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I. Dr. Bryson, can you tell me something about your family?

A. I have a wife.

I. Your parents . . . were they native Baltimoreans?

A. No. None of them were native Baltimoreans. My grandfather and grandmother were from Georgia. They lived in Atlanta. My grandfather was active in the NAACP — that's my mother's father. My father's parents were both from Alabama. I don't really know a great deal about them.

My mother and father lived in Chattanooga, Tennessee after they got married. My father was President of the Chattanooga Branch of the NAACP for several years. He was a letter carrier for 41 years in Chattanooga, Tennessee. My mother and father moved to Dayton, Ohio after my father retired. My father is dead. My mother is still living in Dayton.

My wife is from Atlanta, Georgia. I met her while I was in college in Atlanta. My wife teaches at Morgan State College.

I. When did you move to Baltimore? When did you first come to Baltimore?

A. I came to Baltimore in 1937.

I. 1937. But, you did come from a family that had a history of being involved in the NAACP.

A. Yes.

I. I guess . . . did they know DuBois and the rest of those who organized . . .
A. My mother was a graduate of Atlanta University Normal School and Dr. DuBois was teaching at Atlanta University when she was there.

I. Did you ever meet him?

A. Oh yes. I have met him. I attended a Phylon Conference that he organized at Atlanta University and then he moved to Baltimore and I have been in his home in Baltimore. He lived on Montebello Terrace, at least his wife, daughter and granddaughter lived there for a long period of time. He visited and I have visited him there. He published one article that I wrote on wartime employment of Negroes in Maryland. He published it as Editor of Phylon Magazine.

I. Now we know this interview is about Lillie May Jackson. Did Dr. DuBois know Lillie May Jackson? Since we're on the subject ...

A. He certainly must have since she was a member of the Board of the National NAACP for quite a number of years. Dr. DuBois was Editor of the Crisis for a period of time. I don't know how active Dr. DuBois was in the NAACP during the latter part of the time that Mrs. Jackson was on the Board of the NAACP.

I. When did you first meet Lillie May Jackson?

A. I met her in 1937 out at Morgan State College. Actually, I guess that the first September that I was here she came out to the first faculty meeting soliciting memberships in the NAACP. I met her then and got my membership in the NAACP from her in Carnegie Hall.

I. Was she invited to come to this faculty meeting or did she just ...

A. No she was out there afterward. She didn't attend the faculty meeting. She knew Ed Wilson, Cordine Grant and Jimmy Carter and so she was
out there in the hall when the meeting was over soliciting memberships and I was introduced to her as a new member. Actually, I had met her before that now that I think about it because Reverend Howard Cornish took me into Baltimore the first night that I was in Baltimore which was the 31st of August 1937, and he was actually returning Marian who was Mrs. Jackson's younger daughter to her home. She was singing at a Methodist minister's meeting in Baltimore and I met Mrs. Jackson at her home the first night that I was here. It was actually later, during the next month that I got the membership in the NAACP but I met her the first night that I was in Baltimore.

I. What was your impression of her when you met her that first night in Baltimore?

A. She was an energetic lady and enthusiastic. Of course, I was just a passenger in Reverend Cornish's car because he was taking me in town to get some bed clothing as a matter of fact to be used over in Baldwin Hall. I just went along with him for the ride and I met her that night.

I. Did she know your parents before she met you?

A. She knew my grandfather from the NAACP meetings. I don't know whether she met my father at that time or not. My father, if I remember correctly . . . he belonged to the NAACP and we had Crisis in the house when I was a kid but he was not an officer of the NAACP to my knowledge in 1937. It was nearer the time when he retired from the postal system there in Chattanooga that he became President of the NAACP but he had been a member of it all the time.
I. Yes, but you said she did know your grandfather?
A. Yes. She told me that she had met him at a NAACP meeting in New York.
I. Was this back in 1937 that she told you this or was this private?
A. This was afterward that she told me that she met him. You see, that was 1937 that I came to Baltimore and it was 1947 that I began auditing the books for the NAACP and it was at one of the NAACP Board meetings that she said she had met my grandfather who died in 1953. So it was before that time that she met him.
I. Right. What kind of activities were you involved in in the local branch of the NAACP?
A. I was auditor of the NAACP and a member of the Finance Committee. I was a member of the Board for over 20 years but auditor of the Baltimore Chapter of the NAACP for nineteen years. I was auditor for the Maryland State Conference for Branches for a considerable portion of that time.
I. What kind of activities did you do as auditor?
A. As auditor? (I. Right.) I checked... in the first place I set up the cash receipts, cash disbursements books for the NAACP and a Ledger. Mr. Maxwell, my predecessor, had been feeble, ill; and they had changed... I employed a new bookkeeper and they didn't actually have a set of records at time -- a decent, adequate set of records at the time that I became the auditor of the Association because the new person did not know how to use the set of records that Mr. Maxwell had established for them. So, after setting up the set of records, as I mentioned, then the receipts and disbursements of the Organization were checked with her,
financial statements were prepared for the use at Board meetings of the Baltimore Branch of the NAACP for that 19 year period of time. But receipts and disbursements were checked and any financial statements that were to be sent out by the Organization were checked by me at the time and statements were also prepared for the Treasurer to be read at the meetings for the NAACP during that time.

