

Voices from the Grassroots Oral History Project

Detroit Equity Action Lab

Damon J. Keith Center for Civil Rights

Wayne State University Law School

Detroit, MI

Wayne Curtis

Interviewed by

PETER BLACKMER AND CURTIS RENEE

June 14, 2019

Detroit, MI

Narrator

Wayne Curtis was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan. He graduated from Northern High School in 1967 and briefly attended Ferris State University. He was drafted into the Army during the Vietnam War. After returning from Vietnam, he joined the Black Panther party chapter in Detroit, where he worked as the circulation manager of the party's newspaper. After his time in the Black Panther Party, he was involved with the Nsoroma Institute, a public school academy in Detroit. Today, Wayne Curtis is a board member at the James and Grace Lee Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership and is the co-founder of Freedom Freedom Growers, a community garden organization in Detroit, with his wife Myrtle Thompson-Curtis. He is also an artist who runs art classes such as the Emory Douglas Youth and Family Art Program.

Interviewer

Peter Blackmer is a Research Fellow at the Detroit Equity Action Lab, an initiative of the Damon J. Keith Center for Civil Rights at Wayne State University Law School.

Curtis Renee is an aspiring healer and chef, a reiki practitioner, and a lifelong Nonviolence (positive peace) activist from Detroit, Michigan. Curtis' Social Justice passions encompass Black liberation, Black & Palestinian solidarity, feminism, and queer activism. Curtis has over 15 years experience in developing, creating, and implementing programs in line with the larger vision of profit and nonprofit organizations (Leaps & Bounds Family Services, Urban Leadership Specialist, Freedom Freedom Growers, and Detroit Area Restorative Justice Center). She also regularly works as a Legal Observer and is a founding member of The Detroit Safety Team. Wayne Curtis is her father.

Abstract

Wayne Curtis discusses his childhood in Detroit, his grandparents' backgrounds, his memories of the assassination of John F. Kennedy and Malcolm X, the walkout from Northern High School in 1966, the 1967 Detroit rebellion, and getting drafted into the Army and sent to Vietnam. He discusses his time in a military jail in Vietnam, conflicts between white and Black soldiers, and how his experiences there changed his political consciousness and made him a Viet Cong sympathizer.

He also talks about why he joined the Black Panther party, their political education system, gender roles in the party and how it dealt with misogyny, how he distributed the Black Panther newspaper, its survival programs and community outreach, the Detroit branch's interactions with the Detroit police, and the relationship of the Detroit branch to the leadership in Oakland, California. He also speaks about the relationship of the Black Panthers to other radical groups in Detroit, such as the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, the Republic of New Africa, and the Nation of Islam. Other topics include how the party thought about electoral politics and detailed discussions of its ideology. He also talks about the legacy of the Black Panther party in Detroit, why he left the party, and what cultural transformation looks like. He closes by giving lessons for activists today and talking about Curtis Renee's trip to Palestine.

Keywords

1966 Northern High School walkout; 1967 Detroit rebellion; Black Panther party; Detroit police; Detroit, Michigan; Electoral politics; Freedom Freedom; Gender roles; John F. Kennedy assassination; League of Revolutionary Black Workers; Malcolm X; Nation of Islam; Shrine of the Black Madonna; Vietnam War

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Transcript of interview conducted June 14, 2019 with:

Wayne Curtis [WC]

Detroit, MI

By: Peter Blackmer [PB] and Curtis Renee [CR]

WC: I had my glasses here, and I...I moved them, and lo and behold there's something else going on that I couldn't see before, and that's how the movement continues. We used to say that revolution is a process and not a conclusion.

PB: Could you just introduce yourself to the cam--to us, your name, where you live, and your organizations or affiliations?

WC: My name is Wayne Curtis. Some people call me Baba Wayne, and that comes from this community that embraced me. It's a school called Nsoroma Institute, which was centered around Black-centered, African-centered education, and, like what Huey [Newton] used to say, something that can't be learned or taught is realization, and I took that opportunity to realize other things after the Black Panther Party, and it was from a strange source that I never thought that I would get any type of understanding or knowledge from, which was the Black Nationalist community.

Wayne Curtis [laughs], born here in Detroit [Michigan] on the West Side. My parents were a young couple. My father just getting home from Vietnam, I mean, from World War II. The political atmosphere at that particular time aft...aft... [coughs] after World War II was the beginning of the new world order. United States was in control, and it started building its imperial status glocally. [coughs]

And so, production had went crazy, televisions, TVs, homes, and my father was able to take advantage of that. But them being so young, they separated and divorced, which led me to go to the East Side, which was like jumping from one extreme temperature to another extreme temperature. The East Side of Detroit was a lot more older [sound of bus stopping; raises fist in greeting to someone off camera], a lot more... [loud bus noises; Curtis mimes talking, laughs, and waits for bus to leave] The East Side of Detroit was a lot older in its culture.

Detroit basically is, to me, a city like down South 'cause that's where everyone is from. My...my grandparents who lived on the East Side of Detroit and their ways are, I guess you could say, southern and African-centered, but they were experiencing the blunt of...of racism, poverty where they live. Black Bottom, our institutions that we built came from--the question that you asked is--the hustlers. The number people provided loans and things of this sort to the community because--or to the neighborhood--because we weren't allowed to get loans and things like this here. So, if it wasn't for our creativity and hustle, we probably wouldn't be here, but because...because of that ingenuity we are here. And plus, you had other organizations like Marcus Garvey, the Black Power movement, movements in the [19]30s and [19]40s, labor movements, and things of this sort, which a lot of the labor movements we weren't allowed to participate in.

[0:06:08]

PB: Were your grandparents or your parents involved in the Garvey movement or the labor...?

WC: I think my grandfather was 'cause my grandmother would talk about him being in the Ford Motor Company strikes and she would...she would be mad at him because he participated, and then she said something about the Garvey movement. She didn't like the movements, but her pride and her...her cultural actions reflected everything that they were talking about, collectism [collectivism?], eating right, free expression [laughs]--she had that down pat. My lifestyle and the lifestyle of her children like my mother and two uncles, it was quite different, where the whole family when my mother was a child were engaged in the neighborhood, in the community. She took 'em on picnics and, you

know, she educated them to what life is, and she went on that to educate me. Like, when I first moved there, I went to this element--I enrolled in the elementary school, and I found a friend, so I thought, and I rushed home to tell my grandmother. "I got a friend. I made a friend." And she said, "You ain't got no friends." And, behold, he turned out not to be a friend. So, things...things like that. A lot of times she used the belt to educate me along with words. She did the best that she possibly could to raise me.

My grandfather was old-fashioned. He didn't...he didn't say much, but he had lots to say when he was younger, of course. But as he got older, he kept to himself, basically. It wasn't until I became a little bit too much to handle because she would try to confine me to keep me out of trouble, which I later got into anyway. But when I moved with my mother again, it was...it was a back-and-forth between my mother and father and grandmother, and I would get these different perspectives of life from each set of...of divided family.

[0:09:52]

[Loud bus noises]

PB: How old were you when you moved back in with your mom?

WC: I must have been around...I must have been around 16 or 15 'cause I had started high school, but I was living with my father when I started high school and I was terrified, living a sheltered life [laughs], and people were telling me--'cause I went to Northern High School, and people were telling me, "Oh, Northern, it's...it's a rough school. There's brains lying on the concrete campus." And I was shaking in my shoes, and everyone was laughing, but it turned out to be a good experience. Northern walked out, back in 1966, and that was the atmosphere 'cause you have a glocal, global movement of decolonization going on, so the Black Power movement was at its height. There were so many things going on. The Muslims were here. Detroit was the first chapter of the Muslims. Republic of New Africa was here. The League of Revolutionary Black Workers was here.

[0:11:37. Jump cut.]

PB: What year did you graduate high school?

WC: I graduated in [19]67. I...I was supposed to graduate in [19]66, but I wanted to drop out, and my art teacher said no way 'cause I was...my only good subject was art. So he said, "No way. You're gonna stay another semester and you're going to improve your grade point average." I graduated with a 1.75, but that particular semester I had a three point something, but I graduated in [19]67. He got me in college, which I wasn't prepared for. After a couple semesters, I flunked out and left with the hives being nervous about finals and things of this sort, and right after that, I got drafted into Vietnam--the Army, and then Vietnam.

PB: Did you participate in the walkout in [19]66 at Northern?

WC: The walkout at Northern in 1966 started 'cause it was right after the riots in Los Angeles [California], and we would go over our teachers' houses and look at the riots and listen Stokely Carmichael, Elijah Muhammad to give us a feel for what else was going on in the world because they felt that the school system wasn't teaching us that--weren't allowed. So, right after that we started to understand what was goin' be done. We started a [coughs]...we started a...we...we started a freedom school, and I think we stayed out of school for a week--to my satisfaction 'cause I wasn't doing nothing in there any...anyway. But, we got rid of the police that were...had residency in the hallways of our school harassing people, harassing the young brothers who were hustling, harassing the young ladies there, just harassing the students in...in general, getting his orders from a white principal who wanted to have a penitentiary instead of a school. So, we got rid of him too.

[0:14:41. Jump cut.]

PB: So was...was the walkout, like, your entree to activism and organizing work?

WC: [laughs] No. [laughs] It was just the free ticket not to be in school, but subconsciously the walkout did it. I was exposed, and...and that's how the masses are...are educated to a new way of life and a new culture. Quantitatively, things happen in a series, and people come to realization. Things have little meaning when they...when they first happen, but later on you realize the significance of a walkout at Northern High School. You realize the significance of the Muslims who...who I watched in my neighborhood for a long period of time. I thought they were crazy, especially Elijah, the honorable Elijah Muhammad. He had this hat that had all these stars and stuff on it. I thought he was a mad man, but it wasn't until I got home that I started realizing the significance of the different organizations who were slowly gaining support from the people for the people to take their survival and their existence and their sustainability into their own hands and being creative and implementing subjective ideas and turning them into objective actions and...and practices that become cultural norms of real existence.

