

10-13-2018

Floyd Walton, October 24, 2018

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Recommended Citation

Burns, Rachel and Jones, Matt, "Floyd Walton, October 24, 2018" (2018). *Oral Histories*. 46.
https://commons.emich.edu/oral_histories/46

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Oral History Interview with Floyd Walton

Conducted by Historic Preservation Graduate Student Rachel Burns, (RB) and Historic Preservation Graduate Student Matt Jones (MJ)

Transcribed by Historic Preservation Graduate Student Rachel Burns

RB: This is Rachel Burns, I'm a graduate student in the Historic Preservation Program along with Matt Jones, another HP grad. It is Wednesday, October 24th and we are here in Halle Library with Floyd Walton. Walton is an alumnus of the university who graduated in 1973. Walton was highly involved student activist serving as a member of the Campus Service Corps and the Black Student Association. Walton was also instrumental with the Black Demands and discussions with administration after the take over of Pierce Hall of February of 1969. So to start off, can you describe conditions for African American students when you arrived on campus?

FW: There were very few African Americans on campus. The African American population had grown from what it had been a few years earlier. The university was in a growth spurt. I think it went from 5,000 total in 1965 to 15 to 20,000 when I got here in '69. Many of the black students pulled together. We spent a lot of time together and pretty much knew every black student on campus. Some felt alienated, it was a different environment from what they had grown up in. That part didn't bother me too much even though I went to a high school where there must have been 3,000 students. We had no white students at all to coming to EMU where less than 5% were black students. That wasn't a problem for me but it was difficult for a lot of other African Americans.

RB: So when you arrived on campus, that January of 1969 correct?

FW: Yes.

RB: The takeover was one month later. Were you aware of any of the planning or meetings that were happening before the takeover?

FW: I was only aware of one meeting. That's when they announced to the black students that we were gonna take over the building the next day, I think it was. Up to that point, I didn't know anybody who was involved in the Black Student Association or I didn't know many. I was new to the campus.

RB: Did you have a rationale-what was your reasoning for not involving yourself in the demonstration?

FW: When I was accepted at EMU, I was put on a waiting list. Pray Harrold was still under construction, the tower dorms were still in construction, and as a matter of fact Ryneerson-it's going to be 50 years for Ryneerson next fall. They didn't have room for me, so they put me on a semester long waiting list. During that time, I went to Highland Park Community College and I joined the Association of Black Students there. We had a walk out. My role was supposed to be guard the door and to make sure no one was reentering but we got a lot of cooperation and that wasn't necessary. We walked out for some of the same issues, the need for more financial aid, the need for more black staff and faculty, recruitment for more black students. But since I had been involved in that protest, I wanted to be a little more cautious in jumping in something here.

RB: Can you describe the campus environment that day and how other students were reacting to the take over?

FW: I was staying in Phelps Hall and the dorm was overcrowded. Instead of having four men per suite it was five. So all four of my suitemates were white. I don't recall even talking to them about it. I would leave in the morning and go down to the cafeteria, do my little job, then go out and walk the picket lines and then go back and continue to do what I was doing. I did talk with some white students and it's something I had experienced before coming up to campus, living in Detroit in 1967 during the Detroit Riot. Early '68 some of the religious groups tried to bring black and white students together. We had a conference at U of D Mercy and we sat there at the U of D basketball courts in small groups to explain the black experience to white students. I found way too often there was resistance. They couldn't see the difference, they didn't understand racism, they thought it was dead. "Forgot about slavery. We don't want to talk about Jim Crow at all," which wasn't way back when, the bombing of churches happened last week. I saw on Facebook that there was a church in Georgia that was firebombed. These things haven't stopped but in the minds of the average white student and white person it ended 400 years ago. They're not doing the math because slavery didn't end until 1865. So it hasn't been that long. My oldest sister is 78. We have different mothers but when her mother first brought her and my older brother- who is deceased-to church there was a 70 or 80 year old woman who asked to hold those babies. That woman was probably born during slavery. So it's only two degrees back to slavery. My grandma's cousin lived to be 100 and he died around 1977. He wasn't born under slavery, but his father was. My great grandfather whom I never met, wasn't born under slavery. But my great-great grandfather was. So, that idea of "we don't want preferences, we don't want a quota system." America is run by a quota system. You go down to the car dealership downstreet and each salesman has a quota that have to sell a certain number of cars. The manager has a quota for how much money he has to make, how many people they need to get in the door. Quotas are not something that is strange to America. We use quotas everywhere else, so there should be quotas for University to know if we are doing a good job in recruiting a diverse student body because students interacting with each other, that's when they are learning the most. My activity and friends-you met most of my friends- our activity outside of the classroom is where we really learned the most. I majored in History, graduated with a minor in Speech and Communication but I had 18 credit hours in Political Science. I was learning things

