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AN INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL JACKSON

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview session with Michael Jackson on November 2, 2015, in Washington, DC, with Shaun Illingworth. Thank you very much for having me here today.

Michael Jackson: Well, it's a pleasure.

SI: To begin, can you tell me where and when you were born?

MJ: I was born February 24, 1949, at 3:23 in the afternoon at Walter Reed Army Medical Hospital, which is right up the street.

SI: Please tell me your parents' names, for the record.

MJ: My mother's name was Rose Oliphant Jackson. My father's name was Thomas Frost Jackson.

SI: Was your father in the service at that time?

MJ: My father was in the service at the time. He was in the 82nd Airborne.

SI: What do you know about your father's family background?

MJ: He was born in Indianapolis [to] Marion C. Jackson and Carrie Thelma Frost Jackson. His maternal roots were from Thomas Buchanan Frost, who was the founder of Jarvis Christian College in Hawkins, Texas. I know more about my grandmother's family than about my grandfather's family. My grandfather was born in Atlanta. He worked at the Bureau of Engraving, burning money. [laughter] I always thought that was funny. I believe he took us down there once, for a tour, but he worked the late shift and shoveled money into the furnace. [laughter] My grandmother was a social worker; my paternal grandmother was a social worker. She graduated from Butler College in Indianapolis and was a grand lady.

SI: It was your mother's family that came up from Texas.

MJ: No, Texas, my father's mother, I believe, was born in Texas, either Texas or Mississippi. My great-grandfather, Thomas Buchanan Frost, was a member of Disciples of Christ and they asked him to come and start a college. Well, it was a secondary school first, and then, like, a junior college and, now, it's a full four-year college, started in 1910. When he died, he left his six children land in Texas. So, my grandmother left and went off to college and didn't ever come back. Her inheritance went to my father, and then, it went to [his children]. Now, the ownership is my siblings and me. My mother's family came up from South Carolina. They left in the dead of night when my mother was about five years old, that "the fellows in the white suits" were coming to get them. So, my grandfather, my mother's father, was a member of the Republican Party when it was "the Party of Lincoln" and he was an activist back [then], advocating for African-Americans to vote. He owned a construction company and a couple of farms. One of his Europas neighbors said, "Oliphant, you'd better get on out of here," and they left and came to Washington. That would've been about '34, 1934. My father and mother met in junior high

school and, after high school, got married. So, that's sort of the history of the South Carolinian [side]. So, my brother is putting our family tree and all that ancestry stuff together. He's got some really good stuff, but it's primarily the Oliphant side, although we do have pretty good Frost stuff, but, [primarily], the Oliphants.

SI: From your mother's family, did you get a sense if there was any earlier harassment from the Klan?

MJ: Well, when you were trying to advocate for civil and human rights, you're always harassed and harangued. We have a document where the African-Americans in the Republican Party were petitioning to be a part of the convention. So, I mean, that was the order of the day. When you stepped out, you knew that it wouldn't be appreciated. I think something just happened in South Carolina, where the officer threw the girl across the room, and I think they killed nine people in a church. So, South Carolina is still South Carolina. [Editor's Note: On June 17, 2015, white supremacist Dylann Roof shot and killed nine people and injured a tenth at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, in an effort to spark widespread racial violence against African-Americans.] My brother's going to take a trip later, probably next year, to research some of the records and I might go along with him, because I've only been to South Carolina once, passing through. My mother and her siblings, I don't think ever--they never returned for any long period of time. I think two of my aunts went down once. They never talked about South Carolina, for the most part. I believe it had some unpleasant memories.

SI: Sure. Your parents met in school. They were both living in the same area of DC.

MJ: Yes. My father lived on Seaton Place, 76 Seaton Place, which is off North Capitol Street--it was downtown--and my mother lived at 14th and T, Northwest, and they met in junior high school. In high school, my mother went to Dunbar, which is a very famous high school for a lot of accomplishments for African-Americans in the '30s, '40s, '50s, and my father went to Armstrong, which was across the street.

SI: Were the schools gender segregated?

MJ: No, no. Dunbar was coed and I believe Armstrong was coed, but I think it had more of a mechanical kind of emphasis. Now, that's a good question. I would assume--and you know ninety percent of assumptions are wrong--that Armstrong was male and female.

SI: Do you know if your father went to college before going into the service or was that afterwards?

MJ: I believe he did go--and I have to tell you what college he went to--for a semester and maybe he got drafted. Then, he went to school to try to advance his career in the police force, because he was a police officer here in the District for seventeen years. He started as a private and he ended as a private. They were not really advancing African-Americans at that point, although he was the second African-American on the K-9 corps. He always wanted to be a motorcycle officer, but there weren't any African-Americans as motorcycle officers. It was sort

of an elite group.

SI: It is interesting that he served in the 82nd Airborne. Was he in the 555th, the all-African-American unit?

MJ: I don't know, although all the pictures look like they're all African-Americans. I don't know. I just know he was 82nd Airborne and jumping out of airplanes, back in the day.

SI: He would have been in around the time of Truman's desegregation order in 1948. [Editor's Note: In July 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order 9981, ending segregation in the Armed Forces. Special Regulations No. 600-629-1, issued on January 16, 1950, reinforced this policy within the US Army.]

MJ: Yes, I guess he would've, yes, because he was in the service in '49, '50, got out in '50 because he had a second child, and so, he didn't have to go to Korea. So, I guess he would've been one of [those] after segregation, after the Armed Forces were desegregated.

SI: Did he ever talk about his time in the service?

MJ: No, just about jumping out of airplanes, and he enjoyed being a paratrooper. Actually, he wanted to be a pilot. He originally joined the Army Air Corps. They made him a cook [laughter] and he didn't appreciate that. So, after some finagling, he moved to the 82nd.

SI: Around the time they were starting their family, was your mother still working?

MJ: She worked. I guess she started working [in the] early '50s. She worked for the precursor to the CIA, and then, she worked with the Central Intelligence Agency for the rest of her career.

SI: Do you know what she did there?

MJ: She was a secretary or security clerk. She worked with one of the original analysts, a guy named Dr. (Streeter?), and what she did was put together portfolios on persons of interest. I guess if the President needed something, they would research him, and so, that was her job, putting all those things together, and she worked in a safe.

SI: Did she ever mention if she was the only African-American woman or were there others?

MJ: No, there were others. There were other African-Americans there. They had, not like a club, but everybody knew each other, like Mr. (Halestocks?) lived across the street and he worked there and there were a couple of other ladies that [worked there]. African-Americans were pretty much in the government at the lowest levels. My mother started as a "4" and I think she wound up a "6," that's a GS-6, after twenty-some-odd years. She would only get advanced in grade, like, started at "4.1" and I think it went to--I don't know what it went to, maybe "12"--and those were the only kind of increases that she got. She trained all of her supervisors, young, non-African-Americans that came in from the countryside. West Virginia, I always remember her talking about them, these women from West Virginia, and she trained all her supervisors. Right

before she left, they were doing something about the inequities at the Central Intelligence Agency and she was involved with the Inspector General in the report on racism in the Central Intelligence Agency.

SI: Around what year was that?

MJ: That would've been [the] early '70s, I think. When my brother gets back, I'll ask him if he knows where that document is, because they gave us some sort of certificate for [her] participating in the [effort]. They dealt with overt racism, not being able to be promoted, and they came up in segregation. They marched for *Brown v. Brown* [*the Board of Education*]. I mean, they were active, through the church, because church was an important part of our upbringing. [Editor's Note: In *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), the Supreme Court overturned the separate but equal precedent established by *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) and ruled that state-sponsored segregated schools were unconstitutional. The ruling marked a milestone in the Civil Rights Movement and led the way to the desegregation of public schools.]

SI: Going back to your father's education, was he going to school at night while he was on the police force?

MJ: Yes, he would. I believe there was coursework that he could take at American University. They had some relationship with the police department to get people ready to take the sergeant's test and my father failed the tests by one to three points for about ten years, which explained a lot. I mean, they really didn't speak about the things that were going on and I understand why. I mean, you have to [think], "Do I tell my son that I'm getting screwed?" We always look for a better day. It wasn't until I was a freshman at Rutgers, in the second semester, that my mother told me about how they'd grown up here in Washington. The Black Power Movement was in swing, in vogue, and she was like, "Well, every day, we sang *Lift Every Voice* [*and Sing*] before we said the Pledge of Allegiance," or sang one of the national patriotic songs, and all the things that they did to survive in this place, in this society. It was eye-opening. I was a little peeved, "Why didn't you tell me this?" but I understood why she didn't tell me this. I don't know if you have kids, but you have to choose when you tell them [certain things]. She had African-American males and I know if she had told me some of the stuff that happened to them, I would have been angry as a young person. The neighborhood that I lived in was--early, before we moved uptown--was a pretty rough neighborhood and I might have done some things that I shouldn't have done, rebelling against the authority of my parents, as teenagers are want to do, and then, maybe not thinking there was much of a future for me. We know, from the prison pipeline, that it's primarily Africos males and other marginalized people. So, there's a good chance I might've wound up in Lorton. Lorton was DC's prison. I worked for the Lorton Prison College Program and there's a lot of my partners down there that took "the alternative route."

SI: You said you lived downtown. By uptown, do you mean this house?

MJ: Yes, we moved here in 1959.

SI: Okay, when you were about ten.

MJ: Yes, I was nine. I started the fourth grade here.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit about what you remember of that initial neighborhood?

MJ: There was a hill. We got some skates one Christmas. It was the old steel-wheel, ball-bearing thing. I strapped them on and slid down that hill and took those skates off and put them back in the box and never put them on again. [laughter] It was a great neighborhood, a great place to grow up, but it was probably a lower-income, African-American neighborhood. My brother's godparents lived next-door to us. It was in an area called LeDroit Park, where Howard University is, so, it was a mixed economic [neighborhood]. There were intellectuals and working-class people and, actually, we had to leave because my father was an undercover police officer and one of the people that he was investigating lived up the street. [laughter] So, they thought it was better to make a move and we did. This was a mixed neighborhood. It was primarily Europas, but it's when white flight began. I think there were three African-American families. We were the third. It's the first time I went to a school in a mixed environment. All my teachers were African-Americans, all my classmates, from kindergarten through the third grade and it was mixed from fourth through twelfth, and then, after I left, my high school, when I started high school, it was sixty-forty, then, it ended up ninety-nine-one. So, it was that whole movement.

SI: What did you think of the schools in your initial neighborhood?

MJ: I thought they were pretty good. My kindergarten teacher was a friend of my mother's--what was her name, Gunthorpe or something? Anyway, they were friends. Now, our school, I initially started at Gage Elementary School, but the schools were experiencing overcrowding and we would've had to go on half sessions. So, in the second grade, after the second grade, we went to Mott for a year, and then, after my third grade--and my third grade teacher went to church with us. I mean, as a naïve kid, I mean, I didn't have any problems with school and an education was always stressed. It wasn't like we weren't going to do what we were supposed to do, because consequences were severe. So, I mean, I had good [teachers], they were good teachers. Remember, the school system had just been desegregated and one of my classmates told me, some years ago, that we were the first class of desegregation. I was like, "I guess we were," because we started kindergarten in 1954, which was after the *Brown v. Brown* [*the Board of Education*] decision. So, I said, "Oh, yes, I guess you're right. We're the first class of desegregation," which would've graduated in 1967, if you went kindergarten through twelve, thirteen years, but the schools were all right. When we moved up here, I had a little problem with a teacher and my mother took care of that. I mean, the teacher was totally wrong. She didn't want to give me a hundred on a paper. She said I didn't capitalize, or I capitalized [what] shouldn't have been capitalized when it should've been capitalized, and my mother went and talked to the principal. I don't think she changed the grade, but my mother had her say. Then, in high school, there were a few teachers that held some different views, I suspect, and most of us sort of knew who the racist teachers were. I remember, my Latin teacher gave my grade to my friend, Robert Jackson, and he was happy, because he passed. [laughter] We always joke about that. That was my last year of Latin, but, for the most part, [okay], but, then, we were in a very distinct track system, which was basically a caste system. There were four tracks--basic, general, college prep and honors. Basic, when you're in the basic track, you were going to be laborers

