



Interview with **Fred Nauman**

Date: April 18, 1989

Interviewer: Louis Massiah

Camera Rolls: 3096-3099

Sound Rolls: 344-345A

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.

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**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 #3096]

[sound roll #344]

00:00:13:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

00:00:15:00

Interviewer:

I'm trying to get a historical sense that is before the experiment was even proposed. What expectations did teachers have for involvement in the administration of, of their schools when you were teaching?

00:00:29:00

Fred Nauman:

Back in those days, I don't think we thought about it a great deal. Certainly I didn't and I, I don't think most of the teachers in my school did.

00:00:39:00

Interviewer:

OK, could you just rephrase it with saying "the teachers..."?

Fred Nauman:

Oh.

Interviewer:

OK. Once again. And maybe I'll just hold onto—

Fred Nauman:

OK. [clears throat]

Interviewer:

Go ahead. And look at me rather than the camera.

00:00:49:00

Fred Nauman:

Yeah. I don't think the teachers thought a great deal about involvement in, in administration of the schools. Many of them wanted to become administrators but not from the point of view...not being involved in administering the schools as teachers.

00:01:06:00

Interviewer:

OK. Cut. Is it—

[cut]

00:01:10:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

00:01:12:00

Interviewer:

OK. This is prior to the experiment. What expectations did teachers have about involvement in the, in the administration of their schools in, in New York at that time?

00:01:24:00

Fred Nauman:

I think the involvement of teachers in that period was really quite minimal and, and I don't know that they expected much more. We'd just had a union for about six or seven years and, and bargaining rights. In addition to that, teachers were very insular. Each school was an entity on, into its—onto itself. Into? Wrong word.

Interviewer:

OK, why don't you start that again?

Fred Nauman:

Yeah. [chuckles]

00:01:53:00

Interviewer:

All right. What, what expectations did teachers have for involvement?

00:01:57:00

Fred Nauman:

They didn't have...teachers didn't have a great deal of expectation for involvement. The union had just been there for about five or six years. They did expect some relationships with the administration regarding a, a number of preparations, teaching time in the individual school, but between schools there was almost no connection. Each, each school operated, more or less, as a unit.

00:02:28:00

Interviewer:

OK. Who were the children that you taught in Ocean Hill-Brownsville? What were their backgrounds? What, what type of kids were they?

00:02:35:00

Fred Nauman:

Well, I started teaching there in 1959. And in the period that I was there, it was changing somewhat, but consistent throughout that period, there were really two groups coming to the school. From the northern end of the area, the Bedford-Stuyvesant end, they were mostly working class, middle class, children of civil servants. From the south were...Brownsville area, this was a more poverty-stricken area and you got a much greater representation from welfare families.

00:03:17:00

Interviewer:

OK. Could you talk a little bit about the race and ethnicity of the, the students?

00:03:22:00

Fred Nauman:

[sighs] The racial makeup of the school, probably in 1959 when I started there, there may have been as much as ten percent White. By late '60s that was probably down to one or two percent. The majority of the students were Black, with a significant minority of Hispanic students.

00:03:51:00

Interviewer:

Who were the teachers of, of Junior High School 271? I mean, what, what was their background?

00:03:58:00

Fred Nauman:

Most of the teachers at 271 were White, a good many were Jewish. Most of them products of the New York City School System. There probably twenty-five to thirty percent were Black. No other major ethnic group, I think, was represented at all.

00:04:19:00

Interviewer:

And, and how did teachers regard Junior High School 271? Did they look forward to teaching in that school? Was it a, was it a prestige school or a not-so-prestigious school?

00:04:30:00

Fred Nauman:

It...271 was, was not a prestigious school. It, it was a ghetto school. But as a ghetto school, it was probably one of the best, at least that's how most of us felt about it. It was a school that, that had its share of successes, and I know a good many of us felt good about going to work there every day.

00:04:52:00

Interviewer:

OK. Why was there some—

Camera Crew Member #1:

[inaudible] change cameras.

