Hallie Q. Brown Community Archives Oral History Collection:

Vol. 1, Rondo Movement History Interview Project

October 2nd, 2025

Hallie Q. Brown Community Center, St. Paul, MN

Clem Crowe Oral History

MW: Mackinnon Williams (interviewer, transcriber)

CC: Clem Crowe (interviewee)

01:57:40 runtime

Subjects discussed: Being born in Fort Worth, Texas in 1951 and raised in Omaha, Nebraska until moving to St. Paul in 1968; witnessing Interstate 94 being constructed when he moved to Rondo; recognizing the bond the Rondo community had; growing up in Near North Side, Omaha; a war between Black men and local police in his childhood; a police officer being killed on Victoria St and Selvy Ave by Inner City Youth League; St. Paul riot at Stem Hall in 1968; joining the Black Panther Party at the age of 16 in Omaha; barber Ernie Chambers in Omaha; principles of the Black Panther Party; village atmosphere in Omaha; Black male unemployment and disenfranchisement through the welfare program; the Black family unit and gender; Make America Great Again; his conviction that slavery has not ended but has instead evolved; his work at Teen Teamworks with Minneapolis Parks and Recreation; Black youth not being able to write or pass driver's exams; the U.S. creating a cheap labor force; his parents being sharecroppers in Texas; his father running away from the plantation to Fort Worth and buying the rest of his family out of bondage; the meatpacking industry in Nebraska; communal services in Omaha and Rondo; the Black Panther Party free breakfast program in Omaha; Black wealth and self-sufficiency in Rondo; Nathaniel Khaliq's family being evicted from their home during the construction of Interstate 94; playing sports at Central High School; teaching at Mechanic Arts High School with no resources; women in Omaha also working in meatpacking; memories of his mother being present when he was a child; Eddie Bolden and the Black Panther Party in Omaha; the Black Muslims and Nation of Islam in Omaha; Black servicemembers and professional athletes in Omaha; BANTU organization; the war zone atmosphere in Omaha with the police; the harassment of Black students at North High School in Omaha; Black men in Omaha being disappeared by the police; BANTU taking over North High School in protest; fighting to not have to enlist in ROTC; BPP programs in Omaha, how food was acquired for the breakfast program; Black flight to the suburbs, loss of role models; Black children today being wrongfully placed in Special Education; attending Macalester College from 1969 to 1973 as part of the Expanded Educational Opportunities program; Macalester College almost being a Black college during his time there; the Macalester Black House; campus takeover protest at Macalester.

People/organizations discussed: Inner City Youth League; Black Panther Party; Ernie Chambers; Teen Teamworks, Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board; Allied Universal;

Recommended bibliography entry using The Chicago Manual of Style:
Crowe, Clem. "Clem Crowe Oral History." Interview by Mackinnon Williams. Hallie Q. Brown Community Archives: *Rondo Movement History Interview Project*, October 2nd, 2025.

Nathaniel Khaliq, formerly known as Nick Davis; Mechanic Arts High School; Dan Stafford; Eddie Bolden; Nation of Islam; Christchild Community Center; Gale Sayers, Bob Boozer, Bob Gibson; Black Association for Nationalism Through Unity (BANTU); Dennis Womack; Michael Jordan; Macalester College, Expanded Educational Opportunities (EEO) program; Upward Bound; Mahmoud El-Kati; John Patton; Arthur Fleming; Hubert Humohrey; Karl Egge; Robert Bunting; Richard Nixon; James Stewart; Walter Mondale; Melvin Collins; Macalester College Black House; Young Holt Trio; Friends of Distinction; Stevie Wonder; Olatunji and Drums of Passion; Doris Wilkinson; Black Liberation Affairs Committee (BLAC); Imani publication; Sounds of Blackness; Gary Hines.

00:00:10

MW: Alright. I'll just introduce us, then we can get into it. For the purpose of this interview—my name is Mackinnon Williams. I'm here with Mr. Clem Crowe. We're at Hallie Q. Brown Community Center. It's October 2nd today, 2025, and we're here for an interview with Mr. Clem on some of his life and work. So to start us off, Mr. Clem, could you briefly introduce yourself, say your birthplace and date, and describe your connection to the Rondo neighborhood?

CC: My name is Clem Crowe. I was born in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1951. I was raised in Omaha, Nebraska and my family moved here to St. Paul in 1968, which happened to be my last year of high school. So I finished high school here at Central [High School]. At that time, Rondo neighborhood was split. When I got here, Interstate 94 was not finished. It was not there. It was just dug out. We used to play down in there. It was just dirt. So I was able to witness and experience that first real neighborhood split, which was caused by that freeway coming through. So it became that side of the freeway and this side of the freeway in terms of our community. And—

MW: Which side were you staying on?

CC: I happened to be on the north side of the freeway.

MW: Okay.

CC: At the time I didn't know the gravity of that move. Maybe about a year later, I really— dawned on me what it was. Being new to the area at the time, I just saw it as, "Okay, they're doing some construction," but I didn't know the impact they had on the community as a whole. But I did immediately recognize the bond that the community had, coming from Nebraska, coming from Omaha. In Omaha, our community was pretty much isolated, just like this one was, so that that communal survival was necessary and very prevalent at the time. In Omaha— well, now they call it North Side.

MW: Okay.

CC: But back then, we were not called North Side. We were called Near North Side. [Laughter] Because there were still a number of white folks on the North Side. So as we sort of filtered into that area, they'd call it Near North Side. You know, I always wondered about that as a kid. "Where is that at?" Okay, but that's what our community was referred to, being Near North Side. Very isolated. Which, like I said, it required that communal— "Everyone take care and look out for everybody," atmosphere. During that period, not only in Omaha, but even here, I mean, most Black communities around the country at that time, it was a— what I would consider almost a war between Black men in particular and local police forces. As a kid growing up on Omaha, I saw a number of my friends that were killed by police officers from junior high and up. A lot of

times you would get guys, Black men would get picked up by police, supposedly taken downtown and never heard from again. Okay. That was pretty prevalent.

00:05:01

CC: So when I got here, same scenario. It was really basically us against them. I had a couple of my buddies back then, who took the war literally and ambushed and did kill a police officer right here in the middle of, from what was then Inner City Youth League. Which is right on Victoria and Selby still today. They called an emergency house, which was about half a block from the city— from Inner City Youth League. When the cops showed up, they snipered and they killed them. They ended up going to jail for it. But at that time, I mean, it was us against them. Totally different than anything I'd ever seen before. We had a— what I call the St. Paul riot, from a concert happening at that time, was at the civic, what's called Stem Hall.

MW: Stem Hall.