about Political Science in the classroom but I was practicing them as part of Student Senate and other activities that I participated in on campus.

MJ: It sounds like the white students kind of met their quota on caring about discrimination. Did you see any sign of change?

FW: We had changed. I still haven't emotionally dealt with the election of Barack Obama. Everytime I try to think about it, it gets pushed back. It shocked me. I know I have probably told some of my students that someday there will be a black president and when it happens I will just say "wow." But whenever there is progress being made, there is a pushback. We had progress in the Civil Rights Movement, but then Nixon came into power and pushed it back. Then we tried to make a little more progress under Carter, and then Reagan is elected and it gets pushed back. We get Clinton and then Barack Obama and now Donald Trump is pushing us back. It just happens. There is truth. The truth will set you free, but there are people in this country, including on this campus that just want to believe a lie. They're happy to believe a lie.

RB: So, would you say it's fair that the takeover of Pierce was like a catalyst for your involvement with activism on campus?

FW: Yeah. I probably was going to be involved anyway. As a matter of fact, when I put my applications out to colleges, I put out four. My plan A was to attend Kentucky State, go to a historically black college. I recently heard part of their choir and it almost hurt me that I didn't go there because they sounded good and I would have been in the middle of it (laughs). But some of my friends and people who were a year ahead of me had gone there and had been expelled because of their activism. When I got a letter from them, it said that they had changed their standards and grade point average and needing three letters of recommendation. They raised the grade point to what I had already. I could have gotten my pastor, my sunday school teacher who had a PhD in educational psychology and later became the superintendent of Inkster Public Schools and somebody else to write my letters of recommendations. But I decided to come to Eastern Michigan. I knew that I was going to be active on Kentucky State's campus and would probably get kicked out so, plan B was to come here to Eastern.

RB: I know that '67 helped frame your mindset but did the larger black student movement do that as well? Did you look at the protests and demonstrations at San Francisco State College, Cornell and NYU for motivation?

FW: They did, but not so much for the campus demonstrations. I remember there was a radio station W-KAR and I was listening to them one Sunday evening on my little transistor radio. They played a speech by Stokely Carmichael. This was first speech I ever heard from him, but he was talking about-in reference to the Vietnam War- a black soldier going to the army to go fight in Vietnam. The only thing he was going to get out was not freedom because he'd come back to this country and still be treated unequally. The only thing a black soldier gets out of it is a paycheck. He called them black mercenaries. I listened to that and it changed my idea about

the war in Vietnam, but it also made me think a little differently about America. Whenever I would walk out into the living room to go play, daddy was watching the evening news and too many times I would walk to there and they show dogs being sicked on protestors and water hoses being turned on them. To some degree, there was a spirit in the air. It was time, and people were being moved to activism. If you look at Motown songs, they were about love and then you get to a point where Motown, James Brown and a lot of musicians had to join in and make a statement about the equality and also the violence of war. So a lot of people were moved during that period of time.

RB: How did you involve yourself with activism after the takeover?