And that was...that's what I meant earlier that we're free while we're doing that because those actions... We legitimize our actions as a real phenomenon that turns into a culture because it's repeated and repeated and refined and refined and it...the...the masses of the people, the rest of our family take note of that and see a difference in...in...in a culture of bondage to a culture where people are at least standing up and expressing themselves and not waiting and begging a corporate political system and economic system for this and that and the other. When...when...when we do ask from this new community, dispositif, we are asking as a means of a tactic and...a tactic to exist while...like we ask for better schools, or we ask to open up schools, or we ask or protest about charter schools, but we're still building our own schools, just like the Black community who were kidnapped and involved in chattel slavery broke the law, and they broke the law because they were not allowed to learn how to read and write, but they created their own school. Their own public, so-to-speak, school under a tree, but it was a school. It was an institution in which they had a purpose, a revolutionary purpose to organize themselves. The preachers knew how to read. You had support from the community, the Black community, to support, bring...bring the people to learn how to read, and it was organized because it was against the law, so it was done underground, pretty much like some of the things that we do now.

Like, in the Black Panther Party, it was against the law to feed children a hearty breakfast, against the law for several reasons. It's a good breakfast, and more and other important issues is that we did it ourselves. We organized it by organizing all of the community's businesses that were in our neighborhoods to contribute not once a month or once a year, but once every week. And we did that by make...making our presence known every day, a different...a different part of the city, and we also did it by selling or distributing or circulating the Black Panther in the communal news service in which people read and looked at the visual art that was in the paper basically by the minister of culture, Emory Douglas, read...read the essays from the editor. We had several. The one I remember is [W.E.B.] DuBois and [inaudible] and we read 'em, like, together. So, it would take the whole part of the day to do that, to sell the paper and talk with the people so we would em...embrace each other just like they did with the first public school in the Black community. They organized the same way that we're organizing now.

[0:21:54. Jump cut.]

PB: Could you, like, put us with you in the rooms where you're, like, hanging out with your friends or, like...

WC: [laughs]

PB: ...at home, like. What are those conversations looking like at this period when, like, Albert Cleage is in the city and Malcolm X is making frequent trips and Uhuru is, like, all is doing what they're doing and this period of, like, radical Black consciousness in the city? You're a young man. How are you making sense of all of this that's going on around you?

WC: Well, it's definitely happening, and the other students are...the...the other...the part of the class that I was in, the rest of the class was talking about things, but they also talk about things that young people like talking about. Me? [laughs] I was terrified of school. To this day, I don't read very well, don't spell very well, but that's another story. I conquered that when I joined the Black Panther Party. But, I would act like I was asleep all of the time while I was in school. I was

terrified of being picked to answer a question. I...I liked poetry, but...and I tried a couple of times to interpret a poem, but it was completely different than what the instructor wanted me to see. I saw something completely different, and I responded differently.

But the rest of the students, like in my art class...a good friend of mine, we ran track together, and he brought the Autobiography of Malcolm X, and he put it in front of me, and I picked it up, and he explained who Malcolm was. I was intrigued for a brief moment, and I put it back down 'cause it was really thick, and I said, "I ain't reading that. That's...that's a lot of reading," but all these things are still impacting me. I'm at home from school, and my mother turns on the TV and Martin Luther King is on there speaking. And then when I'm living with my father, [John F.] Kennedy is killed. I found out Kennedy was killed 'cause I was skipping class and we were drinking wine, and they flashed it all on the TV, and we were shocked, but it put the whole school on notice and we got busted because teachers started paying attention who was in class and stuff like that.

The neighborhood was responding to things. Like, I drew Kennedy, and people really liked the drawing, and everyone started buying the pictures of Kennedy, King, and...Kennedy, Martin Luther King--Dr. Martin Luther King and...what's the other one? The other revolutionary? Maybe Robert Kennedy, too. But everyone had those pictures, all three or two of 'em, in their living room. This was the whole neighborhood.

[0:26:04. Jump cut]

PB: Was there the same kind of emotional reaction in the city as when JFK [John F. Kennedy] got killed as to when Malcolm [X] was assassinated?

WC: When Malcolm...I'm trying to remember. I don't think so, but you had pockets of people who were very angry about Malcolm, and I really wasn't involved in...in that type of organizing or that community, but JFK is like with Elijah Muhammad to old Malcolm, "The people love JFK, so don't go saying nothing stupid about him." He said something. It wasn't stupid, but he said something

that...he disobeyed our honorable Elijah Muhammad and said, "The chickens are coming home to roost." I didn't hear that at that time, but I read about it later on in the Autobiography of Malcolm X. [clears throat]

But, the movement was very much alive. The neighborhood was segregated. We had our own stores. You know, in high school, you have to get a physical. The doctor and his office was right across the street, you know, and it wasn't a big thing that the doctor's office was there. There wasn't any Kentucky Fried Chicken. We had restaurants. There was no need for us to go outside of our neighborhood until segregation picked up steam and destroyed a whole community.

[0:28:16]

PB: So, you graduated high school in the same year that the rebellion takes place, in [19]67. What kind of memories stand out to you about that week?

WC: I graduated the day--no, I was going to Ferris State [University] 'cause my art teacher had got me involved in college. He probably knew I was gonna flunk out, but he wanted me to at least see that. On the way [laughs] to...to Ferris State, I look out the...the back window, and--we were living on Twelfth and Brighton--and I look out the back window, and I see all this smoke and stuff, and I wanted to go there and see what was happening. He said, "Aw, they just rioting." And when I heard that, I wanted to go, you know. I mean, young people participated in stuff like that, and I wanted to go. When I got to Ferris State, the riot was--the rebellion was still going on, and so I said, "I'm going back." And, I...I had this list of stuff that people wanted, TVs, radios [laughs]. And so, I was going back to see if I could get it, but no one was allowed to leave the campus. I was a little upset.

But that's...we...we...we all participated and took advantage of the movement, and we took advantage of the movement as much as our consciousness would allow us to. When our consciousness increased or expanded and broadened, our participatory became different, you know. It's still about survival, it's still about righteousness and dignity, but more of it.

[0:30:44]

PB: So at that particular moment, like, as you're watching this unfold from the campus of Ferris State, what...as your..what...what was your analysis of that time? What was...what was the analysis about why this was taking place in your hometown?

WC: [laughs] My consciousness said that we were just sick and tired of white people, you know. Basically, that was it for me, but other people saw different things. You had groups who were fighting back and who are armed. That captured my imagination, fighting the police, wearing the bullets around the neck and stuff like that, but it wasn't until I joined the National Committee to Combat Fascism, which was an organizing arm of the Black Panther Party, that I realized that revolution or cultural transformation is a process. It happens in stages. It's bold, but it's organized. It's aggressive, but it's organized. So, that compared to a spontaneity, a rebellion that would only last a week or a month...We wanted the last, as a culture would, much, much, much longer, years, and I found that different when I came home from Vietnam. Try to organize an army to kill white people and [laughs] the crew that I had, that was...They were getting high off angel dust, and I was smoking weed, so we weren't gonna accomplish much just sitting there talking about how much we hated white people or something like that, but we had no program, no organization. Our...our consciousness had just started developing. A lot of the people there were from Vietnam, and most of us in that group had come back addicted to various different types of medicine, like opium, weed...yeah, stuff like that.

[0:33:58]

PB: Would you be willing to share a little bit about your ex--your time in Vietnam?

WC: Yeah, that was where my consciousness really exploded.

PB: What year were you drafted?

WC: 1967. Yeah. Right after I flunked out of Ferris State. I knew it was coming. Maybe a month or a week or two, I received a letter from the Department of War that I was inducted and I had to report April 1, and I was so silly. I told everybody this is a joke because it's on April the first, so I'll be back home. I mean, I actually believed that it was a joke 'cause I didn't...I really didn't want to go, so. Of course, I was unable to get home, [laughs] and I was kidnapped. I don't like saying I was drafted, I was...I was... [coughs] me along with other brothers and sisters were kidnapped and that's...the first day is when the realization started hitting me like...like...like...like a machine gun because the brothers who were there, they had a hell of a consciousness, and we stuck together and we had...we had conversations. I didn't have much to say. I was...I was really naive about a lot of things. Yeah. We'll get into that later, I guess. [laughs]

PB: How long were you over there for?

WC: I was there for a year and a month. I had stayed over my time 'cause I was at Long Binh Jail in Saigon [Vietnam] for drug charges, and I was one of a very few that were...that was in jail for...for drugs. The rest of the brothers were there because they refused to fight, so I got more education. I received a lot of...I...I became a VC [Viet Cong] sympathizer, me and some other brothers. We did a few things that I'm very proud of that they didn't like.

[0:37:23]

CR: You've spoken about the conflict between white and Black soldiers, how it would erupt in fighting a lot, and I feel like that's not a narrative that we hear a lot of in Vietnam. Could you talk about that?

WC: Yeah...the racism is...is like... People ask me about my PTSD [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder] and they want it reflected like the only way I can get PTSD is to have been in combat and watch people get murdered by the U.S. [United States]

government. I say the U.S. government because we wouldn't have been there if it wasn't for the U.S. government, but brothers would come in from the field and talk about that, and they would talk about how they would be put in dire situations where their...that would threaten their lives, and there were so many other things going on, like, just on the base. I think I got around three court martials and a thousand Article Fifteens because of the racism, and everyone got tired of it, particularly out on the battlefield.

There were...there were ri--there were rebellions. Unlike here in the city, everyone was armed with different types of equipment, tanks, flamethrowers, and they had rebellions with those. It was like another war, and there was quite a few of 'em that it...it never reached the media here. In fact, they wanted to keep it quiet because it would interfere with the concept of us going there fighting as a unit against Communism. If that hit the news media while we were fighting separately against racism... [laughs] and they didn't want that to happen. A lot of brothers died on the battlefield, but that...to me, that was murder. And I started developing that consciousness, and my wife at that time, she started sending me Black Panther newspapers. She told me later on that--[laughs] I mean, I really was--but she said she thought of me as a square with my head in the sand, but she didn't know how much I had changed or developed.

