Interview with **Dr. John O. Brown**

Date: June 21, 1989

Interviewer: Madison Davis Lacy, Jr.

Camera Rolls: 1118-1120 Sound Rolls: 153-154

Team: A

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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Interview with Dr. John O. Brown, conducted by Blackside, Inc. on June 21, 1989 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 #1001] [sound roll #114] |
|---|
| [wild sound] |
| 00:00:11:00 |
| Interviewer: |
| You break the rules. [laughs] So we got— |
| Camera crew member #1: |
| Do you have to come back earlier? |
| Camera crew member #2: |
| Speed. |
| Interviewer: |
| You want to come back earlier? |
| Camera crew member #1: |
| Even earlier to when he was in med school, you know, when he wanted to join the army. |

| Interviewer: |
|--|
| All right. Can you start there for me? |
| 00:00:23:00 |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| Well, I was in college— |
| Interviewer: |
| OK. Hang on a second. |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| —not in medical school. |
| Camera crew member #2: |
| [inaudible] camera rollin'. |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| I'll say a few good things about the Badgers— |
| Camera crew member #2: |
| Mark it. |
| [slate] |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| —up at the University of Wisconsin. [laughs] |
| Camera crew member #1: |
| [laughs] |
| 00:00:34:00 |
| Interviewer: |
| OK, now we, we've started to roll. Tell me about going to college and med school. Take me through the story about your journey [unintelligible]. |

00:00:41:00

Dr. John O. Brown:

Well, I was originally from Oklahoma which was a segregated state. Of course, you didn't have the number of Blacks in that state as you did in the deep South, such as Alabama and Mississippi and Georgia and Florida. But then I went to college at the University of Wisconsin. And I had always intended to be a doctor, but then I was thrown a little off base because of the good treatment and the equal and fair treatment that was given to Blacks at Wisconsin, which was considered one of the most liberal schools in the country at that time. And I went off on the military end because I was the first Black that was admitted to advanced ROTC. And my friends were telling me, They need you in the army. The military needs Black officers. You'll be a colonel and we'll still be second lieutenants. So, I was thrown off base here and went into the army for three-and-a-half years and was shot up over in Italy with the 92nd Division. I was hit by a German mortar shell. After the war was over and I was admitted to medical school in Tennessee, I took a postgraduate training course in ophthalmology at the University of Illinois and in that class was a German boy, who had fought against his country at World War Two. And his unit was assigned to the same area that I was in Italy. And as we talked to each other, found out that he was on one hill and I was on the opposite hill, so we were probably shooting at each other. But he could come over here after fighting against this country to enjoy our educational benefits—

| 00:02:10:00 |
|-------------------------------|
| Interviewer: |
| Oh, we have to stop. |
| [cut] |
| 00:02:19:00 |
| Camera crew member #2: |
| Mark it please. |
| [slate] |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| OK. There was a German fella— |
| Interviewer: |
| So— |

| Camera crew member #2: |
|--|
| [inaudible] just a second. |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| OK. |
| Camera crew member #2: |
| Now. |
| 00:02:24:00 |
| Interviewer: |
| So, he was on one hill? |
| 00:02:26:00 |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| He was, he was on one hill and I was on the other. And we were probably shooting at each other. But after the war was over, he was able to come over here and even though he fought against this country, he was able to enjoy our educational system. And there were places in Chicago that he could go that I couldn't go, and this just didn't make sense whatsoever. |
| 00:02:47:00 |
| Interviewer: |
| So, now, what—when, when did you come to Miami? |
| 00:02:50:00 |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| I came to Miami in December of 1955. And after having many pent-up emotions about the war and the treatment, the segregated conditions of the army, and the second-class treatment that was given to Black soldiers in the, in the army in World War Two, I had many pent-up emotions. And I knew that the big battle was to rid this country of racism. |
| 00:03:14:00 |
| Interviewer: |

| 00:03:17:00 |
|--|
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| One of the most segregated cities, urban areas, in the whole United States. I mean we talk about Birmingham and Memphis and Atlanta and places like that. Segregation was just as rampant here or probably worse. And probably, the economic, the economy of Miami, as far as Blacks was concerned, was probably the lowest in the nation of any urban area. |
| 00:03:43:00 |
| Interviewer: |
| Let's stop down now |
| 00:03:45:00 |
| Camera crew member #1: |
| Can you do it— |
| [cut] |
| 00:03:50:00 |
| Camera crew member #2: |
| Mark it please. |
| [slate] |
| 00:03:52:00 |
| Interviewer: |
| Now, you were involved in CORE during the early years of desegregation effort in Miami. Tell me that story about the Royal Castle and the [unintelligible]. |
| 00:04:01:00 |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| |

And what did you find when you got to Miami? Tell me.

