

The University of Baltimore is launching a two-year investigation called “Baltimore’68: Riots and Rebirth,” a project centered around the events that followed the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and 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 website 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. They will ask you 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. 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 on the website, 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.

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

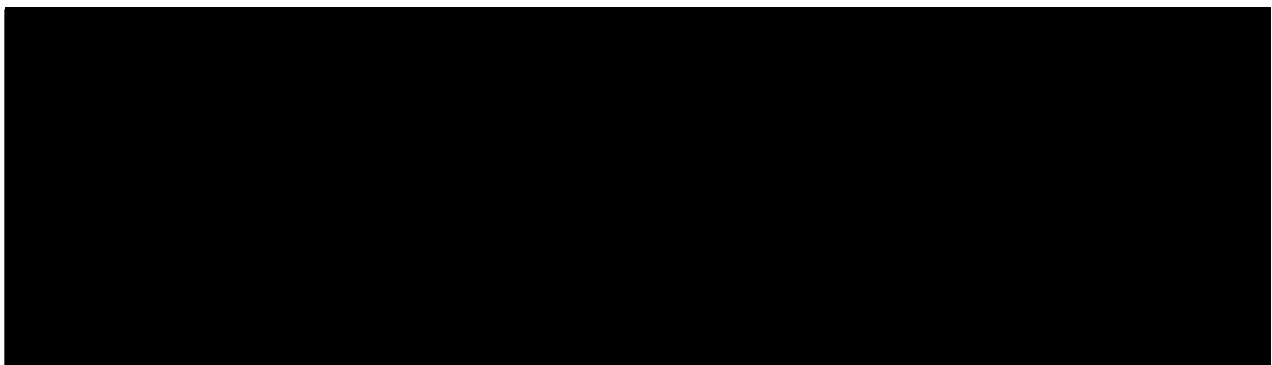
If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact me at 410-837-5296. Thank you for your participation.

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.



## *Interview of Governor William Donald Schaefer*

This interview was conducted by Fraser Smith of WYPR.

Smith: Governor in 1968 when the Martin Luther King was assassinated and we had trouble in the city you were the President of the City Council.

Schaefer: You know it was interesting because at that time I remember it so well, I was out at the Greenspring Inn out on Falls Road and I could see into the city it was sort of it looked hazy and smoke was coming out of the city and having dinner and I got a telephone call from Tommy D'Alesandro said you better come into the city right away because were having trouble so I started to go got dress not got dressed ate the food and went on in the city. It was an eerie feeling you know they put a curfew in. I remember riding around the city seeing how things were going everybody was in the house all of a sudden a member of the National Guard stepped from behind a tree and Halt! My God I almost died because you knew it sort of scared you. But our riots were minimal riots. I was thinking that because out in west they really burned up everything, they burned up everything but here we had riots but they were they contained and they smashed a couple windows and that was it. There was a doctor by the name of Saunders who set up a medical aid station for the people who were busting up the windows.

Smith: Did you go right to the Armory right from, from your dinner appointment?

Schaefer: Right from the Armory. I remember that so well. I think it was General Gelston that was ah it was it was a wonderful man. Tommy went in. Tommy was Tommy was a little taken back at this he had never seen a riot. I'd seen riots over in Europe and it was interesting to see the National Guard take over and they did well and an interesting feature was one night it was Holy Thursday, I think. I ah everything was quiet, people were calm no problems and I went down to go to Church, in Zion Church down near the fire department and I went in there they had started already started the service and the lights were down low because usually when they had the service at 12 o'clock at ah Holy Thursday. I went in and it was a little bit dark and they were speaking in German. I remember that. I don't remember many things but you know there are certain things that you remember.

Smith: Sure. So was this the day that King was killed?

Schaefer: I don't remember when.

Smith: I think it was a Thursday that he was killed, so.

Schaefer: That would have been Holy Thursday.

Smith: So we still we were still pretty calm at that point.