But after I started reading the paper, plus talking with the consciousness of other brothers...I started, I...[laughs] I would take my shoes and sand...sand them, and I made suede shoes out of 'em. I took my uniform off and put on a blue jean jacket because I had heard that that's what they were wearing out here. So, I got Article Fifteens for that, yeah. It...the whole state there was, it was like the people here who have post-traumatic slave syndrome, or PTSD, or both. Live in a culture that's not sustainable, it's bound to create health issues, mental health issues, physical health issues, economic issues, political issues, and I realized that when I got home. I was... Like I said, I tried to organize an army unsuccessfully, but I realized that when I got home and I could compare the two, but all I could think of was the Vietnamese people. They were like us, you know, and I realized that more. They used to tell us, "Why you fighting us? You should go home and fight. They're bombing your churches, they're hanging your people, and they're doing the same thing to us." Again, that didn't register until I got home. I mean, some of it did, but the full blunt of it didn't register until I got home.

When I got home, I...I considered myself a VC, a Viet Cong, a revolutionary, like the Viet Cong were. The People's Revolutionary Soldiers, I considered myself like...like them after my education and consciousness was raised to a different level of how we would sustain ourselves. The methods that we used to sustain ourselves, politically and economically, always met resistance, just like in...just like the VC. They wanted the American corporations--one in particular that I remember is Michigan Tires--they wanted them out of their country. They wanted 'em out of the rubber plantations. They used to say that the blood of the Vietnamese people on the rubber plantations was like the cotton fields, but the blood was the fertilizer for the rubber trees.

[0:45:01. Jump cut.]

PB: The Detroit Black Panthers...like what, take us through that history.

WC: That was a lot of fun. I was really excited. I had stayed over my time in Vietnam because I was locked up, and as soon as they let me out, I went straight to the airport. They drove me there to make sure I'd leave [laughs], and I came home and it was... I thought the experience would be good, but it was... I was glad to see my family, but I had...I had shed myself of a lot of the cultural things and cultural norms of...of capitalism and just norms period, like one of the worst things that bothered me was eating three meals a day. I used to get really upset. People offering me food all the time. It don't seem like I get upset now [pats stomach], but it bothered me a lot, and with that, I seeked out the Black Panther Party. That was before the little group I was trying to...or was it after? I can't remember. Sometimes things overlap. But it was on Mack and Baldwin, and I went there. And because I was from Vietnam, they were very happy to see me 'cause a lot of brothers that came from Vietnam, they had consciousness, and they knew how to defend themselves both defensively and aggressively.

I was excited. They had the posters all over the storefront. They were young. They were younger than me. I was, what, 20...23 when I got home, I think, and when I joined here, the young brother who was in charge was only 17. He taught us dialectical materialism, which I had a hard time adjusting to, but this is where I

learned concepts, insights, history. I...I became interested in things like that because it became part of a culture that could be implemented. I realized we were practitioners of a brand new...of...of a brand new lifestyle, and that was exciting to me. It...it...I was nervous about it. I was ashamed about it, but this was family. They welcomed me with open arms, didn't talk about me or anything like that.

[0:49:00]

PB: Who were some of the leaders at that time when you first made contact?

WC: I didn't know much about the leadership, except for Detroit, but, of course, Huey [Newton], and he was in prison for murder. Bobby Seale, Ericka Huggins, Elaine Brown, Emory Douglas, of course. There were some other...I can't remember full names. Of course, George Jackson, who was the Field Marshall of the Black Panther Party. A lot of people left, including people in leadership, because of the ideological premise of the party transformed because of the practice, what I spoke of earlier as both sides changing. Our enemies changed, and for us to have a unity of opposites, we had to change also or develop a new concept of who our enemies were.

Before the National Committee to Combat Fascism, there was a...a chapter here of the Black Panther Party, and it was closed down for...for different reasons. And then after that, when I came home, it was up on Mack and Baldwin. It was the National Committee to Combat Fascism, and on Indiandale and Fourteenth, it was the National Committee to Combat Fascism. I think there were... On Continental on the East Side, it was the National Committee to Combat Fascism, and what that was was an organizing arm of the Black Panther Party to ensure that we became educated and disciplined to exactly precisely what was going on: who were our enemies, what is fascism, what is nationalism--'cause we were nationalists. We were Black nationalists at the time because we felt that we increased the numbers, we could implement ourselves and our ideas into the...within the geographical boundaries of...of the United States, and that was...those were precise movements. It was very organized survival programs where you...where you utilize to organize people 'cause we felt we should organize people around their needs, food, shelter, clothing.

As I said earlier, Elijah Muhammed used to say, "Do for self." And we took that phrase, so we started serving ourselves and using our own creativity. We used to say, "Power is ability to first define phenomenon and then make it active and desire matter," and that's what we did. That enabled us to have freedom now and to control our own destiny.

[0:53:37. Jump cut.]

PB: What that the structure of the Party was like and how people were kind of growing up in this political consciousness?

WC: One of the cultural...some of the cultural norms that's forced upon us, that has been forced upon us over years and years and years over the...the population of...of wage-earners, is individualism. As I said earlier, misogyny, transgender-phobia. I mean, there's a host of 'em. One of Huey's poems is, "One day I have forgotten name, age, sex, religion, address. I found myself." He was free. He was free to operate in a collective type of situation as...as we all learned how to do that. So a lot of political education was, of course, centered around the political and economic. It was taught in a way to interconnect us with our personal, also, to cut down on antagonisms, to cut down on the abuse of women, to cut down on the abuse of ourselves, to cut down on the abuse of the people themselves.

And we read the Red Book, which talked about ultra democracy, individualism, a host of other things. We read the Black Panther paper, we read from Huey's book, we read George, George Jackson. We did a lot of reading. Every morning, we would have...we would conduct, we used to call it, political...political education classes, and we would read aloud and explain a paragraph, and when I first started doing that I was really nervous 'cause I didn't read well, and I still don't. I read a lot better now, but I was terr--I was terrified, but everyone loved the political discussions 'cause you could debate and you could holler and scream who had the right idea, talk about each other's mamas and stuff like that, you know. [laughs] We had lots of fun. P.E. class, political education class, which we called P.E. It was

a...it was a lot of fun. Even after the class, after we ate and counted the money from the donations from...from the people and the...the money that the people spent buying the paper. We would clean up, get ready for the next day, and during that time, everyone would be reading on their own. We were required to read at least two to three hours a day, and a lot of times that meant late into the night, but while people were reading, we would have the discussions also, and those were the best ones 'cause we conducted our own meetings instead of in such a formal way, and that's when things [laughs] didn't get out of hand, but they became more robust. [laughs]

On the combat misogyny, the sisters would tell the brothers, no pee-pee without P.E. [laughs] I would be passing the brothers and sisters reading. The brothers would be reading their ass off, man. They'd be reading and spouting off political education and everything, so. And the sisters would be [crosses arms], you know. But the majority of P.E. did come from the sisters. There was a sister that taught me, had the patience enough to go through dialectical materialism, laissez faire economics, imperialism, nationalism. That's...that's... I mean, we studied every day, and how it related to the situation right here, like what does fascism have to do with Collingwood and Second, what does imperialism have to do with employment. Yeah.

PB: Do you remember who...who...do you remember her name who taught you...?

WC: Lorraine Banks.

PB: Lorraine Banks?

WC: Yeah.

[1:00:02]

PB: I have...there's a couple questions that come out of this. Could you tell us a little bit more about the gender roles in the party?

WC: The generals?

PB: The gender roles.

WC: Oh! Everyone did everything. Brothers and sisters worked together. They tried me at cooking. [laughs] That didn't work out too well, so I would clean the kitchen up. That didn't work out well because I was so tedious. I would clean behind the stove, behind the refrigerator, and wash the walls down. I mean, but that's the type of enthusiasm that created the initiative and the love that we had for the Black Panther Party. I remember there was a gang up here on Hamilton, and they were impersonating the Black Panther Party, so I was recruited to go down there, but there was sisters going too, and when we got to the place where they were at--I had just joined, or they didn't think I was mean enough yet or politically inclined to handle a situation like that. But the sisters went up to the apartment, and they took care of business. Yeah.

So, the sisters and brothers...there was...had different roles. And it's like...it's like Elaine Brown said. Someone had asked her about the sexism between the brothers and the sisters, and she would say, "Well, the brothers didn't come from revolutionary heaven." So where we did come from, these things were allowed. They were allowed because they created a stagnation [sic]. It created disunity. It created conflict, but that couldn't be tolerated in the situation or the environment that the Black Panther Party was in because nothing would get done. We couldn't have discussions. We couldn't give out directives. We wouldn't have faith in each other. We wouldn't watch each other's back without petty contradictions turning into antagonisms, so we dealt with that as we went. We had a revolution within ourselves in...internally and externally within the confinements of the cadre of the Black Panther Party.

[1:03:18]

CR: What was the protocol around when things...like on the individual level, like sexism...

WC: What was what?

CR: Like, what was the protocols? So, what...what happened? How did the party deal with it when it was seen?

WC: Brothers would be put on discipline. The sisters would be present. Discipline was a form of edu...was a...was a form of education, and they would read, they would have conversations with sisters for a certain length of time. I was on discipline quite a few times. I...I guess trouble just follows me around. But, that's basically how it was handled. Some forms of discipline were a little bit...were a little bit harsher because of the nature of the conflict. People were purged, things of that sort. Did I answer your question?

CR: Mmhmm. Was any of that [Wayne Curtis coughs] the party seeing the necessary shift needed to happen with...with how women were treated also like in community spaces? So like, you were talking about how it was addressed in the party, this level of recognizing the party is a reflection of, like, the larger community. And so, like, out in the community spaces, like, what were those conversations? Was it a part of, like, in the breakfast program? Or like, I know it's just like, all of these, like, survival programs that came out of the party. But were there things, like, specifically to help, like, the community address this problem?

WC: Yeah. One in particular that I remember, like when sisters joined the Black Panther Party, if they were married or they had boyfriends, they...they would be...they would try to conduct--control--over [air quotes] "their women" that were in the party, and that's something that we didn't allow. But it wasn't allowed in a...it...it was implem...that not being allowed was implemented in a matter of...of education of to what the Black Panther Party was, how it had to be, and the roles that both parties would play, even though she would be a member and he wouldn't. But even...he would still have a role to play as far as supporting her,

listening to her new consciousness, which would educate him also. But, that happened within the Party also.

