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From where I see it as a kind of outsider, why we're interested in it because one of the things I felt was happening in Balto. the 4 years that I lived there was that the stories that you were telling and the theatre in Baltimore saying the story of the neighborhoods of Baltimore reached publics in a way that no case study or no public policy statement or nothing that was doing adn it was doing something that was ( ) a larger arena because what was happening in Baltimore in terms of neighborhoods and multi-ethnic ( ), ( ) sensed that Baltimore was doing something really special, that people were in fact saying that 'we're going to do with our neighborhoods what we want to do.' And that whole organizing activity at the Gino's(?) in ( ) with ( ) early days said to me that there was something very special that needed a larger audience so what I'm saying to you now is now that you've done the Balto. pieces, go from the Baltimore piece, and we'll bring you some people who have done this in other places and see if you can tell the story that's larger than Baltimore and also begin to tell it in a way that perhaps at the end of this process will become a major and new ( ) theatre for the Democratic National Convention in '84.

Let me elaborate on that theory. I resonate to theatre, even though I read a lot I'm not a writing person, and you'll find a lot of activists don't write and get angry and don't ( ) and then you'll find—how many people voted in the last election—26% of the population—and a lot of people who are ( ) or left out or alienated or in-between or frustrated, you can see in this society that just voting isn't it. And just reading papers isn't it. And there's something wrong with where people's experience is at and where politicians are at and everybody else is at and there's something going on in the community in terms of the way that people can— I just came back from South Africa and it was the same kind of thing there—that there was a lore and experience in the community that was not written about in the papers or books. And a people that lived the existence or had the conflicts or the struggle didn't write any books, an odds and ends person here or there would write a book. And how do you communicate—especially in our society now, it's getting so big with corporations on one side and government so complicated and
and people so disconnected from government—how do you communicated the experiences of people, the problems of people from the community sector. How do you communicate the problems of people here to the public sector, the government, federal, local, whatever, and corporations? The community doesn't have a way of talking back or even talking to each other about what the hell's happened to them. The government thinks it's saying something and the corporations think they're doing something but the community is not articulating. (   ) takes out its ads, papers write stories but I don't write anything adn I've seen a lot of experiences in umpteen cities. I've been in nearly every damn neighborhood around the country at one time or another but what I see there and hear there is not the same thing, that the message about what's going on in America in terms of citizenship, issues, conflicts, how people deal with that and how they want to trust or don't trust the systems—but in the community there is something different being said than what's being said in print and what's being said by politicians or corporations. And somehow you have to show the conflict between all that. What John was trying to say is that this is an American phenomenon and not everybody is going to read it in the paper, not everybody gets their thing out of the paper. I communicate verbally—if you ask me to write something down, you'll die waiting. Most people are that way.

But is it a mutual antagonism?

I think the biggest (   ) of all and why people are so angry and disconnected is that people are looking down at 'em and making fun of 'em and so on. Take the stuff that's on TV, the Jeffersons or Archie Bunker. See my brother-in-law looks at Archie Bunker and says that's what the media says I am and he's (   ) from minimum wage and hospital care, you know social (   ). He may be afraid of a tough neighborhood or a guy with a beard or a hippie but socially he says everybody's grandmother should be taken care of. In a sense the media is telling who he is by Archie Bunker. I used to listen to Amos and Andy when I was in school, they told us that was the thing to do. Later on (?) with eht NAACP to kill Amos and Andy 'cause they said yeah, that's us. It's what media (   )—it's a different image of what are people saying, it has the catches, the spirit of what's happening,
I'm not saying the underground but it's almost like an underground.

It's certainly true many ( ) right now are working with a group of six...

50% of people don't know who their congressmen are in a poll last year. Didn't vote, didn't care, I mean it was not part of their life. 95,000 people at the state fair were handed out stuff and 50,000 didn't know she or you or he or who was who.

What's the message then to say to politicians and government and what message are people saying to each other about the kind of society we live in? And I think that's alienated people, be they young people, for not voting, be they ( ), be they white, no class whatever, the working class. There's a whole class of people who are saying something different than what we get out of media. What you're ( ) is taught is to take that and to speak it back to them and to others and to see if it's true and the other is if you could catch that and communicate it to the people who are so disconnected. So what's important to people, what do they think is fair, what do they think is right. Why don't they vote. I think the political thing is very important to figure out how to ( )

You spent a lot of time in the neighborhood on the Hill(?) and in the agencies—but you spent a lot of time in the other neighborhoods too and what are the differences between those neighborhoods? You try to bridge them. The world of Washington and the world say of Federal Hill and Providence or the world of ( ) or the world of the four teeth? and U St.? How are those different worlds?

