INTERVIEW I

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INTERVIEWEE: CLIFFORD L. ALEXANDER JR.

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

PLACE: Mr. Alexander's office in Washington, D.C.

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F: Mr. Alexander, I'm curious about one thing. How, outside of the fact that you're bright, did you happen to come with McGeorge Bundy into the National Security Council?

A: Well, I knew Mac Bundy from my college days. I was president of the student council, and Mac was then dean of the faculty of arts and sciences. We used to run a debating session about once every other week and I got to know him then. He called me one day in New York and suggested that I come down and talk to him. I did.

F: It must be quite a wrench, in a way, for a young lawyer who's just getting set up.

A: It was, and I didn't want to actually come to Washington. I had what I thought was the beginning of a practice and some political interests and opportunities in New York. Then I came back and actually told him there wasn't an awful lot of interest. I think a few friends of mine told me I was crazy to mess up this kind of opportunity. I called him back and went and talked. We reached an understanding. And, as I am sure is still typical of Mac, he said something like, "You've got two weeks to get down here and get

settled," or whatever, what I considered to be an absurd amount of time. But if Mac said it, you did it.

And [I] ended up moving down to Washington, I remember quite well on July 11 since that happens to be Adele's and my anniversary.

F: This is 1963?

A: 1963. It's our anniversary. We lugged everybody, including our then one year old daughter, down here, and have been in Washington ever since.

F: You're going to stay awhile?

A: I think a little while, anyway.

F: Did you see much of the Vice President in those days? You didn't have a long time with him as vice president.

A: No. I certainly did not. I did not know him at all, really. I saw him from a distance, and I saw him around, but I really had had no conversations with him as vice president.

F: What were your duties primarily?

A: At that time I worked most specifically with Mike Forrestal on then a little-discussed part of the world known as Southeast Asia. We did a good deal relating to Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, and to a certain extent Malaysia. The basic job was often to take what was coming from the various parts of the bureaucracy and condense it for Mac, who would do what he would with it for the President; not to particularly make judgments on the subject matter, but to use a lawyer-politician kind of training and place a few

pages in more orderly succinct fashion and keep it moving. Also got into economic affairs to a certain extent.

F: Where were you at the time of the assassination? In Washington?

A: I was on my way back to Washington from New York City. At the actual time of the assassination I was in the Executive Office Building--the first word we got of it.

F: What happened? Did everybody just spill out into the halls?

A: No. Bob Komer and myself were at the time talking with a general, whose name I don't recollect, from Indonesia, and [we were] talking about problems relating to--

F: Do you mean an American general?

A: No. Indonesian. We had been talking about a conversation. It ended up, when we heard the news, the two of us were alone. You know, it was just sort of, I guess, blank. I don't think we spilled into the hallways, but just a blank, empty feeling. At the time we heard that President Kennedy had been shot, we didn't hear much beyond that, and you know, there was disbelief there.

F: An hour or so.

A: Then I guess we talked and just didn't understand what in the world was going on--tried to get some information. Then, I think, more rapidly than an hour after that we found out that in fact he had been shot fatally.

F: What did you do with the rest of the day?

A: The rest of the day, I tried to make some sense with what my responsibilities might be which I'm afraid from my lack of

recollection of them, couldn't have made an awful lot of sense. I do remember sort of general patterns throughout those few days, more than really specific kinds of things. I remember, at home, the uneasiness. My daughter--we've got two children now, but we only had one at the time--was less than two years old and how profoundly she was affected by my wife's and my attitude. There were some tears, and a good deal of confusion, and so forth.

F: She sensed something.

A: She sensed something. One could see it in her behavior, which is quite normal and cheerful all the time, and during this four or five day period, certainly wasn't.

I also remember I believe that very next morning meeting with Mac Bundy. He exhibited, I think, a kind of confidence that one would expect of him. I also remember going over to see him that afternoon right after the assassination. He had been in tears at that time. But [at] the meeting the morning after where he indicated what we ought to be doing, and the responsibilities we still had, and the vacant points and as you know, the inordinate rumors as to whether there were foreign entanglements involved in this, and so forth. Yet our responsibility certainly had to be to keep doing our job, because we were involved in the country's national security.

W: Was there any sense of relief or disappointment that Lee Harvey Oswald was considered leftist and that this wasn't part of the right wing establishment that had gotten him?

A: No. I think when one sees a leader killed that it becomes not of

great moment what their particular political persuasion is. I guess it extends a person's capacity for compassion. It's all well and good to get mad at an alleged fascist or a racist or whatever that might have committed murder, but it doesn't bring a person back to life. And I think part of the reason we have the violence in this society is that we often tend to be looking for a reason to feel a little bit better about it or [for] another area to vent our hatred. I'm afraid it just ends up accumulating in the country.

F: I've always thought of Mac Bundy as a thorough professional. Did he waver in this time, or did you get the feeling he was just going to bow his neck and go right on doing his job?

A: I had the feeling that he was going to go right on doing his job. I also had the clear feeling of a very deep sense of personal loss. I think Mac is--he needs no defense from me, but he's a misunderstood guy. He has got his problems and his crustiness and his arrogance at times, but more importantly, he's a thoroughly dedicated human being who worked hard with intelligence. And [he] often was actually responsive in some areas beyond--this was later on under President Johnson--in areas of relating to blacks in this country that had not been accomplished earlier. I think Mac is a fast learner. I don't think he thought an awful lot about the problems facing the blacks until it became--

F: Just outside his purview.

A: Outside of his purview. But I tried to make him think something

about it after seeing what our State Department looked like and our Foreign Service looked like, and its discriminatory patterns; and the failure of our nation to place ambassadors, specifically in the United Nations. He helped fight those battles, which took some convincing, but not a hell of a lot.

F: Was there a feeling that Johnson might bring big changes, or a feeling that, really, you had continuity?

A: I really had very, very unknown emotions, I guess mixed emotions is the easy phrase for it.

F: You're moving from a known quantity to an unknown.

A: That's right. That was really the most significant kind of problem. I hope I wasn't affected by what many people are--you know, pre-judgment of a white southerner. In my background, it so happens that my mother used to be head of the Mayor's Committee on Unity in New York. Her predecessor was a white Texan named Dan Dodson who was as fine a man as I've ever known. So whatever biases blacks and whites grow up with hearing a southern accent, I think I got out of the way at a pretty early age.

F: Dan Dodson, incidentally, started out teaching for my father-in-law.

A: Is that right?

F: And then moved up to NYU.

A: That's right. Before he was teaching at NYU, he used to be head of the Mayor's Committee on Unity, and my mother was his assistant. Then he left there, and my mother became executive director of the Mayor's Committee on Unity. Until her death they were dear, dear

friends. I still consider him one, even though I don't see him as much as I'd like to.

F: Had you ever been considered for any post in the civil rights field? You had the background through your parents.

A: I did. I actually had been approached by Sarge Shriver and turned it down--the Peace Corps. But that certainly wasn't civil rights. I'm sure I've had conversations with people in government about possibly coming down, but nothing that went to the stage that the Peace Corps did of coming down here to talk to anybody.

F: You kept the same position with Mac Bundy until the summer of 1964, according to my notes.

