

ORAL HISTORY T-0020
INTERVIEW WITH JUDGE NATHAN B. YOUNG
INTERVIEWED BY DR. RICHARD RESH
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YOUNG: I want to stress and emphasize that if you wanted the story of the history of civil rights in the U.S.A. and had to confine it to one city, you could write the entire story of civil rights by going back to the history of the city of St. Louis. I think the complete civil rights background and history could be taken and understood better by knowing the history of St. Louis, Missouri, completely. And if you had to add one other city to make it really complete would be New Orleans, Louisiana. Between New Orleans, Louisiana, and St. Louis, Missouri, the entire civil rights history could be presented. Now that's saying a lot and I have a lot of evidence to submit to prove that, that you could take those two cities alone, especially St. Louis, and you could get the history of civil rights in America in a complete form.

RESH: Our interview today, July 15, 1970, is with Judge Nathan B. Young, jurist, editor, local historian of the St. Louis Negro community. Judge Young was instrumental in the founding and the operation of the St. Louis American and is the author of *Your St. Louis and Mine*, a history of the St. Louis black community published in 1937. Judge Young, could you tell us something about your own life, your early background, your boyhood, your parents, what kind of, where were you born?

YOUNG: I was born in Tuskegee, Alabama. I guess I've had a unique boy hood in that I was born on the campus of Tuskegee Institute. My father, Nathan B. Young, Senior, was the first dean of the English Department at Tuskegee Institute under Booker Washington. I happened to have been born in a cottage that was next to Booker Washington's house on Tuskegee campus. My father set the English Department up at Tuskegee and then he went to Georgia State College at Savannah, Georgia, and from there he went to Florida A.&M. College at Tallahassee, Florida, where I spent most of my boyhood. Some twenty-one years. And I am a graduate of Florida A&M University, class of 1915. I went from Florida A&M to Yale University at New Haven where I studied law in the Yale University Law School and finished in 1918. Two years ago I went back to Yale for my fiftieth reunion. After finishing Yale Law School, I came down to Alabama, on the insistence of my father that I go back where my roots were, and took the Alabama Bar in Birmingham, in Montgomery, in the later part, fall of 1918. The third Negro to have taken and passed the Bar up until that time. Quite an experience. I went on to Birmingham, Alabama, to practice and I was there for six years. But those were the rugged days. I can remember looking out of my little office window on Eighteenth Street and see the Ku Klux Klan in full regalia, led by the Birmingham police in parade. And so ever since I have known that the bottom of the totem pole for American democracy was in Alabama, Birmingham, not Mississippi. I could recount many deeds to prove that. And was finally brought out to the world when Dr. Martin Luther King had his rounds there with the dogs and Bull Connor. That was many years afterwards. Well, I left

Birmingham, Alabama.

RESH: Could I interrupt you and go back just for a second? When you practiced law there and appeared before white judges, did they call you "Mister" or did they call you by your first name?

YOUNG: No, you, at that time it was very hard to even get before the white judge. Most of the, there were three Negro lawyers there at the time and they did very little open court work. Two of the men were older lawyers. And your trouble was not with the judges, the judges in the South are not, they are perhaps as good as they are any where else. But it's the attaches, the court people, who make it so hard and different at that time for you to even get up to get a trial, you were treated so irregular by the bailiffs and the sheriffs until you hardly get to trial. I might say in passing that the Mississippi Supreme Court is regarded, if you could get to the Mississippi Supreme Court and has had that reputation for years, you've got a fine set of jurists before, but the trouble was getting up there. And it's the lower courts in the South at that time especially, that was a blockade, a complete blockade you could hardly get your case up to the judge. But that is not crying for spilt milk, that, the conditions I'm proud to say, even in Birmingham have been, have changed greatly. I have a number of young, fellows, especially Arthur Shores who was a boy in school when I was practicing there, has come along and made quite a reputation in Birmingham. But that's too much about the negative side. In 1924 I came to St. Louis because my father had, largely, he had moved to Missouri to become president of Lincoln University. And he suggested that I come out of the South and come to St. Louis and I came here and entered the practice of the law here.