Other than that, the activities which did not necessarily fit in as an auditor were that at the time, I was Chairman of the Department of Economics and Business at Morgan State College and we did, at one time, work out an arrangement whereby Mrs. Jackson agreed to have some students at Morgan operate a campaign -- a membership campaign. The membership campaign of the NAACP at the time was carried on in the Fall and the Spring there was relatively little activity. We did have occasion to have students from classes in Sales Management, students in classes in Salesmanship and some from the Introduction to Methods of Economic Research interviewing people in the City to find out what they thought of the NAACP and then to have individuals follow up the interviewing by conducting a membership campaign in the Spring in the NAACP in which the NAACP at least in one instance obtained at least an additional 1,000 memberships.

I. Were her books generally in order. I mean did she do things by the record?

A. Oh yes, yes. Mrs. Jackson was interested in having accurate records kept for the Institution. She did not interfere in any way with the material that was being kept there for her. She was particularly interested in finding out how much money she was receiving and also how
many memberships so we kept up with not only the membership money but the number of memberships that the Organization had.

I. Was it unusual for a Branch to have an auditor? Was the Baltimore Branch.

A. I don’t know. I hope it was not unusual but I don’t really know. I was studying at the University of Pennsylvania and notified Mr. Maxwell who was my landlord that I was returning to the City after I received my doctorate and he asked Mrs. Jackson if she would contact me while I was in Philadelphia, asked whether or not I would serve as the auditor for the Organization when I got back into the City because he had become relatively feeble. He was the head of the Department of Business Education at Douglass High School for quite a number of years. He had retired and was spending full time at the NAACP as an auditor of the books for the NAACP. He said that he really wasn’t able to get around any more, and I had, after he had asked me about it, accepted the request to be the auditor but she had had an auditor for a number of years and we don’t want the statement that I set up a set of books to be used to infer that they had no records before. They had not only changed auditors, they had changed bookkeepers and they got a secretary that wasn’t familiar with the set of books that they had so that was the reason for having to set up a new set of books for them.

I. Were you on the Executive Committee?

A. Yes.

I. Well, did you witness . . . . I guess you did witness Mrs. Jackson’s activities before the Executive Board.
A. I attended practically all of the Executive Board meetings until about the last three years. I was on the Board when activities at the Advance Savings and Loan Association made it almost impossible to get to the NAACP Board meetings because both of them were on Wednesday afternoons.

I. Well, did Mrs. Jackson encourage you at the Advance Savings . . .

A. Well, Mrs. Jackson was on the Board of the Advance Savings and Loan Association . . .

I. Oh she was.

A. . . . at one time. We started Advance Federal in 1957. In 1959, Mrs. Juanita Mitchell, who was Mrs. Jackson’s daughter, was elected to the Board of the Advance. At the time we had only $36,000 in total assets. Mrs. Mitchell later requested that we accept her resignation and let her mother be on the Board. She thought it would be an honor for her mother to be on the Board. We did accept Mrs. Mitchell’s resignation and Mrs. Lillie Jackson became a member of our Board and she served on the Board for probably two or three years and helped get additional money.

You see, one of the things that a number of individuals don’t realize is that one of the reasons for establishing Advance Savings and Loan Association was that mortgage money wasn’t freely available particularly to members of the ethnic group that you now refer to as Black to obtain money. The NAACP had fought through Mrs. Jackson’s activities in protective covenants declared unenforceable in law but once they got the protective covenants declared unenforceable in law it still became necessary for individuals who wanted to buy pieces of property to be covered by
protective covenants to find an institution that would lend them the
money to move in since most of them did not have the cash. It was in
part as a follow-up of the NAACP activities, to make the NAACP activi-
ties more meaningful, that the savings and loan association was estab-
lished. That's part of the reason for establishing it.