A: Yes, I did. Also, I guess from the moment I walked in there, I felt that it was my responsibility as a black in a position like that, to concern myself with "my" folks and how they were faring. And [I felt that] whatever little influence I might have should come to bear domestically or in foreign affairs.

I did talk to people about the march in August of 1963. I went down and was there and ran back with my enthusiasm of it to Mac, who took it right to President Kennedy. I don't know. You know, you like to think it had some impact on the changing of his opinion. His wasn't as open as it should have been to the leadership of that march. But, of course, he did graciously see the leadership at the conclusion of it, which I think was an important kind of thing. One tends to put less emphasis on marches today, I think with good reason, than one did then. It seemed far more monumental at the time.

Also, in the whole area of foreign affairs, it didn't take long for me to see within the department and in our representation in a world that's two-thirds black, brown, and yellow that we were almost exclusively lily-white.

F: Did you meet a resistance in the State Department, or was it just simply a fact that they'd kind of been operating in an absence of mind on this issue?

A: I think what they would have you believe is that they had never thought of it before. They'd thought of it, and these were things they were interested in keeping for themselves and not extending to blacks. They constructed the usual patterns of exclusion for the "qualifications."

F: Sort of clubbiness.

A: Clubbiness is the worst part of it, really. And that applies to lots of categories of whites that they excluded as well. It has, I think, served to undermine what is great about this country--that it is rich in a lot of crazy people, and a lot of good people, just a lot of different types. What we see overseas is an emulation of some of the worst British systems: the stodginess, the pro forma kind of behavior that is expected of ambassadors.

I remember giving Mac, at some time, and I don't remember the date, a memo going through all this qualification nonsense about the number of blacks that should and could and ought to be considered for ambassadorial positions. Several years ago I looked at it, and I think there were about five or six names and about four or five

of them have been made ambassadors. I think there were many efforts made on this.

One specifically was at the United Nations, which was a long, tough, and hard fight, where Ambassador [Adlai] Stevenson was, who was an alleged liberal and did not see what, to me, was the profound importance of having a black in a ranking ambassadorial level there. Mainly working with President Johnson, the step was made, and a black ambassador was sent up there, and really sent up there and was told that that was going to be. Frank Williams was his name. Others on the list not related to that, Pat Harris was one; I believe Hugh Smythe was another. But this was just part of the more or less top level of breakthrough. Here you had our mission in the United Nations not reflecting this nation; had our mission rejecting, as I understood it, a series of people who had been sent up or proposed within the bureaucratic chain of command.

F: I'm sure for courtesy's sake that you would clear anyone with Ambassador [Adlai] Stevenson that you sent up there. Did he have a power of veto in this?

A: Yes, he did have one until President Johnson took it away, in this instance. That's my best understanding of what finally happened. I think that when Frank Williams went up there, he went up there as obviously a highly qualified man. It's a shame you have to say that, but those are the silly alleged prerequisites that are set up--that there be some sort of black superhuman being that

must appear in any kind of significant job. I think that when it happened, it was President Johnson saying it would happen-- that's what did happen.

F: "This is the way it's going to be!"

A: "This is the way it's going to be!" Yes. Exactly.

F: You moved over then in the early summer of 1964 to join Ralph Dungan.

A: Right.

F: Was this for a specific purpose?

A: It was recognition of, I think, a few things. It was recognition that my interest in talks with staff and to a limited extent with the President was--

F: You had seen the President by now.

A: Yes. I had seen the President very shortly after he became president.

F: Was this by design? By his initiative?

A: I think the longest social time we spent together was he and Mac putting it together. It was a dinner where Adele and I went out to Mac's house, just a small number came by, and Mr. and Mrs. Johnson came by. I think we really got a chance to know the man in that sense.

F: Did he talk to you much that evening?

A: We talked a fair amount. He talked a lot to Adele that evening, too.

F: Did he talk, or did he ask?

A: I think he talked a good deal which I think was usual.

F: Did you get a feeling that you were being sized up?

A: A little bit. And that was good. I would expect him to do same, and he did.

And I think when he appointed me--that was an appointment to the White House staff, as you know, out of the National Security Council field--it was a recognition of things I was doing and [things we] were getting more and more into at that time. We used to call it civil rights kinds of activities, and also political. I think there was a Machiavellian hope that I shared that in 1964 he would run and that I'd get into the political business of dealing more specifically with the black community.

F: Did you send him memos along, suggestions?

A: From time to time. I would say that in that period certainly most of what I did in the area of human rights related to talking with his staff people that had that kind of responsibility.

F: Whom did you talk with?

A: Lee White would be the primary person at that time. Harry McPherson came later, and I worked with Harry very closely. In the personnel areas, of course, I had always had a concern for employment, and specifically employment in the federal government, and Ralph [Dungan] had a fair amount to say about those kinds of activities, as sort of personnel [man].

F: Allowing for the fact that the president, regardless of who he is, sits on his own pedestal, did the President approach these problems of human rights in a patronizing or paternalistic fashion, or was it just kind of man-on-man situation? In other words, could you sit down and jaw with him on it?

A: I think if one is to generalize with a man whom I came to know much better later on, I never got any sense of his being patronizing.

And I've grown up with a strong sensitivity for those who are patronizing. I would have one or two, and they'd be rare, criticisms of the man, but it certainly wouldn't be as far as how he approached black and white in this nation.

F: You had a feeling that the commitment was real?

A: I had a strong feeling of that. Beyond the realness of the commitment, I think one could see that rhetoric was used as the President should use rhetoric in this field. He repeated to a nation that has been very wary to give its black brothers what they justly deserved; what should be, what the responsibilities of an American are in this area. And he did it, some say for potentially political gain, but there are just too many instances where it had to be, if anything, a political detriment to him. The "black vote" was secure from his point of view. And I think he did this for a number of reasons, from my analysis of the man. I think this was a man who came up in the South--and, obviously, I did not know him at that time--and participated in a political structure that he himself knew to be wrong.

As so many blacks used to say I remember many years ago and so much today that your best friend, if you find a white reconstituted southerner, you're best off. Many of the northern liberals end up being a little bit paternalistic. They think what is good for you and what they have evolved in their own minds is the best way for this nation to move. I think there was some of that in Lyndon Johnson.

I think, too, that he basically was a people-person. He liked to deal with people, and blacks as fellow people in this country had not been dealt with as human beings. They had been construed as a problem or a hate symbol or an inferior group, and that was not his way.

I think, too, that he is a man who likes to have gratitude. He saw from the political and civil rights leadership a kind of at least people bothering to say "Thank you." I think some of the criticisms I would have of him actually would relate to this characteristic, that as the movement moved on and as the self-esteem of blacks became of greater significance, blacks were not turning around every ten seconds and saying, "Thank you, Mr. President," or, "Thank you, Mr. Federal Government." They were saying, "This is as it ought to be." And I think President Johnson perhaps misinterpreted this as a slap in his face. I think that toward the end of his administration he felt a little put upon by some blacks. He felt, "Since I've done so much!" There's no question in my mind that he did ten times as much as any other president has ever done as far as blacks are concerned. [But I think he felt] that he wasn't getting enough "Thank yous" for it.