RESH: Did you have any contacts here before you came? Did you know anybody?

YOUNG: Very few people, I didn't know, my father knew quite a number of people, but I didn't have many contacts at all. But I, it was certainly an oasis compared to Birmingham, Alabama, at that time in 1924.

RESH: About how old were you at this time?

YOUNG: I'm going on seventy-four years of age.

RESH: No, I mean at this time in 1924.

YOUNG: Well, I'll let you figure it yourself, I was 32 or 3, some where back in there. You want to know about the St. Louis American, I had always been interested in journalism on the side, or literary, my father was a great reader, had a wonderful library, read books. And I picked up the habit of reading, I did a good bit of reading. It was just natural for anybody in the Young family to read, and he had books and books and books. So when I came to St. Louis one of the first, earliest law clients I had was the organization of a newspaper, new newspaper here by small group of men who thought that they needed another Negro newspaper in St. Louis. The Argus was the only existing paper at the time. And it was thought of by many at that time as being rather conservative. And there was a movement here of men like Charles Perkins, the first constable, who wanted a new type of paper. So they imported a newspaperman from Baltimore, A. N. Johnson, an old newspaperman, and he started the St. Louis American, came here to start it. And I was the lawyer for the new

corporation. And helped organize it. And a group of men about six, eight men, put money together and started the St. Louis American. And as, this was about 1927, yes. And, as you know the history, in 1928 and 29 what happened to this country, the Depression really set in hard and that was just about the time the American was trying to lift its head above the water. So it was, the paper didn't do so well after some six, or eight months and A. N. Johnson, an impatient old newspaperman, could not wait, and suddenly I found the St. Louis American on my desk. And I became, I had been writing editorials for it from the beginning, and I had to keep on as the editorial writer and manager of the St. Louis American to keep it going. And my father who was president of Lincoln University down at Jefferson City was naturally interested in my endeavor and he had a bright young man who was just about ready to graduate from Jefferson City, a go-getter in his estimation, and he says you send, you get N. A. Sweets, who's just finishing and he's now out in Cody, Wyoming getting money, trying to make some money to go to law school. You get in touch with Sweets he moves things. So I called Nathaniel Sweets, got in touch with him in Cody, Wyoming, and he came to St. Louis and took over as business manager of St. Louis American and began to put his hustle into it. And since then really, the story of the St. Louis American has been the story of Nathaniel Sweets who now publishes the paper and has run it for years. And yet over the forty-how-many years, two or three, years I have remained as the editorial writer. I think I've written the editorials practically for every issue since the beginning of it. Although my name now does not appear on the flag head. But the credit for the St. Louis American, its survival, its continuation, its drive, should and must go to Nathaniel Sweets who has done a marvelous job because the paper could have faded, many of them have faded by now and this paper still goes on.

RESH: Could I ask you a question on the history, the earliest history of the American? Did the American and its founders have any association with A Phillip Randolph?

YOUNG: Very close. In fact the first issue of the American featured A. Phillip Randolph as an unsung hero. A. Phillip Randolph was at that moment having his hardest fight to gain recognition as a labor organization with the Pullman Company. And one of the early strikes or aces of the St. Louis American was to feature the Pullman Porters' plight to try to get recognition, and we took over that as an issue in the second or third issue. And at that time, I must frankly say, that the St. Louis Argus was in complete opposition to the Pullman Porter movement. In fact they thought Randolph was an uppity man wearing spats and hungry and broke. And it was a natural reaction because the Pullman Company in St. Louis had its strongest link, this is perhaps the second or third largest was the third largest railroad center for Pullman operation. And the Pullman Company here spent money to maintain the set-up, the company set-up that they had, and they put money out. And I remember one early issue of the American, somebody mysteriously bought up the entire issue with Randolph in it and his claims. And it was one of the first issues, we had two issues that we tried to, we did write on and we are still proud of. One was to sponsor we were the original sponsor of A. Phillip Randolph and the Pullman Porters' Organization. And the second was that we inaugurated the first movement here of "buy where you can work." A forgotten and very important movement. And I take a little personal pride in both of those because having been in school in New Haven, my classmate, one of my classmates was Joseph D. Bibb, who came from Atlanta, Georgia, and I came from Alabama, we finished Yale the same year. He went to Chicago and he established the Chicago Whip. And Joe Bibb and myself were very close and he established the Chicago Whip and he begun and also with Joe Bibb was McNeal his

