh, certain things were different and wrong, especially coming from a, an environment, you know, from the Pon—from the North, you know, where certain—a lot of things were tolerated, or a lot of things were—when I say tolerated—a lot of things were accepted that were not accepted in the South.[12]

CH: And, um, as you just said that you weren't an activist, is there a reason that you weren't going out there?

JM: It was, uh—1963 was when I was, when I was there, and there was, uh, really no, uh, outward movement other than what was going on in, uh, other parts of the South like Alabama, and Atlanta, and Georgia, Tennessee—areas where you would more so associate, uh, uh, Martin Luther King[13] at that time, uh, uh—activities would going over there. It wasn't until, uh, 1963—the year I graduated, and I went, uh, back to Pontiac, Michigan where a lot of things were changing, and then where you had, uh, uh, a lot of, um, volunteers from all over the United States were coming into the South. And ironically, they came into McComb, Mississippi, and a lot of it was to try to get blacks organize, uh, to vote.[14] And, um, uh, I think it was in 1964—year later—where, uh, I believe the Civil Rights Act[15] was signed at that particular time. But, uh, lot of whites were coming into the South at that time organizing and getting marches and protests and things like that.

[00:10:15]

JM: Uh, but for me, 1963, you know, I came home, I worked, and I ended up going into the military. And so, uh, when I was in the military, a lot of different things were happening. At that time, you were even, you were either coming out of two different, um, uh, uh, uh, concepts, or you supported two different groups. You either—you were supporting, uh, uh, Martin Luther King, who was, uh, um, preaching, uh, non-violence, or you were following behind Malcolm X,[16] uh, who was basically saying an eye for an eye.[17] And, uh, at that particular time, when I was in 63, and those

[12] Northern states did not legally enforce segregation; Southern states did.

[13] A prominent leader of the Civil Rights movement.

[14] The Fifteenth Amendment (1870) had guaranteed the right to vote to African American men. Exercising this right, though, was prevented by a myriad of state and local legal barriers until the Voting Rights Act (1965).

[15] The Civil Rights Act, signed into law by U.S. President Lyndon Johnson on July 2, 1964.

[16] A prominent leader during the Civil Rights era.

[17] Malcom X advocated for black self-defense against white supremacy. See his speech "Message to the Grass Roots," delivered November 10, 1963.

that were around that particular time, um, Martin Luther King was not a very popular, um, uh, individual. He wasn't accepted, um, uh, out—you know, he was more so accepted than Malcom X—but, uh, there was a lot of disdain for him in the South. So, in the military you were s—you were shielded, you know, from a lot of the different activities. Except I had, uh, the—my first experience I had was in 1964, uh, when I was in the military. I went to a place called, um, a Fort Sill, uh, Oklahoma.[18] The city is Lorman, Oklahoma.[19] And I went to a radio telephone operating school in the military,[20] uh, and I, and it was very few blacks that were in the radio telephone operating training. And so, you know, candidly, all my associates and friends, they were white, and we were in this group. And, um, we went downtown in Lorman, Mississippi just one evening after working the whole week in the training and whatever. We went down to, to a bar or something to that affect, and I was refused, um, uh, service, and it was the first time ever. But I had never attempted to go to any kind of establishment when I was in Mississippi because I knew that's what the rules were. But being naïve and growing up watching cowboys and being in the West, I never, uh, thought that it was segregated, also with the cowboys and the Indians. I th—I just never associated the West with segregation or with the same rules that applied because they always associated the word the "South," and I never looked at, uh, the Midwest states, uh, like Oklahoma, uh, Arizona, uh, going all into that area, that it was segregated also—which it was. And so that was my, actually my first real, uh, slap in the face, and I was in uniform—I was in uniform. So, that, uh, sure had, um, impact on me, even though, you know, the, the guys I was with, we all kind of walked out of there together. But we were at that age, I think we were, uh nineteen years old—nineteen maybe, some of us may have been twenty—but nineteen years old. And so, that was my really, um, going against—trying to ge—not thinking I was going against the system, but trying to go against the system. But, uh, that was one of the experiences I had, you know, growing up during that period of time. So, I sort of lived during that civil unrest, but I, I wasn't a, a vocal protester. Um, but, um, when I went to college—when I came out of the military, uh, in 19, uh, 66, uh, it was at the height of, uh, the, the civil unrest, even though they had, uh, signed, um, the Voting, uh, Act,[21] and they also had already signed the, uh, Civil Rights Act. At that same time, there was a, a lot of dissention on the campuses

[18] Fort Sill, Army post southwest of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; established in 1869.

[19] Presumably Lawton, Oklahoma.

[20] Training for military signalers who relay information from the battle field to commanders about supply levels, locations, and so forth.

