

Interview with **Nancy Jefferson**

Date: October 22, 1988

Interviewer: Judy Richardson

Camera Rolls: 2026-2030

Sound Rolls: 213-215

Team: C

Interview gathered as part of *Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads, 1965-mid 1980s*. Produced by Blackside, Inc. Housed at the Washington University Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection.

**Preferred Citation**

Interview with June Jordan, conducted by Blackside, Inc. on October 22, 1988 for *Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads, 1965-mid 1980s*. Washington University Libraries, Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection.

**Note:** These transcripts contain material that did not appear in the final program. Only text appearing in *bold italics* was used in the final version of *Eyes on the Prize II*.

[camera roll #2026]

[sound roll #213]

[slate]

00:00:18:00

Interviewer:

OK, you were talking about the rally, the Soldiers Field rally—

Nancy Jefferson:

Mm-hmm. Right.

Interviewer:

—and the excitement that you had at seeing Mahalia Jackson and also that it was a turning point for you. Can you talk about that? Oh, and I'm sorry, if you could mention in my—could you cut a second? Sorry, one thing I neglected to say was—

[beep]

[cut]

00:00:35:00

[slate]

00:00:37:00

Interviewer:

OK. If you can talk about the Soldiers Field rally and the sense, the sense of excitement and, and hearing Mahalia Jackson and, and that turning point that you were talking about at Soldiers Field?

Nancy Jefferson:

Judy, that's—

Interviewer:

Sorry, just don't mention my name.

Nancy Jefferson:

OK.

Interviewer:

OK.

00:00:50:00

Nancy Jefferson:

That Soldier Fields rally was, was a great experience as I think about it, you know, it was a, it's, it's really hard to explain just how you felt about that because it was the height of the, of the Dr. Martin Luther King, it was the height of the excitement of him coming to Chicago to try, kind of set things right. It was, it was pleasing to know and see even though the mayor of this city was trying to thwart that, that operation of, of having that rally there. But there was enough people in Chicago that pushed forward. It was the Al Raby and the Bill Berry and that crowd, you know, of the...and, and people just made it so. And Mahalia Jackson sang that day as if she, as if the, the heavens were, were comin' down on Soldier Field. But it was a hot day, it was just lots and lots of people, lots of us there, just there. You can, it's, it's, you can't explain that feeling, you cannot explain, but you knew then that, that, it was like things are gonna change. It, it must change. We...you felt that God was with us. It was such an excitement that, hard to explain. But I also think that what was done that day set the tone, the environment, for a real movement in this city. I think that was, you know, that, that was what happened.

00:02:34:00

Interviewer:

Fantastic. And why did you decide to work with Dr. King?

00:02:38:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Well, I, I understood that things were not right in the city. Understood also that lots of us, lots of people, because of the, of the machine politics in this city and, and the Richard J. Daley trying to keep him out, that...but we understood what was going on in the South, knew how he was trying to correct and bring the conscience to, to America, you know. And when he was, when he came here, I knew that it was a—

00:03:11:00

Interviewer:

I'm sorry. Cut a second.

Camera Crew Member #1:

[unintelligible]

[cut]

00:03:14:00

[slate]

00:03:18:00

Interviewer:

Can you tell me why you decided to work with Dr. King?

00:03:20:00

Nancy Jefferson:

I decided to work with Dr. King because I had followed his, his work in the South. Having come from the South and understood that hardline in the South and what he was all about, and welcomed the time that he came to Chicago knowing that, that things were not right in Chicago, knowing that, that people thought, you know, we all came to the North to...for a better life. That's what we thought. And yet, we, we understood that things that other

communities took for granted was the things that we ha—was hard for us to come by. Just simple things like garbage removal, the slum condition. And Dr. King, we knew, were going to come, when he came to Chicago I thought, well, this man has the courage, the leadership as to do what he was doing in the South, bring it to the conscience of this city of what they were doing and, and try to change some things. And I knew that's where I wanted to be. I wanted to be in that change process.

00:04:29:00

Interviewer:

OK. [laughs] Also, how did other Black people accept Dr. King? I mean, were there problems? You mentioned that when you first started organizing block by block it was hard, and you had maybe seventeen people at a rally. Can you talk about that?

00:04:41:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Yes. When Dr. King, I, I'll never forget, the West side was harder than any other part of town, simply because the plantation politics on the West side existed, I guess more prevalent than any other side of town. And that, and was a lot of reasons for that. We all came from the South to the West side. OK? Most, you know, most people, when coming from the South came to the West side. So people on the west side was always determined as being, all of as being country, from the, you know, from the plantation. So, the—and the, the machine politics took advantage of that, you know, that environment of, of that kind of people. And so the, the, the, the plantation politics was, was very prevalent on this West side, you know. Even though when the, when the area changed from Black to White, it was still the ward committeemen, the aldermen were still White with Black precinct captains. So that was a form of, of, you know, politics that were here. When Dr. King came to the West side one day for a rally, and I remember Katie Booth and Roberta Wilson, a couple of us, we were, you know, organizing that rally. And I was organizing it through the Black clubs, because the Midwest Community Council was a Black clu...is a Black club organization. We were on the corner of Horne and Madison in a vacant lot. And it was only seventeen people showed up at that rally. You could imagine how embarrassing that was, you know. Only seventeen people took that risk. Other folks were, you know, walking on the street like ga-gauging in and saying you know, should they come in or not? But, but had some fear because the fear of the politicians on this West side was saying that you better not go to that rally. Dr. King was always denounced, you know. He wasn't really accepted in Chicago by the, by the machine politicians. And, and a lot of the machine politicians at that time were blocking the machine, you know. The Metcalf's, they changed later, you know, after he, when Dr. King took that risk. So that was quite a day, quite a day for me.

