

I N T E R V I E W

W I T H

M R . H E N R Y P O W E L L

Mr. Cardwell: I am sitting here in the office of Mr. Henry Powell, a report for the Lynchburg Area Journal and a former school teacher. He is also a visiting teacher in the City of Lynchburg. Mr. Powell, I want to thank you for allow me this chance to interview you. I hope you understand that what we say will be used in a study that I am involved in concerning integration in the City of Lynchburg.

Mr. Powell: Yes, I understand that.

Mr. Cardwell: Mr. Powell, how long have you been in the City of Lynchburg?

Mr. Powell: It must be about 23 or 24 years, I'm not really sure.

Mr. Cardwell: Well, you have seen many changes come about, as far as the policitcal and economic structure of blacks in Lynchburg are concerned. How do you fell about integration? Do you think this was the proper procedure or the best method to achieve social changes that we were involved in, in the 60's or do you think other steps could have been taken?

Mr. Powell: I think its too soon ~~to being~~ to assess the effects of integration. I think many more years will have to pass before we're able to determine an answer to your question. To this point, from the time that integration began in reality to today, I do not see it as a positive. What minor positive gains have taken place in my mind, some have been outweighed by the negative side of things. Let me illustrate exactly what I'm trying to say. Just a few

years ago, before the school were integrated we had what the state of Virginia - what must of been hundreds of black teachers. Every community had its full compliment of black teachers, principals and staff. Where are they today? The jobs have disappeared. Only a fraction of the number that we once enjoyed, the benefits the teaching career had to offer, there remains only a few nowadays. This is the direct result of integration, so that's a minus. But again I don't want to be always targeting of the fact that it's hard to make an assessment. It just hasn't gone on long enough.

Mr. CARDwell: You were a school teacher, how do you feel integration affected your life. Do you think that you would be better off now than you were when it first started or do you feel that you would be worse off?

Mr. Powell: Well, let me say this at the risk of sounding like a racist, I'm not a racist. When I was teaching school, I always wanted to utilize whatever I had to offer as a teacher where it was most needed. I saw it as most needd in the black community. I thought that I would be able to relate to the students, to the parents and the problems that they had in their lives in a way that few white people could. By the same token I did not think I was as well equipped to understand and interact with white people. However, once integration became an accomplished fact and I was compelled to work with whites as well as blacks. I became more aware of the fact that the problems that many black people endure are identical with the problems of white people. There is not as much difference

as I had imaged it would be. I found, I guess because I'm an humanitarian, it's possible to love white children just as I had loved black children. I don't know if I answered your question or not.

Mr. Cardwell: Oh yeah. We have talked much about the effects of environments on blacks and their surroundings. What your view on the lact of blacks advancing as they should, especially the black youth. Whom have turned to dope, crime and other means of livelihood in the streets, rather than working. What is your feelings concerning this?

Mr. Powell: Well, somebody has decieved these youngsters into thinking that the world owes them a living, somebody owes them something. They would like to escape the fact that you cannot progress in this country unless you're ready to pay the price. In most cases it's hard work, determination. If you're trying to take the easy way out, it's a whole lot easier to take a gun and stick it in somebody's ribs and rob them, than work 8 hours a day for a week. That's why I generally feel these people who do not want to work cannot be made to work. I think I'm pretty hard-nosed about it. I have no sympathy, because I keep going back to something I heard a guy say many years ago. I argued with him and disagreed with him. But more and more I could understand what he was trying to say. He said if you live in the ghetto, and you are of sound mind and are not physically impaired in anyway - then you are there becace you want to be. Because the opportunity to get out is ever present. But it requires a view that you have to pay the price of getting out of the ghetto. It can be done cause you have seen it and I have seen it. I don't have sympathy

for the unfortunates who are unincapable, borderline intelligence, physically of course I have sympathy for them. But when I see strong young men and women enslave themselves to do nothing, when I see people who are capable of making a positive contribution to our society, settling for a welfare check, I don't have a great deal of sympathy for them.

Mr. CARDwell: I have asked this question to several people. During this computer-age it seems that we are actually being reduced to a number rather than other means of identification. How do you feel about this?

Mr. Powell: Well, its not very surprising in light of the fact that the Bible predicts that the day will come when you will not able to buy or sell, without a number. I'm surprised that Dr. Sutherland didn't mention that and I'm sure he would have if he had long enough to talk about it. I've leared to, what little I know about the Bible, to believe that it accurately predicts what we expect. I think about the Middle East situation right now, to see it come to reality in my lifetime. What the Bible predicted 2,000 years ago. That's all I need in the way of proof that the Bible is for real. So, when it speaks of the times, we can see ourselves moving closer to that time. When you won't even find yourself unless you are a number.

Mr. Cardwell: Well, it's kinda ironic that you are following Dr. Sutherland on this tape, because your father proceeded him as President of the Virginia Theological Seminary & College. Who also has pastored many churches in

the United States. You have been exposed to religious training all of your life. I appreciate these statements. I am also concerned about blacks supporting their institutions of higher learning. Not only institutions of higher learning, but black business and other black entities. We talk about political power and economic power. How do you think we can regain the little economic power that we might have possessed before integration. Because of almost being forced to patronize the black businesses, but now we have the freedom to patronize whoever we want to patronize. How can we regain our economic power in the black community?

Mr. Powell: Of course it's always a danger to go over simplifying things, but, I think that black businesses can survive in this time and in this country. In spite of the often repeated statement that blacks will not support other blacks in business. That's a bunch of malarkey, I've never bought that. I've never believed it and I don't believe it now. First of all, if your place of business is conducted with the kind of foresight, the people within your place of business are treated with courtesy. In other words, if I extend to you the very same, whatever it is, that I have to sell. If I present it in a way that shows that I am anxious for your business, my personality plays a great part in that. HOW many times I've been in a black business where the people are barely civil, they don't have change for a \$20.00 bill. Their stock is dusty and overpriced and so forth. We have so many examples of black people who have made it and are making it. I think of Mr. Miller whenever I hear that thing about black people, that's a lie. Mr.