Oh, we had a real time here in, in Miami with CORE. Originally, the emphasis on—in the civil rights movement was based around the legal decisions that were rendered in the NAACP cases. The school suit, I was involved in the school desegregation seat—suit, and the bus suit that we filed here, a golf suit was filed here and I became a participant in that also. But we found that only a handful of people were involved. So we were looking for an organization that would involve the people from the streets, the grassroots movement. And after investigating, we found the answer to be in the organization called CORE, the Congress of Racial Equality, and we immediately started our sit-ins. The first sit-ins that we had here were at McCrory's and W.T. Grants. And I'm proud to say that these sit-ins occurred prior to the student sit-ins that occurred in Greensboro, North Carolina. Of course that was the student sit-in movement. Ours involved grown-ups and people, mainly professionals, here in the City of Miami, and another interesting point was that over half the individuals who were involved in these sit-ins in Miami were White, not just, not just Black alone. And after we started in the ten-cent stores, we decided to take the Royal Castle chain which was a hamburger chain. And we didn't meet the resistance that you found in what you would call the deep South, although Miami is deeper South [laughs] than any of the rest of them, that was because of several reasons. Miami was a glitzy city, you know, and its basic industry was tourism. And everybody came to Miami to have a good time. And the city fathers did not want to see any trouble spots here. We wanted a trouble-free area. We could not project to the nation an area where we were having racial violence. And they did everything in the world to keep everything quiet. And we did not meet the resistance here. At the Royal Castles, we would go in, the first couple of times, we would go in and buy approximately forty or fifty hamburgers. And as the manager would've said, You're going to have a good time tonight, aren't you? And we said, We sure are. Then the next thing he'd look up, you see forty or fifty people with the hamburger in their hands, sitting at his counters. The police would come and they would ask, Well, what are you crying about? He says, These people are sitting here, he says, Well what—where did they get the hamburgers? Did you sell them to them? He said, Yep, I sold it to them. He says, Well, you have nothing to complain about then. [laughs] You sold them the hamburgers. So then, it went down to the point where we would have to send in one or two people to get one or two hamburgers and have about forty or fifty people in the parking lot. As soon as we would get a sufficient number of hamburgers, then we would all storm in again. So, it became sort of like a cat and mouse game. So, there were those little times that it was almost, it was, it was humorous. And although the penalty could have been death at that time because it was still a tense situation here in Miami.

| 00:07:07:00 |
|------------------------|
| Interviewer: |
| Stop down. |
| Camera crew member #2: |
| OK. |

[cut]

00:07:13:00

Camera crew member #2:

Mark it.

[slate]

00:07:15:00

Interviewer:

We've been told that Overtown in its heyday was a thriving, bustling Black community. Tell me what you think.

Dr. John O. Brown:

No, it was not a thriving business community.

Interviewer:

Can you start one more time to say, No, Overtown—

00:07:27:00

Dr. John O. Brown:

No, Overtown was not a thriving business community. There were a number of little mom and pop businesses there. But there are many people who'd seemed to think that it was a thriving area, but it was not. The businesses, most of the businesses that existed in Overtown were owned by Whites. And you've heard about the big hotels and the entertainment and the night life over there. The Lord Calvert, a Sir John Hotel, was owned by Sam Rabin family. The Carver Hotel was owned by a Jewish family. Out in Brown sub, the Booker Terrace was owned by, by a Jewish family. The only Black hotel in Miami, at that time, was the Mary Elizabeth Hotel. There was a smaller one called the Darcy Hotel, but for all intents and purposes, it was not rated among the better places to go. But these were not Black places. I guess, about the only real business that was owned by Blacks was a soft-drink company that was—existed in Miami and that was unusual for any Black community in this country. But we didn't have the business in there, not the Black businesses. As far as professionals were concerned, we had about six Black lawyers. We had about sixteen Black doctors. We had one accountant that I can recall. We had a number of school teachers, but other than that the industry was construction and domestics.

