

PRESERVING MEMORY: NEWARK AND RUTGERS
IN THE 1960'S AND 1970'S

An Interview with

PETER JACKSON

Conducted by

Gilbert Cohen

March 9, 1991

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GILBERT COHEN: This is Saturday, March 9, 1991. I'm speaking with Dr. Peter Jackson in his home in Newark, New Jersey. Dr. Jackson is on the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Rutgers in Newark in the Master of Public Administration Program. Dr. Jackson is a Rutgers-Newark graduate, graduated in 1969. He holds a Ph.D. in economics from Harvard University. [Break in recording] Okay. My first question is when you applied for admission to Rutgers-Newark, what was your perception of the college, the university, at the time?

PETER JACKSON: I began my work at Rutgers in the evening, and then I switched to days. And I guess I didn't think very much about the environment. I wanted to finish my undergraduate degree, and I had been doing social work, community organizing for a year, maybe close to two years. So my sense was that I was off schedule for finishing my undergraduate degree. So I just wanted to switch to days. And I needed, I don't know, maybe a year's worth of work, a year and a half's worth of work to finish. I just wanted to get in and get it done.

COHEN: Why did you choose Rutgers over other schools. What advantages did it offer that you saw?

JACKSON: I was in Newark, and Rutgers was within walking distance of me. In fact I don't think there was an Essex County College. But had there been, it would not have offered—I don't think it would have offered—the appropriate degree. So it was close.

COHEN: What was your perception of Rutgers University as an opportunity for a black person living in Newark at the time?

JACKSON: Again, it wasn't...the issue wasn't one of that. I'm not a native of Newark, so Newark was the fifth stop on the way to many more stops. And I've always...my tendency has always been to drift towards university environments simply because it offered the exchange. And so I wanted to finish. I saw this as a place to go. And so going in, I didn't have any ideas about the university. Any ideas which I acquired, I acquired subsequent to attending classes.

COHEN: What kind of ideas then did you form when you started at Rutgers?

JACKSON: I started, I guess, during the day in sixty-eight. I was only in school at Rutgers for a year. I was there from the fall of sixty-eight through the spring of sixty-nine. And I think I may have taken a course during the summer; I'm not sure. But that was it. And so what I remember about the institution was that it was very much as it is today. It was a predominantly white institution. What's different about it today than was true when I attended in sixty-eight to sixty-nine, was that it didn't have people from, as many people, from Asia and Africa and Latin

America in the school. When I look at the campus now, I think of African people who were born in this country. I don't see very much difference between what it was then and what it is now. I'm sure that there probably are more students now, and I'm just not as conscious of it. But in terms of relative proportions, it looks very much now as it did then. But it was sixty-eight, it was sixty-nine. So the times had their own spirit and their own force. But I don't think when we were in school that there were more than...I can't remember more than twenty or thirty of us. There may have been more, but that's what I remember. And I'm sure that there are many more now—but again, relative to then, it appears to be about the same.

COHEN: What kind of campus extracurricular activities were you involved in in that year?

JACKSON: None. Essentially I had twenty-one hours my first semester and twenty-four hours my second. So I didn't have much time for formal activities. I somehow.... Well again, because of what was going on in the country at the time, there was a tendency to concentrate on issues pertaining to race and to liberation, to black power, to community organizing. And there were other students there who had similar interests. So whatever time I did have, I spent with them essentially. I think there was a student center there, but I'm not sure if it had been dedicated to Robeson yet.

COHEN: I think so. I don't think it was Robeson yet.

JACKSON: And the cafeteria then was where the pool table is now—or the pool tables are now. And we spent a great deal of our time between classes in the cafeteria. We played cards, we played chess, we talked. And that's what we did when we wanted to. Or we were in the library, the second floor. At that time we didn't have to—I don't think there was a formal sign-in process either. If you were the first one to get to the second floor, then you could get one of the rooms. [Laughs]

COHEN: That's still the case. They went to a formal sign-in, and then gave it up. [Laughter]

JACKSON: So that's what we did. We'd go up those stairs, and we'd get a room if we had to prepare for an exam or do some community study.

COHEN: At the time, what was the relationship between the black students on campus and the white students? Was it uncomfortable or what?

JACKSON: I think it was...I don't know. I mean the group that I was with, we didn't pay very much attention to it. Other than sitting with them in class, there wasn't very much contact. I'm sure that there was contact among some groups, some blacks and some whites. I mean they were there. Until the takeover, I don't remember experiencing any hostility from them. We were just indifferent to them for the most part.

COHEN: Now BOS was organized in sixty-seven. Why, in your recollection, was it organized? NAACP was on campus.

JACKSON: I don't remember why it was organized. But by the time I got there, it was there. I think Harrison Snell was the president when I arrived. It's funny because I was listening to—watching—*Eyes on the Prize* the other night. And they were interviewing the representative from Atlanta who was the chairman of SNCC.

COHEN: Lewis?

JACKSON: Lewis.

COHEN: John Lewis, yes.

JACKSON: Right, right John Lewis. But it was the same thing. I was thinking when you mentioned BOS that Snell went out and Joe Browne came in. And I think that was representative of the.... Although I read something; someone did a study, and they said something about contrasting the intellectual Snell with the something Joe Browne. I can't remember what the attitude was.

COHEN: We read the same book. Richard McCormick's *Black Protest Movement at Rutgers*.

JACKSON: Right, right. [Laughter] Somebody showed me a copy of it. That would never have been the way that I would characterize either of them. I mean I just think it was a question that Harrison did step down. I don't remember whether there was a vote, or whether it just rotated. I don't remember how it took place. But I remember that Joe became president of BOS. I guess in some sense... I mean whatever the NAACP and the Urban League had to say at that time, many people within the radical fringe of the nonviolent part of the student movement, and certainly those who were part of the violent part of the student movement, were not listening to whatever the NAACP and the Urban League had to say. I remember at one point there was a break. CORE had been a part of the nonviolent movement, along with SNCC. And SNCC broke and then CORE broke. And so by that time, I'm sure that CORE had broken by the time that BOS was formed or by the time I arrived in sixty-eight, sixty-nine. So the NAACP would not have been relevant to the kids of issues that were being raised by students at that time. And it's still the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. So if for no other reason than black not being a part of its name, it certainly would have been rejected. But the reasons for rejecting it were certainly much more substantial than simply its name. But in addition to all of those, there was also what it called itself.