Miller died, I suppose, a man in fairly good financial shape. Whatever he made, he made from black people on Fifth Street. Why? What was the secret of his success? You could point to any number of others. I think a person would be foolish to aim his business strictly at the black people. Although because of housing patterns, some business will inevitably have more blacks than whites for their customers.

Mr. Cardwell: I think, now, the market is the total population. We cannot specifically say, that black business, because there is no black business. But that is one of the evils, I think, of integration.

Mr. Powell: Yes it is. It's going backwards. There's no question about it.

Mr. Cardwell: You have been in the educational field for some time, I guess the better part of your life. What is your assessment of the black child in the classroom. Is he as attentive and is he getting the individual attention that he received when there was no integration at all?

Mr. Powell: Well, I think one thing that we can't lose sight of, when we consider the pre-integration of school, is the fact that the black teacher in many instances knew the parents or knew something about the family from which the child came. Some of them on a social level, they may have been members of the same church. For any number of reasons to know each other away from the school. This was a great help because it formed a bridge between the parents and the

school. We no longer have that with integration. It's not likely that the school personnel would have any knowledge of the parents. That's one of the disadvantages of integration, particularly in a small city like Lynchburg. Most of the black teachers know something about their backgrounds or an older brother or sister. This formed a bond of communication that no longer exist. I feel so sorry sometimes when I see parents come to schools, they feel obviously ill at ease. They're really concerned, but they don't know the questions to ask and no one really has the time to listen to them, to hear what they're trying to say. Many times they are unable to articulate their concerns. They feel ill at ease being around some educated people, because they don't want them to know how uneducated they are. Sometimes they come across as belligerent. We don't sit and really listen and our kids get lost in the shuffle. Whether or not they get the, I'm highly qualified to talk about what goes on in the classroom, even though I've been out of the classroom for about 10 years. From what I hear it's a very different ballgame, from when I was in the school system.

Mr. Cardwell: What do you think accounts for the fact that, I think I read the other day that there are children graduating from high school who cannot read, due to instructions that they are receiving or the curriculum. What is the cause of children not being able to read and to go all the way through school with this handicap?

Mr. Powell: It's a condition that's almost inevitable, in

light of the fact aht if you were to examine the homes that many of the children come out of, you would understand why they are coming out of school not being able to read. If you could understand something about their family lifestyle. I think you'll find that the parents themselves have not put the proper emphasis on the importance of education. Generally and specifically, reading. In their homes, I don't imagine you'd find a book or a magazine. You see, when a kid says they can't read, I say can you play a trumpet. They say no, I say can you play a piano, they say no. Then I say, Why? They say I've never had the opportunity or never had exposure to those things. I say well, if you had exposure to a piano, guitar or whatever, with practice the chances are you could learn to play something to some degree of efficiency. So in reading, if you don't read away from school, then that makes it much more difficult to read in school. If the parents would take the time when the children are small, parents can sow in the childrens minds seeds of curiosity about things by reading to them. It doesn't really matter what you read to them. As long as its something that they can understand and relate to. You will be sowing in that child's mind the idea that one day they will be able to read for themselves. They become curious about things and you've done them a great favor. If parents would just do that very simple thing, get your child off to a good start. You can't leave it up to the school. They cannot do it all. The parents are a part of the team of learning too. I can remember when my kids were small, all of us lying around being together and me reading them a book. Something they enjoyed and when I finished reading they would say, "Oh don't stop, what happened after that?" They couldn't wait for me to read to them again. Partly because of that, I'm convinced all of

them were good readers. In my home, I had books all around, hundreds of books and magazine subscriptions. These were not expensive books, you'd see me at Goodwill, Nice as New, or the Veterans place, buying books. What these books have instilled in my children, is what it's all about. Their curiosity, their hunger for learning out of my reading to them. I would attest to the fact that they learned to read early and they learned to read well, because they were programmed from the home for that.

Mr. Cardwell: I feel that TV has taken a great role in producing non-readers. Because it's entertaining and its the easy way out. If I had my way about it, I would have certain hours the child would watch TV and he would have to match it with the same hours in reading. I think this would solve the problem.

Mr. Powell: Yes, it would. I'm not a Virginian, I was born in Pittsburgh and raised in Philadelphia. I came to live in Virginia early in 1950. I taught school in Princed Edward County. I have something interesting to tell you about that to. I think maybe the first month that I was in Prince Edward County a young lady came by the house one day. She was petitioning and she asked me and my brother to sign this petition aimed at correcting the terrible high school conditions for black children that existed in Prince Edward County at that time. This young lady was Ms. Barbara Johns, who now is my sister-in-law. On the petitioning, she gained a husband, my brother. For herself, she gained some notariety. As a matter of fact, the Richmond-Times Dispatch had her picture on the front page. They interviewed her about her involvemen in Prince Edward County back in the 50's. I do not want this in, I did sign the petition and did so gladly, because I saw the conditions of the high school.

But, I did not know what the repercussions of this petition would be. Nine years later, it cause me to losse my job, because I did not go to school in Prince Edward County, I just taught there. That, integration, was the result of the Supreme Court suit, they closed the school, so I lost my job. The interesting thing about that, is this - here I am high and dry, down in Prince Edward County - no job, bills piling up and no money. I wondered just what am I going to do. Well, about that time a black guy cme to my house one day. He said you wanna go back to school. I said yeah. He said he was representing a group of black who wanted to find a school for black children. To sweeten the deal, I've got \$1500 I'll give to you if you say yes. Well \$1500 in those times was enought to almost make me stand on my head and yell Yes. But because of what was involved, I couldn's say yes, I had to say no. I guess in a way I can say, I've paid my dues as far as equal rights s concerned. I can't imagine, the five years Prince Edward County schools was closed, how much money I could of made if I had been a teacher or principal.

