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The University of Baltimore is launching a two-year investigation called “Baltimore’68: Riots and Rebirth,” a project centered around the events that followed the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and their effects on the development of our city. UB administration and faculty members in the law school and in the undergraduate departments of history and community studies are planning a series of projects and events to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this pivotal event. We are currently working with the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History, The Jewish Museum of Maryland, Maryland Public Television and the Enoch Pratt Free Libraries to pursue funding for projects that may include conferences, a website and a library traveling exhibit.

Your potential participation in an oral history project would contribute to the very foundation of this project – the memories of Baltimoreans who lived through the riots and saw the changes that came about in response to them. Your life story can fill in the limited knowledge we learn from newspaper accounts and the television footage.

If you choose to participate in the project you would be interviewed by students from the University of Baltimore. They will ask you questions, but your memories will determine the direction of the interviews.

If you agree to serve as an oral history informant in this project, you will meet with a team of undergraduate students. The students will take a still photograph of you. In addition, if you have a photo of yourself in or around 1968, we would greatly appreciate it if we could borrow it, scan it, and return it. We would reserve the rights to reproduce those photos and use them on the website, conferences, exhibit or publications.

The students may conduct the interviews at a location of your choice, or you may meet them at the University of Baltimore Langsdale Library for your interviews. During the interviews, your recollections will be recorded in two forms: audio and video. The students will be responsible for operating the equipment. You can expect the interviews to last for a minimum of 30 minutes each.

Sometimes talking about events that occurred decades ago will unearth forgotten memories. Undoubtedly, some of those remembrances will be negative. We greatly appreciate your willingness to take the risk of exploring a potentially painful past so that your life experiences will be recorded.

After the interviews the students will transcribe your oral history. They will provide you with a copy of the transcription for your review before the transcription is published. The transcription, video and audio records will be archived in the Langsdale Library Special Collections and will be accessible to the public. Your name will be attached to these documents. The University of Baltimore may use your image and/or your words in any future documentaries, exhibits, conferences or publications. Participants in the oral history project agree to waive their confidentiality.

If at any time you are uncomfortable with participation in the study, you are free to drop out. Participation is strictly voluntary. While your participation is requested and highly valued, you are free to decide whether or not to continue participation at all times. You may decline to have your name published with your reminiscences

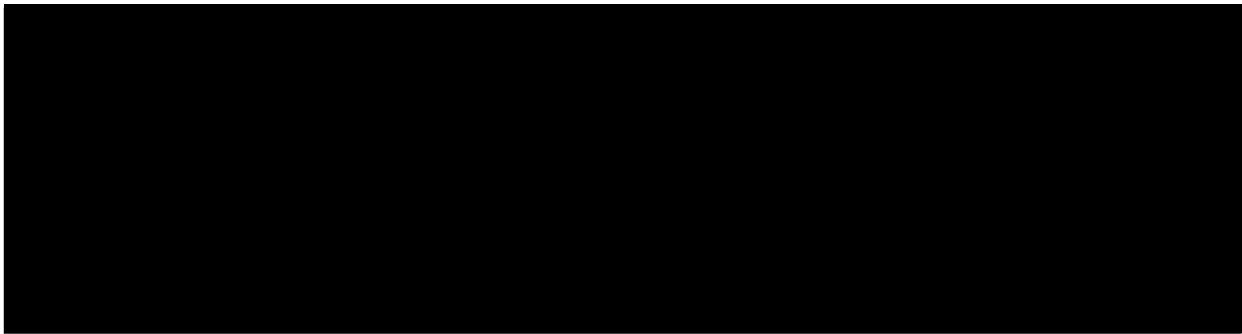
If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact me at 410-837-5296. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth M. Nix, Ph.D.  
Visiting Assistant Professor  
History and Community Studies  
The University of Baltimore

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I have read and understand the information provided above, and consent to participate in the study. I have also been given a copy of the informed consent for my records.



*Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth* Oral History Project  
Interview with Marvin Mandel (56<sup>th</sup> Governor of Maryland, 1969 – 1979)  
Date of interview: 12 July 2007  
Interviewers: Nyasha Chikowore and Maria Paoletti  
Transcribed by Maria Paoletti

**Nyasha:** So, Governor Mandel, in 1968 you were Speaker of the House [*of Delegates of Maryland*]?

**Gov. Mandel:** Yeah. That's right.

**Nyasha:** And where did you live?

**Gov. Mandel:** In 1968? I lived in Baltimore.

**Nyasha:** In the city?

**Gov. Mandel:** I was born and raised in Baltimore, and I lived in Baltimore at that time. Out in northwest Baltimore.

**Nyasha:** And how old were you?

**Gov. Mandel:** In 1968, I was forty-eight years old. I'm sorry, forty years old.

**Nyasha:** Forty?

**Gov. Mandel:** Yeah.

**Nyasha:** Do you remember where you went for groceries, and clothes, and that sort of thing?

**Gov. Mandel:** Back in those days? Right at Pimlico, in Baltimore. There was a shopping area there.

**Nyasha:** I guess, since you were involved in a lot of things, you had a lot of interactions with people of other races?

**Gov. Mandel:** Oh, all the time.

**Nyasha:** So did you find that race played a part in your work?

**Gov. Mandel:** Not as I personally was concerned, but I think it did play a part. I mean, in some of the things that happened, as far as the fires and the riots were concerned.

**Nyasha:** And how would you describe the racial mood in Baltimore before the riots?

**Gov. Mandel:** Well, because it was not long after Martin Luther King had died, had been killed, and there was a lot of unhappiness and people were upset about it. I happened to know him. I was one of those upset by the fact that he died.

**Maria:** What about before Martin Luther King was assassinated, just in the years leading up to the riots, how was the racial mood in Baltimore?

**Gov. Mandel:** It wasn't as bad. I mean, it wasn't great, but it wasn't as bad as it became after he died. It became much, much worse.

**Nyasha:** What do you remember about the moment when you heard Martin Luther King was assassinated?

**Gov. Mandel:** I just thought it was terrible. I mean, how could you think otherwise? It was horrible. Until this day, I don't think it's an excuse to riot. I just think you can express your feelings in a lot of other ways, other than...as I started to say earlier, if you would have seen from the viewpoint of being in an airplane, flying into the airport, and

see fires burning all over the place...it just looked like an old-time castle that was being attacked, and it was under heavy attack. It was terrible seeing the city where you were born and raised.

**Maria:** Would you mind repeating, for the recording, that story about where you were when the riots started?

**Gov. Mandel:** Well, that session of the legislature—as I said, I was speaker of the house—and that session of the legislature, we had passed legislation giving the governor, when he declared an emergency, extraordinary powers. And it still exists today. As we usually did, a group of us—eight or ten members of the legislature—went away for a week or so after the session was over, just to relax, and get back to work. We went down to St. Croix, so I was in St. Croix, when I got a phone call from the governor—it's Governor Agnew—that that bill had not yet been signed. This was not long after the legislature had adjourned. The bill hadn't been signed, and he wanted to get it signed because he wanted to use some of the powers that were in that bill. And I think we had passed it as an emergency bill, so it took effect immediately upon being signed. And under the Constitution of Maryland, the governor signs legislation in the presence of the speaker or the president of the Senate.

Well, I told him that I'd fly right back, as soon as I could get a flight. But in the meantime, I suggested that he talk to the attorney general to see if there was some way to handle that. And I immediately called and got a flight back that evening, to come back to Baltimore. And I did, but by the time I got back, that attorney general had already said that the speaker pro tem of the legislature could act in the place of the speaker when the speaker wasn't present. He had signed the legislation, and it had gone into effect.

I immediately went over to the Fifth Regiment Armory, and that's where the governor and the mayor, Mayor D'Alessandro, Tommy, "young Tommy," was at the Fifth Regiment Armory at that time. They were asking the federal government to allow...to send in troops. And I don't remember if it was 102<sup>nd</sup> Airborne or the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, but one of those two was being sent to the city of Baltimore, half of the division. They were out already on the outskirts of the city. They can't come into the city,

however, unless the governor requests it. Governor Agnew was there, and he was asking the mayor, Tommy, if Tommy wanted the troops to come into the city. And I can understand, there was a lot of hesitancy on Tommy's part. So finally, Agnew because very...upset, disgusted. He said, "Look, I'm going back to Washington." I mean, "I'm going back to Annapolis,"—I'm sorry—"going back to Annapolis. If you make up your mind, give me a call." And in the meantime, the attorney general of the United States was calling, and he was saying, in effect, "I can't leave those troops sitting out on the highway. Either you have to ask them to come on or I'll have to send them back to the camp, where they came from."

