

Winston Suite [WS]: I went on a government scholarship to Mona, to do special physics—

Avah Atherton [AA]: Mona campus, yeah

WS: —in 1965. What am I saying? 1962. I used to teach in St Stephen's College at that time, where I taught for academic year and a piece. And then I went to Jamaica. When I came back, I was placed in QRC, Queens Royal College, to teach physics. Mainly A-level classes, the scholarship classes, and the form— But they also put on a number of form one and form other things, which was pleasant because some of these young students, although I only spent two years in QRC, they remember me years back, some of them.

AA:

What year was that?

WS:

65 to 67, two years.

AA: And how old were you?

WS: I was born in 1940 so in 65, I would be 25 years old, 27. But I never wanted to teach in Port of Spain, I never wanted to live in Port of Spain. I taught in St Stephen's and I had a terrible passion, I wasn't interested in teaching really, but I was interested in the development of the area I came from. And I said, if I'm going to have to teach because I'm on this scholarship with a five-year contract for the government, then I want to go south. It's either you're sending me to Presentation College or St Stephen's College, where I had worked. Country!

St Stephen's was the only high school that they had in the area. All the other high schools were in San Fernando. Boys and girls. So I had to go to Pres, San Fernando. My brothers went to Pres and my nephews went to Pres and my nieces and that— My sister went to school for three years in Bishop's in town and I said I wanted to go back to the south. Mainly Princes Town if possible. And they told me no— they told me listen man, everybody bawling to go to QRC and this is the top school in town and you don't want to do it? I said no I want to go to Princes Town. They must have thought I was mad. I tell them no, no, no I want to go to Princes Town, they need me in Princes Town or San Fernando. So they agreed in the Ministry [of Education], after a prolonged talk, that they will look at the question, they will look at my case as time passed

After the first year, I was so absorbed in the little black children in Port of Spain, in that school, a lot of black children, African and Indian, some from Laventille and all kinds of things. I got caught up in teaching. I tell you straight, I didn't want to be a teacher, I didn't want to be a teacher, that's another question.

But I said, look, if I have to teach at all, put me in south. They say they will look at it. After the first year, I was so absorbed, I didn't even apply to remind them but every now and again, it would come back in my mind. And I raised the issue— I remember once I had

exams coming up, A-level exams in my class, the senior class in physics, trying to get a scholarship or not.

Something happened in the lab, some piece of equipment or something. We found out that we didn't have some raw material that we needed for the exam, the practical exam. So I went to the office to tell the principal, a fella name Laltoo, that, look, we have to have this material by Monday for the exam. And he looked at me— We were good friends because I was hard-working and he liked me and he was married to a woman from Princes Town who was just next door to me. Next door to where I lived in Princes Town so we got along quite well. He had just come back from Canada, he had spent a year or two years there, they had sent him in that school. So, eager with this teaching that I didn't want to teach but I'd get caught in it, I can't get it out of my system—

So I tell him, he looked at me, he said, Suite, why do you have the shirt outside your pants? I said— I laughed at him I thought we were good friends, he's the principal and I'm a hard-working senior teacher. He said, put your shirt in your pants. I said, Mr. Laltoo lewwe talk about that this evening or tomorrow or some other time. Let us right now get the equipment for the class. He said, this is very important. I said, what? He's persisting, he's not listening to me telling him about the equipment. I tell him, I say, you know, I put in that thing that I didn't want to work in QRC, I want to go south

I'm going to leave the teaching if you pressing this point. It makes no sense me saying— I'm going to go to the Ministry, I'm going to tell them. He took what they call—they have a phrase for it— take front before front take you— he gone and report me to the Ministry, which is just next door. How Suite is improperly dressed and he told me to fix myself and I would not fix myself. So by about one o'clock in the afternoon, I got a letter from the Ministry telling me that Mr Laltoo had reported me for insolence and persistence and badly dress and all this kind of thing. If I do not obey his instructions, they will have to take action.

I said, what? Good. And I wrote a letter to the Ministry telling them— I told Laltoo the same thing— I said yuh see right now I don't own— and I remember the phrase *Arrogant lil young black fool from Princes Town*— I remember the phrase, I told him i said listen I dont have a pigeon or a parrot on a stick and if you want to press me, I will leave and not come back. I would stop teaching. I could go and stay in my mother gallery. Yes, I tell him you trying to press me to put my shirt in my pants and you know the history of the shirt in my pants? My brother who is now dead, he was about six years older than me, had gone to Mona while I was there my last year. He had done languages, he had in the last year of the Spanish degree – they used to go to Mexico to spend the vacation, the long vacs, where they get immersed in it. Just like how the French people would go to France and spend a whole year.

So the French degree was a four-year degree but the Spanish degree was a three-year degree because it was right here. Encourage them to go and spend the two summers. He had come back about the year before. Bought about three shirts for me, they were called Guayabera. These are the shirts that are short sleeve, they could be long sleeve but the pockets are outside, both up here and down here. Right? And I remember he bought a white one, a pink one and a blue one. He bought these shirts for me. I was so keen. Nationalism in

Mexico. Why you telling me— we don't have a dress code. We wear all kinds of crazy things, and put on all kinds of, feeling good. I wasn't no radical you know. That's the next question

So I decided Suite boy, You have to, you have to leave QRC. Everybody looking at QRC as the greatest place to teach. What? Scholarship class, this is the top, next to the Ministry. I didn't curse. I said I wanna go back home, I wanna go back down south. And if alyuh don't send me? I am prepared to leave the job, to resign and do nothing. I was really crazy in those days. They pushed me... So when the year finished, that was my second year. By this time I was so absorbed, almost to the point that I kind of wanted to stay in town because of the students. At least two of my students ended up being professors in medicine in Mona. Some of them are specialists, all kinda thing.

I used to work hard and I didn't want to be a teacher but I worked hard. So they agreed to give me a transfer. So I had spent two years in QRC and they sent me to Mod Sec in San Fernando. They had just built this school, it was supposed to have two batches of Common Entrance classes. One for that part of San Fernando and one for Penal so the school was called the San Fernando and Penal school. Years after they built the school in Penal for them. A number of years, It was carrying two sets of form one. So the first year When I went down south, the school was about three years old and I went down there and fell into the trap of teaching.

You know It was a passionate thing I'll tell you. I met a number of students who went to Pres. And we decided that we want to make Mod Sec as it was called as good as QRC, as San Fernando Pres. We all went to Pres or most of us and we decided we're going to make Mod Sec as good. And that was about cricket, sports, football, academics. And we started to work hard— in fact out of that by two years time we got a couple of students, I know some of them names by heart, remained friends, retired now — A-level distinctions in physics. I was teaching physics. And there was a woman named Bradda Lynch from Ste Madeleine. She went into health and things like that. She did work with the medical faculty. She did her PhD in teaching all kinda thing. But then she was doing chemistry, she had just come out of Mona, out of St Augustine. So I would have been In my third year when I went to Mod Sec of the contract And she might have been In her first year. And we all were worked up about this Mod Sec and making it into some, this great school blah blah blah blah. Stay giving lessons in the evening for nothing. Staying late, coming Saturday, all kinds of things. I got trapped in teaching.

AA: How many of you were doing that?