They speak different languages. Now what is the language that connects. You speak a language that the people will hear themselves and will that language then speak to others in a way that we're not connecting now. See what you hear in government—it's like we will do something for you but if you're out there in the community and even if you're good guys, they're going to do it to you. I mean that's your attitude. That's what you're saying back. They're saying something different; I'm saying I'm a good politician because I'm going to do something for you but the way you hear it even from the good guys is 'yeah, they're going to do it for us but they're really doing it to us.' Or I gotta do it so big that you don't get it. It's the disconnect somehow. It's the whole question of citizenship. In south Africa, they want to take
away citizenship by sending you back to where your father came from and therefore you lose your S. African citizenship after you’ve gone to Delaware. Well, that burns people. ( ) my citizenship don’t mean nothing, I can’t vote. I’m saying in the U.S. we can vote and we still get jerks. So how do you touch that malaise that’s working like with my brother-in-law who’s a machinist. My sister said yesterday—she’s an Air Force nurse(?)—a lady came in on Monday, shot herself in the mouth, died, Tuesday, a lady took an overdose, she’s hanging on, Wednesday, a kid came in with his neck cut, his mother whacked him and almost took her head off, I mean these are Air Force families, the hostility and anger that’s in society too, people are beating each other up. People have loyalties, he’s a friend of hers or yours, and you’re connected. So there are things like families, sometimes community, See, that would be the genius of your media. There’s the other media that’s not saying anything from community to the political and even to the journalists and I don’t know if that’s capturable. Does that make any sense?

(General agreement).

I mean because with Washington, Reagan is smart and yet it’s a disaster, he keeps ( ) on how government’s no good.

Well, more and more people believe that anyway, regardless of who’s in government. And that’s a terrible disaster—if the government’s no good, then why should we vote? And so that attitude is one attitude. But what are people saying in the community. What have people said to you about why they don’t vote?

What’s the use? What the hell’s the difference? One of the things—victims—believe ( ) and that happens in communities. The insurance man dropped us because ( ). Well, it must be my own fault. I ( ) a cancer group this morning and one of the books that read together in this cancer group says if you have cancer it’s your own fault. Well, I threw the book away 3 times and the group is begging me to go back and read it and ( ) we agree or disagree—is it my own fault that I have cancer. Or when the people’s insurance was dropped, the lady got up and said 45 years she paid insurance and never had a claim and when she dropped it she really felt it was her fault. She really believed, you know, my insurance man, he wears a tie, or when SI was in Los Angeles, they have
what they call the savior scheme. These guys, they sell real estate and make a lot of money and they're on the talk shows. Well, in a lot of states they do that by going for closure, you know. He's a few months behind on his mortgage and they go in and so on. So I said to this lady—how come 1,000 people got gipped on their houses, what happened? She said the guy who sued had a tie, a briefcase, shining shoes, he went to school, she said what do I know—nothing. I said 'what did he say?' 'He's going to save me from my troubles.' I was 3 or 4 months behind on the house, I signed a paper.' What did she sign—she signed over the house. The house was worth more than the mortgage. Eventually he kicked her out. She was even grateful he let her stay 3 months without paying. I bet she thought it was her fault. The victim believed the victimizer. So there is a victimization. People say what do I know towards authority. I mean Bethlehem Steel, Sparrow's Point, the thing with jobs. You ought to be grateful you have a job. That's what they told my father in the coal mine. And my father had to fight to get his ( ).

When do people get to that point. Then, what can an individual do about it. Or I don't have any authority, I feel helpless. I think one thing for you to pick up is a lot of good things the government does for people creates apathy, creates dependency. A friend of mine was telling Reagan the story about a young woman—her parents were dead and she was about 19 and she was going to college. Well, her social security because of her father's death was cut and her student loan was cut and Reagan said '( ) go take care of her' and this guy said 'there's 40,000 like that' but see that individualistic—that a lot of times—Washington is a great example, I don't know about Baltimore. Washington is a plantation town in a sense. Washington has this mentality of big Daddy, big government. And people kind of say 'if only we could get Mayor ( ) out here or the Archbishop, then something will happen. Somewhere there's a tension between what we can do ourselves and what we think the politicians going to do. So there's different expectations and somehow we have to get between. And the other part is that the people are disconnected from their schools and their churches and the institutions that used to connect them. You know I went to school, most of my age went to school or
or whatever the teacher said was it. I think that was a very traditional value. Now people aren't so sure and that's why there's a need for people to sit down and say hey, regardless of whether we have a good politician, they can't do it all. We're still going to have to get together and figure out what we want and figure out how to deal with it. Power is the ability to act. I think that people need the mechanisms to cope and the coping is different than when we were on the farm. You know the neighborhood barn-raising. People knew everybody. But in the city(/)
The other question of apathy and dependency and how people have to fight that. Regardless of administrations, we need people to put groups together that can deal with that people feel that they have some ability to act, some way of making something happen. So there's a whole new creativity that has to happen. I think the malaise is there of the breakdown of whatever people belong to, a family or a neighborhood or a church or a union. But all those things have grown up like weeds and people are tired and those traditional organizations don't work anymore. People are looking for new groups. You got all kind of self-help groups now. And people need this support. But somehow--how to capture the political statement because you sure don't get it from the political writers. Where things happen is where people believe that getting together can make some difference. So that one(/) has to say what the frustration is and the other one is to say what people are doing about it.