Interviewer:

We're gonna change cameras.

Camera Crew Member #2:

That's a rollout.

[cut]

[camera roll #3097]

00:04:57:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Mark it, please.

[slate]

00:04:59:00

Interviewer:

OK. When the experiment began in the fall of '67, why was there some reluctance on the part of, of some teachers to go along with the experiment?

00:05:08:00

Fred Nauman:

Well, the reluctance developed really over the summer, because we had been told one thing in the spring and that is that we would be a part of this...a full-partner in, in this experiment. And in the summer those, those of us who were involved during the summer found that that just wasn't true, that any suggestions that were made by the teachers were either disregarded or, or, or actually, they were insulted about making them. In addition to which, the, the one thing that was very clear from the beginning, Father Powis, who had explained the entire proposal to us at a staff meeting in June, had told us that every school would have a chance to vote in the fall as to its involvement in the, in the program...in the demonstration. When we came back in September we were told, Well that's tough. It's...we voted it. It's here and you'll cooperate.

00:06:13:00

Interviewer:

OK. Was that true, was there that same sort of reluctance once the year began, in the, really, '67, '68 year, that same distrust?

00:06:22:00

Fred Nauman:

Well, it never went...the distrust never went away. It, it reduced, some things calmed down, but for a period of weeks, even months, there was pressure on the teachers to elect someone to sit on the Governing Board, and the, the teachers felt that they, they didn't think it was right, we didn't feel it was right for us to participate in that way since we'd had no choice about the setup of the program. And there were a number of steps by the administration including that they selected who would be on the Governing Board and they selected from those who obviously agreed with what was going on, so the tension continued.

00:07:11:00

Interviewer:

OK. At one point the State Supreme Court ruled that the hiring of principals in Ocean Hill-Brownsville was illegal. What was your reaction or the...your meaning the teachers, what was your reaction and action when the Supreme Court nullified the, the appointment of, of the four principals?

Fred Nauman:

We had some, initially had some mixed feelings about—

Interviewer:

And if you could rephrase a little bit.

Fred Nauman:

Oh, sorry.

Interviewer:

Sure.

00:07:39:00

Fred Nauman:

The...when the community principals were appointed, the principals appointed from outside of the, the city's regular lists we had some reluctance about it and some unhappiness with it, with the idea. However, when the individuals arrived, at least at 271 and I believe in a number of the other schools, we were quite pleased with 'em. Bill Harris was a good principal. He...while we had been very happy with our previous principal and they were two entirely different individuals, Bill Harris got the school much more under control and we were able to work with him quite positively. So, when the Supreme Court decision came out stating that they were not properly appointed, I started a petition in the school which was signed by, interestingly enough, almost all of the teachers who at—we had been, we had become somewhat divided at this point, and all the ones who were on our side signed the petition asking that these principals be retained. Some of the teachers who were at that point on the other side suspected what we were doing and, and refused to sign the petition. We sent that petition to the president of the Board of Education, and we got a nice response for him...from him. We asked him to appeal that decision and to keep the principals on.

00:09:11:00

Interviewer:

Could you talk about that, that division between teachers?

00:09:15:00

Fred Nauman:

[sighs] The division between teachers really happened more as a result of the '67 strike than anything else. Most of us saw the strike as a regular labor union strike against the employer, it had no particular significance in Ocean Hill. It was a strike that was going on citywide, it was a strike initially for monetary gain, but then primarily for one of the things that the district was supposed to have been created for, and that was the more effective schools, the increase of the more effective schools. We felt it was a good strike with a good cause. Some of the teachers, some of the people we had worked closely with crossed the picket line and most of, mostly they were the Black teachers, and also involving some White teachers, and they did so, many of them, because they had been pressured by the community. A few of them, as a matter of fact, left the district because of the pressure at that point. But that started the division really, the division between...our terminology would have been the, the unionists and the scabs.

00:10:40:00

Interviewer:

OK.