Mr. Cardwell: Was this private school to be opposite the private school that was for the whites? Then possibly there would never have been any suit in the City and there would never have been integration.

Mr. Powell: The decision had already been made ad there are very close-minded people in Prince Edward County, so instead of integrating, they closed the schools. The white people, even though they didn't want integration, they deplored the fact that black children didn't have no education. They wanted me to fill up the gap.

Mr. Cardwell: Do you remember how long Prince Edward County had no public schools?

Mr. Powell: For five years, my sister-in-law Barbara Johns, who is the niece of Vernon Johns, you know Vernon Johns. So that'll tell you what a firecracker she was. He was head & shoulders intellectually, more than anybody I've ever met in my life. Very, very brilliant man, a spellbinder as an art.

Mr. Cardwell: It has been said of Dr. Johns, that he was the originator of the "I Have A Dream" speech King made. Incidentally, he was also President of Virginia Seminary & College. We've had some great men at Virginia Theological Seminary & College and it has been responsible for a lot of great leaders in the nation.

Mr. Powell: Everyone of them was mistreated by the constituency of the conventions, the trustees and different ones.

Mr. Cardwell: I think it was more or less a power struggle. Everybody wanted to be the leader.

Mr. Powell: Let me put it this way, Vernon Johns use to tell me all the time - you can tell what a man is by the things he says. His sermon was called "Loving Through Excitement". How anybody, getting back to a minister, could stoop to the kind of bickering, arguing and demeaning themselves - over that pile of bricks, is simply beyond me. What does it say about them? The fact that you could do something like that, that you could argue. Because you can

demean yourself to threaten to punch somebody in the mouth, for example.

Mr. Cardwell: For some reason or another, the Virginia Theological Seminary & College never got the attention of local people, as it should of. Yet when there were no high schools in Lynchburg, that was before the era of public high schools in Lynchburg. Most of its graduates on the high school level, came from Lynchburg. I never understood why this was the case. Virginia Theological Seminary & College could have been a great institution if it had more support. We have always heard there was mismanagement and thorns in the later years of Virginia Theological Seminary & College, but that's was not always the case. Because their largest fundraising efforts were usually what is know as Hayes-Allen Day and I think that seldom exceeded \$125,000. With all of the teachers to pay and the building to maintain, the boarding students they had, that is not a very large budget. So it's not much there to mismanage. Well, I see nothing but doom for the school, becuae of the competitiveness now with our predominantly white colleges. Your able to go anywere you want to, to any school you want to, if you qualify. Because of the competitiveness in the job market, you are usually trying to seek the best education you can for your children. Therefore you send them to other schools rather than a school thats struggling.

Mr.Powell: That's true, but you goota keep in mind the factor that they are maybe not aware of the fact that lately their has been a great resurgence of interest in sending black children to black colleges. Just this year for

example, at Hampton Institute, they've had more than 5,000 applications for 400 freshmen slots. The reason this is so is because black students at white colleges are finding themselves much more informally set-off from the white student body. There seems to be some resentment of their presence. In a lot of instances, north as well as south, to make black people feel less unwelcome in some of these white institutions. I doubt that many people interested in the school seem to be in any position of authority. I keep getting positive upbeat predictions from them. I asked them what's the future of the school. They all speak positively. I wish I could understand where they get their optimism from. Like you just said, their greatest financial efforts to date have never been more than \$125,000, which is a pittance. One lady at the school asked me - "Don't you know how badly we need fine teachers?" I said, of course I know how badly you need fine teachers. I'm probably as well informed about that as you are, I've written about it several times in the newspaper. Even so, what can Virginia Seminary do about it. She said, we can have the finest teachers. I cut the conversation off, because I saw I was talking with someone who didn't know reality. I wondered, if she had any idea of the great expenditures that would be necessary to bring that school to form. Taking off her legitimate degree of teaching, is she aware of that requirement of a million dollars? Is she aware of the fact that you must have a gymnasium and laboratory facilities? You must have faculty for so many kids needs and you must pay them certain salaries. At a school with an income like that, it's a joke. It's not reality.

Mr. Cardwell: I think that has been the case historically.

Because the accreditation requirements now are much greater than they were in prior years and it takes money to compete.

Mr. Powell: Two years ago there was this university, one of the largest, oldest, most prestigious black institutions. They could not predict that summer, that they were going to be able to open their doors that fall. If this school with all these hundreds of affluent alumni could not say, with all certainty, that they were going to open in the fall, then what in the world is the chance for Virginia Seminary & College.

Mr. Cardwell: Well, Hampton Institute in Virginia is the largest dominant black school in the state. They have financial problems, maybe not as severe. Money is the name of the game.

Mr. Powell: Don't leave this out, black schools are being looked at in the most critical eye nowadays. Because you get the feeling, in some circles, that the degree from the black school is regarded with a great deal of suspicion. They aren't willing to regard that as being equivalent of degrees of other institutions. The teachers, I think, sometimes accuse people of prejudicing black schools. I had a white lady tell me that one time. She said are you enjoying the NEA, I said no, I'm not enjoying it. She wanted to know why, I said because unless the NEA is gonna announce, as one of the primary plans, an effort to do something about the plight of the more than 15,000 black teachers who've been terminated from their jobs because of

integration, then I have no use for the NEA. It's not good to me. She said well I've always heard the black teachers weren't well prepared. Well, my nose flew open, but I kept quiet and cleared my throat. I said well, since I've been teaching school. I then asked her if she had been taking any in-service course and/or advanced courses, she said yeah, she is now. I then asked her are there any blacks in your classroom, she said yes. I said do they seem to be having any more problems with the subject matter than you're having. She said no, as a matter of fact, one or two of them, I wish I could keep up with them. I then said, well chances are, these are products of the same period of education that you're talking about. If they're able to compete with you, where's your theorology? I said Virginia State can't begin to compete with Univesity of Virginia in terms of buildings. But if it's products are able to compete with you and your a product of University of Virginia, then where's the difference?