00:07:10:00

Interviewer:

Well, when did that start changing? I mean—

Camera Crew Member #1:

[unintelligible]

Interviewer:

—when did you begin to—cut, OK.

[cut]

00:07:17:00

[slate]

00:07:19:00

Interviewer:

You mentioned that it was hard, and you only had seventeen people at a rally. When did this start changing?

Nancy Jefferson:

Well, I think it, it, it changed in the gradual process, that when Dr. King—

Interviewer:

I'm sorry, if you could say, "People started coming around..." as something to intro it.

00:07:34:00

Nancy Jefferson:

OK. When, you know, we had seventeen people at a rally. That was disappointing. But the change began to, as, as Dr. King continued he, he was, he, he continued. He understood that, that people was afraid of him or anything new, anything that they were not accustomed to. And he understood that. And there were a few people that, that understood that. A few of us understood that, also. Said if you dealt with, with the truth long enough that, that things would change and that the people would change, the people would see—see. And I think, I remember that we, we started using, the, the religious background of all of us, is that, you know, when the Lord said, "I have twelve disciples," he didn't have but twelve. And, and he says, Now, you twelve boys got to go to the four corners of this world and preach this gospel. And, and that you and I and anybody else been sitting around at that time would have said,

you know, he's got to be out his mind, how can twelve people do this? And, and that's the concept that we began to move on, that, that twelve of us in the community decided well, we, we gonna have to do it. Dr. King understood it. He was a mild-mannered man that understood that fear of that man on the street. He understood the plantation politics. He understood the why that Richard J. Daley was co-opting everybody that was into any inkling of change. And so...but we knew that we had to continue. We couldn't stop, that people would change once they understood, once they understand. People knew that they were hurting, didn't know how and why they were hurting, was afraid to take that risk of, of, of do I get in this movement or, or am I better off where I am? And then when people began to, you give people the kind of, of, lect...the kind of meetings that we had, we just continued to have meetings. Dr. King set up shop in a church over on—every church didn't accept him, especially, the, the Black church did not accept him at first, a lot of the Black church, you know, on the, particularly on the West side. But there was a church on the corner of Warren Boulevard and Albany. And that was a White minister over there. He set up shop in his, his basement. That's where Dr. King started working out from. He was at Warren Avenue Congregational Church. And people, you kept doing it. And you, you don't really know when, just at the time. But it was a, it was a gradual process and then people began to understand, and it changed. It just, it was that perseverance of, of Dr. King continued to work at it. His soldiers, he had a lot of young lieutenants out, the Bevel's and, and the Jesse Jacksons and, and those folks was door to door, people to people. And, and people began to move in.

00:11:00:00

Cut.

[cut]

[camera roll #2027]

00:11:03:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

Mark

[slate]

00:11:06:00

Interviewer:

Talking about the Daley machine, if you could, talk about how he pitted the machine, pitted Blacks against Blacks.

Nancy Jefferson:

Well, I—it, when Daley, how Daley was very cleverly—

Camera Crew Member #2:

[coughs]

Nancy Jefferson:

—was doing, just putting--

Interviewer:

That's OK. If you could, just start it over again.

Nancy Jefferson:

Yeah, let's start over.

Interviewer:

OK. That's all right.

00:11:29:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Richard J. Daley was a very clever politician, you know, with machine politics. He was a mastermind at it. And how—

00:11:38:00

Interviewer:

I'm sorry.

Camera Crew Member #1:

Start over.

Interviewer:

That was a great beginning but start over one more time.

00:11:41:00

Nancy Jefferson:

OK. Richard J. Daley was a mastermind at machine politics. He was clever. He knew that, you know, he denounced all the time Martin Luther King coming to Chicago. They called him a carpet bagger, that he should stay in the South, and all this. He took, first of all, he co-opted very smart mind—

00:12:10:00

Interviewer:

Sorry. Do one thing. If you could, say, "Richard Daley co-opted..." Yeah.

00:12:13:00

Nancy Jefferson:

OK. At, at, first of all, Richard Daley co-opted smart minds, of the young Black men particular, into his camp, so that he could control the others of grassroot people. They were the Erwin Francis and all those folks, very smart, articulate people. He co-opt those by putting them in his camp and they became...and with the programs, of, of, of all the social programs that were, they were, became the heads of those programs. We became the contractors of those programs, the grassroot people. He did, he did it for two things. Mayor Daley did that for two reason, so that Blacks could spy on Blacks. Those that were, that were coming out with potential activist such as the Nancy Jeffersons. I got a file, you know, knee deep on, when the Red squad, you know, we finally got those files, you know. And it's knee deep. It's how they were following me all the time, you know. And I was only talking about independent politics and all that stuff.

00:13:34:00

Interviewer:

I'm sorry could you cut for just a second? I'll tell you what I'm looking for particular, because I'm gonna get back to that point.