COHEN: Yes. That was an issue which was discussed among members of BOS?

JACKSON: I don't remember it being formally discussed. But it was certainly...yes. I mean it was not an accident that it was Black, and not Negro Organization of Students or the Colored Organization of Students.

COHEN: What conditions existed in the university to encourage protests and militant action?

JACKSON: The University—I hope the machine can handle me walking.

COHEN: Your voice is good. [Laughter]

JACKSON: The university was...I mean universities are what they are. I mean on the one hand they encourage and foster independent thought and creativity. And on the other hand they regiment and attempt to foster— [Break in recording]

COHEN: We're recording now. We are recording again.

JACKSON: So this need to express oneself was important; and the university, at least within the classroom, at within some classrooms, the university's presence was felt as a fostering agent. And in other classrooms it was felt as an inhibitor. On the other hand, because of the need to articulate the struggle on campus to the general struggle of African people, called at that time black people, it became incumbent upon us to take the inhibitor and to use that as simply another symbol, another emblem of what it was that needed to be overturned. So the classroom, the university, provided us with what we needed for the development of a revolutionary base, both because it assisted us, and because it attempted to proscribe our activities. So at that time, just because of the strength of the movement nationally and internationally, the university was just, again, was there; it wasn't important at that time to black people where they were. It didn't matter whether they were in prison—well, as Malcolm points out, we're all in prison. But it didn't matter whether we were formally there with bars and guards, or whether we were informally there just being in Newark or being at home, wherever we were in this country, or wherever we were throughout the world. So what really happened, I think, what probably was really important about that period was being able to take the environment that we were in and to connect that environment to the general environment of African, Third World, and black people. And I think it's a sign that it's perhaps important to make this distinction between black and African-American; because black was the antithesis of white. And what we call ourselves now, African-Americans, is about something geographical, it's about a place, it's about a nationalism which changes the nature of the struggle entirely, from one of— [Break in recording] There's always an African movement that's not new to African people being in this special...1990 or 1991, whatever year 1988 became official when the *New York Times* and the *New York Post* announced that we were now African-Americans.

But this concept of black is different, at least it's different for some; because it embodied...if it was black, it was aracial, it was everything that was opposite to what was white. And then white became more than simply a white skin. It became a metaphor for all that was evil. It was an embodiment of evil, but it wasn't peculiar to a person. So what happened was that white stepped out beyond its racial origins, and black similarly. Because white was already beyond its racial origins, black also stepped out beyond its racial origins. So initially when you said black, you didn't mean just African-Americans. You meant African-Americans, you meant Asian-Americans, you meant Native Americans. You meant all people who were oppressed by either a racial or an economic or a social or a political oppressor, by a system. And now it's lost that. It's becoming more and more of a synonym for African-Americans. And that began to grow right out of black power. I mean first what I remember was there was black, and then there was red power with respect to Native Americans. And then brown for [unintelligible], which is a different issue and doesn't fit directly, again, with this. But [unintelligible] and yellow power. And so we had the splintering of the idea of black being the antithesis into black being concretized in people of

African descent. So it's not surprising that that process has ultimately led to a shedding of black, at least amongst some, and the adoption of the more nationalistic African-American. But what's important about that, I think, is that we can [unintelligible] African-American [unintelligible] that the universal revolution was embodied. And it's probably also the case that black and not African-American contains much more of a seed of revolution, because it contains something which goes beyond the state. And the state is important. I mean it is important for African peoples to be able to trace themselves, what it is they are, what it is that will never become, its origin or its origins. And part of that trace is to trace what actually occurred in time and space, which the space is Africa, and the time is at least in part from possibly the fourteenth century. It explains at least part of our relationship with the United States, its factors. But having said that, back to wherever it was we were, I think the question is what was going on at the university.

COHEN: At the university, yes.

JACKSON: So we saw the university as a formal structure as centered on deans and administrators on the one side, faculty on another side, students on a third side, and staff on a fourth side, the administration—I don't know how much contact most of us had with the administration. We know what the policies were. We looked around the campus, and we saw that the campus is located in Newark, but there weren't very many of us on campus. And we understood that the relationship between the university to an area which is predominantly black and a campus which is predominantly white, again within the general struggle; and so we responded to that. We wanted to know why this was happening, and we wanted to know—and we demanded that it should be changed. And again, from the... Thinking back, the only part of the university that may have substantially changed between the time that we invaded Conklin Hall and today is the custodial staff. What I remember then is that in the cafeterias, they were white Irish women, I think, who served the food and took the money—I think. And now those positions are held by black women for the cafeteria services. For the custodial services of the buildings, I remember that there were black men then and there were black women as well. I don't remember any Spanish at the time. And I can't remember whether there were any whites who were cleaning buildings. But if there were, they're gone now. And those changes took place. And once they went into effect, there was no retrenching from them.

On the other hand, and this is hearsay at this point, I remember once I left, once I graduated, I think I returned to Newark fairly frequently for my first couple of years of graduate school. And the enrollment of blacks on the campus increased significantly. And I think there was also an increase in Hispanics. But then, my understanding is that somewhere in the mid to late seventies, whatever gains in percentages that accrued to blacks were dissipated. So the only substantive difference then, based upon my observations, is that there were more people working in the kitchens and in the bathrooms now than there were then.

COHEN: These perceptions were formed over what period of years again? I missed that.