I think that this meant that he did not learn to understand what was going on in, particularly, the young black community. I think, too, that, because he was such a curious human being [he made possible]

something that we did. Others have gained credit for it, but basically it's myself and, I guess, Sherwin Markman and Willie [Louis] Martin. We went out, some White House staff did, and went to black communities throughout this country and did some sizing up of what the leadership was saying is needed. He saw those reports, wanted them. If Nixon were to do that today, it would be a great moment to him. I don't think there's any compassion in the man, no love for blacks. Obviously, we're talking about a thoroughly different kind of human being. But anyway, I think President Johnson then used these reports. I know of him using them with legislation. He used to say, "There's the Rat Control Bill or the Rent Subsidies Bill," or so on. "Now look this is what my people are saying is happening in Oakland. This is what they say is happening in Chicago and New York. This is what they saw. This is what people are saying. Why can't you give us these twenty million dollars for rat control," or whatever it might be. I think that in that sense he saw those reports, and he used them in a constructive way. But I think, if he read them--as I am sure he did; I saw him read them--carefully, he also saw emerging a very important and I feel constructive development. Blacks were saying, "Now, we aren't going to be thanking you for doing what you ought to be doing. You may be the first one to have done it in this style. We ain't going to hate you for it."

I think, too, just as in the area of Vietnam, he overreacted to those who spewed out against him in the black area. He also misunderstood militancy in blacks. I consider myself as a militant human being and am proud to be so. And I think many whites consider that a threat, that a militancy and urgency about your rights is what one would consider a militant. But I think that the white media and many of his white friends--because his contacts were obviously broad, North and South, conservative and progressive--said to him, "What are these militants doing to you? They're tearing you apart. They're ungrateful." And I think he was hearing this in one ear as he was trying to do what he thought he ought to do for the country.

F: This is always, of course, one of the most difficult human relationships, I think, where you sort of jockey yourself into what you look on as a teacher-pupil relationship. You sponsor the pupil; and the first thing you know, he's out there running his own program, and you can't quite absorb it.

A: I think that certainly is a very apt analogy. I think, too, that there were some black leaders, namely Roy Wilkins, who contributed to the misunderstanding.

F: They probably didn't understand it themselves.

A: They didn't understand it themselves, I don't think. Again, they felt a sense of gratitude. You know, in the black community the cry in the forties and early fifties was "a man on the Supreme

Court!" A man in the Cabinet!" Now, Lyndon Johnson took care of those two major calls.

Well, in 1964 or 1968 or 1971, those cries are of some moment, but there are so many others. And while someone coming to see a president--what is normal anyway in any relationship with the president is the unnaturalness of it to begin with. When they're brought into our form of regalness, and you've got all the accouterments of power sitting there--the buzzers and the people running around doing things--you're a little awestruck to begin with. Some parts of more traditional black leadership, I think, kept saying, "Thank you," when they should have kept on pushing, particularly in [civil] rights groups. A grocer's job is selling groceries; their job was to prod, was to push for new things. Their job was not to say, "Thank you," no matter what white politicians said about, "You've got to back up and show your appreciation sometimes." That isn't the point. You're an advocate. In a sense, it's like a lawyer's role. You don't, because you're half-way through the case, thank the opposition for having been stupid.

F: Or the judge for listening.

A: Or the judge for listening. More appropriately the judge for listening. And I think some of them stopped and thanked the judge for listening. We're nowhere near heaven in this society, nowhere near it, although I think Lyndon Johnson helped move us a little

ways toward it, and, again, ten times as far as any other American president. But he had to keep listening, and I don't think he was served well by those who stopped him. I know there were blacks in government who gave timid advice as well. There certainly were whites in the White House who gave it. And he listened to this or rejected this as well.

F: Was the White House itself color-blind?

A: No, it wasn't. Its employment patterns. I remember when I moved from the White House to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, I hired a messenger from the White House staff who had a master's degree to be an investigator. They under-utilized black talent just as American corporations and labor unions do. The White House staff tried to get more black, but that was not done as much as it should have been by President Johnson or his predecessor. All over while people in the social office, specifically like Bess Abell, sought and fought with me--and I think this was kind of an important collateral thing we did, getting lots of blacks into social affairs, a number of them black political leaders or potential political leaders who could use the exposure of a White House dinner or a White House event to go home and say, "I was there with the President the other night," and that would help them get elected or get a new project or whatever it might be. [This was] a power we didn't have, yet the office itself didn't have black people sitting in it. Now Bess consulted with me a great deal on this, so you

had some input, but there should have been people sitting there.

The Bureau of the Budget was one of the most lily-white operations. I had several fights with particularly Kermit Gordon. I had been fighting with whites who hate, because they consider themselves traditional liberals, to be challenged in the field of civil rights. Your first months of fighting is getting to them a recognition of the fact that you have to move beyond saying that you're a good human being to the point where you do something that is provable and does some good to slot lives in decent positions.

F: Were they defensive about this, or did they sort of shrug and say, "Well, that's the way it has to be."? That old argument, "When you've got people ready, we'll take them."

A: I think you got that some places. You got help and aid in strange places. For example, I had many disagreements with Marvin Watson, but not a single one in this area. We had them with him because he ran checks on people coming to the White House conferences which I considered offensive and deceitful and sickening. We argued about nameless people whose FBI records were being looked through as to whether they ought to be there. I won those arguments, but I thought the procedure was awful. You know, Marvin and I would fight about that a good deal.

But where we didn't have fights was when we were trying to move blacks into parts of the government in significant positions. He was many times a helpful ally in accomplishing this. I think a

fair amount of that, obviously Marvin was carrying out the wishes of his principal, but I consider Marvin to be a straightforward man that one would certainly label a conservative. But that had nothing to do with this, because I don't put this as a conservative or liberal kind of issue. He worked and strove to do this in a variety of places in the federal government, and I think we made several inroads as a result of this at, again, significant levels. You can still look today and find GS-1's in the federal government that 52 per cent of them are black, and supergrades are 1.4 per cent.

And it unfortunately has gotten worse under this man [Nixon], instead of the kind of spurt we started under Johnson really accelerating.

F: You at least had a forward thrust.

A: Yes, we were on the launching pad, and everybody was revved up, and the rocket was ready to take off. But now they've turned everything off. They'd really disassemble the rocket if they could possibly do that.

I included the Bureau of the Budget in sort of the White House because of its strong influence, sort of staff adviser in so many ways.

F: It's about as key as anything in the government.

A: And if you, unfortunately, looked throughout it, it had many an intelligent white, many not so intelligent. One, I found, too, that they had the most traditional responses to why they couldn't get

blacks: "Couldn't find them." Well, in those days when somebody would say that, I'd try and go the extra mile, and provide some names, and find people, give the names. Again, there would be excuses. Then you'd often have the problem of you'd get the name, you'd get them to focus on it, that they would run a black through four times as many procedures that you'd disgust the black applicant. They'd want to sit down with the black and find out what that black thought of Stokley Carmichael.

F: This is really a Caesar's wife proposition.

A: Yes.

F: I could get by with things you couldn't.

A: Yes.

F: This is subjective, but it must have given you a certain amount of pleasure on somebody like Marvin who is, I think, not demeaning, just a good, tried and true southern conservative, to maneuver him and make him useful.

