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## Steve Spencer, December 10, 2018

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RB: Today is Monday, December 10, 2018. This is Rachel Burns, I'm a graduate student and Historic Preservation Program along with Matt Jones another student in the program. We are here in Halle Library speaking with Steve Spencer, an alumnus of Eastern Michigan University. Spencer graduated from the University in 1974.

SS: '5.

RB: '75. Thank you. His time at Eastern can be characterized by student activism and bettering conditions for students of color on campus. Today we are interviewing him as a part of our "Taking Great Risks" Oral History Program. So to start off I'd like to ask, how did you select Eastern Michigan University?

SS: I didn't. It selected me.

RB: Oh.

SS: Very shortly, it was the only place that accepted me.

RB: Okay.

SS: There's a whole long version that goes with that, but if you want to hear it it's just a matter of as an ADD kid, sitting still for tests was not something I could do, except for standardized tests. I scored millions of points higher in standardized tests than my grade point would indicate. As a Matter of fact, we have a running thing at my high school is that when my SATs came back, my counselor sent them back because they were wrong because they knew nobody with that grade point would have that score on the SAT and a couple of places came back and said -- colleges came back and said, "Yeah, do a year at Community College or somewhere else," and Eastern said, "Yeah, we'll take it," and so we packed up the bags and moved to Munson.

RB: What was your major?

SS: Eventually, Speech and Dramatic Arts with a minor in English language and literature, Black Studies and Secondary Education.

RB: Very cool. Were you aware of the demonstrations with protests that happened on campus before you attended Eastern?

SS: Nope.

RB: Could you describe what it was like coming to the University as an African-American student at that point in time?

SS: It was a lonely experience. I got a little bit of a break because I fancied myself as an athlete. I was not. And so I was housed in an athlete's dorm. The athlete's dorm at the time was Munson. Well, Brown and Munson. Brown was the girls' dorm. Munson was the guys dorm and so most of the football players, baseball players, swimmers, everything started here because Bowen had -- was across the street, the baseball stadium was across the street from us, the football stadium had just moved out to Rynearson and previous to that it had been right there next to Munson, so there were a few more people of color in the dorm than some of the other dorms, but once it became very clear like two months in that I was not of the caliber that as the athlete at Eastern Michigan was used to, it got to be a- I shouldn't say it got to be a lonely place. It just the first year was really rough for me because I didn't know anybody.

MJ: I think we've heard from was it one of our last interviews where there were very few black students in his dorm and it was only when the protests started that he realized how many black students were at Eastern.

SS: I didn't really started being socializing with-- I shouldn't say I started being socialized-- started being aware of that a lot more when I became part of the Black Student Association which in itself was kind of hard because they were not where they said they were supposed to be. All the student associations were housed in McKenny as a student union and I will say, we, the

Black Student Association was assigned a cubicle that is about one-third the size of the room we're in now and that was where the phone was, but the Office of Religious Affairs had offered us much more- much bigger space over in Starkweather. As a matter of fact we had the whole second floor of Starkweather and that's where everything was based out of so if you call the number for the Black Student Association, it would just ring and eventually I caught up with the folks and got involved with the Breakfast Program.

RB: Was that-- so you said that was not immediate? When did you start finding yourself getting involved in it stuff like that like campus--

SS: Sophomore year.

RB: Okay. How did you find out about Black Student Association?

SS: I had been aware that there was-- from friends at Michigan State, actually. I had some friends. I was a January graduate from high school. That's what they did then. They had started Michigan State immediately. I didn't start Eastern until September and I had-- they had gotten immediately involved with the student organizations up in East Lansing and they told me that they had communicated with some students here so that's why I figure out there was one, but I would run into various programs every once in a while but never where I could identify somebody I should talk to and say, "Yes, I want to be part of this."

MJ: Mm-hmm. Do you remember who that first person was that you talked to?

SS: Most likely John Sanford.

MJ: Okay.

SS: Because he was in my dorm, eventually.

MJ: Okay.

RB: What kind of responsibilities did you have in Black Student Association?

SS: I was everybody's secretary. When I started, there was obviously a hierarchy and so I think at the time and something that I found when I became a little bit more part of the administration of it, is that people will come to you and all the time and say, "Yes, I want to do this," and so you start them and you go right and you start them and you go right. And you start and slowly you get involved in things and as they show an aptitude for something then you start giving them more and more things to do and I think that's what happened. I got started in the Breakfast Program and that's what caught the attention of some of the black student leaders and they asked me to be a driver. Now, anybody who knows me knows that I am not a morning person. It was not supposed to be my job, but because I lived in Munson, whoever Munson is, and Munson was directly across the street from where the state cars or the university cars were kept. The physical plant was where this joint was.

RB: Okay.

SS: And when they moved the physical plant over and built this library later on but the physical plant used to be right next to Munson and I could go out the side door, the one that faces this building, and right into a car and that made it very convenient for me to be the driver. It just meant getting up at o'dark thirty to get people there and so I can't say that I was part of the beginning of the Breakfast Program but in years I was here, that's when it really gained a lot of volunteers, a lot more kids between the time I started and the time I no longer had to drive folks had a lot more folks and that is- was basically my first real assignments with the Black Student Association which there was officially I guess there was an arm called the Black Campus Corps.

RB: Yes.

SS: And it was-- I always saw was kind of weird is that we're doing exactly what we were supposed to be opposing as we were segregating. We-- there was a Campus Service Corps and a Black Campus Service Corps. There was a Student Defenders and a Black Student Defenders. There was a-- or before I got there, a year before I got there a homecoming and a black homecoming. And it was basically not necessarily that we didn't want other folks. It was that we didn't feel included in anything else so we wanted to do that too and so the Black Campus Service Corps, the first and main thing was to do the breakfast program and so we will go over to Perry School five days a week. I was a driver for on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

MJ: Was there any push back at all from white students when you would branch off with the Black Homecoming or Black Campus Service Corps or anything like that?

SS: Oh yes. Some of them would use the separationist idea of, "Why can't you be with us? Because you don't let us." And or that folks just didn't feel comfortable or that it became a thing where if you joined the organization you were assigned if it dealt with people of color, you will just assign those people of color. To deal with those people of color and so, "Okay, then if I got do that then, I might as well just have my own organization and I can choose what I want to do, when I want to do it, and what I want to do it with." And so but eventually that faded. I know the Black Campus Service Corps combined with the Campus Service Corps and that also was part of coming out of the Office of Religious Affairs and we all- and that was kind of why we were all in that same Starkweather Building. Eventually, I got to the point and maybe we'll talk about later that I got the job that went with it. Chuck Minneman, the Director of Religious Affairs for Eastern Michigan had a budget and it was the Associate Director of Religious Affairs. It was a student job and it pretty much went to the person who was running the Black Student Association or had been selected by the other folks in the Black Student Association as the most needy and they needed-- it was work-study-- I believe it's a work-study job but-- and it was a job that I did appreciate because, I was putting myself through and it came in handy because it really didn't have a whole lot to do with religion.