JACKSON: Sixty-eight and sixty-nine, seventy, seventy-one. I was still coming back to the university on a regular basis. And I remember that there were discussions about the increase in black enrollment which took place between—I left in the summer of sixty-nine. Even by the fall of sixty-nine, enrollments of blacks were up, and my understanding is that they stayed up for—

possibly up until the oil embargo; so possibly up until seventy-three. But the student revolt continued through seventy-one, seventy-two. There were still demonstrations for Mozambique, for Angola, for South Africa taking place on university campuses through that time. But what I recall is that after seventy-three, after the oil embargo, then the illusion of progress became more and more transparent. And through it, if one looked, one could see the same structures, either unaffected by what had taken place between sixty-one and sixty-two and seventy-three, or in the process of being reestablished, so reconstructed. So the edifices either were not damaged or they were being rebuilt. And so back to the question of the university again. The university wasn't... The university, I think, was much more fluid then than now. I think in sixty-seven and sixty-six, the university was still spread out in Newark. I mean it had consolidated, I guess, somewhere around sixty-seven, sixty-eight. So there was a new [unintelligible]. It didn't have a sophistication. And again, it was an institution that was a part of what was taking place everywhere in the country. So it was just another of those institutions. And there was some sensitivity on the part of some administrators. But I never came to know anyone that closely among the administrators then. I remember that Malcolm Gross, I guess, was provost then.

COHEN: Well, Malcolm Talbott was...in sixty-five he became vice president. [Break in recording] Okay, we're back.

JACKSON: So what I remember about Talbott was just that... When it was over, what we thought we had done was to sit down over the table. We thought we had been able to sit down and work out an agreement with our adversary, an agreement which would ultimately produce the goals and objectives that we sought. But we didn't come away from our meetings with him—again, this is all so fuzzy. What I can remember about him and the meetings is I remember Richard Roper—he was with the state, and he came with a tape recorder to the meetings. I don't really remember anyone else in the room, but I know that they were there. So Rutgers, what...

COHEN: Well, let me ask the obvious question: Why was Conklin Hall taken over?

JACKSON: It was there. [Laughter]

COHEN: What were the issues or issue, if you could...

JACKSON: Right. It's funny. I don't really remember many of them. But I do remember this about the issues: They were nonnegotiable. What was true about the issues is that they were nonnegotiable demands. This was very, very serious. I remember some of them very clearly. We wanted to introduce a black studies program at Rutgers. We wanted more black faculty. We wanted more black students. We wanted more Spanish students. We wanted more Asian students. And I guess maybe that's some of the irony of it. It seems we were able to get everything in the long run except more black students. The other kids seemed to make permanent inroads in the structure. But thinking about those gains, of course, those gains had very little to do with us, I suspect, since we weren't able to sustain our own enrollments. And the enrollments of other groups are probably being sustained by their increases in the population, more so than anything that we did. But we wanted the university to become the place where you went if you wanted to become a liberator. You should be able to enroll in Rutgers University, study for four years, get a BA; and when you finished, go out and help liberate your people. And you should be

able to come to Rutgers University, sit down for four years; and when you leave the institution, you should know more about Africa, Asia, Latin America. And if it's a zero sum game, then that may mean that you know less about Europe. So there was a tremendous need on the part of the students then to heal the institution, to correct it, to put it on its proper path, to lead it towards truth and knowledge. And to make it more receptive to the often very muted cry for justice that could be heard by more sensitive ears.

COHEN: How did those expectations differ among, oh, let's say, black students in those days compared to their expectations today? Well, let's say as it developed into the eighties, let's say, okay? If you could compare and contrast, as they say.

JACKSON: Right. I mean it's clear that what we wanted then is a new world. We wanted a new world. We wanted it. We wanted to build a new world.

COHEN: Don't people want a new world today, too? How did that change?

JACKSON: Today people want a new car. They want a new house. They want a new job; although given the current situation, people are much more inclined just to simply want to hold onto their old one. But, no, there's nothing profound in what's taking place now. There's another movement; and what I'm doing, of course, is oversimplifying. There is and there always has been and there always will be a movement for the liberation of oppressed people. That will...just as surely as there will always be a movement for the oppression of peoples throughout the world, there will also be a movement for their liberation. But what happens is that that movement is not always as evident as it is at other times. The question of evidence is not only the question of the intensity of the movement, but also has to do with the size of the movement. The fringe.... When you think of the metaphor of the fence-straddler, I always thought in the past that the fence that people straddle is very narrow. That it's what I did as a child when I walked down the street and I tried to stay on the line. And you try to walk on the line so you don't fall off. And that's what I thought a fence-straddler was. Someone who tried to stay off the.... But that's not it. It's clear now that the fence is wider than the path. That the fence-straddlers are the majority. It's not a peripheral activity to be on the fence. Being on the fence is what it means most days of most of our lives, being on the fence. Getting off the fence is the rare occurrence.

COHEN: How did the students decide to get off the fence when it came to the final decision to take over Conklin Hall? What kind of discussion was there? What kind of difference was there?

JACKSON: Right. I can remember one of those discussions clearly. It took place in Conklin Hall in one of the classrooms. And we were all.... Well, when I say we were all there, I remember some of the people that were gathered there. I remember that Aaron was there. I think Jan was there; she might have come later. But I think she was there. Joe was there. I was there. Harrison Snell was there. And there were a couple of.... I think it was a class; it may have been a class. Someone spoke at the class, and then perhaps after the class was over.... Okay. Those were two different times. No, this was a meeting. We called a meeting in Conklin Hall. I remember the classroom was nearly full, so perhaps twenty, twenty-five students were sitting there, and we were talking about how this thing was going to go down. I think Morgan was there. And then we had people, [mumbles] been there. Then there were people whose names I can't

recall. So the conversation was what are we going to do? We want these things, and no one seems to want to respond. Now there were some people who were in conversations with the administration about the things that we wanted. I wasn't a part of it.

COHEN: And who were they? Do you recall?

JACKSON: And I don't know if they were formal or if they were informal. There were conversations going on about what it is that we wanted. But I don't remember any meetings being called, at least none that I was invited to. And we were in the room, and we were—oh, right! There were two brothers there who lived in—I can't remember their names. They were twins, in fact. Not only are they brothers. And there were, oh, there was a strong radical component to the group. I think Harrison and there was a small group of others who were less inclined to take Conklin; they wanted to talk more and negotiate more. But I remember talking and talking and talking about it. But I don't think that it took.... What I remember—and this really is so foggy—what I remember is that it took more time to decide when we were going to do it than that we were going to do it. And I don't remember how we ended up with Conklin rather than.... I think initially we had planned to take both Conklin and....