FW: After the takeover, we had a lot of marches and protests trying to get the charges dropped against the students who were arrested that day, including Bob [Smith] who was arrested a day or so later. We did that and then it is essential- you can have all the protests you want, but once you get an agreement from the administration or any institution, you got to follow up on it and continue to press because they'll put it on paper and file it away somewhere. You would have to keep reminding them like "you said you were going to do this, you said you were going to do this, you said you were going to do this." That led to some of the protests in 1970 where we worked together with students who were mainly focused on two things: academic freedom for progressive professors and also concerns about the end of the war.

RB: After the demonstrations, the faculty senate formed an ad-hoc committee to discuss the demands and they would often invite students to be apart of those discussions. Were you ever apart of those discussions?

FW: I don't remember me being involved in those. It was probably Bob and a few other people.

RB: Did you ever meet with administration?

FW: Oh yes, after 1970. In '69 I started working with another student on the communications committee for the Black Student Association. I learned about silk screening in junior high school so I walked over to the student union bookstore and bought a silk screen. I used to draw on brown paper and cut out the stencils and adhere it to it. I would make posters for the meetings we were going to have and flyers. I would go around to each dorm. I had a contact person in each dorm and their job was once I gave them the information they would have to circulate that to the black students in that dorm. Also, there was a contact person initially for each fraternity and sorority so that we could get the word out quickly. After the following semester, some of the older students who had been in the protests and leaders had either graduated or-I call it senioritis, when you're a senior and your focus is on getting the hell out of the university. They stepped aside, and I got more involved in sitting down with administration and talking about implementation of the demands.

RB: What were those meetings like with administration?

FW: It was interesting. We felt that we were right and we weren't willing to back down on these issues. We'll talk and make some compromises, but we knew we were right and we were convinced it was the right thing to do. We didn't want the administration talking about "let's wait, let's put it off." It's dangerous because you're only going to be on campus for four years-me five and a half. Still, you're only going to be there for a certain length of time and if they put it off one year, and another year, and another year, there's going to be a new group students that come in who don't know what was going on before and nothing happens. We were also really set on telling new students the whole story of what happened. We had the first mass meeting of the year and we would give a history lesson and then we'd find those who were committed and interested and we would give them more training so that they would keep up the work and stay interested.

MJ: Do you think those new students who came in with their own impressions of what you had already done? Were they looking for somebody to fill them in and get started?

FW: Yeah.

MJ: Did anyone ever come in with new ideas that you didn't really approve of?

FW: The new ideas that I wouldn't approve of came toward the end of my time. There are students, black and white, who like to pad their college resume. They'll run for positions, or create positions and imaginary things so they can impress a human relations department so that someone would hire them in the future. There was this new guy who wanted to start his own organization. We were trying to get him involved in the Black Student Association to keep up the struggle, but he formed some totally different organization. I won't say the name of the organization but it means friend. On his resume, he could put "I was the founder of this friends organization." Then we got one group after I graduated that got into cultural nationalism. They were interested in renaming yourself with an African name, which is okay but for me, I'm named after my father, who was named after my grandmother's idea to name the next son Floyd after him. She didn't know granddaddy had told his uncle Griffen after him, so they compromised. Floyd Griffen Walton, I had that history in my name. I wasn't going to change my name. I named my son Floyd Griffen Walton the third. His wife decided that none of the sons should be named Floyd. But other than that, she's a wonderful young lady.

RB: During your time here, you were involved in the Student Senate. Could you describe what you did in the Student Senate?

FW: In running for the Student Senate we formed a coalition between some of the progressive whites and the African American students. We had a slate that we encouraged people to vote for. I made posters for that and put them up all over campus. We got elected and then our purpose was to -through the Student Senate, use more of the university resources for minority students and progressive causes. That was a lot of fun. There was a lot things that went on, a

whole lot of things. We were able to make some accomplishments. I only stayed on the Student Senate for one year. Right around that time the Campus Service Corps got going good, so I focused more on that.

RB: That was my next question. What was your level of involvement? Did you ever have a leadership position in Campus Service Corps?