Mr. Cardwell: This is evident of the fact that integratio has done great harm to the black people in Lynchburg. As far as their own educational institutions are concerned.

This section is on interviews with some of the people involved in the movement, to bring about social changes in Lynchburg.

Mr. Cardwell: Mrs. Mary Payne, when did you become aware of the need for you to participate and become active in the movement to bring about social changes in Lynchburg?

Mrs. Mary Payne: Well, I was interested long before Dr. Martin Luther King's visit to Lynchburg. But after hearing him speak, it was the one thing I needed to motivate me to get up and do something - joining somebody and really get to work.

Mr. Cardwell: What was the first project that you participated in, to bring about social changes in Lynchburg?

Mrs. Payne: The night that Dr. King spoke, the committee that brought him here, was asking people to sign up to participate in different areas of work. I signed up immediately that night and beginning that very next day, I began taking action to help bring about a change.

Mr. Cardwell: Where were you employed at that time?

Mrs. Payne: Craddock & Terry Shoe Company

Mr. Cardwell: What is your occupation now?

Mrs. Payne: I am employed as a LPN at Lynchburg General Hospital.

Mr. Cardwell: Did the movement or do you think Dr. King's visit to Lynchburg made things any better or more conclusive to you being employed where you were employed at that time?

Mrs. Payne: I think Craddock & Terry opened its doors because of the struggle. I don't think if we had not had the movement, I think Craddock & Terry would be segregated even today.

Mr. Cardwell: After leaving Craddock & Terry, what happened?

Mrs. Payne: I was involved with a union situation at Craddock & Terry, which caused me to lose my job and I left there and worked as a Voter Registrator for Lynchburg Voters League in this area for a while and I decided that I needed to get something to do that would give me some kind of protection as far as holding down a job. That's when I decided that I would take the Licensed Practical Nurse Course. After completing the Licensed Practical Nurse Court, I was hired at Lynchburg General Hospital as a Practical Nurse.

Mr. Cardwell: How long have you been working at this job?

Mrs. Payne: I have been at Lynchburg General Hospital now for nineteen years.

Mr. Cardwell: Mrs. Payne what specific changes have you seen take place in Lynchburg since you became involved in the movement?

Mrs. Payne: Well, immediately we saw the bus company was very cooperative. It became integrated, people could sit anywhere they pleased on the bus. A lot of the restaurants took it right up and opened their doors, you could come in and eat in most restaurants. Department stores were slow moving, but they did move forward in hiring blacks to work as Clerks on the floors. Job opportunities in the plants around Lynchburg opened up. They readily accepted the change and people were able to get better jobs, women especially were able to get better jobs. So, I've seen many changes. The school system changed drastically, the children were able to go to any school in the City. At first it was a matter of choice, as to which school they wanted to go to. Then of course in a few years, it just became open, period and we were able to do this without too much of a hassle. It was something we still had to do, as far as talking with the school board and what not to make the changes come about, but we were much more fortunate than a lot of areas, in that we did not have hand to hand combat in Lynchburg. It was just a few isolated incidents and problems so the school system has changed a great deal.

Altogether, as far as the City political process goes, things changed a little. It has not changed as swiftly as we would have liked to see it change, because even today we still only have one black City Councilman. But things began to change in City government, we have always had people in jobs that were just hard labor - we began to have positions open up in the higher level government. I've seen a few changes in the neighborhoods, but of course, we have always been fairly fortunate in that department, anyway. We have always lived in integrated areas. We have had our patchy segregated areas, but basically in Lynchburg, two blocks away was a white family. The apartments were the ones that were a little bit slow opening up, but eventually, they did also. Today it is almost unreal, you just wouldn't believe it was the same town. Because of my activities in the movement, I was asked to go to Washington to participate in a White House conference to fulfill these rights. I sat a table with Dr. Milton Reid, at the head table. Dr. Martin Luther King and President L.B. Johnson were in attendance and that was one of the most brilliant things that ever happened to me. For me to be able to be right there firsthand with people who were making the change come about. While in attendance at the White House conference on to fulfill these rights, I made a suggestion to them that they needed to upgrade the housing projects, you know where low-income people live. But yet they weren't stepping up into any better housing situations and today you see the housing projects is just like moving into an expensive apartment.

At an early age, this young lady who is about to be interviewed, took part in the movement to bring about social changes in Lynchburg. She now tells you about her involvement and results obtained personally by her being involved.

Ms. Laura Irvine Williams: My name is Laura Irvine Williams and at the time I resided at 1225 Clay Street, here in the City of Lynchburg, Virginia.

Mr. Cardwell: Do you recall the first time that you thought of entering into the movement or even becoming involved?

Ms. Williams: No, I didn't really think about it at the time I always thought it was something for somebody else to do. But it just so happened that my sister got involved in the movement through her sister-in-law and she was picketing on Twelfth Street in front of the A & P Store. On the day that she was picketing, I just decided that I was going to go into the A & P and ask for a job, because they did not have black checkers, at the time. I was not actively pursuing a job at the time, but I thought about it when they were picketing. I said well, this is my opportunity so I'll go in and I'll ask for a job. So I went into the store and I spoke to the Manager and told him I wanted to apply for a job and he was readily agreeable. He agreed right on the spot and he gave me an application, told me to take it home and fill it out. I took it home and brought it back the next day, I was hired on the spot. It seemed to me that he was relieved that a black had come to apply for a job,

because I think the pickets were hurting the business.

Mr. Cardwell: Well, to my mind you were the first black cashier in the City of Lynchburg, as far as I can recall, do you agree?

Ms. Williams: I think I was, I don't remember anyone else before then, because it was during the time that the picketing started that I got the job as Cashier at the A & P.

Mr. Cardwell: You mentioned your sister, and are there any other members in your family who became involved during those years?

