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Interviewee: Massell, Sam

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RONALD BAYOR: Twenty-six, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35.

(break in recording)

BAYOR: -- racial relations in twentieth century Atlanta.

SAM MASSELL: Yeah.

BAYOR: And I'm interested in various aspects of your administration. So I thought I'd begin with the 1969 election. And I was curious there, one thing, about the importance of racial practice in that election, in terms of why the black community gave you so much support, almost as much as they did to Horace Tate, for example.

MASSELL: Almost as much?

BAYOR: Well, I think in the --

MASSELL: Well, they gave me a lot more; otherwise he would have been elected.

BAYOR: Well --

MASSELL: No, not really. But I mean --

BAYOR: Well, you got [40 voters?] and he got 49%, and you got the white, (inaudible) white vote also.

MASSELL: Oh yeah, oh, (inaudible).

BAYOR: Well there's nothing wrong with that.

MASSELL: Oh, OK. I'm sorry, I thought you -- OK. [01:00] I was thinking of the general election.

BAYOR: OK. The general election, (overlapping dialogue; inaudible; phone ringing). Oh yeah, yeah. OK, I was curious about that, why they supported --

MASSELL: What was this -- I don't even remember what the debate was between me and Horace. What'd Horace get? So he got...?

BAYOR: He got 49%, you got 44% of the [first election?].

MASSELL: Of the black vote, yes. I had forgotten (inaudible). But excuse me, so your question was what?

BAYOR: Why the black supported you over one of their own.

MASSELL: My own -- my assessment would be that they thought I could win, that he couldn't. At that time, they still did not have the majority of the [race of the?] voters. And I think it was purely a practical matter.

BAYOR: In terms of you actually running for vice mayor, too, did they feel they could take the second position in that? This is Jackson [over Horace?].

MASSELL: I don't remember the figures, but [02:00] you can tell me what the figures were. I mean (inaudible).

BAYOR: I don't have the figures for --

MASSELL: I'd have to analyze them probably based on the figures, I can tell you.

BAYOR: But in the sense that you would say generally that the feeling was it was not time for a black to one of the biggest positions?

MASSELL: No, no. Not a question [not?] time. They were ready, yeah, they didn't have the numbers. But also, because I offered them what they were wanting in the way of philosophy, that Farris did not. I mean, and I can give you that comparison. Farris was more conservative.

BAYOR: I guess Cook too, (inaudible).

MASSELL: Cook, right.

BAYOR: So you were, in a sense? Was there any kind of meetings between the black community and yourself beforehand, in terms of what you would do for the black community if you got their support?

MASSELL: Not out-of-the-ordinary meetings, they were the typical screenings that the black leadership at that time - - [03:00] I don't know if they still pursue this or not -- executed with perfection, very professionally, before every election. That they set up their committees -- of course some were a lot more meaningful than others, because they really represented power and leadership, where the others were self-anointed -- but they would set up a screening

committee and invite you in. And they invited every candidate, the major candidates down to the most minor, and asked them the same questions, where do you stand on this issue, that issue, and on and on. Now, every black community (inaudible) was not the only people, the only part of the community that does that up here. The League of Women Voters does it, but (inaudible) questions, and asked about where they stand on them. And the League's questions are issues in which they have an interest; black questions are the questions in which they have an interest.

BAYOR: OK, so then the support for you then [04:00]

[therefor?] was based on --

MASSELL: On my answers.

BAYOR: On your answers, if you could do something for the black community?

MASSELL: Yeah. There was no -- there were no promises from me. Now some of the others may have made promises; I just didn't make any promises to anybody because I wouldn't promise something I didn't know I could deliver, but -- and you don't know, because at that time, we had what was called a weak (inaudible) system there. And you really didn't have the power other than (inaudible). So I don't think anybody would say that I promise anything, white or black. Not to anybody.

BAYOR: Of course, you had your record as city council president to stand on.

MASSELL: Yes, I had that, and I promised -- I made it very clear what my attitudes were, my philosophies; there was no secrets about it. But it wasn't a tradeoff. There was a tradeoff on -- for the fact that hey, if you elect me, here's the kind of government you're going to get. And the fellow before you is more to your liking and what you want than my opponents.

BAYOR: Yeah. And they (inaudible) on what you could provide.