COHEN: Next door, you mean, Boyden?

JACKSON: Boyden.

COHEN: Boyden, yes. Mm-hmm.

JACKSON: But for some reason we only took one. Maybe people didn't want to separate or we didn't have enough chains for both buildings. But it was Conklin. And we didn't have much choice. I mean if I remember correctly, there was Conklin, there was Boyden, there was the library. I'm not sure if Hill was up yet.

COHEN: No, I don't believe so. Ackerson was open.

JACKSON: Ackerson was open. And—

COHEN: Campus Center...

JACKSON: Smith, I think, was.... Because there was somebody who was in chemistry, and I think he was already going to Smith—I think. He was a graduate student at that point. He didn't participate in the occupation, but he was with us when we were talking and he would share ideas with us.

COHEN: What was your position during those discussions?

JACKSON: Oh, what did I think about the occupation?

COHEN: Yes, about whether to go or not to go or when to go?

JACKSON: What I remember is that I argued to go. I don't remember what the conversation about the buildings was. But it was very clear that I supported the occupation. What they decided to do was...Joe went in. And I also had—

COHEN: Joe Browne?

JACKSON: Joe Browne went in, along with the other occupiers. And there were a couple of other people—I don't remember who they were—but I remember that there were other people. And we stayed out. And my responsibility was to negotiate with the administration for the release of Conklin Hall. And that took place in the law school. What was the law school then, which is now Ackerson.

COHEN: Yes, yes.

JACKSON: Right. When I think back, looking back upon it now, I think the occupation lasted, what was it, three days?

COHEN: Three and a half days, I guess, the twenty-fourth through the twenty-seventh, I think were the dates. It was occupied the morning of the twenty-fourth, and the students left on the twenty-seventh. What were your concerns about possible harm to yourselves, the students that were occupying—either from, well, any number of sources?

JACKSON: Now, thinking back, I don't think there was very much concern.

COHEN: You weren't concerned about the police or local community people or...

JACKSON: No. We figured we were going to take the building. And as long as we held the building, as long as we kept chains on the doors, it was our building. That's how we saw it. I guess it was possible for them to have broken the glass and just come through the windows or the door without the glass, but that wasn't really much of a concern. The concern was how long were we going to have to occupy this building before the university relents? What's that process going to be? Or will they ever? Will our nonnegotiable demands that would be met?

COHEN: After the negotiations led to the students' exodus from Conklin Hall, what were the sticking points? There was an agreement which was talked about. What was the disagreement after the building was taken, after it was left by the students?

JACKSON: See, this is one of the questions where things, from my perspective, things aren't very clear. I negotiated with the university for three of those days. And I remember going into a room and sitting down at the table. The administration was on one side, and there were three of us that were around the table, the students.

COHEN: Who were those three, if you can recall?

JACKSON: My sense is...I really don't remember who was there. Again, I can't remember who was there. But what I remember about is that we said the demands were nonnegotiable, and we

did not negotiate. And I remember that the people in the building, maybe towards the end of the second day, started to become a little concerned. A couple of times the Young Americans for Freedom...because while they were inside, we were marching in front of Conklin. Another group of students who weren't inside but marched every day in front of Conklin. The Young Americans for Freedom showed up in front of Conklin with I guess a couple of other students. And I remember it did threaten us on a couple of occasions. Of course no one was particularly impressed. But nonetheless they did voice the threats. But we continued to march. And what I remember is that not only didn't we know whether it was day or night because we didn't sleep for the entire time of the occupation. And we were supposed to be out on break from one of the negotiating sessions. And I remember someone said to me, "Why don't you go and take a nap? Just go sit down and rest." And I did that. And when I awoke, someone told me that the negotiations had been completed, that BOS would be coming out in so many hours or whatever. So I asked to see what it was that we'd agreed to. I mean I...and I never found out what it was that we'd agreed to, and what the conditions of releasing the building were. What I did come to learn, because the university [unintelligible] what took place inside the law school when they were moved over to Washington Street.

COHEN: Right, right.

JACKSON: By that time everyone was out. So Joe was there and the other members of BOS were present. And so then the negotiations were about how many faculty, what faculty, what courses, and what black studies would look like. And that's what it finally looked like.

COHEN: Did the students feel, understand, that all of the demands had been met?

JACKSON: No.

COHEN: They left Conklin Hall even though, you're saying, they didn't feel that the demands had been met?

JACKSON: Well, they felt that they had gotten...remember the demands were nonnegotiable demands. And the question is what did you get in exchange for the negotiations?

COHEN: Yes.

JACKSON: And as far as I can tell, what took place was that the university agreed to improving its enrollment of minorities, to working out—or working on—a black studies or courses in black history. But I never saw a document saying this is what we have, this is what we don't have. Because what we did from there was go to [unintelligible] what it was that we had and what it was that we didn't have. And from that.... And now when I think back about this, it is—it's not clear exactly what it is that we got out of it. Another thing they did institute is the courses—I think it was African-American...I don't know whether Curvin's course came out of that. I think one of the people that somehow at least had an opportunity to.... Well, I'm not sure. See, I don't know...because you never know what is a result of the activity that you have done, participated in. In the sense of BOS, what it is that BOS has done. And what is it that would have occurred independently of BOS.

COHEN: Why was the--on March thirteenth there was a demonstration, and then there was a call on the part of BOS to shut down the university—do you have any recollection of what led up to that decision?

JACKSON: No. Tell me more about it.

COHEN: After the students left Conklin Hall on February twenty-seventh, subsequent to that there was a demonstration and a call for shutting down the campus, according to the paper and whatever, because of dissatisfaction with the administration's response to the demands. Do you have any recollection of the events that led up to that?

JACKSON: No. But again, what I remember about it was that...I don't remember a resolution. And I clearly remember the negotiations.

COHEN: The negotiations. But by resolution, you mean a signed document?