A: Well I didn't . . .

F: "Maneuver" is maybe too strong a word, but I mean to see him doing things that you know that, left on his own, he probably would not have [done].

A: There was some satisfaction there.

There was always a problem. I used to get out of the White House a fair amount, which I think is something that more of us should have done in connection with our duties. Occasionally I'd go out and speak, which I don't think many of the White House

staff people would do. I think the President used me and wanted me to be political and that it helped him, in a sense, to project a black that he knew pretty well, and go out, and say what he hoped were the right things, but semi-believable, I hope. But anyway, in going out you got a feeling, once you got out of that cloister and the silly party set that we get involved in here in Washington of what are some of the real problems that face people day after day. And you then I guess maybe humble is too proud a term, but you are humbled by how much you need to get done. And the daily victories with a Marvin, or developing a policy with a Harry McPherson, while of momentary satisfaction, just kept saying there was so much more, so much more that needed to be done.

This is just a general problem that I was concerned with the summer when I worked with Ralph [Dungan] briefly and also just generally. The nature of the federal animal is such a terrific problem for a President to deal with. That bureaucracy comes up at you and grabs you, and does not respond to you when you can go with the imprimatur of the President and say, "I want so many folks hired by such and such a time," and go back and it isn't done. Or "such and such a bill ought to be enforced," and it isn't done. And in this field, and in others, that bureaucracy, I think, just ate him up. Of course, much less progress could be made in this field specifically than what should have been done.

I think, too, that a very serious problem was the John Macy operation, that it did not respond as it should have to minorities.

That machine that was spewing out names didn't spew out the black names because they weren't fed in. And the traditional excuses that one would hear from the Bureau of the Budget were also heard from John Macy and Company. It was sad, and it meant more of a burden was placed on Louis Martin. I worked a great deal with the vice chairman of the Democratic National Committee myself, and a couple of others, to play basically "talent agency," which we had no particular capacity other than friends and contacts and thinking about it, where that should have been within the President's structure. That should have come out as other names came out. Only a few did, because the reason was they weren't supplying the names into the machine to be spewed out.

F: You have the problem, Louis Martin has the problem, which John Macy should have been able to solve, of course, and that is the fact that: "We need somebody in Washington state," and under the ordinary terms of things neither of you would know anybody in Washington state.

A: That's right. Exactly. I worked with Louis a lot on this. And one of the things I'm proudest of to see how it's developed [was] the growth of black political elected officials and political personalities. We started; we had several meetings where President Johnson would meet with a group. We'd have a breakfast, say with the Vice President, at the time Humphrey, and the President would see the group, and the group would go to see various Cabinet officers [and] under secretaries.

They'd learn about programs and get special briefings on what might be useful to their communities. To see that group grow was a great thing to see.

But going back to the point I was going to make on this. If you wanted somebody in Washington state, at least from those contacts you had a chance by calling such and such an elected official or somebody running for office there. But that "ain't" as good as having that machine working for you with loads of contacts [and] with universities working for you. For example, many a time I suggested the black schools, the broad kind of professionally qualified talent that existed there. You know, written qualifications for jobs are not as important, I don't think, as the society places stress on them, and the Supreme Court is now recognizing that in Griggs Reduit Power case. But anyway, for those who wanted a certain kind of parchment, you could show them that. But still you were fighting a big, big problem with a very, very little stick when we were doing it individually.

Never at any time was there any hesitancy on the part of President Johnson in this. I think [there was] only one, and I'd have to guess it wasn't his hesitancy, it may have been Ramsey [Clark] and I don't know, but it was the Justice Department. It was the appointment of a black judge in the South. We had a person highly qualified, and they brought up the old saw of IRS investigation, which was just utter nonsense. But it's something that was used

several times to knock down potential judgeships. I think what actually happened was that Ramsey or somebody tried to check it through and get the complete okay of the southern senators involved on this. And we didn't fight that one. That was and is still a very important one to fight--black judges in the South and blacks in courtrooms generally in the South. The whole administration of justice is just not trusted. And this would have been not only symbolic, but it would have caused the hiring of lots of other people.

F: And the first victory is always the difficult one.

A: Exactly. And this should have been a Johnson kind of victory. It was in line with what he had done in several fields.

F: You made some inroads on the State Department. It doesn't seem to me you made too much on the bureaucracy of the State Department. Was Dean Rusk involved in this at all, or did he really pay much attention to the administration of the department?

A: Although I guess he's a southerner by background, he would fit the generalization of--

F: The northern liberal caste, yes.

A: The northern liberal caste in this one. All the right platitudes and Urban League affiliations and so forth. But when it came to getting the job done, he didn't treat it as he treated other problems. This is a man who I saw, in several secret briefings that the President used to hold for the Congress in the White House, be one of the most forceful speakers that I've ever seen. And it

surprised me. But he brought these professional "pols" to their feet. McNamara would speak, and the President would usually have [Charles] Schultze or Gardner Ackley, somebody, talk on the economy. But it was Dean Rusk on foreign affairs, and in ten minutes he got everybody cheering. But there was a fervor and a forcefulness and a sense of purpose that came through clear, and I'm sure in terms of their relationship with Johnson, it came through clear. But it was not there when it came to correcting the internal bureaucracy.

Now we made some strides with the FSO's. They aren't the kinds of strides that I was at all happy with, but they were again light years from where they were. But there was again a timidity to challenge the structure. There was the old club atmosphere, and there was no real help from the top. There was also a sort of assignment of blacks to African Affairs for them in State. There was never a black placed in the secretariat.

F: You'd never send one to Western Europe in a high-ranking position?

A: Lyndon Johnson, you know, sent Pat Harris there as ambassadoress, but if you looked at the time--I think these figures are unfortunately correct, I think there were a thousand and some-odd, give myself a little room there--people in the embassies. And I think at the time, maybe 1966 or so, we had one black in the EUR [Europe]. It was just particularly absurd.

It could have been changed. Rusk, like anybody else, could have had some impact. Again, there's a special unique kind of bureaucracy

in the foreign service. But it's smaller and, in that sense, more manageable, though some of its criteria are worse than those that the Civil Service place on them. But it didn't have it. It wasn't his top priority by any means. One did question--I did certainly--whether it was any priority for him at all. And I think, unfortunately, the results kind of showed that. We made far more progress in the presidential appointment level in foreign affairs than we did there.

F: Who among the blacks was "the man" with the President? Was it Louis Martin, or was it you? Was it a team job? In other words if you wanted to get a point over.

A: I think I would say that Louis was the most influential man in a general sense with the President.

F: Was that because of his connection with the party?

A: I don't know. I think that I'd qualify that by saying that, as far as he and I were concerned, it always was a team job. We were not going to get in the box as two blacks who had some influence with the President, with one saying one thing and the other saying another. We'd talk about it before we'd talk to him. But while I think mine was always awfully good with the President, Louis' was broader, as it should have been. He's a wiser man than I am. He's a man who was in the political sphere. He's a man who also had been in private business, and now is back in the business of publishing newspapers. His contacts had been broader.

F: His base had been broader.