MJ: What did it have to do with?

SS: Oh, what have to do with? Actually found a-- it was helping bring cultural activities to the campus and that's what I did. I don't know if-- I don't think—[Spencer looks for a document in his bag]

MJ: So, you're employed that one for--

SS: Yes. We're really proud of the--so the--

MJ: Yes, I just scanned that into our computer this morning.

SS: This one?

MJ: Yes.

SS: This was an annual thing, Black Solidarity days was in March every year. We were very adamant that it not be in February and it would-- week where we would concentrate cultural activities. I'm trying to figure out which year this one, I think.

MJ: That's 1975, I think.

SS: This one was mine, yes.

MJ: Okay.

SS: Mine as in I get to be in charge of trying to bring everybody together. I think I agree with you because this one where we got **Imamu Amiri, Baraka and Sam Greenlee** were basically back-to-back and I had to get people in and out and that was part of my job was to identify cultural things to come in to our people to get them here to or basically my job was to meet them at the airport and then we put them up-- from '73 on we put them up in at Briarwood. Briarwood had not been built yet but the hotel had and so we'll put them up at the Briarwood Hilton and we'll be in charge of going back and forth and we had all kinds of wonderful folks. We had, let me see, people that I was specifically in charge of. The three people to stick out in my mind we're Nikki Giovanni, Cicely Tyson. That she would-- that was from the time she got off the plane till the time we put it back on the plane was she was my assignment and a Matter of fact, I remember being really upset because the way we worked it out, I couldn't take her back to the airport because the way it was supposed to be, she was getting off the stage and driven back to the airport immediately and I had some other duties. So--

MJ: Do you remember talking to her at all?

SS: Oh yes and one of the big things that the first thing that struck me about Cicely Tyson was number one, that she was shorter than I was and then two, that she had a very sincere smile and when she smoked, she spoke like this, [in a Caribbean accent] and I did not understand why that although I had seen Cicely Tyson for 20 years but I had never heard her talk in Island accent.

MJ: Oh, wow.

SS: And she would be going through the airport. She would be talking to-- at the time she was pushing, I think, her publisher. They had-- she had just done the autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman and the publisher was pushing that book and she was on a speaking tour so they had a publishers rep and her and me when we picked him we picked him up at the airport and so we were talking back and forth and she was talking with this thick island accent and then somebody will walked up like, "Oh Miss Tyson so nice seeing you." "Oh, that's nice. Very fine and in perfect English. Wait a minute. That's not the way you were talking five seconds ago! And that's what she could do, just switch it on and off at will. And I remember feeling really honored that she was at ease enough to use her natural accent. The other guy, the other person that I hadn't spoke was Alex Haley from Roots. We had him in two or three times and he became somebody that we actually corresponded with after he had been here and one of our conversations was I had told him while I was here I had never been on the airplane and he looked at me like I had told him we didn't have indoor plumbing. And so he left and later on I got a

letter from him. Enclosed was an airplane ticket, open airplane ticket to find anywhere that this amount of money could and at that time I could fly I think it was to Boston and back on it.

MJ: Oh my God.

SS: And just because I had because he-- I had never been on an airplane, he said, "Hey, you can fly Midway." I don't know what it was but it was something that absorbed but something else and something else. It was eventually Delta Airlines but--

MJ: Oh.

RB: Very cool.

SS: Frontier or somebody. I don't know. But yes it was really different. Roots had not come out when we first got him. We first got him because he was the author of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, which is a neat trick to be the author of an autobiography of something else but that's-- he was author and so that's what we brought him for and so he did ten minutes on Malcolm X and did the rest of it on roots and we were all in Pray Harrold, which was the biggest auditorium we could afford. Well, I mean, we all in all get Pease and we all sat there transfixed you know. It was until after he had finished that somebody mentioned, "Boy, he didn't say much about Malcolm X did he? He didn't?" And that was one of the things we were also—

MJ: I was just today writing about a visit from that event by Lerone Bennett.

SS: Yes, Ebony.

MJ: Yes.

SS: And he was not one of my direct charges but yes, he was—[searching through documents] oh that was the gospel choir. That was something I was involved with but we weren't in charge of. That was Martha Cotton and her crew.

RB: So when you were doing these events, how would you say- how were they attended?

SS: Oh, they were great. We had real good attendance and it was not monochromatic either. It was a vast majority black but we had also one of the things that I had been, I don't know, charged with but I thought was important was establishing or strengthening the ties with the other organizations of color. So we had the Chicano students, CSA, the Confederate States of America and as opposed to the Boy Scouts of America at the BSA and the AIA was the American Indians Student Association, the AISA and that was part of what I thought was kind of important so -I don't remember Jose's last name but we started having conferences together. A lady from the AIA, all-- we all came together. We did a couple of events together. I don't remember what they were but-- and then also they attended some of ours. I remember they used to have a big Indian powwow in Bowen in the years and then they brought it back. I remember bringing my children up here to watch it.

RB: Very cool. Would you say that your time at Eastern would be mostly characterized by like cultural events and planning for those sorts of things as opposed to like fighting and demonstrating and protesting or-

SS: Fighting, oh. Actually, the original storming of the beaches was done by a group, I'm sorry, by Bob Smith, by Kurt Hill, by some of the other folk, Chuck Coleman, and those were the folks. My job and this is what we talked about. My job was to make sure that those concessions or those things that the university promised were still-- we're going to be carried through. It wasn't a promise, "Okay, you guys graduated. Goodbye." And it was not as much as confrontational as it had been although it got confrontational at the end because I was the head of the-- I was basically the head [of the Black Student Association] in '74. I knew I was going to graduate. I know I'd better graduate in '75 and so the guy I had been working with, we made him the official head of the Black Student Association and he was much, much more confrontational than we had been in the three years that I was very active in the Black Student Association. David Burton's name was, is-- oh, come on now, **Ukiene Malek**. As a Matter of fact the gentleman who runs-- who's the head of the African and African American Studies, yes, he interviewed him for I don't know, I don't know if he was on a panel for somebody but because when we were here in the summer, he asked me did I know him and Ukiene was the one who, like I said, if you look at it as Rap Brown passing it on, it's just like, "Oh, you ain't seen nothing till you seen the guy behind me." I remember my job was to keep him in the University because he would do things that were very overtly-- He would be confrontational. He did not want to Martin Luther King it. And make progress. He wants it now. And it was funny because I looked at him--went, "If you can get it now, go ahead." And so he would do something and the university would threaten us with getting thrown out and it was my job to move things over so it was more controversial in '75 and '76. Again, I saw myself as somebody who needed to know where the university, where the strengths and weaknesses were in the university and how to shore up the weaknesses and exploit our strengths. And so I can't say that we were that controversial. There were demonstrations. There were things that happened that we reacted to both nationally. One of the big things on campus was Angela Davis. We had several things that especially when the whole jail break went down, people were aware and then when they started arresting folks, we had some rallies for that. Again, it wasn't as confrontational at '68 and '69, which is why on your wonderful little timeline it stops and, "Gee, they didn't do anything after that until way after. What? Where we're we? Where do we go?" But again it was more trying to hang on to the gains that were made.

