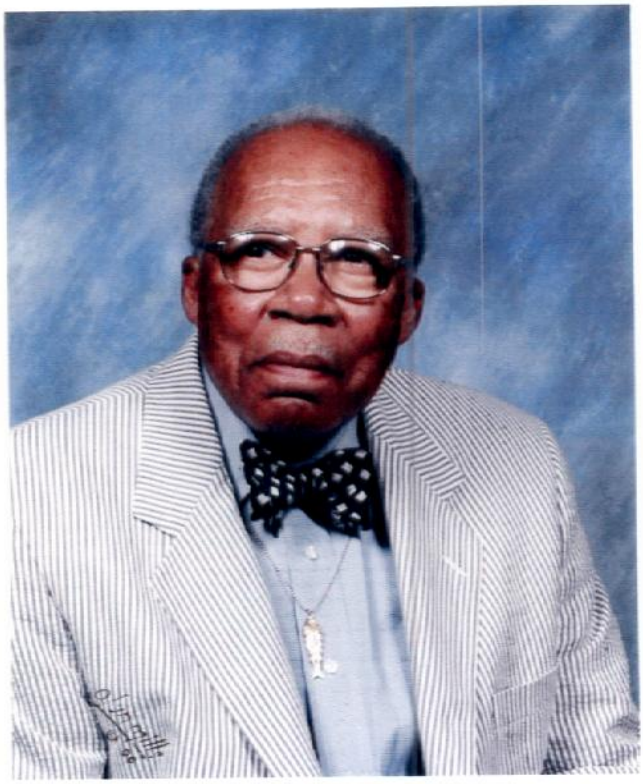

Dr. Marion C. Bascom

University of Baltimore
1420 N. Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Dr. Bascom:

The University of Baltimore is launching a two-year investigation called "'68 Riots and Rebirth," a project centered around the events that followed the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., their effects on the development of our city. UB administration and faculty members in the law school and in the undergraduate departments of history and community studies are planning a series of projects and events to commemorate the 40th anniversary of this pivotal event. We are currently working with the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History, The Jewish Museum of Maryland, Maryland Public Television and the Enoch Pratt Free Libraries to pursue funding for projects that may include conferences, a television documentary and a library traveling exhibit.

Your potential participation in an oral history project would contribute to the very foundation of this project – the memories of Baltimoreans who lived through the riots and saw the changes that came about in response to them. Your life story can fill in the limited knowledge we learn from newspaper accounts and the television footage.

If you choose to participate in the project you would be interviewed by students from the University of Baltimore who are currently taking "The New South and Civil Rights." Their work in this course will inform their questions, but your memories will determine the direction of the interviews.

If you agree to serve as an oral history informant in this project, you will meet with a team of undergraduate students on three different occasions. On the first meeting, the students will take a still photograph of you. In addition, if you have a photo of yourself in or around 1968, we would greatly appreciate it if we could borrow it, scan it, and return it. We would reserve the rights to reproduce those photos and use them in the documentary, conferences, exhibit or publications.

The students may conduct the interviews at a location of your choice, or you may meet them at the University of Baltimore Langsdale Library for your interviews. During the interviews, your recollections will be recorded in two forms: audio and video. The students will be responsible for operating the equipment. You can expect the interviews to last for a minimum of 30 minutes each.

The general topics for the three interviews will be:

1) Your life before 1968
2) Your experiences of the events of April 1968
3) What you see as changes that came about as a result of the riots

You will be interviewed three times to give you a chance to process the questions and make sure you are giving the fullest narrative possible. Sometimes talking about events that occurred decades ago will unearth forgotten memories. Undoubtedly, some of those remembrances will be negative. We greatly appreciate your willingness to take the risk of exploring a potentially painful past so that your life experiences will be recorded.

After the interviews the students will transcribe your oral history. They will provide you with a copy of the transcription for your review before the transcription is published. The transcription, video and audio records will be archived in the Langsdale Library Special Collections and will be accessible to the public. Your name will be attached to these documents. The University of Baltimore may use your image and/or your words in any future documentaries, exhibits, conferences or publications. Participants in the oral history project agree to waive their confidentiality.

If at any time you are uncomfortable with participation in the study, you are free to drop out. Participation is strictly voluntary. While your participation is requested and highly valued, you are free to decide whether or not to continue participation at all times. You may decline to have your name published with your reminiscences

If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact me at 410-837-5296. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth M Nix

Elizabeth M. Nix, Ph.D.
Visiting Assistant Professor
History and Community Studies
The University of Baltimore

I have read and understand the information provided above, and consent to participate in the study. I have also been given a copy of the informed consent for my records.