CC: Stem Hall. It's part of what was the Civic Center of downtown St. Paul at the time. There's a concert there. And somehow things got out of control. There were a lot of teens at that time, there was a young concert— that were brutalized by the police. In particular, what really set it off was there was one young lady who happened to be pregnant at the time that got billy-clubbed down there. And that— from Stem Hall all the way back up to Selby, and around Grotto now, that's where it all happened. You know, it's pretty, pretty bad. A lot of folks got hurt. I had a friend that got shot. So I was looking at this as— being new to the area, just being here a year. But I could see that unity with the people. And fortunately, I got accepted immediately into that fold. And I

was treated just like one in the community. I think a lot of it had to do because I also was into sports. Hooking up with those athletes here, I got into the fold pretty quick. I had, going back to that reference, I joined the Black Panther Party. I was 16, in Omaha. There was a— actually he was my barber, named Ernie Chambers. And his barbershop was our meeting place. That's where I joined that. He also became at one time a senator from Nebraska. Ernie Chambers, you can look him up. Very intelligent. I think the most humorous thing I remember about him when he was in the fin— he sued God. [Laughter] Yeah, he brought a lawsuit against God, which, you could check that out. It was really hilarious, but made sense, you know. But from that period was, I feel, the development of my personal convictions, because the Party at the time instilled, basically, "Each one teach one. Each one protect one. And each one support one." So this was in order to become a part of that Party. [Inaudible] Yeah. You know, we instilled in us— was that in order to become a part of that party, you had to commit to those principles and commit to those principles as long as you exist. So your efforts and your purpose doesn't stop until you can no longer do it.

00:10:42

CC: Which is why I'm still doing it now. It was a time when— once again— it was a village raising everyone. Okay. Every elder out there was responsible for me as a kid. And I had to be a support to them. Many times, I would do something out there as a kid. By the time I got home, my mom and my dad would say, "Hey, so and so called me, told me they saw you." Okay, but that was— I even had parents come out and discipline me and then call my parents and I got it again. So that was the closeness. Those were the survival methods. Which I feel are missing

today. Those things are not there today. We've become more individualized as opposed to communal. We were more communal back then. And I— like I said, I've been here long enough to see progression and regression as far as our existence. Coming up as a kid, everybody I knew had mom and dad. Everybody I knew had mom and dad, as I was old enough to see them implement the welfare program, which— to this day— I give credit for producing those single-family homes. Because at the time, Black male unemployment was probably 85%. They just weren't hiring us for anything. So they implemented the welfare program, which stated, "We will take care of that mom and we'll take care of those kids, but that man cannot be in that house." So a lot of men were faced with staying with my family and watching them starve, or leaving and watching them survive.

MW: There's a dependency on the state that also forces that split.

CC: Yeah, forced it. Plus— I mean, at that time, welfare workers would show up at your house, just show up unexpectedly and search your house to see if there's anything in there that belongs to a male. Uh, or, "Do you have anything in here new that you didn't have before, like a toaster or a TV or," okay, and whatever that toaster or TV cost, they would deduct from your monthly stipend. Or if they found men's shoes or clothing or something, they would take your stipend away. So that was the condition that, like I said, put the— forced Black men to leave that house so that their family could survive. And that was the early '60s. Okay, early '60s, late '50s, early '60s. So subsequently what I've seen is, first of all, that was the breakdown of the family unit. Which I consider the strongest institution in the country— is the family unit. So there was a

considered effort— and that's been the main theme since they brought us here, the divide and conquer, on any level. And in that time, it was, "Yeah, we break that family unit up."

00:15:28

CC: And that's exactly what they've done. So that subsequently, we're in a position now where we have young men raised by women, okay? So that male perspective is blurred, okay? Now, taking nothing away from our women, 'cause there are women who have done exceptional jobs raising men. But the bottom line is that can only go so far. There's just some things that women cannot teach men, that only men can teach men. And that element is what's been lacking for years now. It's evolved now to where it's— you know, white folks make jokes. "Did you know your daddy?" It's become a norm in this society perpetrated by that system. So once you can control that, then you can control that population. What I see and feel now when these folks are talking about, "Make America Great Again." Question— when was it great? Back when we were—! Okay? That's how it got great. Now, human nature is such that we do what works for us. We learn this as infants, okay? We learn to cry when we're hungry. When we need attention, we learn to cry— because that's how we get attention. So that works for us. We learn that from infancy. So whatever works for you, that's what you tend to do. Well, that's what worked for them. In this country. And they tend to get back to that. And like I said, I see now, I've made comparisons. Yes. They're almost there again. My conviction is that slavery has not ended. It has just evolved. It's just taken out different forms, became part of the fabric. I try to explain to a lot of the young folks that I deal with now— to bring to perspective of right now, we're talking about bringing manufacturing back to the country. Big deal. Well, you have to understand why

did manufacturing leave the country? Well, they left the country because— cheap labor force, all around the rest of the world. Okay? I would tell folks, those Nikes you wear, the folk that make them Nikes were getting paid 75 cents a day, working 12, 13 hours a day, making 75 cents a day, not an hour, a day. And then you're paying $120 for those same shoes. So you see where Nike would be? Well, now, if Nike is getting pressure about making those shoes here, their requirement is that, "I still need that cheap labor force." So I've watched since— I think— 1965, how this country has been developing and making that cheap labor force by mis-educating, non-educating our population.

00:20:11

CC: I work with a teen program in Minneapolis Park Board, and I've been with that program now 30 years.

MW: You said, which program is that?

CC: It's called Teen Teamworks. It's with Minneapolis Park and Recreation. And I've been with that program for 30 years. And for the last, I'd say almost 15 years, I've been yelling and screaming and hollering about these kids— these are now 14 and up. But I have these kids that are— on average, we'd have maybe 150, 200 kids every summer that we hire in this program. I'd say 80, 85% of them can't sign their name. They don't teach cursive anymore. None of them can read a clock if it's not digital. None. "I can't even read the clock." So, I explain to them— first of all— if you can't sign your name, you'll never be admitted to a contract. For example, we used to give them checks. They get paid, they get minimum wage, $15 an hour, and they get checks.

They couldn't cash their checks. They can't sign a name. So now we give them all cash cards. But I explained to them, "You're in a position right now that the slaves were in." It was against the law for them to write or read. So, they just had to put an X down and someone who could verify who they were had to sign that name. Gotcha. Well, you're in the same position right now. You can't sign your name. So you're going to have to put an X down and someone's going to have to sign that can verify who you are. And that's generations. It's not just here. I mean, we got whole generations of folks who aren't educated, got diplomas, read on a 3rd, 4th grade level, bring no skills to the table. But one thing we all have in common is we all gotta eat. So in order to eat you got to do something. So, you bring no skills to the table. Then I'll show you what I want you to do and I'll pay you what I want to pay you. Because you have no leverage. And our federal minimum wage is still $7.55 an hour. That's all I'm really required to pay. And nobody can live on that these days. But that's the position that we're in. I mean, I see mass generations of them. So that now, the majority of our kids have sort of phased out. They don't even want to be a part of it. They don't even want to be a part of it. I've got a number of guys, you know, 16, 17, all the way up to like 22, 23, 24 years old. No driver's license. Can't pass the written test. No driver's license. First of all, that eliminates a whole line of jobs for you right there. Just on that. I've got a relative, I've got a grandson who's like maybe 23. Can't pass the written test. And I watch him— I mean, he's not unintelligent or anything, but for some reason, these guys cannot pass that written test.