The consciousness of the women had to be dealt with also to be able to criticize misogyny or sexism. The brothers weren't...they weren't equipped enough in a lot of cases to educate sisters that had...but that sisters educated themselves to make criticisms to the brothers, and those conversations got pretty heated, so then the brothers had to be educated to what the sisters were talking about. It wasn't a thing of sisters changing their role and their rank in male and female...male and female relationship. That was growth, and brothers and sisters had to become educated to that. There were a lot of things that were not resolved after the party had dismantled itself. There was still things to be learned that wasn't learned.

[1:08:21]

PB: So, you...you talked about the political education that was taking place within the party. How did that extend, or how did you engage folks outside of the party in those kind of conversations?

WC: We had a program for volunteers. We would be collecting donations or selling papers. Unlike today, people would have forms and stuff like that, but we felt the...the best way to educate about transformation is education--is...is educating while we're in the process of transforming ourselves in relationship to transforming a situation that's unkind to us, which is capitalism and reactionary intercommunalism now. So the best way would be, while we're out selling papers, we would deal with the male and female situation. It wasn't until later we started tackling the problem of queer. Huey [Newton] wrote a thing about homosexuality, and I remember it. It was really hard for brothers to accept that, but we understood politically, and that's still something that we have to deal with today.

But, selling papers, talking with people, the survival program, serving the children breakfast, lunch, survival programs with free clothing, free medical care. They would get their education of this new relationship through serving the people 'cause that's a hard pill to swallow. Helping somebody, giving out, which we used

to do, a thousand bags of groceries all at one time, or 5,000 bags of groceries, or 10,000 bags of groceries, feeding 400 to 500 children every morning a free breakfast, free transportation for senior citizens to go to the store, brand new shoes free. People would say, "Well, we should charge the people." I mean, when we out talking, they'd say, "Well, how much does it cost?" We say it's free, and a lot of people would disagree with that. It should cost something in order for it to be valued. As capitalism functions, if the market is not involved, if money's not involved, people will become lazy and the initiative to create or invent will go down the drain, which is not true.

So that practice, people would come back. We used to call come back from the field, and they would be asking questions about situations that happened out while they were talking with other people. Like, I would take somebody out with me, and they would get into an argument with one of the masses. And we'd come back, and we'd talk about that and why it's unnecessary to have an antagonistic contradiction or disagreement with the people that we're trying to organize. It's not necessary. It's uncouth, as Malcolm [X] would say, and that's how the political education...that's how we politicized actually building a community, a neighborhood, making it stronger. The way we talk building community was through the practice of building a community, basically.

[1:14:12]

PB: Could you talk a little bit--I mean, you've talked about the paper and...and the process of distributing the paper--but could you talk about your particular role of distributing the paper throughout the city?

WC: Yeah, we had regular people that bought the paper. Like, we would leave the office...we would leave the office with the paper and--papers--and it...it...it started evolutionary process. Like, when I first joined the National Committee to Combat Fascism, before I joined, they would give me 10 papers to sell for a week 'cause the paper came out weekly, and it took me a whole week to sell no papers [laughs], and I would bring the papers back, and from handling, the ink would be smeared all over the papers. They would be all curled up. They'd give me 10 more for the next week, and when I finally joined, I would come back and I would say,

“Man, the people was dumb. They won’t buy no paper. This is useless.” And the leadership and the cadre would pull me aside and, “This is education for the people. This is how it works.” They would say, “It’s the art of persuasion that you have to rely upon. In order for the art of persuasion to become effective, you have to know something about the subject. You have to study. You have to know yourself. You have to know the people that you’re talking to. You have to understand your relationship. The people are not dumb, you are.” [laughs]

So that was the education I got, and I got better and better. I got up to selling from no papers to 400 papers a day. Not every day, but 400 sometime. [laughs] But I...I became enthused about it, and I loved selling the paper, and so they made me circulation manager, which I was in charge of counting the papers once they came from the airport, distributing them, me and another brother. His name was Edgar. And that was more education that I received building--while building and liberating a peace zone, or liberating territory. I would become educated to the conflicts of capitalism. I remember, before I came circ...circulation manager or distribution manager, the brother...let’s see, what happened...the store owner was saying...he was saying something and...and the brother responded to him. It was either the papers weren’t selling or something along those lines, but I never will forget his response. His...his response was, “Well, under a capitalist system, it’s...it’s...it’s different from the relationship that you and I have with selling the paper. [clears throat] Our selling the paper is...is not based on profit.” I...I guess he was leaving old papers around, and he wanted them to give ‘em out free, at least that’s what I did, and they didn’t want to do that. They wanted to sell ‘em. But, it’s all types of little its and bits of contradictions between a capitalist society and a humane type of collective society where everything is according to one’s ability and needs. It’s not everything, but that’s the main premise of it. But, I got good at selling papers. Yeah. [laughs]

[1:20:20]

PB: So imagine, like, Curtis and I are walking down the street, you’re on the corner selling papers. How would you have engaged us? Like, what...what was your...like, your opening line? Like, what was your hook?

WC: [laughs] It varied from day to day or how I felt, but I think the first thing was I would say is, "Power to the people. Would you like a Black Panther paper?" And they would say, "No," and we would let that go. I would open up the paper and show 'em an article, walk, walking along with 'em, and then they would stop and they would look at the article [coughs], and either they would buy the paper according to what I had to say or they wouldn't. I would compare lifestyles that we had in the paper. I would show having solutions to some of the cultural inconsistencies of sustainability and...and how they were being dealt with on a...on a different level in other parts of the world and the country and within their own community. [laughs]

The sisters... "What's up, sister love," or something like that. [laughs] Some of the sisters would say, "I ain't your sister." We would get a lot of flack from the sisters like that. "I ain't your sister. Don't be calling me your sister." And I would continue, and it got so that we tried not to let no one get past without introducing the Black Panther and the communal newspaper to them. So we would have maybe four or five people selling papers on the corner, but we just wouldn't be standing still, we would be moving and talking with the people, and the establishment knew that power, that the paper was important and how important it was to organizing people and raising the consciousness. They realized the finance from the selling of the paper was extremely important, that's...we live under a capitalist system, so we still had bills and still had to buy food.

So, the police started harassing us. I think I got around five or ten tickets for impeding pedestrian traffic. [laughs] I said, "What is that?" He said, "You're stopping people from walking. You're...you're interfering with them going about their business." I said, "I haven't touched anybody. I don't stop them. I walk with them, and if they're stopped it's because they stopped." And that was utilized as an educational moment for the whole city 'cause we must have gotten, I mean, a whole bunch of impeding pedestrian traffic tickets, a hundred, 200, a thousand. It was a lot. And...and so, we decided to have a news conference about it, and when we went to court, we asked for a jury trial, and they chose me to go and a couple of other brothers and sisters, and they called me to the witness stand, and my thing was we serve the community, and the paper was a form of educating the people to work for each other, da da da da da. Every time, every answer, every question that he asked me was in the answer was...was towards rebuilding and serving the people. We wouldn't harm them. We wouldn't stop them or force

them to buy the paper because we needed their support in building the survival programs 'cause that's what we organized people around their needs, and we won the case. Judge was mad. [laughs] Yeah.

[1:26:10]

PB: So it sounds like, I mean, even just from the...the newspapers, that the Panthers had a very visible presence in the city landscape. So, I'm wondering about what kind of relationships... Like, given that we're talking about late [19]60s, early [19]70s, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers is occupying a lot of space in the city, the Republic of New Africa is around, the Shrine of the Black Madonna. What kind of relationships did the Detroit branch have with this radical landscape across the city?

WC: We had good relationships with 'em. I mean, we had at...at certain times, the Muslims, they had Muhammad Speaks. They were selling their paper, and we were selling ours right along side 'em, and they were basically the same quality of cadre that we were. They were from the streets, we were from the streets. They were ex-drug offenders, they were...we were ex-drug offenders, the--a lot of us, not everybody. So, we related very well together. Of course, we would have contradictions about whose paper was the best [laughs] and...and...and who could sell the most papers. Of course, we beat 'em every time. I don't know that for sure, I'm just sayin' that. But, I'm...we...we would be on the corner together, and the Shrine of the Black Madonna, or BCN [Black Christian Nationalist?], they...they wouldn't have papers, they would just be collecting do...donations, and we would, so we would have our political discussions. We would criticize one another. They were serious criticisms, but we would be laughin' about 'em and stuff like that, but they were serious. We wouldn't get into no fights or anything like that, and when we got back to the office we would...we had to fill out reports every day about things that happened in the neighborhood, and then that would go to what we call Central in...in Oakland, California, and then we would have...we would conduct P.E. [political education] class around some of the things that happened in the neighborhood. The prestige of the party was discussed, and that was extremely important, and I got in trouble for that.

I went to this barber shop, and it was a neighborhood barbershop, and I went in there and asked everybody if they could...I asked the barber if I could sell the paper in his establishment, and he said, "I don't care." So then, aft...after I sold papers, I asked him did he want one. And he said, he started cussing and said, "No." So, I tried the same routine, showing him the paper, and I gave it to him, and he took it and kicked it. I was supposed to whoop his ass [laughs], but I didn't. I just picked up the paper, and I think I said, "Thank you for your trouble," and walked out and, "All power to the people," or something like that. And when I got back to the office, I wrote about it and told the leadership. I was in trouble again, and they explained to me how important the prestige of the party was, and under no circumstances would anybody disrespect the party in a violent way, and that was violent as far as we were concerned. We loved the paper. [laughs]

I remember selling the paper. I went into this magazine store, one of those peep-magazine stores where they sold exploited women magazines and stuff, and the guy looked at the paper--this was after the incident that was at the barber shop--and he said--I showed him a picture of Elaine Brown and was talking about the leadership of the women, and he said, "Damn, that's a fine sister. I sure like the...her." And at first, I didn't say nothing, and I walked out. Then, I walked back in and I said, "Remember what you said?" He said, "Yeah. Why?" And I said, "I want you to apologize to the picture." He said, "What?" And I said it again, and he apologized. And it wasn't me, per se, why he apologized, it was the prestige of the party that...the reason why he apologized. It was the prestige of the party that I was able... [pauses during loud bus noises] It was the prestige of the party why I was able to sell 400 papers--every now and then. [laughs] But it was the prestige, which was very important 'cause we were...we were up against a...a very violent and brutal political reciprocal of...well, we would just call 'em pigs at that time. So, and I remembered that.