[redacted]

University of Baltimore
1420 N. Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Dorothy Bascom,

The University of Baltimore is launching a two-year investigation called "'68 Riots and Rebirth," a project centered around the events that followed the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., their effects on the development of our city. UB administration and faculty members in the law school and in the undergraduate departments of history and community studies are planning a series of projects and events to commemorate the 40th anniversary of this pivotal event. We are currently working with the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History, The Jewish Museum of Maryland, Maryland Public Television and the Enoch Pratt Free Libraries to pursue funding for projects that may include conferences, a television documentary and a library traveling exhibit.

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Elizabeth M. Nix, Ph.D.
Visiting Assistant Professor
History and Community Studies
The University of Baltimore

I have read and understand the information provided above, and consent to participate in the study. I have also been given a copy of the informed consent for my records.

Dorothy B. Bascom
Participant Name

11/18/06
Date

Dorothy B. Bascom
Participant Signature

Dr. Marion Bascom

Fire Commissioner 1968

Badge

MEMORABILIA
MEDALLION


COMMISSIONER
BALTIMORE CITY
FIRE DEPT
M.C.B.

Transcription of Interview with Reverend Marion Bascom on November 4th, 2006

Katie Lambert
Jackie Spriggs
Kerry Zaleski

Jackie: Could you describe life before the riots?

Rev. Bascom: I would rather call that experience.. .or those experiences.. .disturbances rather than riots. I would think that before the disturbances there was a kind of...

(Doorbell rings)

Rev. Bascom: Oh, let's start all over.

(Conversation between interviewers.)

Rev. Bascom: I'd like to respond to you before you question me. Relax me.

Jackie: Again I want to thank you for letting us come into your lovely home and letting us interview you today. And some of the questions that we had in mind, we want to start with, could you describe life before the disturbances?

Rev. Bascom: Well, first of all, welcome to our house.

Katie: Thank you very much.

Rev. Bascom: We're very pleased to have you here. It might be that there are some things I have forgotten. One of the unfortunate things about my life, I never thought, prior to the disturbances, that I would be involved, as I became involved. Therefore, I did not write much of what could have been written down. I guess, there has always been disturbances, but not riots.

I, one time, was a pastor of a church in Florida, St. Augustine, where I first got some real tastes of what was going on in our world. I lived across the street from a funeral home, where I was a friend to the funeral director, Llyoce(spelling?) Johnson. That was in St. John 's County, one of the largest potato producing, Irish potato-producing, counties in the country. There was a sheriff down there named Shepard, I can't remember his first name, but I remember distinctly that he, at one time, more than one time, called Lloyce Johnson, who was an undertaker and say, "Llyoce, there's a dead nigger down in Hastings in the potato field. I want you to go down and get the body and bury it. Don't worry about any certifications, just bury the body."

And of course, Llyoce, being single, and sort of frightened, did what he told her to do.
In the mean time, I called a lady, Mrs. Elsie, who was the superintendent, supervisor of elections, and suggested that she would hold, bring down to our church the [election] books, so that colored people in those days could register to vote, because they were afraid to go downtown to register. I guess that, along with.. .and I might say that she did it, and as a result, several hundred people were registered to vote, particularly colored people, and so as a result, I guess I got interested [in civil rights].

And then I came to Baltimore, where I became rather active in what was going on here. There were some groups, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People here, headed by Miss Lilly Jackson, there was the Baltimore Urban League, which was headed by Vernon Templeton. Of course, there were splinter groups. Students were becoming...at a point of unrest. I guess that before the disturbances you might also say that.. .when I came to Baltimore, of course, it was in 1949...there were no facilities...eating facilities.. .for blacks outside of the black community.

In **1954,** when I became a member of the Grand Jury of Baltimore, although I was a member of the Grand Jury, and we met downtown every morning during the week for a three month period, there was no where downtown where blacks.. .Negroes. .colored people could go and buy food.

I guess you hear me saying Negro, colored, and now black. These are the different phases that we have come through. And now there's Afro-American. So in my life, I've been colored, Negro, black, and now I'm Afro-American .African-American. So, that, I guess, pretty much tells you something of where I was and what I was about, prior to the disturbances.

Jackie: Now, we're going to go to the disturbances. What was life like during the disturbances?

Rev. Bascom: During the disturbances, interestingly enough, I don't know where you would begin to call them disturbances...During... the most prominent part of the disturbances center around the assassination of Martin Lither King. Fortunately, I got to know him fairly well, and it was in 1968, I think, that the real flare-up came in the disturbances, when he was murdered.

During that period, I was a member of the Board of Fire Commissioners of Baltimore City, so that I got a chance to see much of the disturbances firsthand. I wore a white hat and a gold.. .a brass. ..badge, which indicated that I could go around the city at will. So that police and anybody else [who] stopped me, so that when curfew time came, I was not obliged to go in, I could stay out and see what was going on.

