IRA GRUPPER
Interviewed by Amber Duke
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Transcribed by Amber Duke
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(Note: this is a modification of the original to compact it in four ways: margins narrowed, single spaced, font changed, and hyphen-like dashes doubled for clarity.)

Amber Duke: Alright, my name is Amber Duke and I'm interviewing Ira Grupper on Tuesday, June 14, 2011 at his home on Bonnycastle Avenue in Louisville. Ira thank you for doing this interview.

Ira Grupper: Thank you, happy to do it.

AD: Just so that we have it on record I did give you a chance to look over and sign the consent form and you are ok with it?

IG: You threatened me and I said…

AD: (laughs)

IG: No, you gave it to me, I looked it over. I'm happy to sign it.

AD: Great. Can you say and spell your name for me?

IG: My name is Ira Grupper. I-r-a G-r-u-p, like in Peter, p like in Peter, e-r.

AD: Ok, great. Well first we are going to start out with some biographical questions.

IG: Sure.

AD: Tell me when and where you were born.

IG: I was born on January 4, 1944 in Brooklyn, New York. New York, City.

AD: I know there is a longer story associated with that we will get into later, but tell me just briefly how you ended up here in Louisville.

IG: I was a civil rights worker in Mississippi and Georgia during the Civil Rights Movement. I met Anne and Carl Braden -- don't ask me where. It was somewhere in the Deep South at some meeting. We got to know each other, we became friends. They had a fundraising office for their organization, Southern Conference Education Fund [SCEF]. They had an office in New York

City. I was living in New York City and was working as a salesman. I was an outside salesman, so I made pretty good money. It was not door-to-door. They usually said the dirty movie houses are filled with salesmen in the afternoon who've met their quota. Instead of me going to the dirty movie houses, I would volunteer for different organizations, one of which was the SCEF fundraising office.

Carl and Anne came through New York many, many times to fundraise and we got to know each other pretty well. Again, it started in the Deep South. They called me in [pauses], it was some time in 1968, to ask me if I was interested in coming south again and working for SCEF. They would train me to run the press operation. They had two off-set presses, and they had a darkroom to teach you layout and paste-up and all that. At that time I was being interviewed for a project for the United Electrical Workers Union, the UE, organizing a big project in [pauses] I want to say Tampa, but I'm not positive. They were organizing a big Westinghouse, building these huge turbines, so big they couldn't off-load them on a boxcar, so they had to put them on a flatbed barge and ship them into the Gulf of Mexico. I didn't think I was going to get that job. I got to around the quarter finals, but I was an experienced union organizer, but I didn't have the supervisory experience, and I have a disability I don't drive a car so I didn't think I was going to get the job. That was big money, and Carl and Anne [laughs] offered me a job for $115 a month whicheven at that time was [laughs] not hardly. So I accepted the job. I was engaged -- we got married and both, my then wife and I, moved to Louisville. We ran the printing operation for a while. That's what brought me to Louisville, and I've been here ever since.

AD: Was that in 1968?

IG: It was New Years Day 1969. I began the first day of [19]69 is when I moved to Louisville. I was hired around October, November.

AD: Can you tell me a little bit about your educational background?

IG: Graduated high school in New York. My intention was to get bachelors, masters and a PhD in 17th Century English literature because we grew up in a city housing project, we had no money. What my brother or I didn't do work for, we didn't have. I never missed a meal; I don't want to play poverty, but that's where I was. My mother, mom always said that education is the [drops thought]. Anyhow, the Civil Rights Movement came along and I said, "This [17th Century English literature] is not my cup of tea." That's not what I said, "Fuck this shit, I don't need it." I was not an anti-intellectual so I took a few courses in college, but I'm basically a high school graduate.

AD: Tell me about your family. How many brothers and sisters?

IG: The other thing I should say, notwithstanding the fact that I don't have a college degree, I consider myself an autodidact -- someone who is self-educated. As a matter of fact, I teach at a university now so maybe I'm doing at least the minimal.

I have one brother, five years younger than me. No sisters.

AD: How did you first learn about race and racism?

IG: Growing up in New York, particular in a project you learn about race and racism on the streets. There was a lot of tension. I was in fights -- actually some African American kids stole my brother's cowboy hat. I was in a fight to get it back. Even thought it was just a fight between kids, there was always the racial element. I remember seeing Rosa Parks on television in [19]56. I was born in 19[44] so I was 11 or 12 years old at the time. It made a huge impression upon me. I began to understand a little bit about race because my mother was not a stone racist, she didn't want black people being bitten by police dogs in Birmingham, but she was not that progressive person at all. My father was an anti-racist. He was not an activist the way you and I are, Amber. He was a very decent man. I learned about it through him. I guess that was the genesis of that.

AD: Can you describe any people who inspired you when you were growing up. You mentioned Rosa Parks, are there other folks?

IG: As far as historical readings, before I tell you of individual persons, I became politicized when I was about 13 years old -- 12 or 13. I should tell you I come from an Orthodox Jewish background, what you would call 'holy rollers.' Though I'm certainly not a holy roller, my father although he came from that background became politicized in the 1930's, again, not as an activist like me. So I read quite a bit about the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939 and that had a tremendous influence on my life. Then I began to read about the Civil Rights Movement…after Rosa Parks, even before Rosa Parks actually. I remember going to the radical history, I was becoming very radicalized at that time and I was very interested for example in Paul Roberson and in James Jackson and the Southern Negro Youth Congress in the late 1940's. I was very disturbed that you couldn't find these references in the public library, at least not very many references. …Hubert Harrison, I read about the school desegregation efforts leading up to Brown v. Board of education, and even before that. I became interested and I began to read just different things. I remember reading about Plessey versus Ferguson and really being very upset that I was so stupid that I was so ignorant that I was so unknowledgeable about things. So that was the intellectual part.

The activist part, in New York City, there was a very active progressive Left and there were many African Americans of prominence who set an example, and I as a young white boy who didn't know anything about anything, I was just learning. This is not false modesty, I didn't know. I was enthralled with that. I also remember reading a book called A Puerto Rican in New York by Jesus Colon who was a self-educated radical person, brilliant man. I know a lot of smart people, but I don't know a lot of brilliant people, and he was brilliant. That had a great influence on me and my interest in Latin America which continues to this day. Is that sufficient?

AD: Yeah, that's great. Tell me about the first social justice action that you ever took.