Schaefer: Oh yea, you know we didn't get out of hand. When you read the riots out in ah California we had riots but we had. I often thought about it. I thought we had sort of a minor riot. They ran up and down the street and broke some windows, set up a medical station but it didn't get out hand. It was a traumatic experience because we'd never had anything like that. Tommy had never had anything like that and all of a sudden kids going up breaking up windows and it went right straight up Gay Street. In other words it went toward the west, towards Edmondson Avenue. Ah on North Ave. and I remember Doctor Saunders setting up the Aid Stations for the kids who were cut when they broke the windows; but, they looted and they had a time.

Smith: There was some feeling in those first couple of days that maybe Baltimore would escape it.

Schaefer: Yeah.

Smith: Partly because there was a feeling that the relationship between the black and the white community was not as bad as it was in some places. Do you think that's right?

Schaefer: I know your right. Because, well first of all, Tommy was a very well liked man. He was liked by the blacks and whites and everybody liked Tommy. Out in California they had a real riot out there. They really had riots but down on Gay Street they had minor riots and breaking up windows up to North Avenue was as far as they go. But as far as hurting anybody I don't think they tried to hurt anybody and set up a medical station in short order. But I remember Tommy he looked like he'd been hit in the face with a divot it couldn't happen to him because he had a good relationship with the black community a very good relationship and all of a sudden they break out and I think that he was more startled that they took black community entered in to its problems.

Smith: What was, what was your role in all of this? I know Tommy called you. I know he wanted you there. You had some experience as you said before in dealing with situations like this from the Army.

Schaefer: After the war was over I went to the Army of Occupation and when the kids were rioting to come home. So I was leaving that kind of riot to come to another riot in the City of Baltimore.

Smith: You mean the soldiers

Schaefer: Yeah the soldiers. They wanted to go home.

Smith: Sure.

Schaefer: Nobody would take them home. They didn't have enough ships or something. So they started rioting. No not bad, not a bad riot. Not a riot where anybody was hurt it was just: take me home I've had enough of this. We got back to the city and I remember being at the Greenspring Inn and Tommy calling and saying I think were going to have

trouble. Later about an hour later he called me and said you better come in to Baltimore City because the fires are starting and you could see the blaze from Greenspring Inn you could see the blaze on Gay Street. They went in to the city of Baltimore they were busting up the windows and looting. I had not really ever seen that before. You know there they just smashed everything up they were sort of orderly.

Smith: So during the difficulty of those first couple of days you were at the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment Armory.

Schaefer: 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment Armory.

Smith: Did you have a role there?

Schaefer: No, well.

Smith: You were just kind of there along with Tommy and Gelston.

Schaefer: Yea. I was. Gelston was a great man by the way. He was a magnificent man. I remember so many good things that he did. He kept things orderly an orderly riot which is very difficult but Gelston was a fine man and I remember going up to the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment Armory and Gelston and all the National Guard were around there and Tommy was there. And after I left there got in a jeep and took a ride in a jeep and it was getting toward night time. Then I remember a young fellow stepping from behind a tree, stepping from behind a tree says: Halt! That surprised you, you know. You weren't ready for that but he let us go no problems at all.

Smith: There was apparently some criticism of Tommy for not being tough enough about the people that rioted. Do you think that was justified?

Schaefer: Well two ways to look at it: One you can be tough you know Tommy, Tommy was a nice man. He didn't like to, he didn't like to hurt people and he was particularly interested in the black community. He was a very close friend of the black community. His father used to talk to him about that: you, you, you. Tommy was Tommy was.

Smith: The old man thought he should be a little tougher.

Schaefer: Oh my gosh yea! The old man he'd stick his nose right in your face. Anytime on anything that was wrong he'd let you know. He was a great man. Gosh he was great you know as you reflect back you think about the different mayors he would be number one as far as I was concerned. And anything you wanted him to do he would try to do and that's another thing I like about him. But Young Tommy he was a little easier going. I remember they came down to city hall one day and we went into the big office and in the main office. I was President of The Council and they came in and kept their hats on and um put their feet on the desk.