I call it disturbances, because in a real sense, there was, during that time, so much hope.. .H-O-P-E.. .that things would change. I have not begun to tell you about going across Route **40** and stopping at the diners and being refused to be served. Now you go to the Double T Diner now, you just go in as if nothing's happening. But police stood guard against colored people going in to the diner.

Let me just tell you a little story quickly, it was a group of people...George Collins, who was with Afro-American newspapers, Logan Pierce, who was pastor of a local church here in the city, and one or two more, who dressed as if they were Africans and foreign dignitaries and they went to Miller's Restaurant which was on Fayette Street and they were served. Only to find out later that they had served local blacks in this fabulous

restaurant downtown. Just as an aside...

Katie: That's a great story! That's a wonderful story.

Rev. Bascom: Of course, I suspect I told you as much about it as possible. Other than to say that, as I was saying there was so much hope in the community and it was shattered by the untimely death of Martin Luther King, and the town went crazy. Not only Baltimore, but almost every city in the country experienced the same thing, it was almost as if blacks in every community had suddenly been inoculated with an hypodermic needle and caught the disease of disturbance. And so they began to set fires, and it was just horrible. You could smell smoke anywhere in Baltimore City.

An aside, which isn't of historical significance, but the story goes that an old lady was seen carrying a small television during the disturbances, and word goes that she said "The Lord blessed me with this television.", even though she had broken out a window in one of the local stores and gotten the television, at the expense of the store. ..well, that's sort of a funny aside.

But it was a terrible time, and it was during this time that one of the major meetings in this city was held, when Spiro Agnew was governor. Let me back up and say that Spiro Agnew was a Republican, and three or four of us preachers went to see him in Towson, and he said to me, "Every time I see you, I'm repulsed." and I said, "Well, that's a problem you'll have to overcome." and I don't think he ever did. But I, in a characteristically preacher-ish way, said well, you'll have to overcome it.

In the meantime, he called many blacks downtown to his President Street office, and he began to berate the colored, Negro, black community for their backing up and not protesting other blacks who were running rampant in the streets. Because this was also the time when General Gelston (spelling?) was the police commissioner, and it was General Gelston who told us one day as we sat in his office in the armory, "We now have guns that are able to with, to, pick out a person at the corner of North and Pennsylvania, from where we are standing, identify that person and shoot them." Which showed the power of the police, but you see, it wasn't just the local police, but the State Police and the National Guard, which will show you the intensity of the disturbances at that time.

So he called us to, Governor Agnew, called us and said "When the trouble came, you leaders ran." And he began to berate those of us who were there. I don't know how many, there must have been at least **50** so-called black leaders. I don't want to take credit, nor do I want to give credit to anybody else, but simultaneously, we got up and started walking out on the governor. We moved on out of the governor's office, and came up to our church, and our church was on the corner of Lafayette and Madison Avenue, where we met to decide and to discuss what sort of action we would take as a result of what had happened.

Maybe I've answered your question or maybe I've over-answered it...

Katie: Not at all, not at all.

Jackie: Ok, we're going to move on right now, Could you describe life for us after the disturbances?

Rev. Bascom: Well, life for us after the disturbances is still trying to learn each other as human beings. One of the tragedies, I think, blessing or tragedy, it seems to me, lies in the fact that American society has developed around racial consciousness. So that even to this day, when I go into an establishment that is white-owned and operated, I have the feeling that someone is sort of watching me. I think all blacks are sensitive of it, of that same feeling, so that we have developed a society where, unconsciously, we are not able to react to others as human beings. We sort of get the feeling that we're getting put upon.

Since the disturbances, you may be sure that the climate has gotten better for some, but the climate still is bad for many blacks, and Hispanics, in Baltimore. This is true from the fence that the president is presently building, so that at present, we are in a state of flux. I don't know what's going to happen. I can only hope that this multi cultural life that we live in this country can find a sense of developing real relationships.

I would say this, that blacks have a long way to go in terms of equality in this country -equal treatment. I guess I'd rather use that phrase rather than equality -equal treatment. Because we really don't know what America will become, will be like, when there is equality of treatment, equal opportunities. And I suspect that is the point at which I am most discouraged. If you asked me, how do you feel about the present, I have some sad feelings about the present, and yet I find some bright nooks here and there as we deal with what is happening in the present. I don't have any statistics, statisticians will have to work that out in years to come, but I guess that's about the best way I can put it for how things are going now.

Jackie: There was one question that I had on my mind, and I was wondering what role did the churches play in restoring peace to the city after the death of Dr. King?

Rev. Bascom: Well, the churches have played a significant role in the movement. Interestingly enough, I was on the Selma march, the second march. I was on the march where Viola(?) Lusa(?) was murdered in Alabama. The white woman from Detroit who left family and everybody else and came to be a part of the movement.