What you see is the line between taking that group of apathetic people who feel that they have no voice, no mouthpiece and making them a group of conservative people that do have the ability to speak up or at least that they do speak up and listen to you.

See, that's the secret of how to organize. If I'd come into a neighborhood and I say I think we should do this and this. I say, Yes, sir, I think you're smart and I think you're right, you be president rather than--see, that's the difference between a leader--sometimes leaders(/) or somebody who really is an organizer and saying what you really want is for him to get off his hand and say I think we should do something. Because why, why should I want to do it when you sound smarter, you know your way around, you're more articulate, what the hell do I know. I'm busy living. I can't
handle what I got. I'm surviving. So how do you break through that. One of the problems as with traditional social workers, traditional clergy is I'll run downtown and get your grandmother's social security. Yes, sir, yes, reverend, yes, Father, whatever and there's a lot of that do-gooding. But you have to believe on the other hand that people have to become awake to their own awareness that I am somebody, that I'm a human being. You have to create a process where somebody gets mad—that's part of the awakening. That process needs to happen. Churches often become the ambulance service for the establishment, going around picking up the pieces. Well, there is charity but in a sense the longer haul of charity would be people getting together to deal with themselves and with each other and the other systems. That's a process. Then you have to find bridge issues, connecting issues. It's like some Jewish guy came up to me today and says he knows some big Jewish builder, the ones that go to Lebanon and build houses. He wanted me to find some Lebanese for this Jewish guy. I said you must be crazy. I said you probably have to get the American Friends to lay neutral, who could get you and me and maybe him and do it through a bridge. What's the bridge issue that connects us. Like in a neighborhood there's a junkyard that bothers you and bothers me and what the hell are we going to do about it. And maybe later on where are you from, what are you about. But sometimes you need to find connecting issues. It's not that we can find her and she's a legal service lawyer; that may be the answer to the problem but that doesn't deal with my apathy. One of the other things I think needs to be busted is the do-goodism; by doing good they really keep people apathetic and indifferent. Reagan goes all the way and says see, if you do things for people, you create dependency therefore we shouldn't do them. I'm not saying that. (switch sides). There some of the missionaries have gone away from ( ) with second-hand underwear where some of the missionaries have broken away and like our government wants to kick them out because they say they're communists. People sat around talking about if you are a Christian, what does that mean, your dignity, you're a human being, you shouldn't have to live this way, now what are you going to do about that.

I mean I am somebody, I'm more than just a commodity of labor or a serf or whatever,
It's the awareness, it's the insights that people get, that's how people grow. I mean we see that in all the self-help. But ordinary people don't go to shrinks. I'm talking about how do you do that in the community where people can become self-realizing, self-determining, then I do need your help because you're a professional. Even if you do good by me, I wish to participate. I'll give you an example in the church. The Serbians— for years they wanted to be part of the Catholic church. Well, Pope John came along and says now you all can go to communion. Well, they got so mad that he did them a favor that they had been fighting about for 500 years that now they won't do it because he didn't have a discussion with them. People need the participation. The problem is there aren't enough vehicles for participation.

How have the family units changed so that a lot of this participation isn't possible anymore?

Well, you have different kinds of families.

O.K., what are they?

See, you've got the Italian family still— some people say who's going home to mother. You may be 55 but mother is still mother. Well, you go home, you sit around, you talk and eat and the kids are there. You go in some Wasp house and the kids are in the next room getting fed supper. They get their McDonald's, get them out of the way. So the kids don't hear the grown-ups talking. Well, different families do things differently. And families don't have much support, it's true. I go all the way across town now to visit her because she knows something about my disease. I don't talk to anybody in the family because they think if I'm up walking, I'm O.K., but if I need sympathy, I go to some group. In Africa, the [craw(sp)] was the husband, the father, that may be his first wife, second wife, or his son, and ( ) around that whole place when they share the cattle. I guess every culture has had that at one point. Now, see, my brother's in Philadelphia, my sister's in Pittsburgh, you see them maybe once a year, a lot of scattering and I think that's why reunions are good things to connect with each other. So you have to look at what families do or don't do. Like politically, my father was a coal miner and Tony Boyle was the head of the union and he was a crook. And so I said to my father are you going to help us get rid of that guy. So my father gathered his friends and he said O.K., why is he
a crook. Well, he hired his daughter who's a lawyer to work for the miners in Montana and she gets $50,000 a year, he's only got 50 miners down there. And my father said she's his daughter and a lawyer, why shouldn't he hire her. I mean it's family, why shouldn't he hire family. I think a lot of that's changing and families are uprooted. Simon ( ), a French ( ), he used to talk about uprooted people tend to be more violent and we are uprooted. Everybody's from somewhere else. I think that's why people need new kinds of organizations. Some of the old ones don't work anymore.