business manager also a Yale graduate and a Yale man they got this "buy where you can work" and made a tremendous drive in Chicago. So naturally; knowing Joe and McNeal in school, I picked it up and put it on the St. Louis American. And we brought Joe Bibb down here. But it was a hard going, the opposition paper thought it was silly just like they thought the Pullman Porters' Organization was something that shouldn't exist, the Pullman Porters' got everything they wanted the company was generous to them, and they couldn't conceive of telling merchants that if you are in our district and we should have jobs if we are gonna buy from you. A very elemental proposition at the time. But at that time it was sensational and scared half of the colored and white population, they thought riots are gonna break out and it just couldn't work. Some ten years later there was a movement of the Clerks' Circle in St. Louis that carried it on.

RESH: This would be around 1938 then?

YOUNG: Yes, they came in and took it over, I mean, they picked it up and as time goes on strange things happen to people who start things. The American after twenty years was never given credit for sponsoring A. Phillip Randolph and the Pullman Porters. I remember distinctly, I went to a meeting, a big meeting some twenty years later and the paper that had fought the Pullman Porters at this meeting was eulogized as being the sponsor of the Pullman Porters and the little American, I sat in the back and listened to it until Bradley, an assistant to Randolph, and who really made the sacrificed his home, his family, even his wife for the cause of the Pullman Porters in the early days, got up and told the, said, "You're talking about what was done in the early days and Randolph, and the American did the spade work and you haven't even mentioned them." So it was the same way with the Clerks' Circle. The young fellows came along ten or twelve years later and started the movement and had never, had forgotten or had never heard of the American's movement here to "buy where you can work." And that seems to be a trend of things. But the American feels proud that it did inaugurate in St. Louis, some of the things that later on were accepted here.

RESH: Did you, obviously, you knew A. Phillip Randolph personally.

YOUNG: Oh, yes, we knew him, because at that time he was a great speaker, had the most marvelous voice. And I knew A. Phillip Randolph having just finished a year and come with Joe Bibb and running the circle of fellows out there, I guess you could say we were in advance thought. And A. Phillip Randolph and Chandler Owens his partner had already established a magazine in New York.

RESH: This was the Messenger?

YOUNG: The Messenger and, by the way, I was one of the first contributors. I wrote for the Messenger. Randolph asked me to write on Missouri. And I wrote the article on Missouri for the Messenger. Might be interesting for you to know, you asked me about myself, I was a part, a definite part of the New Negro Movement in the 1920's. I won some prizes for literature there, I had stories published, I had a long novella published in one of the books put out, so I came along with the fellows who were in that, the New Negro in the 20's.

RESH: That would have been Langston Hughes?

YOUNG: Oh, I was with Langston Hughes and

RESH: Did you know Langston Hughes?

YOUNG: Yes, I knew, oh, sure, I had, somewhere I have an autographed copy of some of his books here. I come along with that group and did quite a bit of early literary work with them, if you call it literary, I was published and I was mentioned in several of the prize competitions of Opportunity and the Crises. I always had that literary bent and that's why you can look back there and see thirty-six, some volumes of manuscripts back on those shelves there.

RESH: Did you know Claude McKay?

