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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 40<sup>th</sup> 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, Ph.D.  
Visiting Assistant Professor  
History and Community Studies  
The University of Baltimore

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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.

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Date



Submitted by: Christina Schuyler

December 10, 2006

Transcript

Informant: Well you know what, what I really remember about the riots was from an eight year old perspective; I was eight years old when Doctor King was assassinated and I can remember, the, everybody in my family, when the news hit, we just burst out crying, we were um, we um everyone was upset um right then, not long after the riots started, I can remember my mother begging for um my brothers not to go out, I had brothers that were twelve and thirteen years older than me. She was begging for them not to go out the night of the curfew. I guess a lot of what I remember was the anger that went through my family. Everybody was so angry that here was a man that represented peace and the struggle in terms of the civil rights movement and this man was assassinated and everybody knew, everybody in the black community knew that the United States government was behind the assassination of Doctor King, that's how we felt in the community. They knew that they wanted him dead. It was that kind of anger and the whole community was angry about that, so as it turned out, I remember also that the neighborhood after the riots because um during the curfew everything was shut down and you had to be in the house at a certain time. Well, I remember coming out from Emerson Avenue, we would catch the bus at the junction. We lived in Fairmount and coming into the junction, if you walked into the junction, there were national guards, troops everywhere, trucks everything. The junction looked like it was tore up, we rode a fifteen bus, we rode down Emerson Avenue to Poplar Grove and from Emerson and Passon Street areas. I remember Emerson Avenue was tore up...looked like a war had come through somewhere. I remember the fear I felt looking. My mother had to come me down on the bus. My mother held my hand extra tight because we didn't have the experience of army, national guardsmen everywhere. So, um, and then I guess I came from a family that also processed and debated things going on, debated why he was killed him, all about that, all that energy was going on in the community, in my own family and it was just a very, very, very tense and tough time for all of us in the African American community here in Baltimore and I guess really all over the country and really all over the world.

Interviewer: The social, economic impact?

Informant: See, you wouldn't ask me that, see my perspective would be from that of a child. You know, and what a child felt like because really I was recounting feelings that I like then.

Interviewer: I remember you said your brother did go out even though grandma asked them not to go out. They did go out. And do you remember people that actually participated in the riots and do you remember seeing you know?

Informant: I don't really remember seeing anything, but I remember, I can remember everybody, I remember conversations that everybody was having, begging their sons, everybody was begging their sons not to go out. It was a, it was a, everybody, what the terror that was in my family was the same as everywhere. Most of, I know for my brothers, everybody felt like they had to do something. You know, when you are disenfranchised and feel powerless, when people feel like that, whatever you can do to

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December 10, 2006

Transcript

show anomy, whatever you can do to be in charge, you know, um, is what happens. That's for any oppressed people on the planet Earth, wherever it is, if you are in Ireland or if you are anywhere. Oppressed people, the way they respond to feeling powerless is to by any means necessary to gain that power and to take over what is going on. It comes out the way it comes out. This riot represented the rage. I felt it in my own house. But it wasn't just in my house, it was in every family, I think across this nation. Every family felt the anger and rage of the death and assassination and murder of Doctor King, so um, you know and that's what it was rage, it was outrage. It was like, this is one more thing you can't take, it was enough our children were being murdered and the four little girls. You know, that was enough. And on top of that, Doctor King, it was just horrendous. I can remember that before the riots, you could go into the store and hand your money and buy whatever you wanted to buy. There were no gates on the store and you know the fronts were pretty much open and after the riot it got to be where there were store fronts with gates to pretty much shut and lock um um, there were this bullet proof windows started to come up in corner stores, when you wanted to purchase something, there was this bullet proof glass between you and the store owner. Um, so that changed. Many of thee um, the white store owners, many of them closed down the stores and weren't there anymore and didn't open up their stores in the community anymore. And um, and then the devastation of just the community, everything was tore up and it was interesting that many of those things were never even rebuilt even, you know, because when any kind of tragedy hits a community anywhere, there should be some kind of rebuilding of that community. That never happened in our community. It was interesting that with Katrina, they are not rebuilding that either. I think that um, it's like an um a boil, you know what I mean. An ooze and puss sore. It's hurting', hurting' and finally it's erupts and after all the ooze and puss and craziness comes out of that boil, then the healing process can really start. Then you really get a chance to see what is inside of it. I think America had been living under this illusion and pain for so long and African Americans born here in America, we had been living under this for so long and it finally erupted and the healing process had to begin for us as a community. I do think that that happened, but I think in some ways, integration was very very helpful for us in terms of human beings coming together, but on the other hand, the people that could really make changes in our communities started coming out of our communities moved out of the community. The people we looked to, doctors and lawyers, professional people that not only lived in the community weren't there anymore. And um, we stop buying with each other. We needed those stores in the community that you could, you know, buy, I think you know the money goes around one time. I think in other communities, the money goes around eight or nine times before it goes to another community. And um, you know, I guess, you know, the riots represented um, I don't know, I'm getting lost here, um, things shut down, everything, stores were shut down, stores that were owned by white people and...