00:25:08

CC: The program that I work with in Minneapolis Park Board, there're kids there that the Park Board would hire right now. All you need is a driver's license. The job's waiting— I mean, these folks want to hire these kids right now, because they've proven that they can do the work. They've already done the work through this program. All you need is a driver's license. And I can right now think of at least six guys that I've dealt with personally that are in that same situation. Just one of them now, he got a security job somewhere overnight.

MW: Allied [Allied Universal].

CC: These jobs over here that you— all you need is a license for— you can make starting $28 an hour, but now you're over here at the security, making less. So, like I said, slavery just evolved. They created a cheap labor force so that these corporations can come back. It's taken them a while, but they've got enough. Like I said, I started watching this in like '65. There was a concerted effort at that point. This was after the riots of the '60s. There was a concerted effort to pull back what was gained through those. That's how a lot of us got to school, got to college. You know, white folks were scared at the time and, "What y'all need, what y'all want, okay, we'll do this, just don't—! Stop burning stuff!" So we got a chance to be a part of something and we took advantage of it. We did, we took advantage of it. Those that got the opportunities took advantage of it, which proved that all we needed was an opportunity. We weren't asking for a handout, "Just give us an opportunity?" But then I began to see it pull back. All of those things— and even now, a lot of folks don't realize I was like 14 years old when we got the right to vote. And now they're trying to pull that back. We were allowed to go to school, a lot of us got the opportunities. There are now more of us Black men in jail than there is in college. And that's not coincidence, a lot of

that is by design. I see that because— Black men back then, making that decision, "Leave your family," but then at the same time you gotta eat too, so what do you do? What's left for you? Something criminal. You got to break in, you got to steal, you got to sell, you got to do something to survive. No one's going to hire you. One thing we got in common is we all gotta eat. And you got to do whatever's necessary for you to eat. So yeah, that's why we got hustlers and pimps, and dealers.

MW: I think one thing that was standing out to me as you're talking about the generations— and I wanted to go back to Omaha and the [Black] Panther Party there. One question that had just come to mind in me is for the elders who were around the community when you were a child in Omaha, how many generations from slavery would they have been?

CC: Oh! Well, my parents were sharecroppers—

00:30:01

MW: Mmm. And from Fort Worth—

CC: Texas. Actually— they were in East Texas, around Jefferson, Smitherman, right across the Louisiana border. They were sharecroppers. As a matter of fact, my dad— at 14— ran from the plantation and went to Fort Worth. And he worked— well, he left twice. He ran away, went to Fort Worth trying to find work, but those folk came and got him and brought him back. And then about a month later, he took off again.

MW: Would he have been stuck in a contract at that point?

CC: Well, it wasn't a contract, they owned you. Basically. I mean, it was—

MW: A "contract."

CC: You're on the land. This is your job. You got to do this, because you owe us—

MW: Right. You go to prison—

CC: —For the seed that we gave you, we gave you a little piece of land for you to work for yourself and you can keep whatever you get, but we give you the seed and then you gon' owe us so much from what you make. But you're obligated to take care of that land as well as ours. Okay. So he actually left the field, left the mule and everything, and went to Fort Worth. [Laughter] But that second time he went, he was able to stay, they couldn't find him. He worked in what they called the tar pits back then. He worked and made enough money to come back and pay for the family to move off that plantation. He paid for them to move. I always thought about that. At 14, I know I wasn't that [Laughter]— naw, I wasn't that tough. And I thought about that. At 14. To do that, to go and get your family. He had three brothers and his parents, and he made enough to purchase them to pay their bill to get them off that. And they all moved to Fort Worth, to Fort Worth.

MW: And was that reflected in the community in Omaha as well?

CC: Yes definitely. As a matter of fact, a lot of those elders, those men that were in Omaha at the time— the only real employment back then was meatpacking. At that time, Omaha was the largest meatpacking in the country. Before that, it was Chicago. Livestock. Well, that all moved

to Omaha. As a matter of fact, back then, Nebraska was called, “The Beef State.” It wasn’t the Cornhusker State, it was the Beef State. And that was because of it. All the major meatpacking plants were right there. They were in South Omaha. But we were in North Omaha, everybody, and all those men, numbers of them. They all worked at that meatpacking. They all worked there. So, they had all of that in common. Now, my dad, he ended up retiring from there. That’s how we got here. In the ‘60s, late ‘60s, that’s when those meatpacking plants closed in Omaha. The majority of the Black men that were in North Omaha at that time moved here.

MW: St. Paul?

CC: Yeah. We came here. It was like a migration.

00:35:01

CC: As I remember, my dad was here about almost a year before we moved the family up. All those men were here getting established before they moved the families. They were here with the plant work. Actually they did had an impact that changed St. Paul.

MW: How so?

CC: Well, before then, very few Blacks were here. Very few. And we came en masse. This community in St. Paul was really small— as a matter of fact, we used to walk it. It was Western to Lexington, Selby to University. That was it. That was it. That’s where e’erybody lived. As a matter of fact, at that particular point in time, that area comprised two percent of the land in St. Paul, but it housed twenty percent of the population.

CC: And then they split that in half [Laughter] okay, with the freeway. So we were condensed in there. But those guys that came here from Omaha started a lot of businesses. There were pool halls and we— we called them jitneys. Ubers now. Uber and Lyft now, we called them jitneys. That was our cab. I happen to know one of the guys that ran one of the biggest ones here. We called him Omaha. That's where he was from. We called him Omaha. But it was a shoe shine shop, didn't have any polish or nothing in it. That's where we ran the jitney. You know, you call there, "I need a ride," they say "Okay," send a car to you, take you, charge you three, four dollars take where you want to go. That was our, what is now the Ubers and Lyfts. A lot of our survival methods, the lottery, that was our numbers. We started that, the numbers. Now it's the lottery. Uh, breakfast program. We started that— the Party.

MW: In St. Paul.

CC: All over. That was part of the Black Panther Party, feed those kids in the morning. Now, also in Nebraska at that time we had— was it Ralston [Ralston Purina Company], Kellog? Most of the cereals had big plants in Omaha. They'd donate cereal to us, you know, but nowadays we got a breakfast program. Sickle cell [Sickle cell screening programs]. We started that. A lot of things that are prevalent now started in our communities. Our survival methods. It became adapted by the larger society. We basically were showing them how to do it. We still do. Which is why you had places like Tulsa, Rosewood, East St. Louis. When they saw those communities flourish, our communities they'd say, "No, we can't have that." They'd go and burn them down, which was the same thing here in Rondo. When their freeway came through, this community at that point

was becoming very self-sufficient. Most of the Black men here at that time worked on the railroad, red caps.

00:40:12

MW: Porters.