Oakland [California] was a lot different, though. No one tolerated any disrespect to the survival programs or the members while they were selling papers, or...nothing like that was tolerated, but the consciousness of the members was very high, and when the branches all across the country closed down, and people--we...we call it the long march, like what Mao [Zedong] had, to regroup and reeducate to become stronger and create a base, and that's what happened. But in order to create a base of that magnitude, liberating the whole city of Oakland, California re...required a lot of political education, on-the-job political

education, and that's what they did. The party liberated Oakland, California. Hardly anything went on in Oakland, California without the Black Panther Party having a say-so in it or knowing about it. It's like when The Godfather was filmed in New York. They had to ask the Mafia in...in certain areas where things went on. They had to ask the Black Panther Party.

[1:35:14]

PB: What kind of relationships did the Detroit branch have with Oakland or with Chicago [Illinois] or with New York or New Haven [Connecticut] or any of the other chapters?

WC: I'm smiling because we had...we couldn't help but to have a good relationship. A bad relationship wasn't tolerated [laughs] because it was a whole organization, but we used to go to Chicago to get educated and to help them with survival programs. Again, re...reflecting the question, well, how do you educate the people in the community. And I think my response was something like do the actual building of a community, of liberating a community, and that's...that's what happened in Chicago. It was...it was like... Chicago was like Oakland because of Minister Fred Hampton--Chairman Fred Hampton, I mean. They were at a very high level of organizing. They had organized the Blackstone Rangers. Oakland had organized the Slausons, 5,000 member Slauson gang. So, we would go there and help them have...help them with their free food program when they gave out large quantities of bags of food and help them sell papers. I guess I must have still...still looked green, even though I had on this gangster hat and long black coat, and the sisters looked at me and said, "He should go to this part of town. He would do good there." And I guess, when I got there, it was more like middle-class neighborhood, and everybody else went into the harsh neighborhoods [laughs] to sell papers. But I sold my papers as usual, had a good time, drank a lot of wine, and came back to Detroit.

The people went to Oakland--I never went to Oakland, but people went to Oakland and then came back. When they came back, we treated them--the cadre, the rank-and-file treated 'em--like movie stars 'cause we thought they went to heaven. Oakland, California, you know, you was with Huey [Newton]. What did

Huey say? What did Bobby [Seale] say? Yeah. That was our relationship. If there was a bad relationship, they would close a branch down, like they did here with the Black Panther party chapter here. They... Chicago closed it down, Fred Hampton himself.

[1:38:39. Jump cut.]

PB: One of the things I'm wondering about is in terms of the analysis that the...that the party had about the lumpen[proletariat] as the site of revolutionary transformation and the party's kind of vanguard activated that movement, how that compared with the League [of Revolutionary Black Workers?]'s analysis of workers being the vanguard of revolutionary struggle. Could you talk a little bit about kind of the differences in analysis and if that created, like, any tension in the city or how you all got along? Like, with those different analyses?

WC: We had a lot of fun debating about that. The...the party's ideology felt that revolution...or the people that are involved or affected consciously by the inconsistencies of...of capitalism and who are willing to do something about it right then and there mostly is the lumpen who have been dis...displaced from the ranks of the working class, whereas the Marxists believe just the opposite and think that the lumpen is the scum of the earth, the least educated, the most undisciplined. But like Muha--the honorable Elijah Muhammad of the Black Panther party took the lumpen and [thumps chest] healed 'em from inside out as much as we could, but the party, the involvement in the party came from intellectuals, lumpen, movie stars, teachers, the intelligensia that we created from the lumpen was our vanguard, whereas other people, it wasn't, and that was because of the methodology utilized.

Like, for instance, the guy that kicked my paper, you know, that wouldn't be tolerated. People were persuaded to contribute to the survival programs of the Black Panther party. Some forms of persuasion were more antagonistic than others because we were and still are dying from the violence of the police, from unemployment, from the lack of education, just learning how to read and write. We're going back to chattel slavery. Neoliberalism is...is tearing down the demos, democracy, so we need to do something now, and sometimes it takes a lot of

heart to save somebody from getting beat up the police. It took a lot of heart for Huey [Newton], Bobby [Seale], and other party members to patrol the police with loaded weaponry, which wasn't against the law then.

We don't feel that... Well, the first people to join were the lumpen, and the party accepted them. Now...well...the party accepted them, but then the first person to join was a sister, to answer your question about the role of sisters. So, our debates were centered around--the party was a Marx-Leninist group also, but we...we liked our method of interpretation, which was dialectical materialism, so we emphasize more on how we analyze phenomena than a blueprint that had yet to be proven to be correct, and that's what our arguments were centered upon. And I remember the arguments, but I had very little to contribute then. If I somehow got into a time machine and went back then, I would have a lot to say, but that's one of the primary con...con...contradictions between a working-class organization and the concept that the party had of society and...and how it can be transformed.

[1:45:53]

PB: I want to ask about the relationships in the Detroit branch and the Detroit police department. [Wayne Curtis snorts] Can you talk a little bit about outside of, like, just the general harassment when you were selling papers, what kind of re...repression, if any, that you witnessed or experienced, and maybe a little bit about, like, any involvement that...that the Detroit branch had in the struggle against STRESS [Stop The Robberies, Enjoy Safe Streets]?

WC: The party went through different phases, I guess because of the environment that they started out in. It was still a forest and a lot of trees were there. The party, the National Committee to Combat Fascism, I guess when it first got started, had fistfights with the police downtown. A few organizations did. A few of the Black nationalist organizations did. The party did, and as things progressed and got more mature, the party was singled out because of its concept and insights. Its oppression from the corporate community was centralized in Washington [D.C.], the counterintelligence program. So if one office got raided, two more got raided. It was in sequence. It was organized militarily. One night, I was on the porch. It

was my turn to watch out for the office, and I'm sitting there with a .357 Magnum and a shotgun, and the police drove past and stopped in front of the office and shined a light on me. I didn't move. I didn't run, and if he would have came up on the porch, I woulda opened fire.

Another time, they...the police were all out here, and we were positioned in our windows 'cause we had orders not to let police in. We were all ordered to possess a means of defense because murders had happened of party members, harassment, false imprisonment. The party was under military attack from the executive branch. So, that was our relationship with the police nationwide. Here, here in Detroit, we had an office shot up on...on...on the East Side [clears throat] on Dorchester Street, and luckily no one was hurt. The cowards, they shot, and then they drove off. They shot around four or five times. It was a wood-frame house, so the bullets went all the way through out the roof. That was our relationship, just because we were criminalized for staying alive in a way that brought beauty and brought a collective effort, that...that was the crime.

[1:51:16]

PB: I've read a little...I read something about a shoot-out with the police that took place in 1970. Would you have any involvement or any recollection of that?

WC: Yeah. That's when I joined. [laughs] I was...you're talking about on Sixteenth and Myrtle? Yeah, me and my wife at that time, we were shopping on...on Grand River and Myrtle. It was over the news...No, people were talking about it inside the store because they had a good reputation and a good relationship with the people in...in...in that area. I lived in the projects at the time, so we took the groc...the groceries home, and I left and went down there. They had the house surrounded. Each corner for maybe a mile or half a mile radius had foot police on each corner all armed with shotguns. They didn't...they...they hadn't...they had yet to be equipped militarily at that time. They still had revolvers. They still had pants and shirts for uniforms. They hadn't become militaristic as they are now. That's how times have changed. That's how the two reciprocals have advanced themselves to another level. And that store, later on, became a huge support--'cause it was Black-owned--became a huge supporter. It was Wrigley's

at...at the time it happened. No, wait a minute. But anyway, it was Black-owned, and then I think he went out of business and Wrigley's bought it or...I can't remember which.

But that's how the people were talking about it because there was a...a state police place, or there was this building that they utilized for the state police. They parked all their cars there during the siege up on Sixteenth and Myrtle. And so, people, they... I mean, we've never seen anything like that. They wouldn't go in the office, just the same reason they wouldn't come up on the porch 'cause they knew that we wouldn't tolerate it. And so, I left, and...and shortly afterwards, I...I joined...

PB: You mentioned...

WC: ...or became a community worker.

PB: You mentioned a night sitting watch with a .357 and a shotgun. Were you prepared to use it on the police?

WC: Yeah. I mean, 'cause if I didn't, they would just run into the office and kill everybody. I didn't want that on my consciousness. [laughs] Plus, if I hadn't and they didn't do that and they were up on the porch and the leadership found out about it, I would either have been purged or got my ass whooped, just like in the Army. You fall asleep on...on guard, you get a court martial or you get an Article Fifteen. You get some form--for them, they call it punishment. We call it discipline, as a learning mo...a learning moment. Yeah, I would've used it.

[1:56:16]

PB: So, in...in your political thought at that...at that time, were you thinking about the use of arms in the context of self-defense or in more proactive ways, in terms of, like, on a revolutionary struggle, or both? Not that that's necessarily either-or.

WC: A little bit of both, maybe. I was cool, but I was a little scared, but the adrenaline of being a revolutionary and my...and the responsibility of cultural transformations kept me calm, and I was able to focus on the tasks at hand.

PB: At that particular moment, like, when you were envisioning what revolutionary cultural transformation would look like, what were the means by which that was going to happen?

WC: It woulda been propagandized as an attack on the people's party, is that what you mean? It would be propagandized as the people's efforts to sustain themselves, and it would be propagandized as this is what's happening even if you're not in the Black Panther party. The executive on the city level, state and federal levels, that's how they operate to maintain control over us, but the party would be explained as an institution that works for the people and not for the corporate community. So, we would not tolerate to be beat down and turn in our weapons or throw away our papers or go home, you know. Is that what you're asking?