Churches provided transportation for the movement. For example, I decided I was going to Selma. I really didn't have any money to go to Selma, so I said to our congregation one Sunday morning; I want to give you the privilege of sending me to Selma. (Laughter)

And I said let the ??? come forward and receive an offering for my expenses to go to Selma. Fortunately, the church gave me enough money that Sunday morning not only for me to go, but there was another preacher, Herbert Edwards, who was the pastor of Trinity Baptist Church, he did not have any money, and our church, I gave him enough money out of my offering so that he could go round trip to Selma, with me.

Another example: what did the churches do? When Stokely Carmichael, and this was before he became "Torres"???, we helped and encouraged Stokely in his role with the student non-violent group, so when he came to Baltimore, one of the many times he came to Baltimore, and had arrived at a degree of fame, our church was THE church that opened its doors so that Stokely could speak, and it was on a Saturday night that he spoke, and our church was filled to overflowing on that night when Stokely spoke.

I never will forget that Stokely's wife, I think it's Makeega, anyhow, when she came in, to study where Stokely was, and some others who were sitting with me. Stokely had told her about me. I've always treasured a spot on my hand where Makeega kissed my hand and thanked me for being kind and understanding about Stokely and his movement.

What did the churches do? The churches under girded the students from Morgan College with the Civic Interest Group. And I might say, while I'm at it, I hope that someone in this series will introduce themselves to Clarence Logan. Clarence Logan was the president of the Civil Interest Group at Morgan, a group of students. And I woman whose name is rarely mentioned, Katherine Adams, was secretary and treasurer of the Civic Interest Group, as well as, I was the adult chairman of the Civic Interest Group. When the students got put in jail out at Morgan, at Northwood, it was at that time, I think the student body filled up the city jails. Students. Students filled up the city jails. And I think that we had done about ninety, we got about ninety people out ofjail...so when you begin to ask, churches supported Mike King, Martin Luther King, they supported the Urban League, the NAACP, and provided meeting places for civic concerns, so that.. .churches all over the city of Baltimore, and across the country, gave real, real support to the civil rights movement. And you'll have to remember that many of the preachers in the movement, many of the people in the movement were preachers. Martin Luther King, that devilish boy Revels, I can't call the names...history will bear me out, that many of the preachers were involved Fred Shuttlesworth. So that you want to know what the preachers do.. .comes to mind the fact that the 16th Street Baptist Church was bombed, the little girls were killed. Martin Luther King was on his way, I think, to a civil rights meeting at a Pentecostal church in Memphis the night he was murdered.

So that the churches have been an integral part, but the one thing that I will say is most important to me, and we tend to forget it, is that students pushed adults to do what was done. And without an interested student body, one can wonder what will happen. The future of this nation belongs to the young college students, and remember, and I hope I'm not being redundant, remember that Martin Luther King really didn't get the movement started until the children were put out onto the streets in the march and people from all over America saw the hoses being turned on little girls and little boys and it would turn them upside down, so that I guess this is a part of what you're pretty much asking.

Katie: Could I ask you a little bit about your relationship with Dr. King? I'm very, I'm very, interested in hearing about, about you two.

Rev. Bascom: I would put it this way, I met Mike King in Philadelphia and was introduced to him by Dr. William H. Grey, who was the pastor of Brighthood Baptist Church in Philadelphia. His son, Dr. William Herbert Grey Jr, or third, or fourth, was in the Congress, and went from there to become the president of the Negro College Fund.

And we met in a social gathering. And I would say this very frankly, that he was a quiet man, pretty much unassuming, he only, it seems to me, came to himself fully, when he was caught up in some tragic moment. So that Martin Luther King was, in my opinion, very human, he was a combination of saint and sinner. He was a brilliant man. And of course, we had meetings here, where we shared quiet times, we were together at Hampton ministers conference one year. When he needed places to meet [in Baltimore), I would get a call, asking to give support. Although he's now deceased, Samuel T. Daniels was the Grandmaster of the Masonic Fraternity, it's headquarters is now at the corner of Lanvale and Eutaw, we would have meetings there. Or around at churches everywhere.
And I guess that's about as much as I would say about Martin Luther King. As I said, he was a very

quiet fellow, but a very brilliant man. I would tell you this, the more I read Taylor Branch, and others that have written about him in a very critical fashion, yet a truthful fashion, I guess very few of us recognized the greatness of the man, and he grows larger than life as time goes on.

Well, what else do you think we ought to talk about?

Katie: I just had one other question, I know you and your wife are on your way, but I was interested in hearing about your community activism after the disturbances, you know, your later activism.

Rev. Bascom: Well, it still continues. After the disturbances, things began to quiet down, and we began to enter into conversations. For example, I think that it can be said that one of the reasons that Associated Black Charities has become such a movement in this city, and you may not know what Associated Black Charities is, but I was one of the founders of Associated Black Charities and it has become the hub around which much of the black money and the white money comes together, and it is a multi-million dollar group that is being supportive of various causes in the city.