RB: Yes.

MJ: Details a little bit about hanging on to them? What kinds of things you had to do?

SS: One of the things was increase the faculty, the minority faculty. We then said, "Look, we need to see folks like us and there was like one or two. I think Ken [Moon] was yes, was one and that was about it and so we asked him for a Director of Minority Affairs and we had to go through all kinds of things to make sure that they were following through and to get a Director of Minority Affairs and now I don't know if anybody who's mentioned that before. The first one's name was Mildred, Mildred--

MJ: Smith?

SS: It was who?

MJ: Mildred Smith?

SS: Was it?

RB: No. [It was Mildred Tate].

SS: I don't know but then she was only there for about a year or so and she was replaced by Roselle Davenport, Roselle Wilson-Davenport. And she was the one that actually was chosen by the—Well, she was the one that the administration was closest to dearly, they wanted to deal with. She was the go-between as far as they were concerned and we would go to her, she would see what we could get, and then every once while we say, “I will use her term “Trick it” and we will go directly to the administration. At the administration brought and let's see who they bring in? They brought in Les Bates. He was a year about a year or two after Roselle. They brought in Gerald Macintosh is the head of Black Studies and now he was a godsend. He would help us do a lot of things and planning us and keeping us out of trouble or trying to and let's see. Maurice Reilly was brought in as an instructor in the over at Quirk. Maurice was-- he had been a teacher in Detroit Public Schools. He had the credentials. They brought him up and to establish or basically what he decided to establish a black theatre wing and we would do black box things and one of the first things I'm trying to remember what year whether it was '74 or '75. I mean, I'm sorry '70 or '71, the people of Quirk decided to do *Blues for Mr. Charlie* and that is what kind of brought together the acting talent, the black acting talent on campus like, “Oh, you in that?” And then there were a whole bunch of us that came together and after and it was immediately after that that they brought a Maurice Reilly. Reilly was *come se dice*, said this, flamboyant. He was not going to be that Ivy League type professor or instructor and he was very openly gay and a very- he put on a show in a black box and I have never seen such a reaction-- I had not seen such a reaction from liberals because, well, he laid it on really thick and he accused everybody- all Italians of being part of the genocide of the black population. He did all kinds of wonderful things but I remember the script and we all kinds of wonderful things that he brought up. He didn't stay very long and he was replaced by Julius Lee I think in '74 or '73 and Julius Lee was much less confrontational, much less flamboyant and but they brought in Judy Goodman who was an academic advisor and her husband happened to be the Mayor of Ypsilanti. He was the first black Mayor of Ypsilanti, yes. Judy was over in academic affairs, API I think was the Dean of Academic Affairs. AP Marshall?

RB: Mm-hmm.

SS: And part of what we did as a Black Student Association is to try to figure out how to best utilize these folks who were older than us and went through this in a more turbulent time to come in and who was willing to do what because obviously you're risk- you're doing a little bit of risk if you get involved in too many demonstrations, you get involved in too many-- you don't have tenure- too many things that students are doing so we had to figure out who was willing to do

what. Judy was a behind-the-scenes person. I mean she would do all kinds of wonderful things but never for attribution.

RB: Mm-hmm.

SS: Les Bates was more upfront. I think he took over for Roselle when she left. She became Director of Minority Affairs but we would also lean on Chuck Minneman to be our basically, to be our funder and we participated in some multi-university activities and he would be the one that would pay for the state car to drive up to East Lansing or we weren't as close to BAM at U of M as I would have liked, but they were also going through some transitional problems because the university there had identified some leaders and was in the process of throwing them out and the people who remained were trying to figure out how much can I do and still remain a student. I didn't had that problem. I didn't care about being a student. Not necessarily because I didn't like the place, but I didn't put the emphasis on academics as I should have. And then again, with the ADD, studying was not something that I could do nor could I type. And that was way before keyboarding where you-- that that was a just like a whole different economy. People could type, would come in, would do your papers and-- but, I believe and maybe somebody could look it up, that I still hold the record for most semesters on academic probation by somebody who actually graduated.

RB: Wow.

MJ: Wow.

SS: I was on academic probation for eight semesters. My first one and my last, well technically my last two, I was on-- first one obviously wasn't-- the last two I was on the dean's list. But, that was because it was based on what you got that semester. I don't know if that's still the case, because it didn't make any sense to me that, oh yes, on a good semester you're on the dean's list. But when I, you know, but I was thrown out of the university and some people came to my rescue.

MJ: Do you know who they were?

SS: I do. It was AP Marshall and Judy Goodman.

MJ: Wow. Powerful team.

SS: I had been active in '72 and '73. And so everybody knew who I was. However, so did my academic- everybody know my academics and university said, "You had fallen below the standards. You must leave." And I have been teased by those that were there as that I had enough- I had the ego to tell, look at the guy and say, "Who are you? You can't throw me out." Yes, he could in the first place. But I then took it to my advisers, and I went to Judy and said, "I can't go home." Because if I leave here I'm never coming back to college. And her and AP pulled together a program that I had to give up certain things, non BSA things. I was a cheerleader. I was a cheerleader because we had had a protest that they had never had a black female cheerleader. And so I was invited to be one of the judges. I don't know what kind of sense that

made. But in all honesty, what the white cheerleaders showed, and what the non-white cheerleaders showed, was large enough so that we did not- we were not able to say, okay. Now this person- you know, this person was so nervous she tripped over herself and did a few other things. But after that, we started getting black cheerleaders, and then they started, "Well, we need a black male cheerleader." You've got a black male cheerleader. In all honesty, the response said, "Yeah, but he's gay." "All the guys on cheerleaders are gay." "Yes." "We need somebody who's not. We want you to be a cheerleader." "What do I do?" "You go around with the team and you cheer. And we give you a scholarship for it." Oh, I beg your pardon? I said "I'm putting a- I'm putting myself, what. Wait, you're giving me who?" So, I became a cheerleader. And I remember that was one of the main things that I had to give up as a-- now and skip the fact that I was a cheerleader on academic probation. Nobody ever stopped to actually look. Because I don't think anybody had had that problem before. But now, I remember that was one of the things I had to give up. I had to go to summer school for the first time in my life. And I had to give up some of the boards I was on and at that point, it turned around to two things. It turned around was, I was able-- I had gotten rid of all of the pre-requisites. And I was able to take some of the things that were, well, what I figured out to be a major because I didn't know what my major was until 19-- until about that time. I was taking courses. And no direction, I don't know. And then when I looked at it, I sat down took a look at it and said, "Hmm, speech and dramatic arts is what I think closest forth. I take these classes." At that time I could start-- at that point I could start taking things that would interest me-- keep my interest. And so that worked out. I also, by that time, the black faculty had been on. So I said, "Oh gee, if one of the things that was mandated out of what our struggles was, that there be a black studies course made. Somebody ought to take that course." So, that was one of the things. I added a minor of black studies and started taking the courses from folks I was interested in. And it helped a great deal. My grade point- my semester grade point average went from 1.6, 1.6, 1.4, 1.3, 3.5, 3.2, 3.5. And it kept me in the black student movement. And we decided that we needed to be part of the univer- we needed to be part of the inside of the university as well as just we want, if we can help make the changes. So in 1970- I want to say '73, we ran the first serious candidate for student body president. We had no idea what we were doing. We were grossly unprepared as was the candidate we run, and she came in second. And I remember that was one of the things were-- was it '73 or '72? Because that was one of the things that John and Chuck and Floyd Walton had said, "Okay, then. You do the running of the person." I was in charge of that campaign and I was in charge of aftermath. We took the university to the-- is there still a j-board university judicial board, made up of the peers?