Interviewer: That was a question I had...

Informant: Yeah, there were stores that were owned by white people, so when they made money, they took it back to their community. At that point, much more healing could have happened if those stores, economically, we could have rebuilt our community. Where some of those stores that black people started owning those stores and had places

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December 10, 2006

Transcript

where we owned cleaners and you know, corner stores and things where that right here in our community where people could serve each other. Of course, right after the riots you see, right after we started to rebuild you see, folks in our community who knew what to do to rebuild the community, drugs hit our community, heroin hit our community, it was very purposely hit our community. The same thing happened with Vietnam and the Vietnamese. It was a very old tactic that is used to disenfranchise the power and take it away.

Interviewer: The civil rights movement, did it end with Doctor Martin Luther King?

Informant: Well, um, you see, the civil rights movement didn't end up with death of Martin Luther King, you see, I don't believe so, nor did the nationalist movement. It's hard to understand that we have to connect with our people all over the world. Africans in Brazil, Africans in Cuba, Africans on the continent of Africa. Having an understanding of that, if you were going to connect, we had to connect with our family from all over the planet.

Interviewer: But would you say that Doctor King's approach of non-violence, that after his death, that was like the turn of events where blacks said this non-violent approach was not the solution? It was not working?

Informant: I think that um, I think that after the um the death of Doctor King that um that those people who believed in non-violence, I'm not going to say that they stop believing in it and stopped practicing it because many people did. It singled a time where people said enough is enough that when the US realized that black people were not African people were not going to stand for any kind of treatment. We were not going to lie down and take it anymore like that. At the party, the African revolutionary party, it singled a time that a portion of our community that believed in non-violence, there is a portion that believes that has our justice by any means necessary. I believe that both of ideologies brought us to today and let America know that we got something to deal with. So...

Interviewer: I had that during the time of riots, members of the Panther party were handing out leaflets and mobilizing and you know what I mean...

Informant: I was a little girl at that time. I really don't remember exactly what was going on with that, it would be like hear say. Changing climate in America. At some point, the anger got to be too much and you know...

Interviewer: The oppression of security?

Informant: There were a lot of older people in my family that really felt that you know, were certainly in the agreement with non-violent resistance, I don't have a problem with non-violence anyways because it is certainly a form of resistance, certainly the younger generation, they felt like America will ask other people to be non-violent when America is violent, they will ask other people for non-arms and to put weapons away and yet, they have weapons. They will ask for other people in other countries to not have nuclear