[beep]

Nancy Jefferson:

OK.

[cut]

Camera Crew Member #1:

Mark.

00:13:39:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

Mark.

[slate]

00:13:42:00

Interviewer:

If you can, talk about how Mayor Daley manipulated people on a real basic level.

00:13:46:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Yeah. Mayor Daley was able to manipulate people in his, through his machine politics by having others to spy on others, particularly in the projects, in the housing projects. People were threatened, you know that's where that, the masses of people were residing. And people were threatened through Mayor Daley, that if you participate with Dr. King, you'll have to move, because, you know, that was city owned housing. And that was a threat, you know. People could not participate. It's either, I'm outdoors, or I'm in the movement. And that was a hard decision for people to make, so they couldn't participate. And he had spies in, those— Mayor Daley had spies in, on each floor to see who was participating. That was one level of intimidating the, the people. The other level was that, you know, We will cut off your check. People were absolutely afraid of getting checks, and they would cut them off. Because it was, he owned, *he owned that system, Richard J. Daley did.* And with those of us, you know, that was living in our own house, I was living right here in this house when the time was with Dr. King, I remember that I had just put in a whole new kitchen, the kitchen you see right in my house right now. I had just put that kitchen, had gotten an FHA loan and put in new kitchen cabinets, new sink, new bathroom and all that. *And I remember the inspectors were going from door to door to those of us who were participating with Martin Luther King. And they came to my house* and I had...that kitchen was three weeks old. The inspector, you know, everybody felt if he showed you a badge and he says, I'm an inspector, you had to let him in his, in your house. Some of us knew that we didn't have to do that, and I was one of those that knew that. And when he came, this inspector came to my house and said, I want to inspect your, your kitchen, your plumbing, and I says, I've got new plumbing, and I'm on my way at, to work. And he says, You can leave. And we know that too, that they were leaving them in their houses, you know. He says, Well, I'll close the door. I said, Not in my house. You cannot come in my house unless you get an appointment with me and inspect, you know. We had the argument at the door, and I didn't let him in. He left, but the next week, I got a seventeen-page violation for a, a kitchen sink rotten. And most people kitchen sinks

were, you know, that. But he wrote up all the violations, the plumbing was bad, the, I need new bathroom fixtures, needed, the violation...every, I had brand new, you know. I had to go to the building court. I had to go to court at that time. And I was just, you know, was able to give my contract of what I had just done with my kitchen. ***But you know, people were harassed at that level, inspectors, for violations that they couldn't fix. So who, so when you got a violation, who did you have to go to? You had to go to one of Daley's men to fix, fix the code, or else, you know, you were fined.*** So you had to go, it was a, a conspiracy that you could never think of that was going on down, during the time when Dr. King came here, and how Richard J. Daley was organizing the politics of that machine.

00:17:48:00

Interviewer:

Could you talk about the—

Nancy Jefferson:

[coughs]

Interviewer:

—end the slums campaign? At the start of that, did you believe that he was really serious about that?

Nancy Jefferson:

No.

Interviewer:

OK. If you could, just say, "When Daley mentioned..."

00:18:01:00

Nancy Jefferson:

When, when Daley mentioned, Daley had to...he was clever he always was coming up with something that he thought could fit in and was fooling the people. And so, when the, the Martin Luther King came through with the union to end slums, and I think James Bevel and some of those guys was in charge of that, and Merity Gilbert who was from Lawndale, was a local person, was in the team. And they started the Union to End Slum, which Daley claimed that he would, he certainly would, was a part of, you know, that he also wanted to end slums, and he made all the great speeches, and all that, you know. That he wanted to end the slums in Chicago, and that, first of all, he denied there were any, was any slums. Richard J. Daley

said there was no slums in Chicago, you know, that, and that...but when it was proven that there were slums, and that they—

00:19:03:00

Interviewer:

Tell you what, can you hold just a second?

Camera Crew Member #1:

Cut?

Interviewer:

Cut, please. Yeah.

[cut]

Camera Crew Member #1

And mark.

00:19:07:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

Mark.

[slate]

00:19:10:00

Interviewer:

OK. What did you think about Daley's end slums campaign and how was that trying to run counter to Dr. King?

00:19:18:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Richard J. Daley was a very smart, shrewd politician, machine politician. Every time that Dr. King would come with a program, Richard J. Daley would counteract with another program. Foolery with the people. He was clever with that Union to End Slum. At that time, it was, you know, three or four young men that was local, it was on the street to work in that Union

to End Slum. He was counteracting by saying, Yes, I approve that we should end slums, but set up another system of, of, of, the way he worked at it, you know. He was very clever to do that counteracting everything that Dr. King was...every program that Dr. King brought to the people. He would co-opt the program through Black people that was a part of the slum. He would, he was clever to do that. But Dr. Martin Luther King was... perseverance with what he was doing, understood that, and, and still moved forward with what he was doing, you know. So that was very clever.

00:20:33:00

Interviewer:

Can you talk about the marches, too, and a sense of, of trying to counteract the fear of crossing a certain line into, into the White areas? Particularly, like, for example—oops.

Camera Crew Member #1:

[inaudible]

Interviewer:

OK. Tell you what, let's cut a second.

[cut]

[sound roll #214]

Camera Crew Member #1:

Marker.

00:20:49:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

Mark.