Camera Crew Member #3:

[coughs]

Interviewer:

Could, could you describe the events around the death of Martin Luther King and the role of these new, new Black teachers, new teachers from the African American Teachers Association that were coming into Ocean Hill-Brownsville?

00:10:54:00

Fred Nauman:

In February, I believe it was, of 1968, Leslie Campbell, a teacher from, I believe he came from Junior High School 35, a nearby junior high school, who had gotten into some difficulty over there and had been brought up on charges and as a penalty was transferred out of his school, he came into 271, along with a number of other people. He immediately...he was a vice-president of the Afro-American Teachers Association, which was a small, relatively local group of, of Black teachers who had set themselves up, really, in opposition to the UFT. He organized a group called the Afro-American Students Organization in the school, a group that was composed largely of the students with whom we had the most difficulty. As a matter of fact, they sort of got a license to, to be out of classrooms if they were part of this organization. When Martin Luther King was assassinated, it was a shock to everyone, but it was a double shock when we came to school that next morning and saw signs all over the walls, all over the bulletin boards that obviously had been prepared and put up early in the morning, accusing...the language was something like, Our, our leader Martin Luther King



has been killed by the vicious White man. You—something to the extent of, get even. We were terribly disturbed. The students were terribly disturbed and, and I'm sure those signs had a great deal to do with it. Be—students, usually they're, they're affected by things, but things happen all the time.

00:13:01:00

Interviewer:

Right, then what happened?

00:13:03:00

Fred Nauman:

The principal, Bill Harris, called a special assembly, and all of the students were brought in, into the assembly, all those that could be corralled. And at the beginning of the meeting, the principal asked the, these—he made the offer that the White teachers who wanted to leave could leave. Some of us left, we were very disturbed by the fact that we had been segregated, that this was something that seemed to be saying to the students, These people should not be here for this. Those of us who left went, I believe, to the library and, and met and discussed what was going on. Some others stayed and then came and reported to us that what happened was an incitement to, to violence, really, by a number of people, Governing Board members and particularly Leslie Campbell, who had made some very inciteful statement to, to these youngsters. When that assembly was over, the youngsters left the auditorium. I believe school was—the, the principal said everybody could go home. The students left the auditorium and rampaged throughout the building. They tore up a lot of things that were around the building and they attacked a number of people. One young lady, a young English teacher was...actually, she, apparently she, the, the reason that was given later was that she had torn down some of these signs, and which she may very well had done. I know I took some down, she was mobbed by a bunch of youngsters, thrown down, her dress was torn, her, hands full of hair were pulled from her head. She was badly bruised and badly shaken up. Another teacher was knocked unconscious and sent to the hospital. Someone else who tried to leave was...had beer cans thrown at him and he had to run back into the building.

00:15:15:00

Interviewer:

OK. Just really briefly—

Fred Nauman:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

—could you just describe what happened in the auditorium and being told to leave, or asked if, if White teachers wanted to leave, once again?

00:15:25:00

Fred Nauman:

When, when the assembly was called, Bill Harris, the principal said, The White teachers might not be comfortable with what's going on here. If you want to leave, you may. And many of us left. Those who stayed reported that what went on was really inciting the youngsters to—

[rollout on camera]

[wild sound]

Fred Nauman:

—to negative impressions about the Whites.

00:15:53:00

Interviewer:

OK, we have rollout.

Camera Crew Member #2:

That's a camera rollout.

[cut]

[camera roll #3098]

00:15:56:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

00:15:58:00

Interviewer:

OK. Once again, could you describe that assembly with Bill Harris after the assassination of Martin Luther King?

00:16:04:00

Fred Nauman:

Well, the morning after the assassination of Martin Luther King, the school was in turmoil. The principal called an assembly of all the students and teachers, and once we were all in there, he invited the White teachers to leave the room. Many of us did, some didn't. And what those who remained reported to the rest of us afterwards is that what went on in there was really an incitement of the students against the White teachers.

00:16:40:00

Interviewer:

OK. Wh—could you describe the reason and what happened when, when Rhody McCoy and Bill Harris came to visit you I think a few days after that?