[21] The Voting Rights Act, signed into law by U.S. President Lyndon Johnson on August 2, 1965.

with, uh, Vietnam.[22] And so, then that I came home, I'm—uh, I was a wounded vet, uh, veteran from Vietnam. When I came home, uh, I came home a, among a lot of protest. But after being home for, um, less than two weeks, I entered college. And, uh, during that period in college, uh, was when, uh, you either were a follower of Martin Luther King or you were a follower of Malcom X. Myself, I was a follower of more so of Malcom X, and that, uh, uh, uh, the, the nonviolence side of it wasn't seeming to work, and, and, and there was, like I said, there was two different camps. And at that same—in fa—in fact, and as history went on, Martin Luther King was actually making a change. And he came out at that particular time, uh, and joined Malcom X and other, uh, African-American leaders, and, and the protest of the Vietnam War. And, at that time, when he did that, there was a real, uh, strong rejection of Martin Luther King when he came out and made the speech about, uh, uh, the Vietnam War,[23] and saying, pretty much, if there's injustice here, uh, these same injustices must apply also to other areas of land. You know, we're United States, we're, uh, involved, and, um, and it was just not very, uh, long after that—he was assassinated.[24] But he was, uh—it's ironic now—we, we, we celebrate, uh, his, um, birthday,[25] and, but a lot of people don't understand and realize that, um, he was very vilified and hated here in the United States. And, and, uh, states like Arizona, Nevada, and there was other states that were really, uh, set against even having a holiday for him. I mean, uh, uh, but now (clock chimes) a lot of people don't understand that, and, and they sort of think that he was always a popular individual and, and very well liked. But, uh, those are, those are some of the things outwardly that I experienced, but there were other subtle things that I experienced, um, you know, when I was in college. I was, um, a Student Government President,[26] uh, when I was in college. And, um, and I've always sort of been outward going. And I was—it was one evening and I was there with a young lady, and we were riding in a car, and she was a *blonde*. And we were sitting there, riding in a car, and we were in a place called Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.[27] And it's a very, um, real nice area, and she lived in that area. And we were just going to school together, and, uh, and we were stopped, and uh, and, and, and

[22] College students protested the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War (1955–1975).

[23] On April 4, 1967, Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his speech titled "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence" at Riverside Church in New York, New York.

[24] On April 4, 1968, exactly one year after his "Beyond Vietnam" speech, Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.

[25] Martin Luther King Jr. was born on January 15, 1929. The U.S. nationally celebrates King's legacy on the third Monday in January.

[26] The highest-ranking student official in a student union.

[27] A small town in Oakland County, Michigan. It is twenty miles from central Detroit, Michigan.

the only reason we were stopped was that the police officer asked her, "Is everything okay?" And that was the only reason he stopped us, just to ask her if she was okay. And so—and that was in Michigan—so, the, I jus—and I say that to point out that, um, the, the, the, the differences, or the things that were happening in the South was actually happening all over. It was just more, uh, prominent in the South, and lot of the, the protests and a lot of the—and I say fighting, uh, killing, or burning of, uh, churches and et cetera, et cetera, and all those things—it was just happening in the South. But, uh, the, the, the tensions was actually all over, you know. It was everywhere. So, those are some of the things, you know, in terms of, um, talking about the Civil Rights. But, um, you know, and, and, and I gather, you know—in fact, I get a chance to talk to some of the guys that I went to high school with, there in McComb, Mississippi, and many of them were involved in the Civil Rights. They were going out as organizers, uh, community organizers, going in and trying to get the adults or the elderly and all of 'em sign up for voting and things like that. And it happened in '63—the same summer that I ended up leaving and coming back to Michigan and working in, uh, in the plant. And, uh, eventually, that, uh, December, right before Christmas, I entered into the military. And I joined the military at that time to go and, you know, be a part of the war. And, at that time, I, I looked at that as being very positive, uh, but, through that experience, you know, it, it changed my philosophy, you know, a lot in terms of war, um, and it changed my outlook in terms of wha—what I wanted in life, because I came out of—you asked me earlier, you know, in terms of my background, you know, and I kind of, uh, um, stated what jobs my father had, my mother had. Uh, my father, uh, never made, um, no more—I believe it was thirty-five-hundred—four thousand dollars a year, you know, to feed a family of, uh, of ten, you know, ten siblings.

[00:20:07]

JM: And, uh, again, my mother—and, uh, she, uh, identified herself, um, not knowing all the details of what she identified herself as, as a dietitian with know, uh, education. I think my mom had a seventh-grade education. My dad had a sixth-grade education. And—but because she was working with the salads and putting salads together, uh, she, she would say she was a dietitian. But anybody would go into detail would say, you know, that's not what she was. And I, and I say that, um, because, um, uh, income level of less than five thousand dollars between the two of them and raising the family of ten—we came out of a very poor situation. And, um, it wasn't uncommon, uh, for us, you know, t—all of our clothes were secondhand. And for us going shopping with—knowing that when I, we were going shopping, I knew automatically that it was going to be, um (pauses), at a secondhand store. And that was, that was going shopping. And it was