RB: Yes.

SS: Well, I'm glad there was one then. And we took the organization. It was fraternity who would run the election on behalf for the university. And we took them to court, our court, inside court because we felt that it had not been fair. There were pulling places that was supposed to be open until five that closed in high minority areas and in certain dorms that had- there were things and we won the case. But the board concluded that it was too expensive to re-run the election. And we were able to get concessions in the way it was run and that it would be the oversight of it. So in 1975, we decided to go again. This one was my decision. We're going to run- I was on the student senate at the time. Like I said, I was a joiner. And so we decided that we were going to make serious run this time for student body president, and we've- okay. Now I'm blanking on his name.

RB: It's Leonard Posey.

SS: Leonard Posey, and James Jeremiah Beasley Jr. were the people running. I was the campaign manager because I had done the one before and I was on the senate with them. And this time we knew exactly what we wanted to do. We wanted the people that-- I was responsible for that year-- was Julian Bond coming in to speak. And he was coming in just before the election. There was going to be everybody there. So we sat and we talked with him, and he was gung-ho but, "Yes. I think it's a good idea. Oh, the first one." But-- and he's gone. Okay. And so this was at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Some friends came and got him and you'd know their names but I forgot. What we didn't know is at the time, Julian Bond was still hooked on drugs. He went out, got high, he came, was delivered back to us and didn't remember anything.

RB: Oh no.

MJ: Oh, wow.

SS: He did his speech-- he was programmed to do that. But he didn't remember anything. We had set it up, so that in the question and answer period, at the end of it, we would have- we would ask a question and because-- if I remember I was in charge of identifying the questioners. So I identified the straw person we had set up and said, "How do you think of a-- what important stuff about-- what are the importance of the student body president. And that was where he was supposed to give us a stirring, *come se dice* he was supposed to back up Posey.

MJ: Yes.

RB: Yes. Give him reinforcement.

SS: He went, "Yes, it's a good thing." And he looked at me like, "Next one." Is there any follow up there? No. No. And we had no idea that he had just went out and got high-it wasn't- it was cocaine.

MJ: Yes.

SS: And he later kicked the habit, but you know, we didn't know. But we ran it and we actually won. And I just remember that being-- I told Posey that that was my goodbye gift to him, was that you get to be president next year. And Beasley was the vice president. And the *Echo* called for their quote and we told them "we're going to support you just as much as you supported us." Needless to say, they were steadfast all through the election for the other guy.

RB: Yes.

SS: And so-- and that hurt me because I wrote for the *Echo*. And you know like, what? You guys know I'm an-- never mind. And I just remember those are my two things for me that I was going to do in '75. I was going to get Ukiene ready for-- and get him a-- be supported of him because that was his first year as president. And I was going to get Leonard elected and, again, we were

going in to different things. I'm trying to work for the work inside out. And that was what I thought needed to be.

MJ: Yes. You still talk to Leonard, now?

SS: I don't. I see Beasley pretty much but I don't see Posey at all. I did when he was first coming out. He had gotten a couple of jobs in the city but I see Beasley and Mike Price more than I will see the rest of the world. I've also wondered whatever happened- I don't know what happened to Posey.

MJ: He was our first interview.

SS: I thought so.

RB: He's in New Jersey.

SS: Is he?

RB: Yes.

MJ: He's working for the superintendent's office in New Jersey somewhere.

RB: Yes.

MJ: Yes. He might have been superintendent of schools. In his community but, yes.

SS: Yes. He was a good-- I could say a good kid because he was two years behind me. But he, I think, he was able to handle the situation whereas the system that we would have put in the first time-- I mean, after learning what I had learned. After doing the couple of years on the student senate and being involved in that area of student that the lady we were going to run at first that the one that we took them to court on, was wholly different. And not ready. And Leonard was much, much, much more ready.

RB: I want to switch gears and ask about the Black Studies Program. Who-- at that point in time, it was new and it was interdisciplinary. Can you- do you remember the specific classes that you took, some of them?

SS: No. If you had asked I still got them. I still have the report cards at home. I took, intro-- it was Intro to Black Studies. I remember flunking Black History. And I was pissed about it because we had a very Jewish slant on it. Every major contribution to the Civil Rights Movement was done by Jewish folks. All the books that we studied that season were of Jewish authors. Needless to say, the person who did the- who taught the class was Jewish. And when I took personal offense to saying, "Okay, are there anything that Black folks did for Civil Rights?" He said, "They're covered in the books." We're not seeing any of that. We took him to his- I went and took him to his, I can't say that organization did that. That was me. And his dean backed him up. I had to take Black History in the summer. Different instructor, A+. No problem. Some of

them- most of the courses in the black studies were taught by people like McIntosh, Julius, those are the two I remember and I'm trying to remember some of the other classes but I remember having to take like, an over load of hours. I think 12-15 was normal. And I had 25 so that I could graduate. Including a conflict I had, where I had a black studies class and I had another class. Both of them I needed to complete and I remember Julius being kind enough to work around, and because I was a senior, he had me come in and consult other people. And we worked through it, I did a paper for him. I had to do independent study for McIntosh because we had-- that was part of it. He and one other person- me and one other guy were to collaborate on a paper. And Macintosh says it turned out way better than he expected. I still didn't like the paper, but maybe because I had to share with somebody. But it was looked upon-- it was the only classes where I wasn't the only black person in the class. We rejoiced when there were two of us in the class. But like I said, every other class I took, I was the only one or one of two. Except for that- except for the Black Studies one and one of the big lecture hall one that they put all the athletes in. And we still flunked it. But it was not even looked upon as legitimate studies in my mind. It was that we did it, it was not-- in my mind it wasn't advertised or put forth to the students enough, in my eyes. Say this is what you would use it for. This- for me, for to be black studies, it shouldn't be just because you're Black. It's that this is what this can be used for. And it was only a minor. And we were pushing for it to be an actual major as part of history. And I guess that happened. But at the time we really had a rough time for us- giving it us. And then amassing what they considered to be a worthy curriculum was. And Macintosh was one that was big on that. He brought it in and he worked on it and he was good. And I remember he left about the same time I did and went out to DC. And I don't remember if we had a black studies person before him.