Ms. Williams: No, I think she was the only one.

Mr. Cardwell: What changes, I know there are many changes, but what changes, to your mind, was the most beneficial to blacks that you saw take place during those years?

Ms. Williams: The changes that I saw were that blacks were hired for jobs that they previously were not able to obtain. They could go to school where it was previously all black school or all white school. They could now go to the school of their choice. They could go to restaurants where they had previously not been able to go to before. As a matter of

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fact, the whole City was just opened up to blacks. Going back to the question of whether I had any other family members that were actively involved, it had gone out of my mind, that my father - John Irvine - who is now deceased, was very active in the civil rights movement. He was a member of the Voters League and other organizations and he took an active part in all meetings and everything else that he could at that time.

Mr. Cardwell: Your father was also the Vice-Chairman of the Deacon Board or Co-Chairman at Fifth Street Baptist Church.

Ms. Williams: That's correct.

Mrs. Virginia Hughes, Mrs. John Hughes of 904 Eighth Street, some people may remember her as Virginia Woodard. I am sitting in Mrs. Hughes home to interview here at this time. Now Mrs. Hughes, your involvement in the Civil Rights Movement has been almost from its beginning here in Lynchburg. I know it would be impossible for you to tell all, but I would like for you to tell me when you first became involved. If you can remember during those years.

Mrs. Hughes: I remember openly protesting segregation when I realized the unfairness in the schools at Dunbar High School. The students had to go in the back doors to enter the school and come out. Maybe sometimes we came out the front door. I believe we did come out the front door, but we

INTERVIEW

WITH

REV. FORD

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One potential violent incident happened at E. C. Glass on February 1971. When principal William Edward Porter refused to consider Black students' demand for Black History Week observance. After the consolidation of Dunbar and E. C. Glass took place tensions ran high. Students coming from Dunbar began to request changes in some of the traditions of E. C. Glass practices such as the flying of the Confederate flag and the singing of Dixie at the opening of school assembly. When the Black History incidents occurred and demonstrations we were not surprised.

On February 8, 1971 a group of Black students led by Christopher Sharp demonstrated at E. C. Glass and requested a mass meeting with principal Porter to discuss their feelings on ethnic cultural incidents. Porter agreed to meet but with only twelve students. He stated that he did not meet with emotionally involved crowds. If the students have real problems they should meet with me in a negotiable manner so that we can talk over the problems and try to solve them. Principal Porter meet with twelve students and twenty-six parents on the morning of November 9. During this meeting Porter announced his decision to refuse to allow an observance of the Black History Week. According to the news even though Governor Linwood Holton proclaimed this week National Negro History Week, Porter said any recognition during school hours would only open the doors to more request for

special observance of the National Week. I remember Porter's remark a little different. Principal Porter had said that Black History Week would not be observed since the school did not observe Ground Hog Day either. It was this remark that compared Blacks to ground hogs that sparked the student protests.

When Porter finally agreed to meet with the students he was totally surrounded by police in riot gear. He told students to disperse or be expelled. The students demanded an explanation by Porter. Porter only repeated this statement to disperse. After calling for reinforcements from the police station Porter then announced that all demonstration participants would be expelled if they did not leave the school grounds immediately they would all be subject to arrest or trespassing.

After meeting at the Court Street Baptist Church the students were told by the adult leaders of the Black community to calm down and go home. That evening two hundred people under the leadership of the Rev. Herman A. Ford met at the Court Street Baptist Church and decided to send a delegation to the city school board meeting the following Tuesday night to protest the treatment of Negro students at E. C. Glass High School. A few days after that confrontation the Black students were allowed to return to school but the tension created by Porter's decision existed until graduation. Several Black students refused to shake his hand when they received their diploma. Janet Shaffer writes William Porter's fair and judicious handling of this and

other disturbances earned him a widespread reputation in the city and state as a capable administrator, a good citizen and wise educator beyond his years. She claimed that Porter's decision was backed by superintendent Fred Young school board chairman Richard P. Gibson as well as principal and teachers.

The wounds were never really closed in Lynchburg but continued to fester over the years. As I have often stated in that there is no history, no recorded history recorded in Lynchburg of the civil rights struggle from the beginning to the end. That which is recorded is distorted and not even researched to see whether it is true or not. But the underlying reason that the historians have not recorded the civil history in Lynchburg being that they did not wish to disturb the quiet which seemed to exist after the turbulent sixties and seventies.

Relations between the races in Lynchburg have for the most part improved. But this is not reason enough to forget the struggle Black men and women have waged throughout their lives for economic, political, social and educational equalities to remain more sensitive to maintaining the quiet than to recognize the admissions of the struggle is to misplace sensitivity and open the things that must be accomplished for the world can be a better to live. The sins of white America must be repented to the extent that racism must go and never again be realized in the years to come.

INTERVIEW WITH REV. ROGER FORD

Mr. Cardwell: I am in the beautiful home of the parents of Rev. Ford. Rev. Ford I would like to thank you for the opportunity to interview you and to talk about some of the past history of Lynchburg and your involvement. The first question I would like to ask you is where have you been? You say that you have been away from Lynchburg for about ten years now but it doesn't seem like it has been that long. It seems like yesterday.

Rev. Ford: When I left Lynchburg I went Tabernacle Baptist Church in Youngstown Ohio. Youngstown is located midway between Cleveland Ohio and Pittsburg Pennsylvania. I actually stayed in Youngstown Ohio for seven years. When I left Youngstown Ohio I went to Baltimore Maryland as of the second Sunday in August 1988 for nine years. So I have been gone from home almost twenty years.

Mr. Cardwell: Twenty years. Doesn't seem that long. I cut it in half and yet it doesn't seem like it has been that long. Rev. Ford I recall that when you were in Lynchburg that we had one of the most tragic things to happen in your home and that is they shot into it. Was it this house or the house next door?