and kitchen workers and general were secretaries, college prep, mid-level managers and honors, of course, the executives. It was a good caste system and it stayed in place until 1970, when someone sued and got it opened up. The only thing is, they never replaced it with anything. It's just like testing, no matter what we do, in education, now, they're moving to fewer tests or they're making attempts to move to fewer tests, but there will always be some sort--well, let me not say always--as it's now structured, there will be some sort of test to separate folks out. Now, of course, there are better ways and Arne Duncan [US Secretary of Education from 2009 to 2016] and folks, they're meeting and talking and maybe there'll be something, but [it was] a caste, and then, we all had to take "cadets." That was on our schedules and we thought it was required. I mean, that meant we got to school--and our high school was ten, eleven, twelve--seven, seven-thirty in the morning and got an M-1 rifle and marched around. Cadets was a big thing. My father was a lieutenant and he wanted me to go through, so [that] I could take his saber. I was a terrible marcher. [laughter] So, it was not big on my agenda, but it turned out that it was not a requirement. That ended in about the early '70s. Some kid just didn't want to do it. So, his mother, when she looked at [it], "Where does it say that this is a requirement?" and it wasn't, but what it did do, the cadets was what's called Junior ROTC and they were training junior officers, because everybody I knew that went to the service became a squad leader, because they knew what to do. I mean, they knew how to take commands, give commands, they knew all the motions and movements. In the military structure, if you're out in the field, if the Lieutenant gets popped, then, the Sergeant, he gets popped, then, the Corporal, the last line of leadership is if you had been in Junior ROTC, because ROTC is Reserve officer training. Actually, when I was at Rutgers, I was in the ROTC program my first year and they gave me an M-1. The Student Colonel was [saying], "All right, this is how you do this," and dah-dah-dah. These guys were working with this rifle and I just went [Mr. Jackson imitates taking apart the rifle] and I was sitting there. He came up to me and said, "Didn't I tell you to take this rifle apart?" and he had a big attitude. I think he wanted to call me something out of my name. I said, "I did," and he said he didn't believe me, so, he said, "Show me." So, I [did]. What you do is, you take the rifle apart, put it back together, go to parade rest, present arms. He said, "You do not belong with these guys," and I joined the Ranger Company, which got me out of gym. [laughter] So, I didn't take any gym while I was at Rutgers. I got credit for it and I even got credits in ROTC, which made me, in my senior year, I just needed twenty-three credits to graduate. So, I was a part-time student first and second semester. I think I took ten credits first semester and thirteen credits the second, or vice versa, I don't quite remember, but, then, I was a terrible soldier. I mean, I was at the last level, because I didn't even march in competitions, but that was okay. I didn't want to anyway, [laughter] but I liked weapons and I liked taking that rifle apart. The only thing is that, with that old [rifle], when you pulled the thing back, you had to hold it when you did an inspection. I caught my thumb in there once and I was like [Mr. Jackson imitates being in great pain]--didn't do that again. [laughter] You're talking about a fifteen-year-old kid with this 8.5-pound rifle. I mean, I wasn't as big as I am now or as strong, but that sucker caught my thumb, boy. Sometimes, I say, "I'm glad you're still here," because people have lost, I'm sure they've lost, thumbs. The M-1 was one of the most accurate weapons the United States has ever produced. It only had one problem--it had an eight-round clip. When the clip was done, it pinged. When they were in the South Pacific, the Japanese waited until they heard that ping, because they knew there's no more bullets in the gun and there was that time between [when] you get that next clip and put it in there, and so, that's when they attacked. That was just a little trivia thing that I've heard through the years.

SI: When you were in cadets in high school, were kids from all four tracks going into cadets?

MJ: Everybody.

SI: Okay, everybody had to do it.

MJ: Everybody. Now, as with everything, the honors kids were on the map team, because we did everything. So, like, my brother was honors, so, he was on the map team or the executive corps, but map team. There were different kinds of things, but everybody, they got a uniform, they got out there and marched, but they didn't have to, because there were also competitions for the map teams and stuff. There was an annual competition in the spring that schools would compete for. It was big in my parents' day, but it was still big. People took pride in winning that competition. I think we won it a couple of times, but we were sharp, (eyeball?) sharp, but I never participated in competitions. They said, "You don't have to go, Michael." I said, "Thank you, sir." [laughter]

SI: What were your favorite subjects in high school? What interested you the most?

MJ: I enjoyed math, math and history, and, actually, yes, math and history, I think, for the most part. I liked physics. I think my academic loves are physics and anthropology. I thought about being an anthropology major at Rutgers, but Rutgers [College] didn't offer an anthropology major, Livingston did, and I didn't want to transfer to Livingston. Physics, because it talks about the world, both anthropology and physics, I think, are bookends. One talks about the physical world and the nano stuff and all of that and the other talks about human development and culture and society and all those kinds of things. I wasn't particularly interested in physical anthropology. Rutgers had a really fine Anthropology Department while I was there. I was in '67 [to] '71. They had some of the cutting-edge people, Robin Fox, Lionel Tiger, Roy D'Andrade. So, it was just fascinating, but I decided I couldn't major in anthropology. I remember writing a paper about us starting to interpret the monkeys. I said, "The poor dolphins, they're done, because we can talk to them now," but, then, I was like, "Well, what am I going to do with this? Do I want to be a college professor?" and I didn't think I wanted to do that.

SI: Let me go back--you mentioned religion a few times. Can you expand on the role religion played in your life as you were growing up?

MJ: Well, I went to church every Sunday. I was an acolyte. We were raised--we're cradle Episcopalians. I'm not sure what my family was in South Carolina. I know that my aunts went to Allen University, which is an AME school. Maybe we were AME, I don't know. My great-grandfather was an AME minister, but, when they came here, they went to the Roman Church, Roman Catholic, and they had to sit in the balcony. My grandmother said, "That's not going to work." So, she went down the street to St. Luke's Episcopal Church, which was the first African-American Episcopal church in Washington, started by Reverend Alexander Crummell [(1819-1898)], who has quite a history of doing work. He founded what is now the Union of Black Episcopalians, he was in Liberia for a while, but he was at St. Mary's in Foggy Bottom, which is the mission church of St. John's, Lafayette Square. That's the Episcopal Church across the street

from the White House. What typically they did, the African-Americans were in a mission, the big church is called a parish, so, [that was] St. Mary's. Then, they didn't want to have mission status anymore. So, I mean, they bought some property, 15th and P, started their own church, the church that--oh, what is his name, the first African-American? Senator Ed Brooke went to that church, W. E. B. DuBois attended there--Washington, before mayors, had three commissioners--one of the commissioners went there. So, it was doctors, lawyers and Indian chiefs, for the most part. My grandmother was the head of the Altar Guild for about thirty, forty years, and so, that's where we went. I went to church with my cousins and I saw my cousins every week. So, it was a major part of my upbringing. We went to school, we went to church and played a little ball during the interim. [laughter] Obviously, it affected my life. I was in the clerical process three times. I was the first African-American postulant from the Diocese of Dallas and I went to seminary from there, but my road was not to take me to be an ordained cleric in the Episcopal Church, although I was in charge of the oldest African-American Episcopal church in Texas, St. Augustine of Hippo in Galveston, as its lay vicar, appointed by the Bishop. So, I did wind up in the clerical order in the Diocese of Texas, but not as an ordained cleric, and that was okay, when I was also working as Executive Director of St. Vincent's House, which was the African-American ministry, which was started by St. Augustine in 1954. So, the church has had a big influence and I guess one of the reasons, as a professional, I gravitated to it [was] because it's the only institution that is supposed to stand against--and I emphasize *supposed* to stand against. I had a little more leeway to do some things because that was our mission. Our mission was to serve those that needed to be served and, when I decided I would remain a follower of Christ, said, "Why not?" and then, I had a particular sect because I was a cradle. A cradle Episcopalian means that you were baptized as an Episcopalian. A lot of people in the Episcopal Church have come from other denominations, particularly a lot of the clergy. As one of our presiding bishops said, that, "The Episcopal Church was the choice of consenting adults," and all that's supposed to mean. [laughter]

SI: I think you said earlier that your parents' involvement in Civil Rights activity came through the church.

MJ: Yes, well, it was a church-led movement. All the leaders were church folks or laborers, A. Philip Randolph [founder of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters labor union], but the church was big behind it. I was at my son's church yesterday and the pastor was calling--the Scripture we read was "The Good Samaritan"--and he made a challenge to the white church. This is what he said. He quoted the main, the major, Europas pastors, Joel Osteen, Mary somebody, "They have not come out in support of Black Lives Matter or anything and these are mega-churches." He equated it with Martin's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," which was to the Europas congregations, "What would it be if the church did what the church was supposed to do?" and it was a powerful sermon. I was like, "Hmm, okay, that's a good perspective." I mean, one, it was a good interpretation of "The Good Samaritan," "Who is my neighbor?" and I was like, "Okey-dokey," because I hadn't heard that before, I mean, but it's the truth. They haven't come out in support of anything. I mean, if they had their forty, fifty thousand-people congregation saying, "Racism is wrong, the inequities that abound here," because we're a part of it and he really did a really great job on systemic privilege. He called it "white privilege," but I try not to use color nomenclature when referring to persons or groups, but, I mean, he said some really good things. He said, "You're privileged when the police stop you and you're not afraid

that you might be shot, that you can get a house with this amount of income," and, I mean, just very pragmatic things, because I've done some antiracism training. The latest thing is acknowledgment of Europas privilege. We think of some big things, like, this area here, this was, as I was growing up, primarily African-American.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: You were discussing some antiracism training you did.

MJ: Oh, yes. Actually, I had stopped doing antiracism training, because we always get hung up with defining racism and whatever. It's easy to talk about--well, it's not really easy to talk about--but it keeps people apart and it's not the real issue. The real issue is inclusiveness, because we are a society, particularly Western culture, that separates and keeps folks separate. So, I tell folks I will do inclusive training. How we separate down, part of that are the -isms. All our -isms, for the most part, are separate--racism, separation by race, feminism, separation by gender, ageism, by age--if you look at all your -isms, they are all tools of separation. So, I was like, again, much as I like math, "What's the lowest common denominator? That we're all one." You don't hear much talk about unity anymore, and he [the minister] did a real thing about unity, too, "Unity is not uniformity, unity is not…" It's a good sermon yesterday, but, so, I had really stopped and the things that I had done were all about inclusiveness, but these last two years have made me have to rethink that, with all the killings of Africos persons and racism really being the primary thing that was on people's minds. I've always tried to speak where people are. I know I have some things to say, but, if they're not going to be received, I mean--so, that's where I am with that. I'm still trying to get people to the common denominator, because it all goes back to how we separate or segregate, because we don't want people to be together. That's why the Panthers got whacked, because they talked about coalitions. Malcolm got whacked because he started talking about coalitions. He was no longer just a straight nationalist and they said, "Oh, you're getting too close to the truth." Martin got whacked because he no longer wanted to stop folks, "You've got to deal with these problems," and then, he was talking about poverty and jobs. When we get to the money, just like they found the Watergate folks, "Follow the money," when you get to the money, then, it gets real antsy. "No, you can't have the money," and so, we got to thinking, "We want the money," but you really don't. I mean, there are just so many other ways that things can work, like reparations. I mean, if we totaled up what the reparations [would be], and there's a group that keeps totaling them, what the reparations should be to Africos persons from slavery, it's trillions of dollars and I doubt that that will ever [happen], but my solution to reparations is, give us one and two-fifths votes for as long as we were in slavery. Since we were three-fifths of a person, give us our one vote plus the two-fifths that you denied us for all these years and for as long as we were in slavery, from the 1600s to June 19, 1865. For those who don't know what June 19, 1865, [was], that's what's called Juneteenth, is when the Emancipation Proclamation was read in Galveston, Texas, and the Civil War ended. That was the last act of the Civil War. You won't see this in the history books, and so, whatever period of time that is, give African-Americans one and two-fifths votes, so [that] our votes would mean something.

SI: I wanted to peel back a bit. This is your attitude after living your life for many decades. What were your attitudes in high school towards these issues?

MJ: I was young and naïve. I was raised in an Africos environment, so, there wasn't much to think about. The Black Power Movement was in full swing, but I didn't get involved with that until I got to Rutgers. I mean, I was raised to be the best person I could be. I was raised as a "two-hundred-percenter," that one hundred percent was not going to be enough to get us to the next level, that we had to be twice as good as anybody else. So, I was raised that no one was better than I was and to treat everybody as I would want to be treated. The Golden Rule was stressed, but, when I left this burg, I went to a whole new environment. I left Washington because I wanted to see how Europas people lived, because I didn't see that here. I mean, I had good role models, good guidelines to follow, but, when I got to school, as most people say, my eyes were opened to a whole other world, the real world. We were privileged in the sense that we were insulated--we were taken care of. This was truly a village. I remember, over on Seaton Place, I broke a window and the lady kept my ball and gave it to my father. [laughter] So, I mean, everybody looked out after everybody, I mean, looked after their children, made sure we didn't do nothing stupid, but, when I left here, I really [had my eyes opened]. Then, as I said, my mother finally gave up the goodies. A good friend of mine that graduated from Temple--Temple? not Temple. What's another school in Philadelphia?