00:16:49:00

Fred Nauman:

As a result of, of the wild situation in the school, the school was closed for one or two days. The teachers met and...or at least the leadership of the teachers in the district met and were very upset. Many, many of the teachers did not wanna return, they, they were afraid literally for their lives. We ca—and I don't remember the order of the phone calls, it was a long time ago, but we called Bill Harris and I believe he called Rhody McCoy. We invited him to a meeting at my house so that the leadership of the teachers in the district could meet with the administration and try and get them to do something to defuse this very volatile situation. They came to my house, we had a meeting. I think there were about twenty teachers there and Harris and McCoy. We had made up a several items that we wanted done. As I recall, we had said that we wanted some sort of an assembly called that the students were to be informed by legitimate leaders, McCoy, Harris, that we were not their enemies. There were a number of items that, that had to do with pacifying things. We were shocked that, instead of saying yes to something we thought was quite reasonable and obvious, something that should have been done without our even asking it, McCoy's response was that he couldn't make that decision, the Governing Board would have to make that decision. We asked to meet with the Governing Board and McCoy said he'd arrange it. I called him several times during the next week, he never arranged it, he obviously never took it up with anyone.

00:18:46:00

Interviewer:

OK. How, how did you learn about the supposed transfers in, in May of '68? And, and do you remember the letter that you received? I know first you may have gotten a call from Sandy Feldman.

Fred Nauman:

Mmm.

Interviewer:

Can you just talk us through that?

00:19:01:00

Fred Nauman:

On the evening of May 8th, 1968, I received a call at home from Sandy Feldman, our...the union representative in the district. And she told me that she had heard that something was about to happen. She did not know precisely what. The next morning I was called, I believe I was called to the principal's office to receive a registered letter. Some of the teachers had the, had the registers le-letters delivered to them in their classes. And the letters basically said that the Governing Board had voted to terminate their employment in the district. That was, that was the specific language of that part of the letter.

00:19:46:00

Interviewer:

And, and what was your reaction?

00:19:49:00

Fred Nauman:

Well, I, I'm not sure that I could say my reaction was anything more than I was totally numb. That was the last thing in the world I had expected. I had been meeting monthly with McCoy as, as part of a group from the union who were trying to work out problems, and *at no time had anybody mentioned that they there was a problem with my service or, or, for that matter, with any of the people who were named, or, or certainly the majority of them. I didn't know them all. But here was this letter that ordered me out. So, all I can tell you is I was dumbfounded.*

00:20:30:00

Interviewer:

Whe-when you...what, what, what did you feel was going on in the Black community at that time in terms of sort of an increased militancy? What, what...how would you describe what was going on?

00:20:46:00

Fred Nauman:

I think to, to talk about the Black community you almost have to divide...you have to define what community means. The community of Ocean Hill-Brownsville, the, the parents of youngsters we had been teaching did not change a great deal. I think they were friendly to us before and for the most part friendly to us during and after. What did happen is that a number of people, some of whom had come from outside, some of whom never were part of the local community had begun to incite some...they incited students, they incited some of the neighborhood toughs. And there this, this climate. So, which community we're talking about will, will determine the answer to that question.

00:21:37:00

Interviewer:

OK. Could you describe the scene after you, you received the letter of transfer or, you know, end of employment, when you tried to re-enter 271 and you were met by Mrs. Rooke and Walter Lynch and some other people?

00:21:54:00

Fred Nauman:

Well, I'm not sure I can describe that scene adequately because there was a half-dozen such scenes.

Interviewer:

Well—

Fred Nauman:

Oh.

Interviewer:

—gi-give me one, right, in May of '68.

00:22:05:00

Fred Nauman:

The...we were on some days physically blocked at the door by mobs, mostly of students, standing in the doorway. Among the students would be a number of members of the Governing Board. Mrs. Rooke was there on many occasions. Mrs. Marshall, a member of the Governing Board, wa-was there. Walter Lynch, who was the community liaison, usually Sonny Carson was there, Father Powis was there, and they would physically block us from entering. And some days we were able to enter by going through a, a phalanx of, of taunts. On other days, we just were physically unable to enter.