YOUNG: Well, Claude McKay died very early, right after he had published his famous poem about "Hurting us like hogs." And also Fisher was in that group, I was in that group with Fisher who wrote the novel, and Langston Hughes who got his stories or his poetry heard there. And I am in the, I have a copy here of the first publication, I had a long novella, character study from Birmingham, Alabama that I did while I was in Birmingham. It was published there. And I have back there on the shelves the novel of Birmingham at the time that I lived through. And the novel was one of those near missed, almost accepted, but the great author Youngblood Royal came out with his novel on the situation and the company. Random House told me that they had that in preference and for some reason I never got my novel Brumigam which was a corruption of Birmingham, which I still think has the guts of what happened in the teens in Alabama. So it was never, it had never been published. I wrote it about four times. So I know, I think it's pretty well written. But I simply wanted to say that I was a part of the first Negro literary movement. And that accounts for my writing for the American and the research that I've done and of late years especially in music. Now I could talk to you about the music background completely. I'd rather talk about that because I think a proper study and a research of Negro music would give a better picture of civil rights in America than anything else. In fact, I think that the music from New Orleans up the Mississippi River to St. Louis is the greatest contribution to our American culture, and is so little understood. I would like to talk to you about rag time. You see pictures around the wall here, and rag time originated in St. Louis. And I have three volumes back there, you can see the pictures, I have three volumes dealing with the basis and the background of rag time as developed in St. Louis. And we have full bred themes here that I claim, I claim will give a picture of civil rights better than anything else. New Orleans has its Preservation House and has a wonderful tradition in music and especially in jazz in its middle state. And it gets much of the credit and they make money down there. But we in St. Louis I say have a greater tradition than New Orleans. We were in business before New Orleans in music. Rag time preceded jazz and everything that followed. And rag time began in the 1890's right here in St. Louis. Down on Chestnut Street, I'm looking at a picture that I'm painting of Thomas Millian Turpin who published the first ragtime in 1897. I'm looking at another picture of Jelly Roll Morton, who came up from New Orleans to hear the St. Louis piano players play ragtime. He came up here in 1911 and stayed here perhaps a couple of years just to learn how to play rag time. And when he first came here he was so frightened of the great piano players here that he told them he was a singer and he wouldn't play. But he was one of the greatest. I think he is the greatest of all as a creator of rag time and jazz and the fusion of the two.

RESH: I was listening to one of his records the other day, backing up on this, and talking about using some of these songs in music as a source, as a historical source. And I have a record of his re-pressed, and he's singing "Lake Michigan Blues," and there's a refrain in it, "Mississippi water tastes like turpentine. Lake Michigan water tastes like sherry wine."

YOUNG: Well, that's right on the piano there, let's pick it up there. Mr. Engineer, give me that, pick that whole thing, no right there, no right on the piano. Just pick that up, let's see if his book isn't in there. I just happened to have . . . Well, yes, the Michigan....

RESH: Would that be a refrain then from the Negro migrants who had come up? Who had left Mississippi?

YOUNG: Oh, yes, that was, I think that that blues was one of his later, late ones. He had so many others. That was one of the later blues. You see I came along, I came along down in Florida in the years of the early rag time players and the natural piano players. Let me tell you this, you talk about everything now is black this and black that, the emphasis has been put on that, I think far over emphasized, where black is used as an adjective. I was talking about my early experiences down in Florida. When I was in school, I spent a lot of time not only playing baseball and football, but I spent a lot of time on music. And my father wanted to develop, make a full man out of me, he had been a graduate of Oberlin College, one of the first Negro graduates of Oberlin in 1888. And Oberlin is a great music school, of course. But he was a student of Greek and Latin, that's what he came out to teach. Shows you how the culture of those days was based on the old New England school background and far different from now. But anyhow, I took to music and I played the instruments, I played in the band, and my father wanted me to have formal education, he had so much foresight that I didn't have as a youngster and I can appreciate it. So he sent me to a music teacher. Miss Bessie Hudson, and had me to take formal piano. And I lasted about three weeks playing the piano under this music teacher, I just could not stand it, I wanted to play loud like the other boys did, I didn't want to be classed perhaps as a sissy and go on a little program. So I gave up and quit the music, formal music, and still I continued to play the piano like I wanted to. Playing it by ear and listening to the local piano players who could play and didn't know one note of music, but how they could play I So I became in fashion a pretty good piano player back in those days. I still kept my music up, I was in the band and in the orchestra. And in my last year in school I had an unusual connection, I went to play baseball with the Florida A&M team up to Atlanta, Georgia, and we were the guests of Atlanta University. And after the game there was the usual social and at the piano at this social, you know you could march with the girls but you couldn't dance with them back in those days, so there was a piano player, a young fellow playing and I became fascinated and I stood by the piano and listened to him play all night. And he did condescend to play a little break, if you had the tape I could go ahead and play a little break now for you. I could play, cut it, cut it. I was just telling you that my early music experience without training, I went to Atlanta to play baseball and that night at the social I stood up by the piano player to listen to him play and we talked and chatted and he found out that I was interested in music and learned me to play, learned me how to play a little break. It goes like this. (Plays). Well, I'm not a piano player and that was fifty years or more ago. But later on this young man who was playing the piano went on to New York, I went back to Florida, and I decided to go into law, and I went to Yale to study and he went to New York and became one of the greats. His name was Fletcher Henderson. Fletcher Henderson. I might have gone on as an amateur musician but I don't think I would

