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 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 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

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]

Interview with Lynnwood M. Taylor
January 8, 2008; University of Baltimore
Interviewers: Duane Howard and Christina Ralls
Transcriber: Duane Howard

Howard: For the record, could you state your full name?

Taylor: My name is Lynnwood Melvin Taylor.

Howard: Mr. Taylor, could you tell me your situation in the late 1960s around '67 and '68? How old you were...

Taylor: Let's see, 1968, that would make me seventeen years old. In April, I would have been a junior in high school—Forest Park High School, here in Baltimore, Maryland. And I was living in Northwest Baltimore in the Ashburton section, a very safe community of preachers and middle-class African-American families at the time. It was known as "Preachers' Row," because a lot of preachers and, as I said, educators lived in Ashburton during that period.

Howard: Can you describe your level of interaction with other races at that time?

Taylor: That which we refer to now as "white flight" was in high gear at that time. The Jewish community was fleeing Ashburton…the WASP, if you were, were also fleeing, because a new middle class of Negroes—Black folks, African Americans—were moving into the Ashburton area of Baltimore City.

Howard: So at seventeen, did you live there? Were you born and raised there?

Taylor: Yes, I was—no, I was not born there. I was born in South Baltimore, but my family, like so many at that time, saw an opportunity for us to move into this new middle-class *[enclave]*, and my parents took that leap. So we moved to Ashburton, to Copley Road. And there, of course, many of our neighbors were—in the late '50s and '60s—

were, of course, Jewish. But, for any number of reasons, by 1967, 1968, most of them had left the area. I started, I think, in the third grade in that area. As a matter of fact, my best friends at that time were young white Jewish boys. And as a matter of fact, specifically—I've been waiting for years to share this publicly—the person that brought me, if you will, *physically*, personally—that is, my *body*—into the Civil Rights movement was a white young man at that time who has stayed true to the cause, in fact. His name is Marc Steiner, who has the radio show *The Marc Steiner Show*. His brother was my best friend, Brian Steiner. And Marc's family was like my second family. I remember his dad, Dr. Albert Steiner; his mom, Anne Steiner. As a matter of fact, my sister's middle name is Joanne, and we added that extra 'e' on there in tribute to Marc Steiner's mother, Anne Steiner. I remember Marc being very active, even in the actual marches of those days. I remember him being at the—and encouraging me and his brother—to be at the march on Gwynn Oak Park back in those days. Because of his activism, I have felt a sense of safety in knowing that, "What's the worst that can happen, I mean, Marc's going to be there!" So we did, in fact, show up at the march on Gwynn Oak Park as a result of Marc Steiner's encouraging us to…don't talk about it, *be* about it. And there we were.

Howard: At the age of seventeen, you are already involved in and indoctrinated, and active…

Taylor: Very much so, and it went on to the White Coffee Pots. In fact, to this day, having been involved in…picketing, if you will, the White Coffee Pots, to this day I don't eat in or patronize any business whose name is prefaced with the word 'white'—be it White Tavern, *White* Elk Lounge, *White* China Inn—because that was a signal to us back in those days that people that looked like me and you weren't really welcomed there.

Howard: Interesting. As far as the mood and the climate before the assassination of Dr. King—could you talk a little bit about that, in your neighborhood?

Taylor: There was a real effort on the part of those whites that were still there, for whatever reason, it might have been economics. Their families probably could not afford to leave as quickly as the others. But there was a real effort to at least show the presence of tolerance and support of the Civil Rights movement and the continued social acceptance of, and economic support of, Negroes or African Americans at that time. That is to say…we did party together, if you will. We did go to school together and get along.

Howard: Can I ask one question?

Taylor: Yes, sir.

Howard: When did you first go to school with people of other races?

Taylor: In the third grade. At Liberty School, Number 64. And it was the whites, and particularly Jewish children, were very much in the majority at that time. So not only were we dealing with—well, it was truly cultural, because we were dealing with not only racial matters, but matters of faith, also. Because, of course, prayer was still permitted in school at that time. So when we said a prayer we, of course, went to the New Testament, if you will, and we prayed in the name of Jesus, if you will. And that was contrary to what many of our Jewish classmates could relate to at that time. As a matter of fact, it was there that they…that the intolerance was most blatant. It wasn't so much in race, although I'm sure that there was something going on in the cloakroom, but they did not subject us to it overtly. Save for when it came time to pray.