RB: The Black Studies Program, I think, it would have been created at the time that you were at the university. Gerald McIntosh was the first.

SS: Yes. Okay, yes. Then, yes. Mac was there. Him and Bates were pretty much the movers as far as getting the black curriculum pushed inside the university. Roselle, I think was either leaving or had left at that time. I don't remember- do you have any idea when she left?

RB: I think '74?

SS: That sounds about right. Then Les would have been about in '75, and a little bit later. And Les and his wife were not that much older than we were and I think kind of empathized with us and tried to give us advice especially on, okay. "You really don't want to do this." Or "you don't want to do it this way." And that's what I was trying to tell Ukiene Malek, is that, they will target you. Yes, Kinney Malek who came after me. They're going to target you, and they're going to see that you're for real, and they came after. One of my other joining was being on the-- we call it the black advocates. It was part of the judicial, when somebody was accused of something, we will be a point it. And it was a basically white organization. I don't know of all the people- I forget what they were really called, defenders. And we called ourselves the black advocates because there were two of us there and I don't even remember who the other person was. Because it seemed to me I got every black person that came through that door was assigned to me. And you can also see why my studies kind of suffered. Because I was doing every damn thing else. Needless to say I went to law school immediately afterwards. So, somebody liked it. But, that was one of those things were we would get folks who had done really idiotic things.

And I was really proud of my record of never having had somebody found guilty of what they were being accused of. And I am trying to remember the Associate Dean of Students. I know the dean of students was Sandy McClain. He brought in a black guy who was basically in charge of the dealing with the student-- he was the assistant principal that would send you out to--

MJ: Who would that be?

SS: Was his name Ken too? Was not Ken Moon? It was after him and me came, and he was always my opponent. He would present the university's argument. Why this person should be thrown out, to the j-board and whatever the appeal, the appellate court was. And like most adversaries that skilled now, we became really familiar and it became never personal about it. But he would present his, I would present. He's one of the things was that I really am not proud of now but, because I think I've changed a little bit, is I had to defend the gentleman who had beat up his girlfriend. He was a really nice person. I knew him. He was a really nice person. She knew how to push his buttons. And he just went off on her. And he got arrested, he got dealt with outside of the university. And so of course, the university said, "We don't want this here." I'm his defense attorney or representative. I've got to say, "Yeah, he does deserve to be here." And I remember that was the only time Macintosh came in. And me and Gerald argued the case before the U-board and the U-board- all we were looking for is I'm not to be thrown out of the university. And I do remember that-- and it was one of those where may-- and like I say, I'm trying to remember the assistant dean's name. Who was, yes, a little lot younger than Gerald, but. And he was a good brother. And he was trying to be fair, but some of the knuckleheads I had to defend were guilty as sin. And the best I could do is, can you reduce it some? And they would always reduce it, they were very easy to manipulate. But, and I just remember the black population and including the staff being divided on that. We, me and Gerald knew that this was really a good person who had never been in trouble before, was not a violent person, but he came in-- but he did beat up this woman, his girlfriend. Who of course-- and unfortunately, seems to be typical abused woman, "Oh, he's good and I was baiting him and you shouldn't look," Okay, we used that. But- and that's something that I've changed my mind on.

MJ: Sure.

SS: But those are the type of things that the Black Student Association was expected to do- I expected the Black Student Association to do. And these are the types of things that were given to me from John and Floyd and Chuck and Bob Smith who was actually more of a celebrity then. I didn't know Bob Smith really, that well until after I graduated. I was doing some plays for him. He writes poetry and he wrote a play with him, and I was- we were doing An Afro-Renaissance Theatre Company. As a matter of fact we did a show re-piece. And I didn't realize that. And that's when I got the chance to talk with Bob about what went on. It was because he had wrote the play and we were creating the characters. And so he came in to talk to me about that. As a matter of fact I think the show that we did a piece, he wrote the characters for me. The character name is Steve. But that's when we got the chance to talk to each other. And that's when I got the chance to learn that those radicals that had occupied the place were not rabid people who wanted death to all white people. But were real students who for the most part, went on to graduate and went on to do other good things. I mean, do you look at some of the things that these guys have done with their lives. We went on and I was kind of disappointed because I didn't feel that I had

prepared the organization to go on after these guys. That Ukiene went into a whole Pan-Africanist thing. He was more Afrocentric than we were. He was more confrontive than we were. And I'm not sure he finished. I'm trying to think of who was it that who was right hand guy became a Detroit councilman. Died a couple two or three years ago. But he was a councilman. A very Afrocentric councilman, and his name was-- and I just remember. He was Ukiene's right hand guy. He was those two. You'd always see him, like- we called them 'Tonto' for that reason. And, oh come on now. Did it start with a 'K'? Well, I don't know. If you look up councilman from Eastern Michigan, we only had two.

MJ: Okay.

SS: And--

MJ: I would do it right here but I can't.

SS: I understand.

RB: For clarification, you were-

SS: You would need that. Yes?

RB: You were in Black Student Association?

SS: I was.

RB: Student senate?

SS: Yes.

RB: Part of campus service corps?

SS: Yes.

RB: You wrote for the Echo?

SS: Yes.

RB: And--

SS: I was in the black-- the choir. I was part of the Hospitality Committee. Only I remember because they put my picture in the '75 yearbook as part of the Hospitality Corps. We were part of the black- I was part of the Black Advocates. I was part of Campus Service Corps. And there's a couple I'm forgetting. And I was a cheerleader.

RB: Can I ask why, why did you get involved with so many different organizations on campus?

SS: The egotistical answer is they needed me. A couple of them was like the cheerleaders, like the advocates, is that I thought that people of color were underrepresented. And that again, my whole thing was, let's change from within. We've got to infiltrate and then change the climate. And so when I saw something that needed to be done, I felt that I can have somebody else do it, or I can do it. I guess I'm going to have to do it. Because I never was very good at delegating so. And I wish I had been better. But, I just felt that okay, we need this representation, this ought to be me. So, when I was on the senate, that was because-- I think I got an appointed. I was originally the black student-- significant I would. That's how I got on the senate. I never was elected. I was the Black Student Association representative as part of it. And so most of the other things came from, "Gee, what am I supposed to do that I'm not an athlete anymore?" Because and I stayed in Munson the whole time. Well, I think I stayed a year, out across the river and the apartments. The first apartments-- if you're walking, what street it is a--

MJ: Was it Peninsular Place?

SS: Yes. And, well they change names every year. It was called Hilltop Manor then. But it was the first one on the right once you cross the railroad tracks. I think I stayed out there for a year. That was the year they threw me out. And then when I came back I stayed in- they had changed Brown/ Munson into apartments and so I stayed there. And those- and that's where I was in '74 and '75 because I liked being on campus. I liked being near where we need it. And to see if I was needed-- I never was. But hey, it felt good to me. And it gave me a chance to get a little bit closer to the faculty, to be able to attend things as a- what I was hoping to be a non-threatening black face as look, "Hey. We just want to be part of it. We don't want to take it over yet." And, so yes. I was a joiner. We were in various things together.