FW: No. The last president of the Black Student Association had a case of senioritis where he sort of withdrew from the activities so that he could get his grades together to graduate. From that point on, we stopped electing and giving people titles. We knew what needed to be done and each person did whatever they needed to reach those goals. In Campus Service Corps, I was responsible for the first mass meeting, I would emcee it and have John [Sanford] talk about Campus Service Corps and Bob speak about the negotiations and inform the black students about what was going on. I would try to recruit people into the program. Sometimes I would take the state car to the south side and participate in the big brother big sister programs. I did make a few trips over to churches on the south side to act as a liason. I wound up having a job as assistant to the director of religious affairs and in that capacity, I worked with the Campus Service Corps and the speaker series, so making I would make visits to the churches.

RB: For my own understanding, it is fair to say that Campus Service Corps was another organization that ran parallel with the Black Student Association or was like if you were in Campus Service Corps you were in the BSA?

FW: It was separate because the Campus Service Corps had already existed. This is kind of touchy-I remember a scene from the Spike Lee Malcolm X movie where Malcolm X was telling a white woman there was nothing she could do to help black people or the civil rights movement. That's not true. There's a lot of things that can be done but going over into a poor neighborhood to help children, it can help them, but you can never really be a role model for that child. That child needs to see faces that look like them in positions of authority or examples of somebody with a good education that's coming back to help them. We engineered that so we could have many more black students involved in Campus Service Corps because there just a handful before that. You could receive pre-student teaching credits from tutoring or being a big brother or big sister through Campus Service Corps, but that was just drawing in students who were majoring education. Once we took over part of it, we wound up with students from all different curriculum areas going over there and giving back and not waiting until after graduation to do so.

RB: The director of Religious Services was Chuck Minneman. That's a name that keeps coming up in our interviews. Could you describe the role that he played?

FW: He was sort of a counselor. He was somebody who was just an honest man of character. I think he was ordained. He was a graduate of the Yale Divinity school. This was his ministry, to be involved on campus, counseling students and encouraging activists. I was raised methodist

and converted to Pentecostal a couple of years after I graduated and had gotten married. There were methodist religious services at Starkweather. There was a chapel upstairs. I don't know what is there know, because that building was given to the campus for the purpose of religious affairs. The president had been lieutenant governor, I think, and then became EMU's President. He felt that the university had no reason to be involved in religion.

MJ: Brickley right?

FW: Yeah, Brickley. Which is weird for a Republican they're supposed to be right-wing religious folks. But he didn't see it that way. I think it was to take away the base from some of the more progressive activity on campus.

MJ: I'm always surprised reading about-I dived into Chuck Minneman's story here and I knew that he was involved in the Office of Religious Affairs but I started reading about the events he helped coordinate, and they were not religious events. They were big concerts with well know people and for some reason that didn't add up to me but I thought it was cool because it made him seem more progressive.

FW: Like I said, I'm pentecostal. Most pentecostals don't get too involved in politics but the Black church was the foundation all of the civil rights activity. I'll use an example-Rosa Parks. She went to camp, she studied protest, and when she did protest, she was fired from her job as seamstress. She lived in almost poverty for the rest of her life. She was punished by America for her activity. Her husband, who was a barber and most likely didn't cut white men's hair in Alabama, but he was fired from his job. They moved to Detroit and he was able to find work as a barber. But when you try to fire Martin Luther King, Martin Luther King's salary came from the black church. The black church was the only financial institution in the black community that is not as subject to the controls of the white power structure. If you work as a teacher and get involved as a protestor, you get fired. If you are working in a business, you get fired. I don't think I've ever heard Martin Luther King just preach a gospel message, or Jesse Jackson just preach a gospel message or Reverend Al Sharpton or any of the others. Their ministry was to try to fight for equality. As a religious person, we use the standard lesson in our church. I got the yearly commentaries and took out an entire quarter. There were 13 lessons and I think out of the past six or seven years there were 13 lessons on God's concerns for poor people and how we are supposed to treat the poor and aliens those who are legal or illegal who come to our country. The people who put the standard lessons prayed about what scriptures would be used on what sundays and which things would be addressed. Americans all over the country were reading and teaching those sunday school lessons. It might have been more within about seven years, they've had 39 weekly lessons on how you treat poor people. All of these religious people are saying build a wall. It said in those lessons, if a stranger is in your land, treat them the way you would treat the people who live in that land. The Jews were told "remember you were strangers in Egypt." Remember that and when there are strangers in your country treat them right. And now what do we want to do? We want to kill the 5,000 that are trying to march to America? Or gas them and shoot them? What are we going to do? Are we going to separate the