CC: Yep. Most of the Black men that were here in this area back then, that's where they worked. But in Rondo, they had their own doctors, lawyers, started their own credit union. That's how they bought all those houses. Pharmacies. They had a— they weren't asking the outside society for anything. And pretty much stayed to themselves. They were fine. "We're doing it. We ain't botherin' nobody." But, outer society, "Hey, what's going on?" Okay. These guys, they got their own credit union. They come in, a dollar, a couple dollars in the credit union every time they get paid. Pretty soon, yeah, you get a loan and buy a house. Furniture store, same thing. Layaway. So that's when they, "Got to find out what's going on in there." So, they brought that freeway in— divide and conquer again— took away a number of houses, a lot of them by eminent domain. Folks got nothing for them, or those that did got pennies on the dollar for their home. Friend of mine, Nick Davis [Nathaniel Khaliq], his family was the last one.

MW: Yeah, his grandpa.

CC: Yeah grandpa, they were the last one. It was just taken. Businesses gone. Just like that. It was the equivalent of a Tulsa, the equivalent of a Rosewood happening here at Rondo. That's what happened here. When I got here— I noticed that Central High School was the main high school for the area, for Rondo. They even had a honk. That was the Central honk. So everybody

in the community— you pull up to my house and you blow the horn! It was that Central honk in particular. Like, wow, okay. And then I learned by playing sports at Central, I played basketball. Even though at that time, we didn't have home games at Central. The gym was not suitable. I hate to even describe what it was. So we played our home games at Como, which at that time was a junior high. But when we played, the place was packed. Everybody from the community was there. Now, what I learned was, if we lost a game it was rough, but if we lost to a white team, oh now you couldn't walk the streets. I mean, people, "What are y'all doing? What's wrong with y'all?" It was that. "I'm like, okay, we got support, if nothing else." So that engulfed me, that closeness is that much, even to where, "We're watching everything you do, and we're supporting you in everything you do." That's what I saw when I come here for Rondo. That was Rondo, at that time.

00:45:05

CC: And like I said, I've seen it being dispersed. I watched it. I taught for a number of years— I started at Mechanic Arts High School. That's where I started. I taught a World History class. I had 34 students. I had seven textbooks. Paint was peeling from the ceiling. Radiators clanged. Pipes covered with asbestos that's peeling. I'm supposed to teach World History. I got seven books, the 34 stu— that was the situation. We couldn't even get chalk. "We got chalk?" "Naw" "We ain't got nothing?" But that was the conditions back then, and this was— when did I start? '73, '74.

MW: Once you graduated.

CC: And I'm like, wow. Fortunately, we had teachers back then who were committed and cared so that regardless of those situations, we made the best of it. We got our own surprise that, you know, they're crying now about teachers— we've been doing that forever. As I'm looking back at just the staff that was at Mechanic Arts at that time. Dan Stafford, the Staffords. They were all teachers, coaches at that time, but they were a group also as a staff. I became part of that staff, so that it was communal education. And that's the only thing that got those kids through. I was able to— I guess— teach the French Renaissance. The superintendent was touring the schools, and he came into my classroom and watched these kids recite verses, events from the French Revolution. They did learn. They're not expecting them to know anything because like I said, "And you only got seven books?" "Yes, I only got seven books. You know. We shared!" Not trying to take any of the credit myself. They shared, they helped each other, but that, I feel is what's absent a lot. Not, you know, with our teachers, but our counselors. I understand a lot of it, at this point, you don't have the support. So you do your job and you get out of there. You do the best you can. You get out of there. "If I can save one," you know, it gets to that. "Okay, I can't save them all. I can just save one." No, you gotta be responsible for all of them." That's the mindset. "The lowest one is the one I'm going to spend the most time with. Now we're going, "Okay, this one's got potential. So the rest of them, I'll just—" So I think that's the biggest change I see now in terms of the education and support, even in the sports. They talked about that, too. I'll tell my folks, my friends. "Better keep working. Future looks bleak."

00:50:21

MW: We do still have to eat.

CC: You still got to eat, yeah.

MW: And so, I was wondering— I had two questions about the Omaha days. One question that I was thinking of as you spoke about the meatpacking work is I was curious what the women were doing in the community, like what their work was at that time, how they found employment. And then the other one after that is I was hoping you could just overview how the Black Panther Party comes to Omaha from the West Coast, and then how you got introduced?

CC: The women back then, there were women that worked in the meatpacking.

MW: Mmm!

CC: Oh yeah! There were women that worked in the meatpacking. There were some that could handle the knife real well! [Laughter] But the majority of them were housewives. Like, for instance, my mom, she worked one day in her life. That was the family structure back then. The men were providers. The women were the homemakers. That role was much more appreciated and given much more weight than it is today. The importance of that position, that mother being at home was paramount to us. I remember the first time that I saw that was kindergarten. We lived in the projects, and next door to me was the only— I think there might have been three white families in the project. Next door to me was one. And the kid was my age, name was Sammy, I'll never forget. But we were in the same class. They gave us a little project for Mother's Day. Fill a milk carton with dirt, put a little bean in there, and the plant will grow. So that was our— and we decorate the little milk carton. So by Mother's Day, you had a little plant there. Sammy and I, we had our little plants and we were running home with— we can't wait to

show our mothers. So, I get home and I show my mom my plant and she's happy and I'm— well, Sammy got home and mom wasn't there. She was at work. And I remember seeing Sammy just sitting out on his front steps with his plant. The next time I saw that plant was in the trash. And like, I don't know if he got discouraged, I don't know what happened, but something where that exchange didn't happen with his mom. That was the first time when I really appreciated my mom being there. My mom was always there, and there were eight of us. Yeah, there were eight of us. My mom, she never worked. Even after my dad passed, he had a raise where she still never had to work.

MW: Wow.

CC: That was sort of instilled in us as— that's your responsibility as a man is to take care of your family. You provide for your family. And you make it so that your woman, your wife, see, all she has to do is take care of that family. Take care of that home. Okay, that was our structure. And that's what they broke up with that welfare.

00:55:20

CC: So now a woman, you got to be the one to provide for that family, raise that family, nurture that family. Okay, educate that family. Now it's all on you. Okay. "We'll take care of you as long as you provide and abide by these rules." Well, those women that couldn't abide by those rules— you got to do what you got to do!

MW: Right. They're punished for it.

CC: They're punished for it. Back then, like I said, when I was a kid, everybody had a mom and dad. I mean, it was everybody. I mean— By the time I'd say 15, 16, that's when we started to see. "Well, we know your dad, but he's staying over here." "Yeah, I know he's your dad, but he's staying, how come he's not staying—." So, I started to see that. I'm trying to remember this guy's name. I can't remember his name, but I remember he was one of the first ones to come to Omaha from L.A.

MW: He moved out there? Or he visited?

CC: Well, yeah, he moved to Omaha and that was sort of how the Black Panther Party— because he was part of that.

MW: Okay. Was it Eddie Bolden?

CC: Aahhh! There you go, okay! So yeah.

MW: And what year would that have been?

CC: Whew! Now you really— let me see how old was I?

MW: You said you were 16 when you—

CC: 16, so that would have been like. '66, '67.

MW: Okay.

CC: Yeah. I would imagine he probably came like maybe '61, '62, somewhere. Because we got pretty well established. But at the time, Black Muslims was prevalent in Omaha.