00:22:49:00

Interviewer:

OK. And again, may—sort, sort it out...where did, where did you assemble and how did you plot your strategy about going in?

00:23:00:00

Fred Nauman:

We...a number of us from each school, usually one, two, or three people who were, who were sort of in the leadership, and of course the thirteen who had been fired most often would meet almost daily at a, at a neighborhood cafeteria and talk about what's going to happen next, or we'd talk on the phone. Usually, Sandy Feldman met with us. And we would, if we were supposed to go back to school, we would agree to meet usually a block or two away from the school and go there together since alone it woulda been a terribly frightening thing. That, that was the most usual way that it was done.

00:23:44:00

Interviewer:

OK. What happened to your friendships with, with Black teachers during that time, particularly teachers who decided to go in? If you could be specific that would be great.

00:23:59:00

Fred Nauman:

[pause] The relationship with, with the Black teachers with whom I had been friendly deteriorated rather rapidly. It...we were polarized. Even before this point a good deal of polarization had taken place. There was a, a young Black science teacher who I had been very friendly with, Dorothy Hopkins was an excellent, excellent science teacher and we had been very friendly. She became very militant, became a part of the leadership of the opposing

group and I don't think we had two words together after that. Others that I recall, such as Ann Richardson, who was a counselor, it was just a strained relationship, I knew that she was in some pain about what was happening. But the closest friendships that many of us had had, the social relationships that many of us had had deteriorated completely.

00:25:04:00

Interviewer:

OK. Could, could you talk, talk to us about the, the incident about the anti-Semitic belief? What, what was that about? Whe-when...what, what happened?

00:25:14:00

Fred Nauman:

Well, actually there was more than one, but the, the one that I think got the most publicity was one written by—

Interviewer:

And if you could rephrase the question a little.

Fred Nauman:

Oh. The leaflet, the, the, anti-Semitic leaflets mostly came from an individual who I think was making this a particular cause, and this leaflet appeared in the letter boxes of the teachers, and I'm not sure at this point whether it was in all the schools or in just some of the schools, but it was obviously distributed with some help and it was...I don't remember the specifics but it was an anti-Semitic leaflet that got wide circulation and made the anti-Semitic situation worse than I thought it was. I did not, at any time, even after this, see this as very much of an anti-Semitic problem. It was a Black-White problem, clearly. And the anti-Semitism, I felt, was o-overdrawn.

00:26:21:00

Interviewer:

OK. Who, who was this individual? You don't have to say his name, but—

Camera Crew Member #1:

We're about to roll out.

Interviewer:

Oh, OK. Let's cut.

Camera Crew Member #1:

OK.

Camera Crew Member #2:

OK, that's gonna be a rollout on thirty, ninety-eight.

Interviewer:

[unintelligible]

[cut]

[wild sound]

Interviewer:

—could restate briefly the incident about—

Camera Crew Member #2:

Rolling and speed.

Interviewer:

—the anti-Semitic leaflet and who...and the notion of, of, and how important anti-Semitism might have been in Ocean Hill-Brownsville.

[cut]

00:26:43:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

00:26:46:00

Interviewer:



OK. Could you talk again about the incident of the anti-Semitic leaflet that was stuck in people's boxes and how much you thought anti-Semitism might've been part of what was going on in Ocean Hill-Brownsville?

00:26:58:00

Fred Nauman:

The press made a great deal about the, about anti-Semitism in Ocean Hill-Brownsville. I never felt it was that much a part of the situation. There was obviously a Black-White confrontation, but the, the fact that many of the teachers or, or all those who were fired were Jewish, I think, was incidental. The thing that brought it really to a fore was one or a number of leaflets that were produced by someone who was not in the district at all, but—

00:27:32:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

Can we cut for a second?