SI: Drexel?

MJ: Drexel, yes, he graduated from Drexel. We were here doing something, arguing, when my mother just said, "Y'all just don't know nothing," and then, the other thing was, like, I mean, I didn't address her, why she didn't tell us, but I figured that out later on. Then, when you have kids, you have to pick your time to tell them some things that's going to get them to their next place. One of my sons is an activist. He's been to Ferguson, recording. [Editor's Note: Ferguson, Missouri, became a focal point for protest against the treatment of African-Americans by primarily-white police departments after the fatal shooting of Michael Brown by police officer Darren Wilson on August 9, 2014. Violence and unrest marked this protest movement in the period after the killing (August 9 to August 25, 2014), after a grand jury chose not to indict Officer Wilson (November 24 to December 2, 2014) and on the first anniversary of the shooting (August 9 to August 11, 2015).] He works for independent radio stations and TV stations, but he's got a big anger going on, and so, the things that I tell him [are] about moderating all that, channel it in proper [ways], and then, he's going to have to tell his [children]. He named his son Marcus Garvey, as a name for him to understand who Marcus Garvey was, but, no, my high school days were bucolic, just going to school, studying, participating in activities. I did start my first political activity in junior high school. I was a member of High School Students for Better Education, which was an integrated group that advocated for schoolbooks, because our school system had been really neglected. We had all kinds of old schoolbooks and I lobbied Congress, as a ninth grader, and I can say that maybe that was the core of the foundation of some sort of activism. I think I did that two years. I guess we got some books, I don't remember. We met at a Quaker house on Sunday afternoons, my good friend Robert Jackson and Billy Roseborough and I think John (McDay?) went also, was something we did on Sunday afternoons, go and learn about how laws are made and lobbying and all of that. So, it was a practicum for what we were learning in history and civics.

SI: When you say you lobbied, who would you go see?

MJ: We lobbied Congress. The District of Columbia is not a state. [laughter]

SI: Yes, I know, that is what I was curious about.

MJ: The money comes from [Congress]; I mean, they allotted money each year. So, we went to various Congresspersons, to their offices, left our literature. If we can see the Congressperson, we would talk to them. Normally, we didn't see the Congressman, saw his aide, but, yes, we went down, just like the K Street boys and girls. It was a good experience.

SI: Was your family involved in any actions, like marches or anything like that at the time?

MJ: Pre-'54, they marched and demonstrated, the Supreme Court and those kinds of things. Now, I didn't go, but I didn't go to the March on Washington, either--wish I had gone. My good friend went. He was up in a tree, but I think--well, I know why I didn't go--my father told me not to go, because he was a police officer and they were expecting trouble. He did not want me or my brother involved, because I was going to it and saying, "Oh, yes, the old bird said not to go," and to disobey Mr. Jackson was not in your best interest. There would be pain. So, I was like, "Okay, he says stay home, I'll stay home." Roger went, though, yes. [Editor's Note: On August 28, 1963, the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom was held on the National Mall, during which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., made his famous "I Have A Dream" address.]

SI: Before we move on to Rutgers, is there any other part of your early life that you would like to talk about?

MJ: No. I consider myself pre-recruitment to the major Europas institutions, when I was involved in something called "the Heights." It was in the first year and it was an experimental program to enhance academic achievement and I was chosen by my high school to go. John (McDay?) and I were the first two African-Americans at the Heights. Then, my brother's class, they followed it, followed up with several more. I took a course called "Study Skills," was introduced to Kate Turabian--you know Kate Turabian? [author of the reference work *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*] yes--and writing papers and researching and taking notes and that truly helped me, particularly at Rutgers, and I was a good note taker. My notes were really good for the first half-hour, next fifteen minutes or so, they weren't so good, because I was asleep, [laughter] but, then, the last half, because our classes were seventy-five minutes back then. I took all my classes, for the most part, in the morning. I learned a lot. I worked for George Washington University, on their maintenance crew, and I had to set up registration. So, when I got to Rutgers, I mean, I knew the process. So, a lot of things in my childhood helped me to get to where I was. I had a lot of firsts.

SI: How long was the Heights program?

MJ: The Heights was six months, I think. They met at the National Cathedral and I think there were about--they took two students from the area high schools--and John and I were the only African-Americans in the program. As I said, it was foundational for me. I mean, I knew some of this. I did know Turabian, I did know how to construct a term paper, although I think Turabian is not used so much. It's probably more *New York* [*Times*] style or *Chicago* style--it's

all the same crap, excuse me [laughter]--but I at least knew how to do it. I didn't have to go [for more instruction], taught research techniques and all that. So, [that is] probably why I don't like doing any of that now.

SI: You worked at George Washington University. Did you have any other jobs while you were in high school?

MJ: My first job was, I worked for the DC Recreation, but that was because we had signed up to go to Idaho to pick potatoes. [NBA coach] Red Auerbach came to Coolidge, because they had a bumper crop of potatoes and they needed some people to pick them. So, my crew and I decided that we would go to Idaho and going to pick potatoes for the summer. [The Department of] Agriculture squashed that program, but, because they had promised us a job, they gave us a job as recreational aides and we worked in the projects in Southeast, which was an eye-opening experience, a good experience. I think I took my first drink [laughter] and all of us, there's about six of us, that it was fun, because I didn't really hang out in Southeast. Southeast was like "the other side of the tracks" and they didn't have any projects up in Northwest. There were projects in Southeast, Northeast, and I met some kids that were my peers and it was a good experience, opened up, probably, how I realized that we were all in this boat together. Then, the next summer, we worked at George Washington. I worked in my senior year at Woodward & Lothrop [department store], in the kitchen, cleaning the kitchen, the dishwasher, with the big dishwashing machines and I learned how to swab a deck, how to mop. You mop in circular things, you don't go like this, so that you get the area. My senior summer, I worked at the Safeway. There used to be a Safeway store up here. I worked, I guess, as a cashier and worked in a gas station, and then, it was off to New Jersey, the armpit of the nation. [laughter]

SI: At that time, when you were a senior in high school, what did you see for yourself in the future, career-wise?

MJ: Well, our parents were pointing us to college. That's what we're supposed to do. So, I applied to Rutgers, I applied to the University of Kansas. My safety valve school was Saint Augustine's, which was a HBCU. That's an Episcopal school. I wanted to go to Kansas because they had a sports media program. I thought I wanted to be a sportscaster. As a kid, I thought I wanted to be a veterinarian, but, then, I had to cut this frog open and I had biology right before lunch. I was like, "No, I don't think my stomach can take this opening stuff up," but my college counselor never sent my transcript to Kansas. Actually, her advice to me was to either join the Army or go to the University of Maryland and, back then, the University of Maryland was not what it is today. So, I was originally on the waiting list at Rutgers, and then, another guy in my class, in my homeroom, Dennis (Hoover?), he was also on the waiting list and I think he was disappointed when he didn't get chosen and they chose me. I was like, "Okay," and that was it.

SI: You said you wanted to go to …

MJ: Kansas, University of Kansas.

SI: Yes, but, essentially, an all-white school, Europas experience.

MJ: Yes, yes.

SI: Why Rutgers specifically?

MJ: Why Rutgers specifically? Honestly, we chose Rutgers because it was affordable and they only needed, only required, the SAT. They didn't require the Achievement Tests, because my mother did not think that--I didn't test well. So, we looked for somewhere that had [the SAT], just all schools that had the SAT, and then, we thought we could afford Rutgers, because Rutgers was two thousand dollars a year and we thought we could afford that.

SI: Does that include housing?

MJ: Yes. Tuition was 454 dollars for out-of-state. I mean, for in-state students back then, it was like two hundred dollars. Rutgers was a bargain. I think I had heard of Rutgers in passing being "The Berkeley of the East," with the Genovese thing in '64, I think it was. That might've been a [factor]. I mean, I'm not sure that had much of an influence, but I think I had heard of Rutgers and I think I knew that Rutgers had started college football and I knew of Paul Robeson. Now, those were not the reasons that Rutgers [was chosen]--Rutgers was chosen for primarily financial reasons. I was not recruited to Rutgers. Rutgers didn't begin recruiting Africos students in a big way until '69 or '70, but that's why Rutgers. Then, it was away from DC and it wasn't [that far]. It was just a three-hour, four-hour train ride. [Editor's Note: On April 23, 1965, at a teach-in at Rutgers University's Scott Hall, professor of history Eugene D. Genovese declared, "…I do not fear or regret the impending Viet Cong victory in Vietnam. I welcome it." A firestorm of controversy ensued and became a focal point in the 1965 New Jersey gubernatorial race, but Rutgers University President Mason W. Gross, with the support of the faculty, resisted public pressure to dismiss Genovese, on the principle of academic freedom. Paul Robeson (1898-1976) was an African-American singer, actor and Civil Rights activist. He was valedictorian of his class at Rutgers University in 1919. Due to his support for Stalin, the USSR and the Communist Party during the McCarthy era, Robeson was blacklisted and had his passport revoked from 1950 to 1958, which prevented him from traveling to perform during those years. The campus center on the Rutgers-Newark Campus is named for Robeson.]

SI: Tell me about coming up to New Brunswick. Was there any culture shock coming to New Jersey?

MJ: No. I remember the drive up. We drove in my father's silver Mustang GT and he let me drive it. My mother sat in the back and my father told me, he said, "You know what the speed limit is. Any ticket you get is yours." It was a Mustang GT with a 390-cubic-inch engine and it could go, buddy. I guess Rutgers looked like what colleges looked like, the ivy and the bricks and all of that, but I don't think the cultural shock--I'm not sure there was much of that. Henry says that I was like a deer in the headlights, and could've been, but one of the things that I've always been able to do is to experience something, and then, reflect on it, I mean, just be in the experience. That's what it was like. The main thing was getting out of DC and seeing the rest of the world, because I knew there had to be more to it, not that [I did not like DC]--kids want to get away from home, no real negatives. I just didn't want to stay. "It's time to grow up. Eighteen, time to strike out upon my own," and Rutgers was the choice.

SI: Where did you live that first year?

MJ: I lived in Hardenbergh. I lived in Hardenbergh. The second year, I moved off campus. Bryant Mitchell and I were roommates. Third year, they made me a preceptor. I was a preceptor in Frelinghuysen and, my senior year, I was in Ford Hall. I can't remember--I think I was a preceptor then, too. After the first year, we basically had to pay--I got student loans and work-study, and so, I was able to take care of the finances, with a little assistance. I know my grandmother paid my last tuition bill.

SI: In that first year, did you have an idea of what you wanted to study?