When you first came to Washington, there were a lot of uprooted kids running around town and they became part of the peace movement so couldn't the good that came out of that be directly—if you're uprooted, then you may also be able to do more powerful action.

Well, but also they may be more disconnected. I was in ( ) and we picked up an 18-year-old kid who had never left the homeland and in that one day we went about 500 miles to a town, he saw his first street light, first traffic light, first store. Well, I doubt if you're ever going to get that kid back on a farm. Individuals alone can't cope with their own problems and society's problems and they need to come together to share in order to grow as individuals and in order to have the ability to act. The commentary on what kind of society we live—very alienated, very rough surviving. What are the kinds of things that people come together around. New family, new church, new versions of these where people are at. ( ) churches, a church ( ) Baptist in Birmingham that has a padlock on their door. Or you go anywhere, whatever the hell they're doing inside th church, singing hymns and praying, you come outside the church and the neighborhood has gone to hell. Inside they're talking about going to heaven. The violence is already there. I could do a real scoop on churches, what they're saying, how religion does or doesn't deal with this.

You also have a lot of older congregations where most of the people who belong to it come from other neighborhoods—

Well, we have it right here at 14th where the gals stand out front at night and the people around( ) we don't want those people. So there is class. Human
nature is the same everywhere. ( ), I don't know if you ever saw that play—
a man and woman in Shantytown( ) 2 people who are common law living
together, talking about survival and the struggle, some other character who used to
be her boyfriend, should she give him some of their food when they don't ahve any.
Well, you saw the whole human cosmos and how they dealt with each other. Somehow
you capture the examples that people say, that's right, that's the way it is. It
makes that kind of statement. What does it say about the political, the corporate,
and about us, how we live. I guess what I'm saying is the old systems aren't enough,
just the family, just the church, just the neighborhood, just the union and that
people are going to have to figure out different ways.

There are stories—you've heard it time and timea again—basically deals with I don't
want people, I want to stay to myself, I want to have the privacy, in my family,
everybody's nosy, they're gossiping all the time, on the one hand it's information
that everybody gathers, on the other hand it's gossip, they don't want to deal with it
they don't want to spend another Sunday afternoon listening to all that crap and
going through the same problems that everybody has, they just as soon live far away
so they can get away from it. How do you solve that human problem?

Well, a lot of that's true. People want to get away ubt one of the things that's
sweeping through ( ) churches now is a ( ) where people don't want to
go the big churches anymore, they want to get together in a group and have a dis-
cussion. Somebody has created community. How do you create community, what are teh
mechanisms of people creating a community of support, and how do you create community
when you think you're getting screwed or shafted. See, you're fighting the personal
I'm no good, I can't do it, it's too complicated, I don't understand, I don't even
know where the bank is. So you go from the alienation, the disconnectedness of
people in a community and osme people want the isolation. I mean we're split.
One side of me says I want to be in a group and the other side says don't, I
want to shut the door.

One of the things that came out in our—we had advisory groups meet with us with
the community organizing forums and eventually it became kind of our title, theme
for the whole thing was values in conflict. Do you see any kinds of values that you would consider to be common with all American people?

Yeah, there are certain values.

What are they?

What's fair. I saw Bobby Kennedy in ( ) in '68 and he was talking over on one side of town and I was on the white side of town, holding this group of people till he got there. Well, he's talking to a plain white group and ( ) you're a white hillbilly or you're a white ethnic or you're black. And he was talking about taking care of everybody's grandmother. She's got a broken back, she needs to be in intensive care, she's got a broken toe and she needs to go to the clinic but don't tell her she got no problems, no troubles. I understand she's got troubles, she's got a broken back but don't tell me I got no troubles. People hurt in different ways.

What else besides fairness?

There are values of the government being just.

Do you think that some of the school, let's say the school problem, something that's broken down, do you think it's that sense of fairness?

See one of the problems you have is terrific conflicts of values. She says I'm the teacher and if my kid gets out of hand, beat him up and he says don't lay a hand on my kid. I think in communities though is the fact of fight the hopelessness, that things can be done. There was less hopelessness ( ) where you can vote. The law is technically supposed to be on your side. In S. Africa, they can't vote. They don't have the law on their side. The law says you can't vote, you can't own property. But there was less hopelessness there in the sense that they felt in the long haul that the struggle was going to work. So here the frustration and hopelessness—I think you have to find examples of what people did that look like me, not the person in the media that don't look like—all those people who do the TV news all look alike. You and I should be able to do it.

Why do you think there's the difference that you have more hopefulness in S. Africa? Well, because we expect more. Our expectations are higher. The teacher told us
this is the land of the free. And they know where they're at, they know the government's against them. Here the government made promises that don't deliver so the next guy comes in and says vote for me, oh, shit, I've heard that before. They're hoping for faith, the substance of things to be hoped for.