Rev. Ford: It was the house down the street.

Mr. Cardwell: It was the house down the street, your home at

that time. I would like for you to tell me what you think led up to that most, I quest it was the most tradgic moment in your life to have your children or was it one child.

Rev. Ford: One child.

Mr. Cardwell: To have been shot at. Bullets missing him by inches. Could you tell me about that?

Rev. Ford: What led up to it was some of the children from the Rivermont area called me to tell me that there was a problem at the high school, E. C. Glass, with the principal not allowing them to celebrate National Negro History Week. He gave responses to them such as: Well, it is Boy Scott Week. Are you going to celebrate Boy Scott Week? They took as a slander when he said to them it also will be Ground Hog Dog Day. Are you going to celebrate Ground Hog Day. Some of the children went to a public booth to the office or somewhere to call me to tell me to come to the school. I went over to the school to try to find out just what was going on. The principal at that time, I think his name was Porter. He refused to see me. He wouldn't talk to me. I then got on the phone and called some of my friends. I called you Mr. Caldwell. I called, I think I called Dr. Walter Johnson. The man that had run against me, and when I say run against me I don't mean it in a negative sense, for President of the NAACP, Dr. Jackson, a dentist on Fifth Street. I called him. We called a meeting of the citizens. We announced in our churches, spread the word as best we could by mouth. We held a meeting at Court Street Baptist Church. A large membership of the Black citizens gathered there. When they gathered we decided that we would organize a Black Citizen's Committee and out of the Black

Citizen's Committee we would send representatives to E. C. Glass to talk to the principal. At that particular meeting the citizens elected me as chairman of the committee and we selected some other persons to work with me. We then went to E. C. Glass High School as a group. The principal did see us on that occasion. He was very negative and completely and totally uncooperative with us. While there I asked him if I might use his telephone and I called Mr. Dixie who was a member at that time of the city council. We first called the superintendent and the superintendent basically said to us that whatever the principal said he was going to support. That he was not going to make any changes in what the principal had to say. Realizing that the superintendent was appointed, at that time, I don't know how it is now, city council we then contacted Mr. Seay. But when we contacted Mr. Seay from my standpoint Mr. Seay did not give us any cooperation. We then went to a school board meetings. We purposely disrupted school board meetings because if they felt that this was not an important issue we felt it was. We knew it was important and we were not going to allow them to transact any other business until they were going to deal our issue. When that occurred and they couldn't hold any business meetings we then decided we would go to city council meetings. We went to city council meetings and in going to city council meetings we disrupted city council meetings. The group was aware that city

council and student board felt that if we can stop this legal we will stop the hold group. When we would disrupt the meetings by singing the group never allowed me to sing. When we disrupted the city council meetings would hum and they never allowed me to hum because it was quite obvious they way the police always stood around me and they were waiting and possibly praying for me to make a mistake. So I never, although I was the chairman in it, I never made any noise. I never spoke unless I was recognized by the chair of the city council or school board. I never did any disruptive tactics myself because they were trying to get me. When the city council and school board found out that their tactics of trying to ignore us were not going to work they began to dismiss their meetings because we had completely disrupted the business of the School Board and the city council of Lynchburg, Virginia. It got to the place then that I was being followed by whites day and night. We held meetings to raise money for our works. We held them at Rivermont Baptist. We held them at Court Street. We held them at various churches in the city for the purpose of raising money and in addition, and more importantly, to keep the citizens aware of what we were doing and to have any input from them that they desire to give. Finally one night we were at a meeting of city council. The last meeting that I remember we attended. When the meeting was over at city council, Mr. Cardwell, Mr. Stamps, Mr. Thornhill and some of the others whose names I cannot remember at this time had a meeting

in the upstairs back room of Community Funeral Home. When we left the meeting at Community Funeral Home we were going our various ways on home. I came down Fifth Street, made a left turn on Federal to come through Hollins Mill Road to come home. Coming through Hollins Mill Road it became quite obvious to me that I was being followed by three car loads of white males. Instead of coming because if something is going to happen I didn't want to expose my family to it as well as myself I kept going out Hollins Mill Road to Bedford Avenue. I did not make the right turn to come up Loudon Street to go home. I kept straight out. I got on Bedford Avenue to get to Rivermont Avenue. When I got to Rivermont Avenue I ran through the red light and made a right turn to come back around Rivermont Avenue to Fairview Street to come home and that's when I lost them. Upon arriving at my home the police, my brothers, my sisters, my family, my neighbors were all present because someone had gone to my home shot both shells of a double barrel shot-gun through my front door. At the time that the shells came through my wife and son were coming through the living room, past the door. The shots that came through the door and through the window of the door missed my wife and son by less than six inches. The holes were in the their storm doors, the front door. I had the doors replaced but the shot-gun shells that went through the walls of my living room into the back bedroom are still in the wall of that closet because I never had them repaired purposely to

Always remember what had occurred. That was when we had one member of our group, a Mrs. Crews, who lived in Chambersville, Virginia, who said to Mr. Porter your life is not one of a Christian life. You shall suffer like a dog when you die. It was not long thereafter that Mr. Porter was being transported by one hospital to another and they could not find out what was wrong with him. He suffered figuratively like a dog and he did die. Though city council, the school board and so forth did not want to hear what we were asking that we would celebrate National Negro History Week. It did come to the place that it was celebrated in E. C. Glass High School because they found that the Black citizens were going to refuse to back down.

Mr. Cardwell: Rev. Ford, because of that effort it is celebrated in all schools. Not only E. C. Glass but Hertiage and the rest of them also.