WS: All the staff. Young, young men, some of them dead. Leslie Sooklal is dead. One or two of them migrated to Canada. But Ramkissoon spent a year there. He went in to UWI after and so we went. Worked hard. And sooner or later my brother who graduated was sent to Mod Sec. So the two of us ended up in the same school. Had another friend of mine, Rawle Aimey, sportsman national footballer, all of this, who also went to the Pres and sort of thing. We really set our head down, we decided that we were going to work hard and make this school a good school, a great school, scholarship winning, all this kind of thing.

And so I'm now in San Fernando, 65, 67. 65, 66, 66 67. 67, 68. I'm now in 68, the first year in Mod Sec. Miss Thompson was the principal. 68, 69 and then 70. 70 is 1970. So I was able to put in two and a half years in Mod Sec before I was thrown out of teaching. But it was such a— It screwed up my head because I remember one day a friend of mine who had graduated about a year or so after me. He did languages. So when I came San Fernando in my third year of the contract, he was in his first year of contract and he was teaching in Mod Sec.

He said what we could do lift all these people? Abandoned and neglected blah blah blah. He called me, he say Suite, I want to talk to you. He's younger than me, he graduated after. He's in English, I'm in Physics and we stood up talking outside the corridor. And this is a very important equation in my life because it is what caused me to move to the next step. And he started telling me about the children we're teaching and some of them coming to school with buss up shoes, all kinds of craziness we have going on in the school. Of poverty and how some of our students, they leave there and have no work. Unemployed. I remember one particular boy from San Fernando He ended up winning a scholarship for A-levels. And he said boy what we could do, what we could do other than just teaching and we try. Bradda and them was giving lessons to students lunchtime, in the evening, in chemistry. I was there teaching some of these students in the evening. Babwah was staying there on Saturdays to come and play cricket because he wanted that team to beat QRC and Naparima where he taught and was a student. That kind of passion. We wanted to make a—I dunno, maybe I was being influence. [laughter] Seduced. So me and Wayne started to talk—

AA: This is Wayne Davis?

WS: Wayne Davis. He ended up a vagrant in San Fernando you know. And died. Died a vagrant. Having been expelled from teaching, all as a result of that. So we decided look what we could do? And Wayne said listen we could organize— I think he was involved in Tapia. This kind of— [interruption]

AA: I'm just making sure that this is— He was involved in Tapia?

WS: I suspect he was a member of Tapia and he wanted to do something like that. The grassroots kind of education. I tell him I'm not just having an education class for poor people children, unemployed. I think but anyhow— And he organized by a fellow named Sonowa. Sonowa father had a drugstore near the library, not too far from here. And Sonowa went to Naps [Naparima College] just like Wayne Davis went to Naps. Sonowa stayed to mind his father's drugstore but Wayne went on a scholarship to Mona about two years after me.

So we decided, he tell me that Sonowa have a place up Coffee Street, let us meet with some of the unemployed youth in the area and see what we could do because he's not sure what we should do or could do or whatever. I tell him alright. And I came down to this, I think I came with a friend of mine from Princess Town and a cousin of mine to go and have talks with Wayne off the school campus about what we could do as young Trinidadians for the unemployed youth in south Trinidad.

And we had, the first day we had a debate. Some of them wanted to put on plays, you know pseudo culture kind of thing. That was Wayne's position, he was in San Fernando Arts

Council and he did an English degree so that's how he saw it. I did physics and I wanted to intervene in the process of the poverty. In doing something. That not teaching them simply to appreciate Shakespeare or [indecipherable] Or to read some sophisticated novel. That is not my— So we had a lot of debate and disagreement and so on.

And we decided, let us, let us— He knew a couple, he was from San Fernando, I was from Princes Town. He will gather some of the fellows, unemployed youth from San Fernando. And we will start talk and see what we could do. So I said alright, I came with my cousin and somebody else from Princes Town and we went into this building that Sonowar had on Coffee Street. It was like an inn, a sophisticated inn where people could sit down and drink. Educated people. But that was in the night after seven o'clock of the place so that it was free for use by us, me and Wayne and whatever group of whatever call them. Discards in the society. To see what we could do.

The debate had— We had a heated debate on the question of— I believed that we should try to see what we could do to educate these people about their predicament. At the same time, see what we could do to guide them in dealing with the unemployment in whatever way that came up to make them instruments and agents of their own. So that important discussion, talking about the national situation and we started to meet, we met about three times. And one night we went in for the meeting, I coming from Princes Town and supposed to be there seven o'clock. Eight o'clock, the door of the place was upstairs, we had to go up— No Sonowar, no key and we downstairs. I say, What the hell is this? We don't own a place. We eh paying rent. And this time our numbers have increased. About twenty young men from San Fernando, about four of us from the Mod Sec, it was mainly Mod Sec teachers in there.

Somebody suggested that there was a fellow called Jessel Alexis had a rum shop on Cipero Street and that he liked politics. And that, the person said they sure Jessel will give us his rum shop, which is going to be empty most of the time, to keep our meetings. And we walked down Coffee Street down Cipero Street into Jessel. I talked to Jaisal Jaisal said is a big place, take it, go ahead. He had two sons I knew of, one was in a fifth form around my time He went to medicine in Howard [University] Then another older brother, son who was in one of my brothers in class. So he would have been four or five years older than me. So he was— His children, one was away studying and one in class in Presentation mainly. And he was one of these activists, kind of interested in the national politics in San Fernando. Roy Joseph and politicians of that era. And we had the whole meeting there.

Jessel said you could come any time, any time, any day. And I tell him thanks. We suddenly no longer had to go and stand up and wait for Jessel, for Sonowar and this thing.

But at the same time, toying with two things. That while we try to educate the people in south Trinidad, the young youth, many of them high school graduates and some drop out from school. We have to get them to understand their own predicament. Why are they unemployed? What could they do about it? If they have to approach the government, what agencies they have to approach etc. And at the same time was the need to evaluate the size of this problem which became staggering because every meeting we have— next week the

numbers grew larger and larger, young fellows from all over the housing schemes in San Fernando, Marabella, Vistabella and the border of Mon Repos and all these—.

So we decided that what we need to do is to make San Fernando aware of the magnitude of the problem of unemployed youth and the best way to do that was to stage a march to put the young people who are unemployed on the street. To march from Mon Repos Roundabout through the streets of San Fernando up on the promenade. Where we would then allow people to speak to the gathering and anybody else.

We planned that and that was our only march we had planned. And we found it coincided when NJAC went in the church in town, it was the same day. We put off our march because we felt— and I use the word 'we' because we discussed it— that we hadn't done enough work and that not enough people would come. And that we do not know the reaction of the people in San Fernando. We wanted to get the maximum number and we wanted to be able to— And therefore the burden of addressing the members and whoever would turn on— The housing— What am I saying? The San Fernando Promenade. Harris Promenade. Very famous in our life later on. —had the responsibility— It was going to be me and Wayne and anybody else who wanted to come and go.

So we did that. This would be a Saturday when I'm not teaching and so we put off the march because we felt that— So that is the same day NJAC had their business done but we had no connection with NJAC. We were not involved with NJAC. We were not involved in going UWI campus, that whole thing. Our business was south Trinidad and unemployed youth and what could be done for them.

AA: So how long were you meeting as a group before you decided to have the march?

WS: The march would have been— We were meeting, what month—?