MJ: Well, I thought I wanted to be an economist. However, because I had already taken pre-calc--Calc 135 was a prerequisite to be an economist and everybody I knew had failed Calc 135. I needed to take 133, which was the prep course for 135, but I couldn't take it for credit, because I had already taken college algebra and trigonometry, which was Calc 133. I couldn't take any--money didn't allow me to take any--courses that I had to pay for and didn't get any credit for. In that time, you had to take two sciences or two maths as requirements, because when I started, we still had the general education requirements that were in place. So, I followed Bryant and the boys. We took geography and it wasn't the geography in high school, buddy. [laughter] I mean, it was about the Earth--I mean, it was Earth science to the max. I remember, we had to learn the Köppen climatic system. That meant that we had to know all the climate areas, what they grew, dah-dah-dah, for the whole world, Köppen climatic system, and that was one of the questions on the final. So, from there, I was like, "Hmm, maybe geography with a city planning option," but I've always been blessed to get a good preview of what it was. The guy told us what city planners did and I was like, "Oh, no, I don't want to do that," and then, of course, there was the anthropology. My work-study job was in the Anthropology Department, so, I was, "Anthropology?" thought about that. I didn't want to major in sociology, because it seemed like that's what all the African-Americans were slated to do, be social workers or whatever, and that wasn't what I thought I wanted to do. So, I'm saying, "Economics got knocked out, geography with a city planning option got knocked out, sociology was a nonstarter." So, I just figured, "I'll figure this out, if I even want to finish," but, because of the things that happened in '68, I became a major in African Studies. One of our demands in '68 was for a black studies department, which didn't come into being until the Fall of '69, I think, and I was on the committee to draw up the major. We decided that black studies was just too out there. So, to our credit--and Dr. Harold Weaver was on the [committee], it was Dr. Harold Weaver, Gregory (Stewart?) and me, we were the committee that drew up the African and Afro-American Studies Department--we wanted to give credence that African Studies was a relevant academic study and Afro-American Studies. Then, the other thing we wanted to do was to honor Paul Robeson, because all the honors programs were [named for] Henry Rutgers, so, we established the honors program for the African and Afro-American Studies Department to be [named for] Paul Robeson. So, I majored in African Studies, Greg did Afro-American Studies, we were both the first Paul Robeson Scholars. So, when we graduated in '71, we were the first graduates of the African and Afro-American Studies Department, which became Africana Studies, is now the Africana [Studies Department]. My transcript says, "Africana Studies." I said, "Well, I wasn't in the Africana Studies Department," but they won't change it. I was thinking about getting a degree, because I

lost my degree some years ago. I gave my degree to my mother, because I said, "You pushed for this harder than anybody else," but it got lost with some stuff in Texas years ago. So, I got the thing to get a [new diploma]. I got my transcript, because I had to apply for a job as a substitute teacher and they needed to see something, and it said, "Africana Studies," and I asked them [to take it off] and they said, "No, that's what it is now," and, if I get a degree, it's going to say, "Africana Studies." So, I was like, "No, they made it Africana Studies," and Africana Studies is great. I mean, we did African and Afro-American Studies. At that time, we did not think about the whole diaspora with the Caribbean and Africana brings in Caribbean studies. I mean, so, it's a good progression and it's picayune, because, actually, I got involved in all this stuff because they were having a celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the Africana Studies [Department]. I said, "Oh," and I just called them up and said, "Well, who was the first graduate in this program?" and they didn't know. That's probably why I'm coming up to Rutgers this weekend, so that we can get the history documented, not that I so much care about being one of the initial people, but we sort of laid the foundation for the things that have transpired and that's why I'm coming to this thing this weekend. I haven't been back to Rutgers since my twenty-fifth anniversary and I'd like to see some of my old friends that I haven't seen in years. [Editor's Note: Mr. Jackson is referring to "Black on the Banks," a two-day conference held at Rutgers on November 6-7, 2015, organized by Distinguished Professor of History Douglas Greenberg, that brought together African-American alumni who were enrolled at Rutgers University in New Brunswick during the 1960s and early 1970s.]

SI: You said that the Spring of 1968 really propelled you on this path. Before that, had there been much activity among the African-American students?

MJ: Oh, yes. We had a Student Afro-American Society that had been in place for several years--had to be several, because Jerry Harris was the president. He was a junior. My class, the 201st class of Rutgers, was the largest class of African-Americans that Rutgers College had admitted. There were forty of us and I've asked some of my [classmates], "Were they recruited?" and this is sort of [hazy]. I think they were, recruited being somebody--I'm not sure Rutgers was their first choice, but recruitment of Africos students came later, when we started the Transitional Year Program, which I think began in the Fall of '68. They had the big thing in '69, and so, I think Fall of '69 is when the Transitional Year Program started, because Fall of '69, I'd have been a junior, somewhere along in there, but that's when the major recruitment and the major, greater, numbers started coming. Now, what was your question? Did I answer that?

SI: I was wondering if there was much activity.

MJ: Oh, yes, there was activity. Yes, I became a part of the Student Afro-American Society and, as I said, my eyes began to open. At that point, we were probably more nationalistic. I also got involved with SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] and the Progressive Labor Party and my activities expanded beyond just African-American activities, because the war demonstrations were going on and I could see the link with all of these things. Plus, I didn't see us replacing Europas folks with Africos folks. I mean, we needed to do something different, as we still do now. I mean, if it wasn't working with them, why are we going to work the same system? It was like I didn't want a piece of the American pie, said, "We can make our own cake or even cupcake. We don't have to be a part of this polluted, just all the evils," because that's what we

[believed], we were buying in to. Oh, we all fell into it, because the system is quite well-entrenched. I mean, we're so subtle these days in many of the things that we do systemically, but, yes, there was activity and I got involved. Actually, in '69, I became the Director of the Black House. So, I stayed involved until I left. When I left, my second semester, I was in Sierra Leone, doing my Paul Robeson study--at least that's what I said I was doing.

SI: Your second semester of your senior year?

MJ: Senior year, yes.

SI: Going back to the Spring of 1968, can you walk me through that period of change?

MJ: Oh, Spring of '68. Spring of '68, Martin got killed. We asked the administration to close the University. They did. We presented our demands. [Editor's Note: On April 4, 1968, civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated by James Earl Ray as he stood on a hotel balcony in Memphis, Tennessee. Violence erupted in 125 US cities, including Chicago, Baltimore and Washington, DC, sparked by the assassination.]

[TAPE PAUSED]

MJ: So, we presented a list of demands and one of them was the Transitional Year Program, I think about twelve of them. The ones that come to mind--the Transitional Year Program, which brought more students to Rutgers, black studies program, I guess the Black House, African-American dorm sections--things that would help us feel more comfortable at Rutgers and that's what those demands were about. I was on the negotiating committee, but I didn't stay after Greg took--when we got to the negotiations, Dean [of Rutgers College (1967-1972) Arnold] Grobman put up their version of the Transitional Year Program and Greg (Stewart?) said, "No, that's not right." So, he took the chalk out of Dean Grobman's hand and an eraser and erased everything the Dean of the College had put up there. He said, "This is the way it's supposed to work," and there were, I think, ten or twelve students, maybe not that many, the deans, heads of departments, and they start taking notes from him. I said, "It's over now," [laughter] and I don't think I went back to it. I said, "The process of co-option has begun," and, I mean, we were teaching them. It's like, "Okay," so, I left, but, then, I mean, I left the negotiations, because they didn't need me to do anything more, because I was more of an "other voice;" to move things forward, I could be a little argumentative from time to time. So, they didn't need that. They were moving forward. We were going to get more students. Now, nothing happened with our demands for another year. There was an occasion in the spring, I think it was February of '69, that there was this big confab at the gym, where the administration was challenged, and then, things moved after that. Now, there was also, concurrently, stuff going on in the Legislature and I got that from [Mr. Jackson gets up to retrieve a book] from Richard McCormick's book, *Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers*. So, a lot of things were already going on that dated back to '65, I think, that the Regents [Rutgers Board of Governors] were talking and the Legislature and there was some coordination between the campuses, Rutgers-Newark, Rutgers College, I guess Douglass Campus. So, all of that was going on and I didn't know anything about that, because that wasn't my area of interest, but, then, one of the things that that time did for me was let me see how things worked. Then, again, with the Legislature and the Regents, it was about money, "Where

was the money going to come from?" '68, April 4, 1968, sort of lit the fire for all the things that transpired after that. Then, '69 sort of put the cap on it and some movement happened at Rutgers.

SI: Were you involved in the creation of Livingston College at all?

MJ: I was--that was my first consulting job. I was on the Governance Committee with Doctor--oh, gracious, how can I forget his name?--because he made me give him the picture that they took of us. He was only there a year. Anyway, I was on the Governance Committee, with Rich Najarian and--oh, what is his name? I can't think of this professor's name, but we remained friends throughout. Actually, I have a picture.

SI: Was he the first Dean of Livingston?

MJ: No, he was head of the Psychology Department. They'd brought him from Harvard. He and the President of Livingston, or the Dean of Livingston, were good friends. [Mr. Jackson retrieves the photograph.] That was us at Livingston. That's Rich Najarian. He was the President of SDS and that gentleman to the right is me and that's …

SI: I do not recognize him. We can put it in the transcript later.

MJ: Okay. They paid me. I think they paid me fifty dollars a session and we would talk about how the students would be involved in the governance of--I think it was the Governance Committee, yes.

SI: Do you remember some of the ideas that you tried to get across?

MJ: Well, I think we dealt with discipline and an honor system and, basically, that there needed to be students involved in the decision-making of any kind of discipline and all those kinds of things, basically stuff that's nothing out of the ordinary. I guess they needed to hear students say it, because, if it's not said, it ofttimes goes by the wayside, just like this event. If Dr. Greenberg hadn't spoken up, they'd have gone [through the] 250 years celebration and [wondered], "Oh, didn't any African-Americans go to Rutgers? Did they do anything there?" Then, there's a time when they were starting to change the general education requirements and everything just opened up at that point.

SI: Was there much, if any, coordination between the African-American student groups at the different Rutgers campuses, Newark, New Brunswick and even Camden?

MJ: There was communication. McCormick documents some stuff, but I think, basically, everybody did their own thing. They coordinated a few things, the leadership talked, but I don't recall us really doing anything with them, because they had their own set of issues--similar, but they weren't us.

SI: Overall, how would you grade the administration's response to your demands? Also, was it difficult to work with them? Was it easy?

MJ: I believe we got what we asked for. I think they saw the writing on the wall, the cat was out of the bag, and they had to move. They had to move forward, they had to move forward with some degree of equity, because there'd been neglect for so many years, and that's what everybody else was doing. I mean, they went with the times and I think they did a good job, for the most part, and the "they" being all of us. I mean, they couldn't have done it without our assistance, obviously, because we drew up the Transitional Year Program. We gave them the outline, and then, they put the bones to it and the dollars and recruited the students. It is what it is now.

SI: Tell me a little bit more about what went into creating the African and Afro-American Studies Department.

MJ: Well, as things were, there weren't any courses, for the most part. I'm not sure when the first--I didn't take the course that they have listed, some history course, "History of the American Negro." I never took that. I think that was the only course at Rutgers and that might've been '69, I don't know, but what we did is looked at the catalogs of Rutgers College, Livingston College and Douglass and saw what was [available], anything that could reference the African-American experience. Now, Douglass had a few, Livingston had most of them, particularly in the African [field], because I took African literature at Livingston, African art. I think my Robeson study program [advisors] were Rutgers professors--let's see if they list the professors. [Mr. Jackson refers to his transcript.] That's how we did it. So, what was available, put it all together and said, "This is enough to have the minimum for a [major]." Let's see, "Independent Study, Problems in Race and Culture, Topics in Political Theory and Cultural Geography," and then, in my senior year, I took "Primitive Art" and two Robeson study projects. In the Fall of '69, I took "Introduction to African Lit," "Work in a Contemporary Society," "Topics in Political Behavior" and "Cultural Geography." So, we saw what had any reference to African-Americans or Africans that were already on the books. Then, of course, after '71, the things expanded and most of my [classes], let's see, African art was taught by a Kenyan, Ernest Dunn taught the African literature--so, most of the teachers were Africos--but that's how we did it. We took what there was, I guess a couple courses came online, then, there were the independent studies and they've got beaucoup stuff now that you can choose from.

SI: Did they have any faculty members, initially?

MJ: Faculty members, Weaver came on to help be the administrator, putting the program together, and I think he taught in Africana Studies, I think. I don't think I took--I don't think he was teaching while I was there. I don't think he taught, but they had teachers and, again, most of the classes were at Livingston and I think there were a couple of classes at Douglass, but I didn't take anything at Douglass. It was Rutgers and Livingston and independent study. Actually, one of my independent studies was at Rockefeller University, in linguistics, I believe. So, obviously, we had a lot of flexibility. I did my independent study in Sierra Leone in my second semester, but we got it established. We got it to recognize African Studies as a relevant academic discipline, Afro-American Studies as a relevant academic [discipline] and distinct from one another. We wanted that distinction to be made, because, at the time, many of the departments at other universities were black studies. We wanted to be--we were intentionally specific--and

then, the other thing, which might've been (equally important?), was that we wanted Paul Robeson recognized, because the University had not recognized Paul Robeson. We almost got the new student center named after Paul Robeson. However, there was an illegal act by the editor of the *Targum*, that he did an editorial, wrote an editorial, that, "If you don't go out to vote, they're going to name the student center after Paul Robeson." So, there was a backlash, because nobody was going to vote and that was what we were planning on. If nobody votes, except we vote, it carries the day. They did give us a music listening lounge that was named after Paul Robeson--I guess there's another new student center--but this was the one that was on College Ave., because the student center, when we started, was the Ledge, which was over here [on George Street], and then, the new one was over there on College Avenue, across from the Commons. That's how we do things. I firmly believe, if he hadn't put that editorial in there, there would've been [a Paul Robeson Student Center], but, then, it would've been very interesting whether the Legislature would've allowed it, because, in reading this, that was one of the issues, because Rutgers was not recognizing Paul in affirmative kinds of ways, although Ed Sullivan did. At the hundredth anniversary of football, the master of ceremonies was--what is the name, Ozzie?