You were saying that the government being just was a value that most Americans shared. Um--

I think people ( ) about taxes, that some people are getting away with not paying taxes. Like the gal who's running in Iowa for governor. She's in bad trouble now. She's worth ( ) in evaded taxes.

And how do you propose that the average person feels that frustration and hopelessness about a situation like that, how do you propose they solve that problem, even if they organize inside of their community, what would be steps that they might take?

You know what's going to happen, it's the other way around. If he gets away with it, why shouldn't you, not report him. I mean the system begins to break down more and more.

(unintelligible question)

Oh the underground, the people up the street here( ).

Before I was ( ), somebody's house burned down and then they wanted to buy a house. Somebody said you don't have enough money to buy a house. Well, the guy cut hair on the side and ( ). He was ineligible for the program because he had too much money. The system is unfair now in terms of people cheating and getting away with it and so more and more people are going to cheat and more and more people are going to get disconnected.

Do you think Vietnam had a sizable impact on this disconnection?

Sure. All the ( ); Watergate, Vietnam.

And those are the big media things.

Then the ( ) are going. Vietnam, my father was flying the flag every day and the kids on the TV were wearing the flag upside down on their rear ends and my father would go bonkers. My brother was in Vietnam and my father cried when my brother went to Vietnam, not that my father was afraid that my brother would be killed in
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Vietnam but my father was an immigrant and an immigrant said son, I wish that I could fight for my country. If I said why, he said well, he ( ) Hitler, right. Hitler was a bad man, fight for your country. The president says you gotta go. But by the time my brother came back from Vietnam, where does he connect. He didn't connect to Abby Hoffman or Jerry Rubin or what's her name in California. He didn't connect to any of them. In a sense he come back and he was nothing. So a whole value system got shot. My brother is still upset about that—that my father believed in a value that he didn't share. So we have conflicting values. That's a human story. That's why like the moral majority stuff came back. Who was the guy that's fastin'? Dick Gregory, yeah. ( ) one time to welfare mothers, and they're all twice as big as me, some huge gals sitting there and Dick Gregory came and he was doing his night club act. Well, he was talking about, he was making cracks about marriage and non-marriage, making fun of Jesus. Well, these ladies booted him and I don't think half of them were married. I mean it was a survival group, in a sense. That didn't make any difference, they still believed in certain things. So there are those value conflicts and I think that's why you get the backlash of prayer in school stuff. I went to public school and I'm dead against the prayer in school. Terrific change. All those social issues people—that's how ( ) of these guys—they write you a letter and they make you mark the ones you believe in—prayer in the schools, bussing—everybody ( ) after that is always on your issue and they cater to your pornographic literature. So in a democracy there are conflicting values. I think that would be easier to do. The problem with sending a message back from this frustration, alienation, in terms of how the political system works, that would be an important message and then what can people do about it.

We've been doing a lot of talking about cultural pluralism in ethnic differences and the melting pot and we've talked to some people about them and found that they're pretty good buzz words—you can really get people to start talking one way or another on those kinds of opinions. And we've read some of the materials that NCUEA has put out. In your opinion what kind of effect has the whole NCUEA coming into existence and helping some groups to get organized and dealing with cultural pluralism
and ethnic pride and everything; how much of an effect have you seen in terms of aiding that change, bridging those issues, positive things that you've seen? Well we were going to try to find positive whites to work with blacks.
But you can also cater to my hopes. I'm hoping for a better kind of society where
the elderly or sick or poor ( ). I got hopes but I also got fears. I'm
afraid of unknown things. I think the difference like in S. Africa, they have
colored and blacks and Asians, the government keeps them separate to try to divide
the society even further. I remember here when colored was still--well, you're an
Afro now. So there is a lot of identity and ethnic so on. And there's still
problems with words, the word (ethnic?) is still a bad word. In Africa there are
9 different languages among blacks, about 3 of which nobody can understand. There's
German, French, Polish, Italian, and you see it more obvious there. We have some
different tribal customs too. But here, you know I was taught to melt or get off
the pot in a sense. For all my education, don't wave your hands, don't do this or
that. I think that's wrong and I became ethnic through blacks in the sense of saying
blacks are going to have to be black because that's part of their identity, that's
part of who I am and what I am and so on. So that tradition and heritage--that's
the song, you give up tradition and you end up like the fiddler on the roof and
so that people's stories tells me. But my father was like that, says where are you
from, who are you and that told them more than whether you wrote a book, whether you
were b'f'time. It's important that he have a story. The problem is my nieces and
nephews don't know who the hell they are which makes it tougher for them to deal
with somebody who looks different.

Talk a little bit about that.