A: His base was certainly broader. And he was the contemporary, more of the established mind. I used to see, somewhat quietly, the people who didn't come into the White House often and what would be considered a lot of the more radical black leadership. And I think he did, too. He didn't avoid them, but I think they'd tend to come to me a little bit more than they might come to him. But I think, as far as with the President, there were more times when he would be with Louis Martin because he'd have that whole area. You know, Louis was not on the White House staff, but he might as well have been. He had that kind of credential.

F: He didn't have to go through an FBI check every time.

A: And he also had the respect, I think, of a broad cross-section of the White House staff. And I think that the influence that perhaps we did have on the President in this thinking in this area came not only through these direct contacts, but almost equally important, maybe even more important, from our working with other members of the White House staff, a) understanding what their responsibilities were and what they were trying to influence or what information they were trying to provide for the President; and then b) talking to them about him; letting them have, if you will, the simplified black input; talking with someone like Mike Manatos in congressional relations about why this bill is of importance to us that he

might not get from just a standard legislative briefing. I spent a lot of time, obviously, with Harry [McPherson], but we didn't have the impact through him on those areas. But [we'd] talk with Marvin about who ought to get to see the President and why it was important to see black elected officials. Or occasionally just doing things that one felt might enrich a president's view of the world.

If I remember, they got in touch with me from Harlem. It was a public school there that was mostly black and about 20 per cent Puerto Rican and a couple of whites. They were coming down to take a White House tour. Casually the principal, who was coming with them, asked me if they might see the President. I asked him, and he said, "Yes." And [they] spent about twenty to forty minutes with him in the Cabinet Room. Obviously, from their point of view, that's a hell of a great thing. But I think seeing these young people and listening to the cute little phrases that came out of their mouths and then [their] presenting him with handwritten signs you wanted somebody in Washington state, at least from those contacts. That was some of the thanks that perhaps he needed, that any president would need to have occasionally. And those kinds of things would not have been possible if you had a Marvin Watson or a Jack Valenti fighting you. So I think it was important for them to understand what our interests were.

I think, too, [it was important] in terms of where they would go to get information. At least, I approached it this way, and I

would think I could speak for Louis on this. I tried never to be the expert on all blacks in this country, but to present, perhaps, what I believed, what I thought others believed, and make some suggestions as to others who ought to be talked to and ought to be contacted. I always tried to see to it that the President would have as much contact with other blacks who would state their position, be it in agreement or not, in as direct a fashion as was possible. I think it was awfully essential to get out and see the black communities, as we did when he went up to see the OIC [Opportunities Industrialization Center] in Philadelphia, as an example, because he was a touch-and-feel-and-smell man. And we'd say to him that itwas worth it to have those twenty-four education bills, or umpteen health bills, in a given session, because, "these are the people that are going to be directly affected that I saw the other day."

I'm trying to think of the more off-the-beaten-track groups. There were rights leaders that would come in, elected officials. [There were also groups] like the Deltas, which is a black sorority that he met with at least on two occasions when I was there, one time for a couple of hours. These are women with a variety of technical expertise and training that talked to him, and criticized him, and exchanged views with him, and moved him, I think, a great deal in just a host of areas. Well, he sat with them for a couple of hours one time, and a shorter period the other time that I remember. There were at least two meetings that I remember with them.

He also met with black publishers. That was more Louis' stake, but we were both involved in that. You know, if anybody bothered in this society as they ought to to read the black press when the Kerner Commission Report came out. It was said that the President ignored the Kerner Commission, didn't like it, didn't like what it was doing. What he didn't like was certain ways that it was presented and reading the headlines before he had a chance to come to his own views. That's what he didn't like. But within, I think, two or three days of that, he had a meeting that had been scheduled several months before with the black publishers. He said at that meeting that this was the most important document that he had had, and this was the most important commission that he had set up, and that he was instructing various parts of his government to react to it, and certain timetables on their reactions. He said that to them. That appeared in black newspapers, [but] was ignored generally by the American public and the "alleged" informed white media.

I don't happen to agree with that about the Kerner Commission Report. I think at least the mainstream of it, of two societies moving apart, is romanticism. The two societies have been apart, and it has only been a sort of new whites coming to this issue that they saw a separation that they didn't want to believe because they'd just had lunch with some black the day before. The fact is that the societies have been apart. I don't think that they've grown

together. There's certain chemistry going on in it, but it isn't two, black and white . . .

F: This went against, though, the one-society viewpoint of the white liberal.

A: Yes, exactly. Yes, it did.

F: That we're all going to have one giant brotherhood one of these days.

A: The word integration taking on supposedly some meaning to blacks. If it is integration in a school sense, or most any sense, for a black who thinks about it, it has only some meaning if it enriches him. You know, there's no great education to be gained just by being with white people. There's no great enrichment if you happen to be in a position where you can talk to them, where you can get the same advantages that they're getting. In the school situation one tends to know that if you don't get the whites and blacks together, the blacks are going to get neglected by the white power structure. You can talk about the fact that there's no difference, and, in fact, teachers can be as good, obviously, black or white. But the point is they "ain't" going to get the same money; they're not going to get the same teacher-pupil ratio, when it's a white school board or a white group in total control. It's not going to do the same thing for a black community.

F: You've got--it seems to me and you can correct me--a subsidence of militancy right now, maybe a lying-low sort of situation, simply

because it has seemed, from my viewpoint, rather hopeless to be too militant. Whereas, under the Democrats you opened the door far enough that you could see possibilities which of course made militancy then, to perpetuate the cliche, relevant. Now, it's not really relevant in a sense, because you don't have an administration that tends to want to go with you. If this is a correct assay, do you think Johnson understood it--that in a sense, the more he did, the more he created a climate of aggressiveness?

A: I would qualify that assessment. But I do agree with the conclusion about the President: that as more and more avenues became open for black expression, as blacks were more involved in ordering their own destiny, if you will, were more involved in understanding their heritage and expressing their own personal pride or their group pride.

F: "If there's no hope of my ever having anything, then I'll live my life without it. But if you can show me where I just might--"

A: Yes. But I think some of that supposed lack of militancy today isn't accurate. I think it's there. It's being felt. Blacks see it more within their own communities.

You see, one of the great problems--and it affected him, and it really affected how he has been explained to us--is a clear and total misunderstanding of white media of the black movement and black and white in this country. If you see the statistics today, after all the thrusts we put in when I was chairman of the EEOC and some of the work that the White House did

to try and get, particularly in the media, the employment of blacks because of their dual responsibility: a) the job; but b) that they communicate. And how in the hell can they understand a Harlem or the barrios without chicanos, with the white going in, a little skittish, maybe carrying a few of his or her own prejudices. Well, that hasn't been corrected. You look at the employment in newspapers today, and it's still 1.5 per cent black, after supposed efforts. And they bring out the old saws about not being able to find "qualified." Well, that's just utter nonsense. The expressive columns. You don't find them in the Washington Post. You don't find them in the New York Times. You don't find them in the Washington Star.

F: Still have your token of William Raspberry.