children from their families? It's ridiculous but a lot of people whose involvement in the Civil Rights Movement and the anti war movement and even going back to the Civil War, the Methodist was strongly involved in the Abolitionist Movement and some of them actually were trying to help runaway slaves. The Quaker movement, which we now call the Society of Friends-there's a church out on Bemis Road in Tuttle Hill and one of the founders of that church had a secret compartment under his porch where the slaves would hide during the day and then make their way to Detroit at night. I think there's another Methodist church-The Wesleyan Church in Romulus-that was a sight of the underground railroad. A lot of people see religion as not just a Sunday morning thing or not just a matter of how you live a moral life but it extends out into how you treat your brothers and humanity and wind up doing things like Chuck bringing in Jesse Jackson and Reverend Walter Fauntroy. That was one of Chuck's college friends. He was one of the top aids to Martin Luther King. He invited him, we picked him up at the airport, and they started talking about old times. I think Yale also came up with the God is Dead Concept.

MJ: Yes, Thomas Altizer came to Eastern too on Minneman's invitation. He is one of the leading voices in the God is Dead movement.

FW: Yeah, he probably knew from being a student at Yale. Religion is something that-God doesn't have hands but you have to put your hands to god's work. A lot of it fits in with Chuck's view of religion.

MJ: The religious community on campus played apart. Did any religious communities play a part off campus or take an interest in your activism here?

FW: No. When we started the breakfast program, one of the students who encouraged us to start that program had been involved with the Black Panther Party. He got us motivated to do it and then he left campus. When we approached the community with Black Campus Service Corps and the breakfast program, one of the leading ministers SL Robeson thought that we were too radical and that we might be Black Panther type radicals. He was resistant to some of the stuff we were doing. Leo Clark who was the principal over at Perry School at the time, before they had integrated all of the schools in Ypsi. All of the black kids went to Perry. When we started the program in the Park Ridge Center. The students had to come there and then walked over to Perry. He invited us to have the breakfast program right there at the school. That continued until they integrated all of the schools and turned Perry into a child development center. Then you had kids from all over the city coming to that school. The black students were being bussed to other schools.

RB: Beyond Chuck Minneman, what other allies were here on campus for you?

FW: Singer Buchanan. His nickname was Bucky Buchanan. He was one of the leading black faculty. He was very supportive of the things we did until he left. In the panel discussion, Bob talked about how Bucky left here and went to Purdue and had a position there. He had Bob take the position while he was working on his Master's Degree. I'm trying to think of some last

names. 50 years will mess with your mind. There were some counselors who were supportive of what we were doing and professors in different areas.

MJ: I remember talking about Mildred Smith. She was a regent who was supportive too.

FW: Now, I've never had any contact with her but Bob and others did.

RB: One question I have about allies that you guys were working is at the same time you were a student here, and all of these protests and demonstrations were happening, and you were trying to better conditions on campus, there was a large amount of black faculty leaving the university I think between 1968 and 1972. The majority was gone. What was the student reaction to that? How were you able to navigate trying to find allies but also dealing with people who kept leaving?

FW: Did you read the article in the paper-I think it was in the Echo?

RB: In the Echo? Yes.