MW: The Nation [Nation of Islam].

CC: The Nation. They were everywhere. So there was that choice, was that, "Where were you at? With us." I tried the Nation, as I was young, but I made a mistake of showing up one day with a pork chop sandwich. So that sort of ended. [Laughter] That sort of ended my Nation— I was like, "My mama's pork chop." So that sort of pushed me [Laughter] towards— although the principles of the Black Panther Party appealed to me, really, plus there was that "Stand up and fight," that type, and I was more of that. And at the time, I began to lean more toward Malcolm than Martin. That appealed to me more, because I wasn't the type that— "Man, if they pour some stuff on me, it's gonna be on. Yeah, I'm not gonna just say no." Yeah, I made that decision. I'm not that guy.

MW: No milkshakes.

CC: So yeah, I'm not that guy. I gravitated more toward that, "Hit me, I got to hit you back."

MW: Were there any other organizations that were forming up around that time?

CC: Well, yeah. There's also a major air base in Omaha. Offutt Air Force Base, Strategic Air Command.

01:00:26

CC: And there were a few brothers that were in the Air Force that had— would come to the community. There was one particular community center, it was called Christchild Community Center, where these brothers came and they would work with the kids in the community, but they

were more geared toward that military. Although I— that's how I learned how to play chess— with this group. And then they would sponsor softball teams. So, if you wanted to play softball and stuff like that for the community center, these were folks that— So there were a number of things. Then we also had some professional athletes at the time, that were from Omaha, that came back and started implementing programs. There was Gale Sayers, Bob Boozer, and Bob Gibson. Now, Bob Boozer played basketball with the Lakers. Gale Sayers, [Inaudible] I just know he was a Bear, Bears running back [Inaudible] "Nah, you can't live here." Yeah, Benson area, they wouldn't sell them a house. "Now you stay over Near North Side." Okay, so that was the atmosphere in Omaha at that time. Which made these parties like the Black Panther Party and these other ones like Bob and these guys, they started first— and it's still there today. They started a little restaurant called Time Out. Okay. Burger joint. You could get chicken burgers. It's still there today. You know, it was one of the first businesses— Black-owned businesses— in our community back then, you know, major. And then they also opened up a service station, gas station, car wash. Then they bought a McDonald's chain. Okay. So they were starting to implement that entrepreneurship. So we had those, and I was dipping into each one. [Laughter] I was dipping into each one I could, to get as much as I could and learn as much as I could from these folk, you know? And like, I'm thinking, you mention that BANTU [Black Association for Nationalism Through Unity] group, you know.

MW: And what was— what'd BANTU stand for?

CC: But see— and then here's another thing. Outside of all of this, like I said at that time, it was like being in a war zone almost. I mean, we were so pressured— monitored and attacked by the

police force at that time— that anytime that you left home, okay, it was, "Keep your head on a swivel. You know, if you see the police coming, go the other way," that type of thing.

01:05:17

CC: So that— that pressure, was such that most of us almost cocooned ourselves. We look for drama, you just look for it, because you expected it. Even in the high school that I went to, North High, at that time we had like 1400 students. We had 40 Blacks. Between classes, any time that you went through the hall, we had to go in a group— you couldn't go individually. I had a friend, Michael West. We were in class. He got called to the principal's office. Before he got to the principal's office, he'd gotten his jaw broken. So I would come to school and— flagpole right in the middle of the school. And there'd be 15, 16 kids there with hoods, sheets on.

MW: Wow.

CC: So, and even in the high school.

MW: And you talked about— people were getting taken downtown and disappearing.

CC: Disappearing. Never find— Oh yeah. We knew a number of guys that got picked up and we'd never hear from them again. That was, yeah, that happened a lot. Or, I know one time a friend of mine, they picked him up and took him 75 miles out of town, dropped him off. Then have to get back to Omaha, stuff like that. After you get beat! It's not like they just drop you— you get touched up, then kicked out. Or, I knew some guys that, they were the type that, "You gotta bring it to get it," that type of, you know, those were some of those that— we never heard

from them again. Never heard from them again. Then you call down and, "No, we, we, we, we have no reports of a man picked up or we don't know anything about that." And we saw the police pick him up! "This was the car. We gave you the number of the car that picked him up." "No we don't have any report." That happened a lot. As a matter, I just saw, not long ago, I think it was HBO [Home Box Office], that had done a film about North Omaha. And they followed these three guys, the young guys coming up through there, and they were able to see, they showed how they would get picked up, taken away, just for being out. Not that, "I didn't catch you doing anything." Many times we'd be just standing around and police would pull up and, "I'm going around the block. Don't be here when I get back." That type of— and they would go, and if you were there, okay, that was enough. Take you out. So that was the atmosphere. When these groups— after a while, anything, it's gonna bust. You can only fill it up so much, it's going to bust. And that's what happened. That's what happened down there. Fortunately, for me, my family moved here. Because at my high school, I was one of the troublemakers.

01:10:00

CC: Me and a guy named Dennis Womack. Because my high school was very strict in that— first of all, you had to wear a belt, you had to have your shirt tucked in, the girls couldn't wear sandals, they couldn't wear pants, you couldn't have hair on your face— which was the start of my confrontation, because by the time I was a junior, I had a nice little goatee. And the school had their rule, but my dad also had his rule. His rule was, "I'll tell you when you're old enough to put a razor on your face." So I got sent home one day because of my goatee. So that was one of the few times my dad came to school. We got that settled. But I got a lot of animosity behind

that from the counselor because my dad really put a flame under him up there about that. So I'm walking around with a goatee, I'm breaking the rules. But what really blew it up was they expelled this sister because she came to school with a 'fro. They were like, "Oh no." Not suspended, expelled her— "Don't ever come here with a 'fro.". That was when we sort of took over school at that point. It was a full blown out inside the school riot, and all the folks— white folks— left and we barricaded the school, and we were in there for about three days. Okay.

MW: [Laughter] How did that get organized?

CC: Well, it was just a— it didn't, it wasn't planned. You know what I mean? It just, everybody just sort of, "That's it." That was it. Now, like I said, myself and— at the time— Steve Womack, we were sort of the spokesmen, I guess.

MW: Okay. This was for BANTU?

CC: Yeah, not that we wanted to— you know, we just spoke up.

MW: Yeah.

CC: Okay. We didn't plan to be— But people started listening, and it just evolved. But, I know they had it in for me. They had it in for me because not only that— I was also fighting them on— they had a requirement back then of ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps]. Okay, that was a requirement in order to graduate. And I was not about— I was not about that! "No, no, I'm not doing that." You had to take it in order to graduate. I refuse, it's my senior year coming up. I'm not— "We're gonna have a problem." And like I said— for me— fortunately, we moved. So I

didn't have to make that. But that was— I was going to the end. "If I don't graduate, I don't graduate, but I'm not committing to this ROTC. They sent me the uniform, they send you the whole everything! Uniform, all of that. "I'm not putting that on, I'm not wearing that!" And it was like, "Well okay, but you're not going to graduate." I had a lot of fights back— in school, outside of school, the whole bit. But being in that Black Panther Party, I knew I had that support bond. Plus, I was constantly getting knowledge and information on how to deal with these situations from some of my elders back then.