00:08:54:00

| Interviewer: |
|--|
| But why is there all this emotion towards what Overtown was? Where do you think that comes from? |
| 00:09:00:00 |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| Well, the segregation brought people together and most of—everybody knew everybody else. At that time you could walk around and at three and four o'clock in the morning. You didn't lock your cars. You didn't lock your house doors or anything. And this was a good timey community. I mean everybody came to Miami to have a good time. And if you were Black in the United States and you were anybody in the middle or upper middle class, you came to Miami in the mid-wintertime and enjoyed the Calvert Hotel, the Lord Calvert or the Sir John Hotel, and you had a good time. There were two main events that you had in Miami at that time for Blacks and one was the Orange Blossom Classic, when Florida A&M brought its big band out and its football team. The second was the Northwest Golf Tournament which was held out at Miami Springs. At that time Blacks could play golf one day out of the week at Miami Springs on Mondays. But for the North/South tournament they allowed them to play the whole week, and Blacks from all over the country would come down for that tournament. |
| 00:10:06:00 |
| Interviewer: |
| OK, let's stop down. |
| Camera crew member #1: |
| K. |
| [cut] |
| 00:10:11:00 |
| Camera crew member #2: |
| Mark it. |
| [slate] |

0010:13:00

Interviewer:

| 00:10:16:00 |
|---|
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| Yes, at that time, practically all the professionals were based in what we called Overtown. A handful of doctors that we had, I don't think there were more than two doctors who had practices outside of Overtown. The lawyers were all in Overtown. But then came what we called urban renewal of which became Black or Negro removal and then the displacement, the relocation caused by the expressways. And we were sort of forced out of that area. |
| 00:10:46:00 |
| Interviewer: |
| Do you recall any experience of somebody who was close to you undergoing that? |
| 00:10:53:00 |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| Yes, I know a number of families. As far as the highway relocation was concerned, the State of Florida, if they had appropriated forty thousand dollars, they would have been able to give the Black families who had to—were displaced a subsidy to move into better housing in other areas of the county. But the State of Florida did not see fit to even appropriate the forty thousand dollars. So, individuals who had the little, small homes and owned the property in Overtown were given about three— |
| [rollout on camera roll] |
| [wild sound] |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| —thousand dollars and they had to move into areas where the cost of housing was thirty and forty thousand dollars at that time— |
| Interviewer: |
| OK— |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| —so they were unable to purchase homes. |
| |

And your practice was in Overtown and you said you were forced out. Tell me about this.

00:11:36:00 Interviewer: OK, we got roll out. [cut] [camera roll #1119] 00:11:37:00 Camera crew member #2: Now. Dr. John O. Brown: And we've got another 15 minutes. 00:11:43:00 Camera crew member #2: Mark it please. [slate] 00:11:44:00 Interviewer: All right, Dr. Brown, tell me that alligator story. 00:11:47:00 Dr. John O. Brown: [laughs] All right, about the same time we were having expressway relocation among the Blacks, there was a movement afoot to build a new airport in this area. And the new airport would be a jet port out in the Everglades. And the environmentalists and everything got together and they fought that. And to this day that airport has not been built because they said they didn't want to destroy the alligators. But when it came to removing the Blacks from

Overtown, there was nobody to fight that battle. So, in fact, they wouldn't even subsidize the federal money that came in for the expressway relocation. So, in the Black community, we

had the saying that the State of Florida thought more of its alligators than it did of its Black people.

00:12:31:00

Interviewer:

All right. Now, go quickly to that, that story you told me about that meeting with the Brooks.

00:12:37:00

Dr. John O. Brown:

Well, there was an individual in this community who handled about seventy-five percent of all the rental property in Overtown area. His name was Luther Brooks. We had a little luncheon club that met on Wednesdays. And Luther Brooks came to us to tell us about what some of the plans were for Overtown and the Black community. And he brought his maps and everything and showed us. This was about 1959, 1960. How that—the only way downtown Miami could expand was to expand into what was then known as the Overtown area, a Black community. And Blacks would be displaced nor—in the Northwest area. And all this area where we are right now was all white at that time. And he said Blacks would be living from 20th Street all the way out to 100 and almost 200 Street in Miami at that time. And we just couldn't believe him, didn't want to believe him. But it has all come to pass because the all White's areas, the White flight, the Whites have gone. The Blacks have moved in and, not only predominantly Black, it's about ninety-nine and nine-tenths percent Black.

00:13:45:00

Interviewer:

But it wasn't that way when you came here, was it? Was it all White, all Black?