Since that time, I think that predominately, the Circuit Court of Baltimore City is manned by blacks, the police department is headed by a black, the fire department is headed by blacks, by and large. So that many things have changed. For example, the University of Baltimore, to which you attend, was at one time, was known primarily for it's teaching of law. Now it has grown, and this might make you feel good, and might be good for the recording, that probably at one time, most of the lawyers who were graduating from law school here in Baltimore City came out of University of Baltimore, so that it not be downplayed as an institution.

What more can I say?

Katie: Anything else you want to!

Rev. Bascom: I would say this, that I am available to talk again to you. So that you can go back and see what you're not asking. Feel free to call me, you don't have to get Dr. Nix to call me. Or write. I see her in church on Sundays, but if you want to talk to me again, I'm free, just be sure that you catch me.

(Laughter)

Dr. Mordecai Johnson, let me put in a plug for my alma mater. Dr. Mordecai Y. Johnson, was president of Howard University, we'll call it the premiere predominately black institution in the country. He used to talk for an hour and half, he was a preacher, and he would say, after having preached for about an hour and half, he would say, "Now, I have only given you the introduction to what is on my mind."

(Laughter)

Katie: That's wonderful!

Rev. Bascom: So maybe I've only given you the introduction.

Dr. Bascom: For many [many] years our church lead in securing memberships for the NAACP in the City of Baltimore. Mrs. Jackson had a way of getting churches, particularly, to participate in drives for the NAACP. [And], as a result of the churches in Baltimore City at one time in the history of the NAACP ,the local Baltimore branch became the largest branch in the country. Believe it or not.
[And] of course, there was Ferman Templeton whose name is sometimes forgotten, who was president of the Urban League, who is very active. I became a friend of his. [And] then in the sixties, I guess I became more intensely interested. Our church became to attract rather influential politicals, one being Henry Parks was a member of the city council and the owner of the Parks sausage company .He and I became very warm friends. [and]as a result, we spent many times in this very room sitting down talking about problems in the City.[and]eventually, I was named a member of the Fire Commissioners of Baltimore City which gave me not only my Civil Rights portfolio ,but it gave me the privilege of working to make it better for Black Firefighters in the City of Baltimore.

As a case in point, very few Blacks were promoted in the Fire Department. [And] to get promotions in those days required [being a] passing certain examinations. [and] this is not very well known ,but there was a time members of the Board meet with the Personnel Director of Baltimore who admitted that he could make a test that would pretty much exclude Blacks.[and] that was the time that we also came to the conclusion that we could develop a chittlin test (c-h-i-t-t-l-i-n-g test). I don't think it has a 'g' on it , but chittlin. In which, we could develop test that would exclude Whites. [That] because we have certain language patterns and certain foibles in the black community that you are just not aware of. [So that] finally, we came to the point ,when we could really pass blacks.

[And] there was a fellow named Clyde Williams. I think his name was. [anyhow] Clyde could pass any test that anybody prepared. [And] finally he became Deputy Fire Chief. I think Clyde is still alive . But Clyde just had the faculty to take tests. Many people have problems taking test, but Clyde sort of broke the barrier. [And] blacks started an upward mobility in the Fire Department.

Interesting enough, when I went into the Fire Department in 1968, there were black beds and white beds. [So that] Black Firefighters did not sleep in the beds the white Fire Fighter slept in.
Katie: Still? Oh my God!

Dr. Bascom: In 1968, I won't claim any accolades for it ,but as a Commissioner of the Firefighter , was the fact that, I was able to break it up. So that, one of the things that I am most proud of in my tenure I was able to break it up. [And] I must say that there were three members in the Board of Fire Commissioners, Constantine Prevas, who still lives. [And] why can't I remember his name? You will have to check that later.

Katie: O.K.

Dr. Bascom: Of course, I was on the fire board two were White and I was the Black one. Two were democrats. I was the republican.

Jackie and Katie: laughter

Dr.Bascom: Now, I was a republican until I got over it.

Jackie and Katie: laughter

Dr. Bascom: [But] I could always count on Constantine Prevas to vote with me. [So that] any two Fire Commissioners could vote together and veto any other vote. [So] It was understood that Constantine Prevas and I were going to vote together on matters that was critical. [Now] there were times when there were political issues, that the mayor was interested in.

Thomas D'Alesandro was the mayor then. Interesting enough, Tommy D'Alesandro is the brother of Ms.Pelosi, who is now the majority leader in the House of Representatives.

He would say , "don't ask Reverend Bascom, don't say anything to Rev. Bascom about this vote [about this vote] that you are going to have because he is not going to vote my way." [And] the two of you will just have to vote to get this through. So, that was the only time when he knew that there were certain times that I would not vote the way the mayor of the City of Baltimore wanted it.