Interviewer:

OK.

[cut]

[wild sound]

Interviewer:

[unintelligible]

Fred Nauman:

You want me to repeat that?

Interviewer:

Yeah, OK. I don't think all the teachers were Jewish that were transferred.

Fred Nauman:

No, no. I'm, I'm glad.

[cut]

[sound roll #345A]

00:27:43:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

All right, mark it.

[slate]

00:27:45:00

Interviewer:

OK. Once again, could you talk about how important anti-Semitism was or was not in Ocean Hill-Brownsville and any specific incidents that, that you remember?

00:27:54:00

Fred Nauman:

*I didn't feel then and I don't feel now that anti-Semitism was a major part of, of that situation. it was a Black-White confrontation, a lot of the teachers involved were Jewish, so some people drew that conclusion from the start.* It became more serious when a gentleman who was not a part of the district, he was a teacher from somewhere outside who usually came where there was troubles, produced a leaflet and somehow got it distributed in everybody's mailboxes in many of the schools, I'm not sure if all, which was a, a virulent anti-Semitic piece. That, of course, was picked up by the press and became a cause célèbre.

00:28:43:00

Interviewer:

OK. Great. Again, we're gonna go back to the...when you got the letter of ending your service. How did you react officially whe-when you met together? Ha—what was the official reaction to being told that you were no longer being hired in the district? What, what did you do?

00:29:01:00

Fred Nauman:

My recollection of our first meetings af-after we had been notified that we were fired, we got together with our union representative an—who told us that what had been done was totally illegal, that this couldn't, couldn't possibly stay, and that it would be taken up with the

Central Board of Education. And I, as I recall, that day we just went home assuming that, that this would end.

00:29:29:00

Interviewer:

And, and then your, your, your decision to go into the school as an—

Camera Crew Member #3:

[coughs]

Interviewer:

—official reaction.

00:29:34:00

Fred Nauman:

Well, we, we were then ordered by the Superintendent of Schools, Bernard Donovan, to return to our assignments. He told us, you know, You're not, you're not fired, you're, you're assignment is there, you go there. That...unfortunately the Central Board was vacillated a great deal during that time and on one day they told us to come down to the Central Board, and the next day they told us to report back to the schools. We, we went where we were told.

00:30:05:00

Interviewer:

OK. How did you feel? We're jumping ahead to '68 when you're back in the schools. How did you feel as an educator when you were reinstated into the schools but, but you weren't allowed to teach, when you were made to review te-text? And just sort of describe that.

00:30:22:00

Fred Nauman:

I, I think our feelings when we, when we did get back into the school after...several times a-after the various strikes, in, in each case we felt that we had been somewhat led down the garden path because in eac-each case we had been promised we would be teaching again and in each case we were not. Something was done to keep us from teaching. Either we were ordered to go to the district office or to meet in an auditorium, or we were given classrooms with no students in them, or were sent to classrooms where there was already a teacher who, one of the so-called loyal teachers who ordered us out. It was very frustrating situation.

00:31:10:00

Interviewer:

OK. So, cut for a second.

Camera Crew Member #1:

OK, cutting.

Interviewer:

[unintelligible]

[cut]

00:31:15:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

00:31:17:00

Interviewer:

OK. You had made a commitment to teaching and you were suspended or kicked out and then had been reinstated but not allowed to teach. How did you feel as an educator being in that position when you were, were sent back into the schools?

00:31:32:00

Fred Nauman:

Well, being in the school and not being allowed to teach was terribly frustrating. We were in effect being asked...we were being paid to sit there and do nothing and, and that's a, a terrible feeling for anyone, particularly difficult when you know that you, you can do some good for people who need a great deal of, of things done for 'em and instead you're being wasted. So, I would say frustration was, was the big thing.

00:32:04:00

Interviewer:

OK. And in, in terms of the union, how did you feel? Did you feel that the union leadership was always...always had—was asking more of you in terms of personal sacrifice than, than was reasonable to expect? That is in terms of staying in there and fighting.