nothing out of the ordinary. It wasn't nothing disgraceful. Uh, it was a happy moment, you know, for—to be going shopping, to get some clothes, and things like that. So that's kind of, uh, the, the background that I gr—I grew out of. But at the same time, um, during the Civil Rights, and during that period of time, one of the things that was really heightened and that was really stressed is education. And I think, uh, you know, through those struggles that a lot of people went through during that period of time, there was always a outward expression that, uh, things were done for the youth in order for them to go on and to, uh, f—futher and better themselves. And the only way they could do that was through education. And so, uh, a lot of that had—w—that was positive, you know, the movement itself was positive, especially for blacks during that period of time, because, uh, a lot of, um, opportunities were made available. Um, there were a lot of things that were established, uh, for lack of a better word, there was—it became a bad word—it was quotas. And a lot of the businesses, uh, lot of the, uh, companies had to have a certain percentage, including the government, uh, so many blacks that were hired (slams hand on table). And so many blacks had to be in certain positions, and things like that. In order for a company to, uh—say for General Motors,[28] for example—in order for them to bid on any type of government contracts, they would had to have had so many blacks in their organization in order to bid. A lot of those things are—it's been regressive in that a lot of that now is, is no longer a factor, even in the colleges. The colleges in terms of their, um, uh, uh, acceptance for students and making sure they had certain amount of diversity on the campuses—had to, uh, uh, accept and allow so many, uh, diverse students on their campuses. And, and lot of that's no longer true anymore. And, um, and some of it's, it's, you know, had some very good reason, you know. Uh, you, you had two people that, uh, were, were equal in ability and, and et cetera, and could have s—been even on the same, uh, financial, uh, uh, uh, level, and it, it, it did favor, you know, a, uh, minority over that other person. And then, and, and, and there were some, um, uh, situations that, that, that came about where s—lot of, lot of people were penalized for being white in, in terms of, uh, being able to get the same jobs and things like that. So, there were some things that, uh, there were inequities. And then there were situations where they put, uh, minorities in positions where they did not qualify, and, uh, and they stood out like a sore thumb. And, bu—just because somebody wanted to make sure they just got a quota, a number, and not go through the, uh, finer detail of making sure they got the qualified people to be in the position just to say I got ten percent. And at, and my, you know, the, that—and so there was a lot of things that came up that m—

[28] The General Motors Company, an American automotive manufacturer; headquarters located in Detroit, Michigan.

that, you know, that, that are reasons why things, you know, were, were scrutinized—and, so, from that side of it. But, you know, the, the Civil Rights part of it, um, you know, being black, you sort of looked at things differently. And I say, "look at things differently," uh, from the perspective of those that were not educated, uh, for those that were in situations where, uh, their plight seems to them that they didn't have a chance. They, they, they looked at opportunities to take things, like the riots I had mentioned earlier to you—about the riots in, in Detroit.[29] Um, I was in college at that time, and I kind of mentioned that, you know, I had a real diverse family. I had one brother who was actively involved in the, the looting and the rioting in Detroit, where they went in and they took clothes and, and they took, um, uh, televisions. I mean, uh, rea—wha—people don't realize when things like that happen, uh, there's so much chaos, you still have a element that will go in and try to take a opportunity to go in to take, uh, whatever jewelry, whatever clothing, whatever values there are that, that's not under guard, and take it. And it's all under that canopy of civil unrest. And, uh, that's why, um, things really got out of hand in Katrina.[30] Uh, when they had the flood there, uh, people were saying, "well, how come the National Guard[31] came in, and that they had loaded guns," and things like that. It's, it's, it's, it's from experience to protect property. Because there were a lot of people—even during the flood waters they showed on TV—you know, water would come up to one guy's, uh, neck, and he's got a TV on top of his head, you know. And, y—y—and, but the thought process is so different for people that are, um, uh, I, uh, I sometimes just use the word uneducated, uh, and, and just don't have the same thinking process. And, and that was what was happening during the Civil Rights. You had a group of people, and, and, and particular blacks who had been denied, uh, for, um, years—hundreds of years—um, the same certain rights that other people had. And, and, and it, it, it, it was, uh, a boiling point and more visible on TV that these things were going on. But, if you left that area, and you were in Michigan, even though those things wasn't happening there, in the evening time people were going home and they were—TV became even more popular then, you know. Although you didn't have the coverage like you have now. You had more, I would say, truthful, clear, uh, coverage of what was going on there, because they didn't have the buttons, you know, to erase or to filter out what was going—like the technology now. They could—if you said, uh, uh, uh, a profanity, they can blot it out before it even got on the

[29] This is the first time that Joseph Milton mentions the Detroit riots in this interview. The Detroit riots occurred in 1967.

[30] Hurricane Katrina hit the U.S. coast from the Gulf of Mexico in 2005. It was one of the most devastating storms in U.S. history.

[31] U.S. state-based military force; part of the reserve component of the U.S. Army and U.S Air Force.

screen. But back then, with the technology for TV, it was more so live. And that was the same thing that caused the war to come to an end with Vietnam—was that they had all of what was happening on the fields, far as, uh, the, uh, mutilated bodies, the death, the, the coffins and all these different things going around TV. Now, with the wars that are current and happening now, um, uh, they don't show those things. They filter all these things out, and, and it's not, uh, uh, because they don't wanna show the gruesome, uh, bodies or anything like that, but it changes minds when people see those things actually rad up. It changes—and it creates movements, uh, for people to see things like that. And, so now, the evi—our government, uh, censor infor—you know, information coming back to us, unless, you know, what happened here recently with, uh, (sniffs), uh, uh, Gaddafi,[32] but that was for our benefit for others to (claps) see the evidence that, you know, this person is dead. But, uh, you know, you don't see bodies of, uh, uh, soldiers or, you know, you may see a coffin—and even they try to erase that. They don't want you to even see a coffin. But, uh, but actually see a wounded or shot, uh, American or anything like that, you know, you won't see that. They filter that out. And, and it's because of the Civil, uh, uh, Rights era, when all these things were going on. I mean, prior to all of that, you know, the lynchings and things that went on in the South—it wasn't televised. There may be a picture of it.