have lasted in New York because I didn't have enough technical genius to make it. But I still maintained my interest in music and background and I give you that to tell you why over fifty years I have continued to probe and to seek out the real background of American Negro music. I think it is the key, the big key, to our problems. I think if you could understand the history of rag time, which later became jazz and jazz has branched out into several things, you have rock-and-roll and things like soul music, all sprang from the basic rag time. I think if you'd understand rag time, you would understand our great American system. Because rag time is the fusion of African tom-tom rhythm and European right hand manipulation. Two cultures were blended and made into what we call rag time. And I think that is what our whole American system means. A blending of cultures. The bass in rag time is always predominate, is always the beat of the drum, of the African drum. But in rag time the treble, the right hand is Germanic more than anything else. The marches that came out of Europe. You put the two together and you get this peculiar moving sensation of music that later developed into jazz and its different phases. So the theme is fusion and that's what America means. I tell people sometime I was one of the original black power players. I quit formal music from my music teacher because it was too hard and kept on playing the piano and played the black keys as most of the early musicians did and some today play mostly black keys. So I was a black power player way back fifty years ago. This regarding the white keys were harder to play and the black keys being elevated were easy to play. And I remember going, seeing in pool rooms, I didn't go, but I seen in pool rooms were the eight ball was the white ball and the cue ball was the black ball. So this black power business is not new like so many of them think that it is a brand new It is not by any means. But coming back seriously, I think a proper study of the development of the Negro music which is the only gift in America that is originally American. The jubilees, the spirituals, everything else practically came from Europe. The jubilees, the spirituals, the rag time, the dancing, the singing, was the gift of the American Negro. And I think it's very important. And I think St. Louis is an anchor city because it was being played here for two hundred years. Chicago was a cow pasture when St. Louis was a city. And to advance my civil rights argument, and I have a picture there where St. Louis, Missouri has been to the Supreme Court on civil rights in six different cases, noted cases over the two hundred years. New Orleans, Louisiana, has at least three or four important cases. No other city, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, can boast of at least one case, few of them have ever carried up one case. We have six cases that went from Missouri to the United States Supreme Court on civil rights. And my complaint with the recent black historians and their claims is that they do not dig and get the facts, they think they're already established in the books and they're not. If they would dig they would tell the truth about the Missouri Compromise. And that goes back to 1818, 1819, and 1820. And I repeat, Chicago was a cow pasture and was developed by a black man, Dusables, at that time. But in St. Louis, a city at that time, had a distinct problem. St. Louis was a city that had nearly a thousand free black people. There were slaves here also. So St. Louis had the problem. In Mississippi and Alabama there were only slaves and whites. And practically no free black Negroes. But where you had the three tiers, free Negroes, white, and slave, you were confronted by a problem. And, therefore, the first confrontation of civil rights was right here in St. Louis in 1818 when Missouri wanted to come into the union as a new state and it wanted to come in as a slave state. And the free Negroes in St. Louis, nearly a thousand of them said, "No, we protest. Because if you come in as a slave state, you will want to in slave us and we've been free under the French and the Spanish and we want to remain free." And they made an issue in Congress. And for two years in Congress there was a clamor over this Missouri's coming into the union. But the school books don't tell you the