Howard: Interesting. I would like to interject a question: what about the fun things that you did during that time? A lot of this sounds like it was serious but what about interaction as far as socializing?

Taylor: Bowling together, skating together. There was one incident where we were

having a party, and the mother said outright, "Well, my daughter will not be able to attend if there going to be any coloreds there." In fact, I remember that young lady's name but I will not say it here! She would not let her come. But at the same time there, was a real sense of a mindset of integrationist, if you will, with respect to the white families that were there, and the up-and-coming new middle class of black folks that were very much taking over Ashburton and that community—that whole Forest Park, Liberty Heights area. Yes, very much so. There were things like the Carlin Drive-In; there were things like the Johnny Unitas bowling alley. There was even, to a certain extent, Mondawmin, which has a very interesting history, in that—I don't know how many folks know—but Mondawmin was originally a plantation. And it's very interesting that when the riots were in full swing, that the place were the National Guard gathered was back at that same plantation. Yes, at Mondawmin. That's where they were able to keep a handle, if you will, on the uprising, because of course that gave them immediate access to Pennsylvania Avenue.

Howard: One more social question...

Taylor: Certainly!

Howard: Where did your family shop at, those types of things, places that they shopped?

Taylor: Well, because I'm a product of an active military man, and that my father was in the United States Navy and my mom worked for the United States government at Fort Meade, most of our shopping, for economic reasons, was done at Fort Meade. Of course, we shopped at Mondawmin and of course we were part of the good and the bad things that happened in downtown Baltimore, that is the Howard Street corridor. The big four—the Hecht's, the Hochschild's, the Stewart's, and I forgot who the other one was. There were times when we were permitted to go in those stores, and times when your mother was rejected from those stores. And of course, we hear those stories. But as we made…realized economic growth, some of those stores opened up and attract folks that

did look like us. Because they came to the realization that money was green. And everybody's money would spend the same.

Howard: What about the mom and pop grocery stores in your neighborhood?

Taylor: Sir, there weren't too many mom and pop grocery stores, as we would have, them—*[his cell phone rings]*—and excuse me, please. *[Recording paused]*

[Interview resumes]

Howard: Mr. Taylor, what do you remember about the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.?

Taylor: I remember it changed my life for forever. I remember wanting to go to that funeral very desperately. My father's best friend happened to also be his pastor—Rev. Sidney Daniels, who was very active in the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance at that time—who actually went to the funeral of Dr. King. I remember being very confused about why someone would want to kill a man who espoused nothing but peace and love and unity. I remember soon after, experiencing rage, even at my young age, at what heretofore had been a very safe middle class upbringing, but I remember feeling rage.

Howard: Where were you when you heard it?

Taylor: Sir, if I remember correctly, we had just gotten home from school, because there is a differential between Memphis time and Baltimore time—of course, Memphis is central—so it should have been around quarter of three, so it was probably more like four o'clock when something happened on television or on radio that said that Dr. King had been shot. Yes. And soon after, that Dr. King had, in fact, been killed. I remember that weekend very well, as I do the weekend preceding it, because it was my birthday. I remember the weekend of Dr. King's assassination, his assassination being on a

Thursday. I don't think we had school the next day; I really don't think we had school the next day. But I remember it, because I was supposed to go to a junior prom—in fact, *did* go to a junior prom—that Friday or Saturday, at what you folks refer to as the Arena now; back then we called it the Civic Center. Doing the dress up thing, and the tuxedo, and the corsage—the whole nine yards, only to have that junior prom interrupted by the presence of National Guardsmen—on horses! On horses, breaking up the junior prom, because a curfew had been imposed. Can you imagine? Seventeen years old, your first time in a dressy tuxedo, a young lady and you are hooked up…and literally, here comes the cavalry in on the junior prom. I remember it also, because it was…that Sunday was Palm Sunday, which is a big to-do in the Protestant world. Because that's the day when the palms are handed out. The tuxedo that I didn't get a chance to wear all night, I wore it to Palm Sunday services. As a matter of fact, we could not go to my church, which was in South Baltimore. So I had to walk to Heritage United Church of Christ, which is on Liberty Heights Avenue, pastored by Rev. Wendell Phillips at the time; he was very much a civil rights activist.

Howard: Can you describe the events that were going on in your neighborhood?