AA: February 26 1970 was the day that they went into the cathedral

WS: 1970. Good. We are talking about 69. About a year or so before that we had been going on for about a little more than a year

AA: When did it formally become UMROBI [Universal Movement for Reconstruction of Black Identity]?

WS: Along the way, I'll tell you about that because as I said, we wrestled with what is our focus and I had read a little bit about Marcus Garvey. And I— how he named his organization the Universal something. So I patterned the name, I take blame for it, I patterned the name of UMROBI, Universal Movement for Reconstruction of Black Identity as a kind of mirror image of Garvey. Although we were not saying, we are a Garvey movement but we would have been influenced by Garvey's original thing.

Then we staged this march in San Fernando. We went through the streets of San Fernando coming down up on to the promenade. That was my first public speaking

AA: What day was that?

WS: What's that?

AA: What day was that?

WS: That was Saturday because we have to teach. My other colleagues have to teach.

AA: So it didn't— It was originally supposed to be February 26th but it was postponed till when?

WS: I think the week after, or two weeks after.

AA: So that was your first public, major public speaking moment. How did it go?

WS: We had an Impact on San Fernando. Because many people came to find out what that is about, what alyuh—? By this time— I want to make another statement. We were not the first in San Fernando to talk about unemployment. In fact, the first organization to do that was an organization called Young Power. It was started by Michael Als, now deceased. Michael was a brave fellow because he was way ahead of us. And what he did, he was working on the unemployment in the oil belt. So he was catering for Point Fortin, Siparia and he led a march of unemployed youth even before us. From Point Fortin to Port of Spain.

AA: When did that march take place?

WS: That march took place before all this thing with NJAC and even us. Michael, after he organized that, went to England I don't know whether he was thinking of studying or what. But he went to England and, I don't know what happened, and he came back to Trinidad and found out that we were active. UMROBI was active and he made contact with me and started to talk and he started to come to our meetings. Michael Als and one of his, his lieutenants, a fellow called something Mascal. I do not know his— I look in all those— I don't have anybody to tell me what was his first name. Just Mascal. He was living in the Roy Joseph scheme. He used to have a— he a dougla fella, I remember vividly, he had long hair up to the shoulders. The only man who could tell me what was his other name has since died himself. Another fellow who joined our organization called Shelton Shelton Williams. He died about three years ago

That's what I tell you, most of all, so many people of that ere have died including NJAC. So our focus was in fact, we were unaware of NJAC and their business. Because they were operating out of UWI and they had some links with OWTU and George Weekes and what do you call the boss? Joe Young and his— So they formed NJAC University students, OWTU and that.

In fact, as we were developing, every time we go and ask George and them to give us room to hold a meeting, they gave us a cock and bull story. I Say alright, we will find a next place. So we had to be drifting around. I suppose they were more impressed by being associated with Port of Spain university students. Who the hell is Suite and these fellows? That

continued for a long time. When we asked them to give us their hall in San Fernando for meetings, they used to give us hell, they wouldn't-- That's another thing. Anyhow.

AA: You were telling me about the day of the march where you had the first public speaking event

WS: It was important because what happens is a lot of people were influenced because they saw that this is not six people. We had people by this time, we had attracted people from Pleasantville, that housing scheme area, all the housing schemes in San Fernando, including Marabella and Vistabella. We had members joining and I remember every meeting we had, we used to have meetings in the night, in one of the housing schemes that gradually people from-- Older people. There were two Muslim boys I can't remember the name because they had an organization affiliated with black Muslims in America. But-- What do you call it again? Elijah Muhammad, that whole thing. They were Black Muslims in those days, good. This is before Abu Bakr and all those Black Muslims and but they didn't have an active organization. They had one or two members and therefore they started to come to our meetings. They could get new ideas, they get more, some people to discuss with and they understood that they were, they had fraternal ties with a wider attachment. I remember those two young fellows. And we started to attract the unemployed youth. And I would, A couple of us would go in the various housing schemes on weekends like Saturday and Sunday.

People would invite you to come and talk to the block, the scheme. And I would go and we would talk about all and sundry things where I was learning while I was teaching and we ended up going, meeting some people from deep south including some of them who were with Michael Als before Michael Organization was no longer functioning So they literally come to us.

We didn't have any formal membership form or officers. We didn't have that structure put-- And that was a serious price for us. We existed in isolation. We had no contact with NJAC, I point out to that. We would go and spend Saturdays and or Sundays in Point Fortin, where people invite you to come and talk. Or one of the housing schemes started to increase your catchment.

Princes Town where I came from. All of Marabella, Vistabella, that whole area up to Claxton Bay and San Fernando. That was our focus. South Trinidad.

When the issue about Sir George Williams and that thing, this is when the NJAC became aware that there was an organization in San Fernando called UMROBI. NJAC became aware of that. We didn't have a very pleasant relationship because they felt that they were in the news and they were in the papers. Who the hell is these fellas down there. Worst of all, George Weekes and them joined NJAC, had almost nothing to do with us. We had to pay to use their hall to have a meeting and this kind of thing but we continued. When Sir George Williams thing blew up further and some of them were coming to Trinidad and [Eric] Williams say he go pay the money to the Canadian people. They threw out students for what the students did do blah blah blah. So, at this point NJAC increased its mobilization in the north. They would go to Tobago. But what was interesting is that when they had their big



meetings in the square, some of our members even I myself would go to meetings. But I must jump backwards.

Before that, one of our meetings that we had in San Fernando that could start sometime Mon Repos or high up in Coffee Street and then go straight on to the promenade where we talked to a larger and larger gathering. And the meeting decided, I say meeting because some of the young fellows decide, they come and tell me look man-- we up on the promenade, that they feel that we should go down High Street and come back up High Street. I might have been naive or foolish because our march had stopped on the promenade and we had had a big meeting addressing people, not only the unemployed gathering. And I honestly didn't read the play, I always admit that. Because it was unnecessary to go down the rest of the promenade to go down to the bottom of High Street and to come up High Street which was night. No business places were open. I misread the play. I always said so. I paid for it. That's not the important point.

I didn't want to do that. In fact, I'll tell you something. When I reached the top of Cipero Street, Wayne tells me he's not feeling well or some such thing so. That he can't go down with the demonstration further down by Cipero across by Presentation up on the promenade. Tell me he can't make it he's tired. Or some other cock and bull. I said Wayne you're leaving me alone to be in charge of this demonstration going down to close off on the promenade. He said, he said I can't make it, I'm tired. He wasn't a big muscular fella, he had a slim frame. I assumed he was a—anyhow.

When we went on the promenade, we had a meeting. A number of us addressed the crowd and then we agreed to disperse. Some of the fellows come and tell me, well listen, they want to take the demonstration down to the hospital down the hill and up the thing. At that point so they will discuss by the library corner. I didn't want to say no, I said alright. When we reached the bottom of High Street, I was in the front of the demonstration, technically leading the demonstration. We had some flags and other people in the demonstration. I remember hearing some loud noises. I couldn't understand what is that? Some people said the police behind us at the bottom of High Street. But I said for what? And then we realized yes there were police down there but as some of the fellows had started to pelt bottle into the showcases of the business place at the bottom of High Street.