01:15:00

MW: What were the programs like for the Panthers in Omaha?

CC: Well, first of all we did our food program. We also had counseling, tutoring— we had tutoring programs after school, where we were actually able to use— like the junior high school I went to, they would let us in in the evenings. So, like from six to like eight, we would have tutoring.

MW: Night class.

CC: Night class. And we would go in. Now, I was— fortunately, I was a student, but I wanted to go anyway, just to be hanging out! So, I would go anyway, for the tutoring, but it was fun. But it was also— it wasn't just math. We threw in life lessons too. They also threw in survival methods and life lessons as well as— yes, there's math and science and this that you need to, and we need to do the English— yes, but. There was that counseling in there also. And we were able to express ourselves, where there was no one else in the school. It wasn't like we could go to a

counselor in the school. “I’m having this problem at home, I’m having”, that wasn’t available for us. But those tutors that came in in the evening, we were able to, “Yeah, I might be a little hungry. We didn’t eat today.” Or, “I’m having a problem with this kid. I’m having a problem with this teacher,” that type of thing. That was what the Party did a lot of. Okay.

MW: One thing I’ve always wondered about the food programs, and you spoke to this a little bit earlier, is where was that food getting sourced from?

CC: At that time, there were businesses in Omaha. Like for instance, I know it was Purina, Ralston [Ralston-Purina], Kellogg. There were a number of major cereal producers.

MW: The corporations.

CC: Corporate. You could smell the cereal in the morning. Yeah, you could smell them in the morning, you know, going in. We also had a—

MW: And they were collaborating or there was an agreement with the Party?

CC: They would donate. Yeah, we went to them and they would donate— you know— products to us. A lot of it was stuff they didn’t sell. But it was cereal. There was a— I remember it was called Roberts [Roberts Dairy].

MW: Okay.

CC: Milk. It was a dairy— big dairy. They even sponsored, I know, the first football team— third grade, first football team I played for, it was sponsored by Roberts Dairy, our uniform had “Roberts Dairy,” so they were invested in the community already, sports wise. So when we

approached them about the program, “Okay,” so they started donating the milk. And we would meet, like depending on what part of town you were in, we usually had a community center somewhere. Well, most of us was in the projects. [Laughter] A lot of projects— each project has their own little community center type. So we’d use those facilities in the morning. You’d get there in the morning, “Breakfast, get to school.” Then after school, “Come back, we got programs— we got— for you to do.” We didn’t have the latch key, okay? We had, “Come in here after school, we do these games, we do this.” They also had a big— I remember as a kid— Cub Scouts. It was real big, and they were done in the families homes. They didn’t have a big spot. I know I had a den mother, okay? And we would meet at her house. And it was only about !seven or eight of us in the troop, we’d make little crafts and stuff. Until I realized, “This is going to— developing sort of a military background to it.” So by the time I got the Boy Scouts, I’m, like, “Faah! Think I’m gonna back off of this one. You can have the badges— I see where this is going.” Said, “No I’m not that guy.”

1:20:07

MW: Mmhmm.

CC: But that was a big thing back then, too. So, all of these factions were going on in that small little area. So we had choices and we had exposure in the community to every— I mean, doctors, lawyers. They were there.

MW: That was the case in Omaha?

CC: Yeah, that was the case. And everyone was right there. I remember going to some of my teachers' houses— junior high school teacher lives right there. He lived by the Y [YMCA, Young Men's Christian Association]. So I'd go to the Y every day. When I came back, I stopped by, "Hey, how you doing?" We stopped by, talked with him is, he was an example. I could see right there. "Okay, yup, I see you doing well." And he'd spend the time and let me know what I got to do to get there. We were exposed, whereas I'd say in the '70s, early '80s, we sort of overcame and all our doctors and lawyers and Indian chiefs moved to the suburbs. So all of those examples were gone.

MW: Yeah, because they weren't confined.

CC: They weren't in— "Oh, we go to the suburbs." They moved out, left. After a while, the only ones that we saw driving— the big cat— in that car, were the preachers or the pimps. Those were your examples. The drug dealers, the pimps, the preachers, those were the only ones with the cars and the big houses, so that that that was your example. Back then. You can't be what you can't see. So you never saw— all you saw was— We're all products of our environment. So that was their environment. And that's what they were producing. And a lot of that was not by coincidence. A lot of that was by design. That's divide and conquer again, any way necessary. You want that under all of these circumstances, you were still able to achieve a level of success. "Get them out of there. You don't need those role models." And that became a big thing back then. To this day, I can't think of another race in this country where role models are so privileged, so emphasized. "Y'all need role model— Y'all need role model—" No. No. We need parents. That should be your role model. Not the basketball player or the football player. No.

That shouldn't be your role model. You don't know nothing about them except they play ball. You don't know what type of person they are. You don't wanna be like Mike! [Michael Jordan] You don't know what Mike's— you dig into Mikey, "Hey, maybe I don't want to be like Mike! Yeah, I might want to play like Mike." But that emphasis came. "You gotta have role models, you gotta have role models. Be like, be like." No, your role model should be that parent. That should be your role model. They take that away. And then by the '90s, they start empowering the kids! Now, you know like, how your parents discipline you? "Pick up the phone and call me, I'll come get them." Oh, okay? I remember when I started because I had kids at the time, they were like high school, starting junior high school, my kids, when all of that came about. They were like, "Yeah, we can call." I said, "Yeah, well, you can. But make two calls." [Inaudible] For the police, one for them."

[Inaudible]

01:25:30

CC: But they don't have to see them as authority figures. So if your parents don't have no authority, what does the teacher have? What does the policeman have? You don't respect— The kids I deal with, if I want to discipline them about anything. The first thing I hear, "Don't touch me. Don't put your hand on me." "Or, what?" "I'll call the police." "What?" "Don't touch me. Don't put your hands on me." And I'm like, "No, no." So that's what I see now. It's that they don't respect authority on any level. Which is detrimental to them when they hit these streets out here and run across that police officer who's gonna tell you, "Stop resisting. Comply. Stop

resisting. I'm only gonna say it once or now you get shot." But they don't have any reason to respect any type of authority or recognize it. If I don't have to listen to my parents, who would I have to listen to? And I see a lot of that today. And still working somewhat with the school system, I see those kids get into school, majority of them get put into Special Ed. Not because they're special. Teachers don't want to deal with the behavior. "Put them in Special Ed." I know friends, guys that, "Yeah, they put me in Special Ed." [Laughter] "Yeah, I got an A for not tearing the class up today." "What?" "I got an A today, for just paying attention." "What?" "That's all I had to do." Oh, come on. So that miseducation, non-education is creating, once again, that cheap labor force. Bringing it back to that cheap labor force. And that's what's happening to a lot of ours. I see a lot now, right now. They're all Special Ed. And I'm looking these kids up, "All he needs is someone, you know."