SI: Ozzie Nelson [bandleader and TV star].

MJ: Ozzie Nelson, who's a Rutgers graduate. Rutgers' three most prominent graduates are Paul Robeson, Ozzie Nelson and Mister Magoo. [laughter] You know Mister Magoo was on?

SI: Yes.

MJ: I didn't particularly watch Ed Sullivan, but Ed Sullivan came on the next night and said, "Shame Rutgers, shame Rutgers, shame Rutgers--you should've had Paul Robeson as the master of ceremonies for the hundredth anniversary. He was your first All-American, he's one of your greatest football players, he was valedictorian of his class, he donated money to you all from his concerts for scholarships, for years and years," but they chose Ozzie.

SI: After the editorial came out, was there a big backlash because of his Communist leanings or do you think it was more racial?

MJ: Both. I'm sure that he was censored because they said he was a Communist, but he's also an African-American. So, it was like, "No, no, no, you can't be that and you're black, too? Why do you want another strike against you?" I mean, they took his passport not because he was an African-American, but because of what they felt were his Communist leanings. So, what can you say? That's how it works. You don't lead with so many strikes against you. Maybe we'll get rid of three strikes and you're gone when they redo all these sentencing kinds of things.

SI: You talked about interacting with other student groups, like SDS. One of the things I am trying to find out about in these interviews is to what degree there was cooperation between the African-American student movements and the antiwar movement, or were they just running parallel?

MJ: Probably more running parallel. Coalition building was not a priority, because we had to

deal with our situation, but Martin was talking about the war and I'm sure the war was [important]. I know my first semester, I knew I had to keep a "2.0," so [that] I could keep my 2-S [student draft deferment], because Vietnam loomed heavily. I mean, all I could think of [was] flunking out and going to Vietnam--one of the reasons I didn't take Calc 135 [laughter]--but, then, that was abated with the lottery. My number took me out, but, yes, I know I demonstrated against the war. Actually, it was my activities at Rutgers that propelled my career. I wanted to go into the State Department, later on in life, and the CIA had a report on me that didn't get me a security clearance, although they couldn't say that. The report said that I was, "A black militant, arrogant and an irritant," and I know that this report was done at Rutgers. We always knew that there were infiltrators--we called them cops--I mean, because the report was reflective of my activities during that time period. So, I've only been able to say that lately. I mean, I've only begun to declassify a lot of stuff and I smile and say, "Yes, Rutgers was responsible for my career, because I couldn't get these jobs that I thought I wanted," and that's okay, I mean, because we go where our path is supposed to lead us. Like, my brother works for Commerce or USAID and, when I was trying to go to the State Department, he said, "You'll never make it at the State Department, because you'll write the report and the guy's going to send it back and you'll rewrite it and he's going to send it back. The third time, you're going to jump in his face," and I was like, "No, I don't think so," but you never know, [laughter] because I don't know if you've--you probably haven't worked for an administration--all you do is write reports. The top guy don't write the report, everybody else writes the report. So, I had a family then and, once you have a family and kids, you sort of look at things in a different way. You need a job and I wanted to go to the State Department, so [that] I could leave the country. I wanted to go to maybe be posted in Africa or the Caribbean somewhere, do that about ten years, and then, come back and teach in the State Department school, get my kids a great education, because they would be going to good schools and all that, and then, away from all this nonsense here in the States. They'd be isolated for a while or insulated, but that wasn't in my future and that's okay. I sued the State Department, filed an EEOC [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission] complaint, and lost. They didn't hear my appeal, but, again, looking at it, that wasn't the road I was supposed to take. Eight years, I battled them. They offered me two--not bailouts, two options--that if I wanted to continue it, they would say, "We'll let you go in as;" there were two negotiations, and I was [unyielding], because I thought I was right, I didn't want to compromise, but that was okay. I wasn't supposed to do that. What I finally wound up doing was what I was supposed to do and I don't look back--it's just part of my history. I can advise people when they go do their EEOC things, the process, because it's a process, buddy. I had three lawyers and the hearing was really interesting, but I put it in my little bibliography to help somebody else if they ever get there.

SI: Just to unpack some of that, you filed a FOIA request.

MJ: Yes, Freedom of Information Act, yes.

SI: Then, you surmised from the report that it must have been from your years at Rutgers. Did you think it was filed by the administration or an undercover person?

MJ: Undercover, undercover, because I worked for the CIA as a summer job--it was the Summer of '68--and I let them know that I really didn't think much of them. My mother got me the job and, the next summer, they told me I couldn't come back to McLean, [Virginia], but

they'd get me a job someplace else. They would pay me, but I couldn't come back. The guy who called me said, "But, you have to cut your hair and you have to wear a shirt and tie every day. You can't do the things that you do. I mean, you just have to look the part," right, and I said, "Well, no thank you." Then, they tried to recruit me after I graduated, to go back on the campus, or another campus, and I told them, "No thank you, that's not quite what I want to do in life." Actually, I was a security clerk. In the CIA, people work in vaults and they changed the locks periodically and that's what I was supposed to learn how to do, but they said, "We're not going to teach him that," and I'm glad they didn't. I'm not sure what I would've done with that information, because I'd know how to set locks and all that, but, so, they had me take people's pictures for their IDs and fingerprint them. I was a good fingerprinter. I mean, I could do some fingerprints, boy, and, now, they don't even do it anymore. Have you been fingerprinted lately?

SI: No, it is all biometrics now.

MJ: Yes, yes, it is, no more ink. It was a good skill, though. I mean, my fingerprints, I've got them all, buddy, but they don't do that anymore. It's all electronic.

SI: Your mother worked for the CIA and your father was a police officer. What did they think of your activities in college?

MJ: My father wasn't happy at all. [laughter] When I came home in '69, he wasn't happy, because I could've cost my mother her job. My mother was a little more diplomatic about it. She understood what I was trying to do, but she wasn't happy, either, because they had talked to her, "Let you know, your son can't [do this] and his activities," I mean, our phone was tapped, "You need to talk to him." They sent me to a police Boys Club camp as the athletic director for the Summer of '69. They got me out of town, "Whoosh," and got in the country. I mean, I didn't find out about this until '76, because I'd gone, taken the test, and it was the first minority program I'd ever applied for, too, because the State Department was trying to increase the number of African-Americans officers. I took the test and everything and I took the physical, psychological. One month went by, two months went by, I kept calling, and then, one day, somebody was sympathetic and said, "You need to file for your Freedom of Information and get your stuff." So, I did and, when I looked at the report, I said, "Oh," and it said I didn't get a security clearance. I asked them and the thing was that they weren't supposed to know my ethnicity, right. They had a list of reports and the CIA report was, like, the twelfth report, but it was at the top, right. So, I just put two and two together and they couldn't tell me that--they never gave me a real reason--but it was [clear]. Then, my case was that, "You knew my ethnicity when you were not supposed to evaluate me on my ethnicity." At the hearing, this one guy that they sent in there said, "Well, in those times, black didn't mean you were an African-American. Black meant you could be Asian or Latino or even a white radical," and I sat there and was like, "Boing," and then, the guy that did the report, he was an older guy, had gone to Vanderbilt before it changed its name to Vanderbilt. [laughter] My lawyer asked him, he said, "Did you know what his ethnicity was?" He said, "Black, he was black, of course he was black," [laughter] and the hearing officer said, "Strike that, strike that." I was like, "Oh, so, this is how it is." I mean, I got a full dose of being on the other side of the structure. I mean, I wasn't real happy about it then, because I had quit my job and I was unemployed and I went to work construction, which was a good thing, but they gave me a good lesson. Then, they denied me.

See, I thought I was going to win all the way through, get my name retained and my hope, and they screwed the transcript up. It'd taken me a year or so to get a hearing in the first place and the hearing officer said, "Well, I know what happened and I think I can give a fair judgment," because the transcript was screwed up. It started on page 1, to 5, to 34, 256--I mean, it was the most terrible piece of something--and he said, "I can't use it." He said, "You can request another hearing," he said, "but it's going to be at least two years." I mean, I'd already been in this thing three years and I was like, "Two more years?" So, I had faith in the guy and I was like, "Yes, even with all these facts, I mean, it just says it right here," and he ruled against me. Then, I filed for an appeal and they said my appeal didn't get in on time. My lawyer said he submitted it on time and I just dropped it after that. "Y'all wore me out. I'm going on with something [else]," because I didn't want to work for them anymore after that. I just wanted the money. I said, "I'll get a nice nest egg, start a business," went on, did something else.

SI: That process began in 1976.

MJ: Started in '76 and ended in '84.

SI: Wow. Before we go further with your career, I want to ask you a few more questions about Rutgers. You mentioned that you were in ROTC for a little while, and then, got put in the Ranger Company. How long were you in ROTC total?

MJ: I think I just did, yes, I did my whole freshman year.

SI: Did you leave ROTC for ideological reasons?

MJ: Yes. Well, I got in ROTC because my father said, "You're going to have to go into the Army," said, "It's better to go as an officer." Then, I guess, pragmatically, once I knew I didn't have to go in the Army, when my number got me out in the first lottery, and then, I was a conscientious objector, but, then, I couldn't say that, because I didn't have that pressure on me. I objected to the war. Nobody over there ever called me nigger or shot at me, but I felt it would be hypocritical of me to talk about these things and I'm out of the draft. I mean, I don't have to go unless I want to go. Then, I was doing all these other things. I mean, I was in ROTC, but I demonstrated at the Dow plant, I mean, and then, I just followed through, wasn't any sense quitting at the end of the first semester. I'd have had to take gym. Nobody wanted to take gym, "College, take gym? That's ridiculous." Then, as I said, later on, I mean, I'd gotten some extra credits, which put me, in my last year, my senior year, needing only twenty-three credits to graduate. I mean, I could've done it all in the first semester if I'd wanted to, but I was in another place at that time.

SI: Was the demonstration at Dow organized through SDS?

MJ: Yes.

SI: Do you remember any other demonstrations that you went to for antiwar purposes?

MJ: Dow, something in Newark; I went to several, where we saw the people photographing us

and that's how I knew. Dow was the one that I remember most, but, then, there was this one we went to in Newark. We did some stuff in New Brunswick.

SI: Was there any police reaction, any violence?

MJ: I never got arrested, but the police were there. They were keeping us back and we didn't go in. Nobody was tossing anything. There weren't any placards, because I didn't carry placards, but making noise and, "Stop the war," the chanting and all of that.

SI: Obviously, you were very involved in the social justice issues, but were you involved in other activities that were more in line with traditional college experiences?

MJ: No, Student African-American Society, SDS, Progressive Labor. Well, again, the piece with Livingston would've been more traditional, but I wasn't in any German club or chess club, no. It was more political and activism kinds of stuff.

SI: Did you go to concerts and things like that on campus?

MJ: Oh, yes, I did. My first year, I mean, I went to orientation, I think A. Philip Randolph had a lecture--oh, no, [Civil Rights leader] Bayard Rustin. I think A. Philip Randolph may have come with Bayard Ruskin. [Comedian] Dick Gregory was there. Dion Warwick did a concert; I got her autograph. I mean, I participated, particularly if it was anything that was soulful or whatever. I remember going to Dion, Dick Gregory, Bayard Rustin. Yes, I participated in those kinds of things, went to the football games, because Bryant Mitchell was on the team, and basketball games I went to, because they had recruited their first--Rutgers had recruited its first--African-American, James Brown, and we were partners. So, I would go watch the freshman--there were still freshman teams back then--and then, when he moved up to varsity, I would go to the basketball games. Basketball, I'd thought I was going to play at Rutgers, but I learned about big-time athletics and recruiting, because they had just lost Dick Lloyd and Jimmy Valvano, so, they recruited six guards, and then, one scholarship and I wasn't on scholarship. I didn't know about walk-ons. I mean, I thought you just went out and I was very naïve to the ways of the world, learned a lot about big-time athletics at Rutgers, sure did. [Editor's Note: Under head coach Bill Foster, star players Bob Lloyd and Jim Valvano led the Rutgers Men's Basketball Team to a string of successful seasons in the mid-1960s, culminating in the 1966-67 season, when Rutgers made the post-season for the first time ever and finished third in the National Invitation Tournament. Bob Lloyd became Rutgers' first All-American in basketball that year.]