I said Winston, you are screwed. Can't find Wayne nowhere. Cuz I know Wayne tell meh he can't go and I said alright Wayne, alright. At that point, the demonstration scattered up high street. People running left, right, and center but generally going up. So I was in the front of the demonstration so I continued and somebody tell me that it have police at the top of High Street going to lock up people. They are out there. So, somebody tell me Suite, don't go up High Street. You have to branch off High Street to a side road. And I took off before the top of High Street to one of the side streets where they have shacks. A lot of shanty. Almost at the top of High Street. And the police were at the top of High Street locking up people. On the bottom of high street police locking up people. And demonstration disperse.

And I decided-- I remember a woman in one of the shanties tell me come inside here, come, come, police locking up people. And I went in her shack and she asked me where you want to go, where you going now? You can't go out there. I said alright I will go Curepe because

my brother was working in WASA [Water and Sewage Authority]. Was an engineer in WASA and was living up the hill of Curepe and she tell me look you hold on here I will get a taxi for you. And the woman left, went by the taxi stand by Point-a-Pierre road there. She tell me when she get the taxi ready, full, one more she will come back for me. And I went and sit down in the woman house. In her shack. And she went and when the taxi was almost full she sent back her son or grandson to tell me come it's safe now.

And I took myself up in the taxi stand opposite what used to be a gas station and they dropped me in town. They dropped me in Curepe. Went by my brother and I stayed by there. Next morning they-- it make Evening News the next day "Suite at Large". They lock up A, B and C. And charge all of us with malicious damage to showcases and taking part in a riot. And that was an interesting exercise because it was the start of my own suspension as a teacher.

This is what appeared, "Top Black Power Men Held and More Hunted". [indicated on newspaper clipping] This is Wayne. This is [Winston] Leonard. He was with OWTU. They were not involved. This was just-- I just showed you a picture of me then. And this is Wayne

AA: So you Disappeared the day after the march.

WS: Yeah. This is [shows newspaper clipping]. No, that is not the one.

AA: That is not the one. This would have been in April 21<sup>st</sup>

WS: So, there was this thing "Suite is at Large."

AA: Do you have a copy of that one?

WS: I'm trying to—If I find it, I will show you.

AA: So at that point in time UMROBI's leadership was just you and Wayne Davis

WS: We were the main leaders. It had other people involved [indecipherable]

AA: Who else?

WS: Rawle Aimey and some other--

AA: But what was the, can you give a rough estimate as to the number of your membership?

WS: That's another interesting question. Because of the very nature of the-- There wasn't a club with membership.

AA: I see. People would just show up?

WS: Yes, and therefore organizational structure-wise, we were not well-structured. It was mass education. That was the focus. It was not forming a lodge. We had no membership

rules. We had no registration. It was free. People like me and Wayne and others giving their service to educate Black people in the area. We had no structure in a sense.

AA: So you believe that the guys who told you to carry the march down High Street--

WS: I think he dead. I think he dead now.

AA: You think they did that as a way to hide their activities--

WS: They wanted to go and mash up-- They must have thought about breaking up some glass case.

AA: You mean like they specifically had--

WS: I work out up this after.

AA: Yeah, of course. Do you think that it was just a simple, like they just wanted to loot? Or was it that they targeted—

WS: No, no looting took place, it was just--

AA: Destruction of property?

WS: Destruction of this. Because nobody noticing them or the unemployed. And this is the unemployed strike back

AA: I see. But it wasn't like they targeted specific businesses. It seemed random.

WS: No, they're coming up High Street and they mashing up people thing.

WS: But the joke is--

AA: So who was arrested? What was the joke?

WS: Well, hear. I disappeared. I explained to you how I disappeared with the aid of one of these women.

AA:

Did you ever find out her name?

WS:

Never. I knew the people in that area. I thought I was doing--

AA: So you took the escape artist route up to Curepe.

WS: What's that?

AA: You took an escape artist route up to Curepe. Hide in some woman's house and jump in a taxi.

WS: From there, from the opposite, from the library corner straight in a taxi to Curepe corner and from there I went up--

AA: And then the next day you see "Suite at Large".

WS: Well when I reached my brother's house, he said boy if the police looking, they're going, they'll come there. And I remember he carrying me on campus. I was a student long before at Mona and I was no longer, I wasn't a student here. And in talking, he said boy somebody said they know Clifton de Couteau, who became a minister. Also from Princes Town. In fact, he was a student of mine at St. Stephen's, he was a young—Your question was-- If you come here, the police might come here. So somebody suggested boy why you don't go on campus and spend the night by Clifton. Students' campus, one of them. And somebody took me and carried me on campus and I spent the night there. Next morning, I come back by my brother. The problem at that point is-- I'm going to jump back to something--

But the -- this is where things, let me take it slowly--Let me see if I can get it. Basil Davis was another important moment in this. Because Basil Davis was shot in the Square. By this time, I -- The government had sent me a letter next morning put me on suspension. Me and Wayne for taking part in a riot and breaking glass case. Suite break this glass case and Davis break that one. The police come and say-- I say what the hell is this? They say yes, a police man say he saw you do this. I get away from a jail like that.

AA: By the skin of your teeth!

WS: I had a mission. I had a mission. Cause if I had come up High Street, anything like that. They charged me for taking part in a riot. This is how I get put on suspension. The glass case cost fifteen hundred dollars so I was charged for malicious damage of a glass case and taking part in a riot. And this, these, those two cases were to drag on three, four years.

AA: Let's see if you can get it chronology correct. So, these protests in Port of Spain by Student Guild and members of the union was February 26<sup>th</sup>. You, UMROBI postponed their protests until the following week, so that would have been the early part of March.

WS: Yeah.

AA: And so that's the protest where that riot took place. Then, the day after that protest, you said that you went to your brother's house. The following day, there was a publication saying, "Suite at Large". So, early March, right?

WS: What happened is that Basil Davis was killed in the Square.

AA: That was in April, right? April? April 6th

WS: Basil Davis-- I had been in the town for a demonstration. By that time, I was suspended--

AA: You were suspended already? Okay. So, you were staying at your brother's house all that time? Sorry, you were staying up north on campus?

WS: No, I had just spent the night there. I went by my brother's house. But, the funeral of Basil Davis, there was a demonstration because he was being buried in San Juan. So, I had left my brother's house and afterwards, going to San Juan for the funeral. While it is, while there, somebody told me that you're on the Evening News. So, I didn't go to the cemetery for the big 100,000 thing, I just turned back and get in a car and I went back to Curepe. I went by my brother. So, I was charged before that because of the riot on the High Street. And this was what suspended me. I was suspended from teaching based on those two charges. Where a policeman named Brayton from Princes Town was the chief witness giving evidence that he saw me. He was to be a chief witness in another charge later on. I had come out and I told you I was in the square, I saw the shooting [of Basil Davis].

AA: Can you tell me more about that?

WS: Yes. A lot of people congregated in the Square and you had people running up and down and moving up and down in the Square. And this fellow, Basil Davis, and I remember he and another fellow who I didn't know, they were from Port of Spain was running out of the Square towards the southwestern corner. That is the corner towards the cathedral

AA: And the library.

WS: Right. And I was not too far from there. But I was in the Square and saw he and the other boys all walking around in the Square. And then, I took no notice of him, I didn't know him. They were waiting for, I suppose, Geddes [Granger] or somebody else to give a speech. I had gone to something. There was a big meeting proposed in the town, I went to the town. When I went back, I heard that the police was looking for Suite. And I took off and disperse, had gotten away from there--

AA: Tell me about the day at Woodford Square when you saw Basil Davis.