Smith: Who did that?

Schaefer: People who were in the riots. They were over to discuss the matter over there. I said you know Tommy let them get away with it. He was a nice man he was a very nice man. He didn't take any action to tell them: take your shoes off take your hat off or something. Then they called me wanted me to tell him to come over there to East Baltimore. He went over to East Baltimore and I think things got better then. He was you know the black community liked him. They didn't have a trouble with Tommy. They had trouble was the time of the season they were going to have the riots they were going to have them.

Smith: Well King had been assassinated people were upset about that.

Schaefer: Right I think so

Smith: and I think his attitude was, you know we need to be as gentle as we can. First of all you don't want the burning and looting to continue so you try to deal with that.

Schaefer: We had limited burning and looting. You know out in California they really went wild out there burned up everything. Here it was selective burning selective burning. I don't mean they picked out one house because that was it. But they didn't try to burn everything. The broke a couple windows looted a little bit. But there wasn't that panic that hatred that you seen generated between races. It wasn't there. And that was due, I think, in lot to Tommy. He was a very gentle man. He was a gentleman. Not quite like me. I wasn't quite as nice as he was. I was tougher than he was.

Smith: I don't know about that.

Schaefer: Yes I was. You know when they start coming in: Take your hat off, take your feet off the desk.

Smith: Well there was that tension I think.

Schaefer: Yeah.

Smith: Spiro Agnew was pretty tough with people, in those days too.

Schaefer: Oh man. Roberta Welcome and Spiro Agnew had it out. Spiro made himself a hero out of that you know. As a result of that he got himself Vice President. Because he was so tough on everybody. But Verda Welcome, she was a fine women. She's been dead now. Her husband was about five foot five nice doctor he was a nice man. She was really a good lady too. Been gone a long time. When you think about people like Doctor Welcome and Misses Welcome, Verda Welcome it was good.

Smith: And Juanita was involved in that too. She was a friend of yours, right?

Schaefer: Juanita was. You know the Mitchell family. There were various degrees of the Mitchell family. The old man you always used that term the old man who was the 52<sup>nd</sup> Senator or 53<sup>rd</sup> Senator what ever he was. He did so much in civil rights it was amazing. He was a great man, not a good man a great man and Juanita was right with him. I remember her so well. When she was on her lasts days and she was out at Greater Baltimore Medical Center and I used to visit her maybe once or twice maybe three times a week. Lovely, lovely lady. I remember her she used to appear before the Board of Estimates and she wore a hat on top of her head and she would get yelling and screaming and jumping up and down. That hat would fly up oh! She was a real master. But the really wonderful man was old man...

Smith: Mitchell.

Schaefer: Mitchell himself. He was above everybody. He was just great. You know you meet such good fellows I mean he was a good man.

Smith: Governor I remember you saying when we talked you know years ago actually about after the riots your feeling that. I think what you said was that people you realized needed to get in and take care of things right away.

Schaefer: Yeah. If you let it simmer and don't do anything. We had City Fair around that time somewhere around that time and we took particular notice of getting into the communities into the neighborhoods and try to help them see if there was anything problems. Up at Mount Vernon was, I guess, one of the worst places when the Women's Civic League opened up and they kids came storming through. They stopped the Women's Civic league from having their parties for a long period of time. Then they went back to Mount Vernon. But that was one tough day. Tommy called me up and said you better come up here it doesn't look good and I remember standing in the middle right by Washington Monument and looking over and there is a bunch of kids ready to go. All of a sudden they swarmed across, they swarmed across. They didn't break up anything, they didn't hurt anybody but it was I guess a bad feeling in this city.

Smith: Was there a feeling that some extraordinary response was needed after the riots to make the community feel like Official Baltimore recognized that there were some grievances and you needed to get in there and address them?