RB: Do you feel like there was, you overlap in the duties that you had in one organization versus the other? Like, "I have to do this for Black Student Association but my role here in student senate wouldn't help that. Or there Campus Service Corps help with this thing, so I can talk to someone from my connection from--

SS: Oh yes. We did that all the time. The folks and that were- I was not, I did not consider myself an administration of the Black Campus Service Corps. Even though I was the associate director of religious affairs, which technically they came under me. That was something that was separate. They were some really, really good people. And they would wanted the folks that recognize on their own. They should not be a separate, campus service corps and a black campus service corps. We can do what we need to do and still be have our own identity or add our identity to this.

But yes. There was a whole mixing of that, that my role never was "just this" or "just this." That in dealing with say, the Chicano. And I didn't realized- I didn't know what Chicano meant. I didn't know that was only Mexican. And so, and dealing with them, and Anita Regalado, and Jose, is that being able to go with them and do things. And I know, it's really weird that Anita was active in the Chicano Association. We had- the hippies were going through at the time. They were right, I think towards the end of what might have been hippie generation. And to go down and live-- I don't live in Rosedale Park. I don't know if anybody that knows anything about Rosedale Park in Detroit. And to have folks, you know be there like and run into Anita and

Danny Schottenfelds who was also, I think, at one point a Vice-President of the student association. Danny and I-- and they've married each other which was great surprise to me. And I've gotten to know them. We ran little leagues together. But these are folks that have still stayed active. I don't know if they stayed active in racial or those types of things. But they stayed active with the community.

RB: So you mentioned earlier having discussions with administration about bettering conditions on the campus. What kinds of preparation work were you doing for those conversations?

SS: Listening in onto John and Floyd and Bob. We would go and-- well, number one, being students and being in so many different things. I had a little bit more of a pulse, a wider pulse. But we would also ask organizations. Excuse me, things people like the fraternities, folks like some of the dorm organizations. We would talk to people and try to find out what's wrong? I know what's going on in Munson. And I know what's going on, on this corner. What's right? What's wrong? What do we need? What do we need to have? And Sandy and I would then go in and try to out talk each other. Sandy McClain was the Dean of Students. And he was a Southern guy. I think he's from Virginia. And he would listen. We would have knocked down, drag others about what happened after he'd listened. But we would meet with him. We would meet with-- the person that was considered to be the opposition was Bruce. He was the Vice-President of Finance at that time. And I can't think of Bruce's last name. But he was very conservative. And because he had control of the finances, he could reign in a minimum and say, "Nope. You can't let them do this. You can't let them do this." And he was one that was seen as the conservative. He was the one that Sandy to me did what his job was. He represented the university as far as the students were concerned. And so his job was to listen to us, and see what could be implemented. And I think he came after the sit in too. But we would talk to folks, and it wouldn't just be black folk. We got a chance to really talk with the folks on the student senate to figure out, "Okay. Now, is this a "us" thing or is this a student thing?" And sometimes, it will be a student thing. And you come to that conclusion, "Do you want the student, do you want them to advocate on your behalf? They are not going to advocate as hard as we would. But maybe they've got a better chance." I was trying to think of something specific where we went to them on. So yes. Those are the types of preparations. We did try to talk to folks. And we did have more of a mix of fraternity and sorority people and with a little bit more awareness than at the beginning. At the beginning, fraternities and sororities didn't have much to do with the Black Students Association.

RB: If you could condense what the major issues that you were pressing on down to three or four things, what do you think those would be?

SS: More minority students was the big thing. And the retaining of those-- what are you doing to keep them here? Eastern Michigan had a long tradition of, "We let everybody in. We're going to throw them out the first year." Whereas as U of M, once you get in, they would try to keep you in. We will try to get programs like that towards keeping it in. We wanted more minority students, more efforts to retain those students who wanted more minority representation in the faculty and staff. Then, later we wanted more access to university affairs. So being included in them, which led to my being in the sum of everything. And I just think they use that my wanting to be in everything just saying, "Okay. We can deal with him. Yes. We'll let him be on this. We'll let him be on this." Then when it came to Ukiene, not so much.

RB: Do you think the administration was more responsive to certain issues than other issues?

SS: Yes. During my time, I didn't see it increase in minority representation, in the student body, or the faculty. Well, we did see it increase originally in the faculty. But then, it stopped. It was like, "Okay. We brought them in. Aren't y'all happy?" "Well, no. People leave. Replace them. And not just for the quota either. Replace them with qualified folks." I was trying to think of some of the things-- in the beginning, we asked for a separate place for black people. And it went absolutely nowhere. Somewhere where everybody could feel comfortable. And I'm okay with that. That was one of them that I pushed. But kind of like a black house cultural center.

RB: Sure.

SS: And, "Oh, hell no," was pretty much the response we got. We asked for ways for the university to come up with-- to give us how they wanted to increase things, or make things better for all minority students. And they had been hard on that for a while. I don't know if they got stuck in one of their committees or what. But I know it didn't get done before I left. And Bruce was able to clamp down on minority affairs. We went in '74 and '75. We started getting huge reductions in our budgets over in minority-- not Minority Affairs, Religious Affairs. And to the point where we could not have an Assistant Director of Religious Affairs. We didn't have that cultural attache' that was with the university. We couldn't take state cars to go different places. We were able to salvage the Breakfast Program and be able to go down to Perry and back. Oh, I was coach.

RB: Oh, what did you coach?

SS: I coached fifth and sixth graders in the Ypsilanti schools. The Ypsilanti schools had cut gym. So my job was to-- it was a work-study job to go out and provide them with a gym class. And I remember going out Eugene Batey. I don't know if anybody around here would know. Eugene Batey was one of the race men in Ypsilanti. He was a person that was track star here at Eastern and stayed in the community and as-- I don't know if- well y'all are history people, you know that Ypsilanti was not exactly color friendly. But they were here, because they were working in the plants, and they were working. So he was one of the big voices, and he stayed in Education and became the Principal of Chapel School which was hilarious because up to him Chapel School is one of the biggest institutions of schools that resisted integration, that resisted next. And I think that was somebody's idea of a joke to send him over there. And I remember being assigned to Chapel. And that really-- knowing that it was until I told folks I was going to Chapel, they still knew it as what it was. And with him there, he was a really good-- what I guess, comes to be a mentor. But as far as guiding me as to what went on back when he was here and so on but he was here for-- I mean, he was in Ypsilanti for a long time. He went on to be more than principal but and that's what I did. Me and seven other people did basketball-- and basically basketball and football. That was what they were interested in. We would take them in. We would give them gym and go out and compete against other elementary schools. Perry which was all Black elementary school that was where they had everybody. And they had-- this was couple of-- oh, they're on-- I was trying to think of some of the other elementary schools. Most of them have shut down and become resource areas here. That was part of my outreach was

going out and teaching them basketball. But that was more for money. I had to figure out some way, because that was why we did it. Education wasn't quite as expensive as it is now having put three folks, three and a half folks, through college. So what I would do is work all year and work all summer. And then pay for last years'-- year. And then start all over again. I have to work all year and work like that. And so I definitely had to keep a job the whole time I was here. And that's part of what the Associate Director of Religious Affairs as well as being the gym teacher it was. And that gave me a chance to go out into the Ypsi community. And like I told you, it comes full circle. Now, one hour a week, I have been enlisted in going over to Perry and giving them a gym class to five-year olds and six-year olds. I don't care if you're in an education or not stay the heck away from them. I was a secondary-education person. I had went to Cass at-- went to teach at Cass Tech. I tried to but law school got in the way. And they don't sit still. I don't know what to do with those children. But that's what I do from 4:00 to 5:00 every Monday which is why I'd-

RB: Oh, okay.