Well, like my nephew in Phila., he lives 3 blocks from blacks, afraid of them, he
lives 3 blocks from Puerto Ricans, afraid of them, he lives 3 blocks from ( )
hippies--his mother says they look like Jesus--and so on. What is he learning about
Is he learning about the life style of the people? No. What the hell is he learning
about? Eskimos, right?. He never heard of an Eskimo, I mean he never met an
Eskimo. He knows more about Eskimos, how they make love and you know how they go
fishing and hunting, what ehy eat, he don't know beans about blacks, Puerto Ricans.
The biggest problem is he doesn't know anything about himself. He doesn't know his
father's story or his grandfather's story, where they're from, who they are. So he
doesn't know who the hell he is, he's so disconnected, how the hell can he relate
if he's insecure, somebody comes in and looks different. Somebody who quote is
together, knows who they are, can deal with other people. One of the things that
we monkeyed around in Baltimore, starting celebrations, that people who celebrate
themselves know who they are and so on, whether it's this festival or that festival.
Celebrations are ways of people saying this is who we are. One of the biggest
problems is that great isolation—this even happened like with John Kennedy—around
John Kennedy were a lot of bright young characters and they got so involved that their
families started to suffer. Now when John Kennedy died, they fell apart because
their whole reason for existence went and when they looked back, the wife wasn't
there, some of them went to pills, coke, a couple of nervous breakdowns, alcoholism.
A lot of the people just got shattered. The problem is they forgot their family,
their roots. You know what ethnicity is.?. It's like home. Home is where they got
to take you in when none else does. What I'm saying is that our society is so
individually oriented, it doesn't matter what happened to your mother or your father,
my mother came from the old country, didn't speak English, the hell with that, you
don't learn his language, you don't get an accent, you're going to study hard and
make it. So you get up there and pretty soon when you look back, you're disconnected.
You can't go back. You fall flat on your face. So we have all those victims.
I think that the reason that a lot of these changes have happened, alternative ways
for people to find community, and the need for it is because those families that
were supposed to take you in when everything was ( ) started not doing that.
Eventually people felt because of technology maybe that you can live by yourself,
you don't have to rely on people to support—
We think we can live by ourselves. School taught us. When you get out there, it's
not always that way but even in the '60's and '70's you saw—we are—rapid social
changes, I mean we're all victims. That's the other kind of thing that would make
a good theme I think for media, is that we're victims for victims. I'm not blaming
my father or mother, they weren't responsible for the situation to make them.
don't blame my father that he did this or that to me or this happened. When I look back--have you ever seen that picture Tree of the Wooden (        )? Or E.T.? E.T.'s got everything. Resurrection, what doctors do to you, human emotions. But the individual has the idea that they can divorce themselves from their family, they can leave their family because they see that they can live on their own. But the desire to find somewhere the community or the family or whatever that will allow you to come in no matter how you are or who you are--

It's hard because you know one of the first things I went into the black community and I've been to many of those called the Latin (        ) cultures--the girl will get pregnant--well, when I was in Pennsylvania, if a girl got pregnant in high school, the parents had to figure out how to send her 100 miles away to some aunt. She was in some home, get rid of it so nobody will know about it. Whereas the (        ) say well, it happened before, we'll put a little more soup in the pot and not worry about it. We'll take care of it. Or you go to court, or you see families from India at the airport--you'll see the father, the mother, the whole clan. Everybody goes to see somebody come home or go away. Or you go to court in a Latin culture, everybody's there, the grandmother's there taking it, the father, the mother, the aunts. Here if that happens, you send the whole family out of town, you hire a lawyer and you don't want the family to share the pain. So there are lots of breakdowns. But one thing I want to say--when the kids came here in the '60's and '70's, a lot of kids would walk up and down the streets of Georgetown, just walking. It's like I don't necessarily want to talk to you but I want to be around people of my own. But a lot of those kids were suburban kids that never lived in a neighborhood, there were never no sidewalks, there was no community. So that we are victims of rapid social change and you can't in a sense (        ) independence because in a sense we're paying a big price for it.

There are a couple of people that tried to restructure a new community. That's not all that mixed up but--

I think that's a struggle. See in Newark--what he's talking about--you had an Italian mayor that went to jail. Then you had the riots, 60 or 70 were killed. Then you had
the election of a black mayor and then it was just turned upside down. The blacks
came in, the Italians were out. Well, here was an Italian neighborhood, there must
have been 1,000 For Sale signs. Then you had Leroy Jones saying 'you white honkies
get the hell outta here' and Tony Pariali, big ( ) type 'we gotta get dogs, we
gotta teach karate'. The first time I met Tony P. was a guy was saying white woman
raped in Seattle, mayor ( ), has no comment. (Next sentence unintelligible).
This is the kind of catering to people's fears that this stereotype demigod white
guy was doing. Now the fears were there, you can't deny. Those people were scared
silly. They had a power base, a mayor and then it turned upside down. Well, into
that came a guy who said to Leroy Jones your kids live in Newark, my kids live in
Newark and I ain't moving. We better do something about it. He got involved in
his community. Now his center is a mechanism through which whatever is left of
the white community deals with the black community. Now they have Martin Luther
King day, Martin Luther King's speech, turn out all the lights, everybody has
candies, there's a gospel singer and afterward everybody sits down and eat spaghetti.
Now this center becomes a place where they make the connection. That's what I mean--
a new kind of coping mechanism rather than individuals dealing with a fear of
another group. So there you had personalities and characters that inflamed the
fears and tensions.
You were talking about victims—that you are a victim and your father is a victim.
Does that just really go back forever, this victimization?. And if it does, can't
you at a certain point just call bullshit on it--