JACKSON: Right, a signed document or— And I remember having a sense of why are you coming out? Because I remember going over and talking to Joe. And I guess the sense was that the way.... See, this was one perspective: Their sense of what was going on came to them from whomever brought the information that we've got an agreement.

COHEN: Their sense.

JACKSON: Right. The people inside the building.

COHEN: The people in the building, okay.

JACKSON: Their sense came from whomever came over and said, "We've got an agreement." Because I don't think the agreement was in writing, I think Joe and the other people inside the building had to rely upon that person who brought the news. I don't know who brought the news. But between the time that we met the last time and the time that I woke up, it was done. So by that time they felt compelled to come out of the building. I think they were ready to come out of the building if they had what they thought they were going to have. And the way that it was presented to them was that they would. So they exited. Now the March thirteenth incident, I don't recall. But they didn't have it; I'm sure of that. So March thirteenth was probably precipitated by their realization—by our realization—that it really wasn't there. But I don't recall the March thirteenth ... what?

COHEN: Well, I think March thirteenth was—it was a Thursday, I think—and the campus was shut down on a Friday according to the papers and I believe according to McCormick's book there was mention of, I believe, a fire outside of Dana Library was set. But there was an episode [laughter] which expressed dissatisfaction with the outcome of the affair.

JACKSON: What I do recall is that no one went away from the university with a sense of we really got it. I think that the realization occurred very closely to the time that.... People did not have to wait until the following year to begin to see that it wasn't there. But perhaps the energy wasn't there either for reclaiming the university.

COHEN: You were touching on this before, but I'll ask the question anyway. As a result of this event, what changes came about in your perception?

JACKSON: Well, they created the African-American Studies Program, whatever that program is called.

COHEN: African-American Studies—now it's a department.

JACKSON: Right. Okay. That was one.

COHEN: What else did you see emerge?

JACKSON: The EOF Program. The increase between sixty-eight and seventy-three or seventy-four—or maybe even as late as seventy-eight. Maybe there were still, but I don't think— No. By seventy-eight things were...when I arrived in seventy-eight, things were just as they were when I left in sixty-nine. So somewhere between sixty-nine and seventy-three or so there was an increase in black enrollment, substantial increase in black enrollment.

COHEN: You mentioned the EOF Program, which started out Educational Opportunity Fund; it's still there. And then how did that whole era through the Academic Foundations Center and then Department, what effects have you seen coming as a result of the establishment of the Academic Foundations Department?

[End of Tape #1]

COHEN: We were talking about the Educational Opportunity Fund and the Academic Foundations Department and how effective they've been together.

JACKSON: I'm not sure. I don't know. But at one point I know that there was an idea being passed around about creating a Newark University where Essex, Rutgers, and possibly even the Seton Hall campus in Newark—I think. Well, it was a grandiose idea. But that was a discussion that I had heard on several occasions when I was coming through Newark in the seventies. There were people interested in doing that. Nothing ever happened. But there should have been, I think, the mission of.... On the question of EOF, I don't see.... I don't think that.... Well, whatever EOF does, it can't do it on the scale that's necessary to have a significant impact upon the general problem of education in Newark. And it wouldn't be the EOF—it would not be EOF's responsibility to do that. It would Rutgers-Newark's responsibility if they were willing to take that responsibility on. I guess the new commissioner is arguing now that the university should become more involved in public education. They're talking about creating these networks and working with the schools. But I think that that directive should not have been a directive out of New Brunswick. I think that...to the extent that this is directly related to BOS and what the

objectives of that organization were, the university has a responsibility, I think, to educate the people that surround it, particularly if those people aren't being educated anywhere else. And that educational responsibility transcends simply taking on.... And my understanding is, in a conversation I had a couple of days ago, that New Brunswick siphons off the best and the brightest even from Newark. So even the best and the brightest in Newark don't come to NCAS.

But Newark, the universities in Newark, should take that responsibility. But universities in other major cities that have large urban, poor populations don't take that responsibility either. The university almost has to be created with that mission in order for it to do that. But satellite institutions like Rutgers-Newark.... Well, of course, certainly as long as they're satellites, they can't do that. So I think EOF does what it's supposed to do. It takes the kids that arrive with education deficiencies, and it tries to bring them up to speed, tries to get them to the point where they can participate. I remember one of the central debates of the post-occupation period was the question of what's going to happen to the standard of education, of learning; what's going to happen? And it may have also been at that time that open enrollment became a part of NCAS. I think that also was a by-product of those activities.

COHEN: What kind of discussions at the time, if you can recall, were there around this whole question of admissions standards, considering the fact that this is a university on the one hand; on the other hand, it is considering students that do not have the preparation to deal with it. And at the same time, the need to get students into the school. If you have any recollection of that?

JACKSON: The standard argument.... What I remember is that there was a lag between the argument for open enrollment and a strong argument for standards. The standards argument was always there. But I don't remember it gaining momentum until after the.... It was almost as if at that moment people were willing to give almost anything a try. And there were voices which said, but what about standards? What about enrollment? What about the way the courses are taught? But I think that most of that opposition... I think that that opposition did not carry the preponderance—or did not carry sufficient weight—to sway the majority of the body. That institutions not only.... Well, I mean Rutgers probably more so than—at least here in Newark—more so than many; because many just didn't think about it at all. But quite a few of the campuses that.... What they would do, if they didn't make the entire university open admissions, they would admit students with the foundations requirement. That you can come in, but we've got to build a mechanism to handle you when you come in.

COHEN: Was this a consensus among the black students, the militants in this direction? Or were the more militant students advocating open admissions at the time?

JACKSON: I'm sure that...but I don't know if it broke down along the same lines. For example, it's not clear to me that you couldn't get more support for open admissions than you could from among the people who would take the building. So that militants would take open admissions. But a large sector of the remaining part of the student body might also.... Because, again, I can't remember. What broke on the militant question at that point is very different from where it would break today. So the militant question really during that period broke on the question of violence. So that as long as you weren't violent, anything that you said ostensibly was less than militant. So most people supported open admissions, open enrollment. Most people at that time

wanted Newark to become or the Newark school system to become more.... Out of Newark schools, you would come into Rutgers. You would go on to a four-year college.