So finally, after a lot of discussion, Tommy agreed that he wanted the troops to come in. In the meantime, the governor had declared a...what do you call it? Nobody could walk in the streets at night...

**Maria:** Curfew.

**Gov. Mandel:** He had put a...oh, there's a word for it—

**Maria:** *Curfew?*

**Gov. Mandel:** *Curfew* in. He had put a curfew into effect that was to start that evening. So when Agnew called the attorney general of the United States, he told him, he immediately ordered the troops in. And I'll tell you, it was a sight to behold, when they came into the Fifth Regiment Armory, I mean, the commanding general immediately took over, and I mean, literally, in twenty-five minutes he had that whole place organized. He just walked down there, "I'll put my office here, I'll put the communications here," and just absolutely organized. And then they were having the troops fall in by company on the floor of the Fifth Regiment Armory. There was one company that was commanded, either a captain or a major, I don't remember which he was. And he was the commanding officer of that company. He was black, and they were out on the floor, the press was around, and they were giving instructions to their troops as to what to do and how to handle the curfew. And the captain said, "If anybody's walking,

you order them to halt. If they don't stop the first time, you order them to halt a second time. If he don't stop the second time, shoot him."

Well, a big gasp went up from the press and all—*shoot him?* And I'll never forget it; he turned around and looked right at the press, and said, "Let me tell you something. See all those men in that company? They've survived fighting in Vietnam, and I'm not going to let them get killed on the streets of Baltimore."

I've never forgotten that. And he just took charge, marched his men out, put them out on the streets. So at that time, there was a lieutenant of the state police who was there, Lieutenant...Tom Smith. Well, we decided to ride the streets to see—and this was later on, it was starting to get dark—to see if everything was under control. And Colonel Smith and I went out in the police car and we had a sergeant sitting in the back with a sawed-off shotgun. We were driving down Poplar Grove Street in Baltimore. There was a store there that had radios, televisions, all that sort of thing. And we were riding down there; as I said, it was just getting dark. There were three people that came out of that store—the window was broken; they were coming out of the front window carrying televisions, taking them out of the store. We stopped the car, and we chased them. And I heard the sergeant pull back on his shotgun. And afraid he was going to shoot, because they wouldn't stop; they were running, carrying this stuff, then they started throwing radios on the side. They carried the television. And Tom Smith and I were chasing 'em, and he was right behind us. We caught two of 'em, but we didn't catch the third. We took 'em into the Western Police Station; we arrested 'em and took them into the Western Police Station and had 'em charged. The place was unbelievable. I mean, there were people all over the whole police station, just loaded with people that had been arrested and charged with violating the curfew, charged with breaking and entering.

There was one thing that happened after we released them to the police at the station. We went back in the car and rode back to East Baltimore, around through there. And we're riding down; it's pretty well under control, when one woman came out of her front door screaming. And what she was screaming is, "I just killed him. I just killed him." Lieutenant Tom Smith stopped the car and ran over to see what the problem was. And she had; she stabbed her husband. Killed him. So he arrested *her*. I mean, but that



was how the mood was; everybody was all upset, everybody was fighting with everybody else.

The reason why I tell you about Lieutenant Tom Smith was that after I became Governor, he was appointed the Colonel of the State Police; he ran the state police. He was the first person who was a member of the state police appointed as a commanding officer. And did one heck of a job. But that was the kind of experience we had; for the next two days, we were constantly on the streets riding around, just to make sure everything was quieted down and all.

**Maria:** Did you ever go home?

**Gov. Mandel:** I went home that night. After we got done, it was around one o'clock in the morning; we'd been riding through the city and all. I went home, out to my place, and early the next morning I came back down to the Fifth Regiment Armory, where they had set up their command post, as you'd call it. Everything was being directed from there. But the city, it was a terrible mood in the city at that time. It was very bad, unfortunately. But that's about—unless you have any questions, about the fact, of the involvement...once they put the curfew on, things settled down, became fairly quiet. The fires, we put out...everything didn't return to normal for a long time. But it started to settle down so it could be properly managed. It was tough times.