Rev. Ford: I am aware from others telling me and I find great pride, not just for myself, but for the citizens of Lynchburg, that they saw it as a worthwhile effort that our children, the Black children and other children, the whites be exposed to the history of the Black race. One of the problems we have between the races is a lack not only of understanding but a lack of knowledge between the races. Not too long here in Lynchburg, Virginia there was a lady who came papers and credentials and proved that her father was the person who had invented suspenders and the invention had been stolen by a white man and he made the money off it. They had given her

father the credit for it but that is all he has received because he is cold and gray. We don't want to talk about how people's lives are saved but it was a black man who came up with the idea and for that day readily perfected it. Blood transfusions has saved the lives of many Blacks and Whites and other nationalities and it was because of the wisdom of a Black man. We are trying to impose our lives. We are not trying to stamp our identity on them. We are trying to share with them worthwhile knowledge of a worthwhile race that they may have a greater appreciation of worthwhile people.

Mr. Cardwell: I would like to at this point ask you a question that has really been the theme of the book that I am about to write. Incidentally I am making a study of the effects of integration on Black folks. From your point of view, do you thing that integration was a best steps to take in achieving equalization? There is no such thing as equalization unless you are in public schools anyway. Unless you are in the same building or reading from the same textbook. Being taught by the same teachers. On a broad basis, do you thing the effects of integration has made a positive or a negative impact on Black folks?

Rev. Ford: Well, I really thing that integration has created a positive effect on Black people. At the time that integration came about it was an impossible situation and the Supreme Court, in my opinion, was right. There is no such thing as separate and equal. It was a positive step for Black people. But it was not only a positive step and I recognize that you did not ask me this, but it was not only a positive step for Blacks, it was

a positive step for whites. Whites had the opportunity then to know that these people, that their parents or someone had taught them were so inferior to them that we really did not have tails that we really could thing on our own. That we had brains like all other races. That our basic short-coming was that they had deprived us _____. It has had a positive step in that Whites have recognized that all Blacks didn't carry razors. It has had a positive step in that they recognize that all Black women are not whores. It has had a positive step in that they recognize that all Black men do not want a white woman for a mate. It has had a positive step in that it has given our children a better feeling about themselves. If you tell a lie long and consistant enough you will make a person believe anything. When they told that Blacks were inferior to whites they were lying but we have to admit that the truth is that some Blacks had gotten to the place that they had believed that lie. We then had the opportunity not just to share the good things of our lives with whites but to lift Blacks by their own boot straps to a higher feeling about themselves. I feel that, I know that the integration of the schools had a positive effect. But not just on the Blacks, it had a positive effect on society of America, Black and White.

Mr. Cardwell: Well, do you think that we have retrogressed instead of progressed? I know that there are a chosen few who have had better advantages than others but on a hold the grass root people have we really pro-

gressed or have we retrogressed?

Rev. Ford: I think if we have progressed it has minimum. But I do not think that we have digressed. I do not think that we have gone backwards. I think that laws have been changed. Especially in the White House. I think much fighting have been done to turn back the tide to the days of old. I know these things have occurred but as far as the Black race is concerned we have not gone back. The struggle has not been as open. The struggle has been less violent than it has been. They are not sicing dogs on us. They are not shooting hose spikes from the fire truck on us. The soldiers and the police are not coming with helmets and shields on after us. So because a lot of these things are not seen and are not in the news a lot of people say we are not making progress. There is progress being made. We are talking in terms of a privilege few. That has always been in the Black race that whites would give privileges to a few to use them. We sometimes twisted the meaning of "Uncle Tom" and called them "Uncle Toms" because the whites used them to find about what the Blacks had been doing. That day is passing. There are still a privileged few amont the Black but they are not what would be called the "Uncle Toms?of old. They are not telling the white man what's going on as they have. In the United States now, (I've gone to various parts of the United States, New Orleans, California, Ohio, Michigan, Baltimore, Maryland) there is an uncurrent, an unrest among Blacks. Because of that undercurrent of unrest we say that we

are not doing anything. We are not getting anywhere. The very fact that we are dissatisfied with our present position means that we are getting somewhere because a new leader will rise up. A new leader will lead us to higher heights. A few years back when they had the riots because of the death of Martin Luther King that time is here again. If something would occur negative to the Blacks. That violence would erupt now greater troubles, greater problems for the white race than it did at the death of Martin Luther King. Blacks made mistakes then. They burned down Black neighborhoods. They burned down stores that Blacks patronaged. It won't happen that way again. If there were a riot in Lynchburg, Virginia it wouldn't be on Daniels Hill. It wouldn't be on Diamond Hill. It would be in Peakland. It would be in Fort Hill. The Blacks will next time will take the fight to the whites. The whites recognizing every state that you look at now they are talking about eliminating guns that they refer to as Saturday Night Specials. How stupid can they be to believe that because a law says that you are not supposed to have this gun that Blacks are going to get in line and turn in their guns. Don't they realize that since that riot that Blacks no longer are going to throw rocks at police. Don't they realize that Blacks are no longer going to throw bottles at the police. Don't they realize that the police shoot again that they are going to be shot back at. Don't they realize that people have bought 30/30 Winchesters. Don't they realize that these men

participating in and it is a fight. You can't fight by the white man. have come back from the Armed Services with guns made by Germans and they put to you the call to fight for the white man. They can't give everybody else as souvenirs. Don't they realize that the fight no more the Black minister. We can't support it. We can't feed our families. will be a passive fight. Martin Luther King is dead and nobody now is He can't take of our honor and the United States will not be because he talking about that they are going to fight non violently. No one is talk- can't come in and fight. The reason that I have never been a person who marched, ing about that. The reason that I have never been a person who marched, the reason that I never participated in that kind of a thing is because the kind of job that I have had that I have had that I have had. You know I know myself well enough to know that if a white man spits on me he had that all of our lives that we have had that we have had that we have had immediately pray to God for his soul because his head belongs to me. I at the United States that we have had that we have had that we have had know this about myself. If he kicks me he had best break every bone in my body because I am going to try to break some bones in his. he didn't know he had.