[1:58:39]

PB: Yeah, it was. I'm also wondering, too, about... We...we know that the police were complicit with drug trafficking in...in the neighborhoods...

WC: Mmhmm.

PB: ...at that period, right? Like, we know about [Hayward] Brown, [John] Boyd, and [Mark] Bethune and the actions they took against the police and drug traffickers. Was the party involved in any of that kind of work, in terms of pushing back against drug trafficking in the neighborhoods?

WC: Again, the prestige of the party helped. Like, for instance, on...on Continental, the party got rid of a drug house. I wasn't a member then, so I don't know if they used weapons or not, but they left, and the party members went inside and took the dope and sprinkled it out on the street, and the people came out of their houses and [claps hands] applauded. Prestige is very important of...of how you establish yourself. The reputation of the party as not taking no shit from nobody developed the prest...that type of prestige. Don't mess with the people's party 'cause the people will support it being protected by any means necessary.

[2:00:22. Jump cut.]

PB: What was the party's analysis on electoral politics at this time? Like, 'cause I'm thinking, we're...Richard Austin had run in, what, 1969 for mayor? Coleman Young is kinda coming down the pipeline. So what...what's the party's position in this kinda trajectory?

WC: There's a such thing as tactics and strategy that...that unite with ideology. So, tactics is out in the open, but strategy-wise we were preparing for electoral politics all along, so that was our position. But we stated that we would not participate in electoral politics, but the final blow to Oakland is when the party ran for council and mayor. The final blow was when the party members seated themselves on the Board of Education, not seated themselves but were elected, and citizen...and seated themselves on citizen district councils throughout the city and other political institutions through electoral politics. Huey [Newton] later on stated that, okay, they say that there's democracy, but we call it liberal democracy, where it's just a little bit of democracy and all the wheels in the background and the gears are designed to keep us out of power, but they say that there's democracy. They say, vote, you know, and all the people that gave up their lives protesting for the right to vote, but they didn't expect a political organization to do what the Black Panther party did, actually organize people door-to-door.

The party all along had a strategy to back up its ideology of revolutionary intercommunalism. The tactic could be seen, but the strategy could not. All along, the party were developing towards participating in electoral politics, but they created the conditions first, which they could do that with the survival programs,

with the education of large communities of...of the whole city of Oakland, California, doing that on a national basis. The Long March backed Oakland, signalled that it was time to engage in electoral politics. Huey had said, "They say that democracy exists, so we're gonna put it through the acid test," and that's what the party did. We were able to run people for offices, small political offices, like Citizen District Councils, the Board of Education, which Ericka Huggins, who was on the Central Committee, was able to take a seat--a very important seat which she was elected to. Community District councils, the people elected them. Precinct delegates, hundreds of 'em, were elected from the party, and that was a means of having more contact with the people door-to-door, developing the prestige of the party.

And then, Bobby [Seale] and Elaine [Brown] won--I mean, they didn't win--well, they did win. We saw it as a win because, dialectically, we see things developing at a quantitative pace, little by little, and that's the thing of liberated...liberating territory. You do it little by little, but you're free at that moment to devise the tactics to a hidden strategy to get what you want using what you have. So we call democracy liberal democracy, which it was, and what liberal democracy is is just what Huey said. They say democracy exists, but it really doesn't 'cause we still have unemployment, since I was little and since my mother was little and her grandmother was little, so it hasn't been resolved. Why? People said, "Well, we're gonna create full employment." Still isn't full employment. Why? "We're going to end all wars." Why haven't they stopped? Then, they say, "Well, go to the polls." And then they...like when Malcolm [X] said, they give you the right to sit on the toilet next to white people. You know, we want a little bit more than that--a lot more than that. So, that's what liberal democracy is.

At that time, neoliberalism did not exist where they were gonna take away--where they're taking away... They're...they're destroying the demos. They're destroying liberal democracy until there's no democracy at all, just do as I say. So, what is the strategy and tactics and ideology for that? I believe it's still reactionary intercommunalism and revolutionary intercommunalism that's needed to challenge this, this global entity. What will electoral politics play in that while at the same time they're taking away the effect of electoral politics, like what [Donald] Trump is doing, or...he doesn't have the sense to do that, but what the corporate community and their own central committee have a desire to implement control of...of the whole world and the world itself, the earth itself?

That's why you have the cap...the capital...Capitalocene and the Anthropocene. You have a change of...of nature because of the employment of...of people who are part of nature. You have the extension--the extinction of various species of life. You have the extinction of a species of life called water, air, land, all these are living entities. So, what will be the tactics? What will be the strategy? What will be the ideology? Subjectively, we have to define that and then make it active and desire matter. It's not... [coughs] It's not...it's not the same as it was in 1966. You can not exploit the use of stern stuff, what you used to call armed revolution, sterner stuff. We're not able to do that now. So we still want freedom now, so how do we get...what are the tactics and the strategies and the ideology of getting freedom now? Not waiting five years from now because this is an example of what Huey said, freedom, transformation, societal transformationism is...is a process.

[2:10:50]

PB: So, did...did the Detroit branch... Like, come back to the electoral politics question. Did the Detroit branch have any involvement in the campaign to elect Coleman Young in [19]73?

[loud music plays off camera]

WC: Not actively or directly. We weren't really participating. As I said, we were preparing. We were cultivating the societal soil for electoral politics to liberate it 'cause at that time, it could be utilized as a tactic for quantitative development, but not qualitative development. It would...it woulda been nice if we could have, but through electoral politics, we did not see a total transformation happening, but we were willing to put it through the acid test. But at the same time, we were preparing to do other things also that were...that would be proved to be creative and to bring about the total transformation that we all desired.

PB: I'm realizing that we haven't asked anything about Ron Scott yet. [Wayne Curtis laughs] Can you tell us anything about Ron Scott's role in establishing the Detroit branch and what his role was in the chapter?

WC: The same. The same as what we been talking about. Comrade Ron Scott was a genius. I don't know where he got his conscious--well, I do know--but his consciousness after the Black Panther party just kept on exceeding past all consciousness and old boundaries of consciousness. He was different then than when...than what...than what...what he became. It was him who created the concept of anthropological cultural transformationist. We were sitting down talking one day, and I said, "We...we need another term for revolution 'cause Revlon is saying that their product is revolutionary." I said, "That ain't gonna work." So he said, "Okay, what about anthropological cultural transformationists?" I said, "[claps hands] That's it! Cultural transformationists." I said, "[claps hands] That's it! What does that mean?" [laughs] And he tried to explain it to me, but me? It took me a long time to realize, to even remember how to say it, but I understand it now.

PB: As you understand it, what does it mean?

WC: Anthropological--Anthropology is the study of people. Cultural is what people do in order to survive. Transformation is...is the trans...is the person who calls us to implementation of a new culture for a new people and is willing to cross all boundaries to do that. Anthropological cultural transformationists. So, we want a new people. In order to get a new people, you got to have a new culture. In order to have a new culture and a new people, it has to...the old one has to be transformed and later dis...dis...discarded or displaced.

[2:15:24]

PB: I also want to ask a little bit about--since we're sitting at 157 Collingwood--about this specific site. We talked a little bit about it throughout the conversation, but could you kind of just ground us in what went on in this very location where we are?

WC: [laughs]

PB: And what kind of programs were operated out of this office specifically?

WC: Everything went on in this office. We had lots of fun. But the programs...we ran the breakfast program out of here. We ran the People's Free News Service. Well, it wasn't free. It was a quarter. But, starting our own newspaper to define phenomena is the top of the line, is extremely important for our survival and creating the means for a new survival. We conducted the bus to the prison pro...program. That was profound because we had to organize buses or owners of on-the-road buses like Greyhound. We never did...Greyhound never would help us out. So we went to the neighborhood businesses, and we came up with the price. The money came from the donations and the paper and individual help, people who would donate personally. After the trip to the prison, to a particular prison, was made, we would ha...we would have a free dinner. They had, whatever, chicken, ribs, mashed potatoes, string beans, hamburger, whatever, and they would go home full, satisfied that they saw their loved ones, relatives, or friends, be closer to 'em for that one particular day. We had the senior citizen SAFE pro...program, which was an acronym for Seniors Against a Fearful Environment. We had a free shoe...free shoe program. Well, the fearful environment, we...I think a van was donated to us, and we would pick senior citizens up, take 'em shopping, take 'em to the bank 'cause--to make 'em feel safe, so they would be safe. We had free shoe program, in which we...shoes were given out. The way we got the shoes were, partly, we...we paid for 'em. The other part were donated. We would have around a thousand shoes. We had...we would give 'em away, and we would take shoes out too 'cause we did a lot of walking. We wore out a lot of shoes.

So, we--I mean, us as a collective--benefitted from the survival programs. We were creating a community. The party was creating a community of sustainability for everyone, and the more the establishment tried to combat that, the more advanced the program became to be utilized to transform the whole system. So, they were the cause of their own demise. We had a free clothing program in which free clothing was given away. The large con...contributor to that were, also

[coughs], clothing stores [takes a drink of water], clothing stores, people. We...we refused to give out second-hand clothing. We gave out brand-new clothes. A store would donate. Like, they would have a display, and they're changing the display, they would give us the clothes, suits, shirts, socks when they're changing their inventory. The shoes, some of 'em we bought for a quarter each. A pair, I mean, because they...they said they weren't gonna do anything but slice 'em up and have the insurance company pay for 'em. It's the same thing with food, now. They put locks on these big containers so that people can't go in there and get the food, but then they created what people called dumpster divers. [laughs] So, the people are going to find a way to resist and transform injustices [sic] because the main trend is to exist and to live and to survive. That is the main trend of biological life, and then to organize that environment and to protect that means of existence.

[2:22:24]

PB: So, were...were the survival programs...like, when you're reflecting back on this period, were the survival programs an effective way of politicizing people in the neighborhood...

WC: Yes.