[slate]

00:20:51:00

Interviewer:

OK. If you could, talk about how, what expectations you had when Lyndon Johnson announced the War on Poverty and how Daley co-opted that.

00:21:00:00

Nancy Jefferson:

When Lyndon Johnson announced the War on Poverty, it was a great sense of, of relief and, and hope that, that we had because one, is that we felt Lyndon Johnson was key to it because he was a Southerner. He understood the remarks that he made about, he understood where Black people were when he was a child and he wanted to change some things. So when the War on Poverty programs hit Chicago because, you know, it was more than, because where the cities were, were in trouble. Richard J. Daley quickly co-opt that, those programs by putting top Blacks in charge, also a slew of community workers on the street that went from door to door. So people had hope about the, about the program. It was never really—

[rollout on camera roll]

[wild sound]

Nancy Jefferson:

—real, it was, the people was on the street were the people that you knew. It was very smart. So you believed what they said, you know, you believed—

00:22:17:00

Interviewer:

We can cut now. Yeah, that's great. OK.

[beep]

[cut]

[camera roll #2028]

Camera Crew Member #1:

Marker.

00:22:23:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

Mark.

[slate]

00:22:26:00

Interviewer:

OK. If you can, talk about the Gage Park march where Dr. King got hit, and, and the fear of it, and particularly the fear of crossing that line into the White area.

Nancy Jefferson:

Well, I think that was the most fearful day of all my time in Chicago participating with Dr. King—

Interviewer:

I'm sorry. If you can, say, "The marches..."

00:22:41:00

Nancy Jefferson:

They gave—

00:22:43:00

Interviewer:

I'm sorry if you could [rattling noise] say, "The marches were..." or, whoops, one moment. Noise. OK. "The marches were..." or something to intro it.

00:22:50:00

Nancy Jefferson:

OK. The, the marches were many in Chicago, you know, in whatever it was, little streets and all that. But I think the most fearful of the time my participation in the marches was when we crossed that line to go into the White Gage Park. We all knew what Gage Park was all about, but we did not, none of us knew that when Dr. King was going into that, that the hatred that was really there. I think that, I think everybody was surprised, everybody was surprised. One, is that we thought that by Dr. King being here and being present, that this city was, was more acceptable to him than what it was. But it, it proved that it was not. When you saw that the...when we moved, crossed that line into Gage Park and saw the look of the, those people in face. You didn't, absolutely didn't see that kind of look with the Ku Klux Klan's in in, the South, 'cause a lot of us had been in the South and had encountered Ku Klux Klan. But you had not seen that kind of real hatred in a lot of young people. You know, what was really frightening was the older people jeering on, you know, the older Whites. And it was the young people saying, you know, Kill that nigger. Do—and you, and you saw it so intense in

those faces. And I was scared to death. I was absolutely scared to death. One, is I was afraid that Dr. King would get killed right there. I wasn't up close, you know, in the line with, where Dr. King was, you know. We was, you know, I was way, you know, far, far back. But I knew, we all was afraid, everybody was afraid on, in our section, Are they protecting Dr. King? Will Dr. King get hurt? You know, I think we thought more about Dr. King than we did our own safety, just hoped that really got him. We hoped that, you know. And we saw that, what they were going to do. And when Dr. King was really, you know, knocked to his, his knees, that was scary, that was scary! And you knew that that White police was not going to protect us or him. That was, it was amazing, what was going on at that time.

00:25:25:00

Interviewer:

OK. If you can cut.

[cut]

00:25:29:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Marker.

[slate]

00:25:32:00

Interviewer:

So when you saw Dr. King go down, how did you feel?

Nancy Jefferson:

Well, everybody in our, in our line--

Interviewer:

I'm sorry.

Camera Crew Member #1:

Just for a moment, please. One second. OK. Setting up.

Interviewer:

OK.

Camera Crew Member #1:

One second. OK. Setting up.

Interviewer:

OK.

00:25:39:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

One second. There we go. OK.

00:25:44:00

Interviewer:

When you saw Dr. King go down, how did you feel?

00:25:48:00

Nancy Jefferson:

When we saw Dr. King go down in that line, everybody in that line that day, including me, that I didn't realize that I could be so mad at the world. I thought if, whatever, if...that let's, let's go to it. Let's, let's go to the point of killing everybody on that line. I'm telling you, we, it, it was, we were angry. Because we knew that man was doing nothing. Dr. King was doing nothing but marching, trying to demonstrate we're human beings. And for, and for them to hit that man, I think everybody in that line wanted to kill everybody that's on the other side of the line. To the point that, you know, when we, when we got, when we got home and really assessed that, it took me for days and months to get out of that anger. And I'm still not out of it. I think it, you know, it still, when you, we think about it, when we think about it, even, it transmitted into the Harold Washington time in this city. When we think about it, that all we were doing was trying to prove that we were human beings and right people. You know, you got so angry about that that, that it, it's hard to even explain that anger. Not only in me, but everybody that was in our line there, on that line, you know. It was, it's hard to even explain that anger, because you knew this was a...***Dr. King was only trying to say to America, trying to say to Gage Park, We are human being***, we have a right to live here, we have a right to come through here. That's all he was demonstrating. He wasn't demonstrating any violence.

00:27:40:00

Interviewer:

Some people would say, Well, look, you have a home. Why do you want to live in Marquette Park?