Yes and no. We try. You can bring a lot of luggage in terms of being victimized.
There was a guy here in ( ) and he was here ( ) a priest and he was an
organizer of street gals. Well as he got interviewing some of the gals on the street,
why. Well, white gals ( ). And they were really victims of certain kind
of mothers and men and their pimps. I remember one gal that was from ( ).
She wasn't going to clean toilets like her mother, just hustle on the street. I mean
how did she end up on the street. She thought her mother was victimized—you could
see that she wasn't going to do the shit her mother did—cleaning people's toilets.
Baroni, II-5

But she didn't make it in terms of she was supposed to be a teacher or an accountant so you see that a lot of that is true. In Los Angeles, there was a Mexican-American community where 1,000 people lost their homes by hustlers. The guy said 'I'm going to save you from your troubles.' So I'm saying that in spite of rapid social change there are examples of people who have taken all of that, in spite of where the family was, what the school meant and what the church meant and what the labor union meant, and what the politician meant. The politician took care of my street life. I wouldn't need a communication(?). And the reason communication started because you had a Mayor Daley. If you could only get downtown and raise hell with the mayor, he could get that damn street fixed. Well, now you can go downtown and raise hell with the mayor—and it's what people's perception was. I was stuck in Chicago for 3 days in a snowstorm and a guy at the hotel said you know if Mayor Daley was around, you'd get to the airport. I mean if Mayor Daley was around, it wouldn't have snowed that much. I mean he was legend. But now you raise hell with the city, the city can't deliver. See that's the other problem of helplessness. The pipes are falling apart, so everybody feels the helplessness, what the hell can government do. It's going to get worse in that sense.

This whole bridge issue. Haven't there always been different ways that people have thought creatively to come up with different ways to bridge people together.?. Isn't it our job as citizens to constantly be thinking about ways to get together? Yeah. Like next year will be the 20th anniversary of the march on Washington. In '63 what King did, it was the first time that the ANE (?) bishop met the Catholic bishop met the Episcopal bishop, the first time these characters got into a room together, it was not to say what's your church, it was on race. And who raised that issue on religion and race. The most segregated hour in American society was 11:00 Sunday morning. And these people said that's right, what are you doing about it. So that King raised the issue of religion and race. At the beginning of '63 there was a big conference on religion and race and a lot of clergy got hit between the eye but the convergent issue to bring the black and white clergymen together was race. That was the bridge issue, the connecting issue. Now there's a vacuum
Baroni, II-6

on the world stage, the Pope gets away with it now because there's no Stalin, there's no Hitler, no Churchill, there's not much competition on the big stage. We're looking for a hero.

Flying saucers.

Flying saucers, E.T. And then the other thing we got coming down on us is—you can go to the VFW or American Legion and they will raise hell about we need more money for defense but when you say we got enough weapons to blow everybody up, they all say that's right. It's like death, you know it's coming but we also got denial. That also creates the hopelessness. I heard my 2 nephews arguing and one of them said what the hell is the use of getting married, of having children. For what? For being blown up? They were having this discussion, 22 year olds. So that's a new kind of thing that's hanging over. That's a pervasive thing.

(Jokes about Barbara Jordan, Barbara Mikulski).

But see I remember Barbara, her story was—Barbara was a little fat social worker at Catholic Charities when Bobby Kennedy died and she said Baroni, if we were younger, this is what we would do. She said you and I we'd get a doughnut machine and run off to Greece and work 2 days a week. I said yeah, if we were younger, that's what we would do. But I kept saying to her, yeah, but you gotta go back because Nixon and Wallace and Agnew are going to go back into your neighborhood and catering to those people's fears. You're going to have to go back to southeast Baltimore and do something positive rather than something negative. Don't let people take advantage of people's fears. And saying o.k., I'll admit they're there but that doesn't mean I'm going to buy into them, Wallace or Agnew or Nixon who catered to those rear-end fears rather than challenging my hopes because see that's the split. I got front-end hopes and I got rear-end fears, who's going to challenge my hopes that we have a great society that does take care of the sick, the elderly, the poor. Rather than scare the hell out of me that they look different.

They seem historically more into tying into those fears than--

Well, because it's easier to be a demagogue, it's easier to get up and cater to people's fears than to challenge their hopes.
Right now we have a very pessimistic concept of value conflict—

Yeah, but I'm saying that in spite of that, like Newark was a cesspool, in spite of that, some good people came out of that struggle to try and deal with it. In spite of all the crap, there's a good side to people. I'm staying in Newark and I think unless blacks and whites get together, it ain't no country. Where am I going to run. Meet the people coming out of San Francisco.