Taylor: Well, see, here's what's very interesting: because of the safe—and I keep saying that for a reason—the safe middle class *[enclave]* that we lived in, of preachers and educators and doctors, this new middle class area; there wasn't much destruction going on. But down the street, just a little bit east of Mondawmin Mall, well, that's where the metal—or however that term goes—it met the road. That's where the burning and the looting, and the stuff that you saw on television…that's where it was really, really happening.

I don't understand why, I'll never—I can't remember why but for some reason, even though there was a curfew, maybe because of he was with his pastor or whatever…my father was able to travel, he was able to drive. I remember us seeing the smoke from Pennsylvania Avenue. I remember him trying to get closer, knowing my father, and being turned around. I remember definitely seeing the National Guardsmen in

the lot of Mondawmin. I'm trying to remember if Mondawmin even had a top at that time, because you know, there was a time when Mondawmin did not have a top. But I definitely remember seeing the National Guardsmen there.

I remember it was a very, very, very, very confusing time. I remember my brother, who was more sympathetic to the Black Power movement, and I was definitely more attuned to the wills and ways of Dr. Martin Luther King, who talked of tolerance and forgiving and all that sort of thing. But of course he had been stricken down, and it gave people like my brother—not that there's anything wrong with his point of view—at that time he could say "See, we told you so".

Howard: More militant?

Taylor: Yes, sir. "See what became of the *dreamer?*" It definitely had an influence on some decisions that I had to make that year. Because I was going into my senior year at Forest Park High School. I remember really getting wiped out not too long after that, because the same thing that happened April 4th occurred again on June 5th when Robert Kennedy got knocked off. I'm getting angry now; please forgive me.

Howard: It's okay; you are entitled.

Taylor: Because I just…I just didn't understand it . I thought that we had proven that we were as smart as they were, and we could hang with them academically; that we weren't going to eat their babies or rape their children—their daughters. I think that was the year that Dionne Warwick sang, *What is this all about, Alfie?* What is this? Why would you kill the dreamer? But anyway...

Howard: Are you ok?

Taylor: I'm fine, really I am.

Howard: Can I go back to ...

Taylor: Sure, go right ahead, sir. I'm sorry.

Howard: In your neighborhood, you were talking about that you were dressed up and going to the prom. That gave me a sense that there was "business as usual," or try a sense of normalcy after the assassination, and yet there were riots and destruction that you could see.

Taylor: There was definitely an attempt to, "Let's proceed and make things as normal as we can..."

Howard: In your neighborhood?

Taylor: Yes, yes. Remember, this was a very middle class, *safe* enclave. In fact, if I remember correctly, the prom was at Northwestern High School, which was a brand new school that was filled with nothing but middle class Negro children and whites from that Fallstaff area up there. There was very much an attempt by the parents, by the families of those children that we're going to proceed and make things as normal as we possibly can. What they couldn't do was make normal that prom, because we had to get off the street like everybody else. Of course, we lived in northwest Baltimore, in Ashburton, and the prom was at the Civic Center. They had to make sure the children, their children got home, safe and sound back to Ashburton—and we did. I'm trying to remember if schools were closed during that mourning period.

Howard: Do you remember having any conversation with your parents or other people's parents about the fact that the prom may not be held because of the...

Taylor: Oh no, the prom was definitely held.

Howard: But I mean, with the assassination happening, that didn't trump any concerns or anxieties about...

Taylor: Whether or not the prom was *going* to be held? We were told that the prom was on, and we were at the Civic Center. The reason that we found out that the prom was off was because in comes the National Guard saying, "You folks have to get off the streets," and that's what we did. Of course, our parents were all over the place outside the—can you imagine Howard Street , Baltimore Street where the Civic Center is, all of those kids' families?

Howard: And that was a Saturday?

Taylor: That was Saturday; that's correct, that's correct. Next day was Palm Sunday.

Howard: Yes, I was just getting a sense of the times. Do you remember seeing any of the other neighborhoods that were physically affected, the damage and things that were done?

Taylor: Seeing neighborhoods that were physically affected?

Howard: Yes.