00:13:48:00

Dr. John O. Brown:

It was just about all White and when I came to Miami. Now the area where I am right now was about ninety percent White at that time. Just ahead, just about fifteen blocks from here, we did have the demonstration. We had a Black entertainer by the name of Frank LaGree who bought a home for his mother in this area. And he didn't really, he was up in Knoxville, Tennessee. He didn't know anything about Miami, but some real estate guy had sold him this house. He didn't realize this was a White area. Today it's all Black, but at that time it was all White. And when his mother moved into that house, we had the White Citizen's Councilors who paraded and picketed in front of his house to try to get him out of there. So you know this area [laughs] was predominantly White at that time. Still the same area where we had our

first integrated school, the Orchard Villa School. At the time it was integrated it was ninety-nine percent White. And the very first year when they admitted Mrs. Range's kids and a couple of other families into that school, the next year it was ninety-nine and nine percent Black.

| 00:14:56:00 |
|---|
| Interviewer: |
| OK, let's cut here. |
| [cut] |
| 00:15:04:00 |
| Camera crew member #2: |
| Mark. |
| [slate] |
| 00:15:06:00 |
| Interviewer: |
| You were telling me earlier about the kind of hope that you had as a Black person here with integration in the '50s and, and how, how that's changed. Tell me. |
| 00:15:17:00 |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| Well, we had hoped, when I came here, this was a very segregated community. But with integration coming there was always that hope that there would be a merging not in—a merging of the opportunities, job opportunities, the politics and everything and we'd just be one big happy family here. I think at that time, most of us in the Black community felt that education was the key. And once the schools were integrated and Black kids were given the opportunities to get training and everything and a lot of these other things would disappear. But I think that we have found over the long haul that this is just fa, another facet, the education certainly has not, not related to the progress that we have made in housing, to politics or economics, that these are all different facets and they must be fought on a different battleground. |
| 00:16:13:00 |
| Interviewer: |

| Do you think Miami is a battleground for that kind of fight? |
|--|
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| Oh, it definitely is— |
| Interviewer: |
| OK, tell me, Oh— |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| [clears throat] |
| Interviewer |
| —it definitely is that kind of fight for, a battleground for that kind— |
| 00:16:21:00 |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| Yes, it definitely is. And the thing about Miami that makes it different from any of the major cities of this country, I mean we're not the only one that has a bunch of Latins, Nicaraguans, Hondurans, and Venezuelans, and Cubans, and with the Blacks and with the Jews and the others, there are many cities that—take San Francisco or Los Angeles, New York. But the thing that's quaint about Miami is the fact of job opportunities. I mean it's not an industrial city. So, there's only a little, there's only one little pie out here and that pie has to be split in so many different directions wh—and we're going to have to create more of these pies here and see that people are trained in order to be able to take advantage of the opportunities that are here. And I think that's the crux of the whole thing, that we just don't have enough of everything here. And there—the competition is going to be keen, very, very keen. |
| 00:17:19:00 |
| |

Well now, what hope then might that be and why? How did an underclass, I mean a permanently unemployed—do you think it exists in your community, it exists in Overtown and why?

Dr. John O. Brown:

Interviewer:

Well, it existed when I came here and it was the gap between—

Interviewer: Start by saying, Yes, the underclass existed when I— 00:17:38:00 Dr. John O. Brown: Yes, the underclass existed when I came here and there was a great gap between the have and the have-nots. The Blacks, contrary to what people want to believe about the South, about Miami, Blacks did not hold the, the jobs at the hotels, the domestic jobs, the bell captains, the bell porters, the chambermaids and things. Blacks were not working in those hotels on the beach nor in downtown Miami. These were the, this work was done by Whites in this community. Unlike Atlanta, Birmingham, and Memphis and those places where that was ninety-nine or a hundred percent Black workforce for that. We didn't have that here. And we've heard so much talk about Cubans taking the jobs from Blacks when they came in here. They did not take jobs from Blacks. We set up an agency, an office over in Overtown, that was sponsored by the Community Relations Board, when the Cubans first started coming in 1959, 1960, to receive complaints. Any Blacks who complained that their job had been taken by Cubans, we certainly wanted to look into it. Over one year, a period of time, we got three complaints. So that should be some indication that Cubans were not taking jobs from Blacks.

00:18:54:00

Interviewer:

Well, then why an underclass in the Miami?

00:18:56:00

Dr. John O. Brown:

Well, number one is the lack of skills. Number two, the Blacks do not provide jobs for themselves. They don't have the businesses, the economics, the economic power, nor stability to provide our own jobs.