[00:30:00]

JM: And you, you had more opportunity to censor a picture or hold a picture than you did in censoring, uh, the actual, uh, uh, televised events during that period of time. So, those, those are the things that, you know, that kinda stands out in my mind, you know, from what happened back then in the sixties. And from what happened back in the sixties—what did America, uh, or, uh, or the media learn from what happened back there. And now I, y—y—I, you can clearly see the things and the changes, you know. But, you know, uh, but for someone that just came along with, um, um, oh, say a cell phone, and the cell phone was, uh, you know, just a little small, uh, three by—three inches by six inches. And this is what they know, and they're very comfortable with it, and, and they're able to do, do, uh, a tech scene, and things like that. It's because it's something that they grew up with. But then if you give them the cell phone that I had when it first came out, and it was a big box that you carried around with you, and it was just phenomenal to have this big, large box. And this big box was, uh, as, as large as a shoebox. And this was—the mobile phone you had in your car, but you had the same feeling of, uh, what the technology was like that a person has when the new iPhone come out. And you had the same feeling

[32] Muammar Gaddafi, the de-facto leader of Libya until his death in 2011.

how (clock chimes) advanced the technology is at that particular time. And now if you take—and you go back and you see where that shoe boxes become this little small cell, you're able—and, and you lived it, and you talked with it—you can see the differences and you can see, you know, the vantages, uh, all the different, uh, capabilities, and, and from where it came from. And that's the same thing of living through the Civil Rights period of time. You know, all the things that, you know, that was new and that was happening, and, and that was occurring, and to where we are now, you can see all the changes that have taken place, you know, right now. But for a person that had never seen that before, and—they missed a lot. Eh, they missed a lot. They—there's a lot that they don't know about. And so, they just, you know, it's an iPhone. Oh yeah, I remember I had another phone. Yeah, but it doesn't go so far back to where it was a shoe box. And so, they can't relate to it. And that's the same thing with the Civil Rights—is that there's been such progress that, um, I look at, you know, things being totally different now than where it was back then. And then, yet, even now you still have people saying, you know, "we got a long ways to go here," you know, "things are still not right," you know. And that's a part, I guess, for myself—is getting older—is that I seen so much changes. And I know things are, you know, I'm no dummy, I know things are not exactly, you know, right on even keel or even par, but I've seen so much progress, uh, it's just, like, phenomenal. And, you know, for a young person now, uh, he may be on campus, you know, for the first time, or he may be a sophomore, or junior on college campuses, and he sees certain little small injustices, whatever (sniffs), and he still has that same, uh, drive that things are not right—things are not, you know, and—which is good, which is good, you know. And so, it was a great period, a great era, um, during that period of time, because it was a time of protest. Um, I'm an ex-hippie. There was a lot of movements that came out of, uh, uh, and that was going on at the same time with the Civil Rights era. There were a lot of protesters, and there were a lot of movement, and, uh, they were, you know, the—there was a group. They were called hippies. There was a group that was with—in the hippies. They were called, uh, Love, Love Children,[33] and, and, and, and growing up during that whole period of time, and interreacting with those periods, you never bec—you never thinking about what history's gonna look at, or the past, or anything like that. But, um, that's, that's my take on the Civil Rights, you know. I kinda wish, and I don't know where I would have been or what my life would have been if I was actually (sniffs) involved in the organizing. If I had had not been in the military, where pretty much, you know, I was a part of an organization, and I didn't—and, and, and, and in

[33] The Love Children, presumably a group within the wider hippie movement, which gained a national following during the 1967 "Summer of Love," the same year as the Detroit riots.

the military you're filtered from a lot of the civil unrest that's going on outside around you. And, um, the military when I went in it—when I was in the military—um, it was integrated, you know. Uh, and they integrated, uh, in the fifties I think—'51 or '52—just, uh, right after the Korean War.[34] During the Korean War they integrated, both by the time—and that was in fifties, so I was in, you know, say another sixteen years later, and, um, and, and I was part of the 101st Airborne,[35] and we were paratroopers, and it was more of a family, you know, very small group. It was more of a family, and, uh, and with the Vietnam War it—and, and, it, and I'm kinda rambling because there was so many different things that were happening that, based on your experience, it, it brought you closer together, you know, like the war. The war, uh, specially the Vietnam War, was a defining moment because those individuals who were in the Vietnam War, they automatically had a much closer relationship because they were immediately in another different, uh, uh, uh, a part of the world. And the only person that they could depend on are the individuals that they were with. So, they, you know, and, and, and so you, you became a lot closer in your interreactions. Uh, I never forget, uh, I was in—when I was in Vietnam, um, I had a record that came—well actually it was, it was, you know, they have now a little CD players and things like that. It used to be little portable record players, and, uh, I had a record, uh, that, uh, somebody had sent me for some Motown,[36] being from Detroit. And, uh, my, um, bunk mate, or a tent mate—I guess we live in tents at that time. He was from Montana. And, um, and he—my, one of my favorite singers right now is a guy named George Jones,[37] and George Jones is a country-and-western singer. And he was like the premier country-and-western singer. I mean, uh, over Travis,[38] or any of these guys that they name right now, and he wouldn't let me play any of the Motown record. That one record I had on his record, because he had the record player, 'cause it only had to be country and western. But we were very, very good friends, very good friends. And, so, one day he said to me—and he was from Montana—and he said to me,

[34] July 26, 1948, Executive Order 9981 called for the desegregation of the American forces. The order was signed by President Harry S. Truman.

[35] The 101st Airborne Division, founded in 1918, part of the United States Army. During the Vietnam War, the division fought in several major battles, including the Battle of Hamburg Hill in May of 1969.

[36] Motown, nickname for "Motor City," a reference to Detroit, Michigan. Motown Records, launched in Detroit, Michigan in 1960. The label produced an upbeat pop style that incorporated rhythm and blues.