00:27:45:00

Nancy Jefferson:

It's not that, I haven't moved to Marquette Park or Gage Park. I have not moved there. I still have a home. I'm still living here. But I think I have the right to do it. You know, I think it was that right. ***I am a citizen of this city. I'm a Black American. I have a right to move wherever I want to move if I have the money to move in. What was wrong with that, you know? And I think that's what it was all about, it was that. I dare one part of this society to say that you can't move wherever you want to move, I think that was the anger that was in us.*** And we didn't realize ourselves what it really meant until Dr. King was marching there. And if they could do that to Dr. King, what about me? You know?

00:28:34:00

Interviewer:

Can you talk about the ser—the difference in services, too, between the Black and the White communities, in terms of city services, and what they didn't do in Black areas?

Nancy Jefferson:

Absolutely. And it's, it's very, you know, it was that day and it's still today.

Camera Crew Member #1:

Hold.

Interviewer:

Whoops. Can you hold? Cut. Just a moment.

Camera Crew Member #3:

You were moving—

Nancy Jefferson:

No. No.

[beep]

Nancy Jefferson:

Go through the back.

[cut]

00:28:53:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Marker.

[slate]

00:29:01:00

Interviewer:

OK. Just a sense of the difference between the services provided in the Black community, and, and what was provided in the White, from the city.

Nancy Jefferson:

When you ask about the services that provided—

Interviewer:

I'm sorry, assuming I'm not here, just—

Nancy Jefferson:

OK.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

00:29:16:00

Nancy Jefferson:

OK. The services in the Black community versus the services in the White community is very, very pronounced. The, the Black community, the, the things that we have to program for, the White community takes, you know, takes that for granted. That's given. But we have to develop a program around moving the garbage. We have to pro—develop a protest around the garbage not being moved. That, that's, that's taken for granted in White communities. The

streets, holes in the streets, the, the sewages, the things that are just basic service, in other communities that's taken for granted, we have to develop a program around that, those kinds of services. So, you know, it's obvious. It's not, you know, everybody can ride down the street and see that the streets not swept.

00:30:17:00

Interviewer:

Can you cut just a second?

Camera Crew Member #1:

[inaudible]

Interviewer:

Yeah.

[cut]

00:30:18:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Marker.

[slate]

00:30:22:00

Interviewer:

And If you could, talk about what the differences in, in services provided by the city between the Black and, and programming...

00:30:28:00

Nancy Jefferson:

The difference in the service between the Black community and the White community is very obvious. The, the things that the Black commun—just basic services, the White community take for granted. The same services that we have to develop programs around. Just basic things like moving the garbage. You pick up garbage, you know, city services says you pick up garbage once a week. We have to develop a program around garbage not being picked up. We got to pick it...we got to develop a committee to call the city and says, You know, the

garbage is not picked up in three weeks, and all this. So we just talking about basic services. You talk about streets being cleaned, streets being swept, you know, boulevards being swept in, in Black communities. It'll go for six months that the boulevards are not swept. In the White community that's, that's for granted that you do that. The things that are just basic services that causes you to move as a citizen in your community has, you know, the police protection. The police serves and protects a White community. In the Black community, they harasses a Black community. Just basic things that, that, that other communities take for granted are the things that we have to develop a program around. That's not right.

00:31:59:00

Interviewer:

If you could talk again about the War on Poverty, and, and what you expected when you heard, Lyndon Johnson first, first announce that, and then how it got co-opted by Daley.

Nancy Jefferson:

Well, when Lyndon Johnson first announced the War on Poverty—

Camera Crew Member #3:

[inaudible]

Interviewer:

Cut, please.

[cut]

00:32:17:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Mark.

[slate]

00:32:24:00

Interviewer:

If you could talk about how you felt when, when Lyndon Johnson announced the War on Poverty, and the expectations you had, and then how Daley took that over.

00:32:34:00

Nancy Jefferson:

When Lyndon Johnson announced the War on Poverty, it meant an awful lot to us as a hope that we had because Lyndon, first, Lyndon Johnson was a Southerner and the remarks that he made that he understood where Black folks were all his life. And that just gave everybody a great sensation, a great hope. But we also noticed very quickly as to how that Richard J. Daley was a very smart politician, and how he took that War on Poverty to promote his machine politics was, he cleverly done that by putting the right people in charge, the right Black people in charge of those programs, and putting the...just ordinary people on the street as community workers. People that you knew—

[rollout on camera roll]

[wild sound]

Nancy Jefferson:

—your next door neighbor, people that lived in your house.

00:33:40:00

Interviewer:

OK, cut. OK. We've got a, a roll out here. OK.

[beep]

[cut]

[camera roll #2029]

[sound roll #215]

Camera Crew Member #1:

Mark.

00:33:45:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

Mark.

[slate]

00:33:49:00

Interviewer:

OK. If you can, talk about how you felt when Lyndon Johnson announced the War on Poverty, and how Richard Daley took it over.