**Maria:** I do have a couple questions. You said you knew Dr. Martin Luther King?

**Gov. Mandel:** Well, I had met him.

**Maria:** You'd met him?

**Gov. Mandel:** When I was Speaker of the House, at a function; I think it was over in Washington. I didn't know him personally, as in working with him, but I knew him. And he was a fine person. It's just a damn shame that that had to happen. Because he would have had a very calming influence on the whole problem.

**Maria:** Were you in St. Croix when you heard about the assassination?

**Gov. Mandel:** No. No, I think we had just about gotten there; I think we had only been there for a day or so when this all started to happen. I think we were still in...when he got assassinated, I was still around here.

**Maria:** Do you remember, when you heard about the assassination, did you ever imagine that something like this would happen?

**Gov. Mandel:** No. I never thought...I was born and raised in Baltimore; I was born in East Baltimore, when I was three years old, my family moved out to Northwest Baltimore. So I was born and raised, and my education and everything else was in Baltimore. And we just didn't seem to be having any problems early on. But then when this happened, everything...just blew apart.

**Maria:** How do you think Baltimore changed afterwards?

**Gov. Mandel:** That whole incident resulted in Governor Agnew becoming Vice President of the United States. And I'm telling you, that's a fact. The day after, he called the black community together—the leaders of the black community—and raised holy hell about everything that had happened. It hit all the newspapers, and became a prime story. And at the next convention, when they were nominating people to run for president, he was nominated for vice president. And that was part of the reason; that story that was in the papers contributed to his becoming the Vice President of the United States. That's a fact. People don't realize, but that's a fact.

**Nyasha:** So you're saying that the fact that he called the black leaders together—

**Gov. Mandel:** The fact that he raised all the hell that he did, and then it was played up in all the newspapers, not just in Baltimore, but all over...when they had the convention,

when they nominated Nixon, when the vice president was to be nominated, Nixon—I mean, Agnew was suggested *to* Nixon as a candidate, and to satisfy the senator...I can't remember his name anymore, from the southern United States. He nominated Agnew. I know because I got a call right after they had their meeting. Senator Louise Gore from Montgomery County was responsible for putting that together. She was Al Gore's cousin, and she was a Republican. Agnew was a Republican, and she took him to Nixon. It's very fascinating, a riot resulting in a vice president.

**Maria:** Did you know any...were you acquainted with any business owners at that time?

**Gov. Mandel:** I knew most of them. Sure. Down on Baltimore Street, around through that area.

**Maria:** What areas do you think were hit the hardest?

**Gov. Mandel:** Down—every place but Little Italy. Down in West Baltimore was hit very hard, down West Baltimore Street, around through there. Little Italy never had a problem. And the reason they didn't is that the people down in Little Italy, the store owners and restaurant owners, just took their guns and went out on the sidewalks, and stood there. And said, "Anybody comes across the line, we're gonna take care of 'em." Nothing was really disturbed in Little Italy. But the rest of the city, yeah. A lot of problems. East Baltimore and West Baltimore.

**Maria:** Do you remember any businesses in particular that were hit really hard, or never came back?

**Gov. Mandel:** No, not in particular. I know the furniture stores, a couple furniture stores out on West Baltimore Street that were torn apart, literally. In that whole area, out on West Baltimore Street, there was a lot of looting and rioting. Along Poplar Grove Street, that I'm talking about, that was taking place. Where were rode down, there. It was a terrible time.

**Maria:** How did race relations in Baltimore change after the riots?

**Gov. Mandel:** I think it took a little while to get it back on track. Well, it did. Yeah, Tommy, who was a good mayor, Tommy D'Alessandro; his dad had been mayor. I knew his dad and I knew him. He was a good mayor and he went out of his way to try to restore good relationships and all that sort of thing. And it just calmed down, and I think he helped...the mayor...and the city council, members of the legislature, all helped, and worked to try to bring the people back together again as we were able to do. And then that just grew after things had calmed down. But it took a while to calm 'em down, it really did. There was just a lot of ill feeling all over the place. A terrible time.