[And] interesting enough Tommy D'Alesandro and I are still warm personal friends.[And] on occasion ,when he wants to talk to me about things political ,he will come here and sit and talk for ,as long as, we want to talk.

I guess that's about it. Am I rambling too far?

Katie: Not at all. (Laughs) you're not rambling a bit.

Dr. Bascom: What else do you want to talk about?

Katie: Another questions that we have [it sort of] has to do with the same thing .[Is] we were interested in the role community wide of the African American clergy in Baltimore and the Civil rights Movement

Dr.Bascom: The African American clergy in Baltimore in terms of real leadership during my time amounted to [about]four men who could be dependant on the give support to Civil Rights .[And]by that I mean many preachers participated. This is not to do away with what they did. But there four men and they were called around that time called around town the "four horsemen" they were Frank L Williams, now deceased, who is the pastor of Metropolitan Methodist Church, Vernon Dobson who is the pastor of Union Baptist Church, and Robert Newbold who is presently living in Texas and Me.

Katie: Laughter

Dr.Bascom: We were called the "four horsemen". We were all of different denominations, but we were very close friends and had the respect of one another in a very warm and personal way. Robert Newbold was the lead republican.

[And] I will say this ,as on the side. During the time when we had the disturbances and again, I reintegrate, that I do not use the term riots with regard to the Civil Rights Movement and the death, the fire burning at the time of Martin Luther King, I call it disturbances and ,in that, was a part of it. I have a right to call, what I want to call it.

Katie: Yes you do.

Dr.Bascom: It was during that period that I got my first real insult, it wasn't an insult, but this was the time the Spiro Agnew was the Executive of Baltimore County. [And] Robert got us to go up and see Spiro Agnew.

This was, also, the time when Mahoney, who was a prominent contractor here in the city, was running for governor (whose platform was every mans' home is his castle). Which meant that blacks were not to integrate. This was just a slogan. [And] it was during this time that Robert Nebold [got us] the fours of us to go up to see Mr. Agnew. [And] Mr. Agnew said to me [and] (I have always that of this as a very high honor). "You know,

he said “every time I see you I am personally taken aback. I am repulsed by you”. [And where upon] I told him. It would be a problem. He would have to overcome that. So, Mr. Agnew and I were never friendly, but you will, also, remember [that] Mr.Agnew became the Vice President of the United States and was disgraced by some of his shenanigans here in the state of Maryland and in DC.

You will have to lead me on because I will keep on going.

Katie: Not at all. We are fascinated by all of it.

Moving on to the disturbances themselves we were interested in understanding a little bit about each community. Specifically, how your community specifically was affected. How they reacted. How the community was affected long-term.

Dr.Bascom: Well, I would like to think, that the disturbances came into being because of a real ferment that running across the nation. You will have to remember that none of this was done in isolation .While we were in Baltimore working out our own little problems. Every community was in the process of doing the same thing. [And] at the heart of it was the movement down in Montgomery, Alabama, movements everywhere,

There were those marching across route 40 for accommodations, diners, There was no place in the major areas here in Baltimore, where blacks could be accommodated

As, I see blacks and whites intermingling all over the place. It is amusing.

[That] in 1954, I think it was. I was on the grand jury of Baltimore City. [And] there were two of us on the grand jury at that time. It was Dr. Draper, who was associated with Morgan at that time, and I was appointed or selected to sit on the Grand Jury. I am pretty sure that they were only two blacks on there, but there was not one place downtown, where we could sit and have lunch. Despite the fact that we were indicted all the criminals that came before the Circuit Court of Baltimore City.

Katie: That is unbelievable

Dr.Bascom: We could not sit anywhere. In fact, the main drug store then was ‘Read’s.

[And] in almost every Read’s drug store there was a fountain, Blacks could go to the fountain, buy something, and they would have to take it out.

Maybe, the most famous eatery in Baltimore (in northwest Baltimore) was Nate’s and Leon’s. Nate’s and Leon’s was at the corner of Linden and North. In fact, the building is no longer there, but Nate’s was just a famous as the place downtown where they sell the famous corned beef. [Well] I got a chance to know Nate’s very well. [And] believe it or not, you would go to Nate’s and you would have to stand at the back [and the back] of the counter and make your order and take it out. Nate’s name was Hans (H-A-H-N-S)

Anyway, we became friends. [And] very often, before the disturbances Nate’s would insist on sitting down talking to me. [And] we became friendly.

[But] I’m veering from where I was.