00:33:57:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Well when Lyndon Johnson announced the War on Poverty, there was a lot of hope in all of us, me and, and all of us that was out here as leaders, that we understood Lyndon Johnson, felt he understood what he was doing because he was a Southerner. He talked about that he had always watched how Black people were treated in the South and he wanted to change those conditions. And that he was setting down programs that would help to, to alleviate the pain that we all was suffering for so many years. We also watched when Richard J. Daley really used his announcement and his, his War on Poverty as a program to pro, to promote his machine politics. He's very cleverly was doing, did that by making sure that he handpicked certain people so that they could promote machine politics. It looked like, you know, it looked like the truth, but it was, was not really the truth that he, what he was doing. He, he was clever in his promotion of the machine politics to maintain and to contain the Black people in Chicago, still under machine politics, under the disguise that it was a, the War on Poverty. It wasn't Johnson's fault, it was how that Richard J. Daley could, could use that program. And he did it very clever, cleverly.

00:35:44:00

Interviewer:

If you could go from that into, back to the marches and talk a little bit about Marquette Park when they're marching and then after the march you come back and find all the cars overturned and a sense, just very briefly about that march.

Nancy Jefferson:

Well you know, it, it, you, you still even connect that with the—

Interviewer:

I'm sorry. If you could, mention Marquette Park.

Nancy Jefferson:

You can still connect—

Interviewer:

Wait. Because I'm talking. OK.

Nancy Jefferson:

OK. You know, when the marches were, how that, how that the soldiers that was dispersed to the marches—

Interviewer:

I'm sorry. What I need is really the Marquette Park march.

00:36:21:00

Nancy Jefferson:

OK. You—when we take Marquette Park, for instance, how, how does that relate to the other part of what we were doing? When Marquette Park, when we went to Marquette Park on the housing issue, you know, open housing issue, that's what it was all about. An open communities act, that's what it was all about. And that's what, you know, the War on Poverty was doing was those different acts. And then when we was marching in Marquette Park, and when we came back to our cars, our cars was turned over, burning car, cars were burning. That was allowed, but that was also allowed by the police department, who was a part of this city, a part of Daley's machine, that was allowing those cars to be turned over and burned. And they looked the other way. They didn't protect the citizens out there that was marching in Marquette Park that day. So those was real acts of, of, of what Richard J, Daley was allowing to go on in this town. He was not serving and protecting the citizens' right to march out there.

00:37:40:00

Interviewer:

How did you feel when you came back in Marquette Park and saw all those cars?

Nancy Jefferson:

Well, it was another step that we knew that we had to overcome. We, you know, it was devastating to see that. It was anger—

Interviewer:

I'm sorry. If you could, in the answer say, "It was devastating to see...", whatever—

00:38:00:00

Nancy Jefferson:

It was, it was, it was devastating to see all those cars being burned. Our cars, you know, our cars were burned. And we knew that the police let that happen. So, but we also knew that this was one more step that we had to take.

00:38:22:00

Interviewer:

Cut. Yes. [laughs]

[beep]

Camera Crew Member #1:

We can do that—

[cut]

Camera Crew Member #1:

Mark.

00:38:27:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

Mark.

[slate]

00:38:31:00

Interviewer:

If you could, tell me how you felt about the agreement between Daley and the movement.

00:38:36:00

Nancy Jefferson:

I...the, the time of the agreement between Dr. King and, and Daley when they signed that accord, it was a great day, a great feeling. Because you, we understood the hardship that Dr. King went through to get that done. The, whatever utterance of change that Da-Daley had to

do, whether it was, and I'm sure to Daley it was superficial, you know, he wasn't real. But you know, one thing that we learned that, and that Dr. King always said so very cleverly is that, You, you cooperate or operate. You get the same result. So we were getting the same result out of Daley having to operate, in spite of his non-cooperation. And, and I think it, you know, it was a great day to us that said, Just, just keep on. You can do it. You know, I think that's what it meant to us.

00:39:37:00

Interviewer:

Cut. Thank you. OK. I'm gonna change courses—

[beep]

[cut]

Camera Crew Member #1:

Mark.

00:39:44:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

Mark.

[slate]

00:39:47:00

Interviewer:

Going back to Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, how did feel about the Panthers? I mean, did you try and cool them out? [laughs]

00:39:54:00

Nancy Jefferson:

[laughs] Well the Panthers were, were an exciting group as I look back on it. Fred, you know, I was afraid of them, really. I, I didn't understand them. Not really afraid, but trying to cool them out, you know. I wasn't afraid to the fear, of the fear, but, but just really afraid of what they were going to do. They weren't going to do it right, you know. Understood it though. *I understood where they were trying to go politically and felt that they had to change things. And when I talk about fear, I was afraid they weren't gonna do it right. And I was always*

*trying to cool them out, and say, That's not the right way to go. They were too direct.* I thought that you, you had to be more subtle in what you were doing and go a different direction. And I was, and they understood me. They, they really did, you know. They tolerated my trying to cool them out. But it was also a kind of a bind when you, when I look backwards at it. It was kind of a bind. They needed me, too. They needed me to say some things to them, because otherwise they wouldn't have kept coming back to me, you know. They understood that, Oh, you know, Ma Jefferson, you, I, you know, I know you, we're cool. Don't worry about it, you know. When we would hear about them having guns, you know, in the, because they had a place at Western and Madison. And, and they, they used to tell me, Come up and look, there's no guns, you know. I really was worried about, if I come up and look would I find them? [laughs] You know? It was that kind of a, it was that kind of a thing that was going on between us. But, but, but they was, I don't think until, honestly, after they were murdered that we, that lots of people really understood how—what it meant, what, how politically they, how they were dealing with the politics of the time. Because if they had not been dealing on a real, real true issue, they wouldn't have been killed. Because I think we all understood the why better what was going on with those young men. But they were an exciting group. I remember that with the breakfast program, they started the first breakfast program with our young people right here on the West side. And got me to start it for them. I remember them, how they came up to me and said...they, you, you know, Because you are who you are—

00:42:49:00

Interviewer:

Excuse me, if you could mention, start again and just mention Fred and, and the Panthers.