Schaefer: I look at it a different way: Tommy a good man he was, he was a very nice man, maybe every once in a while a little too easy. But when they'd meet together they didn't have any problems. They met sorted ended the problems. You had the people, the rabble rousers every once in a while you'd run into them but most of the time the people that you talked to were reasonable. They understood and they also understood that they were breaking their own properties up. Like out in California they messed up the whole town and that little village out there but here they broke a window or two but they didn't smash up or burn everything and in particularly in Little Italy. Little Italy was interesting. Little Italy had people with shotguns on the roof watching to see that nothing happened.

Nothing happened, by the way. They didn't come nobody came down that way. But the Little Italy was all prepared ready to go.

Smith: Well it's fortunate that things like that didn't get out of hand.

Schaefer: Yeah. They, Little Italy was all ready they just it was a matter of just getting it over with. But I remember going up North Avenue you went straight up Gay Street and turned to the west and went out toward the west up North Avenue and you wondered how far it was going to go. I lived out in West Baltimore but it didn't come near our place, didn't come near our place. So we didn't have any problems with that.

Smith: You had and I know Tommy did. You had relations relationships with the faith community with ministers like Bascom and Dobson and people like that right?

Schaefer: I had a very interesting relationship. I liked Dobson very much. He is still around by the way. I think he had a stroke not too long ago but he was a tough man. He would come in and he would, and I remember he and Bascom came in and I was sitting behind the desk and Dobson was out there and Bascom was out there sort of letting everybody know who they were. And I said hey Dobson did you ever read the Bible. He stopped and I think he was taken back so taken back and then he said yeah I read it once. He was a good guy Bascom was too. Bascom came earlier than Dobson. Dobson you didn't see him at the beginning. But Bascom was the man who was sort of the leader. He went on the Fire Board.

Smith: What about the development of Martin Luther King Blvd? You know the building of the road and the naming of it.

Schaefer: Well the building of the road was there. It was ready to go. Bill Boucher had a lot to do with it by the way. People you know forget names they forget Old Tommy, they remember Old Tommy. They don't remember Old Tommy but he was a great mayor and Bill Boucher helped to all the downtown work. He was the Head of the Greater Baltimore Committee and they built that Martin Luther King Blvd. and of course at that time the name Martin Luther King was very high on everybody's agenda and so they named it automatically Martin Luther King Blvd.

Smith: Was it controversial at all?

Schaefer: No. No it didn't have any controversy. I don't remember any controversy. They named it period. I guess everybody thought it was the right thing to do, so no problems I don't remember any.

Smith: Right, right.

Schaefer: And I was there because Bill Boucher had a very major part in naming the Martin Luther King Blvd.



Smith: So the City Fair was came after all of this right? And it was all about getting people back down town.

Schaefer: Well the City Fair was set up and I remember Mount Vernon and the women up there. I remember I was sitting in my office and Tommy called up and said: You better come up here it looks like were going to have trouble. So I went up to Mount Vernon and the women are very gentle women you know.

Smith: Was this the Flower Mart.

Schaefer: Yeah Flower Mart. Nice, nice gentle people and the neighborhoods were all set up and all that. But over to the west there was a whole bunch of kids. I don't know what they're going to do. Well I left and after I had gone, I been gone some time. The kids cam through and swarmed through and that closed it down as far as that thing was over. Then they move down to the Inner Harbor, Charles Center and they had problems down there. The City Fair blew over when they had a very bad rainstorm Saturday night. The interesting thing was I think it was one of the turning points was the neighborhoods got together. Each one was a little neighborhood of its own and they didn't talk to each other they didn't help each other. But after that Saturday night when all the tents blew down next day was Sunday and every person was out there helping to put up the tents, put them back again.

Smith: The tents at the City Fair?

Schaefer: Yeah, at the City Fair. We had you know you had those little wooden places where they sell stuff. Everything was in order didn't try to mess up anything. In fact everybody tried to help everybody. And I think that was one of the good turning points that people saw that they could work together.

Smith: And this was after the disturbances?

Schaefer: Yeah, yeah.

Smith: So what do you think? Just sum up a little bit here. Were the riots a set back for the city in terms of raise relations or do you think that something positive happened as a result or what do you think?