Do you think people are getting more to that realization?

I think there are good stories and I think what we need to do is find them and do more, in spite of the conflicts, in spite of the tensions, in spite of the demagoguery between rear-end fears and front-end hopes.

What you were saying earlier about the teacher taught me this and the teacher becomes the figure that represents a lot of things. do you suppose that part of many people's rejection of that teacher telling you what you should or shouldn't do and how you should feel and think has broken down some of your ideas as to who can lead us?

Oh, yeah. And there's a lot of books about Catholics, you read stages, passages, I mean everybody's got a version of that. And it's individuals who are trying to shake up what they thought. And so because of rapid social change we are more and more disconnected from traditions and heritage and then more and more we become rootless, and more we become violent people. Where are the loyalties and affections? Not in government and not in the corporations. Loyalties and affections used to be in families and extended families but now in the more complicated society people go across town to start groups, something that somebody will go to when they don't have to. It's not work. You know a group where 5 or 10 or 20 of us have some loyalty or affection. There's values in those kind of groups. There's 500,000 health groups; whatever disease you got, there's some group. Did I tell you the story about 2 friends of mine split, she called her lawyer, he called his lawyer and I thought their grandparents didn't do that. It's like the old priest who told me—I don't know anything about marriage, the only think I can tell people is to get one bed so that they can have all their fights but when their toes meet. Now these people don't have to go back to one bed and so on. See, culturally those grandparents had to
go back to the same place. The best one I heard was I remember somebody who used to work for me here, was living with this guy and her parents came to visit her. He had to move all his stuff out. Then I heard that 2 parents were widows and were living together and when their kids came, each one moved out. I mean this old lady moved this old guy out because her kids were coming to see her. We get so caught in rapid social change and it has created so many stories. Those are the new stories—how to deal with the tension. But politically I don't find anybody that understands what people feel in the community in terms of what politics does, representation. My father used to think Nixon was going to be the last president. He thought Nixon would take over ( ) and disband the elections, I mean it was paranoia. But there's some truth in that paranoia, that sooner or later...

That's a good story to tell—we can save the nation with the Congress because they kicked him out of office.

Yeah, but we all got burned on that, see Watergate burned us as much as ( ). We had civil rights blew up in our face, then Vietnam, then Watergate. So you had bang, bang, bang. Then the whole lifestyle revolution. All those things blew right up and that's a lot to handle. I don't know what the next generation of kids...

Well, we're running out of time so any final questions or anything?

The thing that I get frustrated with is that the people that write about society and politics, I don't mean the human story, but the political scene in terms of relationships between community and government, corporations—I don't think the message is getting through from the community to the politicians. And even if somebody wrote it, the people that are most any man wouldn't read it. The secret is how do you capture that kind of alienation and disconnection without becoming completely despairing. Because whatever is happening politically and in the corporations and what's happening in the community...because I think next the community is going to have to go after the corporations. We don't have any charismatic figures to do that. One thing that's happening in the corporations too is they're finding it harder and harder to capture people. People won't move with the corporations. There's still a bundle of packages and fringes etc. that will move people along but the last 10 years
fewer and fewer, more and more people are saying 'no, I'm not going to go.'

If you say who's mobil, it's so complicated. Before I used to know a guy who owned a store, he actually owned the store. Now, who the hell is Safeway, I don't know who Mr. Safeway is. Who the hell is Mr. Mobil. You call some number and they tell you to call some other number.

From what you were saying before, there's also one of the options of having a 3-sided thing insofar as those who decided to do something about it and went to extremes, those who were totally frustrated and decided to do nothing, and those who decided to take a stand and find that ground, that midline, that bridge and find a means of dealing with the fact that they did have an existence in a certain environment.

Yeah. Those who ran away, those who are stuck and feel trapped, those who are there and are trying to do something about it, and what that reality is. See, I think politicians don't speak to the reality. There's some kind of gap between what's real for people and what they believe in and what can be done. Now we don't believe things are going to get any better. I mean if you ask anybody now. If you were around in the '60's, it was different, it was like somehow we shall overcome. There was a mood of a lot of good things are going to happen. Are you still doing school stuff? We have been. Right now we're doing a piece with 5 kids interviewing their families about their involvement in labor unions so a lot of what you're saying is real enlightening in terms of these kids because what I'm finding is ( ) they're either steelworkers or garment workers and everybody is just about to lose their jobs or their parents certainly see that's coming but what they cannot lose and what these kids can't put their finger on and talk about is that their heritage of that organizing effort did for them cannot be taken away. And their attitudes that they have about life and their hopefulness I find remarkable.

See what happened is the people that did the struggle and the people that benefited--and they didn't have to fight, they didn't have to make a choice; you vote and if you vote for the union, you're going to lose your job. Whereas, now nobody ever threatened them with losing their jobs. There's no growth without pain or conflict or suffering. And out of struggles you get great characters. But the people who