[37] George Glenn Jones (1931-2013), American country musician and singer. His most famous song is titled "He Stopped Loving Her Today."

[38] Joseph Milton may be referring to either Randy Travis or Travis Tritt; both are well known American country singers.

he says, "Joe," he says, "y—you know, you're, you're, you're a good nigger." And when he said that to me, I knew he was sincere and that he was looking—he was really giving me a, a compliment, and he was very sincere in his heart. I mean, there was no vindictiveness in what he was trying to say to me in using that word. And then he thought about what he said. And he explained to me immediately without me asking or anything on how he grew up with that word in his home. And me, being from the South, or going to school in the South, it gave me a, a real clear, uh, uh, snapshot on how he grew up and the things that he looked and thought was okay and took for granted, because that was a word that w—that was used commonly. And it's not something that you can just change or take away from a person—from who a person is—even though it may be something that you don't like. It's, it, it, it, and it may be something wrong. But it, it doesn't—the words doesn't really dictate the heart of a person if they use a certain word. And, and, and I, and, and, and I—and he was closer to me than anybody else that I knew when I was there in Vietnam at that particular time. And it, it, it, ne—you know that, um, we are the product of, uh, our own environment. And, uh, you know, and our thoughts, and the way we think, and, and it, and it—until you have the opportunity to, um, interreact or to have communication with other people—that you have opportunity to see that, that person for who they are, or kinda learn a little bit more, you—and you may not get it all at one time.

[00:40:03]

JM: And, and that's the same thing with me, you know, in terms of growing up in those different areas. Uh, there were certain things I like, and there was certain things I didn't, didn't like, and, and the stores, you know, that I would go in. I say the Jewish store, um, such a small world. Th—it was, it was called Selman Jewelries,[39] and that was in McComb, Mississippi, and, um, the, uh, girlfriend I had at that time, um, I was the—buying up a ring, a garnet. It is, uh, the birthstone—back then everybody would try to get a birthstone in the—for their person. And I got a ring—and I was really big shot—it cost me probably bout seven or eight dollars—high school, you know, and that was like big money. I'm buying that ring at Selman Chevrolet—not, not—Selman Jewelry. I got ahead of myself—Selman Jewelry. And the guy was really nice to me, and 'cause I went in there a couple times, you know, to try to figure out what ring to get, you know. And I looked and saw what I was gonna get, and I had to save my money up and get money from my grandmother and other little chores in order to by this ring. And, um, and I got it. That was in 1963. I come out here to

[39] Selman Jewelers, established in 1945 by Charles Selman; later purchased by Betsy and Lamar Murrell in 1985.

California, I came out here in 19—I think in this area here—I was out in California a couple times—in 2000. And I go in one of my dealerships is Selman Chevrolet.[40] And, so, I'm in there so—he's got two kids, uh, uh, uh, Tray, and I can't think of his daughter's name right now—and we're talking and all that there, and it, it—story kinda goes on, and, "where you from?" "I'm, I'm from," he's from Mississippi. I said, "oh, Mississippi." He said—I asked him where. He told me Jackson, Mississippi.[41] I says, "oh," I said, "I'm from McComb." He says, uh, "my uncle had a jewelry store in McComb." And I said, uh, "such and such and such," and, and it was his uncle, you know. I don't know why I told that story. But, uh, I, I think I told it because the—even during the times where people said, uh, um, that this is the worst period, you know, segregation and this and that, there were still friendships, there were still, uh, uh, uh, good occasions, uh, you—and then the interreaction I knew where I was in the, the, the ways that you knew your place. You kno—I—you know, it's just like being around adults. You knew what to say. You knew what not to say. You knew what conversations to bring up and what not to bring up. And that, and that was the way it was. But there, there was, there was some good occasions in there. But, um, over and all, the Civil Rights, uh, was something that had to happen, and it is ironic that they're saying, you know, that we talking about Civil Rights and, at the same time, what's going on in, uh, all these other cities right now with these protesters going on right now. And one of the things that, um, uh, a lot of people, they take it for granted, and they don't ask themselves—they don't see it. It's not televised. And if it's televised, it's televised in real short, you know, clippets. It doesn't really show all what's going on and all the different cities what's going on. And, and, and then I, you know, again, it's, it's from, um, I think the experiences of what happened back when everybody sees what's going on. But I think this is gonna be a big movement that, that's gonna take off—

CH: (um-hm).

JM: It's gonna—

CH: No, you've done great. You've answered so, so many of my questions without me having to—

JM: Okay.

CH: —ask you. That was great. Um—

JM: I should have got some water.

CH: Did you want to? I can pause it for a second.

JM: Would you?

CH: Yeah.

[40] Chevrolet car and truck dealership established in 1952 and located in Orange, California.

[41] Jackson, Mississippi, the capital city of Mississippi located on the Pearl River.