Submitted by: Christina Schuyler

December 10, 2006

Transcript

weapons even and they will have them. You know, you cant, so many people felt like you know, one of thee um, you know, the right to bear arms, people who had arms to protect themselves, many people felt it was their rights, as is the right of anyone else to protect themselves. And if you feel, at that point, people felt like we were under siege. When it came to the point where, that's a normal response, when you are held under siege. When you feel like the life of your family and the life of your people is being threatened, advertly threatened. That is a very normal response to retaliate. You know, I got a feeling, it's like, if you go to umm...any place in the world, where people are oppressed and feel disenfranchised, Irish first came here they were really badly, Irish people were killing other Irish people. When Italians first came here, they were treated really, really badly, and so bad, that many of them changed their names, what were they doing, they were killing other Italians because they were disenfranchised and oppressed, but one generation after they immigrated over here, they were able to upgrade their economic situation, and of course, during that time, it changed very little during the turn of the century, dealing with economically and feeling oppressed that the response was a response that people have had from all over the world. People say black on black crime, but when you go to China, Chinese are killing other Chinese people. So the people that live around you. So you know, the fact that this was, even in destroying our community, we didn't own anything in that community, we didn't own stores in the community, very few of us did. Economically, most people were renting. It was our community and it wasn't our community. Suffering from post-traumatic slave syndrome, the trauma never got any, all of us should be going into therapy right now. None of us got therapy. You are talking about uh just horrendous things that we watched over time and we never perched ourselves with that pain. In a way, we are just started to do that with movies like Saint Coffa, like that, it got handed down from generation to generation and then the media, the 30s, 40s, even the 50s, the way they portrayed African American people was terrible. I can remember growing up thinking that people that lived in the 20s and 30s, everybody walked around with their eyeballs in their head and weren't able to speak and as a little girl, I can remember feeling like that and I remember my own personal anger that in 15 and 16 and I started reading about Dubois, these great thinkers and I never knew about them growing up. All I saw was these real exaggerated, crazy images of black people in America making us look like stupid. Growing up with that feeling all of your life, that is some compounded trauma, if you will.

Interviewer: There were some recent things going around...

Informant: You know, there were people that lived through that. It's a postcard, but people lived through lynching. People lived through that trauma of actual lynching and all of them, all of those stories, and even if you didn't endure it, those stories were told to us in our family, so we didn't forget. I can remember one time when I was like 17, I wanted to travel down South alone and my mother was like "Girl, be careful, they lynch people" And I remember riding through Lynchburg and I was like "Whoa" because those are the things that you remember. Those are the things, the tapes that play in your head over and over again. We had to know as children who our potential enemy was. We had to know that. And I don't know how our parents were able to do it. Our parents were able to teach us to love unconditionally because my mother was real loving and real

Submitted by: Christina Schuyler

December 10, 2006

Transcript

peaceful. She taught me to love unconditionally and know who my enemy was at the same time. That dicotomy in this thing, you knew, that you could only go but so far. You had to know who your enemy was, but there were white people who were beautiful people individually, but what she said we were fighting against was white supremacists. Was the system of white supremacists. Many people, white people, have inherited that terrible demon. Their children have inherited it. But there are individual white people that are very loving. Most of our mothers to taught us how to love human beings, but keep your eye open for who are enemy are. \*Laughing\*

Informant: You know it's not over, it's not, you know, we have churches on every corner, we own stores, we have black mayors and black governors in many states and yet, we still, in terms of money, we have the largest middle class now that we've ever had, there is still this great divide. When you go to schools, especially here in Baltimore City, when you go to schools in Baltimore City, predominantly African American people go to. They don't have books, toilet paper, they don't have heat. Schools are definitely as far as I'm concerned separate and unequal. We have a school system that teaches history from a European perspective. We have a school system that our children can't themselves in. You know, recently, they have done things with a multi-cultural curriculum. Its just all kind of things that you um, if we um, if we truly have a multi-cultural space as African American month, and some white people still get mad that we have that, but if we don't have that, the reason for having that is the real history is not in the history books. We have inventors that should be in the history books with all the other inventors. All the Lois Latamors...PP Downing should be right there with them. I heard that the MD State Archives that there is no recorded history of the riots of 1968 and if that is true, that is a crying shame. That is a part of our history that we should not ever, ever, ever forget. We shouldn't forget.