I. What kind of Board member was Mrs. Jackson? Can you characterize
her activities?

A. She attended Board meetings regularly during the time she was on
our Board. She contacted individuals and asked them about putting money
into the savings and loan association and got some individuals to apply
for mortgage loans. However, Mrs. Jackson was getting old at the time
we started the association and as I mentioned here the Board meetings for
the association were on the 3rd Wednesday night of the month and the
Board meetings for the NAACP were on the 3rd Wednesday afternoons and
the two sets of meetings got to be a little too much for Mrs. Jackson and
me and she resigned from our Board at Advance Federal before I resigned
from the Board of the NAACP. But, I think she said on doctors orders, she
had too much activity during the day, but she was active as a Board member
and helpful as a Board member.

I. Well, did she have any business dealings with the Association?

A. Yes. We made two mortgage loans to Mrs. Jackson. We had the
mortgage loan on 1234 Druid Hill Avenue, the building that housed the
Baltimore Branch of the NAACP . . . the one that is called Freedom House
now. It was bought with a mortgage extended by Advance Savings and Loan.
That's a matter of record.
I. Okay. Now as a member of the Board of the NAACP, how did she run those Board meetings. I understand that she was rather rough... well in some people's words rather gruff, dictatorial. Well, at least she was in charge. There was no doubt about it that Mrs. Jackson was in charge.

A. Well, I think you would say that she was in charge of her Board meetings. Mrs. Jackson did a lot of work. You see, the things that an individual, and I guess I could mention this now, the late Dean George C. Grant picked me up one day before I bought a car and wanted to know if he could give me a ride and where was I going. I told him the NAACP. He said, "Well, well, well. Mrs. Jackson does some good work there. She gets paid well for it." I said, "She doesn't get paid anything for it." He said, "She does all that work for nothing?" I said, "She could get paid a good salary for doing all the work she's doing." But Mrs. Jackson did a huge amount of work day-in and day-out without getting monetary compensation. I think she enjoyed what she was doing. She was a little impatient with individuals who did not realize what she said... "Freedom had a price tag." They wanted freedom immediately. She worked in that direction. Anyone who did not want to put a lot of effort to try to put up her program was a kind of stick-in-the-mud as far as Mrs. Jackson was concerned. She was very serious about what she was doing. She was a competent person. The Civil Rights Movement -- there were people that didn't like Mrs. Jackson as an individual. Some felt that they liked to talk a great deal. They didn't get to talk much because Mrs. Jackson did a good bit of the talking. But then there were other people who raised
objections because among other things, Mrs. Jackson did a good bit of objecting and I think leading protests against establishment of bars and transferring license from bars into the Black neighborhood as you would call it now. It was called Negro or Colored neighborhoods. Mrs. Jackson preferred the word colored to Negro but there were individuals who wanted bars in places who objected to her fighting to keep the number down. She felt that the individuals did too much drinking, they did too much dancing and a number of other things that she had personal objections to. Some of those people did not like her. Anyway, there is no individual who doesn't have some individuals that dislike them, but I don't know of any individuals who did not respect her for the ability that she had and the sincerity with which she performed her work as a member of NAACP. She had her agenda which she followed and she gave each person who wanted to say anything in a Board meeting an opportunity to speak and she conducted the votes in perfectly parliamentary manner.

I. Oh it was done in parliamentary manner?

A. Oh yes indeed. I don't remember her trying to run over anyone in a meeting as a matter of fact.

I. Can you recall any of her comments about the Governor's Commission on Problems Affecting the Negro. I think she was a member of that. I hope this was not after your time as auditor -- I think it was '47 to '48.

A. 1947. Some parts of 1947 would have been before I was auditor. I started auditing the books in September, 1947 but about the Governor's Commission specifically, I don't remember anything about it. I had seen
individuals in the office to discuss the possibility of getting Black streetcar operators as you call them now, but at the time, they were not available and I have seen the president of the company come in to give an explanation that they would hire them and if they couldn't get them trained in Baltimore, they would go out to Chicago and get Black operators to train the ones we had. The President of the Yellow Cab Company, back at the time that there were no Black cab drivers were in existence, would be in the office to agree to use Black cab drivers. They put them on the Bell Island cabs first. He owned both Yellow and Bell Island cabs. He used the Bell Island cab drivers first and then went to Yellow cabs and then spread throughout the City afterward.