JM: I didn't know I was coming down with a, a sniffer. What's your hobbies? What kind of hobbies do you have?
CH: Um, I do a lot of things. Mostly hang out with my friends though (laughs). (Milton's footsteps walking through the house).
JM: See my hobby—I would talk to your dad—my hobby is photography.
CH: Oh, yeah. I don't really have anything too interesting like that unfortunately.
JM: (hmm).
CH: Unfortunately, no. I've always wanted to get into photogra—
JM: What about computers?
CH: Nope (laughs).
JM: I mean, are you good with a computer?
CH: Not really (laughs).
JM: Okay.
CH: I'm not good with comp—
JM: Your dad's good wid' it.
CH: He is?
JM: Yeah, he—yeah, yeah. He's pretty good. I mean, when, uh, I would come down there—in fact, um, Mike, uh, I would use your dad as a sounding board, you know.
CH: (hmm).
JM: He, he always takes a very analytical slant—
CH: (um-hm).
JM: —and when he gives me a feedback, you know, and when I would, uh—and I called him all the dealers. And I would try to get feedback on what's going on, just through conversation, and so—and it helped me, um, uh, gear or slant my questions, you know, when I was at another spot or point, you know—
CH: Yeah.
JM: —saying, yeah, as a sales manager, you know, what do you think of this program or do you think that's a good program. Is that a good incentive? And your dad, he was like, "well, I gotta tell you." He was just right on it. He would tell me, you know—
CH: Yeah.
JM: —And so—
CH: —That sounds like him (laughs).
JM: Oh, yeah. And, so, it would help me out tremendously when I went to other dealerships. It—kinda get a good feedback on how they saw that program.
CH: Yeah.
JM: And—but, uh, no, he was really good. But he was good with the computer. I mean, he would, uh, he was, you know—
CH: He always tells me that he's good with the computer.
JM: He is.

CH: But for some reason my—I always doubt him (laughs). I never trust him on that.
JM: Yeah, he's pretty good with 'em, pretty good.
CH: Um, well, you've actually hit your time, so—
JM: Okay.
CH: I—you are free to keep talking. I just—I'm gonna ask you a couple closing questions—
JM: Go right ahead.
CH: Um, I have no time limit. I'm just letting you know that you don't have to—
JM: Oh, oh okay.
CH: —you don't have to push it or anything like that—
JM: Oh no, I was just trying—you know, I didn't have any concise, uh, order—(clock chimes)
CH: Yeah, no it's been—
JM: —in my mind, you know.
CH: —it's been great. You've answered—I was, I would come up with a question in my head and then you would answer—
JM: Okay, good—
CH: —it right after—
JM: —good.
CH: So, you've been, you've been doing a great job. Um, okay, let me see where I can start from.
JM: I know I started hitting on one spot—I start talking about my—I almost got choked up when I was talking about my, um, upbringing with my mom, you know—
CH: Oh, yeah.
JM: —we would go shopping, you know, and stuff like that, and, and my daughter, uh, my baby girl, she's assistant principal. And then my older son is, uh, VP, vice president of, uh, of, uh, JP Morgan Chase Bank in Atlanta.[42] Then, uh, he was over at, uh, at, uh, Cal State Fullerton,[43] and he just turned twenty-two.
CH: Oh, okay.
JM: And my, that's my baby boy. And now—he was at Cal State Fullerton—now he's over at Santiago, uh, Canyon,[44] you know.
CH: Okay.
JM: Trynna get through that program over there.
CH: Um, so then I'm just gonna go to—you answered positive. So, um, make sure this is back on. Yeah. Okay. What was—what would you say is the most negative memory you have of the whole Civil Rights movement? Any,

[42] JP Morgan Chase and Co., headquartered in New York City, established in 2000.
[43] California State University, Fullerton, established in 1957.
[44] Public community college located in Orange, California, established in 1985.

um, attacks to you personally, to a family member, to, um, what came of it—anything like that?

JM: You know, when you say negative, there's two things, uh, and I mentioned the one. The, the one big negative was when I was in the military, and I was refused service. Uh, that was a negative. There's something that, um, you know, that kinda still—I, uh, even though I can't see the pictures of the people or what it looked like or where it was or anything like that, or the downtown, or anything, but, you know, that was a very embarrassing situation, 'cause I couldn't believe it was happening. And, um, that's the only one that really stands out and the on—I, I guess it's the, the only other things that stand out is a really negative is, and I, and I'm just talking to someone here just recently about it—was how, uh, a person is, like my father, and, um, and, or, and, an, an, individuals like my father who were older and who saw things a lot more different than I did, you know. I, I—even though, you know, I didn't see things the same way they did, I didn't have the same patience that they had, just like young kids now don't have the same patience I had. And that—and my son looked at me differently on how I look at things, and we not looking at the things the same. And, and I looked at it as a negative on how—within the, uh, neighborhood, or within the family, you know, you looked at your father and, and, and you had a certain reverence and respect for your father, and he stood for who he was, and, and you respected that—good, bad, and different. You, you knew who that person was. And to see how that same person—how he became when he was around a white man, and how the interreaction was so much different—uh, the, the speech language, uh, the body language.

[00:50:00]

JM: It, it was, uh, uh, total, uh, uh, subservient, you know, ingratiating, um, you know, to, it, it, it was like, you know, you know, honoring a, a god or—how you, you know, and, and, and, and that was just not him. That was that generation on how they reacted and how they acted and how they accepted, uh, uh, because they were never called men. They were always called boys. And, and, and so there's a lot of things in terms of negative—and, and even now you, you, you even may hear in the u—as I'd say this to you now—you may hear someone as a boy, and how that became such, uh, uh, a fighting word when a man would later would be called a boy, and how they took it to be a, or, a, um, someone say to you are—it, it, there's a lot of negatives, you know, uh, and a lot of it was with communication. It was—and were—people will take things for granted or when someone saw a black man and he was—had a tie on or whatever, and, um, they would call him an uncle,[45] or they would say, "you're a preacher." You know, and,