FW: That was me. When I found that number, I wrote the letter to inform the staff and the university in general and question what was going on here. Of course, some of them went to a better place or a better opportunity, but that's too many to lose right away. It showed that this might not be the most hospitable environment to keep staff here. I was upset about it, and I tried to communicate that with the rest of the student body and the rest of the university in general so that even white professors, and union leaders would approach the university. and go "we got to find out why these people are leaving. What are we going to do to make things better?" I did get kick back. After I lived in Phelps Hall with the four other white guys, I roomed with Ron McClellan. We called him Big Ron. He was from Inkster but he never got involved because he was too conservative or worried that he would get in trouble. He sang tenor in male glee and I joined male glee. They brought in Dr. Henry, a black music professor, and I think he had been at one of the historically black colleges.

MJ: Was it Oscar Henry?

FW: Yeah.

MJ: I know who you are talking about but I can't think of it ever.

FW: I put his name in that article. He had a little bit of pushback that he had just left for a better opportunity. He ended up coming back to university later on. But there were probably people, black and white, who are very cautious about keeping their job and not sticking their neck out and trying to keep the powers that be. I tried to get along with him as a friend and as a professor, he was friendly. But he was never someone to step out and really have our back or say too much.

RB: So what were the positive changes you were able to see by the time you were ready to graduate?

FW: We had established the Black Studies Department. It mainly was, and probably still is, multi-disciplinary where you can put together your own curriculum based on what classes are offered in different departments. But that's good, because you wind up with more classes being taught that fit into that. We had a definite increase in the number of black students. As a matter of fact, when I was teaching at Robichaud, one of my students had a brother who was a student at EMU at the time. He made a comment that shocked me a little bit. He said he didn't want to come to EMU because there were too many black students. I felt shocked. What do you mean too many? But then again, I stuck my chest out and thought it was because the work we did is why we have so many here. The next big push is to get them to graduate in bigger numbers. There you have to be careful, some black students want to go to college. They're not thinking "I want to graduate." or "I want to have this reasonable objective or profession." Not everybody that wants to be a doctor is going to make it through med school or to med school. Not all of our desires or goals are reasonable. I wanted to be a lawyer and then I realized that probably wasn't the best choice for me. Mainly, it was the work and all of the extras that were dragging me down. Now, I see that it was god's will that I was a school teacher rather than a lawyer. I had this romantic idea that I'm gonna open up a law office and only innocent people are gonna come to my office and I'm gonna fight for innocent people. I didn't figure out how I'm gonna get paid if they are innocent. If they didn't rob the bank, then they don't have the bank's money to pay me! If they are not selling drugs, then they don't have the drug money to pay me. Even Ken Cockrel stepped back from his legal practice and went into politics instead because as brilliant as he was, he had some difficulty trying to make a dollar in law. He was defending people who were indigent and stressed for money. You're not gonna make it as a revolutionary lawyer. You can make a ton of money from corporations that are being sued.

MJ: I remember the first time we talked, one of the things I remember most is the question was 'how do you balance being an activist with being a student.' and you said the activism actually enhanced your education. I was wondering if you could explain that for us.

FW: Well like I said, there are a lot of things that you learn through the activism that then applies in the classroom. After taking a couple of history courses, a couple of things were good for me. Bob and I were roommates for about a year and a half. He had taken some of these history professors the year before. So I was getting ready to choose my classes and he's giving advice on who to take. Knowing Bob, he wasn't going to say 'take this guy because he is easy.' He would recommend the professors who were going to challenge me. I go to class and I hardly ever missed class. As a teacher, when I would be absent, the kids would text around the building "Walton is absent today. Shocking!" I would go to class, I would take my notes and then he and I would talk about what I learned that day. He would add what he remembered from the year before with the same professor. I had friends who were history buffs and we would just talk about history and politics and different things like that in casual conversation. Then I would go into the classroom with a lot of what I learned from my friends enhanced it. Some of them would