WS: I wrote something about that. You see it become vague in your mind. That was 1970, that is how many years?

AA: It's also very traumatizing, isn't it?

WS: Very. Because I saw the fellow shot. I was not far from here to the wall [indicated distance]. And this policeman had a gun

AA:  
Less than five feet, yeah?

WS: The wall--

AA: Yeah

WS: More than--

AA:

This wall, here?

WS: No, no, the glass [indicates distance again]. He is running, the policeman behind him and the policeman, I remember seeing this stocky policeman, aiming at him as he exited the back gate. That gate was open. As he exited there, he turned left to go towards east and the policeman is behind him and I don't know-- I think he turned and the policeman shot at him. But what I vividly remember in my ears, I'm not familiar with guns, all I hear is something go bang, bang, bang. With a highly, not explosive, boom, boom. A light thing. And the policeman had-- If I am lying, I could fall right now-- The policeman had his gun, he had a little gun in his hand like this {shows size using his hand} So part of his fingers would have been on the muzzle, which is short and the rest of the gun here. And he shot at the fellow.

And this boy, who was, what you call kixsing around, I don't know what he did to provoke or vex the policeman. But the policeman was running him down and he ran through the back gate and he turned. The policeman shot him and you hear about two shots and he turned and fall. Dropped right down the road. So I thought that he kixsing as I say, that is all part of the whole--That he must be high on drugs or high on-- well, it wasn't so much drugs in those days-- high on alcohol. And as he fell, some people went towards him, turned him over and when they turned him over, what I was near enough to see a speck on his clothes. His jersey open up so and a speck of blood, because it was not a hole, I am not familiar with guns, but to me, it was a speck of blood. And as he dropped on the ground and turned over, I say he kixsing.

I didn't put two and two together and say, Well, the police shoot him, but you hear the noise, the police come up and tell people, get away from here. The fellow is on the ground and some of the people say, But the man get shot! And the people coming to help him because some realize that he is seriously wounded. In his chest. Left side.

And I had never seen this, I had never seen a man get shot before. I have not been involved, I am a school teacher, I am not involved in this kind of thing. We didn't come out for that And somebody say, well, get a car and somebody say, call a car and they lift him up and put him in the car to rush him to the hospital. Later on, we hear that Basil Davis died and that those shots were shots in his heart. The first time I was so close to the shooting of a person. I'm a school teacher. I'm a university graduate and this and that. I say boy, what the hell is this? You understand this? Anyhow, that was the death of Basil Davis. It became a big issue.

AA: He was young, right?

WS: He was a young fella. He was in his 20s. Good I would have been—19-- 29. He would have been, possibly, younger than me. And I say, he's one of the many young unemployed fellows from the Port of Spain side, congregating in the square, and the police must be thing

him and he running from the police. And part of it is kixsing and part of it-- And the first time I ever saw somebody shot.

AA: And killed.

WS: And killed. So this became a big issue. And when I reached my-- I'm trying to get back things-- When I reached--It is this, I went to Curepe, not Curepe, San Juan to go to the funeral.

AA: The funeral took place on April 9<sup>th</sup>, so just a couple days after he were shot

WS: Yeah and somebody tell me the papers have "Suite at Large"

AA: Did you know that the police was looking for you?

WS: I suspected that. Yeah, this is the State of Emergency [indicating newspaper clipping] I'm going to-- My sister had gotten this in an old newspaper. I go try to see if I can find out before you go.

AA: How far did you get? Because I know the funeral started--

WS: They say, I coming from the east. I reached San Juan with the thing coming and people say that the other side of the funeral was by the overpass.

AA: They were coming up from Port of Spain to go up Saddle Road--

WS: From San Juan

AA: San Juan, yeah?

WS: Yeah

AA: So you didn't make it very far up?

WS: I reached the junction.

AA: The Croisee.

WS: The Croisee. And I take off. Good? So that was that. I am now on suspension

AA: You and Wayne Davis. Did you speak to Wayne Davis after the protest, the riot in Sando?

WS: No, no, he--

AA: He went home.

WS: Yes

AA: Right, and then you said--

WS: In fact, I have said that Wayne was never on the promenade. I don't know if he changed his mind. By the top of the Cipero Street, Wayne came to me and told me, listen, I don't think I can make it, I'm tired. Just by this funeral agency on one side of the Cipero. I said to myself, Wayne, you're going to leave me alone with these men to see about this thing, man. He tell me, boy, I'm tired and so on I half believe him, I half didn't. But time came when I made the point. To the best of my memory, I remember standing up and seeing Wayne going across. It's about three streets, right? Going back by where this funeral agency is there. Behind. And I said to myself, this bitch, [[laughter] this man is going to leave me alone. Anyhow, frig that. Because I went back with the demonstration I said, Winston you can't duck out if he want to duck out that's his business. Well later on, this will come up because they charged Wayne for being in that riot. And Wayne's father was a big man in charge of WASA at the time--

AA: And there were police witnesses.

WS: --and they couldn't save him from getting this charge or being suspended from teaching and losing his job and becoming a vagrant. Going mad and becoming a vagrant in San Fernando. One day somebody came, by the time I working up in UWI. Somebody called me and they say "Suite, when last you see Wayne?" I said, quite some time, I don't go to San Fernando. I think I'm now on staff in the UWI. They tell me, Wayne is a vagrant in San Fernando, you know. I said, what do you mean? They said, Wayne's sleeping on the road. You have to come down south to see Wayne sleeping on the pavement in San Fernando. That's where Wayne reached. He paid the ultimate price because of the suspension. What I did, I decided I was not going to sit down. I knew that they were not going to reinstate me. So I decided, Winston, what are you going to do? You have to start planning.

When I was put on suspension, I didn't know what the hell I was going to do, I was still thinking it out. Then, when the State of Emergency came, I realized that you ent getting back in no teaching job. And when I was inside, I wrote a letter to Ken Julien, if I could come and register to do a degree in engineering.

AA: That's when you were detained? During the State of Emergency--

WS: While I was detained.

AA: You decided to become a student?

WS: Because I said I'm not going to sit down on my ass and let these people screw me. Because I'm not getting no teaching job, I'm on suspension. In fact I was chosen, as some people does say. What happened is, when they suspended me from teaching, I set a national record. I was on suspension from April, from February, when this riot took place, 1970, until June of 1965. I was on suspension

AA: 85? You're going backwards.



WS: Huh?

AA: You're going backwards.

WS: How?

AA: You said 1970.

WS: 1975.

AA: 75. Okay.

WS: And I'm going to tell you why, because by that time I had done a bachelor's degree in engineering and a PhD in engineering.

[laughter]

AA: So what's the record? Longest suspension?

WS: Check it. I was reinstated when the government decided to no longer charge, carry on the charges against me. The main charges, the two charge on High Street, I won it.

AA: Okay.

WS: I fight my case myself.

WS: I represent myself in court. And I'll tell you why, and my wife had nothing to do with that.

AA: And you didn't study law.

WS: --She was in law sometime after. So—

AA: What--

WS: Just now, let me give you this—See why I say it's good that you come because next year I mightn't be able to remember anything.