IG: (Pauses). I should have known you were going to ask that question. I have an answer for you. Yes, ok. I was 16 years old in 1960. In February of 1960, it was the first or the second, there was a sit-in in Greensboro, North Carolina at the Woolworth's lunch counter. Does Woolworth's still exist? I don't even know if it still exists as a chain. At that time it was the biggest chain of five-and-dime stores in the country. My father came home from work, he told me about this. He saw

it on television or in the paper, and he said, "Ira, there's some people who I've just heard about that are going to picket our local Woolworth's here in New York, in the neighborhood, in support of the people in Greensboro, would you want to come?" And I looked at him and I was aghast. First of all, I had been politicized about two or three years ago, I was very excited about this. But I was skinny, well you wouldn't know that now…

AD: (laughs)

IG: but I was very skinny then. Don't laugh at me. I hope it doesn't happen to you what happened to me. I was very nearsighted, which I still am. I always felt very inferior. I had pimples and I didn't feel good about myself. I was scared to death that if I took off from school and went on a demonstration, and God forbid there was a television camera there, and they found out I would be in trouble at school and I would also be made fun of by other children. I thought about it. I didn't have a lot of time to think about. I thought about it and said, "Yes, Daddy. I'm going to go." So he took off work, or maybe he was not working at the time, because my father was unemployed a lot. I was so proud to go with Daddy. We went on this demonstration and most of the people there were working class Jews, it was multi-ethnic group, but mostly Jews. Very few people crossed the picket line, I remember. There may have been something before that, but for me was sort of the impelling event that there was no turning back after that.

AD: That's interesting. Moving ahead a little bit to talk specifically about the Kentucky Alliance, so you came to Louisville and you are working with Anne and Carl. So I guess it's through that work that you learned about the Kentucky Alliance. How did you get involved with the organization?

IG: Well I need to get you some prefatory information if I may. There was a big dispute within SCEF in the early 1970's. It resulted in an eventual split of the organization. It was very unfortunate. Carl and I and Anne and I took different stands. Details aren't important. But it was a very hurtful time for all of us. In fact, years later, I had a very interesting discussion with Anne, I don't think it was ever tape recorded, but I wrote about it once. She said to me Ira you know, neither of us is going to remember what that split was all about number one. She says but probably the FBI took a legitimate difference people had and exacerbated to the point where it became a split, they got us fighting each other. In fact, Carl named to me who he felt was the FBI agent. I think I agree with him, but I don't like to say anything like that without knowing.

In any event, this is important to the Kentucky Alliance. There was this schism, but Anne and I got together soon thereafter because the schism was around 1972 or [19] 73 I'm guessing. Soon thereafter there was this busing crisis in Louisville. I have four children, but I only had two at that time. They both were in school. They were very young. There was a boycott by white parents, many white parents, of the school system, that's the school desegregation order. I, of course, sent my children through the picket line to school and was scared to death. I remember having a hammer, which I would put in a paper bag to take with me, because that's how scared I was that there was going to be violence against my children. Anne and I got back together soon after that, I don't remember what year, there was a national, well international, movement to free Angela Davis. Angela Davis was arrested and framed, it's a long story, so is the Black Panther Party in California. There was a national organization to free Angela Davis. I was peripherally

involved in that, not very, but I was involved. When Angela Davis finally got her freedom, the people who ran the organization helped to transmogrify into the National Alliance against Racist and Political Repression. That was the logical extension, rather than just fold up this tremendous entity with mailing lists and [inaudible]. I was very interested because the friction that had happened at SCEF, I was only peripherally in that; I participated in meetings, but I was also very busy in many other activities, it's not like I was just sitting at home. Anne and I began to work very closely together around the end of the 1980's. We did a lot of work in the Kentucky Alliance together in fact. There were problems with staff, and Anne wanted me to train the personnel. I remember a woman named Shameka Parrish, now she's become Parrish-Wright. Shameka Parrish came to town and I helped to orient her and other people who were involved in the staff. So that's how I got involved.

AD: What did you hope to achieve through working with the Alliance?

IG: I wanted to an alliance against racist and political repression. Those are the two Achilles heels, preventing unity among progressive people, racism now as it was in the past. This is not to denigrate other problems like sexism, homophobia and handicap discrimination, age. Race seems to be this Achilles hell, this tremendous weakness. W.E.B. Dubois once said, "The problem of the 20th Century is the problem of the color line." I think the problem of the 21st Century is the same. I don't think it has changed. Again, this is not to say that other forms of ruling class division are unimportant, they are very important. Racism is the key.

AD: In the years that you've been involved with the Alliance, what are some of the major issues that you've organized around.

IG: It's funny there are so many issues (laughs) I just can't think of one. We delved a lot around the school situation. Prisons, the fact that I think it's something like 60% of prisoners who are released from the state of Kentucky jails, have no place to go. The number of prisoners who are effectively functioning illiterate is very high. There's no possibility that these people are not going to get in trouble again. Because there's no jobs, there's no housing, there's no references. An employer is not going to hire someone without some type of track record. We dealt with that.

My particular interest with the Alliance has been around discrimination cases, people who have been discriminated [against] on the job, in hiring, in promotion, retention. Centered mostly around race, but also dealing with the issue of sex, age, handicap, sexual orientation. So I've done that for a long, long time. I volunteer my time. I'm not a lawyer. I can't practice law without a license, but I have a lot of experience dealing with it. I'm a former commissioner of the Metro Louisville Human Relations Commission. Well, I'm a commissioner now with it, but I was with the old Louisville and Jefferson County Human Relations Commission for six years. We can talk about that later if you like. I have the dubious distinction of having been thrown off the Commission twice for vigorous defense of affirmative action. So I had experience in doing that. Lately, there have not been many cases because the climate is so bad, people don't file. There's no work to be gotten. But it's still out there and we still get cases. More recently, and actually now, currently, I'm very involved in the issue of school desegregation. The search for the new superintendent, both as a member of the Kentucky Alliance, but also as an appointee by the mayor as a commissioner of the Metro Human Relations Commission.

AD: For people listening to this interview 20 years from now, can you kind of talk about what's going on. How the superintendent search came to fruition.

IG: I can't do that without giving you a little of the history for the last 25 years because it's all a piece Amber. In 1975, a federal judge James Gordon, who interestingly was a real right-wing S.O.B. kind of a judge. Some people resisted the war in Vietnam would automatically get five years in the slammer. I mean he was not progressive. He made a very progressive ruling around school desegregation in Louisville. I don't think he did it because he was progressive, or saw the light. I think judges don't like to be reversed. That's the biggest thing. It's like talking about somebody's momma if a judge gets reversed.