encourage me to read Mao Zedong writings. I never got through the red book, but I got into it a little bit and could understand and it enhanced what I learned. One of the Black Panthers, Huey Newton, spoke at the University of Michigan in Hill Auditorium so a bunch of us found a friend with a car and rode up there to see him. Because of my activities outside of the classroom, when this guy got up there, we expected him to be about 6'5 but he's about 5'8. He started lecturing about dialectical materialism. Most of the students who were sitting there were turned off and lost. But because of conversations I had had with fellow activists, I could follow along and that enhanced some of my understanding in the political science classes and the history classes. It helped. The people who you were around who shared the values and interests and experiences that you had helped me. Then you saw the degrees people had; medical doctors and PhDs. When you try to run with the big dogs, you have to keep up a little bit. I knew that I couldn't just be involved in activism and not try to keep up my class work. Then too, I didn't want to disappoint my parents, so that's one thing that stopped me from quitting and dropping out.

RB: I have final question.

FW: Before you ask that I have to add something. Dr. Goldstein-from the name you know he's Jewish. He had a School and Society class. It was six credit hours and you would take it before your student teaching in order to graduate with a degree. Right around the time I'm in his class, the university sends me a letter saying that my grade point had gone down and that I was being dropped from his class and I would have to move out of the dorm because with those six credits missing, I wouldn't be able to stay in the dorm. At that point, I was sort of depressed because of all the pressures from all the stuff I was doing. I packed up my stuff and moved home. And then I get a call from him. He had gone to the University Records offices and had researched my grade point average and found out that they had made a mistake. A "mistake." He had demanded that they reinstate me in his class. When he called, I almost felt like saying "No, I don't want to go back." But I did. There were people who respected what you were trying to do. Years later, he had forgotten, I think, but I ran into him and walked up to him to thank him for that. Now, other than that the class was about open classrooms and I never bought into that idea. They used to have the Roosevelt building that was a-

MJ: Lab school.

FW: Yeah, a lab school. I happened to walk in there-there was some office I needed to go to-I walked in there and heard all of this noise and I was thinking there was no way kids were learning anything. And then he probably was initial in making Ypsi High turn into open classroom-it was built for open classrooms. The first floor had no walls and each class would just sit in little groups and they get their assignments and work on their own. After so many years, they decided that this wasn't working. "We have to put up walls and go back to the traditional classroom." It works in some cases. Community High in Ann Arbor. Some of my sons' friends went there and some of them were complaining while they would work in groups or on their own it's like the school was pushing everyone to pass and everybody got a good grade. She didn't feel like the other students had earned it. Her mother was a medical doctor, so this

girl was really sharp. She felt that even though she liked being in that school it wasn't as fair as it should be. What was that question?

RB: Sure, we talked about working with white students in demonstration in 1970 after-

FW: Yes, and then later we made a coalition with the Chicano Association and the Native American students. We believed in trying to work together with anybody who had a common goal.

RB: My question is at that point in time in Eastern's history there was a lot going on. A lot of times, you had the SLAM strike and the national guard was called in. I know that some of the panelists at the event in July talked about the goal of Black students was just reformation. It wasn't to destroy the campus or anything like that. How did you coalesce with all of these different groups but still maintain the "it's just for reformation" aspect of it?

FW: What we did was add our concerns to the concerns that they had. But then after the protests were done, it broke into two different groups negotiating different issues. The progressives, the hippies-they really got nowhere and stopped sitting down with the university. The university had to come out of that with some type of progress and they, I think, we're more cooperative because they could. We had issues and concerns that were for the most part were solid things that were harder to argue against. The radicals were saying "we had these professors who were radical and you fired them for things they said in the classroom and we want them rehired." Well, the university wasn't going to do that. The idea of getting the university to stop the ROTC program and stop allowing the Army to recruit on campus; the university gets a lot of money from the military so they weren't going to do that either. They had to show the state legislature and the citizens in Michigan that we are addressing these concerns. So we wound up negotiating separately. There were some that we sat down as big group, but that didn't get anywhere. But with coalitions you don't have to agree on every little point. You have to find the common issues and you work together on those. That's always going to be necessary. As black folks, we're not going to do anything totally on our own. But we want to make sure that the people we are coalescing with aren't going to run off to another issue. "We're all about civil rights," and then "We're going to Women's rights," and then "No, we're going to LGBT rights. And were not concerned about Black Lives Matter." As long as you are trying to work together all of those groups will get together next month get out somebody that wants but you know there'll be some working together and then you have to go off on to your own issues because people aren't 100% in there. They knew trying work here at EMU and then friends down the road down at U of M trying to end the war in Vietnam that it would move them forward and get even more involvement in these protests if they also addressed these issues. It was a good coalition, but it sort of a balancing act to do that. But it is necessary.