A: Well, Bill has a special burden placed on him. He's a local columnist basically. You know, there's nobody. And I've argued with people at the Post, before and after government, about their responsibility to give a national expression to the problems facing blacks from a black perspective. Or Carl [Rowan] who has as his background and training a little more international than this. He's interested, as an intelligent man would be, in a host of issues. He isn't dealing with this either. Now when Evans and Novak deal with it, or John Roche, or anybody else, they're just wanting. They'll try to. I'm not maligning their intent, but it's a specific point of view that is missing. I think that then that superficiality, if you will, tends to layer on what they see as

indices of lack of militancy, i.e., "there ain't any riots, therefore there are no militants out here." Or there's no expression.

Yes, I agree that blacks feel that it is hopeless to deal with Nixon. And they're right, because the man's a bigot. I don't come to any simplified judgment about him that, "Well, he's really just a neuter man." He's a bigot! And many of his administrators are bigots, and they act like it, and they treat the blacks--or their lack of treatment of the issue. This country's too sophisticated today to take the kind of activities that this man has come up with.

But when you see somebody like a Nixon, and you don't try and deal with him head-on, yes, some of it is resignation and frustration. But it doesn't mean that the militancy, if you will, has subsided.

F: Overt militancy is what I should have said.

A: Nor is it proper to analyze militancy in terms of numbers of buildings or cities burned. That never was--

F: I didn't mean that. I meant the constant pounding of issues.

A: I think in the issues area is where we as blacks perhaps have made a mistake. We haven't got an audience there, but there are other forums. We have started finally to exploit it in the legislative field. The [Black] Caucus is doing it some. Other black leaders are trying to. I've been trying to use a television program I have now once a week to talk about the political sphere and the economic sphere,

specifically, what leverage we have; selective boycott; the idea that if you do elect somebody, you have liaison through specific white interest groups, not the old one necessarily. If you want to do it with organized labor, it's okay, but make sure that you have a commodity of interest. But what about the environmental movement! Environment really, when you get beyond the trees and the rivers and pollution, you're talking about central cities mostly--the black and the chicano.

F: You're talking about the sidewalk and the sewer.

A: And there's every reason in the world for there to be a liaison rather than a white upper middle class movement that doesn't involve blacks. And we ought to do it from our point of view that they've got the bucks and some political clout. They ought to do it from their point of view, in that we are the potential lawsuits for them; we are the people who can give them in the cities today some political influence, because we're mayors of cities and we're on local city councils. But to try and think and develop those kinds of liaisons, to talk in other forums, to keep the pressure on the private sector. Now the companies, the corporations, haven't done a thing. Here is an area that I tried to get the White House and the EEOC to push corporations just to obey the law. We made some halting progress. I think a good deal more than had ever been made, but it was halting.

Now this man [Nixon] presently in is trying to reverse that. But corporations lag in how they respond. They still continued

to respond up until about three or four months ago, I think. Now they're starting to get that message of early 1969 of Nixon that you don't really have to do so much in this area.

But there are other ways, I think, to have them get that message. That we are a forty-six billion dollar consumer market is a very important way to get it. By joining hand-in-hand all of us, black and white, can have a few more bucks in our pockets. That there is a paucity of talent out there, and there is now and there are 6 per cent blacks in colleges around the country. They are now seventy-two blacks graduating from the Harvard Business School this year, when from the years 1901 to 1969, forty-one had graduated in that entire period. In other words, from your own self-interest-- I'm not of the school that prays to people about these things--it would be useful to go out and get black talent the money the talent should have.

Now there are some ways to do that. It would be a hell of a lot easier if the federal government also exerted some pressure. But there are some ways beyond that to do it. Here's what I think the black movement--well, there are lots of parts to it. It isn't over-simplified. There are [Adam Clayton] Powells; there are civil rights leaders; there are individuals who are followers--the whole rich panoply of leadership that you find in most groups. Only there's a little more of it, because you've got a lotmore things you need to lead people to than an affluent white group might have.

But, anyway, I think we need to figure out more ways, when we're saddled with a Richard Nixon, to get other kinds of things done. And I think we also ought to figure out more ways. You know, the Clarence Mitchells of this world have to hit the Richard Nixons in order to deal with the establishment far more often than they do. It's all well and good to be friendly with a Lyndon Johnson, but that doesn't mean that, when the others appoint as they have, and fail to appoint, that you don't come out and holler at them when they emasculate legislation or when you see a commission like mine that is virtually inactive. [This doesn't mean] that you don't talk about it day after day.

And I think here your analysis of the difference between how you treat friends and people overseas--because Nixon might as well be overseas on this issue--is quite germane. You know, a Clarence Mitchell, just to use him as an example of the kind of leadership that would strike out at parts of the Johnson Administration that weren't responding--Clarence Mitchell hasn't been doing that to the EEOC. He hasn't been doing it with the same fervor, and five times as often, because there are five times as many inequities as there were previously.

There's also the problem that grabs many a leader, white and black, in this country of wanting to be included, wanting to get to the White House, wanting to sit at the right hand of the President, wanting to get to a dinner, wanting to have somebody appoint them to a major board of a corporation,

wanting, in other words, to be part of this establishment. Some people pull their punches; others try and do the best they can. But that in some senses affects--

F: My big interest in this question was: did Johnson understand, in a sense, that he helped invite criticism, that everything he did brought on more criticism? It gets back to that business we mentioned:the gratitude and the cessation of saying, "Thank you, boss" sort of thing.

A: I think he understood it.

F: He didn't have to like it.

A: He didn't have to like it, right. I think there were lots of things in this area that he understood the ramifications of them, knew in a sense they wouldn't do him any good; but that strong decent strain about doing something about it prevailed. I remember being with him. I guess Louis [Martin] was there. We were there for about forty minutes with him just before he announced Thurgood Marshall. He told us. That was a nice kind of thing to have happen, because we saw him call everybody else afterwards, the Vice President, and [Chief Justice Earl] Warren and so forth. But he told us.

F: Did he call you in for that, or did you just happen to be there?

A: No. He called us. A strange thing, because usually when you go over there, somebody would say, "The President wants to see you at such and such a time in his office," or wherever it might be. He called this time to say, "Could you come over?"

F: And you said, "Yes."

A: You wondered maybe if Marvin had gone out to lunch, why he [Johnson] was making his own phone calls.

F: Did he call you personally?

A: Oh, yes. He called me personally, which made it kind of strange, and he didn't say what it was about. I got over there and went into Marvin's office. I forget. I think I went in and Louis came in very shortly after. Then he told us, because I guess we'd both been bugging him about this kind of thing for a long time, what he was doing.

But the point of all this is, after we were there for a while, and after talking and his calling a number of people--the whole thing must have been I guess close to an hour--he brought Thurgood in. And I think when Thurgood was there, he said, "You know, this is not going to do me a bit of good politically." It sure wasn't. He gave the host of reasons. He was warned, too, on either side. You know it really wasn't; politically he could have held together the black vote. There's no question about it anyway. But he said, "I appointed this man because he's very much like me. A man of the people brought up the same way. He doesn't have a Harvard degree like you, Cliff, I know." He'd zing on that Harvard thing. He used to love to do that. But he said, "This is a man who understands people, understands what they're about." He didn't even talk about the symbolism of it very much. Really, this was a guy "like me." You know, [he] touches, feels, smells. That was the overriding concern.