AD: (laughs)

IG: He did the right thing. He ordered schools to be integrated. There were very serious problems with school desegregation at that time. First of all, the plan was not equitable or not fair to everybody. My children, white children, were bused 2 of 12 years. African American kids, who were the victims of this Jim Crow system, were bused 10 out or 12 years. It was disproportionate. Nonetheless, the plan had many effective parts to it. The example I like to use is Central High School, Central High School being the traditional African American school in Jefferson County and Louisville. It had no track. It had few, if any; I don't know if it had any microscopes in the biology laboratory. Well when school desegregation was ordered by James Gordon, the first group of students to be bused from a white area to an African America area, the West End, was a group from Douglas Hills. Douglas Hills being a very affluent white area, and they were going to be bused to Central High School. Well of a sudden, the heavens open up and there's brand new microscopes, there's brand new text books. The African American kids hardly ever got new text books, they would get the leavings. All of a sudden there was a new track at Central High School. So anybody tells me that separate, but equal is equal, doesn't know what the hell they talking about. They have no sense of reality. Now one can talk about these problems that exist like I just mentioned, the disproportionality of sacrifice that's made. Another thing of course is what happened to African American teachers, the dispersal and the lack of role model. There were many negative things about the plan, but I saw some very positive things and still do.

Well come to now the year, what are we in 2011 and now, and the search for a new school superintendent. The last superintendent, [Sheldon] Berman, I don't think was an evil guy. I think he wanted to do good. He just came from an affluent, small mostly white suburban area. He had no, he was not cognizant, he didn't know how you deal with a large multi-racial, multi-ethnic population. For gosh sakes, we've got a burgeoning Latino population in this city that we've never had before. The old white areas around Preston Highway, the redneck areas where now you got taco-tias and restaurantès and all kinds of Latino businesses there now. Well so he's left, so now they're hiring, they're interviewing as finalists two new superintendent candidates. Both females, both eminently well qualified, judging from their CV's. They've got all the credentials. They got the PhD's, and actually you know actually BS, MS and PhD means bullshit, more shit and piled higher and deeper.

AD: (laughs)

IG: But that's another story. They had seemingly what it takes to be superintendent. I can't say they'll be bad superintendents. However, when you dig down, one of the women, the one who is in Michigan now, when she was in Baltimore, the Baltimore NAACP has given her a very bad grade. They said, not that she was not intelligent perspicacious, but she was not effective with dealing with a multi-racial situation. The other applicant, other finalist from North Carolina was the school superintendent, as I understand in Wake Country, North Carolina during the time of a school desegregation crisis and of change. It's not that she did anything bad, but she was not really involved in the process. She was almost peripheral, again according to people I know in the area. Well, what do you do about this? As a minor city appointee, that's all I am with the commission. I was part of a discussion process. We met with the board of education. We had quite a number of meetings. We just came out in support of the [Louisville] NAACP position, which didn't say these candidates are no good totally, but said you need to reopen the process to see if we can get more people. I've been involved in discussions in the Kentucky Alliance about the same thing, only on what I consider on a higher level, a more politically sophisticated level, more progressive level. Although, I'm not able to go to all of the education meetings because I just have too many things on my plate. So that's been my involvement.

Even recently we just issued a statement, the Human Relations Commission, about four days ago, five days ago in essence saying reopen the search. That has created a lot of ripples because another city entity, the board of education said, we're done. So we're basically in opposition and as I understand it, the people who run the city are not very happy about what we've done. I'm very proud of what we've done. So that's my involvement.

AD: So there has been no official response from the mayor's office about the commission's position?

IG: The only thing that Chris Poynter, the spokesperson for the mayor, has said is that the Human Relations Commission is in fact a city entity, but it does not speak for the mayor in so far as his personal view is concerned. Which is a very diplomatic way of saying, "You better watch your behind."

AD: So what would you like to see the Kentucky Alliance's response to this situation be.

IG: The same as the NAACP in essence. The NAACP, we don't always agree with everything the NAACP does, but I think the NAACP has taken a righteous position and I would like to see the Alliance push for the reopening [of the search]. It may be a fin de complet Amber. It may be that it's too late. Steve Imhoff, who is a personal friend of mine, is on the board of education seems rather (laughs) determined to make the decision within the next little while. The board is either meeting or has met in closed session because it's a personnel matter. They are going to decide pretty soon what to do. I have a feeling that they are gonna choose from one of the two immediately, or they'll reopen the process. They won't delay this any longer. Something has to happen. That's what I see.

AD: Moving back to the Alliance a little bit, talking about how organizing happens, you talked about the staff and I know there is a board and committee structure. Can you talk about how

organizing actually happens at the Alliance?

IG: The Alliance reflects the progressive movement in the United States. The progressive movement in the United States has faced a lot of turmoil. It has faced a lot of flux. So sometimes there are difficulties in organizing the Alliance, just like there are difficulties in many other organizations. The Alliance's work on prison reform is very good. Their work on the school desegregation now and then. There's no unionnimoty incidentally in the Alliance committee about how you go about achieving a just school system. So those are the two main areas the Alliance has worked. There's a committee against police abuse CAPA. I don't know what that is doing right now. Again, I'm embarrassed to say that because I've been so busy. I teach at a university and I'm involved in all these things that I'm very involved around, Middle East work and I write a newspaper column. I don't have time to do, it's the best form of birth control

AD: (laughs)

IG: I don't have time to do much else. I'm busy. Forgive me. I'll bet you edit that out.

AD: (laughs)

IG: So you want to know, how, what activities the Alliance is doing besides?

AD: If you can talk about how the board structure works, how people are elected to the board, how the board makes decisions. I know there was a time that there was paid staff for the Alliance.

IG: There is no money. There is no money. It's like this all over the country. (AD coughs) It's not just the Alliance. There is no money. So we constantly face a crisis. We also faced a crisis unfortunately in the progressive movement where there are organizations that say they have fealty to the Alliance, but without mentioning names, have not really done enough to assist the Alliance and its mission. Money, big money, has been given to many other entities Fairness, etc. but almost nothing comes into the Alliance. Part of the reason for that I think is that there is some criticism, some correct, that the Alliance oftentimes is either in disarray or an anarchic situation, people desperate to try to resolve things, but there's no money or no staff to do it. People are accused of being ineffective.

It sounds like I'm giving you something that's just tangential, but no, I think this is intrinsic to an analysis of what's going on. The Alliance reflects, represents a microcosm Amber of what's happening across the country. People are in deep trouble, and there is indeed a fight back. The bad guys have learned how to operate in an effective way. If you like, I can give you some examples. This is sort of going off the topic.

I used to chair the anti-discrimination panel of the old Louisville Jefferson County Human Relations Commission from 1980-1986. I was vice chair. We would hear discrimination complaints. The process was as follows, and I think this is same with the federal government, the EEOC [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission] and the OCR [Office for Civil Rights], and the state Commission on Human Rights and other state commissions across the country, and

metropolitan commissions also.