AA: I'm sure you will be remembering for a very long time.

WS: What I said is look, Winston, when they put, when Williams declared a State of Emergency, they arrested a lot of us, I included. Put me on Nelson Island, I spent, I think 28 days of the first State of Emergency. And then Williams-- They moved me-- I missed the number, I used to say 17 but some people tell me it's 12 of us who were charged with sedition. I could call some of them, I tried to call [Clive] Nunez to get some of the names of

the fellas. A lot of them dead. You see what happened is a hundred people were detained on Nelson Island.

AA: A hundred people?

WS: A hundred. When I was in the National Trust, I tried to make up a list and if you go on Nelson Island, you'll see a list of names. I did that when I was now employed as the Chairman of the Board of the National Trust. That's why I say I would like to see that place called [Uriah] Butler's Island, because he spent more time there than all of us. He was detained twice. Good. And you have to document this.

AA: I'll do my best.

WS: He has to be recognized, he's one of our national heroes. I know you, I hope, you have other things to do. But I taking your time. You're busy? You have to go anywhere else?

AA: I'm here for as long as I need to be here.

WS: Well good. I'm going to tell you all I remember.

AA: Can you tell me what prompted you to go into Port of Spain for the march?

WS: I went to the march because I'm on suspension by this time. A big, they're having this big demonstration in Port of Spain. So I, I ent working so I said I'm going in town. I'm going to see, hear what they have to say, what NJAC had to say. And what is the state of what going on. Good? Remember at this point, I have two charges against me. Malicious damage to the tune of fifteen hundred dollars and taking part in-- Malicious damage and taking part in a riot. Two charges.

Then Williams declares a State of Emergency on the 21<sup>st</sup>. I am in my mother's house. We had a meeting in San Fernando. And I came home in my mother's house where I was living. And we were ole talking, a couple of us on the pavement. Me and one of the fellows that I know, who is dead now. And somebody else. We were there talking and I said boy it's two o'clock, it's time to go and sleep. And I went inside in my bed in my mother house. And then suddenly, she come in the back and tell me police outside and they come for you.

My mother in a state. In front of my mother's house, parked up, several police vehicles full of police men and at the back of the house, in case I flee or attempt to flee, they had big long guns. By this time now, so I'm going to find out this when I come outside. Because when they come, they come to the front door knocking. A little old house, my mother, my father there. Police come, they come. "The big man in San Fernando send us to bring you down." For what? They tell me they don't know, they just given instructions to go and collect me and bring me down and charge me. And that was the truth, you know. The police men who come, they didn't know what was going on.

AA: They didn't know it was a State of Emergency?

WS: No, they didn't know that. They found out after. But they were told to go and hold people. And I was one of the first people in San Fernando to be held. When I hear, I told my mother, my mother she said boy the police outside. I tell her don't worry yourself. Don't worry yourself, whatever is to be will be. Take off—change my clothes and I went outside. When I reach out, they tell me go in the backseat. Police men on one side and I in the center, and then policemen in the front. Then I seeing police coming from all in the back of my house, loaded with big long guns. In other words, I realise, these fellas surround the house, they had gone all down in the back, in the bush, around the house, in case I had tried to run, they would shoot. I realise that when I come outside and I seeing police all in the back of the house and the yard.

They carry me to San Fernando. In the charge room. The main charge thing, office in front. And they tell me how the big man-- I'm trying to remember what the hell was his name-- send them to bring me. When they bring me, they put me to sit down in the charge room. They tell me hold on there and now, I say what am I here for? They tell me the boss will come just now. It was four o'clock in the morning when they took me from my mother's house. And I never saw a senior policeman to tell me anything until about eight o'clock, nine o'clock. I am sitting down, seeing people coming. They walking, then they bring George Weekes come and they put George Weekes there and Winston Leonard come. Nuevo Diaz. Three fellows who was walking in the union. Senior officers in the union. They put that-- They don't seem to know what was going on. One of them start to suspect, boy is a State of Emergency.

I was the first person to be brought in from Princes Town. The others came in after and somewhere around eight o'clock, nine o'clock, or something so. They come and usher you in downstairs, into the Black Maria, you know the big van that they do thing, inside, lock the door. And you inside. Nobody ent telling you anything, explaining or telling. They don't have no responsibility. They say that they get instructions from Port of Spain to go and collect the rest of you. All right, that was it.

I don't know, whether they will—in those days, the government could have shoot you. They could have claimed to say you get shot in anything and-- When you reach Port of Spain, they decided to head towards St James to the army. And when they reached the army gate, I remember this vividly, that's why it's important that you-- Nobody waiting for you to go?

When I am, I reach Tetron. And I said nobody know the hell... All of we. Four of us, five of us. Nuevo Diaz. George Weekes. Winston Leonard. In the back of the van. And they drive in. They reached to go into the-- What do you call it? The base. Nobody know what happening. I remember vividly looking out through the wire up, high up there and I saw a young man who I knew in my youth. He came from Princes Town, we used to call him Balcatee. His name was Harold Stephen, right. Years after I saw him in Sea Lots. He used to live there but we never got to meet to talk about that. I saw him there and I said boy what is going on. He say boy, hell going on in the army, the army revolt. I say alright. That's all he know. And he is now on the outside of the gate with some other military people. This is a friend who grow up with me, he about a year older than me. He used to live in a house about from here to a lil further than that one [points] next door. We grow up together. Balcatee. Sister name Ingrid or Evelyn, something so. I remember his brother name Joseph. All ah we grow up on

the same hill in Princes Town. Nobody could tell you what happening. They took me in to town. When you reach down on the base and you hear that they in thing here. So somebody in the gate vicinity tell them, you better carry those fellas back in town because the army in upheaval.

AA: This is the same day that Raffique Shah and Lasalle--

WS: They were inside the base with their own problems inside of there, which I knew nothing about. I had never met Raffique Shah, I didn't know Raffique Shah. I had never had any dealings with any of the fellas in the army. They carried us back in to Port of Spain, in the main police station. You see the one that Abu Bakr and them had blow up once? Carried us downstairs. They have big cells downstairs, and they put you in a cell, I can't remember whether I was alone or what. What I remember vividly is that we could climb up and peep outside at the highest level and realize that, what you are seeing is the road level, so that your building in which you are, you are in the basement, below road level.

We stayed there for quite some time until it was almost dark and then they came back and they moved us from there back into a van, back down in the base. And when we come out of the base, this fella, Kel Shol, the one who, was he the one who had the [indecipherable]? It was either him or his brother or his cousin, I can't remember who it was. But Kel Shol, one of them, was in charge of a set of Coast Guard people and they took us out, put us on a boat, and carried us out to Nelson Island. Come out and you went. They had, what do you call it, police? Coast Guard. Coast Guard and some police surrounding the building.

The building is still there if you go and get a, excuse me, a view of it. And they put us inside the building. The building had no rooms. Subsequently, they went and they built cells, but then it was one big open hall, and they locked the front door on us and that's it. So that now, this is night of William's State of Emergency. By this time you find out there is a State of Emergency. But while we were downstairs in this basement, you're hearing people running up and down. Police running up and down. Because some of them are frightened, they jump in their car and they going because because they're afraid of the army. And every now and again, you hear some gun shoot off, because, and you are now eight feet below ground level, kept in this darkness, in a literally at the mercy of whoever, whatever, on whatever charges.