COHEN: Do you have any recollection of the demand that students with a four fifty verbal SAT and I think in the top half of their class should be admitted? Do you have any recollection of the discussion around that?

JACKSON: No. But I remember that there was a discussion.

COHEN: Yes. Any recollection of the discussions around the geographical area which was to be defined? Was it just the City of Newark? Was it Newark and the surrounding area?

JACKSON: No, this was Newark. Well, then the only surrounding Newark—the only surrounding area was the fringe of East Orange, but it was really the fringe. Because blacks—well, what I remember is that if you were on Central Avenue, that blacks had made it roughly to the mall-like area of Central Avenue now. About a mile up from—it'll come to me.

COHEN: King Boulevard?

JACKSON: No. Further up into East Orange. But they had not made significant inroads into East Orange. So it was Newark. And the conversation was about Newark.

COHEN: About Newark.

JACKSON: Right. That's where everyone was then. The branching had not taken place.

COHEN: Let's see....

JACKSON: In fact even this street at that time, which is on the border of Irvington, was still white.

COHEN: Going back again to the Academic Foundations and the Educational Opportunity Fund, do you have any recollection of the university's proposal to have what was commonly called the open admissions or called the Urban University—UUD I think they called it. Urban University?

JACKSON: Only vaguely. I remember that we were pushing for it. But I don't.... What we wanted was open enrollment, and I remember that we didn't end up getting it. But the details of the compromise now, not very much.

COHEN: Going back to personalities in terms of administrators, how would you assess the roles of various people? Let's start with some of the people in BOS in leadership roles. You mentioned Joe Browne.

JACKSON: Right.

COHEN: As an example. How would you evaluate his role, his effectiveness?

JACKSON: Yes, Joe was good. I mean Joe.... Essentially we were roughly the same age. So everybody in that group was fairly close to the same age. And what were we then? We were twenty years old. So your leadership qualities, the qualities that you needed to be a leader then, were, one, you needed to be able to state what the issues are. Two, you needed to be able to lock—the same I guess as of any leader—you needed to be able to lock the people in the group together in order to execute a mission. And Joe did it. There was no question about that. He invigorated the group. He represented.... Because I think what's important about this in addition to that is that Joe was an embodiment of the group. I think that's the thing. Joe was an embodiment. He incorporated.... His ability to incorporate was more extensive than Snell's. I think that was probably real. Because Snell was certainly less radical than Joe. And Joe was maybe within the last quarter of the radical element. So that with his reach, he could touch people who were as radical as BOS had. And at the same time, he could still touch hands with Snell. Snell reached out as well. So he spanned the organization. So I think that was very important.

COHEN: What can you say about Vickie Donaldson's role?

JACKSON: Vickie, yes. Vickie was good. See, talking to me about these things.... I remember them as very committed people. They were committed to the struggle. They were committed to wanting to get it done, to wanting to have the energy and the power to stay on top of it, to bring people back together. It was more than just a.... See, this struggle was more than just people coming together and doing this. This was a community. I probably haven't stressed this enough. But this was a community of people. And we were together beyond simply the BOS involvement, the takeover. And so the people who were at the forefront.... See, it's not equivalent to city politics and county politics. It wasn't about.... This was—what you saw as our leadership was who we were; they represented us. Nobody imposed them. And they were organic to whom we were. They came out of us. Go someplace and get them and bring them in, they weren't that. No. No, for those reasons it was just very powerful. And there's nothing that occurs subsequent to that in organizations I don't think. Because at twenty, you—at least the twenty of 1969 and sixty-eight—you didn't have, you weren't a sophisticated organizer of people to get your program across. Our group was not equivalent to the student government. There were no signs. There was no sense of all you have to do is talk to enough people and if the other person isn't known, then you'll get.... No, it was out of us. They were who we were. We were comfortable with them, and they were comfortable with us. And we argued. I mean we could run the range of discussions. But when it was over, at that point in our lives there was enough radicalism in all of us for us to move in that direction.

COHEN: How did this community of students relate to the Newark community, especially since the civil...well, I think the term that you would prefer probably is Rebellion of 1967. [Laughter]

JACKSON: Anything other than “riot.”

COHEN: If you could sort of go back a bit and maybe tie that up.

JACKSON: Okay. Well, the people who were on campus for the most part were people who already had a mission. These were not uneducated people. These were not particularly poor people. These were simply middle-class black people who were attending Rutgers-Newark. So in that sense they looked like any other college student, except they were black. Or most college students in 1968 or sixty-seven—except they were black. And so now the question of relating to the community, what I remember is that there was still the distance between.... There was still a distance between what was taking place on the campus and what was taking place off campus. And this would be true—well, it's not true, because I was going to say this would be true about any commuter school, that the people who commute to the school are the people from the community. But that's not true, that's not true about Rutgers-Newark. I mean for whites it's not their community. And that probably was as true in 1967-68 as it is now. It would certainly have to be more true now, because there are almost no whites in Newark now. But for the blacks who attended school in Newark, they lived in Newark. I think probably the students who...probably Maplewood might have been the longest radius from Newark of students who attended school here. So what we pick up from that is that you still have a contact with the community. And the community.... So you may not have had anyone from the Kenny Projects in school when we were in school. But you had somebody who maybe only lived two or three blocks away. So you didn't...you hadn't pulled—not then, and I'm not sure what took place, again, between seventy-one and seventy-three during the height of that attraction or that pulling from Newark. But my sense is that to really get substantially into the community, it wouldn't take place unless we went back to what we were talking about earlier; namely, a school that says our primary mission is to go out into the central high schools of Newark and to bring those kids out of—to get those kids up to the educational levels that they need in order to compete.

COHEN: What effect did the events of 1967 in the city have upon the students, the leaders, in BOS and the Conklin takeover on the campus?