So Amber Duke files a discrimination complaint against Ira Grupper Manufacturing Company, claiming that there was unwanted sexual advance made, or that there was a racial discrimination situation. You come in to the commission and the commission has what they call an intake officer. He or she determines whether you have jurisdiction here -- meaning did Amber file her complaint in the proper amount of time. Some complaints you have a 6-month limit, others have different. If you filed in 7-months instead of 6-months, even if you are right, you are just SOL as they say. Do we have jurisdiction? Meaning did this alleged discrimination occur in Jefferson County? Lets assume that those things are met. Then it's given off to an investigator. The investigator takes Amber's statement. It's usually a notarized statement which you give where you say that Joe Smith at the Ira Grupper company, or maybe Ira Grupper himself, made an unwanted sexual advance, created a hostile work atmosphere, etc. You take that statement and you come to the company. I, or my lawyer, or someone says to you, "Oh no! We love black people. We love women. We would never do anything like that. We summarily dismiss it. What really happened was that Amber just couldn't do her job for whatever reason she has some sort of problem, maybe with her boyfriend or husband or somebody. She's just come and taking it out here. This is just baloney." Then you go back to Amber, again this is theoretical, right? Amber says, "No and I'll show you then." Then you have this witness. This information, again in the old commission in the [19]80's would then go to the investigator in consultation with what is called the compliance supervisor. The compliance supervisor would then make a preliminary determination that, these are technical terms, there is either probable cause that Amber was discriminated against or there's no probably cause. Then that's taken to a board of commissioners, and they either affirm the supervisor's recommendation or they rule against that. If they rule against Amber, then Amber is just out of luck as far as this commission is concerned. She could take, you could take this case to a private attorney, but the vast majority of people have no money to go to a private attorney. So you are out of luck.

If we rule in Amber's favor and there's probable cause to believe. Then the commission tries to effecture what is called a conciliation agreement. A conciliation agreement means the company and Amber agree to certain terms that you'll be put back on the job. You'll be given back pay or partial back pay or be given a promise that there won't be any harassment. If you file what's called a pattern of practice, in court they call that a class action [stammers] that they won't do this. That's what the theory is. Let me tell you what the real world is. It's all bullshit. It sounds good.

Ok, I make an unwanted sexual advance toward Amber Duke, and she repels that advance, "Get out of my face!" In the old days I say, "Bitch you're fired!" Now I don't say that anymore. Now I say, "Ms. Duke, we'd like to retain you in employment, but you've not met our criteria for advancement." Instead of me saying that to you, I'll get a black, female supervisor to say that to you. You think this is crazy? That I'm making this up? It happens all the time. How do you then demonstrate a prima facie case? There are many ways to do it, but you have to be aggressive. Then lets assume that the case gets up to a situation, and understand, I'm not on the enforcement panel of the commission any longer. This is the new commission now. I chair the other panel. Let's assume that a conciliation agreement is worked upon. Now we've found in your favor. The company is basically saying, "Ok, we'll give this woman back pay, back seniority. We'll give

her some vacation benefits. We'll promise not to mess with her in the future. We'll even putting in a hiring plan to hire more African Americans or women or whoever classes. But we don't admit nothin'! We have done nothing wrong, and you can't take my behind to court. No civil damages sucker. You are out of luck." Why am I giving you all of these details? I'm giving you all of these details by way of saying that the system has learned how to adapt to changed circumstances. This is not to say or imply that racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism and the other discrimination isn't sometimes, and oftentimes, blatant. It's more often less blatant, more subtle, more sophisticated. I as a member of the Kentucky Alliance want to just rip this sheet off this new façade. The Klan is still wearing a sheet, except the sheet is not as readily apparent. That's the work that I'm very interested in doing. I would like to see the Alliance do this more because we would be more aggressive, more insidious in our pursuit because we have no implementer of enforcement. We're not a city or a county agency. This is what needs to be done in the near future. It's not being done often enough. It's not just here. It's across the country. So that's where I am.

AD: How would you summarize the mission of the Alliance and the goals of the Alliance?

IG: (Pauses). I don't remember the wording. I don't remember anything anymore (laughs). We want to bring about a just society. We feel that racism is a main division that keeps working people apart. We want to deal effectively with the issue of racism. When the Alliance, when the National Alliance became the, well when the Angela Davis movement became the National Alliance, it was called the National Alliance against Racist and Political Repression. I think that it needs to return to that mission and it hasn't. There is a tremendous amount of political repression in the country today. It is increasing. I don't think the Alliance either knows enough or if it does know, it's not active enough around the issue of combining racist and political repression. I would like to see that happen more. I think there's more and more need for that. There have been many cases recently of people being arrested by the FBI, subpoenaed recently in Chicago and Minneapolis, for anti-war activities and support of justice for Palestinians, for other nationalities in other countries. I would like to see the Alliance get involved in that as well, and I don't see that. Again Amber, a lot of it is money. There ain't no money, and that's the problem.

AD: Can you describe the relationship of the Alliance to other social justice organizations here in Louisville?

IG: I think there has been generally a good relationship over many years. The Alliance has a dinner every year [the Unity Dinner], and it's the most integrated dinner that I've ever seen in this city. We have anywhere between 400 and 1,200 people that come. Cornell West spoke about seven, eight years ago -- that's the one where we had about 1,200 people. There lately, it has been smaller, but it's growing again.

I think we have good relation with other organizations. Some organizations feel that we're not as well organized as we should be. There needs to be more. I love your organization [Here Ira is referring to the interviewer's connection to the University of Louisville's Anne Braden Institute for Social Justice Research where AD is employed as program coordinator]. I think that your organization, the Anne Braden Institute, needs to have more active relationship with the

Kentucky Alliance. I think part of it is that Cate [Dr. Cate Fosl, co-founder and director of the Anne Braden Institute], who I love dearly, feel that the Alliance is not…that there is too much turmoil. They would rather be with; you would not like what I say. I would say more respectable people. You would say people who are less in turmoil. I think that needs to happen. Unless that happens, we're going to face a lot of difficulties.

AD: You talked about the fundraising challenges being something nationally that's a challenge for groups. What do you think are the specific fundraising challenges for the Alliance? Do you have ideas on how they could overcome these challenges?

IG: The basic answer is I'm not sure. I'm just not sure. I do know there has to be more outreach. There has to be more work. It's not just African Americans who are affected. In this city now, it's Latinos and other immigrants who are affected. The women's movement from what I can see, and I'm a man talking so maybe I shouldn't, it's not a cohesive, unified entity like it used to be. We used to have the Coalition of Labor Union Women, they still exist. We used to have the National Abortion Rights Action League, various women's organizations which were very dynamic. I think that needs to happen again. Amongst disabled people that's a very important element by the way. You have the Metro Disability Coalition, which is one of the few coalitions of the United States that's led by African Americans that has strong African American leadership in Louisville. [They] have very interesting programs. They also have problems and turmoil with money, with dynamics. But I've never seen the Anne Braden Institute or even the Kentucky Alliance have an active relationship with the Disability Rights Movement. It needs to happen. So there's a lot of challenges ahead for us. I think these are some of the things that are necessary.