MW: Give that attention, support.

CC: The future looks bleak. I tell my friends, "These are the folks that will be paying your social security. Mm-mm!" They're not even working. And if they are, they're not making that. Okay. So what's that gonna do for you? I hope folks are looking at that. I hope folks are seeing this progress. Like I said, guys like you, I admire right now. I'm so happy to see a Black person in college!

MW: Thank you.

CC: Especially a male, a Black male in college. And like I said, Macalester [Macalester College], to see a Black person there! Oh! Oh!

MW: I actually— that's perfect. I wanted to talk about— so you went to Macalester College 1969 to 1973 in the Expanded Education Opportunity Program [Expanded Educational Opportunities], which we know as EEO. [Laughter] Can you talk about coming from Omaha to St. Paul, but then from the Black Panther Party—

1:30:11

CC: Yeah—

MW: And you said North High in Omaha— You were at another school where there were probably 40 Black students!

CC: Yeah!

MW: Can you talk about your experience going into Macalester and the environment there?

CC: It was really— [Laughter]

MW: How did you—

CC: How did I get there?

MW: How did you get recruited? Yeah.

CC: Okay. They had a program, when I was at Central High School, they had a program called Upward Bound. And I got exposed to that program. And what really brought me to the program was that it was like on Saturdays you get to go out to this college.

MW: Macalester.

CC: Take you out to Macalester. And they— you get to sit in a class to learn about how college classes work. Plus they paid you $350.

MW: Okay. [Laughter]

CC: I said, "What?! Oh well, yeah, yeah." And you got to do a one-on-one with the students. Who would— because they might have been teachers or getting into a teaching program. But I remember there was this girl, this lady that was my counselor at the time and a tutor. And I just got to talking with her and I'll never forget, you know, she started using these words. I'm like, "Wait a minute, got too many syllables in that word, but what do you mean?" Using all these big words. And I began to talk to her about that. And so then she began to explain to me that that was normal diction. She gave me my first thesaurus. "Oh, okay. I got you. Alright." So I stayed with that program, Upward Bound program. Then that summer, we got to stay on campus. Stayed on campus. We had and took courses. Okay. So you got the experience of being in a dorm and that whole bit. And so I liked that, but, I'll tell you, at the time I had no intention of going to college. Although I did have about six athletic scholarship offers, small schools around there. But at the time, I was into drafting, architectural drafting.

MW: Okay. Wow.

CC: I got into that at seventh grade. And that was my thing. All through, and I mean, that was my thing. And I had planned to go to what is now St. Paul College. Back then it was called Technical Vocational Institute, TVI. They had a 10-month program for drafting, which I had, that was me. "Okay, I'm going to there, get out of there, making the bucks." Well, three days after I graduated

high school, I get a letter from Uncle Sam talking about "You're 1A and drafted for the military service. I'm like, "I'm not that guy! I'm not that guy." You know, "Military? No." And at the time, the only way that you could get a student deferment— you had to be enrolled in a four-year school. Mine was a two-year. That didn't qualify. So that's when I went out to Macalester and said, "Well hey! I'm coming in, all right?" And they were like, "But Mr. Crowe uh, we sent out the letters of acceptance in April. This is June." I went, "I understand, but I'll be here in September." [Laughter] "So you do what you got to do. But I'll be here in Sept—" And, fortunately, I had the grades and I had been through the program. So, they sort of let me slide on in. And that's how I really, I got to Macalester. So I said, "Okay, now I'm going to college, what the hell am I going to do here?"

1:35:12

CC: They say, "What's your major?" "You got drafting?" "Nah, we don't have that." Fortunately, there were some upperclassmen that sort of took us under their wing. Because I remember registration day, I'm in my dorm, I'm knocked out, I'm laying, I don't care, and I hear a knock on my door and this girl just said— she was a senior at the time— she said, "You gotta go get the classes." "What do you mean get the classes? Don't they send me my classes?" "No, you gotta go." "What? Okay." So, she took me over and started— "No, this is what you gotta do." "Okay." "And what's going to be your major?" "I don't know!" "What did I like?" So I said, "Well, I liked history. So I put History, history major." Because I did like history, "Now I'll do that."

MW: Was Elder Mahmoud [Mahmoud El-Kati] there at that point?

CC: Yes.

MW: Okay.

CC: He was, I sat at his feet many a day. I sat at his foot many a day. Not only him, he was there, there was a guy named John Patton. Taught music. He was quite a character. He had sung all over the world. I don't know if you remember, if you ever saw— he played the preacher in The Color Purple. He was Shug Avery's dad. He was the preacher. That was John Patton. He taught him the concept. Between him and Mahmoud, they kept us together. They put the meat on our head— brains. Because at that time, they brought in 75 of us.

MW: For EEO?

CC: For EEO.

MW: And you were in the first year of it?

CC: The very first year. And we sort of took the campus over. Actually, Macalester was somewhere you could almost say was a Black college.

MW: Yeah. Highest per capita number of Black students from a school that wasn't an HBCU, if I remember right.

CC: Definitely. And graduated at a higher rate than any in the country, we started with 75, we graduated 52. But like I said, it was very communal. Matter of fact, I brought this for you. [Macalester 50th Reunion EEO Committee's "Macalester College's Expanded Educational Opportunities (EEO) Program publication]

MW: Wow.

CC: You really want to know about the program, that's it.

MW: Thank you.

CC: Now, you can take that, but just make sure I get it back whenever you're done. But that's going to give you a lot of insight. When we got here, the program was such that the president at the time, Arthur Fleming, he was on the [Inaudible] program, he was the head of that in the White House. And he came and started this program here in Macalester. And I was always curious about why these people— Hubert Humphrey came there, to teach Political Science, they had two Econ professors, Egge and Bunting. [Karl Egge and Robert Bunting] They were two of Nixon's top aides.

MW: Wow.

CC: And they're teaching economics there, but every couple of weeks, they'd be gone. They'd be called to Washington, Nixon's been calling these guys to Washington.

1:40:01

CC: And then you got Professor Chase, that's Chase Manhattan Bank! They're paying this cat a dollar to teach math. I'm like, "Wait a minute. Why are all theeese people comin' to this little bitty spot here on Grand and Snelling. What's going on in this little? So something's got to be going on here." So I was glad to be dug in there and be a part of it. And some of the professors

that they had at the time were, I mean, top shelf. Yeah. The History department, there's a Professor Stewart. I think he just—

MW: James Stewart.

CC: James Stewart, he just passed recently. Ahh. Yeah. We spent a lot of time. I learned so much from him. And, all of these guys and folks was at this school, and I'm like, "Oh, something's going on." You know, Mondale [Walter Mondale] he was the speaker at my graduation. Is Nixon coming? That's all I wanted to know. But I was fortunate enough, I think, to be exposed to these folks and be able to pick their brains somewhat, and get a different perspective from their viewpoint. Now, we had problems with some of those professors because we would have classes where professors would give an assignment and then say, "Well, you know, the Black students, y'all just read this."