JACKSON: Right. What I remember about that is the following: Being here in sixty-seven, sixty-eight, prior to my enrolling in the school—and I guess this goes back to your earlier question—there was, but I don't know how extensive it was, there was contact between the university and the community. But again, the contact could have been through agencies which primarily influenced middle-class kids who lived in Newark and not necessarily the poorest children who live in Newark. And if that's true, then the relationship is just as it normally is. The university extends itself to the people that it thinks can just come in and just float through easily. But I know that there was at least that contact. The other thing is that if you can catch someone who was there in sixty-six or sixty-seven...because even by sixty-eight what I'm thinking is that the impact of the rebellion had already begun to show itself in the enrollment in Rutgers-Newark NCAS—by sixty-eight. So that even the twenty or thirty—because I remember, I distinctly remember, that some of those students were.... But again, it could have been that some of those students—a considerable number of those students—were freshman and sophomores. But that could have simply been the right distribution even if there had been no rebellion effect. But I think that the discussions that I had at that time always pointed to the increase in enrollment, even at that time. And I'm sure that it was true for sixty-nine. But on the question of the rebellion, the most that I have on that is that I know that the rebellion, whether it was.... But again, the question is how do you know it was the rebellion? Because the ties to that middle class may have existed prior to the rebellion. But it was certainly true that the spirit of Newark after

the rebellion was we need to try to do something differently. We need to try to get more involved. But I don't know whether that translated into anything concrete in terms of increased numbers of students.

COHEN: You mentioned the middle-class background of the students involved. Are you saying that this is basically a middle-class movement?

JACKSON: Well, for the most part, the only kids here in school are from the middle class. Sure. And if you've got.... Yes, for sure. That's my suspicion. I haven't looked at the data, and I certainly haven't looked at the data from 1968-69. But my sense is that most of the kids who were in school there were. And I don't mean by middle class that they all lived in single-family homes either. I mean if you're living in Newark, in some sense you are only so middle class, even in sixty-eight or sixty-nine. But I don't think.... What I think is important is that... what I'm sure of is that the people who were in school then were not the poorest members of Newark society. I think that's probably more important than that they necessarily had to be middle class.

COHEN: What does this say then about the role of the middle class in revolutionary movements?

JACKSON: Well, it's probably—as Marx put it, I mean without this.... And I want to be careful about this because I want to distinguish between this intellectual core and this middle class. Not only the intellectual core in the middle class, but also the differences across economic... the differences between having middle-class ideals and your median income is right there in the middle. [Laughs] I think that there has been.... Whether poor people can sustain the revolution.... See, poor has nothing at all to do with whether you have the intellect, intellectual stimulation. So somehow the idea is that if you are an intellectual, you are in the middle class. And it appears to me that assumes one of two things: Either if you're an intellectual, you're in the middle class because you were born into it, you acquired your wealth; or you work. If you work, then your working has nothing at all to do with your intellectualism. So I think that in fact the model may be the wrong one. I think that you need an intellectual core. But the problem is how do you sustain an intellectual core if they don't have an income base? So you get the intellectual characteristic tied to the income characteristic of at least a middle class. But they should be separated, because what you end up doing is seeing someone in the middle class and looking for them to be your intellectual leader. And that's tying things together falsely.

The intellectual may come just as likely from poverty as from the middle class. It's the question of who's going to subsidize the intellectual. No, I think the middle class has just managed to play the role that it's played because if poor people become... if you start out in poverty and you move into the middle class, then what you're seen as is where you are now. So therefore you become a middle-class intellectual. But if you say, well, where did this person start out? Were they poor when they started out? Then, in fact, you might find the criteria are different from what you thought. So I want to be careful on that one. I don't know whether you need the middle class. I know that you need an intellectual core. And even more importantly, what you need.... It's funny because I was talking to Barbara Foley about this the other day. Do you know her?

COHEN: Yes.

JACKSON: Okay. I think that you can...that the criteria, one of the criteria, has to be a selflessness. That there has to be some sense of doing for somebody else which is a motivating force. And Barbara has much stronger feelings about the class interest being sufficient to lead to... And I think that the class interests are important. But I simply think that there also has to be this other characteristic that plays an important role. What else did you want to ask?

COHEN: Which you clearly, I think, talk about the BOS group during the takeover of Conklin Hall, the selflessness.

JACKSON: Yes. No, there was.

COHEN: I wanted to go back a bit to just your assessment of people. We talked briefly about Joe Browne and Vickie Donaldson. Marvin McGraw was another one.

JACKSON: Oh, sure! [Laughs] You're right I forgot Marvin.

COHEN: These are some of the people with which I... I remember personally and I then sort of became reacquainted with when I saw this tape of the panel discussion led by Mayor Sharpe James at the end of his broadcast on cable.

JACKSON: That's right! Marvin!

COHEN: I remember him very well. What can you say about him?

JACKSON: [Laughs] Oh, that's so great! I mean Marvin! Right, right. What can we say about Marvin?

COHEN: [Break in recording] Okay. We're back.

JACKSON: What I remember about Marvin...was Marvin in the building?

COHEN: I believe so, but I'm not the authority. [Laughs]

JACKSON: I don't remember Marvin for his political views. I just don't....

COHEN: Do you have any feelings about his role in the negotiations and the takeover?

JACKSON: Well that's what I was trying to remember, was he inside or outside. I remember Marvin, but I just remember him as a person. But I don't remember anything political about him. He was involved in it. I don't remember him—I'd like to know whether he was inside or outside...There's something I just can't remember, where he was. Somehow, the more I think that he was outside at some point. But I don't remember him.... I'm sure that he didn't foil any attempt on the part of the [unintelligible]. And I remember he was always very lively, very engaging. That's all.

COHEN: Okay. What can you say about Harrison Snell?

JACKSON: Well, Harrison I remember clearly and politically I remember. I mean we talked about that. I sort of saw him as the John Lewis type. In that way. I saw him as being sincere and being firmly committed to the struggle as he saw it.

COHEN: Yes.

JACKSON: He just saw it more as King saw it than as Malcolm did.

COHEN: Yes. The role of Bob Curvin?

JACKSON: When did Bob arrive?