Taylor: Like every other good Negro family at that time, after the declaration of curfew, we hurried back to our safe neighborhood in Ashburton. But like I said, for whatever reason—and I can't remember why—my dad was mobile. Now I thought there was a…and I used to love to travel with my dad no matter where he went, so I remember us riding on Liberty Heights Avenue, but there was no damage on Liberty Heights Avenue. You didn't see anything that even began to look like damage until you went to Mondawmin Mall and over there by Pennsylvania Avenue. That's when you began to see even any smoke but in Liberty Heights Avenue, Copley Road, Grantley, Forest Park—no

damage. No damage. We were safe. And that's the way our parents and our guardians wanted us to feel—*safe*. That we were removed from all of that stuff. And again, one of the reasons that I made some choices that I did, after the assassination of Dr. King, because I wanted to experience, if you will, that other side of the black experience, if you will. Because I was always *safe*.

You know, it's very interesting; very, very interesting that I now live, or my family lives, two blocks from Gwynn Oak Park, the place that I was picketing. One of the things that happens is that parking is a problem up there. One of the things that happens is when one of those folks tells me, "I've been in this neighborhood for thirty years!"—some of my white neighbors that live there right now? If they only knew that sends up a flag to me—oh, you were part of the people that tried to keep me out of this neighborhood. Well, I'm *here* now. I love my sister and her husband, and that's who owns a home there, but it tells me something; it tells me a whole lot if you tell me that you were there, particularly if you tell me that you were there forty years—"Oh, I've been in this neighborhood forty years!" Oh, okay. Then I can imagine where you were when we were picketing right down the street.

Howard: A little anger?

Taylor: More than a little, sir. More than a little.

Ralls: I want to take a sound test at this point, is that okay?

Howard: Sure. *[Recording paused]*

[Recording resumes]

Taylor: …Because this story needs to be told, it needs to be told to my children. And to some extent my sister, who is ten years my junior because hopefully she understands a little bit better now the rage that I feel when the neighbors that are still there come out

there and they think that they are making a pronouncement - something victorious by saying I've lived in this neighborhood for forty years. Well as I said that sends out a signal to me. Oh, you're one of the folks that I'm sure you were part of that cadre of individuals that tried to keep me from this neighborhood. Of course I'm happy for my sister because the real estate value has gone sky high. But again it influences the decisions that I made with respect to where I went to college. I was blessed, I was blessed to be noticed if you will. It was a very interesting period because in 1968 of course Nixon...

Ralls: We should be recording all of this. I'm not recording because we didn't ask questions yet.

Taylor: Oh, I'm sorry.

Ralls: So I'm just saying that like you're saying awesome stuff that I'm not recording so ..

Taylor: …So in 1968 when Nixon was, of course, President and the honorable Spiro T. Agnew was elected Vice President, who is our most infamous graduate from the same school from which I graduated, Forest Park Senior High School. Of course, he invited us in 1968 to march in his presidential inaugural or the presidential inaugural of Richard Nixon of which of course he was the running mate. So having said all of that, as a result of being invited back to speak in 1968 that Vice President Spiro Agnew could not make it. So he had United States Senator Joseph P. Tydings—Joseph *D.* Tydings, Joseph Davis Tydings—to fill in. I happened to be president of the student government at Forest Park Senior High School, the first African American, or Negro as we were called at that time, to be president of the student government at Forest Park High School. So I given the honor, if you will, to introduce the United States Senator that had come to speak to the student body.

Well, it just so happened that at the same year that I was president of the student government association of the student body, my father happened to be president of the

P.T.A. So when Senator Tydings came on to speak, they had to choose someone to introduce him. Of course, the collaboration with the principal, whoever else was of course his son and that being me. So I introduced Senator Joseph Tydings and he wanted to know who was that well-spoken Negro boy—me. My dad of course said, "That's my son."

"Well, tell your son to let me know where he's going to college."

Of course I was, "Why, what business is it of yours where I'm going to college?" That was my attitude, not knowing that as happened here at UB, a blessing was in store because as a result of that introduction, he gave me a what's known as the United States Senatorial patronage position. Which means I worked in the United States Senate during my freshman year in college and at the time he wanted me to decide what college that I wanted to go to, be it Howard University, American University, George Washington University, University of Maryland College Park. Because he could make sure that I was taken care of at any of those universities.