There was no place in the City of Baltimore where blacks could go in and be accommodated. For example, my wife tells a story of her little girl. [Of] Vivian who is quite light skinned. [And] Vivian lived in the Pimlico area with her mother and her father. [And] of course, Vivian didn’t know that she was black. [And] when she was that age you could hardly tell that she was a black child. [And] all the properties up there around Garrison and Park Heights knew that Vivian was black Vivian just was so fast and moving about and sit up on the stool

and they would serve. Vivian never knew that she wasn't supposed to sit there. But there was agitation because of this all over the country. [And] as a result, before much of the disturbance begin, we began to have marches and sit- ins. [And] it was during that period that I became vitally interested in the sit- in movement.

Student non-violent committee, of course, the NAACP was less then psychically aggressive during this period. You will have to remember that there technique was a law game, not a law game. I don't mean it that way. They were interested in making it illegal for discrimination to exist in public accommodations, but] it must be said that while they did not do a lot of violent reaction. They gave money and support and lawyers.

[And there has to] we have to remember this man .[And] I hope that one day ,those of you that are really interested in the Civil Rights Movement will try to find out something about Tucker Dearing, Tucker Dearing was a lawyer "one of the ablest civil rights lawyers that has ever been in Baltimore".

In sprite of the fact that, there was Bob Watts, and others who were interested in the legal aspects of Discrimination Juanita Jackson Mitchell

It was this man. Tucker Dearing who was a country bumpkin, to say the least, talked with a real drawl, but was a brilliant lawyer. [And] somewhere in the City of Baltimore somebody needs to lift high that man's name. In fact, while I am talking, this is the first time this has ever occurred to me. I am going to start agitating to find out more and more about Tucker Dearing.

Dr.Bascom: Now, I think that if you're interested, you will find that Larry Gibson might know more about Tucker Dearing and might have it more certified than anybody else in the City of Baltimore. Larry Gibson is a professor at University of Maryland Law School.

[And] I think Larry lives in this neighborhood somewhere.

[But] it was during this period that we could not go to places to eat. [And] the students of Morgan were in ferment. By some hook or crook, I got involved with Clarence Logan and Doug Sands and other students who were out at Morgan. [And] I shared in the leadership of breaking down the barriers of segregation and discrimination in Northwood. Northwood was one of the top flight in town malls of a sort. [And] it was diagonally across from Morgan State University. [But] students could not go to the White Coffee pot (which was another one of the little corner eateries where you got hamburgers, and coffee, anything else that you want). Students at Morgan State College, at that time, could not go across that street and sit down and eat in the White Coffee Pot. They could not eat in Read's drug store. They could not eat in Hecht's which was a department store out there. It was a completely segregated world. [And] it was not until students became a part of students insisted on the ferment.

I can't and you'll have to forgive me, but I can't understand what has happened to students. The student of 2006 are completely different from the students of the 1950's and sixties

Katie: You're right.

Dr.Bascom: I cannot understand what has happened to students. [And] I tell you this, had it not been for students. [And] this will show you what I mean, had it not been for students much of what has come about to bring equal treatment to minority people in America would have never occurred. The students at Greensboro, the students at Morgan. You name it. [And] you, also, have to remember, that had it not been for the fact Jim Bevel's broke through the traces and fooled Mike King [and], Young and Jessie and all the rest of them into getting students into the streets. In Birmingham, things would not have been the way they are. Plus the fact [and] I hates to mention this. Plus the fact of the four young black kids who were killed in the 16th Street Baptist Church that Sunday morning.

So, I guess if anything I have to say about the movement .It must be about the activity of students.

There is a woman who lies dead now. Her name is Catherine Adams, who was a treasurer of "CIG" (the City Interest Group). I was the president of the group. She was the treasurer of the group. Clarence Logan was the student leader of the group, Leo Burrows, (and these names just come up). I am remembering them for a long time.

[And] as I said, if you really want to get an insight into the student movement here at Morgan, you must meet ,and know ,and talk to Clarence Logan. His phone number is registered in the telephone book it is 947-3777, at any rate, it is very close to that. Clarence Logan must be remembered as a student very active in the affairs of the Civil Rights Movements here in Baltimore City.

Now where am I and where are you?

Jackie: We have 28 minutes on this one.

Katie: Yea, we've got about a half an hour.

[And] I am goanna ask you one more question, and then I am goanna switch. [And]

Karrie is going to ask you some questions.

We were also wondering, how your family was directly affected by the disturbances?

[And] how if at all did you feel you family's reaction was any different from other African American families in the community?

Dr.Bascom: Well, how shall I put it? Other then to say, that, my family might have suffered because of my absence from around them a lot, because I woke up and went to bed civil righting.

I was going to Cambridge to Annapolis to Washington. [And] you name it, in this real ferment that was going on.

I'm not saying this boastfully, but it was during this period that my children, and ,I guess ,I must be responsible for ,but all of my children, this period, started going to private schools. [Two of my boys] the two boys went to boys Latin. My two daughters went to the park school.

I don't know if ,whether, it was the best thing or not.