[45] Presumably referring to "Uncle Tom," a derogatory term used against black men.

and, and, and there was always—those references mean something. To some people, they don't catch what those references mean. But for some, they—and so there's a negative in that, there's—a lot of things still linger, and you have to be able to, um, put them away. It's just like, for example, for me, uh, I mentioned my son, um—I'm a Vietnam vet. And so he went to Canyon High School,[46] so the diversity is from left to right and he's biracial and blah, blah, blah. And I'm downstairs, and I wake up, and I'm looking at a Vietnamese kid. And this is a friend of his that, you know, they just happen to come home, and they're in the house and, and whatever they're doing—shooting pool or whatever—and, for him, he's probably was born in, uh, in the eighties, you know. He was probably born in the eighties. He doesn't even know that my minds going all the way back to '64 when I was in Vietnam, and I'm looking—and my mind, you know, things linger, and they don't go away, and some people, uh, and some veterans were not able to, um, uh, channel or compartmentalize, you know, reality with, you know, and, and you know, those, those kinda things. And, and it's, some, those both, those are s—and I don't know how come I said that—but, uh, it, those are the things that are, that are negatives that, the, the images that some things come up or, you know, you, you, you're in your own moment and sometimes there's—you want to think about happy things or daydream about, you know, you know, going down the aisle, and it's gonna be this way—things that make you feel good, but all of a sudden—there's always sometimes there's an image that will come up from the past that you didn't really know how it dialed in. So, those are the negatives, that there are certain things that, uh, um, you know, that, that you, you think are gone but you sorta looking in the rearview mirror and, and it's, and it's more closer to you than where you really think—you think it's way behind you. So, there's some things that linger on and, and you think you're not angry or, you know, because you don't talk about it (phone rings) or because it's not any regular conversation or anything like that.

CH: Okay, (voices in the background) the last thing I just wanted to ask, um. You obviously have been very successful. You've, um, come up from what you said was a poverished home.

JM: (um-hm).

CH: And you've obviously created a great home for yourself, um, what is the thing that you're the most thankful for that—maybe that happened during that time? Like, perhap—like seeing your father go through that stuff, like anything that you saw that made you change your life, made you wanna be?

JM: Um, (pauses) the best thing that ever happened to me, is that I left Pontiac, Michigan—and I was a problem child, you know, and I, and I, I told you I

[46] Presumably Canyon High School, located in Anaheim, California.

was out of the streets, but I was doing a lot of things while I was out in those streets. And, uh, I got involved in all the things that young guys are getting involved in right now that people say are bad, and they can't believe kids were doing that while I was doing those same things when, you know, back when I was in high school, you know. And I was getting involved in smoking and all these other different things like that, and, and staying out at night—sneaking out, you know, and chasing girls, and all that kind of stuff. But, um, to the extent where my, um, parents said, "Hey, he's gotta leave this city or he's gonna get in some serious trouble." And so I ended up going back and staying with my, my grandparents. And, and living in that area down there, um, um, they didn't take things for granted. You know, they all looked at going to school was a real opportunity. Uh, I was in the cities, like, jeez, I can't wait to get home. I want nothing to do with this here. I, I wasn't really interested in it, and, so, it gave me a chance to see more so where my father came from, 'cause I, I lived with my grandma. And so my mother's mother, and then my dad's father was there also in the same little small—like, it was a very small town. And so I saw them, and I saw where they came from. I saw where we lived, and we lived out in the country. And I mean, uh, and the fa—and the facilities were out in the back.[47] I mean we had no indoor facilities or anything like that. And so, I, I, I lived in that, that, that side of it, but—it was a lot of fun, too. I mean there was, you know, it was a, lot, lot, lot of fun. It was lot of, uh, good things about it, and one of the good things about it was that the bus would come out in this little, uh, small community, pick us up, and then we would drive and, and it was like, just, go up to the school. And it was segregated. And we would go by the white school there in McComb City, and go up to this town called Borglum,[48] and we would go to school up there. And, um, all of our books were, you know, books that came down from the other schools and things like that. But everybody wanted to do something. Everybody kinda wanted to be something. And I was a good student. I became a very good student, and I was, and, and I, you know, I, I, I became a very good student and then, just by becoming a good student, people start treating me differently. And for whatever reason people look at good grades and things like that as being a nice person. Even though I had the same look for the girls, and all this here like I always had, but it seemed like it di—it was different, you know, because I was a good student, and being a good student means that you're a good person. And so that kinda changed my life in that, um, um, people looked at me differently. And sometimes you, you sort of respond to what you think people think of you. And if people

[47] Outdoor plumbing.

[48] Presumably Brookhaven or Bogue Chitto, Mississippi, which are both North of McComb, Mississippi.

think, uh, that you're a nice person, you, you, you tend to try to be a nice person. And I found that to be true, and, so, that changed me a lot, you know. 'Cause after that, I, I—though I went in there to the military, but when I came home from the military, uh, like I said, I was home probably a week, week and a half and I went right into college. But, I followed in behind my brother. My brother was, um, eh, my hero. And, um, he was an—he was an attorney, and he was an all-A student. And, uh, and he was the president of student government, so he got me student (inaudible) I become president of student government. And it was, um, uh, it was a very predominantly white school, you know, college that I went to. So, and that's that kind of interreaction and that kind of acceptance, and, um, and, and, and you learn a lot of in terms of relationships, you know, that people are people. I don't care who they are. And they got good days, they got bad days. And sometimes you don't—you can't know or why you like that person over that person, or whatever. But you tend to learn that people are people, you know. So, it, it, it was a good experience. So, those are the good things for me, you know—being able to go back to school there in the South and also have a mentor like my brother, you know, to, uh, uh, follow in behind, you know, so—

CH: And I thought of another question while you were talking. Was it—during the time when you were going to school was—in college did—was it hard to get into school because of your race for either you or your brother or—

JM: (clock chimes) N—no—well, see, that—during that period—it became a quotas.