Nancy Jefferson:

Yeah. OK.

Interviewer:

In terms of starting the breakfast—

00:42:55:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Yeah. And I remember that Fred and Bob Brown, they came up to me to start a breakfast program for the young kids. And I said Fred, what about a breakfast—And he said, Ms. Jefferson, you know that these kids are hungry. They go at school, they can't learn. If they go to school hungry halfway, they said, At, at ten o'clock in the morning they, they laying on the desk asleep, because they're hungry. And said, We want to start a breakfast program, and because who you are, and how the people believe in you, if you help us start it, they'll know

it's real. And, and I was saying, Now, y'all, I don't understand this, you know, breakfast program. And they said, Just trust us and work with us, and start the breakfast program.

00:43:46:00

Interviewer:

Can you hold just—cut, please.

[cut]

Camera Crew Member #1:

Mark.

00:43:48:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

Mark.

[slate]

00:43:52:00

Interviewer:

Tell me how they approached you about, how the Panthers and Fred approached you about the breakfast program.

00:43:55:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Well Fred and Bob Brown and Mark Clark came to me and said, Mrs. Jefferson, because of who you are, we need to start a breakfast program for the kids. And I said, What about a breakfast program? What's a breakfast program? And he said, Mrs. Jefferson, the kids are hungry. By the time those kids get in school at ten o'clock in the morning, they're laying on their desk, they ain't hearing, and they sleeping and all that. That's because they're hungry, they haven't had breakfast. And he said, We're gonna start a breakfast program to show that kids should have breakfast to get started off in school right. And I was saying, All right, you know, that's, that's some more mess, you know. And they, they was laughing, and they said, We want you to help us because the people will believe in you, it's who you are. And they think we about something else. And they said, Help us to—

[rollout on camera roll]

[wild sound]

Nancy Jefferson:

—start a breakfast program. And, and I trusted, you know, their, their, their sense about it.

Interviewer:

Excuse me, I'm sorry—

Nancy Jefferson

I trusted the Panthers.

00:44:55:00

Interviewer:

—we can cut. Yeah.

Camera Crew Member #3:

[inaudible]

Camera Crew Member #1:

[inaudible]

Interviewer:

Yeah. That's—

[beep]

[cut]

[camera roll #2030]

Camera Crew Member #1:

Mark.

Camera Crew Member #2:

Mark.

[slate]

00:45:05:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Let me get out of here.

Interviewer:

OK.

Camera Crew Member #1:

Go ahead.

00:45:15:00

Interviewer:

Can you talk about Fred coming to you with the breakfast program?

00:45:17:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Yeah. Fred was a, a, a unique person. He was delightful. I like to talk about Fred. Fred came to me with, he, Fred and Mark and Barbara, I'll never forget how they came to me and talked about they wanted to start, Fred said, We gotta start a breakfast program. I said, Fred, what a breakfast program? What is a breakfast program? So Fred said, But Mrs. J., you gotta understand, kids are in school hungry. And he said, About the time ten o'clock come in school, all the kids got they head on the desk, he says. Because he was always in the school. Fred was always in and out of everything, you know. And he said, These kids were...are hungry. He says, When you ask the kid, Why are you sleepy?, he says, I'm hungry. And he said, If we feed these kids before they go to school, make sure they got a good breakfast program, he said, that's going to affect their learning. And I was saying, Fred, with all this mess, but OK, I'll help you. I will try it. But I just thought Fred had another angle. I always thought Fred, he says, You always think I have something else on mind. No. OK. We're gonna go with it. It was, it was sort of a trust that Fred and I had with each other, you know. Not quite, I wasn't trusting him as much as, I guess, he was trusting me. I, I understood, you know, that what he was doing. But I wasn't quite sure I wanted to [phone rings]—

00:46:49:00

Interviewer:

Excuse me. Cut. [laughs] That's beautiful.

[phone rings]

[beep]

[cut]

00:46:53:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Marker.

[slate]

00:46:56:00

Interviewer:

Keep talking about the trust you all had, you and Fred had.

00:46:58:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Yeah. Fred and I had a very unique trust, level of trust, you know. I, I understood what Fred was doing. But I wasn't, I wasn't always sure I agreed with the method of what—how he was going. I was always watching his method. And he understood that. He [phone rings] under—

00:47:20:00

Interviewer:

Excuse me, please. Cut.

[cut]

Camera Crew Member #1:

Marker.

[slate]

Interviewer:

Can you talk about the trust you and Fred had with each other? I'm sorry. I'm sorry that's [unintelligible].

00:47:28:00

Director:

OK.

00:47:30:00

Interviewer:

Can you talk about the trust you and Fred had with each other?