SI: Do you want to elaborate further?

MJ: Well, no, I mean, it's big money. It's about scholarships and recruiting and very seldom will a walk-on come on and do anything. I think the only reason they would've kept me on the team was to be Jimmy's roommate. I wouldn't have played, and then, that was the time of John Carlos and Tommie Smith and many African-Americans turning their scholarships down because they didn't want to play and I had a couple of buddies. [Editor's Note: US Olympic Track Team members John Carlos and Tommie Smith gave the raised fist salute (often associated with the Black Power Movement, though Carlos and Smith stated they did so as a statement on human

rights) during the medal presentation ceremony for the 200-meter race at the Summer Olympics in Mexico City in 1968.] So, it was all that and I was like, "I don't think I really want to play anyway. So, now, I'm going to be an amateur." I mean, I love basketball. I've scrimmaged with the varsity. I learned how the things are set up. Like, you're not supposed to practice before October 15th, but the varsity's out there on the court, scrimmaging, the coach is up in the stands. The captain of the team goes up, talks to the coach and he tells him what he wants them to practice. [laughter] This is like in the summer camps, where the coaches--and Bill Foster had his camp in the Poconos--and all the college kids would come, right, as camp counselors, because they can't play in summer leagues or anything. So, this was where they played. After the kids went home, they played and scrimmaged against one another. So, I learned that whole system, and then, with football, I watched Bryant Mitchell's career and how athletic departments pushed athletes. Like, Bryant was the eighth-leading rusher in the country, but he didn't get drafted, because Rutgers didn't push him in the press. Part of it probably was because of some of his activities, because he was a little rebellious with the team from time to time. I just got to see the whole structure of how things really worked. I mean, this is a business, right, and, if you don't fit it, it doesn't matter whether you have talent or not--I mean, not to say that the guys didn't have talent, but, "This is the talent that we're paying for." It was a good learning. I got to learn how professional sports were put together, I mean, just the structure of it, and I attribute that to, I mean, if I had not ever been able to have hung out with Bryant and got to know Jimmy Valvano and just learn the structure of things. Like, I could've left Rutgers to play ball at Johns Hopkins. Jimmy asked me to come. He said, "Come on down to Johns Hopkins and shoot some jumpers and have some fun," but that was '68 and Johns Hopkins was too close to home. Plus, I thought I'd flunk out. I didn't realize what they did for athletes, are going to make sure that they don't. So, it was a good education and I'm not sad that I didn't play. I'm glad that I was able to see all of that. So, when people talk about this stuff, okay, because sports is a real distraction--that's what it's for. It's for entertainment and to distract us. That's why the sports page follows the finance page in every newspaper, epitomized by *The Times*, finances, sports, and we realize how much money that sports makes, not just from the turnstile, but gambling. There's Fan Duel and all these kinds of things. It's big money and, when you have big money, there's going to be some manipulation of it, because people don't--my father told me, he said, "Gamblers don't gamble to lose money, don't make sense. 'I'm going to take your bet and will let you win and you take my money.' Doesn't work like that." So, I don't gamble.

SI: You mentioned earlier that you did not want to major in sociology because you felt it was a place that African-Americans were being pushed towards.

MJ: Yes. I mean, I was a preceptor in Frelinghuysen and we all had to serve on a committee and [there was] the social activity committee, so, the resident manager appointed me social activities person. I was like, "I don't want to be the social activities person. I want to be on the finance committee," and he said, "No, I already have the finance committee committed," and that started us off on a very bad footing, because I was like, "No." I mean, I didn't say the things that I wanted to say about it; I said, "I don't want to do that. That's what you always assign us to. I want to be on the finance and budget committee." He wouldn't put me on the finance and budget committee. So, we didn't have a good relationship. Actually, he tried to fire me, because that was the year that Rutgers started coed visiting, where you could have girls in the building. Each section had to come up with their own policy. So, I had some really wild dudes, that the

guidelines were, you had to have a time that women were allowed to visit.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: This is great. We were talking about setting the policy for coed visitation.

MJ: Yes, yes. [laughter] So, the group, I had a real wild group. I mean, these dudes were--they were just good guys, but they were off the chain--and so, they said, "We have a twenty-four-hour policy. You have to walk your girl to the bathroom and stand outside with her," and then, whatever, there were three guidelines and they were very minimalistic. They met the guidelines. I mean, they answered the guidelines. My resident manager said, "This is unacceptable. Go back and talk to them and tell them they've got to flesh these things out." I took it back to them and they gave it back to me again. [laughter] I said, "This is what they want," and I suspect that he felt that I defended them and was insubordinate to him and he didn't like it. So, he went down to the Dean's office and said, "I want him gone." I got interviewed by the Dean and I said, "Well, these things meet the guidelines. The students are supposed to decide how they want [to do it], I mean, and everybody was in agreement. I mean, they were in consensus. I mean, their action was, they all voted for it," and I think they even all signed it. I mean, I think that's what happened there--everybody signed that this is what they wanted their rules to be. Dean (McDougall?) was the head of the preceptors and he talked to me and told me, dah-dah-dah, and then, he called the other guy, called the resident counselor in, and said, "Yes, we could support you," he said, "but you didn't do it by due process and we don't want any trouble around him," because I believe that they gave me the position to [test me]. Well, they had an African-American section, but they didn't put me with them. Frelinghuysen is way over on the river and there weren't any African-Americans in my section. So, I figured they had done that just to keep me quiet. Plus, they gave me power and they said, "Okay, what's he going to do with power?" not really power, authority. "Is he going to abuse it? because, if he does something, then, we can wire him up and get rid of him." So, they told the guy that he had to keep me and they said, "Maybe if you had done it in the proper procedure and given him a warning and all that kind of stuff," which he didn't do. So, we had a meeting and we sort of ironed stuff out. I don't think he knew that I had heard what they said to him. He had this process of inviting everybody to dinner and I said, "We will agree to disagree and I know what the deal is, you know what the deal is, so, let's just [leave it there]," and I never went to dinner at his house. His wife sort of tried to mediate between us and I was like, "I really appreciate you, but I can't come. I'm not ready to sit down with him and break bread with you," and we began to respect one another. He was an entomologist, something or other, worked with bugs, and I was sort of interested and we would talk about that. I don't think I was on anybody's [committee]--maybe I did do the social thing, but somebody else was the chair. I mean, I really didn't do anything, I just eased on through. One incident, I always [recall], I had the keys to all the doors, right, and there was a policy that you couldn't open the screens. So, one evening, Rich Najarian and I were walking down the back of Frelinghuysen and there's this guy throwing water balloons. I mean, he threw one and it almost hit me and I thought I saw the guy's mouth call me out of my name. So, I was like, "We need to go up and address this fellow," one, because he was violating the rules. He wasn't in my section. I walked into his room and he had a *swastika* on one side of the room and a Confederate flag on the other. I opened the door and went in and he had the windows open and the water balloons. He wanted to be indignant, but I sort of let him know that that was not going to work

and I wrote him up and whatever. I learned later that he had been hassling this Jewish fellow and bullying him, everything, and the Jewish fellow snapped and beat his butt. I mean, I went in there and I was like--he did not appreciate me coming into his room. He told me I couldn't be in his room. I said, "Excuse me, I'm a preceptor and you're violating the rules." That was Frelinghuysen.

SI: Were there other overt examples of racism like that?

MJ: When I was playing with the freshmen, I had my hair cut short and they used to call me "Eight Ball" and I didn't get it for a while. I said, "Oh, that's why they're calling me Eight Ball, okay," and they would laugh and I didn't think anything of it. This was all in reflection--I said, "Eight Ball? Okay, because I'm the only black guy out here, head shaved, right." Then, this one guy I thought was a friend, we're playing ball in the gym and I fouled him and he called me an animal. I was like, "I thought we were partners," and I don't think we spoke anymore, but those are just a couple of personal instances. There weren't that many, because I didn't allow myself to get in places where ugly was going to happen unless I was going to initiate it.

SI: Going back to your preceptor work, what was expected of preceptors at the time?

MJ: To make sure that the students followed the rules. There were dorm rules, not stealing the lounge furniture--not stealing, "borrowing" the lounge furniture [laughter]--keeping the bathrooms clean. I don't know if we had to clean the bathrooms, but just make sure that order was maintained and they didn't tear the place up.

SI: Did you have to enforce a drug and alcohol policy?

MJ: Maybe that was in there, I don't ever remember having to. If somebody's drunk, we'd get him up there, make sure they get into bed, but I don't remember if you could have--I never had that situation, that I remember. Maybe they said something, but, back then, it was really *in loco parentis*. We covered up anything that really happened between the town and the students; basically just to keep order in the place, I guess, and then, provide activities, let the folks know what kind of activities the dorm was sponsoring, if it was a trip for this or whatever.

SI: Do you recall any incidents between the townies and the students that came up?

MJ: I had a few instances with the townies, but we won't go into that. Bryant will tell you about those. [laughter] Yes, I had some confrontations with the townies my first year, some, yes, nothing I would be proud of. I was probably an ass.

SI: Going back to the black student movement, I do not know if it was during this period or later, but I know that there were actions the students would stage, sit-ins at the gym during basketball games or actions in the cafeteria.

MJ: Yes, there were actions in the cafeteria and I'm not proud of those, either. Yes, we messed the cafeteria up a couple of times. At the hundredth anniversary of college football, we walked across the stadium, walked across the field, at *The Star-Spangled Banner*. We thought we were

going to be on television, but, the hundredth anniversary, it wasn't on television--they started it after we walked across the field. We wanted national publicity, but we didn't get it and they didn't start the cameras rolling until the last person got across, because we walked across the fifty-yard line with the national flag, red, black and green. We did our thing, but I always supported the majority of the things that we did, probably all of them. I was the rearguard most of the time, just to make sure nobody would get hurt or whatever.

SI: What was your impression of Mason Gross?

MJ: I respected Mason Gross. He and Bryant were friends. Actually, it was Bryant that probably convinced Mason to close the school. The night of the 4th [Dr. King's assassination], all kinds, there was a riot in New Brunswick, we were talking about doing this and doing that, and somebody said, "Well, we need to talk to the President." So, Bryant and I went up to Dr. Gross's house and he admitted us. This is about one o'clock in the morning. It was late and they talked a couple of hours and Bryant was passionate and convincing. I remember Gross saying, "Yes, but we didn't close the University for JFK," and Bryant let him know that this was not the same kind of situation and that it would probably be much better, go on and on, and so, they closed the school the next day. I didn't know Gross well, but Bryant spoke well of him and he had handled the Genovese thing in '64 well and stood up for his professor and academic freedom and freedom of speech and all of that. So, I think he was a good guy. I never had a relationship with him, only through Bryant, but I respected him for listening to us and I'm glad he shut the school, I really am, because I don't know what would've happened if he hadn't. Then, he was a good administrator and he had good staff. They knew what they were doing and I think, or I believe, Mason understood the times. "The times were a changin'," and they needed to get on the boat and I think they took the lead of what was happening in schools. Some of the things we did, I think, were in the vanguard. In watching other kinds of events that happened afterwards, we were ahead of the curve and I thought people could've learned from us, instead of going and making the same mistakes, close administration buildings and get to the Board of Regents and the Directors, that the deans were just mid-level functionaries. I thought we had some people that were really bright and were serious about the things that we were doing. I think we accomplished a lot. Like, my brother went to Columbia and they were doing things we had already done, and then, that Cornell piece was like, "That doesn't work, homies. We did that. That's not the way to go." [Editor's Note: Mr. Jackson may be referring to the April 19, 1969, occupation of Willard Straight Hall on the Cornell University campus.] It was really good student leadership. I have a lot of respect for the seniors, a lot of respect for my peers, because we were the next ones in line. I did not take a leadership role in SDS. I did become the first Director of the Black House, but I've always seen myself in support roles, behind the scenes, and I think I carried that out through my career for the most part.

SI: When were you the Director of the Black House?

MJ: '69.

SI: Your junior year.

MJ: Yes.

SI: What sort of things would you do there? Were you acting as a sort of preceptor or were you doing more programming?

MJ: Well, we had various programs. Plus, it was a place that we could gather. Many of the things that we asked for were simply places that we could gather on our own and do what we wanted to do. We had parties there, I guess we had some programs, speakers. I don't know if it still exists. I know when I went back for my twenty-fifth, they had much more programming. I don't think we had a whole lot of money dedicated to us. They gave us a building and maybe furnishings and we could decorate it the way we wanted to. It was an early effort, but it was a place that the African-American students could gather. It was our own place, like our fraternity house or sorority house or whatever.