00:32:23:00

Fred Nauman:

Actually, it wasn't the union leadership that asked us to stay and fight. The union leadership said that they would support us if we made that choice. The decision to stay and fight was made by the teachers shortly after May 9th, by all of the teachers in the district who came to a meeting, about 350 of them, and asked us to, to make a stand, not to allow ourselves to be removed. I, I think it was the correct step to take at that time and the union supported us in it, but it was, but it was the teachers who decided that.

00:32:58:00

Interviewer:

OK. Cut.

Camera Crew Member #2:

Stopping down.

[cut]

00:33:03:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

00:33:04:00

Interviewer:

OK. Could you describe what happened, what, what you met, what situation you, you, you finally experienced when you were back into the classroom that, that fall of '68?

00:33:16:00

Fred Nauman:

The students whom we finally got to face in the classroom had been thoroughly coached that they were not allow...to allow us to communicate with 'em. They would chant whenever one of us would start to say something to them, making any form of communication impossible. And it was just a terrible situation trying to, to get a class to sit still, to open their notebooks when, when they couldn't hear you because a group of them would be doing this. At one point during one of the first days back, in one of the classes a youngster who, as I was trying to quiet the class down uttered some profanity and he wasn't gonna listen to me, he was told not to listen to me and he threw a chair. He then picked up another chair to throw. I took...grabbed the chair out of his hand, he ran outta the room. Later on there were all kinds of reports, first that he had a broken hand, and wh—then that it was a cut hand. He appeared on television that evening with a hand in the cast and all kinds of accusations. I will say that the accusations died because nothing ever happened, but there were threats against my life and the state overseer of the schools at that point removed me from the school, they said for my own safety.

00:34:50:00

Interviewer:

OK. All right, cut.

Camera Crew Member #1:

OK.

Interviewer:

All right.

[cut]

00:34:55:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

00:34:57:00

Interviewer:

Could you talk about a growing awareness of a racial divide between a predominantly Black community that had once been su-supportive to teachers that were predominantly White?

00:35:08:00

Fred Nauman:

I don't think that the...that we ever lost the support of the Black community. I think we lost, I think that, that an artificial battle was set up by some people who, who were taking the civil rights movement and using it for personal power, personal aggrandizement. I think that can be, can be demonstrated clearly by just a year later there was an election for representation, union representation in New York City for the paraprofessionals, almost all Black. They voted overwhelmingly for the UFT to represent them.

00:35:49:00

Interviewer:

Could you stay in the time?

Fred Nauman:

Oh, oh, OK.

Interviewer:

OK, that's OK. Go ahead.

00:35:53:00

Fred Nauman:

The, the people with whom the, the split developed were really a group of militant...they, they were not the Martin Luther Kings of, of the, of the civil rights movement. They were closely to, closer to the Stokely Carmichael, to Malcolm X and, and in many cases to people who were just interested in personal aggrandizement. I don't think they, they were with the movement as much as many of us in, in the White community were.

00:36:28:00

Interviewer:

OK. Cut.

[cut]

00:36:34:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

00:36:35:00

Interviewer:

How, how had your personal feelings about the civil rights movement or, or analyzing Black-White issues changed during that time?

00:36:44:00

Fred Nauman:

I, I had been a strong supporter of the civil rights movement, strong supporter of, of Martin Luther King and, and obvious—not of the militant Black movements, I didn't support the Black Panthers, but, but I supported the civil rights movement and I was for...every time there was a confrontation of some type between Black and White I tended to side with the Black. This was the first time, because I was personally involved, that, that I discovered this revelation that it was possible to be Black and to be wrong. That, that this naive attitude I had previously was just that, it was naive. And I think I'm better for it, that I can judge things today based on the individuals rather than on the skin color.

00:37:40:00

Interviewer:

OK. Cut. I think, I think that's it. That's great.

Camera Crew Member #1:

That was great.

Fred Nauman:

Thank you.

[cut]

[end of interview]

00:37:48:00



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