MW: Wow.

CC: Woah, woah, woah. "Because y'all are here on this program." So they didn't feel we was qualified. "You're just here be— you're EEO. But we're not going to require you—" No. We had to go through that. There's a young man named Melvin. [Melvin Collins]

MW: Yep.

CC: You know of him? He'll tell you what— we had to do a lot of. We took over a building out there! Yeahhh!

MW: Yeah I was gonna ask, were you in that?

CC: Yeah!

MW: What was the story of that? Because that would've been the second building you took over.

CC: Well. [Laughter]

MW: It seems like you like to do this.

CC: I don't think it wasn't any— But see, like I said, I'll always watch. They start these programs. They see that they work, their success. And then they constantly start to break it down, break it down, break it down. I'm like, "You know it works. What, what, why?" And they don't, "We really don't want it to work." Okay. Originally it was supposed to be 75 of us brought in every year. They said after that first 75 of us, "Aah, maybe make it 50. Maybe make it 30." So I'm saying that's what we were fighting. Plus, "Nah, we don't want no special—"

MW: Yeah.

CC: Okay. And we're not here. We earned— everybody here got grades. Everybody here got— it's like, okay. We had a bunch of 'em— went through three years. Bunch of them. Even myself. I had a double major. I had a double major. I majored in history, sociology, plus got to teach, you know, education was my minor. So I'm trying to get everything out of here I can. You know what I'm saying? I want everything I can out of here while I'm here. So the drive, the intelligence and all of that wasn't a question. They questioned it. They assumed we didn't have it. They dealt with us like on those levels. We had to fight that for a year. "Yeah, you guys just read the first chapter." No, no, no. So it was really different.

01:45:10

CC: But like I said, the program itself was really successful because it basically put us on a level playing field. Yeah, full scholarship. And at that time it only cost $3,500 a year. But that was one of the highest around at the time too! It wasn't like— that was still high to you. They gave us $150 a month spending money, you got $75 a semester for books, meals, and room and board, everything taken care of so you didn't have to worry about all those. All you had to do was go to school. Like most of those kids, they went to school there.

MW: Right.

CC: Most of those kids that went to the college, they're not worried about tuition. They're not worried about room and board. They're not, you know. So they sort of just gave us the same playing field. Okay. And that's all we asked for. Now, if we don't make it, that's on us. But we did. So the proof was in the pudding. Given the same opportunities, we can achieve just as much and well as anyone else. And that was the fight. "What do we do to prevent that?" And I think that's where we are today. That's what they've been doing ever since. Because I know for a while, a long time, Macalester, only Black faces I saw there, they were African.

MW: Yeah.

CC: That was it. "Where's, you know, where the homeboys at?" For a while that was it. Which is why I said, I'm so glad to see you. You're in there now. But we, because of Arthur Fleming, we were able to advance things, he supported us in other ventures, like, for instance— we had a, well you probably heard of the Black House.

MW: Mmhmm.

CC: Yeah. That was just remarkable. They spent, I think it was $1.5 million on that house at that time.

MW: Wow.

CC: Oh, it was— But that was our cultural center. That's where we kept each other together. That's where we met. That's where we studied. That's where we ate. They hired a sister to cook, so we'd go there and get our greens and neckbones and grits, that they didn't have at the commons [Kagin Commons]. So, we were able to just feel comfortable there in this campus. So that was our spot. It became the spot for the Twin Cities.

MW: They were bringing speakers.

CC: Listen. Not only speakers, but every weekend Black folks from all— the U, everybody, Duluth, Wiscon— Every weekend, the Black House at Macalester. And we had bands in there, we had it, the whole bit. It was a thing. Everybody talking, "The Black House, the Black House." Four floors.

MW: Mm!

CC: Oh, yeah, the attic to the basement was finished. Speaker system run through the whole place, very comfortable, relaxed. But they also gave us entertainment. We convinced them we needed our own entertainment too. So they had a little fund. We were able to bring some nice bands. We brought Young Holt Trio and Friends of Distinction. We had Stevie Wonder. We had

Olatunji and Drums of Passion. “We needed this type of,” and they provided that for it. So, like I said, it was great.

01:50:30

CC: Plus, I probably made more money back then than I have since I’ve left! Because like I said, you got this every month, you know. So then by the time I was like a junior, I was like— I found out if you moved off campus, you can get your room and board money. What?! Okay! So that was like, what was it, 350? Room and board every month, I got that. My apartment was only ninety-nine dollars of money at the time. So yeah, yeah! I was getting that. Then I took out work study. And they had a plan to go like, if you could find a job that was related to your field of study, then you could get work study. Well, yeah. I got a job in Minneapolis at the Blaisdell YMCA, dealing with the youth over there, which was part of my sociology major. So I was getting the work study. Plus I was getting paid from the Y. So hey, I was, I was doing real well back then. But like I said, it was, by the time I was a junior, that’s when we got the building because we kept saying, “You’re breaking this down, you’re breaking this program down every year from what we started out and they created with.” And there’s no justification. It's not like we weren’t successful, because we were. You couldn’t say that it wasn’t working, because it was. So why are you, how can you justify breaking it down? But I had a professor, never forget, Doris Wilkinson. She sort of took me under her wing. She was a sociology professor. She took me to a trustee meeting one day, snuck me in the back just to listen. And all these guys are cutting this— I’ll never forget this one woman who walked in the door. Mink, diamonds everywhere. She

walked up to the front and informed them that she did not go along with this "E. E. O. program," and if it was not eliminated immediately, she would pull all her funding from the school.

MW: Wow.

CC: And she was upset because she had to come here and interrupt her second tour around the world that she was on. But then, yeah, start hearing that. "Yeah, we're gonna pull a lot of funding. We don't want to see it. It's all my money. We ain't getting the money if we keep the program." So that was why we sort of got in there with that BLAC [Macalester Black Liberation Affairs Committee]. But there were a number of organizations that got started through that. Okay, did the BLAC. We even had our own newspaper.

MW: Imani.

CC: Imani. Sounds of Blackness started there.

MW: Macalester College Black Choir.

CC: Dupre Hall. Gary, [Gary Hines] I was just talking with him last week. They had a piano in there. So he'd go in there, the opera piano, and then the kids just start coming in and all of a sudden they start, "Can you sing?" "Yeah." Boom boom boom.

01:55:00

CC:As a matter of fact, I have their very first album that they did—

MW: Wow.

CC: While at Macalester. I've been keeping it all these years unopened. Okay. This might be worth something one day. It's like been over 50 something years now. I've had this, but I've got their very first album. I've tried to stay a part of Macalester. I donate a little bit here and there, I take part in that. I'll be there next week for a little buddy of mine that I played ball with, they put him in the Hall of Fame. I'll be there for that next week. And I've tried to make all the reunions, you know. I'm a Golden Scot, so, I appreciate and enjoy my experience there. It did a lot to form the person I am today. Okay. Well, I shouldn't say form, I should say put in perspective, because I think the formality started long before I got there. But being there put a lot of perspective for me— [Inaudible]