But because of the experience of being a safe Negro during those formative years of the '60s, I chose Howard University because I wanted that pure black experience that they had killed the dreamer. I wanted to go someplace where, if you will, folks that looked like me—didn't necessarily talk like me but that's all right—that *looked* like me were in the majority if you will. As a result of Dr. King's assassination and the riots and all that kind of thing, that I chose Howard University to attend to do undergraduate work; my undergraduate degree. Although I didn't graduate, because Senator Tydings got beat, so I had to leave and come back to Morgan; that's where I got my undergraduate degree. But I mentioned that because beyond a shadow of a doubt the riots of '68, the assassination of Dr. King, the election of Nixon over Humphrey, the identification of—and proudly I did—as an integrationist as opposed to a separatist that was more concerned about black power, even though they were talking about economic power at that time, definitely influenced me. And as you can see, still has very much an influence on me. Anyway, let me let you ask me some questions.

Howard: Going back to the National Guard and that night at your prom, could you

describe that night and what was going on?

Taylor: Massive confusion! As a matter of fact, I remember…because I went with a young lady…

Howard: That was two days after the assassination.

Taylor: That was…yes, it was. But Governor Spiro T. Agnew had pronounced an edict that there would be curfew. That curfew did not exempt us safe little Negroes from Ashburton; we had to get off the street, too! And our parents had to make it to the Civic Center to get us off the street. In fact, the curfew went into effect at midnight or eleven or something like that, and we were at Howard and Baltimore Street. We needed to get our derrières back to Ashburton. I remember a gentleman; he was a member of the National Guard—I don't mind calling his name because he's gone on to glory now—but Box Harris, I remember seeing him come through there, and I remember they were on horses. And I'm trying to figure out how they got through. Some kind of way the Civic Center has, or was able to have, dances on—I think you entered through the ground floor or some kind of nonsense—but I remember we had to get our rear ends out of there. It was massive confusion.

Howard: The party was over.

Taylor: Oh, yeah. We had to get off the street. Get *off* the *street*. And particularly downtown, that economic hub at Baltimore and Howard Streets…oh no. "You folks have got to go; you've got to go, you've got to go, you've got to go."

Howard: And the Civic Center at the time was a new building; it was one of the jewels…

Taylor: It was definitely one of the jewels . That's why Northwestern—and I think that

was the…they had to be the second or third graduating class, or being prepared to be the second or third graduating class.

Howard: I'm just trying to get a sense of the turbulence of what was going on, and the chaos…

Taylor: Well, remember looking at the locale; the Civic Center was real close to what was really going on over in East Baltimore at Gay Street. Now remember, Gay Street is not that far from the Civic Center if you keep proceeding down Baltimore Street. And remember the brothers and sisters over in East Baltimore; they were in full gear. They were already into the cat-and-mouse mode, in that, *the police and fire department and National Guard's over there; okay, let's go set a fire over here, and when they go come over here then we're going to go over there*. That's the kind of cat-and-mouse game that was being played at that time.

Ralls: I have a question. After that incident did you enter downtown Baltimore or leave your neighborhood at all after that while the curfew was set and the riots were going on? Once you left the Civic Center did you stay in your neighborhood or did you actually witness any of the other...

Taylor: No, no the only thing that I did was ride with my daddy around Mondawmin, around…let me tell you where I remember him going. I remember him coming down Liberty Heights Avenue; I remember looking over and seeing the National Guard on the parking lot of Mondawmin; I remember going down Auchentoroly Terrace; I remember some kind of way making it to North Avenue, making it to Pennsylvania Avenue, and all the time wondering, *why is my daddy allowed on the street? What's going on here?*

I don't know if he played the military game, I don't know what game—he was active in the United States Navy—he very well might have had…well, let me stop before I get my Daddy in trouble.

Let me mention this to you: what's very interesting—it's very interesting—is that

whether you know it or not, Dr. King was not supposed to be in Memphis then. Dr. King was actually supposed to be in *Baltimore*. Well, that Friday—Dr. King was killed on a Thursday—the preceding Friday was March the 29th. It was my…seventeenth? Seventeenth birthday. And I remember my mom and dad taking me and my…my family; our family, to Haussner's Restaurant, which was a very exclusive restaurant on Eastern Avenue. So you know what it was back in the day.

Howard: I've been there.

Taylor: Very good. So what's very interesting is that while we there—and you know there are not many people that look like you and I that used to patronize Haussner's—a white boy came, a little young man came up to my dad and said, "Dr. King, may I have your autograph?"

I remember my dad looking kind of bewildered, like, "Who? What is he saying?"

"Daddy, he thinks you are Martin Luther King."

And although there is some resemblance, it's not that much. But you how know that story is—"all of you look alike." *[laughter]* But anyway!