00:19:10:00

Interviewer:

So, self-determination in an economic vein is part of the answer?

00:19:15:00

Dr. John O. Brown:

It is a large part of the answer. I mean you see the groups coming in, even the Haitians, the Jamaicans, all those groups are coming in from the islands and they are really participating in the economics of this community and business enterprises to a much greater degree than the Blacks of this area. Now, I talked with Alex Haley many years ago. And he tried to explain to me one of the reasons why the American Black of the South, the Black of the South was so far behind the Blacks from the Islands. And he said that when we talk about the big plantations of the South and everything, like Tara in _Gone With The Wind_, that that is really a myth. He said, The slaves that were sold in the South were sold one by one, or two by two, or maybe threes, or something like that, to sharecroppers. These slaves came from different tribes. They didn't know each other. They couldn't communicate, spoke different languages. They were against each other. The only thing they could do was vie for the favors from the master, telling on each other. So, they were against each other from the very beginning. But see, in Jamaica and Barbados and places like that, when ships would come in with slaves, they were all from the same tribe, from the same families, and they were sold in large numbers, so they communicated. They were together there. When they come over here, they have still had a togetherness. They had been oriented to business. They know what this capitalistic system is all about—

| [rollout on sound roll] |
|---|
| [cut] |
| [sound roll #154] |
| [wild sound] |
| 00:20:42:00 |
| Interviewer: |
| [laughs] |
| Camera crew member #2: |
| And rolling. |
| Camera crew member #3: |
| They had four, five relatives in that county and now it [unintelligible]— |
| Interviewer: |
| [laughs] |
| 00:20:50:00 |

| Dr. John O. Brown: |
|--|
| [laughs] It means Barking Waters. It's the capital of the Seminole nation, you know. When the Seminole Indians were taken out of Florida here— |
| Interviewer: |
| That's right. |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| —on the Trail of Tears, there were many Blacks who were— |
| 00:21:02:00 |
| Camera crew member #2: |
| Mark it please. |
| [slate] |
| 00:21:05:00 |
| Interviewer: |
| At one point you were saying that the Black community here was economically isolated. Do you have any kind of illustration of how that manifested? |
| 00:21:13:00 |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| I'm not so sure that I can illustrate how that—the is, the economic isolation. The Black community is really—was just isolated from all areas of the country. I mean if you got north of Tallahassee, back in those days, you were way up north. |
| Interviewer: |
| OK. |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| And we didn't have, we didn't have the economics, the economic potential here. I would like |

to tell this one story about housing. When I came in, here I was, considering myself a new doctor, with all sorts of potential for economic advancement and I need, I had to buy a home for my wife and four children. And I was told in no uncertain terms by three banks here in

Miami that We will give you six thousand dollars to buy a home and that is all you're going to get. Now, six thousand dollars was a lot more at that time than it is now, but it still didn't mean anything when the house that you want to buy was eighteen or twenty thousand dollars. It meant that you would have to get a second mortgage. First mortgages were going around six percent at that time, but the second, for about twenty years, and then a second mortgage would be about twelve to fourteen percent and would—the money would come due in about three years. So, you were really being exploited. And that, I was told in no uncertain terms that this was the only amount of money that they would let me have. They didn't care what kind of profession I was in or what the potential was. And, of course, I sort of by-passed that because we have family interests and an insurance company in Atlanta, and they said, We will give you the money that you need.

| 00:22:54:00 |
|----------------------------|
| Interviewer: |
| Now— |
| [rollout on camera roll] |
| [wild sound] |
| Interviewer: |
| —you were talking earlier— |
| Camera crew member #2: |
| Roll out. |
| Interviewer: |
| OK. |
| Camera crew member #3: |
| We got all that. |
| 00:22:58:00 |
| Interviewer: |
| OK. |
| [cut] |

[camera roll #1120] 00:23:03:00 Camera crew member #2: Mark it. [slate] 00:23:05:00 Interviewer: Tell me that story you just [unintelligible]. 00:23:07:00 Dr. John O. Brown: Yes, I can understand the things that happened in Overtown and the way that they pushed the Blacks out of there, because I had the same experience with my original home over in Brownsville. It was used as rental property when I moved over to this house and the renters decided to move. As soon as they moved then the inspectors came by every week or two and I was getting a notice to repair this, to add this, to add something else. Now no one was living in the house and I knew that there were many houses in that area that were not as desirable as this house would have been for rental property. And finally I got, I was just pushed to the limit and I said, Now, look, how much is it? How much would you, technically, will this house be, this land and house be assessed, you know, if there is no house on this at all? And he told me what would be the assessment with the house on it and the one without it. I said, Well, you don't need to bother to come back with another inspection because when you come back again, there won't be a house on that land. And of course, I had it razed and knocked down. Of course, my kids have not forgiven me to this day because this was the house that they were raised in, and for sentimental values, I mean you can't, you can't value that in terms of money. 00:24:25:00 Interviewer: So, similar kinds of things went on in Overtown.