CH: Okay.

JM: And, um, we went to a, um, there school there. The, the, this was a junior college that I started out, uh, at—I mean, I ended up going to Walsh College[49] after that for marketing. And he went on to, um, uh, Wayne State[50] UMD (?) for law.

[01:00:00]

JM: But at that time, we went to—it was a community college called Oakland Community College.[51] And there was more than one Oakland Community College. There was an Auburn Hills campus, there were Highland Hills campus, and there was an Orchard Lake campus. Well, the Auburn campus was mainly a black—I say black—it was closer to the inner city. The Highland Lake campus was a, uh, white area. And, um, but it wasn't *the*

[49] Walsh College, Troy, Michigan, established in 1922.

[50] Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, established in 1868.

[51] Oakland Community College, Oakland County, Michigan, established in 1964; it is made up of five campuses which include Auburn Hills (1965), Highland Lakes (1965), Orchard Ridge (1967), Southfield (1980), and Royal Oak (1982).

premier white area, you know. It wasn't, uh, Malibu,[52] you know. It was, um, Newport.[53] I mean, you know what I'm saying.

CH: (laughs).

JM: I mean, it, it, but that, that was at Orchard Lake. But we went to Highland Lakes. But all the campus competed, you know, and stuff like that for interreact, you know, interreact. And, um, and so at, uh, at the Highland Lakes at that time I say out of, um, say three thousand students, I would say probably (pauses) thirty-five, forty blacks, you know, on the campus. So, it was that kind of environment. And, uh, and, but, but popular—I'm a yapper—you know, popular, you know, that whole type of thing—and good students and whatever. And it was during that time, like during the Civil Rights, and this was prior to the, uh, um, uh, riots in Detroit—where it was popular to be black, because you was getting quotas at the different campuses. And everybody was trying to get their quotas, and so it wasn't hard to get into college. In terms of loans, loans are just like that (snaps). And I went in, I went to school on my G.I. Bill[54] from the military. But loans were very accessible—no payback—wasn't any keeping up on who owed what, or anything like that. Not the way it is with youth today—going to college and taking loans and having to pay back. Never had to pay a loan back. The loans that you were getting at that time were grants, you know, to help minorities and things like that, and it wasn't looking to say, okay, within the next number of years you gotta pay me back—none of that. So, it was, uh, easy, odd time to go to college, if you wanted to get ahead, you know, in, in life. It was a real good opportunity—much, much better than what it is right now, you know. And I mean, pretty much the way it is in the, the European countries where education is free.

CH: (hmm).

JM: You know, and, uh, and, and that, that gives some of my political thoughts where here in the United States, just like medical, it's a profit center. The sicker you are, the more you got to pay. Education—you want a better job or whatever, you gonna have to pay big bucks. In other countries, uh, European countries, they look at that as being a premium for their people to raise their nations. The smarter our people are, the more we will compete, you know. The healthier they are, the more we will compete. And it's not put on a profit center. I mean, it's just like me remembering, uh, I come out of Michigan with, um, automobiles, you know, Chevrolet and all, all the co—um, manufacturers. At that time, all the insurance companies and the medical companies, they were non-profit. You know, Blue Cross, Blue

[52] City in Los Angeles County, California.

[53] City in Orange County, California.

[54] The G.I. Bill provides educational benefits for U.S. veterans.

Shield[55]—non-profit. You know, all these agencies that used to be non-profit. Hospitals—no way a hospital would be a profit based. It would be a non-profit, you know, because profit wasn't the motive necessa—they were set up. And they sign off that status, all of them. Because it became such a money-making process. But that's another, that's another story.

CH: Alright. Awesome. Is there anything that you wanted to say closing about the Civil Rights or anythings—

JM: No. I hope you guys get, uh—and I hope I gave some information that could be used, or you can edit it. And hopefully it will be positive. Hopefully you gained some experiences, you know, um, just within our sitting and talking. Hopefully, you know, uh, you guys, uh, in your classrooms, uh, uh, collectively have gained a lot of experience in terms of going out and collecting data (automobile drives by). And, uh, because this little—and, 'cause, from my experience, like I mentioned early and doing it after the riots in Detroit, was an experience that followed me all my life—being able to go into different homes, and at that time I didn't have the, you know, the, uh, audio, but we had, uh, uh, just surveys. And we just went in and had the surveys filled out. And then it was more so this percentage said this, this percentage said that, this percent—but just doing that collectively as a group, you know, class, it, it—you will find will stay with you the rest of your life in terms of, um, the information that you receive and that you get. And you'll meet a lot of different people too from different perspectives. And you learn a lot reading people, you know, that, on, an, an, on, in a situation where a lot of people don't get the opportunity to do that, they don't get the opportunity to do that. So, so, I wish you guys luck.

CH: Thank you. Okay.

JM: Alright.

CH: Closing interview with Joseph Milton.

[01:05:50]

END OF INTERVIEW

[55] Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, health insurance provider, established in 1929.