So having said that, having said that…I thought it was interesting—no, not interesting—*prophetic* that Dr. King was assassinated a few days later. Because I knew what the young man meant, and evidently he, too, must have gotten some wind that Dr. King was supposed to be in Baltimore that weekend.

What's also interesting is that the reason he was not there was because he was sidetracked *back* to Memphis, because the *first* time he was in Memphis, a riot broke out. That's why he had to leave quickly. Dr. King left Memphis quickly, because he was the man of peace and peaceful demonstrations, and the sanitation workers were having none of that. *No, we are going to make some noise*. And they did. So they got Dr. King out of town. After they promised, if you will to *behave*, Dr. King came back, and that's when they killed him. That's when they did kill him.

Howard: You have said how it impacted and influenced you; I want to focus now on

how you've seen change since then in Baltimore, since the riots. Can you speak on that? Or has Baltimore changed to you?

Taylor: Baltimore has changed tremendously, in that politically, we're there. We're more than there. Because we have had folks that have used this…the number of careers that were launched; political careers that were launched: Parren Mitchell—Parren J. Mitchell, Kweisi Mfume, to a certain extent Clarence "Du" Burns…these were folks who, unlike a Parren who was a—who didn't mind confrontation, whose motivation was righteous indignation. On the other hand, there was a Clarence "Du" Burns who was a compromiser; a consensus builder, if you will, who was sometimes mistaken for an Uncle Tom. There were strides made educationally; educators became politicians, like the Clarence Blounts, who happened to live literally right down the street from me on Copley Road. There were community activists, like a Ruth Kirk, Delegate Ruth Kirk who…there were people like *me*, who came back and became active in the anti-poverty programs that grew out of 1968.

Howard: Would that be because of the Civil Rights movement or is that the riots?

Taylor: They're one and the same, sir. They are definitely inseparable, and anyone that thinks any else is naive at best, and I can think of some other adjectives that I'm not going to say. Very much so, very much so. And so many of us started there; I mean, that's what Parren was. Parren was the executive director of the Community Action Agency. It drove Thomas D'Alesandro III out of politics altogether! It was his handling of the 1968 riots that brought Spiro Theodore Agnew to the attention of Richard Nixon, because he applauded the way that he handled those…people that were involved in that uprising.

Howard: That was one of my next questions.

Taylor: Yes, sir.

Howard: What about the handling out the riots, how do you see it?

Taylor: Spiro Agnew did the right thing, in that he called on everyone from the preachers to the street pimps to ask us—or *them*, because I didn't have any part of it, God knows I wasn't going to—my parents would have killed me dead, but anyway—to stay cool, to stay calm. In fact, there is this broader thought out there that if they had just been able to maintain the peace, and keep the tranquility until Palm Sunday then there would not have been riots because we would have had a chance for all the preachers to preach to their congregations and tell us to behave, or tell *them* to behave.

Let me make sure that you understand that. The boldest thing that I ever did was get involved in the Civil Rights movement, as a result of Marc Steiner. Believe this: that caused a lot of upheaval in my family. My family were very *safe* Negroes; very safe. And the truth of the matter is, everybody that is now singing the praises of Dr. Martin Luther King—they were not always there. There were some who said, "Oh, please keep that agitating Negro preacher out of here." And again—

Howard: Blacks?

Taylor: Excuse me?

Howard: Black folk?

Taylor: Oh, without question! And I'm not so sure that my parents weren't a part of that silent movement, if you will, because they were…comfortable? In parentheses? They were safe Negroes; they had moved to Ashburton; they had good government jobs—let me stop; I'm trying to respect you *[indicating Ralls]* because he *[Howard]* knows; he feels what I'm talking about.

Yes, and for me to branch off from that, and say, "Oh, *no.* I'm going to the picket line; I'm going up front. I'm going up *front*. I'm going to Gwynn Oak Park, I'm going to

White Coffee Pot, I'm going to the White Tavern and I'm going to let my presence be known."

I remember when things…that day in Gwynn Oak when things got a little out of hand. The first thing they did was make sure that we were safe—the younger people; the kids. They wanted to make sure that we were safe—*get these kids out of here.* Because some of those folks at Gwynn Oak Park were vicious. They'd get up on the, up on this—they used to have this wooden roller coaster—but they'd get up to the highest point and throw rocks down on us. They'd stand on the—and it's right there now, it hasn't moved anyplace—the island where we would march, where we would do our marching. All we did was march in a circle; that's all we did. But they'd stand on the side and throw rocks at us.