Went over in Overtown and those people [clears throat] where they were—

Dr. John O. Brown:

| Interviewer: |
|---|
| Stop. Start again, by saying, Yeah, similar things went on— |
| 00:24:32:00 |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| Yeah, similar things went on in Overtown. The small houses that they had in Overtown where they were paying X number of dollars for taxes this year, when they wanted to get them out of there, immediately these taxes were raised. And people were unable to pay these taxes and just went off and left these places. |
| 00:24:53:00 |
| Interviewer: |
| Do you remember Malcolm X? |
| 00:24:55:00 |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| Yes, I remember Malcolm X. I certainly do. |
| 00:24:58:00 |
| Interviewer: |
| What do you think of Malcolm X? |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |
| Well, I think he's one of our heroes and role models for our Black kids and many of the statements that he has made have come true to this day about the racism in this country. |
| Interviewer: |
| I need to get it again, start by saying, I remember Malcolm X—because I interrupted you, I'm sorry. Start by saying, I remember Malcolm X. |
| 00:25:14:00 |
| Dr. John O. Brown: |

Yes, I remember Malcolm X. And there's no question about it that he was one of the role models of, of our youngsters in this country, at that time, and many of the statements that he made concerning racism have come true, that they are true. They're more obvious today than ever before.

00:25:32:00

Interviewer:

Well, Malcolm was one who was great—made great statements, some of them conservative-based about self-determination. What do you think about this?

00:25:41:00

Dr. John O. Brown:

Well, that I certainly agree with him about self-determination and this is going to be one of the things that we are gonna be able to, one of the ways we are gonna eliminate some of the things here in this country. Now, we always hear about what's happened in Overtown, about the race riots and things over there and how that these people are still in the ghetto and they are denied certain privileges and everything. But I think basically you can say that today that any kid in Overtown, in the Overtown ghetto today, can escape the ghetto if he is highly motivated. There are ways to get out now. But why should we have to be more highly motivated to get, take advantage of certainly opportunities and things when other kids in this country don't have to be.

00:26:27:00

Interviewer:

The Arthur McDuffie killing, what was the response? What was your response?

00:26:32:00

Dr. John O. Brown:

One of anger. There's no question about it. This is, this question—the system of justice that we have in this country. And when you are my age, you can remember back in the days of the lynch mobs and everything. The lynchings that even sort of spurred the existence of, of the NAACP. There used to be a report that was given each year on the number of lynchings that occurred in the United States and that was one of the first programs of the NAACP, to see that a federal anti-lynching law was passed. And of course in the recent years, we heard about Emmett Till up in Mississippi. And this was the very same thing that had happened in, in the Arthur McDuffie case. We knew that a Black man had been killed by a policeman. We knew the policemen who were present. And yet when they had the trial of Arthur McDuffie up there. They came back with a gui—verdict of not guilty. That these people

were not guilty of murdering this man. And it was just another lynching. So, immediately, there was a feeling of anger in the entire community. I belong to an organization called Sigma Pi Phi on the national level. It's more or less known as the Boulé. At the time of the Arthur McDuffie verdict, we were having a, a workshop at one of the Holiday Inn's on Biscayne Boulevard, trying to work out solutions to the race problem here in Miami, the economics, the politics, discussing all of these things. And also considering the possibility of violence because of the Arthur McDuffie case. About three o'clock that afternoon, it was announced in the workshop that Arthur McDuffie, that the officers were not guilty. And we were certainly fearful at that moment that all hell was gonna break loose in the Black community. We disbanded, I guess, about five o'clock and certainly—

| [rollout on camera roll] |
|--|
| [wild sound] |
| 00:28:21:00 |
| Camera crew member #2: |
| We've gotta roll out. |
| Interviewer: |
| We got roll out? |
| Camera crew member #2: |
| Yeah. |
| [cut] |
| [end of interview] |
| 00:28:26:00 |
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