SI: I wanted to ask about your time abroad in Sierra Leone. What did you do there? How did that come about?

MJ: I was ready to leave. I really wanted to leave the country. I was just tired of all of this and a good friend of mine's roommate was from Sierra Leone and his father was the Minister of the Eastern Province, Frank Anthony. I told Frank I wanted to get to the Continent, I wanted to get to the Motherland, and he said, "Oh, great, I'll contact my parents and we'll whip something up." It just so happened that Mr. Anthony was in the States for something and he met my mother and they talked, and so, they said, "Okay, we'll bring you, come on." So, in January of 1971, I got on an airplane; JFK, went to Freetown, Sierra Leone. I also was doing--I said, "Well, I might as well look at African educational systems," because I was amazed at how we were fighting about class size and I saw teachers [there], and you can see it still now, one teaching eighty-five students and nobody getting out of order, everybody's learning. My independent study was comparative educational structures--and got malaria, there was a coup. My brother told me the best thing that I could do for Sierra Leone was to come back here and affect policy and I said, "Okay," and I listened to this senior counsel. I mean, I could've stayed, I could've gotten a job, because, when I got to Sierra Leone, they separated me, took me to this room with all these Europeans. I was like, "Gosh, they're going to put me out and I just got here," and I stepped outside and it said, "VIP." So, somebody from the aviation division came and said, "Michael Jackson?" and said, "Come with me," and got me into Freetown. I was like, "Whoa," I mean, I hadn't expected them to be waiting for me, but, then, I was privileged, because I was with the Minister of the Eastern Province. I lived up the street from the President. When the coup came, it wasn't a good place to be. [laughter] I was having this dream about a revolution and I got up to go to the bathroom and I said, "Gosh, this is a very vivid dream," hearing, "Boom, boom," [Mr. Jackson imitates machine-gun fire]. Then, Mrs. Anthony came and I said, "What's going on?" and she says, "Be quiet and get down on the floor." The next day, we evacuated. It didn't last long; it wasn't a long coup, but it was the second coup. I think 1970 was the only year in which independent Africa didn't have a coup. The first one started in January, in Uganda, with--oh, what was the brother's name over there, killed everybody?

SI: Idi Amin?

MJ: Idi Amin, and then, February, they had a coup in Sierra Leone and they finally straightened

everything out. [Editor's Note: In March 1971, a group of military officers attempted to overthrow the government of Prime Minster Siaka Stevens.] They didn't change the government and they did not get rid of Siaka Stevens and they ran out of bullets, but I watched it. I was up on Fourah Bay College and I could see all the way down into the middle of Freetown. Things would be going along, then, guys would come with the guns, these people go this way and these people go that way. I was glad I was where I was, and then, I caught malaria and thought I was never going anyplace else. I thought that's where I was going to lay, and then, I came back in May and went home, came here and laid around. My mother said, "Don't you think you should graduate?" and it wasn't a question. That was, "Get yourself up, pack your bags and go back and graduate," because my friend David Talbot had registered me for classes. I got 454 dollars from my grandmother, paid the tuition, got my grades, got my degree. The Dean said, "Mr. Jackson, it was nice having you here--don't come back," [laughter] and I said, "You don't have any problems. I don't want to come back," and the next time I came back was for my twenty-fifth anniversary.

SI: Why did he say that? Was it just because of your activism?

MJ: I had had discussions with them. We did not agree on things. I mean, they knew who I was, I knew who they were, and they didn't want any activists or anything, didn't want anybody stirring things up. So, I said, "Okay, I mean, no problem." I wore a dashiki to my graduation. I stood next to David Talbot. I told David, "We came in here together and we're going to leave together," because you line up by alphabet and I was like, "No, we came in together, we're going to go out together." That was my Rutgers history.

SI: Is there anything that we skipped over about Rutgers? Is there anything you would like to add?

MJ: No, I don't think so.

SI: One thing comes to mind from my interview with Bryant Mitchell. Being from the South, he talked about seeing a real difference between African-Americans who grew up in New Jersey from those from the South. Did you make similar observations?

MJ: We considered ourselves "the Southern contingent." Bryant had left the South because he went to prep school, but, coming from the South, you didn't have to tell us that we were African-Americans. I mean, it was just like you see here. I mean, you look here, all our images, pictures, role models, everything, were African-Americans. In the North, they grew up in more integrated kinds of situations. They may not have been equitable, but they went to school with Europas folks. We shopped, until 1968, in the African-American community. I mean, that's where we shopped, until the riots tore all that down. So, it's like those of us from the South just knew who we were. I think we had less identity crisis, because I think a lot of it was, "Who am I?" and I pretty much knew, at least where I was from and who I was. I think that that might've been what Bryant was referencing. It was different, I mean, and I wanted to see the differences. I mean, that's one of the reasons I went North, and then, the Northeast is the "hub" hub, hubbub, of culture and all of those kinds of things. "Everything happens on the East Coast," still today. There's a difference between the East Coast and West Coast and the South and the Southwest,

but there was a difference. I mean, I don't think we really talked about it while we were there, but guys from the South hung out, stayed together, for the most part, and there were a few of us. Bryant was from Virginia, Dave was from Arkansas, Jimmy was from Virginia, oh, yes, Claude Roxborough was from DC, I was from DC--Claude and Bryant were in the same class--(Lynne Watley?) was from Atlanta, Michael (Muse?) was from Virginia, Roy (Ash?) was from Virginia, but we just had similar kinds of experiences growing up. I mean, probably, most of us grew up in segregated environments, but most of us were probably sheltered. I know I was. I mean, it's just who you were. I know, in the early days of the movement, one of the things, when we did education, we put all African-American images on the walls, African-American calendar, so that you see it and you feel it and you notice you don't have to look at these, you can be influenced by it, other images and those subliminal kinds of things, and that's what we grew up with. We had that. So, I guess that's what one of the differences was.

SI: There must have been a range of views among African-American students at Rutgers at the time. Where would you put yourself on the range, in terms of, on the one hand, people advocating for more extreme actions or others advocating for more peaceful approaches to change?

MJ: Well, it ran the gamut. In retrospect, I'm glad some of the extreme views didn't carry the day. Of course, it didn't in the negotiations, other than being adamant about the structure understanding what we were asking for, again, the example of the Transitional Year Program. The administration had their thoughts on it, we had our thoughts on it--our thoughts carried the day. Of course, it was a negotiation in the details and whatever, but the outline of it was what we had asked for, but, in any activity, I think the moderates carried that, and then, particularly after Martin got killed, because things just went [sour]. The guy that we sent to his going home service really hadn't been a part of stuff, because we had to choose one person. The administration was going to send one person from the Student African-American Society and the guy we sent really loved Martin and he conveyed that. It was unanimous, "You're the one that needs to represent us," because some of us didn't agree with what Martin was saying. We were nationalists, for the most part, but we accomplished what we needed to accomplish to take Rutgers to its next best place, letting it be a more inclusive university, more diverse. I guess women came in '72, '73. So, Rutgers went on and rode the tide.

SI: I know that the gay and lesbian movement also started at Rutgers at this time. The person most noted as the founder of that movement was an African-American student, Lionel Cuffie, I believe. Did you have any interaction with the movement or with him specifically?

MJ: I knew Lionel. Lionel, I think, came in with the Transitional Year folks, came in a couple of years after me. I was probably a sophomore or junior when Lionel came in. I wasn't involved with--I mean, Lionel was a brother, I mean, he had his thing, "Go for it." I mean, many of the things that are gay and lesbian were taken from the African-American [movement], as with women. It's all the same movement for trying to get equitable rights and we were the vanguard of that. I mean, they just copied the things that happened when we did them, and then, it was that time, to get things moving. I mean, how could you do one without doing the other? which, again, is a way that is used to separate, because you only have so many funds, "Well, who's going to get them? Are we going to give them to the African-Americans? Are we going to give

them to the women? Are we going to give them to gays and lesbians?" So, they keep us all at odds, but, then, our movement didn't just start in '68 and '69. I mean, it was a culmination of things that had been going on since we had been emancipated and, as we know, still, the same struggle continues. Names have changed, the leadership has changed, a different focus, getting closer to what we're really talking [about], getting closer to the common denominator.

SI: After you graduated from Rutgers, you entered a master's program in education.

MJ: I went into an Ed.D. program at the University of Massachusetts. I left with one of my mentors at Rutgers, Dr. Ernest Washington. He took a job at the School of Education and he said, Mijack, what are you doing next?" He said, "Come on and get a doctorate," and I said, "Okay," because I was tired of school, but I went, because Ernie asked me to come. I had an all-African-American doctoral committee. The doctoral program was a year of residency, go out and do some work, come back, write your dissertation, three years, you'd have a doctorate. I established my residency and I was tired. When I got there, we did some different stuff, but they were doing all the things we'd already done at Rutgers, although I participated in the best demonstration I'd ever been in, because we did a coalition with the Euro group and Latino group and it was really well-coordinated. I actually carried a sign for the first time, because there was a group of older people that that was their thing, carrying the signs, and, in respect to them, I carried a sign. Again, I established my residency. My dissertation was supposed to be color perception in exceptional children. What Amherst was, I think they only had about--maybe UMass was twenty thousand then, maybe a little less, fifteen, twenty thousand--but it was out in the boonies and I met folks that had never seen African-Americans before. I didn't like Boston. I thought I'd like Boston, but it was truly "up South." I mean, Boston was as racist as a place as I'd ever been in my life. Another thing, I couldn't see myself being Dr. Jackson at twenty-five, I said, because I didn't know anything. I hadn't had any experience. So, I came back to DC and started substitute teaching. From there, I went to work as a counselor at Junior Village. Junior Village was the place where they sent incorrigible young men, pre-adjudicated youth, before they locked them up. If they made it out of Junior Village, they might not get locked up. It's where I wrote my first proposal for a youth group home, because they began the process of decentralizing. We had gotten to that point, in the '70s, where institutions, large institutions, centralized stuff, was not the way to go. We went from macro to micro. A lot of people got lost in the shuffle, are still. I think we're going back, were moving, edging, back to macro in some of these things, particularly mental health, I think. That didn't happen. I got married, had a couple of kids, worked for the University of the District of Columbia, which was Federal City College, in the Lorton Prison College Program, for one of my [advisors]. Rody (McCoy?) was on my doctoral committee and he came down here to run the student [program], to get their schooling, continuing education. He wanted me to be a director of one of the programs, but he set me up as the assistant to a guy he brought down to run the Lorton Prison College Program. So, I mean, all of this continues, the things that I'm doing. I'm working with prisoners now, been working with a lot of guys that I know.

SI: Were you teaching them directly?