I spent 25 or 28 days, one of those numbers there, on Nelson Island. By which time, they had more, almost 100 people collected down there. Then we were taken into Port of Spain by [indecipherable] into the Red House. Driving from the basement of the Red House, coming inside, and you're come up the stairs, that was the high court. And we were read charges. That you were charged with sedition. Somehow or the other, I think we knew that we were going to court. They may have read the charges on Nelson Island for us. And I remember writing a piece of prose, I wish I find it, I can't find it nowhere.

AA: At that time, you wrote this thing?

WS: Yes, you expect to die anytime. I wrote, it was in defense—[phone chimes] I'll call the name just now. There is a French Jew who was charged with sedition and he spent time on

an island, on the island. Dreyfus. I tell you, I'm frightened [points at head]. I hope you taking all this down.

AA: [laughter] You're doing a good job.

WS: Eh?

AA: You're doing a good job. Don't worry about your memory, it will come.

WS: I wrote that, because, to me-- I used to read a lot-- Dreyfus was charged because the other non-Jewish officers were envious of his meteoric time in the French-- And they conspired to fabricate a charge of treason against Dreyfus. It's a famous, books have been written on it. And films have been made on it. And the case has been about, you know-- because Dreyfus, somebody, one of the famous French philosophers organized a mobilization of people in France, in Paris. And forced them after a couple of years to open the case of Dreyfus. And Dreyfus was exonerated.

AA: So you felt this was similar to your situation?

WS: Because some people had fabricated a charge against him. Because I'm saying, what have I done?

AA: But sedition is supposed to be proven, isn't it?

WS: Well, girl, all of those things.

AA: So about 100 people would have been charged for that?

WS: No, they were charged with lesser things. About 12 or 16 of us were charged with sedition. And that charge would be vacated, six and some years after. The government one day, by this time I finish the masters, the bachelor's degree. I had almost finished the experimental work and the write-up of the first draft for my PhD. And I received a letter while I am finishing my write-up.

It was telling me that the government was no longer intending to pursue the matter of sedition against me. And therefore, I had to report to the Ministry of Education to be reinstated in my teaching job. So I was on suspension with half pay, that's a next issue I'll raise today. Wonderful story. I was charged with sedition with twelve other people. On the 23rd of January, February, I was put on suspension until- that is 1970, 1976, June!

I received a letter. By which time, I had done a bachelor's degree, I got a first-class. I did, I got a scholarship to do my PhD, I get vex then, so I decided-- Just the same week when I got vex with them, I was on a research-- What do you call it again? A fellowship, scholarship, government, university scholarship for coming first in your class. That's another story.

There were people who were trying to stop me from getting a job. And I said, really, if that is the case, if I come first my class, and alyuh doh want to give me a job, and I see you hiring

other people the years before. Hiring people who ent do as good, I think, I said, no, I got mad vex and I said, it's a good thing I had been working pell mell. I said, decided on my own, I was not-- I finished--

I did the master's, the bachelor's degree but it cost me four years because after I finished the first year, and going to second year in November, the government extended the State of Emergency, and locked me up the second time. So, I was suspended in all-- First, we spent from April to November

AA: April to November. The first State of Emergency

WS: The first State of Emergency. Then the second State of Emergency, it was about nine months. So in all, it was about 15 to 16 months in prison.

AA: In the prison.

WS: The second time-- therefore I lost a year. I end up doing the degree in four years, that I should have done in three years. And while I was in there, I said, I'm not going to waste my time at all. And I decided that I will set my own pace. I will finish my PhD. This is not arrogance. This is-- I was screwed, and I had to catch up. So I decided I will not spend three years, I told my potential supervisor, he told me to come back and do a master's. I said, if I come back and do a master's, maximum two years. I will finish this in two years. All I want is your support, and to make sure that they correct it on time, and two years.

If it's a PhD, three years. I'm not staying any-- I have lost too many years. Good? So, I told you, the government decided after six years and something, six years and a half, that they will no longer pursue that case. In the meantime, I had defended myself on the two charges in San Fernando and had them thrown out.

I appeared on my own defense. So, it took me about three years for the case to come up, and every day I had to take time off from my lectures and to go down to San Fernando. I was mad vexed. And there's no stopping me. When you're mad vex, you do all kinds of things, you know. I was mad vex. I was mad vex for years.

AA: If you weren't suspended-- I would be mad vex too.

WS: I finished my PhD, experimental work, in a year and a half.

AA: Really?

WS: And when they told me that in June, I had almost written up the first draft. And I said to myself, I said, Winston, these people testing me. And I go in the ministry, and I remember the fellow who I had to meet. I tell him, I say, why are you all sending me Point Fortin as a relief teacher? You're all trying to get me to resign. And he smiled and smiled and said, is that possible?

AA: He said that?

WS: I said, anything possible. And I said, never forget it, I decided I will go-- Conveniently, I got annoyed with the university because they didn't want to appoint me on a job. Somebody make me apply, and when the time comes, they had they meeting, and they said, well, no Suite don't have enough experience. So they're not giving me-- Yeah, I don't have enough experience. And they did not want to—A certain fella in the faculty, senior in the department didn't want me. I wasn't the right kind of person

And I was to show them that I'm more than the right kind of person So, I resigned from the teaching fellow, what do you call, teaching assistant, instantly that evening. The same evening, I decided to resign, I get a letter telling me, report to the Ministry. I said, so I resigned from the UWI, and I said, I do, I finished all work. My first reaction was emotional, was to burn, I'll tell you the truth, was to burn my thesis. I had all the experimental work written up in two years.

I said, this stupid thing tries to drive me—all the years I spend doing that, my bachelors, my PhD finished, almost. What are they going to say, that I'm a mad, that I'm incompetent, or what it is. But the forces were great. The forces were great that were allayed against me. So, they sent me to Point Fortin, as a relief teacher. I did it for about two weeks. Leave Tunapuna where I was living to reach San Fernando, racing hard, and one day, I'll tell you the truth, this is undocumented, one day I overtook a taxi driver, round a corner, and as I overtook the driver, something came to me, Winston what the ass you trying to do? You're going to get killed. Possibly that's what they wanted to do, by sending you down Point. So, you know what happened? In June, I resigned. So, I resigned from teaching, and I pack up. I changed my mind, I said, alright, I won't burn the thesis. I almost finished it.

AA: [laughter] Good!

WS: Because my aim was three years. I had it done, inside and out. But the forces allayed against me. They take long to correct it. So, it ended up three and a half years, before I graduated. I said, well, the forces that are against you, are not equal to the forces that are for you.

I left teaching, the longest person on suspension, six years and a half, or something like that And then, they threw up their hand, and they're no longer charging sedition against me. I won the cases in San Fernando. I had a PhD, I had a master's degree. I said, well, what the hell are you doing? My brother told me, he had an engineering company, he said, well, come and work. I didn't want to work--

I went and worked for him for six years, as a contractor. After that time, I was tired of that, and I left. And, at that time, they called me in the faculty. If I'll change my mind and come and work. I said, yes And, I went back to the university after six years And, I have never left. Because, when I left, I was kept on for about three years, part-time. And then, Julien called me to join the staff at UTT [University of Trinidad and Tobago]. I stayed there for about 15 years, or 18 years, or something, helping them do their work. I'm still a professor emeritus in UWI. They appointed me a professor emeritus.