Again, he could have gonein a lot of other directions at that point and had been criticized some for it, but not a hell of a lot, but

he didn't. Just as an example of what we're talking about: as he opened the door for more bitching and complaining, he didn't like to hear it, damn, he didn't like to hear it! But I think as he thought about it he knew that what he was doing was potentially providing more and more opportunities, potentially more expression from the people who had been expressionless so long.

F: "If we've got a Supreme Court justice, why ain't we got X and Y and Z?"

A: Exactly. What he was doing was taking off something, I used to refer to it when I chaired the commission as a black ceiling in employment. You know, in corporations they can go so far, and then the black ceiling hits you. In government it's the same way. That's what Nixon has done in this government. You know, the black ceiling is the assistant secretary level. In various departments it's lower than that. And you just don't even strive beyond that.

F: I remember attending a Ford Motor Company seminar about fifteen years ago when Levi Jackson of Yale had become in one of their plants a department manager or whatever he was, and he was a real showpiece to them. And you ask the inevitable question, "What's his chance of moving up into the Detroit hierarchy and getting to be an assistant vice president or vice president." I mean, the look of consternation! Nice-meaning guys. You can still see that "We have brought him this far! What more do you want?"

A: Exactly. I'll tell you a story. Just the other day, at the public hearings I held, I asked company executives, "Do you have any blacks, women, and chicanos as vice presidents or managers?" And I got that look of consternation from them and [get it from] any business people in the audience continually. A friend of mine at the commission I had lunch with the other day was saying that in a hearing that they're now planning that somebody was talking to him who represented a number of utilities and saying, "I remember the last chairman was obsessed with this business of black vice presidents. Are you going to have this same kind of nonsense?" And that black's doing a little thinking.

It affects Edmund Muskie today--you know, the political importance of this concern for them. But it does say to a lot of young people, "Well, there are a lot of folks out here who think we can only go so far." And that's what he should have thought about, Muskie, and not his honesty at that given time. Now, that might affect a lot of votes out here.

F: The American dream is still that anybody can be president.

A: Yes, but to a black it's a nightmare. It just isn't any dream.

F: And to hear the foremost candidate saying, "You can't even be vice president!"

A: Exactly. And when one sees today's vice president, you wonder what the connotation is.

F: We haven't gone very far on my chart, but this is all, I think, extremely germane. I've been very interested because you've had

a special position vis-a-vis President Johnson. Two other questions I wanted to ask you along this line. Did he ever look on you as a black upstart? Did you ever get that feeling? You were young. He had a lot of young people around, for whatever reason.

A: Yes, he did. I don't know. I know that a couple of memos I sent him I'm sure he didn't like. I sent him one on Plans for Progress where I really called it, in a little less strident terms, bullshit--as an empty kind of vague promise. And I had statistics to back it up. He never did follow up on what I wanted to do with it. I don't know what he was mumbling under his breath when he read that. I found the relationship to be a warm one whenever I was in his presence. I had the pleasure of being chewed out a few times. I got my ass chewed, yes.

F: That's a good man-to-man sort of proposition.

A: Right.

F: Since you'd gone to Harvard and Yale, did he ever tease you about being part of the Eastern establishment?

A: The one I mentioned to you with Thurgood I particularly remember. Frankly maybe this is over-building it, I think he liked it a good deal. I think that it's something that happens to too many people who don't go there; they place more emphasis on what we supposedly learn in those schools which ain't a hell of a lot different from what I've found in most places. But I think he, maybe, is like all of us--you know, a group that you haven't

been in contact with most of your life, that you're now in a special kind of relationship with them. I guess if I ever sat with a group of corporate presidents who I thought of as narrow-minded and unable to deal with the problems of blacks and all of a sudden we were on the same wave length, I really might make fun of them. But I'd think a good deal more of corporate presidents than I ought to because, having won them over or having them involved in my cause, is a good kind of thing. I think, too, that he got so much crap from the phony liberals from the Kennedy era about his "alleged" causes, his "alleged" this, his "alleged" that--all of which was reflective of their own insecurities and their own incapacity to judge a great man. But I think that that made him feel differently to those who were from Harvard, who might happen to have an admiration for what he could accomplish or just show a mutual kind of respect that he exhibited for them.

F: This was a most curious sort of thing in the world, because some of the backbone of his administration were holdovers from the Kennedy Administration, as were some of the real backbiters.

A: That's right. You know, the backbiters, well, I guess Arthur Schlesinger was a prominent one among them. He's no particular friend or enemy, but I was there long enough to know what his role was in the Kennedy years because I went to the secret little meetings we used to hold in the National Security Council in the early mornings. His role was about like mine. Maybe we had fifteen people in the room, and there were five or six first-stringers and the rest of us.

And we'd occasionally contribute, but basically were there to keep up with what was going on. He was not of great moment to that administration at all.

Well, you know, striving to keep in the headlines is one great problem. The second is the thing that often Agnew talked about, and there's some grains of truth in it: this incestuous little group in Georgetown that does help to perpetuate a lot of bad things. One of which is tearing down fellow human beings, white and black. The second is to think that they are really the source and the fountain of all knowledge. The third is a virulent kind of racism that excludes in a city that's 71 per cent black and really closes out the blacks. And I say this, having been not to many parties there, a few, but enough to observe the phenomenon. I'm not talking about that as somebody who has never seen it in action. A fourth is that it often consumes its own. It is so close and it is so obsessed with the negative that it's at some stage willing to gobble up its own if that's going to accomplish moving it forward. And that's a very sad thing, and it affects, I guess, this government to a certain extent. But it affected ours a good deal.

F: You touched on something a while ago that I think I'd like to hear you expatiate on, and that is, well, two things, really. One is that you got around among black men particularly. A lot of the White House people stayed home, and did their homework, and didn't get outside the inner circle. And then there's a

larger question that goes with it, and that is the fact that whether you don't have an establishment here that too often thinks Washington is the nation.

A: Yes.

F: And talk to each other and settle things.

A: That's right, and settle things. Now in a sense President Johnson who I think saw this, saw the dangers of it, in a way contributed to it, not in any conscious sense, but by his criticisms and his closeness in his relationships to keeping stuff from the press. He gave them an easy common enemy. He was for them a Texan; he was for them "crude," he was for them not awfully bright, he was for them not consumed with foreign affairs, which was their penchant because it's "away." You can talk about foreign affairs and not worry about 5th and M in this city where you've got some real problems that they might do something about. He was a man who they thought was really trying to kiss their ass, and so they probably felt a little proud about that. He was a man who was overly-consumed with the media. All those things were happening. I think that all of those things caused them, again, to justify themselves, come up with their own solutions, and then feed it to each other.

And there were people within the administration who, I think, contributed to this as well. You know, I make my guesses about McNamara in this field, that he was a part of this. I know in the fields I was interested in I never got to first base in getting black generals. I finally got Johnson to do it. I sent memos over there

to try and get some blacks in the upper level of Defense. They weren't there then and they're not there now.

But again, people who are pictured as bright, progressive, intelligent, la-de-da--all those phrases--when it came to action on issues they were in a position to do something about, it was a little closer to home and a little less esoteric than what you could sit around a table and talk about and have good French wine with. They weren't so quick; they weren't so ready.

F: It's easier in a way to integrate a base down at Columbus, Georgia, than it is the Pentagon.