I'm not too sure ,that many of us who did not go to any integrated school are any poorer because of segregation or not.

I will say this that, some of the best teachers in the city of Baltimore were Black teachers, who were denied the privilege of going to white schools of higher Education or not. Most of the teachers, the older teachers ,were restricted to going to local colleges (Morgan and Coppin for undergraduate work). It was during this period that (and I don't know if you ever heard of this), [that] Black teachers and White teachers were placed on separate list for appointment for schools. So that my wife who was first in her class at Coppin could not enjoy being on the list with white teachers. even though they had passed the same examination.

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TRANSCRIPT

Interview no.2 with Dr. Marion Bascom, Saturday, November 18, 2006.
Dr. Marion Bascom
The Baltimore Riots of 1968
Katie Lambert is the interviewer.
November 18, 2006
2101 Park Ave.
Baltimore, Md 21217

Dr. Bascom: Make it enjoyable this time.

Katie: I am recording, are you recording as well?

Jackie: Yea

Katie: Ok, all right.

This morning, we wanted to begin by asking you just some basic biographical questions about yourself.

Dr. Bascom: Ok

Katie: If you wouldn't mind, give us some details such as: where you were born, raised, where you attended school. Things like that.

Dr. Bascom: I was born in Pensacola, Florida, March [the] 14th, 1925, which makes me 81 years old.

I, of course, went to school in Pensacola for the greater portion of my twelve years. I graduated from Washington High School in Pensacola Florida and then went to Florida Memorial College in St. Augustine. I'm, also, a graduate of Howard University Divinity School which is located in Washington. I've done some study at Garrett Biblical Institute in Evanston Illinois, as well as, a little work at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington. I guess that is my academic portfolio.

I have, of course, been honored by Florida Memorial College with a Doctor of Divinity ,which is honorary, and I have been granted an honorary degree from Morgan State University where I served for two or three years as Director of the Morgan Christian Center.

I guess that is about as much as I can tell you.

Katie: No, that's wonderful. We just wanted some basic [basic] stuff, thank you.

Katie: Ok, if you wouldn't mind could you please tell us a little bit more about your experiences in Florida and your experiences in Baltimore in the 1950's kind of the burgeoning of the Civil Rights Movement.

Dr.Bascom: Well, [I was] after finishing college, I went to become the pastor of the First Baptist Church in St. Augustine and for a brief while became president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People the local branch. It was there that I became really active because I had come out of a college that was quite active in the city.

[And] as a result after becoming pastor of the First Baptist I recognized some things that things that were going on in St. Augustine in St. Johns County. St. Augustine, as you probably know, is the oldest city in the United States; it still has a slave market at the heart of the city.

Katie:Ummmm

Dr. Bascom: And after becoming president and pastor of the church and president of the NAACP we went to see Mrs. Else I can't remember her first name but Mrs. Else was the superintendent, supervisor of elections in St. Augustine and we were able to persuade her to bring the election books or the registration books to First Baptist Church in order to enable more colored people to register and vote.

Across the street from me was a woman who belonged to our church and was a funeral director who occasionally got calls from the Sheriff of St. Johns County whose name was Sheppard he on occasion would call up Lois and say "Lois, there is a dead

'nigger' down in the potato field in Hastings and I want you go down to pick up the body and bury it don't worry about a death certificate just bury it. Of course she has no choice, if she wanted to live in St. Augustine's peacefully. I guess this was one of the reasons that spurred me on the get colored people registered we were called colored people in those days.

So, that we have evolved from colored to Negro, to blacks, to African-Americans. So, I don't quite know, what we are now in the year 2006. I guess you might say. I am a part of the hormone of God which makes me how I am.

At any rate, as a result of the voting there were literally hundreds of people added to the rolls in St.Augustine and you will remember that maybe fifteen to twenty years later Martin Luther King had his encounter in St. Augustine. [And] well I guess that excited me to become a part of the Civil Rights Movement as I eventually did.

Katie: And when you got to Baltimore, How did that translate?

Dr.Bascom: Well, it translated into the fact that Mrs. Lillie May Jackson who was then president of the NAACP was a neighbor of mine and [she] as I said was a President of the NAACP and you didn't say no to her.

She was quite a person she was also the mother of Juanita Jackson Mitchell who was the wife of Clarence Mitchell who was called the fiftieth senator in those days. She had another daughter that was quite famous an artist her name was Kaya her last name was Kaya and she had another daughter who was quite a singer. Her name was what?

Mrs. Bascom: Mariam Jackson Downs

Dr. Bascom :Mariam Jackson Downs ,and as I remember my wife tutored Miriam Downs' daughter at any rate I become involved and interesting enough the people in Douglass Memorial Church became.

Jackie: Stop.

Katie: Why what’s wrong?

End CD 09:13