I have known individuals figures such as the late Dr. Lemnell who was there to discuss the integration of the school system and to compliment her and to keep the pressure on because as an outsider he couldn't do it. He could be forced and somebody had to force him. He was in favor of it but he was a hired employee.

But, individuals of that caliber have been into that office during the time that I was around the office. She was there full time. I was teaching. I went in in the afternoons, many times Saturday and part of my time auditing books was done on Sunday. It had to be at times I was not teaching.

T. Did you witness any conversation between Mrs. Jackson and Sydney Hollander? Was he living then?

A. Sydney Hollander was living and I knew Sydney Hollander. I guess that was Sydney Hollander, Sr. and Sydney Hollander, Jr. but
I never witness any discussions between them.


A. Mrs. Sarah Fernandez Diggs.

I. Right. No, no. Mrs. Sarah C. Fernandez.

A. No. I didn't.

I. Well, how about Mrs. Diggs?

A. Mrs. Sarah Fernandez Diggs was a member of the Board of the NAACP. She was an individual who raised a lot of money in the campaign for the NAACP. She was a member of our Advisory Board for Advance later too. She was one of those who brought in a substantial number of memberships. She always held her money out 'til the last day to make a big splurge so they had to spend a lot of time counting her money when she brought it in. But, she was a very enthusiastic person about both the NAACP and about Advance, too.

I. Well, can you comment at all about the relationship between Mrs. Jackson and Carl Murphy. I mean things beyond . . .

A. Well, Carl Murphy was head of the Legal Redress Committee if I remember correctly. I was not on the Legal Redress Committee and I didn't see Carl Murphy up in the office because the Legal Redress Committee met in Carl Murphy's office, not up at the NAACP office. Mrs. Jackson and the other members went down to Carl Murphy's office to meet. I knew Carl Murphy well. In fact, I lived around the corner from him but their meetings were held down there. He did not come to any Board meetings. He did come to some Annual meetings for the NAACP when the election of officers was going to be held and he presided over part of those as
Mrs. Jackson was up for re-election and Carl Murphy as Chairman of the Legal Redress Committee presided over the meetings and saw that she got re-elected.

I. Wait a minute. When you say "saw that she got re-elected" did she ever have any opposition?

A. Yes, she had opposition.

I. She did?

A. Yes. She had some opposition part of the time but . . .

I. You mean Carl Murphy would use his rule book in a sense to get Mrs. Jackson elected more so . . .

A. Well, I think he helped get some individuals out who would help to make sure she got elected and she got some votes. You see, the meetings were not attended by any extremely large number of individuals but there were some individuals who planned to get rid of her several times.

I. Can you recall who . . .?

A. I wouldn't like to mention names of individuals. (Simultaneous talking) I mean, they may still be living and I really don't remember their names but there were in some instances some employees who felt that they should be in charge of the office and operation of the institution. They planned to try to make changes but they really didn't have the nerve to do it when Carl Murphy was there presiding. I think they didn't even get nominated in some instances after he arrived and some individuals who were employees of his moved that she be nominated and no one actually made any . . . often anyone else name in some of those occasions and the few that I attended and then the motion was made that the nominations be closed and there was no one else nominated and she was elected unanimously.
but there were some occasions that some individuals had plans to do something different. I think she knew they were making plans to do something different but I think the City was better off with her in the position than it would have been with the other individuals in that particular position.

Mr. Carl Murphy got money for the institution -- funds. He had a Legal Redress Fund to which he made contributions and got additional money for the NAACP, and he also came to the Annual Meeting of the Maryland State Conference of Branches and often presided over the meeting of the Maryland State Conference of Branches which was held usually at the Sharp Street Church in probably the third Saturday or something in May.

I. These attempts to get rid of Mrs. Jackson -- did they occur in her later years or did they occur around middle . . . .

A. Remember. I don't remember how old Mrs. Jackson was, but I guess this was somewhere around 1960 -- the ones I knew about.

I. 1960?

A. Between 1955 and 1960. I was there between '47 and '60. I did not attend very many meetings but of course, I went into the office to work on the records and I overheard conversations that were going on in the place and actually, I talked with some of the employees who were there.

I. You mean when you say employees -- NAACP employees?

A. Oh yes. She did have employees. She had a secretary -