So, I say the forces-- For some reason, they wanted to teach me a lesson or just set me on a path of wanting-- But, I didn't want to be a teacher. But, so here am I, being a perpetual student.

AA: And, a reluctant teacher.

WS: No, I'm not a reluctant teacher.

AA: Not anymore?

WS: No. My students, in a way, make me feel that I have done wonders. I never wanted to be a teacher. But, when students meet me in the airport, or they meet me, I just came back from the UK and, they come and look for me. And, carry on this kind of thing to make me feel good that I help them, I said, well, boy, possibly you didn't want to be a teacher, but--

AA: You were meant to be a teacher.

WS: --But, you had to be a teacher. That is not your choice. I resisted the idea of being a teacher. I thought that that was not what I wanted.

AA: So, what did you think you wanted to do?

WS: Medicine. But, that is another story. That you might have to save-- Ask me what you want to ask me now.

AA: So, the two charges during the State of Emergency were both sedition charges?

WS: The two charges, no, first I told you the two charges before the State of Emergency were--

AA: Yeah, those two were--

WS: It was based on the High Street thing, right? Malicious damage of breaking a glass case and taking part in a riot.

AA: Yeah

WS: Those were the two charges.

AA: Right. And then, for State of Emergency, you were charged with sedition both times?

WS: But, there was only one time. You were charged with sedition and they just keep--

AA: And they exten—Right, okay.

WS: I wasn't studying them.



So, at the end of it, I said-- some people say you're blessed, others say you've had a function, a role, something to play. And that's, that is why you were protected. You are protected. I told you my age?

AA: Yeah.

WS: I tell myself, I am lucky. There are plenty of people who grow up with me, dead. There are plenty of people who are detained with me, dead. So I say, well, boy, possibly somebody watching over you and you have a purpose. It's arrogance, eh? Sounds like arrogance. But I can't explain it. I mean, when the struggle going on, you feel bitter and when it finishes, you tell yourself, it could have gone on--. You know, Wayne became mad.

AA: But he wasn't--Was he also arrested during the State of Emergency?

WS: Yes. Well, he was kept on Nelson Island. When he came out, he was already shaken from the impact of the thing. And then, after that, Wayne became mad. Lost. Became insane on that, whatever you call it. So I say, well, boy, you could have been like that. There are a lot of people who, when they went into their lock up, they just give up. Some of them didn't know what to do. Some migrate. One or two of them who migrate were able to finish-- Andalcio was able to do a degree somewhere in Canada. So that all have not failed. Some of them were able to establish—

There's a fellow, a Jamaican fellow, Blackwood. He was, detained with us and charged us with sedition. He ended up with a, going to France and England, I think. The last time I heard about him is that he was in Canada. He did a PhD in electrical engineering. He was doing electrical engineering, bachelor's degree here. He ended up doing a PhD. So he did fairly well after. He got married to an Indian girl, her father had an engineering company here. So, the story is about that.

What other areas are you interested in? As I told you, I went back in the UWI, I became an academic. I had my struggles with them inside of me. They found that I want to go too fast.

AA: What, what became of UMROBI?

WS: That's a nice question. When I came out of prison, the first time, we assembled, reassembled. Decimated. And a lot of people frightened and all kind of things. Some were in prison, someone in detention, some afraid that-- the police threaten them and all kinds of things like that. It was an elaborate program to destroy any kind of organizational thing. All the organizations in general, they suffer from all different kinds of problems We had the harassment of the police and young people feel afraid and then the government started the programs here and there. And they will give out something here to distract the young people. It was difficult.

So what we did, we joined, there was a No Vote campaign. We got involved with [James] Millet and their organization and a few other organizations and we organized the No Vote campaign. That was when I came out. So I spent my time studying academic work and doing political work. That was all I stopped reading anything, never go to-- stop going to the

cinema, stopped doing this, stopped doing all that. I devoted my life to two things, the organization and getting a good degree. And then, that was then, the second State of Emergency, locked up again. And we came outside and reorganized with great difficulty and after somewhere around-- I'm trying to remember the exact time-- this is about 1976.

We had joined-- Raffique Shah joined with Panday. Panday and they had the-- what do you call the organization? I'll call it-- this is Panday and Shah, Joe Young. I'll call it-- They had an organization and that survived and we used to, some of our members-- we had a long debate what we should do and some of them decided they want to get involved in that and a couple of them went into that. And we kept surviving, meeting from time to time. Diminished. Depleted number and impact. Then we started to face reality in 1976. ULF. Some of our members tried to be in ULF and be in our organization. And the strain became too great for people. We were all six years older, who had wife and children. And the question of jobs, difficulty in getting jobs. You can't get jobs with profile.

We engaging in a serious analysis, a serious analysis as to what is demanded from the members by the objective situation in politics and decided one day that--you end up with the shell of an organization. NJAC went through the same kind of thing. It was a sad bitter day and we did that for a number of years, members shut down but kept active. Some members went in the trade union movement, others retreat and then go away. My own personal case I decided that there are other ways to contribute to this.

I took up the issue of writing, I hope you would be interested in some of this, I took up the issue of reparations. I have written possible a dozen papers. Some of them published, some of them not published. About reparation means, what do we expect of our so-called national leaders. But first thing, I broke up the whole historical period into looking at the issue of the African man in the Caribbean, as a slave, from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

AA: So we have had this struggle for ownership, and a struggle for economic power going on for a very long time. I think that's reflected back in this 1970 revolution. Even though you weren't part of the NJAC, the whole north movement officially, you know.

WS: The way we were carrying on, our main focus was unemployment. But it, because of its nature and the membership, we started to discuss the question of the African in Trinidad. And the question of what the government responsibility is. Because I was telling you about that. First you have the period during slavery. At the end of the emancipation, there was never attempted to distribute land or to compensate the Africans.

AA: As a matter of fact, the plantation owners were the ones being compensated.

WS: Good. So that is first. Then we go from the period of 1834, 1838, to 1946. When the local government is kicking out the earlier fellows who tried to fight the guns on them after. And in 1956 with the PNM, and then 1962. In 1962, the discussion with the British never included a reparation for the Africans. That's a debt that our government took over when they became independent. Took over that debt from the British government up until now.

Wealth, generation wealth, is a thing that never matured in our system. So my father, when we would go to high school, we were living in a rented house. Renting is the evidence of the fact you never had generational wealth. So that's a fact. And, our government, Williams with all his progressive thing, never took up the issue with the British about land distribution or reparation for the Africans.

AA:

And that led to this economic imbalance?

WS: Ah, yes. Then we find now, so they lock up people thinking that they would quell the thing but it continues. Then we look at 1976. We are now a republic. We have a second constitution but the constitution does not deal with the backlog of the debt. Neither does it deal with human rights and fundamental rights of the Africans. Or the cumulative debt to the First Peoples. Good? They even carry out some brutality against the East Indians too, you know.

But I'm saying this is the colonial debt. And when the government, Williams and them take over, they were supposed to, they should have dealt with that problem. Why is it that what we have is a generation of only death? Young men dying every day, fighting each other, killing each other. That's the effect. The failure to deal with the reparation.