**Maria:** [to Nyasha] Do you have other questions?

**Nyasha:** Did you watch any TV coverage of the riots?

**Gov. Mandel:** Yeah. Yeah, I saw some.

**Nyasha:** Do you think it was accurate?

**Gov. Mandel:** The TV coverage? Yeah, I thought the real news coverage, in the newspapers, was fairly accurate; it was a little too...it helped to increase the riots; it helped to stir the people up. Made it look like it was black against white and that sort of thing. Just stirred it up. Didn't help. The news media—the *printed* news media. Not television; television was just showing that actual sights of this burning, that burning, all that sort of thing. I thought the news media...I think you had three newspapers then at that time. You had the Baltimore Sun, morning and evening, and you had the News-American, which was printing one edition every day, the Baltimore News-American, and you had the Baltimore Post, which later became the News-Post. So they all were covering it, of course. I think that the coverage accentuated, increased the amount of problems

over and beyond what it would have been. That was my feeling then; it's my feeling today.

**Nyasha:** Do you know of any other parts of Maryland that were affected by Martin Luther King's death or by the riots?

**Gov. Mandel:** Not as badly as Baltimore. Nowhere near. In southern Maryland, and western, and Prince George's County, Montgomery County and all through that area, they didn't have anywhere near the problem that you had in Baltimore. Now, close to Washington, they did have some problems. Right on the border area there. But that's about it. Baltimore was the principal place that had trouble. You've got to remember, back in those days, Baltimore was a much bigger city than it is today. It was closer, I would say, to 900,000 people than 600,000. That's almost a million people in Baltimore at that time. So Baltimore seemed to be more in the spotlight than it would be today. Anything else?

**Maria:** I don't have anything else.

**Nyasha:** Is there anything you remember about the National Guard? Did you have any conversations with some of the men; did they tell you anything?

**Gov. Mandel:** Well, the National Guard didn't play as big a role; they played a role, but when they brought in the federal troops, the National Guard was sort of supplanted as the primary group protecting the city. So there were...yeah, I knew the National Guard; they were based at the Fifth Regiment Armory. But they didn't play as big a role, in my opinion, as the Airborne Division did. That was unusual, to have the 82<sup>nd</sup>...Airborne Division coming into the city, just flocking into the city. That was an unusual sight. Something you never forget.

**Nyasha:** Do you think things would have been different if you were Governor at that time?

**Gov. Mandel:** Well, it might have been handled a little differently. Would I handled it...yeah, I would have handled it a little differently. When we had trouble on the campuses of the University of Maryland, I had to put the National Guard there. And I did, right away, to calm it down, and it did calm it down. I think I might have just moved a little faster to get things under control, but I think they did a good job, comparatively. Putting in the curfew, and all that sort of thing, to bring it under control. And the curfew really did have the effect of keeping people off the streets, so you didn't have as many problems.

**Maria:** I actually do have one more question: when you went home, those evenings, do you remember any reaction or any...what the impression was in your home neighborhood, your family and your neighbors at home?

**Gov. Mandel:** Well, everyone was devastated. I mean that, very seriously. Where I lived, out Park Heights Avenue, in the city, at first they didn't quite understand what was happening. I mean, something that most people never visualize is having this taking place. But then, when it did happen, everyone was sort of afraid to go out, to venture out into the streets and all, so there wasn't much traffic and there wasn't much of anything going on. I just thought that in my area, there was no damage done, frankly. But at the same time, they were scared to death that it could explode out into the outer reaches of the city. And it didn't, as far as I know. There might have been a few areas where it did—East Baltimore or Southwest Baltimore—but not where we were.

**Nyasha:** Do you think something like this could ever happen again in Baltimore?

**Gov. Mandel:** In Baltimore? It could happen anywhere, depending on the circumstances. I mean, the mood blew up back in those days. No excuse for it. Really, I mean that, very seriously. Martin Luther King was a great person, but so was Jack Kennedy. But you didn't have that kind of reaction when Jack Kennedy got killed. And he was President of the United States. You had some problems, you had some little trouble spots, but not a

massive riot like you had in Baltimore. So, yeah, I think there's a possibility that it could happen again. But the laws are there, the controls are there; it would rapidly be brought under control. Very rapidly.