I also think people need to be trained, young people. They need to understand history. People don't know it. An example I like to use is, I was in, well I forget where I was. I was in another city. I was walking down the street and I heard these two dudes talking. One dude says, "Hey bro what's happenin'?" And he says, the other guys says, "Ain't nothin' happenin'." And then the first guy says, "Man you ain't shit!" And the second guy says, "I know it." And they walked on. Now I'm not a Freudian. I don't like to parse words, and I don't like to try to just look into [drops sentence]. When they say, "What's happenin'?" and the other guy says, "Nothing's happenin'" there's a lot happening! There's just not a cohesive, unified entity to take these things that are happening and to generate it into a progressive movement context. And

then when somebody says, "You ain't shit." Well that's saying you're not worthwhile as a human being. We're all worthwhile as human beings. That has not been inculcated into people. It's not just a matter of civil rights movement; it's a matter of all people. People do not feel that they are worthwhile.

I have four children. They are all grown. I have one who has a master's degree, he's an engineer. He's delivering packages on a truck now. He can't get work, after all those years. It's a crisis. I have another child who is got a master's. She's a high school social studies teacher, can't get work teaching high school social studies. She's going back for another masters to teach English as a second language. I'm telling you, I shouldn't say this on tape, but there's a lot of teachers that can't get work who are going back to school to get a degree in English as a second language because they can't their first job -- which means there not going to be as many openings. This is

the crisis that we're facing. We're facing a crisis of unemployment.

Another thing that has to be dealt with, since you're asking what does the Alliance or others have to do, the Alliance is a 501c3 entity and I think that it somehow needs to bifurcate in the way that the ACLU has done it -- where you have one part that's nonprofit, the 501c3, and another part that deals with the political stuff. There needs to be an analysis of the Obama Administration. The fact that most of the attacks in the Obama Administration, before, when he was running for president, and even after, were nothing but stone racist attacks. On the other hand, he ain't done nothin' as far as employment is concerned! The unemployment situation is getting worse. I don't care if he's African American or not, if he ain't doin' the job then he needs to be criticized. I think the Alliance needs to be about the business of making that criticism in a non-antagonistic way. As an example, and this is just one person's observation-someone who has been in and out of city politics, as well as I won an important discrimination case -- you should ask me about that, handicap discrimination. [Pauses] No, I'm getting too far off the topic. Go on.

AD: I want to spend some time talking about multiracial organizing. I know that the racial makeup of the Alliance has fluctuated over the years, but generally can you describe the racial makeup of the Alliance?

IG: I would say it's always been multiracial.

AD: Ok.

IG: There are times when the white people in the Alliance have for whatever reason have been more vocal or more public than the African Americans, and that's a serious problem. Problems of objective, not subjective, but objective white paternalism. There's also been a tremendous thrust toward egalitarianism, toward including everybody in the organization. I'm very proud of the Alliance for that thrust.

AD: You talked about the growing Hispanic/Latino population in Louisville. Has the Alliance been able to have any folks from those new communities become a part?

IG: Yes. In fact, we give awards every year at our banquet, and several Latinos have been honored in the last few years. There is a working relationship. Again, given the flux that the Alliance finds itself in, in the financial and other difficulties, it's quite difficult to build this. This needs to be worked on more. There's certainly other seeds that have been planted. That's the best way I can answer you. I don't think there's enough work being done, no. But there's that possibility.

AD: Have you made friends while organizing at the Alliance?

IG: Oh yeah.

AD: Tell me about some of the relationships you developed.

IG: I'll tell you a little bit about Bob Cunningham. You know Bob Cunningham. We've known

each other I guess 40 years. We really got to know each other during the school busing crisis. There was an organization formed at that time called PIE, Progress in Education, to counter the racist, anti-busing movement. Bob and I were on the committee. Well we were the committee (AD laughs). We were on the committee that was going to go out to various white, working class areas, not only those…but, and try to talk to people who had these tremendous fears of what integration was going to do. He and I went to way out on Taylor Boulevard, white working class area. We went to Okolona and to Fairdale and McNeely Lake. Places where we would walk to the car (laughs) we would be looking around, we were all scared. We talked to people. Bob is just a tremendous, tremendous orator. He has a way of talking to people that really, well you are shaking your head like you know him, so you know this. [Mic bump] He gets confidence of people. We developed that relationship over many years. We've known each for all these years, and we were involved in many projects together. So that would be one friendship that I value that I developed over the years.

Other people…there was a woman no longer living, named Jackie Shaw, that I had a very good relationship. Then I feel I have a good relationship with the current people who are active in the Kentucky Alliance. It's been a very important aspect. If there are any benefits to being involved in the progressive movement….there's a lot of negatives. (Laughs) There's no money. You are not going to move up on the corporate ladder if you are very certainly involved in making trouble and being bad. These kinds of relationships Amber, are for me, life sustaining. I have nothing but the highest praise for someone like Bob Cunningham, just to use that example. A man who is maybe 75, 76 years old now, he's not in the best of health. God knows I want him to live to be a hundred. It's those kind of relationships, and you're not going to find, unfortunately, Bob's name in the compendium indices of the civil rights legends. The civil rights legends are usually people who have their names in the paper, and his name is not always in the paper. The person who is there to do the kind of work that needs to be done, that's him. So that's an example of the kind of friendships I've developed, and you can't put a monetary value on that.

AD: How was your family life impacted by the time you spent, not just working with the Alliance, but in all of the work that you've done.

IG: Humph. (Pauses) Married twice. Living with somebody now for ten years. There's been a lot of turmoil in my life. I'm not saying if there weren't a progressive movement that wouldn't be the case. It may be my own inadequacies. Maybe it's just the way society is now days that people go from partner to partner, but it has made an impact -- particularly my involvement in the labor movement. First trying to be a union organizer, and then working within organized labor, and trying to expose the bad things going on as far as race, sex, etcetera. I've had to fight my own colleagues oftentimes, not just fighting the bad guys in the corporations. So it has taken its toll. You want to be a union organizer you take these crazy jobs where you work different shifts. Your life is just [drops thought], but that's what working people face generally. Movement people are no better or worse than working people in general. It takes a toll on you. It has taken a toll on my health. [Pauses] But I wouldn't have had it no other way. I'm proud of what I've done. Maybe that sounds arrogant or egotistic, but that's how I feel.

I was involved, and am involved, in the disability rights movement. I mentioned that case that I won, a very important case. Notwithstanding the battle that I fought over it, I've met people that

just changed my life. It has given me a perspective on things that I didn't have.

AD: Do you want to talk in a little more detail now about that case?