A: Yes, it certainly is.

F: Because it's 'way off down there in Georgia.

A: Exactly. We had that. When I first came down here, as a matter of fact,I worked in another foreign affairs race-related area on the Gesell Commission--Gary Gesell, who is now a federal judge. His report where he talked about off-base discrimination, I didn't find it a particularly moving report, but it was thought of as rather radical for its day--off-base housing and so forth.

Well, McNamara didn't implement any of the stuff. I think Clifford finally did a teeny bit of it. And these [Nixon] folks, that's one thing they've done a little bit more of it than the Johnson Administration. But that kind of activity is so much greater than any of them have done right in their own backyard just hiring some people, setting some targets and goals for themselves. There has never been assistant secretary, never a deputy

assistant. High level GSs--if you look in that report in the minority groups employed in the federal government, Defense is as bad as any of them. And again at the bottom, everybody is lumped. Now, in the services, in that particular pressure, which has to be a political pressure, to get generals, we got some tiny results, but again only with presidential intervention in the process. I remember Whitney Young coming back from a trip to Vietnam when President Johnson asked him to go over and observe the elections. We were there and the three of us talked about generals. Whitney brought up--and I think this line was quoted--he said, "B. O. Davis is a general, and B. O. Davis, Jr. is a general. But B. O. Davis, Jr. doesn't have any sons. So unless you get out here and appoint some black generals, we're not going to have any." And that was literally it, they were the two black generals--the father and a son.

F: The line is going to run out.

A: The line is going to run out. Whitney obviously went on to specify, and the President went along with it. But it jarred the President in something I had tried to get done. But you get a man of Whitney's stature come in and coming back from a mission, it took on some importance. I think a couple followed from that. But so much more is needed in that area, and it just wasn't getting done. It wasn't getting pushed by the civilian side, nor by the military side.

But even then if you look at the services, for the wrong reasons blacks do better in employment in the services than they

do in the private sector. The wrong reason they're moving up is that they re-up, because they can't go out here and get the equivalency. They can't, as their white colleagues, move into industry. They can't retire and be a Lockheed space advisor. This isn't happening and never has.

F: Better take that time in service.

A: That's right, take the time, and move up to the noncom level in that, or if it's a commissioned office they hold, take their chances. They see a black ceiling, but, hell, it's an awful lot better. The ceiling is higher than it is in the private sector.

F: If enough of them get to be majors, they can push one up to colonel.

A: Right.

F: And make a new plateau. Let's get back a minute. You tell me when to quit on this. I'm going to have to see you again, as you've already seen.

Did Ralph Dungan seem to have the President's ear?

A: It's a little hard for me to judge. I would guess not an awful lot, but I don't really know that.

F: Did he want that ambassadorship to Chile?

A: Yes, I think he wanted that.

F: It wasn't Johnson's way of easing him out?

A: I don't know. I just honestly don't know. I never heard Ralph--we never became particularly close--engage in the kind of things that some of the former administration people did. But we weren't close enough for him, certainly, to trust me

[or] to say negative things about Johnson. It wouldn't have been a good idea, I don't think, anyway. My guess would be it was a mutual kind of thing. I think it had to be very difficult for those who had been with President Kennedy through a campaign, through these times and to go through the emotional strain, to think what they've given up. I think putting a few years in government is a strain--at that level certainly a hell of a strain. And it's just different than new people coming in. And I think the new people, what I saw of them, did an exceptional job of not being heavy-handed. Maybe too much of one, because I think it almost made for an uneasiness. Things were so standoffish. I think part of President Johnson's problems in Vietnam relate to this--not to question Mac Bundy, who didn't know a damned thing about it to start with.

F: He came in cold just like you and me.

A: That's right, absolutely. And not to demand more of his McNamaras. He had, I think, his uneasiness in this area, clear uneasiness. But he didn't do what he would always do in other fields, which was to get more facts. He didn't send out people on unconstructed tours, as we went out to ghettos in this city, where you go out and find something out. I don't know that this is a fact, but I doubt if he talked to some of the younger journalists there--younger not so much in age, but in terms of seniority, I mean a Dave Halberstam. The only thing that was different about Dave was, I guess [was] he left Saigon and went and looked at the rest of the country. Many of the correspondents there were too busy doing

what they do in Georgetown, with mutally supportive information being transferred one to the other.

I know some of the first real deep questions I had was in conversation with a neighbor of ours--we were good friends--a big guy named Bruce Morton at CBS. Bruce was over there for the better part of a year, I guess. I had always known him as an eminently sensible man, a man who did not carry the predispositions against Johnson that many had--negative predispositions. And his questioning of Vietnam, I think, caused me to do more. I wasn't at all involved in it at that time. It was much, much later. But I don't think enough of that kind of information was getting in. I guess once you reach a certain point, you then get into personal justification of past errors. Again, if Lyndon Johnson had let Lyndon Johnson, the human compassionate man, take it, it would have been so much better. If he had left out the thing that I see so much, at least some, I haven't read the excerpts of the book much, but in that and in CBS interviews--this compulsion to deal with justification rather than his--in those CBS interviews--talking about this area, talking about education, talking about health, about people domestically where he made such a contribution. It was running over stuff that the Washington Post and the New York Times cares about and very few other people; and not the broad issue of Vietnam--obviously we all care about that--but, you know, into the minutiae of it. You can still, I think, poll half the people in this country, and they can't find Vietnam on the map. So that isn't the concern.

But they can find their children who have drug problems. They can find their kids who aren't educated well. They know the health problems they have. And the contributions he made there are the important things, I think, for him to be talking about, as well as saying why he thought he was right. And he may well be still [right] in Vietnam. I don't know. But I think if he had just done such, and would continue to do so.

I also fret a good deal that he doesn't get into a little bit of warfare with Nixon to conserve black rights. I think it's most essential. I mean, the Democratic Party is bereft of good white leadership in this area, and the black rights are string-sighted as with a number of other things. But I think it's important for him not just to sit there and find his place in history. If all that work is going to mean anything, somebody has got to say, "Now, listen, Richard Nixon, you stop screwing around with what we got started!" And I think it's important that somebody do that.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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June 30, 1983

Professor Michael L. Gillette
Chief of Acquisitions and
Oral History Programs
The Lyndon Baines Johnson Library
Austin, Texas 78705

Dear Professor Gillette:

Thank you for your letter of June 21, 1983. I have not had the time necessary for a thorough review of the transcript of my oral recollections. I have found certain inaccuracies in those parts I did review.

I do however want you to grant permission for you to utilize my recollections. I would appreciate your informing anyone reviewing the material that I have not reviewed the material.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,

Clifford L. Alexander Jr.

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Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interviews of Clifford L. Alexander, Jr

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Clifford L. Alexander, Jr. of Washington, D.C. do hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title, and interest in the tape recordings and transcripts of personal interviews conducted on November 1, 1971, February 17, 1972, and June 4, 1973 in Washington, D.C. and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

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(2) The tape recordings shall be available to those researchers who have access to the transcripts.

(3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcripts and tapes.

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Clifford L. Alexander Jr.
Donor

July 18, 1983
Date

Archivist of the United States

July 29, 1983
Date