SS: I do it because nobody's here.

MJ: Yes.

SS: Other specific questions to try this whole wondering thing together?

MJ: I like the wondering together. [laughs]

RB: You've kind of described what the positive changes you were able to see on campus by the time you were ready to leave?

SS: Not nearly enough. I was very proud of us getting a Student Body President and being able to do it by popular vote. We were very proud of the Breakfast Program. And by the way, I met my wife who is still my wife, at the Breakfast Program, she was staying in Jones/Goddard. And she was one of the people we picked up. And we met at a BSA party. Contrary to popular belief, we partied also. [laughter] But this one was specific. They gave me-- I had had such a rough first year. They gave me a surprise birthday party of-- I think it was my 19th birthday, because 18 was just, "Oh, God." Well, that was the first time I got a chance to talk to her at the party. But that was also one of the things is that I was taught is by the guys who came before me, guys or women who came before me, was that you still got to be part of the folks. You can't be that militant guy who looks down on everybody, who does not take immediate offense at all of the real and imagined transgressions that have gone before you got to be a student. And that's what I admired about them, too. I also was very proud of actually leaving here. And the increase in the minority staff that we did get was one of the things that I felt was achieved during my time even though it was set in motion just before me. Like I said, we didn't get the increase in minority population that we wanted. And the minority affairs program including the academic side of that was just getting started, so I can't take real credit for that even though I see it has progressed. But one of the things I guess I became-- they became too comfortable because one of the things that happen-- I don't know about too comfortable. I get teased that when I did graduate and walked across the stage, Sandy McClain got up from-- being the Dean of Students, he was up there in

total ropes. As I was walking across the stage, he got up, stopped everything, and shook my hand.

RB: Oh, wow.

SS: And much to the chagrin of my Dad who is taking pictures and he stood between me and my Dad and also the person that was coming behind me didn't know what was going on.

MJ: [laughs]

SS: But I thought that was funny. So yes, I am proud of the time that I was here. I'm proud that I am a Huron. I will always be a Huron. I just feel Eagles is too generic. Everybody's an eagle. There wasn't there with many Hurons out there. But I do understand why if the Huron trying saying, "Yes. That's offensive." But I was kind of pissed because the Chippewa was, "Oh, no. Go ahead." And so Central Michigan can keep their name. But we couldn't keep ours. And they had the-- they had stopped having an Indian mascot during my time. But that wasn't my doing. We supported it. But we can't take credit for that. That person, somebody told me, was on scholarship, too. But those types of things that happened during my time, I was proud of. But for me, I didn't do nearly what I truly felt-- what these guys before me had done and paid for. And when you come in and you see these upper class men and everybody knows who they are and the university tiptoes around them and I just got a little bit of their glow. They tried to slap me around a couple of times. And that's when I realized how much John and Floyd and Chuck and those folks had given up and done or been punished for, too. I shouldn't say punished. But yes. I guess hardships that they had to go through, too. And be students that all of them graduated out of here.

MJ: I have to say their story makes so much more sense to me now after hearing yours, seeing the whole arc.

SS: How so?

MJ: Just the whole arc of it. Because you said that when we first talked that your experience was more of carrying on the things that they sort of opened that force for.

SS: Yes.

MJ: So seeing it kind of-- we haven't heard much about what happened after they were there. How things actually bear themselves out. And so you've been filling in that timeline.

SS: And as what I have always revered them for is most of the stuff that we did from '71 to '75, *they* started. I was part of it. And then was able to push things along. But that was why I went, "Oh, yes these guys." And I guess that reverence came out because that was why they said, "Oh, SS. You're part of this." I don't think when I was originally included that they knew it was going to be so focused on the takeover.

MJ: Yes.

SS: And so me and Eric-- what's Eric's last name?

MJ: Lewis.

SS: Louis. Me and Eric and Mike and Beasley, we were all behind those especially me and Eric. Me and Eric were kind of like in between. We're there when they were there. And the rest of the folks came after we did or joined in after we did. And that's why originally-- and I don't know if I've been included if it had been very clear to everybody that if this was going to specify the takeover as opposed to the rest of it which was what they knew that I had been part of. But I'm glad you got Posey's because he was part of what went on after me, James Beasley was part of it. But I don't know if you've talked to Ukiene yet. But--

MJ: No. We haven't.

SS: That's the next guy.

RB: Yes.

MJ: Okay.

SS: That is the guy that, like I said, he felt we were way too nice. So when he became the head of the association in '75, I was made in-charge of University Relations. That was mainly because-- as whenever we organized, there we were organizing in a much more global thing. Like I said, he's more Pan-Africanist. He was much more inclusive of a whole African culture into this university. Whereas mine was, "Hey, I'm just trying to keep these students in this university."

RB: I think I've gotten through all my questions.

SS: No problem. I have a question.

RB: Yes.

SS: What start-- what brought this on? What made the University decide-- this part of the university decides that is important and that we are doing this archive?

RB: Well, the takeover of Pierce Hall will be, 50 years ago in February 2019.

SS: Don't remind me.

RB: And [laughs] so, I don't know the exact planning and culmination for it, the event that happened in the summer. But I know that our boss Alexis, is very-- everything is like, there are with gaps in the written record. And oftentimes, it's from marginalized people who don't get to tell their parts of the story. And when I started here as a Grad Assistant, the year before I had been doing research about Black Student Union, I had all of these questions because there's--

SS: Association.

RB: Of-- to the-- yes, the Association for Black Student Union.

SS: Thank you. We had to do that. You don't know how many times we had to do that.

SS: That the Black Student Union was at Uof M and BAM and all those other good folks.

RB: So when I was doing my research, there was all these--

SS: When did it change, by the way? It changed.

RB: Yes. I think it's changed in mid '80s.

SS: Okay.

RB: And I got brought along onto this because I think the plan after the panel but was to just to go more in-depth with who ever came. So--

SS: Well, as you can tell, we're not shy about talking.

RB: [laughs]

SS: And we laughed about that. It's like you're putting John Sanford, Bob Smith, Chuck Coleman who is the least of them. If you put Sanford and Bob Smith in the room, there's no more room.

MJ: [laughs]

SS: It's that there no more works.