PB: ...and getting them engaged in collective struggle?

WC: Yes, like the liberation school...One of the points of the Black Panther party, I forget which one, we wanted to expo...we wanted an education, a true education that exposes the decadency of this...we want an education that teaches this true history and the decadency of this society. The schools don't do that. They lie about history, and they...they dis-inform people purposely about the conditions and the atrocities that this system has done, this American capitalist global system has performed against all life, has performed against all biological life. They lie about it. The politicizing comes from an education that will provide a form of sustainability by teaching the truth, by teaching the truth and skills which we can apply amongst ourselves. Why wait 'till you're 30 in order to build a house, you know, or fix some plumbing or become a psychiatrist?

I remember a long, long time ago in Mozambique during the war, they had teachers 14 years old because...because of the war. The teachers were being murdered. They were dying. So, the young people taught school because they had the skills. So, why do you have to wait 'till you're 21 to vote? Why do you have to wait 'till you're 21 to get a good-paying job? And a [air quotes] "job" is not the answer anyway 'cause it's a means of... [coughs] It's a means of exploitation. It's a means of oppression. It's a means of producing a surplus value in which the pigs make their money off of, the corporate community makes their money off of. We produce 3,000 percent sur...sur...of surplus goods. George Jackson once said, in the... [takes a drink of water] in his book Blood of Mine, that "If the people knew the surplus value of their production that they don't get paid for, they would be shocked."

[2:25:46]

CR: How did the survival program [Wayne Curtis coughs], like, like, support going into, like, the demands of contemporary customer?

WC: Well, like the one I just spouted about teaching the true history, it's...the contradiction is exposed because we give examples of what true history is through our schools, just like during chattel slavery. In order to participate in the culture of escaping and signing the planter's name, they had to learn how to read and write. So, a job or a means of existence needs a good education, a good, round education to put into practice, not to get a job.

Ten [point] platform program, platforming program was like...could have been like a mission statement or something like that. The survival programs were the application of that mission, and so that application of the survival programs was a means of educating people around the mission statement, and the mission statement was a means of educating. The platform was a means of education of the ideology that would fall into place with the cadre implementing the tactics and strategies of both the platform and program and the survival programs that would lead towards revolutionary intercommunalism. But at...at that time when

that happens, then we can make the decision--well, I don't know what will happen at that time, really, but...

'Cause like I said earlier, when...when one, like when you re...remove the contradiction of--this is the contradiction here [points to something off camera] and it's laying on top of the glasses but you don't know the glasses are there. You get rid of that, and bam! Here's another contradiction that has to be resolved, but this has been qualitatively demised and displaced. So, these are the...the internal situations of what's the contents of this box are...the relationships of the particularities of a particular contradiction. This is altogether different from this 'cause this has been resolved. So, that's what we're striving to do.

[2:29:09]

PB: What kinds of impacts did you see in this particular neighborhood?

WC: Well, like, the young lady across the street, you saw and heard what she felt. They had a drug house here, and she stated that the insight that the party gave them was build community, protect your surroundings, and they got rid of the dope house. So, they took power into their own hands. Not power over something, but the power to define phenomenon and then make it act in a collective manner, and that's the impact. The impact is what people are doing now. People have breakfast programs. People have food give-aways. They were giving away mattresses, brand-new mattresses a while ago, two, maybe two weeks ago. Art...Art Van was giving away mattresses. That's a free commercial. I want to get paid. [laughs] But, that's...that's an example [coughs] of transferring power into the hands of the people. The example's been set. The realization is realized that we can do this, and it's...and it gets done.

But there's so many other parts that have to be realized and understood, like what George Jackson say, "Vanguard means ahead of the people. We're not the rear guard, we're the vanguard." What that means is that...is that we're not the rulers. We set the prime examples that haven't been set before of how to do certain things 'cause the only way history is...is...is made and the only way phenomena is

transformed is by the people. So, the people have to engage and have the understanding, the same understanding that we have in...in...in...in general. But because of their circumstances and their perception of...of things, it may come out different, but it'll still be a strategy, a tactic and a strategy that will have a ideology that will transform this particular set of conditions. So, only then will we find out what the tactics will be. We can answer questions about electoral politics. We'll be able to answer questions about what's gonna exist, nationalism or intercommunalism. We can answer questions about what part will women play in this new society that doesn't exist yet. But, it will be the people because of their relationship and their struggle to be free now to answer those questions.

[2:33:16]

PB: So in that vanguard model, how do you ensure that there's accountability between the vanguard party and the people? So if, like, we're thinking about this as a model in which the vanguard party is leading or ahead of the people, how do you ensure that the mandate of the vanguard is from the people and then there is accountability to the people?

WC: Structure. Structure and education. Structure, dedication, love, enthusiasm, initiative that are within that structure. The leadership, the chain of command, the ability to criticize and self-criticize, the ability to have an ideology in which the structure can change or can go by...like, the party's ideology changed at least four or five times before it became revolutionary intercommunalist. So, we have to trust ourselves. We have to be able to interpret phenomena. We have to be able to understand what our mission is. We have to be able to understand what our goals are and what parts people will play in that, what part we will play in that. We have to recognize a central body of...of...of...of accountability, but we have to do that. Huey said, "Dedicated cadre, structure, and a...a correct analysis of, a concrete analysis of concrete conditions of the structure or the opposition to what we want."

[2:35:33. Jump cut.]

PB: The ideas of the revolutionary intercommunalism that liberate its own, does that make you think about Cabral? Amilcar Cabral and the Liberated Territories? Is that...was that one of the influences of that analysis?

WC: I think it was, yeah. It coulda been. I don't know. I'm sure other people have...have...have talked about it. I'm sure other people have implemented it because that's dialects, which is still a concrete analysis of concrete conditions, and truth is the criteria of the practice, so what will be will be, you know, especially if it's the truth. But intercommunalism came forth from honesty and the question that you asked of how you pay yourself--make yourself accountable to the people and to yourself, which is still your practice, and that's what the practice is the criteria of the truth. If, like, you wore your t-shirt today 'cause you thought it was going to be hotter than what it is now. So, does that practice coincide with objective reality? No, it didn't. So, we have to be able to criticize ourselves to say that go on home and get a jacket, and I have to pay attention to the conditions or the weather to understand when to wear a jacket and when not to. If the cadre doesn't understand that, then it's up to the Central Committee of people to implement how that's gonna be taught or...or...yeah, how...how it's gonna be taught so it can turn into directives, so people can correctly formulate strategy, tactics and strategy and ideology.

[2:38:07]

PB: What came first, you leaving the party or the party dissolving or...or this branch of the party dissolving?

WC: Me leaving the party.

PB: Could you walk us through that decision, why you decided to leave?

WC: I had a family, and I was incorrectly trying to take care of it. In fact, I wasn't taking care of it. I wasn't contributing to it because I thought I would sacrifice everything for the transformation of this society, which was okay, but there has to

be some form of communication, and that's where my misogyny came into play. There wasn't much respect. There wasn't much understanding of [coughs] the development of young life, what it needed, except for the people. [takes drink of water] I failed to realize the art of persuasion with my own family, to why certain things were important, the environment that needed to be created. So, it led to antagonistic contradictions in which I left the party when it came for them to move. Because of these contradictions, I wasn't allowed to go, and that's the maturity of...the maturity of...of...of...of the Black Panther party.

[2:40:01. Jump cut.]

PB: When you...when was that that you decided to leave?

WC: I don't remember the year. [laughs] I just remember life was hell [laughs], and she made sure it was. [laughs]

PB: So what became of the party?

WC: It wasn't funny at the time. [laughs]

PB: I can imagine not.

WC: [laughs]

PB:What became of the party after you left? Did you keep tabs or were you...

WC: Yes. I kept tabs, and eventually they asked me to liberate Ecorse [Michigan]. I had no...my perception and understanding wasn't what it is now, so I failed miserably. But, I kept selling papers. I was selling papers. I wasn't directly under

the influence of the Central Committee, but indirectly, and they had enough faith in me that I would act accordingly to the well-being of the party and its program.

PB: What...what did it...what did that mean that you were tasked with liberating Ecorse? What was expected of that?

WC: Perhaps to create a chapter or a branch there, or create survival programs, create the people's ability to...to contribute to their own destiny.

[2:41:59]

PB: I wanted to just check to see if there are other things that we've missed about your years with the party.

WC: Well, I can't think of anything else except how hard the work was. Getting two hours sleep a night, walking 10 miles a day...Like, our...our daily routine would be leaving the office--after getting up at, what, four or five to start cooking the breakfast for the children who came in at seven thirty or seven. After we cleaned up, count our papers, have P.E. [political education] class, we would...after we count the papers, we'd take 'em out. I would write down the names and who had what amount of papers, the route that they were going, and that was important to do 'cause we wanted to try to control provocateurism as much as we possibly could so no one could just leave and go wherever they wanted to, wherever they pleased 'cause we--in case something happened, we wouldn't be able to get in contact with them.

But after we walked, started selling papers as soon as we hit the sidewalk to the neighbors. Some people would go around in the neighborhood, and then they would go to their respective routes. One route was going downtown or selling papers on the way. [laughs] Yeah. Selling papers on the way, leaving papers at the store, getting on the bus [laughs]. I mean, we were poor like the people, right, and it'd be around like ten of us out there. I think bus fare was a quarter or something like that, and we would take a dollar and split it in half and fold it up and throw it

in the thing, or we would take a handful of pennies and just drop 'em in there, and the bus driver knew we were up to something. He knew it was incorrect, but what was he gonna do, you know, 'cause we would drop it in there before he could say anything. "Open up the dollar," a couple of bus...bus drivers would say, "Open up the dollar." And we'd hem, [laughs] we'd hem and haw, and we would retaliate, "What do you mean, open up the dollar? You don't trust me or something?" You know, he'd say, "No." [laughs] So, we'd end up paying the whole dollar or a dollar for four people or something like that. Yeah. [laughs] But, we were young. I think I was 24, and, like I said, the youngest member was 17, and he was in charge of everything. Yeah.