IG: Sure. I'm legally blind. My corrected vision is legally blind. I'm partially sighted. I can read a paper, and you couldn't tell the nature of my disability unless you saw me [picks up paper] hold something up to my nose so I could read. When I became politicized, union-centric if you will, whether there was a union organizer involved or where there was an organized place and try to democratize it. Well to get hired at a place, you have to take a physical. What I would do was, I would sneak in to a medical office at a factory or warehouse or what have you, and memorize the eye chart because I had a very retentive memory. Well I used to. I can't remember anything anymore. I can't tell you what I had for breakfast today. [couch makes noise as he stands to stretch]. If that didn't work for whatever reason I would have someone of a similar height, weight and build take the test for me. If that didn't work I would pay somebody off. Am I proud of these things? No. But that's the real world. They didn't hire people with disabilities. Finally around 1970 or [19]71, I said to myself, "Ira you're a big idiot." Well, I've said that to myself before. (AD laughs). I said, "Hey you're fighting for everybody else, and you're not fighting for yourself. What's wrong with you?"

So I bought me a book Amber for $2.50 on how to do legal research. I was very skilled, if I may say that without sounding immodest, in doing research in general because I did a lot of that when I was in SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] in Georgia before I moved to Mississippi. I had a lot of experience in doing research, but I had no experience in doing legal research. I bought this book and I went to the University of Louisville Law Library because I had no money. I poured over the books and I finally found this law called the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, public law 93-112 subdivision 4a4b. There was a section 503 and 504 which were very relevant to me. 503 says that any company that does business with the federal government as a contractor or a subcontractor, meaning if I own a construction company and you sell me paper clips you fall under the egis of the law. Any company that does business with the federal government cannot discriminate against a person with a disability, and further has to make what's called "reasonable accommodation" to conform to the parameters of the disability, reasonable accommodation being a particular form of Affirmative Action, which is what African Americans are fighting for. An example of that is, if you're sitting in a wheelchair and you gotta go to the bathroom, they gotta widen the stalls so you can get in there. Or if you are deaf and you are working around fast moving equipment, equipment that starts up automatically and a buzzer rings to warn you not to put your hand in there, obviously a deaf person can't [hear] there needs to be a light bulb that goes off, or the machine needs to start manually. I don't know.

Armed with this information about this Rehabilitation Act of 1973, I go down to the state employment service 6th and Cedar downtown and take what they call a GATB test G-A-T-B. It's a manual dexterity test where you put the square pegs in the square holes and the round ones. I evidently passed the test because I got a call from Philip Morris about three weeks after, this is 1975, July of [19]75. [They said] "Well we need you to come down and take the physical. Now you can't have the first shift or second shift because you don't have enough seniority…and we need you to fill out the Blue Cross forms, medical insurance forms." So for me, the unspoken assumption was that I was being hired contingent upon passing this physical. This is July of

[19]75. I take the physical, didn't pass it. That was on a Friday. The following Monday I call up Philip Morris, Philip Morris a very liberal company, and I ask for the medical department. I said, "Nurse, I understand that I didn't pass this test. Can you tell me why?" She puts me on hold, and then she comes back five minutes later. She says, "I just spoke with the doctor and the doctor said we can't hire anybody with vision as bad as yours is." I said, "Thank you very much" and I hung up, except I wasn't on the phone by myself. I had an attorney and also a representative from the Kentucky Council of the Blind, part of the American Council of the Blind. So I filed my discrimination complaint under this Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that I had researched. Incidentally that law eventually became superseded by another law called the ADA -- the Americans with Disabilities Act. This was prior to that, so I was sort of a pioneer if I can say that without being immodest. So I file a complaint. It took these bastards six months and finally -- oh and the U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Contract Compliance Office in Atlanta are the ones that oversaw the complaint. And they didn't do anything, or more appropriately they didn't do nothin'. So by that time I was getting different organizations to help me. Wendell Ford who they used to call the Senator from tobacco, Philip Morris pissed him off or the Department of Labor pissed him off because he wrote a letter on my behalf and he never got an answer. I don't mean him personally; one of his slaves did that, his administrator.

Six months later, the company called the Department of Labor who then called my attorney. They wouldn't speak to me directly. They thought I was a hothead. I suppose I was, but that was the kind of paternalism… They said, "Ok, we admit having discriminated against Ira Grupper when we didn't hire him. We discriminated against him, sorry. We will give him six weeks back pay, but we cannot hire him because in a routine employment check we discovered that he had lied on his employment application and said…" [Speaking to AD] You are shaking your head (laughs), this is what happened. "He said he was a satisfactory employee, and in fact he was not. So had we hired him, it would have taken us about six weeks to discover that he fabricated this. Since we didn't hire him we'll give him this money." Well my Momma didn't raise no fool; I might be dumb, but I ain't stupid. I had no idea that they would do this, but in anticipation of anything they did, I went to all my past employers and got letters of recommendation. I got a letter from my previous employer, which I think was Fawcett Haynes printing company at 11th and Broadway -- big, huge company. They moved out of the city and they laid people off and that was no fault of my own.

That set up a scenario either Philip Morris was lying, or I was lying. There was no gray area; there was no gradation, no nuance. Finally the Department of Labor issued what they call a letter of determination saying that I was discriminated against and encouraging the parties to sit down to effectuate a conciliation agreement. That was all bullshit, I didn't want a conciliation agreement; I wanted to work. At that time I was separated, I had kids at home. I had no money. I was living off of food stamps. I was living in an apartment. I had no money; I mean I was busted.

It takes another year, finally by that time I had 13….15 lawyers representing me, and about 12 or 13 organizations. I don't know if you could look up my name in an index and find this case. It was not like that. Many organizations, particularly the American Council of the Blind was pushing for this to be a precedent setting case. Finally my lawyer, well I had a chief lawyer in Washington, but my local lawyer calls me and he says, "Ira! You won. They are going to hire you in two weeks." I said, "Well, what are they giving me?" He said, "They are giving you a