truth about the Missouri Compromise. There were three compromises. The school books don't say anything about it. Or you have to read the fine footnotes to get the story. The truth was that when Missouri came, wanted to come into the union in 1818 as the first of the states out of the vast Louisiana Purchase Territory, to set a precedent. They wrote that state constitution in Jefferson City as is demanded by any state coming in and in this new constitution of Missouri, written in 1818, they had a provision in there that all mulattos and Negroes, those were the exact words used, all mulattos and Negroes must be driven from the state of Missouri unless they accept slavery. Now your school books don't tell you about that, they don't lay that out for you. And it is because of that clause in the new Missouri constitution in 1818 that caused Negroes in St. Louis and white friends in St. Louis and friends in Congress to rise up and rebel, and for two years, for two solid years, there was a rage in Congress and over the country over whether Missouri should come in and disclaim the free Negroes' rights here in St. Louis. That was the beginning of the fight for civil rights. St. Louis started it. And there are six other cases, but I'm not asked to go into that question. But I am only saying that St. Louis, the story of civil rights could be written entirely from the history of St. Louis. But I think, more important, the story of American music. Call it Afro-American, Negro-American or Black-American music, the fusion of it started in St. Louis and is an important story. And let me tell you this. My research shows that it was a fusion of the German talent in St. Louis, its musical talent, the refugees from Germany driven out of Germany, seeking freedom, who came to St. Louis, who set up their sing-alongs and their music clubs, and their appreciation for music, and do you know that the music, the Germans who came to St. Louis invited Wagner, the great composer who also had been exiled and was living in France, to come and live in St. Louis. And there's correspondence between the St. Louis Germans and Richard Wagner inviting him to come to St. Louis and live and finish his composing. And I have often wondered, if Wagner had come here and composed his Ring of music, his great background of German mythology made into music and into drama, what he might not have done with the situation here with the Negro on the steam boats and the music that he was making. So there was a fusion between German technique. Listen, all the early teachers in the west were German teachers, music teachers. All our famous black musicians, Tom Turpin, Scott Joplin, all went to German music teachers to get their formal education. Mr. Handy, who do you think in his book he gives credit to as the man who moved him into music? Down in Henderson, Kentucky, when he was a janitor there and still trying to play and get his band going. He was so interested, this was W. C. Handy, was so interested in his music until he became a janitor in a music school. And the man who ran. this music school his name of all names was Bach. Not the great Bachs of Germany but his name was Bach and he was a German. And Handy in his book tells you that he got his fundamental music composition from Bach. So the Germans infused their technical music into the stream of Negro beat and rhythm. And soon we had rag time and the development of blues. And later jazz. That to me is the real America. Negro music is not all African. It is not all tom-tom, they knew nothing about the piano there and the other instruments that have been mastered. The clarinet, the violin. Mastered by Negroes in New Orleans and St. Louis but put to the use of fusing the feeling of the Negroes on the technical basis of German music. And that's why it's lasted. And that to me is the real picture of America. It is the fusion of cultures, not one culture alone, standing and growing by itself. But many cultures being fused and in the background is that fine African feeling of "What race am I? I am many in one. Through my veins there flows the blood of black man, white man, Britain, Celt, and Scot. In tumultuous America. I welcome them all but love the blood of that kindly race that swathers my skin, crinkles my hair, and puts sweet music into my soul. What race am I? I am an American."

And that to me is the real and final American picture. And it's an untold story, it's undeveloped. I told somebody I said, "These Ph.D.'s are doing research, they really ought to get busy right here in Missouri.

RESH: Right. Chicago has had it's historians of both the black and the white community, just recently the black community, Owen Spears book on Chicago. And New York has been written about but one is hard pressed to find any sort of detailed accounts of St. Louis.

YOUNG: Well, St. Louis has a great story because here you had the complete human cycle more so then any other. You see, what they must not neglect, and you can't tell this new generation, there's no need to talk to them for the tumult that's going on now that will have to wear itself out. This matter of pride is what all elemental races go through , they over do it. Hitler did it in Germany. He had the German's feeling that there's nobody else, every German was, and he wasn't a top German himself, but he had the feeling of great pride and they looked down on everybody else. I guess all races go through it until they get bumped. Napoleon had the French doing it, and he wasn't a Frenchman. The funny thing, these boys come up, it's a funny thing how they come from some other country or a side country and come in and do it. Hitler came in

RESH: Hitler was an Austrian.