COHEN: Well, let me see. He was there during negotiations, I'm pretty sure of that. And he was on campus before that period in the sixties. And he was teaching, I believe, I don't have exact dates. And do you have any recollection in your own personal life of his role in the negotiations?

JACKSON: No, not at all...not at all. He may have been around the table. But I don't remember him. I mean there were.... I don't remember him... I don't remember him. I took a course from him, and that had to have been in the spring of sixty-nine. So he was...but I don't remember him from—no, not at all.

COHEN: Administration people who were involved. How would you assess Malcolm Talbott's role in the whole affair?

JACKSON: What I remember is that after it was over, it seemed that he really wanted to get this thing resolved. I don't remember him as standing up and banging on the table and saying, No, we're not going to get this thing done! No, you're not going to get this. No, you're not going to get that. I remember him as being.... I don't remember him...I don't remember anything about him, which leads me to believe that he was conciliatory. And I remember being in his office and meeting at a long table. Massive table. Must have been ten feet. You should see if you can get those tapes.

COHEN: I understand they exist.

JACKSON: Yes.

COHEN: According to McCormick.

JACKSON: Yes, yes. No, those tapes exist.

COHEN: Yes.

JACKSON: Now I don't remember.... The meetings that we had in the law school, those may have been taped, but I don't remember that as clearly. I remember that we had...we just sat up

there, and we just talked all this stuff out and talked, talked. And there were other administrators at that meeting. But Talbott, I remember...my sense is that Talbott was in charge—except for the chancellor. Because I think when Roper came...Roper either came as a representative of the chancellor or he came with the chancellor. The chancellor may have been there.

COHEN: Oh, he came with Dungan?

JACKSON: Maybe it wasn't. Maybe he was there alone. But he was already working with the state in this capacity.

COHEN: Any recollection of Mason Gross's role?

JACKSON: Oh, okay, so there was Gross. There was Gross, and there was Talbott. So Talbott was the vice president.

COHEN: Yes.

JACKSON: And Gross was the president.

COHEN: Yes. Talbott was vice president, and he was also the acting dean at the time.

JACKSON: Okay. Alright.

COHEN: Do you have any recollection of—

JACKSON: Of Gross.

COHEN: —of Gross?

JACKSON: No. And I don't know. He may have been at the meeting also. Was he?

COHEN: I couldn't say authoritatively. I'd have to check the meeting we were talking about. But I just was interested in your personal recollections.

JACKSON: I don't remember.

COHEN: It's a long time, yes.

JACKSON: Yes, I don't remember.

COHEN: Okay. Do you have any recollection—we're getting close to the windup. Do you have any recollection of the whole issue around the admissions officers, Bob Swab and C.T. Miller? Do you have any recollection? Eventually they moved out—either they resigned or moved into other positions. About the accusations of their not being receptive to the idea of admitting students—do you have any recollection of that?

JACKSON: No, no.

COHEN: Okay. A couple of wrap-up questions. What do you look upon...how do you view the historical significance of the takeover of Conklin Hall and the whole question of the black students' movement on the campus?

JACKSON: Well, I don't think.... I think that it was important that the students at that time had at least reached the level of consciousness that inspired them to take some action. I was standing on the corner with the provost last summer at Warren and University Avenues. A black student walks up with a fatigue jacket, comes up to Samuels, and he says, "I need to speak to you for a minute". And I'm thinking this guy's going to pose one of the problems of the 1990's down at the provost's. I'm guarded. I'm protected. This is the moment of truth. And he wants to know why the price of parking is what it is. And so I think that it's not a question that any of the students in Conklin Hall would have raised. And there's another...of course there's another vanguard of students on the Rutgers-Newark who would also not ask that question. So I think that the significance of the movement is, one, in having done it, that the statement was made. Like Sisyphus, Sisyphus dropped and has to climb out of the depths of the valley again. And unlike Sisyphus, we don't have eternity to do it. But perhaps—and I'm sure; I mean it's not perhaps—it's that I would attend sessions on campus where students would come together and talk about other issues. There's a very strong voice on campus. I don't know about the organizations themselves. It could be that BOS was very new then. And perhaps organizations have a lifespan, the maturity of which is the longest part. And it's in that maturity that the organization becomes ineffective except as a place where people will come and sit down and talk and reminisce. And that says that although the students who come through the organization change, that the organization itself, that it structurally binds and constrains those who pass through it, the way that the NAACP or the Urban League does. And that no matter what—although the NAACP and the Urban League stayed much longer; so that means that the student organizations have a higher probability of being able to un-entrench themselves. But I think that the second reason that it's important is because having done it, it becomes part of history, and other groups can say that it took place.

When I was at Southern, there were people who had gone through Southern before me, earlier classes. And they had had demonstrations on campus. They had revolted against the administration. And that was etched in the history of Southern. So we knew when we did it that we were following a path. And I think that little thing that we did is just a pebble on that path. It's another reminder of the direction. And it also points to the futility of thinking that that can be sufficient, that whatever it is that you go after for that moment is going to be sufficient to alter. At some point the movement has to be self-sustaining. I mean it has to sustain itself at a level significantly higher than the level that it has sustained itself over the last maybe twenty years, since seventy-three. It'll be twenty years in two years. So it has to sustain itself at a higher level.

COHEN: Is there anything I haven't touched on that you'd like to talk about?

JACKSON: No. I mean that's really all of it.

COHEN: Just sort of as a windup, if you will, give a brief career sketch, your beginnings as a student and what motivated you and some of your experiences in schools up to the doctorate and beyond.

JACKSON: Well, I guess in the sixties I decided what was important and tried to find a way to participate in the liberation of oppressed peoples. Among those peoples, of course, are African and Native Americans. And then the question came up, well, how do you go about doing that? My first thought was that we do that by becoming a political scientist and understanding politics. Then I thought, well, once I became a Marxist, I figured that economics was the panacea. So I went off to graduate school in economics. I finished graduate school, and then I realized that that's not enough. And I guess in some sense, at least the intellectual part of my life, I got involved trying to figure out the path.

COHEN: Thank you very much.

JACKSON: Thank you.

[End of Tape #2]

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