damn job!" I said, "I'm not accepting it." He said, "You're what?!" This was a corporate-type lawyer, a really nice guy, but he'd never met anyone like me before -- a guy who comes in there in his nasty work uniform to his fancy office downtown. I didn't do it deliberately. I had a part-time job at the time. He used all these polysyllabic words with the proper syntax. I said, "Well I'm not accepting it!" He says, "You what!" I said, "Well first of all…" and he'd never thought of this. I said, "What's stopping them from working me for two weeks and saying 'We love handicap people, but Ira couldn't do the job, so we just had to let him go, sorry." Besides which I said, "I want back pay. I want back seniority. I want back vacations. I want all the chances that I could have bid on a higher job," because this was a union situation, "and I want to be able to avail myself of that. I want the company to pay my union initiation fees," which was a lot of money. "I want a promise that they are not going to harass me anymore, a promise that they aren't going to retaliate against me." I can't remember now all the other things that I asked for. (Laughs) I could just see him scratching his head, and the other lawyers they conferred, because it wasn't just this one. Well, the agreement was that I would go to work on what they called a trial work period, as opposed to a probationary employee. The terminology was used so they could differentiate that from the union process. The union was rather sympathetic to me, but it didn't want to abdicate the hierarchical nature [drops thought]. If I lasted 30 days, well if they thought I couldn't do the job after lets say a week or two, and they were adamant about it -- a third party intermediary which I would have input in selecting, an expert on rehabilitation therapy or industrial design would make the final determination over whether I could do the job or not. If I lasted the 30 days, I would receive -- I would get the job, I would get full seniority, partial back pay. They owed me then about $19,000 or $23,000…they only offered me $6,000. I would have to accept that. This is an aside, but actually my attorney told me I could get the whole thing if I were willing to fight longer. But I didn't have any money, I was absolutely broke. …a promise that they wouldn't harass me, blah blah. Well, I worked there 24 years, so I must have been minimally satisfactory.

It was my experience in the Civil Rights Movement that steeled me for this fight. I would not have had that because I was always feeling inferior about myself. But the Civil Rights Movement helped me. There are many other things to this fight. For example, I can say this now, I'm retired (laughs), my whole resume was all a bunch of lies except for the part that they challenged. I had to say that I was never arrested. I was arrested in the Civil Rights Movement on both sides of the Mason Dixon line, etcetera. Having won that case, many things happened. First of all, Philip Morris…Are you from Louisville?

AD: New Albany, [Indiana]

IG: Ok so you know this area. Philip Morris was one of the prize jobs you could get. When I left Philip Morris in 1999, June of [19]99, the lowest paid worker, the lowest paid once you got into the union, was making almost $22 an hour -- the lowest paid worker. People got hired there they thought they'd died and gone to heaven. This was a prized job. [Forgets point he was trying to make, pauses] Well let me just say, a lot of things came my way as a result of having won this case.

Oh I remember now, it takes a long time to establish a rapport if you are going to be an organizer. This was not a non-union place, but still we wanted to democratize the union a bunch

of us. You gotta drink a lot of beer, go to a lot of bowling alleys and what have you. When I got hired at Philip Morris, I started in [19]77, and I got back seniority…to meet people. It was a city, built from 18th [Street] to 19th [Street] and then they built another extension. I was almost two blocks long, a block wide, seven stories tall -- that's the main building, there were other buildings too. It was just unreal. Everybody knew that this handicap guy, freak was coming to work. I didn't have to drink a lot of beer. People were wonderful to me. Again this was all because of my understanding of the Civil Rights Movement, where I learned how to fight.

I remember the first day I went to work. They put me on day shift because they were watching me. They had, oh my God, they had time study people, the head of….Is this helpful to you?

AD: Uh huh

IG: Ok. …watching me every time I scratched, someone would be there writing it down. Then a woman comes up to me on the first day and she says, "Give me your name and your phone number." I'm looking at her, very attractive woman and I say, "May I ask why?" She says, "Well, you can't be late for work for the first 30 days. You can't be late. They will fire you. I'm going to call you every morning to make sure you get up." I started to cry. The next day she and another woman came up to me, and again, I was on day shift, I didn't have the seniority to be on second and I was being watched -- the shift was 7AM-3PM. They said, "When you get off, we want you to come upstairs." They gave me a particular floor to go to and a particular department. I said, "Why?" She said, "Well, we are going to set up a little assembly line for you, and what you can't see, we are going to show you how to do with your hands."

AD: Wow.

IG: I'll never forget that, long as I live. Now once I did my job and showed that I could do the job, a lot of things came my way. It's nice to be nice to the disabled. We don't riot like black people. We don't burn our bras like the women. We're just palpable. We need our goods and services and paternalism, that's the stereotypic paternalistic view people have. The mayor's office calls me two years into my tenure. William Stansbury was the mayor. He didn't call me personally, but, "we would like to appoint you to the Human Relations Commission as a Commissioner." I didn't solicit it; it was offered. I didn't know what to do. I said, "I'll get back with you, thank you." So I called my progressive friends on the Left, in the Alliance and other groups, and they all said to me, "You are such an egotistic, arrogant little bastard. What good is it hanging out with all these bourgeois people? Are you just going to feel good about yourself?

All this pomp and circumstance…what does it mean? It means nothing." Then Anne Braden calls me up, and did you know her, had you met her?

AD: [Shakes head no]

IG: Anne Braden was a very direct person, God bless her. She said, "Ira you are a damn fool. I want to see you." I went to see her, she says, "Now you know the reason that they are going to appoint you to this commission is because you are this little freak." It's really nice to be nice to the disabled. Again, we don't burn our bras. [Anne says] "What the hell do you care why they

are hiring you. How often does a progressive person get to sit on a commission like that? Accept it!" I told her what my Left friends said, she said, "Your Left friends are bullshit! Do it! But you have to do just one thing for me Ira. You are known to have a really big mouth. You need to shut up for a year and learn how the system works, you need to do that." She says, "You are a veteran of the Civil Rights Movement; use your knowledge that you've acquired over the years and your union work. Use that knowledge to figure out how to help people by being in that system. And never be awed by those people. They put their underwear on one leg at a time just like you do." So Amber, I said ok.

I remember showing up at the Commission now, by that time I was on the day shift. I got off work at three o'clock, and the meeting started at like 3:30PM. Because I don't drive a car, I was living in Old Louisville at the time, I had no time to go home and take a shower and to change into a suit and tie. So I would show up at these meetings (laughs), and here were all these women and men very fancily dressed -- the women in their Calvin Klein outfits and the men in their Armani suits, well I don't know if they were Armani suits -- Brooks Brothers suits with their silk ties. Here I am with this gray work uniform coming in there, with heavy work boots with steel toes. I stank to high heaven from tobacco dust. All this stuff was in my hair. I didn't like to do that, but I did. They would look at me and you could see, I don't know if the word is disdain, but you could see I was not good enough for some of these fuckers. Excuse my language. Then I would open my mouth and I would use polysyllabic word that I knew. I was well prepared for each meeting, where most of them were not. They were very impressed. Here was this freak that used all these big words and can quote Frère, DuBois and whomever else.