But, go downtown on Woodward and State. That was Panther, the corner of the Black Panther party, but the Muslims would be there, the Shrine of the Black Madonna would be there, but we considered it our corner since we fought on it and we sold the most papers. Hee hee hee. [laughs] But I would sell... I'd try to reduce 400 papers down to around 300 or 250 or something like that. Some...sometimes I could, sometimes I co--I didn't want to carry 400 dollar--400 papers during the whole route. So I...I tried to sell as many as I possibly could, and...and I found out that your internal spiritual thing is...is readable to other people. If...if...if I was having a...a bad day, it seemed like people could read that, and I'd say, "Black Panther paper?" And they'd say, "No." Then, I try to act like I'm happy and stuff. Still no, you know. So, I would take a break and whatever was bothering me, I'd try to resolve it.

But when you--we used to say, "We're high off the people." And when you're high off the people, you can do anything. You can sell a million papers, get...get people to support any program, get any store to contribute even though we were there every--twice a week 'cause we were there to store--to sell papers and then we came back to collect donations. Some people called it extortion, but we were very politely persuasive for them to contribute. That's not how the party started [laughs] when the forest was thick, but that type of entry was necessary at...at that particular time. But I...we would sell papers. Then, I would walk down Woodward to...one day, I would walk down Woodward to...well, I would walk down Woodward to Seven Mile, walk down Seven Mile to a little bit past the Southfield Freeway, come back up Seven Mile, or catch the Hamilton bus or something to Hamilton and walk down Hamilton to...back to the office.

In another route--what would we do? We would walk down Woodward, Davison, Livernois, Fenkell. They were long walks. They were long walks. I don't know if you know the graphics of it, of...of the city. Those are long walks. We wore out plenty of shoes. But, we had to be cool. [laughs] Like, we had the platform shoes with the long heels. Yeah, we had to be cool.

[2:50:16]

PB: When you look back on these years with the party, what kind of lessons do you draw from that that you particularly think that younger activists and organizers today would benefit from learning about?

WC: I guess dedication. The f...the first thing I notice is that we were...the party was a culture. The activities of the party was a culture. In other words, we participated in it 24/7. That's all we did. We created a new way of existing with dignity, with the support of the people because we...we used to say, "Turn in everything captured." We shared it with the community. We shared it with the neighborhoods. Like what she was saying, we have food giveaways here. I used to give away a...a lot of Black Panther papers because people would just give me money, and if they gave me a dollar, I'd give away four papers. If they gave me five, I'd give away whatever amount that is.

How women are being treated sticks out a lot, which the masses of people are really getting a better grip than I had. My...my sons are wonderful fathers, and my daughters are beautiful women. The ones that have families are very dedicated. [laughs] They probably get on my sons' nerves every now and then and vice versa. But those...that's just a couple of the lessons that I learned. Other realizations is you have, I mean, if...if...if you're a transformationist, for me, it's hard to live in this society, in this one, 'cause this one has its own set of contradictions that will come up just living in it 'cause it's not designed to survive in it. It's designed to struggle and do without, and that's why I become a revolutionary in the first place, a transformationist in the first place. So, it's hard to live here and there also. One has to go. Either I'm not a revolutionary, or I'm not participating and I come back to this holy hell. It's either one or the other. But how do you create those

conditions? How do you create that culture of existing is...is the question of practice.

[2:54:08]

PB: How has...how would you say that your experience with the party has influenced your organizing work, your activism work since then?

WC: At least 91.9 percent. Ron Scott helped me a lot, and his perspective of...was, of course, the Black Panther party. But, surprisingly, his perspective was spiritual also, which Huey's was also. [clears throat] The Boggs Center, which I'm a member of the board, Freedom Freedom...I joined the Black Panther party. It was already in process, in progress. Things had been done and undone, ideologies had changed, consciousness was...was reflective of that work. History was made. With Freedom Freedom, I'm starting from scratch all over again. I'm starting from scratch for the first time, in a new set of conditions, a new set of...of consciousness that...that...that...that the people have. So it's...so it's...it's a lot different, a lot more challenging.

The thing about family, which I messed up royally, I think that's a huge challenge. How do I do both? You know. How do I say, with certain things I'm...I'm just not gonna participate in it 'cause it takes up time, and I'm trying to increase--like I said, I'm trying to increase more time organizing for the displacement of this corporate ideology.

[2:56:40. Jump cut.]

CR: Is that why the base of Freedom Freedom is...is family...

WC: Yes. Yes.

CR: ...on campus?

WC: Family. I'm trying to teach, or set the example of, immediate family, and the hardest is setting an example of extended family. It's very hard. That's...with individualism, the Ozzie-and-Harriet type of relationships of we take care of ourselves and no one else. But Ozzie and Harriet had the dough to do that with, you know, they didn't have to ask for any real help. They had these superficial relationships with other people that had...that had money. They really didn't need anybody, you know. Like, someti... [coughs, takes a drink of water] sometimes, people say, "I have enough of kids for y'all to play amongst yourselves, and you ain't got to play with nobody else." [snorts] And, I mean, but that's the hardest thing to overcome, the extended family.

[2:58:25]

PB: When you look around at the city today, where do you see signs of life or legacies of the Detroit branch of the Black Panther party?

WC: It's very hard 'cause you have a new political and a new economic. Visually, geographically, it's very hard to see 'cause of gentrification. Neighborhoods are being destroyed to make room for the new worker, for the new wage-earner--the new high-tech wage-earner, I should say. But like the sister across the street, the young lady. I see the teachers when they all got together and got rid of the dope house that was inside the Black Panther party's old office. They said, "Hell no," 'cause this is an inspiration for them. They would love for us to make this a historical site. I see that. Like I said earlier, people giving away--I think on the way down here, we saw people, a truck giving away food. So, you see a lot of that now. Churches doing that, churches letting the homeless sleep there on cold nights. That wasn't done before. We were one of the first--one of the few--that practiced those community-neighborhood relationships and...and...and build... [coughs] and building a dispositif of apparatuses that would be doing the same thing and setting it up so the people could run it in case like...like what happened to the party. It was de...it was...it was destroyed by the counterintelligence program.

[3:01:02]

CR: When I was getting ready to go to Palestine for classes and your mixed emotions about me going...

WC: Mmhmm.

CR: Like, I feel like part of you being really proud, part of you being really proud, and part of you being really afraid, ...

WC: Mmhmm.

CR: ...and I think I didn't really let myself, like really, look at you afraid because then maybe I would be afraid. [laughs] Like, what did I get myself into? Can you talk to me about that, like what were you feeling? Like, when I was like, "Alright, family, I'm going to Palestine for five weeks!"

WC: What I really thought? Almost what you said. Part of me was extremely proud 'cause you would bring back a new consciousness, which you did, and I'm...I've become very interested in learning more about the history of Palestine, and I'm realizing the intercommunal connection of Palestine, Detroit, Oakland, Chicagy [sic]. I'm...I'm...I'm realizing the intercommunal connection because of the reactionary intercommunal connection. In a sense, this is what we have to do to get rid of the reactionary. The fear is the same fear that my mother had. She was proud of me being in the party, but she thought I could be doing something else. I didn't go that far with you, but I knew what could happen immediately, and I knew what is happening now. Your name is probably on a list because you went to a very...a pla...a geographical place what that the United States wants very badly. Not just the United States, but the intercommunal, reactionary intercommunal world wants very badly, and they're at the stage of taking rights away here so we can't go to the polls to stop 'em, so we can't elect people like--she'll kill me, I forgot her name, the sister from Detroit, the Palest...

PB: Rashida [Tlaib]?

WC: Rashida, and the rest of the progressive members of Congress. They're causing a lot of problems. They have to stop that because the world politics is glocal now. I don't say 'global.' I say 'glocal' meaning Palestine is my neighborhood that's...that's...that's in trouble with the same old pressure doing the same dirty tricks here as they're doing there. We're...we're dying here just as they're dying in Palestine, and I believe it's gonna intensify. So, I'm afraid of...of you becoming part... I'm...I'm afraid of you becoming criminalized because of your freedom, but I can't stop the freedom part. I don't want to stop it 'cause what's worse than being free is not being free. That's a slow death, a slow painful death. Being...being free, you still have your moments of happiness and sadness, just like in any other cage [laughs], but the happiness is...is more pure and gratifying because it's not just you [hits chest] you're sharing the happiness with, it's with a lot of people.

[3:05:40]

CR: Are there any things that you would like family to, like, pick up as the family is growing, like, generationally? Like, make sure that we are, like, holding onto and, like, pushing forward again?

WC: Learn is I am we, collectivism, realizing that this is our extended family as well as Palestine as well as the Congo as well as any neighborhood that's under the wretchedness of...the political wretchedness of...of...of the glocal corporate world and that we can't survive just...just as one family. In...in fact, even within families, there are different families trying to exist in this capitalist system that takes all of their time from...from birth to the grave and nothing is resolved. It's on a continual basis that they have to work and fill the pot up with money that has a hole in it 'cause we're nothing but consumers and the only way...and the only reason why we're consumers is because they need our labor in the first place. If they don't need your labor, as...as you can well see, you don't have have a right to walk down the street 'cause you don't have shoes or you don't have clothes or you can't take a bath and people shun you for doing that.

You don't have a right to medical attention 'cause you see them fighting whole-heartedly to stop universal care, and for the primary reason... I heard a newscaster ask, "Well, how do you feel about... Is it a problem... Don't...don't you have a problem with your tax dollars going towards people who are unemployed, who don't have any money, and you're paying for their medical care?" And a lot of people would say, "Hell yeah. I got a problem with that." But they don't have a problem with [Donald] Trump being on welfare, and the whole governance being on welfare system. It weren't for tax money, they wouldn't ha...[coughs] they wouldn't have any money. And some would say, "Well, they get money from the corporate community." Well, the corporate community wouldn't have any money if it wasn't for our labor, so they wouldn't have any money if it weren't for us, the wage-earner. So they don't have a problem with that, but I do. Y'all do. The people watching do.

[3:09:14]

PB: Anything else that you want to add before we sign off for the day?

WC: Yeah. All power to the people! I am we. Peace after victory, and continue.