Mr. Cardwell: Well, when I interviewed members of the cloth I usually ask them this question. I don't know whether you have observed it or not but most all Black organizations now are headed by ministers. Do you think this is a divine thing or has it any significance other than the fact that they are available and that they can have the time or exert the leadership that is needed for these positions. I know that the NAACP, Urban League and SCLC and I could name many more that are headed by the clergy. What do you think is the reason for this?

Rev. Ford: Firstly I will state unequivocally that I do not think it is divine. What occurs is when you work in a furniture store, you work

Mr. Cardwell: One other question that occurs to me is that I think some- on some social project, you take the leadership for this fight that we are where in the scriptures, I'm not sure whether it is the Old Testament or the

participating in and it is a fight. You can be fired by the white man. They get to you we call it because of the job we have. They can't fire the Black ministeries. We can be supported. We can feed our families. We can take of our homes and the White man can't get to us because he can't come in and fire us. The Black ministries are put into those positions of leadership and assume those positions of leadership because of the kind of job they have that the white man can't fire them. You know that all of our lives that there have been people, my brother Sam worked at the United States Post Office and there was a time when it was illegal for him to be a member of NAACP and every year when we would solicit the memberships he gave his money for membership and would not join until the law was changed. My father and my brother Jessie worked at various apartment houses for White people. If my father or my brother had taker the leadership position that I took with the problem we were having with the school system they would have been fired from their jobs. We questioned and wondered if they would be fired because their brother and son were participating in it. Because that was one of the white man's methods of trying to control Blacks. He controlled him with economics. No man is going to go and get involved in something knowing that his family is going to go hungry because of his involvement and the White man used economics to as they say, keep us in our place. That's why ministries do it.

Mr. Cardwell: One other question that concerns me is that I think somewhere in the scriptures, I'm not sure whether it is the Old Testament or the

what Testament that states that before the end of time man would be known by a number. Recently, Social Security has ruled that every child that enters school must have a Social Security number. We quickly are being reduced to a number. When you cash a check you have give them a number. I believe before the end of time all your identification will be by a number especially in this day of computers and so forth. I asked Dr. Sutherland about this and he said that computers are not in harmony with God but more so with the devil. In escence this is what he said. How do you feel about the computer age? I think that it might be good for a person to be known by number because then you don't know the color of the skin. You only know the number. Have you thought about this? What is your feeling?

Rev. Ford: Firstly I don't look upon computers as being in the league with Satan or in league with God. I see computers like an automobile. I see computers like a thermostate that keeps your air conditioner. I see them only as another instrument that we use for our convenience. I would agree that persons being identified by a number elminiates knowing their sex or their age or their color, if the numbers were used correctly. You can take a person's social security number and the way that social security numbers have been established, I had a fellow who was a postman in my church and he could take your social security and tell you your age because certain numbers were used in certain years in order to determine your age. I

can not tell you that those numbers are not fixed in a fashion that they can determine your sex or your color. I can't tell are or that they are not but I do know that Thomas Williams could tell you your age from your social security number. So those numbers are not as clean as they might appear to be. From that stand point someone would say that proves that they are in league with Satan. No it only means that those persons who use those numbers are in league with Satan. It does not mean that the numbers themselves are. Now, as far as numbers themselves, men being determined by a number, there is a possibility that there is a misinterpretation of what the scripture is saying. The scripture always has dealt with numbers. The four and forty-four. The twelve. That's how men learned to shoot dice was from the scriptures. The number six sixty-six (666) is referred to Satan and in the scripture man is always referred to as a six (6). Man has always been a six (6) from the populitic scripture. He has always been six. So we are not coming to the place where man will be recognized by a number. He already is recognized by a number. From the writing of scripture that has always been. The scripture deals with one through twelve. All of the other numbers that you contact with are only multiplications of those various numbers. Some of them we think that we know what they mean. Some of the we admittedly yet do not understand. But the day is already here and always been since the exception of scripture that man was recognized by a number and that number is six (6).

Mr. Cardwell: As you said in the beginning of this interview that you have been away from Lynchburg for about twenty years. What specific changes have you noticed in coming back home at various times?

Rev. Ford: Well, the biggest changes that I have noticed is the spreading out of Lynchburg. The incorporating of other areas. My oldest sister who lived in a area called Forest, Virginia. That no longer is the out skirts of Lynchburg. That is now a part of the city limits. Where Rev. N. S. Walker's church was, Holcomb Rock Baptist Church was not apart of Lynchburg, Virginia when I left home, that now is part of the city property. I noticed that in all areas. One of the good things that I have noticed about Lynchburg is the repair that they do to bridges that I have noticed that most other cities fail to do and I see that as a concern. I have noticed in Lynchburg that the Blacks are now recognizing that they can depend upon each other more so than they did when I left Lynchburg. There's seems to be a common rivalry among them that didn't exist when I was in Lynchburg. Not being as involved as I was when I was home, I may be in error, but it appears to be a greater trust among Blacks than there was when I was in Lynchburg. I have noticed in conversations with some them because I come home at least about once a month because of illness of my mother as you know now I am here because of the death of my mother, I have noticed that there's a greater openness among them, a more willingness on their part to share with one another. When I say share I'm not just talking about share openly information, I mean a caring and sharing for

one another. I see this as a good sign that the Black's in Lynchburg are lifting each other up as they are lifted up rather than having the privileged few and. I was reading a book called God's Bullies. It talked about the movement of Jerry Falwell in Lynchburg. I find it quite amusing when people talk about the moral majority when there have been surveys made by whites who proved that Jerry Falwell is not leading a moral majority. He is leading a minority that is questionable how moral they are. This kind of a thing when I see Black's talking about that kind of thing where when I was home some Black's were concerned about going over there to see what Jerry Falwell was doing. Some were concerned about going to join his church. Now they see it as a joke because they recognize that Jerry Falwell is not all that he may say he is. This kind of a thing makes me recognize the intelligence level of Blacks has been lifted. So I see many signs indicating that Blacks are on the rise in Lynchburg, Virginia.