Schaefer: I never thought about that Fraser. I never really thought about whether it was a good thing, bad thing. It was a bad thing at the time and the fact that we did not have a major riots around the place. They messed up some places but it was just something that everybody could handle. They didn't have to go out and start shooting each other and beating up people or everybody. So it was different. I remember the City Fair they had down at the Charles Center and also Mount Vernon. Mount Vernon was the scariest place. The kids had organized on the west side of Mount Vernon Square and they came through and I thought: oh gosh its' going to be really terrible but they messed up a little bit didn't try to break up everything.

Smith: You know it was a time when, I don't know how much we have progressed since then but it was a time when a lot of white people didn't know any black people and black people didn't know white people.

Schaefer: Exactly. Everybody stayed in their own neighborhood.

Smith: And so the first sort of, kind of, forced coming together was when people looked out and thought you know here's all of this agitation for civil rights and what do we get? You know we get, you know I think that attitude was there but do you thing that became something.

Schaefer: I think it was good. I think it was very good; because they didn't look at each other as black and white. They knew that the tents were down, the boxes where they sold things were all messed up and nobody looked at another person and said there is a black person over there and a white person over here. They all just pitched in. I think the interesting thing is later on when the City Fair was there I remember on a Saturday, the City Fair was there and Sunday night or Saturday night it blew all the tents and a man by the name of Palughi help put all the tents up. He was a great man by the way.

Smith: I know.

Schaefer: A great man.

Smith: He could get things taken care of.

Schaefer: O yeah and he could talk to the black people and never offended them, never offended them. He knew where to stop. He was just a great man. You know there are various stories about him, like he picked up one of the Potties with somebody in it. Oh my God.

Smith: (Laughing)

Schaefer: And another time, I see, he was going out to tear a house down say 1540, he tore down 1538.

Smith: Oh dear.

Schaefer: Oh he was a great character.

Smith: When the tents blew down, was that the first City Fair?

Schaefer: No. It wasn't the first City Fair. It was the first City Fair where they had problems.

Smith: Oh right. It was the first one after the riots?

Schaefer: It was before the riots.

Smith: Before?

Schaefer: And then they stopped having the City Fair. I had to, I don't take a lot of credit for this but I sort of insisted that they go back again. And the Women's Civic League no sir, were not going back there. You know they were gentle people genteel people who were very nice and a.

Smith: So that the neighborhood cooperation that happened when the tents blew down was a signal that our city black and white could get together?

Schaefer: It wasn't black and white it was just everybody helping everybody else. It was amazing because on Saturday they blew down and on Sunday everybody was down there putting these things back together again and with in a couple of hours, couple hours everything was functioning and nobody was mad at anybody. Nobody was trying to tell the black people off, the white people off they weren't doing anything like that. They sought cooperation among them. You know that worked out, that worked out, very well. Tommy was an influence on that. He was a good man as far as the black and white community were concerned.

Smith: Do you think the City Police and the black community had a difficult relationship.

Schaefer: No

Smith: They didn't?

Schaefer: I didn't, I didn't see that. I read that in the paper that they had a tough time but no. I didn't see that. I saw Colonel Battaglia and General Gelston were magnificent men. Oh boy they knew how to do it.

Smith: Well Pomerleau these guys weren't cupcakes were they? I mean they were.

Schaefer: Pomerleau was a tough man. He was really tough.

Smith: I know

Schaefer: But Battaglia was such a nice man. Gelston what a man he was. He let the black people sit in the middle of the, you know the tar place on the streets. Blistering hot so they thought they were going to riot and make him mad. So that set down in the middle of the block and he said he stood over in the shade and let them sit there until they got there little bottoms burned and then they got up and walked out. I remember that to he was a great man.

Smith: OK. I think we've done it.

Schaefer: OK thank you

Smith: Thank you for coming in.

Schaefer: Pleasure

Smith: Good to see you as always

Schaefer: As always.