Surprisingly, the only thing that used to bother me was not the rock throwing, not the screaming, not the hollering, not the—

Howard: Name calling?

Taylor: —Didn't bother me. But for God's sake, don't spit on me. It was the spitting on me that almost made me lose it. But I remember that when things started getting out of hand, I remember the Mitchells there. I remember them. They would shield us—black kids *and* white kids—they would shield us, and get us out of there. And get us out of there. Of course, then I had to come home to face my mother—particularly *my* mother, which was another story. *That's* when I needed some protection:
"Boy, where have you been?"
"…I was marching."
"Oh, I'm going to give you something to march about!"
"But mommy, but mommy..." *[laughter]* Oh yeah.

Howard: What about Baltimore now? Forty years later?

Taylor: Part of our problem isn't so much *them* as it is *us*, if you will. I wish we did have

the convenience of saying it was *them*. There are some things that *we* need to do, not only as a people of color, but seeing things that we need to do with respect to gender as well. It's time for African American men to take their rightful place as providers and protectors and priests of their homes. And that's the next phase that I want to get into, and very much thankful that I've made some entrée into that area. That's what I was mentioning to you because you know I'm a—I was, or am—a single parent during my tenure here at University of Baltimore. In graduate school, I did it as a single parent, and was blessed to be an intern. Which brings me to this point; it very well may be the concluding one. One of the things that taught me, that1968 taught me, is that I wasn't ashamed; I no longer became ashamed of being who I am and what God made me. And that is an articulate African American man who loved education, who loved speaking well, who loved being able to communicate because it has opened doors for me as it did with United States Senator Joseph Tydings, as it did with Kweisi, and being able to replace him in 1986 on WEAA radio.

With speaking to a Dr. Loebner here at the University of Baltimore to the point where a woman didn't know me from Adam, if you will. But because of my articulation of speech, she said "Wait a minute, this might be a person that we can use with…" to the point where as you know well I don't know what you know about the human services administration, the Master's program, but the program is also offered at Coppin. I consciously made the decision that I wanted to be noticed. On Coppin's campus I'd be just another black man; at the University of Baltimore I'd be, "Oh, there is *that* black man," and that's why I chose UB over Coppin, with respect to—that's why I chose Howard over the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, where United States Senator Joseph Tydings still sits on the board. Prior to that it was his dad, United States Senator Millard Tydings as well. All of those things were decisions based on the events of April 4th, 1968 and I'm thankful.

I've often run into old classmates and what have you, and we all agree on one thing. We are so *glad* that we lived through that period. We don't have to pick up a history book; even to a certain degree you folks have to read about what was going on there…we *lived* it. Even from 1963 with the assassination of John Kennedy, we *lived* it in

junior high school. We know that school was closed that day. We lived coming home from school that Thursday and finding out that, "My God, Martin Luther King has been shot." We lived that period during the riots when our junior prom was closed down. We lived those riots and seeing…Baltimore was mentioned with New York and Chicago and Detroit and Washington D.C., as, "Well, how're the riots over there?" –we lived it. And to know that the scars are even there; some of the scars are still there. They're still right there! That it produced a strong, united middle class of African American people, we were there.

Howard: I have one final question, but go ahead.

Ralls: I don't know your background as well, probably, as anybody else here, but what are you doing present day that was influenced by the riots, and also what can you suggest to the youth of today presently, what they should do and what should they learn from the riots?

Taylor: Let's see, what am I doing present day? I'm here with you, because this story needs to be told, and I commend you. And I'm so glad that you did it, because I knew that somewhere in life that a forum was going to present itself when I could get a chance to share this story, because it is so important.

Learn from it. I'm glad that you are studying it because if we don't know what happened in the past we're doomed to repeat it.

Work together so that we will never ever, ever have to go through that again. We forged friendships; communication—like Brian Steiner and Marc Steiner and I did—that we were working together, walking together children and we did build a stronger community. We did have people that were able to look at a Marc Steiner and understand that he could rightfully support a Billy Murphy for mayor.

Today, today, *today*…we can now look at a Barack Obama, and people that look like *you* can support a Barack Obama because of his *politics*, and because of his message and because of the *content of his character*. You have no problem doing that.