00:47:33:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Fred and I had a very unique relationship, you know. It was, it was a level of trust that we had with each other that was really funny. I, I always remember how that I trust Fred, I've trust his programs and things that he brought forward. But I wasn't quite sure I trusted his method, you know. And he knew that. He understood that, you know, because, you know, I guess I was more parochial, you know. And, and Fred was direct, you know. And I was always trying to cool him out. He always says, You know, you always trying to cool me out, you know. But just trust me, you know, just trust me. And, and the breakfast program was a real example of, of Fred saying, We need a breakfast program because the kids are, are, are sleeping in school because they are hungry. And, and I was willing to set it up with him and help him set it up, you know. He knew why he had to use me to do this, you know. And we were always funny how we was using each...how he was using me and yet, I had to trust, really get down to trusting his method. I understood his, his, the reason, but I wasn't quite sure I understood his method of, of how he was going about doing what he was doing, you know, very direct. I think I wanted to be more cooled out. Just more parochial in, in, in the way we do things, you know. And Fred was saying, You can't change it that way, [laughs] you know. And it was, it was really, it was a hilarious way that we were operating. But—

00:49:15:00

Interviewer:

Can you talk about how you felt when you heard that Fred had been killed?

Nancy Jefferson:

Well, I, you know, it was like—

Interviewer:

Say, "When Fred was killed..."

00:49:23:00

Nancy Jefferson:

When Fred was killed, that morning, the way he was killed, the way Fred was killed, I absolutely said, Poor Fred. You know, 'cause we had that trust between each other. I knew that, I felt that morning that Fred was trying to reach out to me, you know. I, I kept wondering was my phone on the hook, you know. Was, I know that Fred must have been trying to reach out to me and say, you know, Come here, come here, look what, come here. You know, I, it was, it was just an awful time for me, because I knew what Fred was all about. I knew that Fred couldn't have done, couldn't have been a person that they should have shot down like a rabbit in that place, you know. It was, I was so hurt, so hurt. To the point that I thought that day, I cannot get up again, you know, just can't get up again. Do we really have the police department in this city that would do a raid on that, that house as they did and kill poor Fred? Who was about nothing but trying to, trying to help us to understand what was going on in this political world, you know. And I think it was, I was at my lowest that I ever been in history. Because I...that was a young man. Fred Hampton was a young man that wasn't about violence, you know, had a method that he was trying to prove, that Fred was trying to prove. And I think I was at the lowest that America didn't understand that, you know, that's what, I, and I, but I think the worst thing was that I felt that, that I said, Now, I know Fred must have—'cause as he always did, he would call me in the middle of the night when he had to make decisions. And I would tease him. I always say, All right Fred, are you telling me this so that if your method ain't working, so that I'm your back up?" You know? I always, I always say he's, you know, 'cause we had that kind of trust. We always was doubting each other, you know, that kind of stuff. And I was saying, Now, I know Fred was trying to call me that night, you know. And I was worried did I take the phone off the hook or did, you know, I wasn't I was just going through all of that.

00:51:52:00

Interviewer:

Cut.

[cut]

Camera Crew Member #2:

Speed.

00:51:54:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Marker.

[slate]

00:52:03:00

Interviewer:

OK. Talk about walking through Hampton's, Fred Hampton's apartment after he was killed.

00:52:07:00

Nancy Jefferson:

You know, immediately that morning, 'cause the police was sealing off everything, you know. But they also knew my relationship to Fred Hampton, walking through his apartment that morning afterward. But I got a, a group of community people and went straight to the police, and said, you know, straight up to that house and said, We are going through here because we are going to see what was done at Fre—at, at his place. 'Cause all kinds of rumors were going on; they had guns, they were shooting out, and all that. But before I went through Fred's apartment that morning, you know, I knew the next-door neighbors. I knew everybody, you know, right there. In fact, one of the little girls that was, lived exactly next door, Earlene was courting one of my sons. And she, they were able to tell us exactly what was going on, you know, how that it was an Illinois Bell telephone truck that was sittin' on the street, and they saw the police get out of that truck. But we, we went into Fred Hampton's apartment and there was blood everywhere. There was blood on the mattress, you know, where that he was killed, right on the mattress. So the young man didn't get up and shoot at anybody because he was killed sleeping on the mattress. And we saw that. That was, you know, oh, Lord, it was such, such a hopeless day. And you felt, at points I felt so helpless. Because I knew that Fred was reaching out to me, you know. We were so close, and I felt so helpless. If they, how, why Fred? How could they do this to Fred, you know? I was able to talk to one of the girls that was in the apartment as, what, what was happening. And they were just so confused. They were so hurt. They were saying, They killed us like dogs. We were running, we were trying to hide. And Fred never had a chance, you know, he didn't pull any trigger. He never had the chance, you know. It was, it was awful. It was just awful to, to know that we had a, a police or a City of Chicago that ordered that. That knew that was going on, that ordered it. And we said, *You know, it can happen to any of us. And that was a, that was fear, shame, you know, sorry. What do we do? How come, why couldn't we have protected Fred?* You know, and I, and I was reflecting back over the things that I didn't trust him with, you know? Why wasn't I there to protect him? Why didn't I protect him more? Why, you know you, you were thinking all those things? If, if we had have done more maybe he would have been protected, you know?

00:55:13:00

Interviewer:

Thank you.

[cut]

[end of interview]

00:55:15:00

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