MJ: No, I was an administrator. I was their advisor in getting them into school and all of that, academic coordinator. At that point, I said, "Okay, I really want to try to do something better for

my family." So, that's when I applied to the State Department and thought I was going and I quit my job. [laughter] I learned "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." I don't ever advise you, unless you've got a signed contract for another job, don't leave the one you've got, unless you've got a bankroll and I didn't have a bankroll. So, from there, I went, I worked in another department in the University of the District of Columbia for a while, in student advising, and that contract ended. Then, I worked construction for a while. Then, my wife and I broke up and I went to Jamaica for a year and came back, thought about going to seminary. My sponsor had died and I was homeless for a minute. I was working with the Catholic Workers and almost went out to run the farm in West Virginia, but another mentor asked me to come and mentor his son. His wife worked for the National Center for Housing Management and she said, "You'd make a good housing manager," and I'm like, "No, I won't," because I knew what public housing was about, right. So, I stayed with them and a job came open in Dallas to be the property manager for a 250-unit housing unit with the Dallas Housing Authority, and so, she said, "I want you to look at this job." I'm like, "Oh, God, I don't want to be a housing manager," because all I could see was--my understanding of public housing, at that point, was large tenements, like in New York and Newark and here, and elevators. I had worked maintenance enough that I knew what happened with elevators in public housing. So, the guy that interviewed me wanted somebody that knew nothing about housing management. So, I was the one and went to Dallas and it was a true blessing. It was two stories, no pool, no elevators, and I was the first African-American that they had managing the place. My boss taught me a lot about managing property and people. So, I did that for three years, and then, I felt the call again. When I was in Dallas, I didn't have a car for a good minute and I was wondering where I was going to go to church. I lived on Kiest Boulevard and at the top of the hill was Magna Vista and on Magna Vista was the Church of the Epiphany, which was an African-American Episcopal church. So, I could walk, and then, I arrived in Dallas in Epiphany. Epiphany is the season after Christmas, where the spirit was given to, the word was given to, the whole world. I was like, "Hmm, something's going on here." So, I went to church in Epiphany and I took my first Bible study course and got involved with the congregation, and then, one day, I was riding down the road--things were going pretty good at Cedar Glen. Cedar Glen was the name of the place. We had started a literacy program, Cedar Glen Day. We kept the place clean. I stopped in and I asked my priest what was the process in the Diocese of Dallas and he told me, sent me to the Bishop. My congregation said, "Yes, you're the one," and, six months later, I was in seminary, got in seminary and thought this was what I was supposed to do, but there was always [a question], because there's always questioning--you're always going through a discernment process. At the end of your first year, you do something called clinical pastoral education, learn how to be a chaplain, so that you can go see your congregants when they're in the hospital and do all this kind of stuff. So, I wanted to go to Atlanta to work, because I'd been working with homeless folks, so, I wanted to go to this program in Atlanta, but they were full. So, the other program was in DC. I wasn't interested in really coming back to DC, but it was a great experience. The CPE program here was one of the best in the country and I learned that I was to be a chaplain. Plus, in '87, DC was sort of murder capital of the country. They were knocking people off like one a day and the folks were saying, "Mike, you've got to come back home. It's time that you come back home," and I was like, "Hmm, I don't know about that." So, I went back and that whole next semester, I just figured--then, I decided, "I need to go back home," and I left. I left in the middle of the year, went to Jamaica to think some more, then, came back here. I met my next wife and was a chauffeur for a while, became a chaplain with the Church of the Savior, opened

up their first--I was the community builder when they opened up their first SRO, which is single-room occupancy, for people in recovery. They wanted me to join the church, but I wasn't going to join the church, because I had some difficulties with their concept of community, but I did the work. Then, my son died. It sort of changed things. I didn't want to be in cities anymore. So, I told my wife I had to get out of town and we moved to Texas. We moved to my father's place in Big Sandy. My wife went along with me, but the country wasn't her thing. It was like *Green Acres*. She worked for Saks Fifth Avenue--she was a marketing maven--but she said, "You've got to go, you've got to go," so, we went. We lived with my father for about six months. We'd had a kid in-between, my daughter, and she got pregnant again and she wanted to be in town. So, we moved into Tyler. She started working for a communications company. I did some work with a group called PATH, People Attempting to Help Others, a community [organization]. I was the neighborhood coordinator, building neighborhoods. She got promoted. We moved to Las Vegas and I had a hard time finding a job in Vegas. Vegas is not a community-oriented place. So, I went back to construction. We decided Vegas was not the place to be, and so, we moved to--her company moved her to--Central Texas, Temple. She was doing a good piece of work. I went to do advanced CPE at Scott & White Hospital, because I figured I was going to be a chaplain and I was going to go back to prisons, be a prison chaplain. We would live "the life of Riley," and then, the Diocese of Texas called me and said they wanted me to come to Galveston and run St. Vincent's House; never been to Galveston and didn't know what St. Vincent's House was, but somebody had recommended me--I think I know who--and I just [went]. My sister lived outside of Houston and Galveston's about fifty miles from Houston. So, I happened to be there and they said, "Would you come and look at it?" and so, (we drove down on it). I said, "If you'll see me on a Sunday," because Temple is four hours from Galveston, I was not [going to come back]. I mean, I thought I had my plan, "I'm going to work with prisoners," and so, I knew my ministry was to Africos males. I said, "We've got to save these young brothers." So, we went down there and they showed me the place. They also wanted me to do an alternate ordination, an alternate ordination for this African-American parish, St. Augustine's, the oldest Episcopal church, African-American Episcopal church, in Texas. So, I talked to the president of the board and the head of the vestry and was like, "Okay, we'll think about this." We came back and discerned and my wife gave up her very nice paying job to a not-so-nice-paying job, but doing the work, which is what I think I was always slated to do, and they vetted me. Actually, it was the most interesting [thing]. That was a very interesting memory, because we'd gotten back in from Houston and there was a phone call. The treasurer, the treasurer of St. Vincent's, was on the phone and he asked me some stuff I had never been asked before. I can remember looking at the phone and saying, "Who is this guy? I don't know him," and I guess I answered everything great. So, November 1999, I got an appointment to be the Executive Director of St. Vincent's Episcopal House and I stayed there from November 1999 to September of 2014. St. Vincent's House was a social service agency, social service mission, for the Episcopal Diocese of Texas that did childcare, social services, including transportation service and a food pantry, and we had a clinic. When I got there, they had two phones, no answering service, one computer, and my task was to take it to its next place. The budget was about three hundred thousand dollars and, when I left, the budget was over a million dollars, but because of budgetary [concerns], the way I did the budget, I didn't want us to be a million dollars, because that put us into another funding kind of thing. We had computers everywhere, answering service. When I started, the clinic was two days a week; when I left, it was six days a week, but we stayed to our core. We did expand the education, because we had a preschool, we went to an alternative school, because you know

how they put kids out of school and suspend them, and so, we had all these kids that didn't have any place to go. So, we had a program for them and we expanded tenfold, I guess, and I had a lot of help, because one never does it by one's self. I retired in September of 2014. I remember, when I was being interviewed by the board, the St. Vincent's board, this one person said, "Why should we think that you're going to be here any longer than three years?" he said, "because when we look at your résumé, you don't have any job longer than three years." I was stumped for a minute, and then, I said, "Well, it's three years because I worked on contracts. Contracts are typically three years, but I'm making a commitment to come here for whatever time it needs to take." My expertise was in crisis management. I could go into a situation, try to see what was going on, tell you and take the action that you need to take, and that's a different kind of thing than being there all the time. You get folks, find them, supposed to do what, dah-dah-dah, but, after the third or fourth year, this was maintenance and not my particular expertise. People said I delegated well. That's true, because I couldn't do it, so, find somebody who could. Then, you wanted the staff to train you, so that you could do the task, because that's what management is. Management is about delegation, writing reports and going to meetings and, if you think it's anything else, you're sadly mistaken. You turn your report in monthly. St. Vincent's House was the only institution in Galveston that did education, social services and medical all together. So, we took care of the whole family and it's also the basis for social determinants of health, which we were beginning to work on when I left, still trying to solve that puzzle. So, I retired and went to our family land in Big Sandy, because it had been abandoned for a few years, and put it together. Now, I'm between Big Sandy and Galveston. I volunteer as a chaplain at UT [Health] Northeast and I'm back at PATH again, working in the food pantry, and trying to see what's next. That's it.

SI: You mentioned that the board initially questioned whether you were going to stick around at St. Vincent's House. Did they back you going forward?

MJ: Oh, sure, yes, oh, yes. We had a great relationship. The guy that was the treasurer who vetted me, we became very good friends. The boards, while I was there, were ultra-supportive. I mean, all I had to do is explain what I needed. I mean, we had to do the work. We didn't have a hitter board. A hitter board is when you've got some big hitters that can help you out. We basically had a community board and one of the problems that they had is, they didn't put any hitters on our board, because the Diocese appointed the board. So, they can put anybody on the board that they wanted. I would get candidates and submit them and they would [consider them]. If I had stayed longer, we would've probably tried to do some different kinds of things with boards, but my boards were always, always supportive. They supported all our endeavors, because all we ever did was do things to enhance people's well-being and everybody can get behind that. Then, kids were our emphasis and we started as a kids program in 1954. St. Aug's was on this side of town and St. Vincent's House is on this side of town and they wanted to reach back and help some people and they did a good job. St. Vincent's House was holy ground. You might look up, if the website is still up, stvhope.org, and we were about hope. Hope was a verb for us. Our mission statement was, "We're an oasis of hope, expecting miracles," and I think we saw a few miracles during my tenure and my prayer is that we continue to provide miracles. Let me give you my new card; I just got my card.

SI: Thank you.

MJ: You know what it says?

SI: "Yes Advice Services?"

MJ: Yes Advice Services, but what's at the top? "Why not?" That's the not sign.

SI: "And why not?" okay.

MJ: Well, that's part of it. I mean, that's the question, "And why not? Why can't we do anything?" My management dynamic was, "Yes," that our marketing thing was, "Help us say yes," because when people call for social services, they're trained to say, "No." So, I said, "We're going to tell people yes." When we assisted people with rent or utilities, we said, "We're going to help you make sure you don't get your stuff cut off, but we're going to do the last part to what we can do. You have to do the rest, but we're not going to let you get your lights turned off, we're not going to let you get put out, right, and we will assist you in finding some other things. Our resources are extremely limited and we can only do this, but you'll leave with hope." The person that did the social services said, "Mr. Jackson always said, 'Let them leave with hope. Don't tell them no,'" because people can do fantastic things when they are hopeful and that was our job, to assist people with hope. That's what we need in this world, a hope that we can figure all this nonsense out and keep working at it.

SI: You mentioned that you thought you accomplished some miracles. Would you like to share any of those?

MJ: It's a miracle that we stayed open as long as we did, [laughter] because, in social services, at best, you get two-thirds of what you need. Our major fundraiser was a gospel concert. We had major stars, until Ike. Ike was the storm in [September] 2008 that whacked Galveston. So, there are so many things. I guess one of them was, this family stopped. They wanted some gas and nobody takes gas vouchers in Galveston, but, if somebody really needed gas, we would give them our gas credit card, because we [had one] for the van. This lady was coming from Florida, was going to the West Coast, and she had nine special kids. They had camped out on Galveston Island and somebody stole all their money. So, she stopped in with us and she had all the kids' names tattooed on her body. We were able to get them gas, we fed them, we gave them food for the trip and we took up money to help them on their way. That was one of the [miracles], I mean, that she had these kids of all ethnicities, special kids, and she had them all in order and loving. It was just a wonderful thing, and how we just assisted her. I mean, it was not anything, there was no procedure, just because all my "co-agents of hope" were ministers. Then, one of the funniest things is, we had a preschool and the preschool door was on this side of the building. People would always double park and it was a dangerous situation, because they wouldn't hold the kids' hands or anything. So, the preschool director said, "Why don't we bring them through the alley?" and that was a great idea. So, we made the alley one-way. The trash got picked up in the alley, so, we talked to the drivers, brought the trucks this way. We painted a sign and it said, "Preschool Entrance and Exit," and I think it cost us two hundred dollars, because we had to put a window in the door. So, it solved [a problem]. So, I mean, the parents didn't have to get out of the car and the teachers went and greeted them, greeted the parents. Sometimes, the kid doesn't

want to go, but, then, the parent [will take them over]. So, it alleviated that and it was just one of those things where it just evolved, because I didn't like talking to the parents, because it was like, "Who are you to tell me how to take care of my child?" I said, "Well, when you take the child out of the car, the safest thing is to take them out on the passenger's side, away from the street." You know what I mean, people questioning people's parenting, they always want to get upset, but my thing was safety, right. We were blessed that nobody ever got whacked, but, then, this just solved this whole [problem] and it was just, like, when the people would pick up in the evening, the nurses were trying to go home at four o'clock, five o'clock. So, they were parked in, but nobody ever said anything about this thing that was distressing them, right. Once this got resolved, it was like this cloud was lifted. When people left at four o'clock, they had smiles on their faces, as opposed to waiting for this kid to go across the street and the parent to come and being double parked, but nobody got ugly. To see how the community resolved this issue without anybody getting harmed, without anybody getting real ugly and it not being a fiscal burden, those are the kind of miracles that happened, that things would organically come into being because of goodwill. There was much sharing and one of the things that I've always wanted to do in my administration was to celebrate. I said, "We have to celebrate. When you find ways to celebrate, things go much, much better."

SI: Is there anything else that you would like to add to the record?

MJ: That's basically it. I did it, I'm not sure what's coming next. I've given you my card. I would like to advise some people. I may get a gig next year, but I'm enjoying my retirement. I've put in my fifty-plus years and I haven't quit. I still struggle, because it's a struggle each day, and I'm still hopeful. I'm glad to get to "Black on the Banks," [laughter] good name, "Black on the Banks."

SI: Thank you very much. I appreciate all of your time.

MJ: Thank you, Shaun, all right.

SI: Thank you.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 4/8/2016
Reviewed by Michael Jackson 1/27/2017