RB: Those are all of my questions. Do you have any questions, Matt?

MJ: One thing that I like that usually comes towards the end of the interview is when we talked to Kurt Hill, Marshall Jennings and John Sanford since we last talked to you and I liked that towards the end the friendship that you guys still have that has lasted since the late sixties. That's pretty cool. Each person has talked about it.

FW: We sort of network with each other. I've got to see if I have Marshall's number now. I think it's one the spreadsheet of everybody. I don't talk to him that much but I will run into Chuck on a pretty regular basis. I will call John every now and then. His daughter is the same age as my niece that I helped raise. They became friends. They had some sleep overs when they were young. I don't know if they stay in touch now. Steve and Jo Ann [Spencer], sometimes I will run into them. We were able to say "Have you seen or made contact with this person or that person." A few people were missing. Russell McReynolds didn't come down but he's come down for us to get together at bob's house a year ago. When Marshall was in town, we all had lunch together with Russell in Detroit. Russell's ex wife Judy was there too, so we keep in touch. We think back to what we were able to accomplish and still graduate because you know how hard that is. Fraternities and sororities put together artificial experiences to bond people together. What we had was real. We keep in touch with each other and a couple of them, Pat and Roberta, I haven't seen in a long time. Pat comes into Michigan every so often. She's got a good friend in Lansing so when she comes to visit her, she'll tell John and John will go over to see her. John either tells me too late or something else is up so I hadn't seen her in 45 years. The last time I saw Roberta I had graduated already. I saw both of them when Roberta got married in Montreal where they grew up. It was in March. We had to take the train because nothing else was moving. The planes weren't flying that day and the cars couldn't go because there was icy conditions and storms. I hadn't seen them in a long, long time. But it was really emotional for me to see them and for everybody to sort of pull together. I think I mentioned last time that were just trying to have a picnic and barbecue together and just sit around to talk about the experiences we had. I think it was God's will it all pulled together like it has so not only did we have a get together but the Archives now has a record of things that have happened.

MJ: What are your conversations like of activism today?

FW: Sometimes we talk about how a lot of the students or activist of today get side tracked a little too much and aren't as focused on what they can accomplish and what they should accomplish. Like the protests here. I was at the football game and I don't go to many football games-I'll go to one every three years. I might make to homecoming this Saturday. I was there when the students were protesting because the graffiti on campus. Yes, protest the graffiti, but what are you trying to accomplish in this? You can't have somebody running around campus with goop off and sandblasting the graffiti. You can't stop some stupid students from putting it up there and then when you find out that it was a black student that did it-I hope that guy is guilty and that he's not a scapegoat for it. Can you get the university address the bigger issue where white student automatically that the only reason a black student is on campus is because of affirmative action? That because you're black you must be inferior to me and you must have gotten on this campus because they wanted some black faces. You didn't earn your position

and you shouldn't be here. If the professor fails you it must be for some low quality work but if I knew you as an individual and took your paper and compare it to mine, I could see that yours was better and the lower grade wasn't deserved.

RB: Any other remarks for the record?

FW: No, I think that's it.

RB: Okay. Thank you for coming back. We appreciate it a lot. Your story is very important.

FW: Well I'm in town and I'm retired so I have a flexible schedule.