YOUNG: Austrian. Napoleon was born a Corsican, came in, became the ideal French. And most of our black leaders, some of them have come from the Islands. They're not Americans. Most of our black leaders who have been so militant have come out of the Islands. There's nothing wrong with them — Marcus Garvey, Stokley Carmichael and this fellow who's head of CORE now. And they didn't make so much headway in the Islands, but they come here and they somehow get to the top flight. I guess that's a part of the way things go. But

RESH: Could I ask you a question about the importance of St. Louis as for Negroes migrating out of the South, St. Louis was the first northern city

YOUNG: From Mississippi and Arkansas.

RESH: Yes, from Mississippi and Arkansas, right. South central.

YOUNG: It was the first, the M & O railroad fed a lot of them in here from Arkansas and the Missouri Pacific. And some of them, the I.e., the main line coming up from Mississippi going to Chicago carried a great number right into Chicago. But they were coming here rather early, you see, this was an old town. But you

RESH: Were they still coming in great numbers during the twenties and the thirties?

YOUNG: Oh, that's when the migration was, in the twenties. The Chicago Defender was the Bible, and all over the South they were just piling in. The war industries were open up. Ford was giving five dollars a day and down South you used to work for a dollar a day. So they just loaded up to Detroit, Chicago, and Gary, and they came in by the scores of families. In fact, that manuscript that I wrote about Birmingham is based on how the migration broke out in Birmingham and much of the tragedy was based on that. Of course, you know, we had quite a, we had the East St. Louis riot was quite an event that happened in the history that the

truth of that has never been told. That was the first clash of foreign labor and Negro labor back in 1917, there was a whole book done on that. So it's too bad, I tell these young fellows here they've, they're making, they get up and they talk about black history and black this and they go out to Washington University. And I haven't since the black studies have come in, I have seen very little new material that was not found in and cannot be found in Carl Wilson's writing. They haven't improved on it. And I was so interested last night I saw, what's the show, "Dick Cavett Show" and the singer was on, Belafonte, a beautiful character, Belafonte was on and they brought in the president of the D.A.R., I forget her name. And they lit into her about the membership of the D.A.R., but she played one beautiful part when she was telling Belafonte about who was, who could be members, you have to trace your ancestry by marriage back to the Revolution and he said, "Well, what about the black man in Boston who first felled?" She said, "That was before the Revolution." And she says further, "He was not black, he was a mulatto from the Islands." And that brought up an historical fact that Crispus Attucks is without a doubt about the hero, he is a hero, now I would tell the school boys that first thing is we don't know if he was even classified himself as a Negro or black, he was part Indian and came from the Islands, he was a sailor, and the chances are that he wouldn't want to be classified as a Negro because he was not enslaved at the time. And then there's another story which we don't like to tell, I'll put it on the tape here, there's another story that Crispus Attucks really was backing out of a saloon and happened to back right out into the, this milieu of shooting and happened to be the first man that was shot. But that still makes him, still a hero, still a hero. But my point of it is that when you use black as an adjective, you confuse and muddle up a situation that might be fine for pride but it's poor for history and poor for the future. Because the future, as Lamumba, the great African leader who was assassinated. The black leader of Africa came to the United States shortly before and was booed in New York City because he said, "I am for the future man, the universal man, the universal man is not determined by pigment, but by his deeds and what he does and what he stands for." In other words it doesn't matter whether you're black or white, brown or yellow. And I just think back, these are my own feelings about it, think back fifteen, twenty years ago, when Joe Louis was champion, it was the "Brown Bomber." And there are books over there, three or four books, written about "Brown America." And we were all rather happy about "Brown America" because it accommodated the entire spectrum of people. Then along comes this new group with black this, black this, emphasizing black. Now we are proud that we're black or have black blood. But it's been so emphasized now you don't know whether he's using that as an adjective or a noun. And so often some of these immature people really mean black. So that a man like Walter White who was really white, blue eyed, and did so much for black people, would not be mentioned. So I'm concerned about it, I'm concerned, I guess it's the phase that we must go through to promote this and tell how beautiful black is. Black can be beautiful and it has been beautiful and is beautiful, but it can be ugly. White can be beautiful, it has been ugly. And as you see around these walls, this is a very personal, as you see around these walls here there paintings that I don't show anybody, I do it for a hobby, and you notice most of them are on history of black people. But I found a peculiar thing about painting, and I'm an amateur painter, never had a lesson in my life. I found that there are two-dangerous colors, one is black and the other's white. If you paint pictures with black and white you have comedians and clowns. The clowns are dough-faced white and the comedians would be all black faced. Look at the, look at there, the piano player. There are black people I painted here and I couldn't put a speck of black in the paint. I had to use browns and several colors to mix them together. There's no such thing as black and white as colors. And I have a feeling before long that this whole racial situation where the matter of