MJ: [laughs]

SS: Mable was more the campus service corps person. She was ahead of me and that was Mama Mable. And she looks after us. Judy Sturgis was one who looked after us. I knew Judy before when she was in high school. We both went to the same high school. And she graduated two or three years ahead of me. But she was always way way older than I am. And so, we were her babies. And I think it telling that she was here to look after my daughter. When my daughter got a graduate degree from Eastern Michigan, she was under the wing of Judy Sturgis and some of the people that I had had over at Quirk. And part of my pride of this University is that my daughter got her undergraduate degree in Education from U of M. She got a master's degree from here before she went in to classrooms. And she said she refuses to even acknowledge that she has a U of M degree. She says Eastern taught her what it was to be a teacher and how to be a teacher. And that's what she acknowledges as and I said, "Hmm." And we still got the same people over who we don't have quite the same people over at Quirk. But we had the same people she had. And I think that was 10 years ago. But that's one thing that I was surprised as much as we talked about Eastern Michigan. We are a prideful that we came here. That we don't have a problem with saying, "No. I went to Eastern Michigan." And Matter of fact, when we did the reunion in '89-- did y'all see the film we did in '89 when we came back?

RB: Did not.

MJ: I did not.

SS: I don't know if that's in here. We all came back and did a-- I had two folders of things that--  
hmm, I guess that was what--

MJ: Yes.

SS: Yes. This one was-- yes. This one was mine. You see, we had to actually charge for this.

MJ: Oh, yes. How about that?

SS: You don't know. We had to save up for that. Oh, that's one of the things I was part of being on the committee or that got the Eastern Michigan Gospel Choir is first national tour.

RB: Yes.

SS: We brought in the Harvard Choir, Kuumba. And it was a home-in-home. And we hosted them. They sang. Then they-- we went back to them for two years in a row out to Boston. And to make it worth awhile, we sing at various other places. I was the road manager for the first one. I was actually in the choir for the second one. And me and Chuck [Minneman] sat down. Did the numbers then tried to set it up. It was the only time I'd ever been to Vermont. And we went to Vermont, Connecticut. Because it was the first time I'd also been in Niagara Falls. We went through Niagara Falls, went up through Vermont, came down, came from Boston, stayed in Boston, stayed in dorm rooms, stayed in-- and then came back to the point-- that's the one I was-- this is one—[displays a newspaper clipping]

RB: Wow.

SS: --one of the things that we talked about. That is-- I think the second one. The first one from the Echo actually has our picture on it. And I wrote about both trips. So yes. Wasn't just Boston. I really did write for the Echo. Don't ask. I know. I looked at it and went, "What's the date?"

MJ: Yes. [laughs] Yes. Yes.

SS: Other thing that I look at is was there something during that time where you couldn't put year on it? I looked at this thing and said, "There's no year on it."

RB: Yes.

MJ: Yes.

SS: Or some of the other stuff in here--

MJ: Actually, just located Martha Jean Cotton.

SS: Oh, Cotton.

MJ: Yes.

SS: No. That one if anybody tells you different, they're lying. That Gospel Choir was Martha Jean Cotton or so. She pulled it together. She kept it together. And she kept it together on personality. There. Okay. This was I believe-- I just found this one was-- I didn't write this one. This was about the-- that was the other one. But that choir is 100% her, and we were part of it. She kept it together. She kept it together I assumed after I left. And it-- that is one of the things I

say I'll be proud of it. We did that first national tour, the East Coast tour. But that was only because part of it was Chuck Minneman. And he said, "I'll figure out where to bank roll this." And he did that.

MJ: They went back to being called the EMU Gospel Choir after a while, and I wondered why.

SS: Because they weren't Black anymore.

MJ: Mm-hmm.

RB: To conclude the interview, do you have anything else through the record?

SS: As far as what was going on then?

RB: Yes.

SS: I guess it was all for the record. But no, I think I have talked enough what we were trying to do at that time was in terms now and this sounds crass "expand the brand." We got a little bit in the door, and we wanted to do something once we got in to become part of this whole University. And these were things that we did as such things as Tribute to Black Women. We've got a few of those running around here where we would make a tribute. As a Matter of fact, I think we wound up making it part of solidarity days. Hmm, this one you've got a Tribute to Black Women was what Black Girl Magic movement is now. And that was one of the things we were trying to do was make that a recognition of the contributions of Black women. And so that's why we would bring in folks. We did Gwen Brooks' stuff. We did obviously Nikki Giovanni's things. We did all kinds of wonderful things not necessarily for men but for everybody. And like you say, if I'm proud of something-- that was my side was cultural awareness and getting War, the band, War in here. We got War. We got Earth, Wind, and Fire was another one. And those were two of mine because all of a sudden Student Life called and said, "We would like you to usher these." If somebody decided that they were the Black-- they were going to bring in a Black War, being Black but Black concert, therefore, they wanted Black ushers. So that was the first time that they had asked us to be their ushers. We went and we did it. We did it well. And that was one that I was actually 100% in-charge of. I had to go find the ushers. I had to go train the ushers. We had to do the whole thing. We did it for them. And I remember they did another one. Okay. It wasn't Chicago. It was one of the-- other ones those here every year. And they paired them with the Temptations. It was the oddest combination I would ever hear of. It just so happened they were both coming in together. And so they were both here. And I had to do that concert. They were afraid for the Temptations. But Temptations were the closing act. But those are types of things we got into-- we got into the university. Made the university less afraid and those in the University less afraid to be inclusive. And that worked out.

MJ: Yes.

SS: I hope.

RB: Thank you so much for--

SS: Well, thank you for listening and let me rumble—

RB: [laughs]

SS: --and go off in all kinds of different directions.

MJ: Yes. It was great talking with you.

SS: Who's next?

MJ: I think right now I'm trying to carrel Roberta Davidson, Patricia's She is in the Caribbean--

RB: Antigua.

MJ: Okay. Now, here in. And so the only way we can converse is via WhatsApp putting the app on my phone. And she called me actually today at 7:00 AM and wanted to do the interview right then. [laughter]

SS: Now, see, both of those were from my time. They were legends, and I had no idea. Matter of fact, they were introducing me at the group together. Those were about the only people that I didn't know that were up there.

MJ: I would like to talk to you. If you could say the name of the next-- the person that followed you and just spell it for me.

SS: Yes, Ukiene Malek. His name at the time was David Burton.

RB: Oh, so-

SS: He goes by-- he is legally changed it to Ukiene Malek. He is known in Detroit especially-- he used to own a bookstore. He is into music and nutrition. And like I said, when I talked to Doctor-- don't ask me to say his name because I will mess it up. He asked me about that. He asked me, "Did I not? Yes." That's the guy who took it from me." But yes. Please talk to him, because he took the organization in a completely different way. And I got no problem with that. And that's also why the guys before me didn't really know who David was. He didn't really take over until seven-- yes, I think he came in '74, and its September '74. Most of them were gone.

MJ: Okay. Also Eric Lewis, we'd like-- we've been going back and forth with Eric, playing phone tag.