I got appointed to the anti-discrimination panel which ruled on allegations of discrimination in the areas public accommodation, housing and employment on the basis of race, sex, age, disability…there was no sexual orientation at that time. Well at that time they called it sexual preference, but there was no coverage. They were very impressed with me. I became the chair of that panel, and I was elected by the other commissioners to be the Vice Chair of the Commission proper. So that's pretty high up, in terms of being there about a year. I realized that I was never going to become chair because the chair is usually somebody who is either a heavy contributor to the Democratic Party or someone who is better politically connected than I was or ever will be. At that particular time, Clarence Thomas had been appointed by Ronald Regan to head the EEOC, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. [Asks AD]…and you know about Clarence Thomas? [AD nods yes] Ok, he set about, that son of a bitch, to dismantle all the gains that were made during the Civil Rights Movement. All the mechanisms of protecting people against discrimination in the EEOC, the most important of the agencies, the lead agency, he was dismantling. Of course he was later rewarded by being put on the U.S. Supreme Court. Now the Human Relations Commission is what's called a 706 deferral agency, which means if you file a complaint to the local Metro Human Relations Commission, it's like you file a complaint with the federal government or with the state. I had in essence a relationship to the EEOC. I had a vested interest in what Clarence Thomas was doing. It was not just a bad guy doing bad things; he was fucking with my agency. The year was about up from (laughs) Anne Braden's order for me to be a good boy. I exposed what was going on, not just with him and the EEOC, but what was happening locally with a lack of enforcement, the lack of insidiousness in pursuing discrimination compliance with a desire to really change the climate. The city people got really pissed at me and the Commission. They realized then that I was no good; that I wasn't just a little

freak who uses the big words, but that there was something wrong with me. You serve at the pleasure of the appointing authorities. They could also say I was a hot head and that I was inappropriate in my expose and my remarks, but they couldn't say I was uninformed. They couldn't say that I was stupid. They couldn't say that I didn't know about the process. I fucking chaired the process. When my appointment was up, it was a two-year appointment, they wouldn't reappoint me. A coalition formed of just about every progressive group in the city. If you are ever interested, I can show you the article, I saved them. Betty Bayé was a reporter for Courier Journal and Clarence Matthew for the Louisville Times and they wrote extensively about this fight that I had. A coalition formed, just about every disability rights group, and women's group and civil rights group got together and they forced the city to re-appoint me.

AD: About what year was that?

IG: I'm guessing about [19]82, [19]83. It was a tremendous victory. At that time Joseph McMillan who is no longer living, he was my dear friend; he was on the commission also. At one point, he was thrown off the commission at a different stage. He was the chairman of the Human Relations Commission at one point; I was the Vice Chair. I chaired this anti-discrimination panel, and he was a member of my panel. So we were, you'll forgive the vernacular, we were kicking ass and taking names. We were enforcing the law. If you had a discrimination complaint and couldn't prove it, we ruled against you. We're not foolish. We were not interested in just making a statement. If you could prove what's called a prima facie case of discrimination, we'd go after those bastards. He was not reappointed, he then went to the state commission, but that's another story. When my second term came up, and they wouldn't reappoint me, and what I learned was that the commission went to my union, and my union didn't like me at that point because I was a leader of a rank and file caucus within the union and I had run for union office and all. They thought I was a hothead, which I was. They asked my union if there was an African American union official who they could appoint in my place. That's verbatim. Mattie Jones, who is very active in the progressive movement, she found out. She was one of the leaders of this fight to get me back the second time. But they did find somebody in the union, an African American person to take that place, and I must say regretfully Lyman Johnson, who by that was beginning to lose it. They put him in as chair of the panel that ruled on discrimination complaints. He was not cognizant really of the fight that was being waged by me. I don't hold anything against Lyman. But how was I, a young white boy, going to go up against a civil rights legend. So I didn't get appointed to my third term.

All this is by way of saying, were it not for me being steeled in the Civil Rights Movement…I was active first in SNCC and then for the Council of Federate Organizations in Mississippi and the Mississippi Democratic Freedom Party where I was a private director for one of those things…and then having met Anne and Carl and many other fine people. I had long talks with a fellow named Jack O'Dell who knows lives in Canada, a very important person in the Civil Rights Movement. He's in his 80's. Were it not for that I don't think that my life would have taken the turns that it did. So it was the Civil Rights Movement that entailed me to be involved in other areas.

AD: We can talk for hours and days about all the amazing things that you've experienced and gone through. As we come to close, at least this time, we may need to talk again, is there

anything you'd like to share that you haven't had the opportunity to yet today?

IG: Well, so many things. I've been to the Middle East five times. I lived there for six months on a grant once, and I have a lot to say about that, about justice in general -- about the need to link issues. I would say that a lesson that I've learned Amber is that you don't get anything without fighting for it. You don't keep anything unless you continue to fight for it. More appropriately, you don't get nothin' without fighting for it. You don't keep nothin' unless you continue to fight for it. We see that every day. We see many of the gains that we've won being taken away. We see…that saying, "men lead lives of quiet desperation," there is quiet desperation right now. You have a master's degree -- are you assured of a job someplace? [AD shakes head no]. Do you think you are going to make big money necessarily? [AD shakes head no]. What do you do about it? Unless you build a cohesive, unified….I told you about my children. I told you about all my kids. Maybe I shouldn't have even said that on tape, I don't know. My kids they are all having difficulties -- all of them. That's what I would say the lesson for me is that we must continue to fight. You must continue to build organizationally.

The other thing is that Anne Braden once said, "There's no enemies on the Left." I think she was naïve with such a blanket statement, but her point is generally correct. That we as people on the Left have to get together to bring about change. The examples that I've given you, and what little I know about this proves that point again and again. By yourself you're nothin', you'll get nowhere. They'll kick your teeth in every time. But if we get together….and I'm very optimistic about the future. I'm not optimistic about the immediate present; I'm a little depressed. The irony is that I, who is not highly educated in terms of degrees -- I'm self-educated -- have earned a better income in many ways than my children may. I know many people whose kids are moving back in with them because they can't make it out there. These are not stupid kids who can't make it. So that's what I would say to you.

I think that these kinds of interviews are very important. I just hope they don't gather dust. Not that I'm so important, but the interviews with many other people that you've done. I've seen too much gather dust.

I teach two classes at Bellarmine -- one on the history of the history of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and one on the Israeli/Palestinian impasse. I can make no assumption of any prior knowledge on the part of these students. These are not stupid students. These are not, for the most part, kids who have to work and go to school at night. It costs $36,000 a year to go to that school with room, board, books and tuition. There are students scholarship. There are poor students. They don't know nothin'! Can you believe that I was told by one professor, when I first got hired? I said, "What do they know about the Middle East?" He says, 'Bring in a map and show them where the Middle East is." I said, "You must be joshing me." No that's not what I said, I said, "You've gotta be shittin' me man." About the Civil Rights Movement -- that's a whole other discussion. Students who are black and white know almost nothing. So that's our job. It's your job -- you are younger than me.

AD: Thank you so much.

IG: I'm happy to do it.

[End of Interview]