I don't ever want to go back to those days, ever. And I'm just as guilty! Because I'm working on, as I said—I don't know if you caught it—but I've got some stuff in me that I got to get right too. Because I don't like hearing, "Oh, I've been in this neighborhood forty years." Well, guess what. That's a flag. It's like certain folks of your ilk saying something about those inner city people; that's a flag. When my neighbors and my sister's neighbors say something about, "Oh, I was here forty ago," see, I get these visions—Oh, were you the one spitting on me? Were you the one that had the rock behind me? Were you the one that called me that 'N' word?

So what does it mean today? You. This youth. The fact that you two can work together. And I'll say this with…all of us don't want to go home and go to bed with you, that's not where it's at, that's not where it's at. Just give us the level playing field—that's all we ask! A level playing field. And you folks are the manifestations of it. Even to this day, like I said, looking at Barack Obama…I think we're there. We're well on our way, we're well on our way; just keep the good work up. Does that answer your question?

Howard: I have one final question. What is the outlook for your neighborhood and your city?

Taylor: Sir, I'm glad to see that we're to the point know where, again, people are looking at this without as much emphasis put on race; that folks are coming back for the economic strengths thereof. That white folks, if you will, are looking at that Linden Avenue, Druid Hill area, Brookfield area because of the access to Druid Hill Park, which is their perfect right. They're looking at South Baltimore, where heretofore you couldn't have *given* away land in South Baltimore—you couldn't *give* it away! But the neighborhood is being strengthened because people are working together. That more and more and more we are seeing African American and white interests being presented as that—economic issues. We're looking at even at situations like yesterday, tragic as it was, with the girl of that state trooper, to look at his family and recognize the fact that, yes, those children were a product of an integrated union but that's okay. Because the real tragedy is the fact that these kids are now growing up without a dad. Even in this

morning's paper that the white grandfather was holding, and loving, and giving condolence to his African American grandchild. That even, again, a Barack Obama this morning—this morning!—is being celebrated because of his appeal, his message and not because of the color of his skin. I think we're moving in the right direction.

But again, the key is in right now, is in you younger people. Not even in me anymore because you see I'm still carrying, admittedly, some baggage. I'm still carrying some baggage. Whether I want to or not, it's your world now. Move me out the way, I have no problem with that whatsoever. God bless you.

Howard: Any final statements or closing statements?

Taylor: Sir, I'm just so happy to claim UB as part of mine. I was just so thrilled when I was playing with the computer and looking at—and I saw this project. I just said, "Oh my gracious, look at what *we're* doing." I'm glad that we are taking the lead in this. I just hope that we don't miss it, because there are so many people, as I mentioned to you—Dr. Levi Watkins over at Johns Hopkins; Dr. Harold A. Carter, who grew up with Dr. King. Oh my gracious, how could you ever forget Dr.…at the University of Maryland Baltimore County…

Howard: Dr. Hrabowski?

Taylor: Dr. Hrabowski.

Ralls: He was president when I was an undergraduate. I went to UMBC.

Taylor: He was there at the Birmingham bombings; he was there! We've got to talk to these people to find out their perspective. Believe me, all of it even those that you might think…the Larry Youngs; he was there, he was on Pennsylvania Avenue. Remember, it was Clarence Mitchell III who was the state senator at that time representing that district. That was one of the people that Spiro Agnew called on to say, "Please do something with

your people!" Call on them; they are willing to talk to you. A Kweisi Mfume, call on them. They're willing to speak to you; they're willing to give you their perspective on what was happening at that time. I don't know if she's still here, but—of course Senator Verda Welcome has gone on—but her daughter…Oh my gracious, I can't think of her name, is it Susan…but anyway, nevertheless...

Howard: The list is growing.

Taylor: What I'm saying is that I made it clear to your director, to Jessica, that some of these people, I have no problem…definitely the gentleman at Providence who went to school with Dr. King, who's going to give you a very, very interesting perspective on Dr. King. But anyway, great work, great work, continue the great works and anything, I pledge to you, *anything* that I can do to assist in the project—because this is my love, this is what I do. You asked what do I do—*this* is what I do. I may have a degree in urban affairs and community organization and a Master's in human services administration, but I still consider myself a community activist and educator, because I love to make folks *think* about those experiences back then. Yes.

Howard: Thank you for your time. We appreciate it.

Ralls: Thank you.

Taylor: Thank you, thank you, thank you...