color and black and white will be extreme, there'll be a lot of folks browns and yellows and all kind of colors in the realm which will outnumber both black and white. And I don't think it matters whether you're black or white or brown or yellow or what in the ultimate. Now that's just my feeling about it. I think we should begin to think about the universal man anywhere. Maybe I'm extreme on that or maybe I'm an old fogey or something.

RESH: One of the individuals who's importance will be recaptured very shortly I think is a man who you've mentioned several times during the course of this tape, A. Phillip Randolph. Could you tell us some more about him, what he was like personally. How did you first get to know him?

YOUNG: Well, A. Phillip Randolph came from Florida just like I did. I lived twenty-one years in Florida and A. Phillip Randolph came from Crescent City, Florida, he's a Florida boy. And I had known of him years before he became prominent. There was two things about Randolph that stand out. Of course, he had the finest God given voice, speaking voice, of anybody I have known. It was just a delight to hear that baritone, the inflection that he gave, he gave you a comfort to hear him. And he could speak. He is a genuine orator. And behind that he had great thought and study and compassion. I think that he's one of the great characters largely unsung and, as you say, he should go down as one of the greats like Fred Douglass in the nineteenth century who was the greatest living Negro of that time. And I think A. Phillip Randolph and Martin Luther King.

RESH: Did you know Monroe Trotter?

YOUNG: Oh, you mentioned Monroe Trotter. There's a penny over there of the early civil rights leaders and I carry it around and I tell group of black people mostly, "How many can they name?" They can't name more than five and there's one on there that they don't even know about, they never heard of Monroe Trotter. And this picture on there and they always go, "Now who is he?" Monroe Trotter was one of the fine, one of the great militants, they talk about being militant

RESH: He was thrown out of the White House.

YOUNG: He was thrown out and if you want to get information on Monroe Trotter get the record of In White America with that scene of Wilson and Monroe Trotter in the White House. And when he says, "Mr. President," and Wilson said he wouldn't talk to him. "Mr. President," he insisted. He got on a cattle boat and went to the Versailles to the peace meeting to advance the cause of black people. Oh, Monroe Trotter, when I was in Boston I went around to take pictures of where his old paper was published. The Guardian, one of the real militants, when to be militant cost you something. And yet today you ask some of these black militant and look on their walls of respect and they don't even know who Monroe Trotter is. Never heard of him. I think I've talked too much, I must sound

RESH: No, no. This is just in fact, I'm thinking that we would like to

RESH: at another time put you on again because I see we're running out of tape here on that spool and it's getting into your dinner hour and we've prevailed. . . .

YOUNG: You ought to really make a tape sometimes, of course, this is a big deal, it really

should go on, some talk about lately, I've been on national hook-up, I've done the Frankie and Johnnie, I was the expert witness of the great trial of Frankie and Johnnie here. And I was on Monitor telling about Franky. and Johnnie and I've done several local broadcasts in a few years But the St. Louis story, music story I think is important to all civil rights and its not only in the painting, but I think it's important too, in understanding of what civil rights really means in America. And sometimes I, you might want to go into that.

RESH: Well, Judge Young, I want to thank you for a most enlightening hour. This is Professor Richard Resh in the home of Judge Nathan B. Young.

YOUNG: Thank you, I hope I didn't talk too much.

RESH: This is July 15, 1970.