MASSELL: Yeah. And there were [05:00] (inaudible) like in a specific, as you might [surely do?] know, like I appointed the first black department heads in the city's history. But nowhere did I make a promise beforehand that I would do so. I don't remember the question, whether it came up. If it did, I'm sure I said, "Yes, I'm anxious to appoint some."

BAYOR: OK. So --

MASSELL: That's the difference I guess, (inaudible). So technically, I wasn't making --

BAYOR: I understand. There were expectations when you (inaudible).

MASSELL: There were expectations that I would do things that blacks wanted done, because I believed in them. Yeah.

BAYOR: Yeah, OK.

MASSELL: There's no question about it.

BAYOR: Would you think of 1969 in any way as a turning point election in terms of you being --

MASSELL: Very strongly, I would -- I think it's only fair to say that (inaudible) I probably -- the same reason Cook got most of the white vote, is because there were expectations on their part that he would do things that they wanted. So that's not unusual; everybody votes for [06:00] the candidate they think will do the things that they expect.

BAYOR: Oh yeah. Right. I was curious about other aspects of this, and this is relating to some other things I'm involved in besides this particular research. I'm on the Black-Jewish Coalition, and you were named a representative to that group. And I was curious, just in that angle, was it helpful at all that the Jewish community had taken a pro-integration and moderate stand previously -- Rabbi Rothschild, for example -- did that help you at all in terms of [black voting]? And are -- did they --

MASSELL: I don't know. I -- let me answer it this way. When I ran for vice mayor (inaudible) president of (inaudible) city council, I made it clear then that -- in addressing black audiences that in my opinion, being Jewish meant I was more sensitive to their problems than a person not

[07:00] brought up in the Jewish faith. So you said did it help me? It might have helped, because I was indeed trying to convey that fact that I had seen the prejudice, and I had felt hatred. Not as much, not the same way -- you know, I would always couple that with the comment, "You can't feel black unless you are black," but I felt I was closer to it, and would react more in the way that they would react to a problem than would somebody more conservative. But as to the fact that I doubt if there was that much sophistication in the election at large, that because they [made?] such a religious group, had a certain philosophy, that they'll be (phone rings; inaudible) electing that person. I don't know, maybe.

BAYOR: Well you know, (inaudible) Jewish community here has a reputation of being moderate and liberal.

MASSELL: Yeah maybe, maybe. You know, the Jewish people are still mysterious [08:00] to a lot of the less educated part of the community. And they were probably surprised to see I didn't have horns. So to say that they would know that the Jewish community would be a little more liberal and all, it may have been too generous for the less educated, and most of the blacks were less educated.

BAYOR: But the leadership I guess then.

MASSELL: Oh the leadership, they -- well, since they already had a working relationship with the Jewish community, (overlapping dialogue; inaudible). Yes, so at that stage, they were already on the boards. I mean they had Jewish people on the boards of the NAACP; they had black people on the board (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

BAYOR: OK. Well then in terms of giving you that, what I was saying, or say that this man is better than Cook, let's say.

MASSELL: Well they might have --

BAYOR: More of a trusting attitude because of --

MASSELL: I would say -- let's put it this way, whereas many people you hear complain because they have a name Goldberg, that they can't get in the door, in this case, maybe [09:00] my being Jewish got me in the door. Because maybe for the Jewish -- for the black leadership, they would start with a more receptive attitude, but it was still the personally -- I mean you've got some bad Jews, you know. (laughter) And down the line. So, I don't think they were actually -- would ever (inaudible) automatically, that he's Jewish, he's OK.

BAYOR: Did Rabbi Rothschild (inaudible) or did he --

MASSELL: No, no. Well, I emphasized that "no" loudly, but I want to make sure you understand, a great supporter and



friend and I'm a great admirer -- or was a great admirer of his. And he would have done anything except I never asked him to get involved. The Jewish community, as you know, in the temple or the synagogues here had not gotten into politics.

BAYOR: Of course, that's the temple itself, but (inaudible) was always -- were an indication of the -- I guess --

MASSELL: The thing in the civic and social life of the community [10:00] is not the same as the political life. Yeah, he's very involved, he was, and I don't know if they thought it was, in his day, you know, David Marx was. And now, it continues that way at the temple, and it's been some -- I've probably gotten more political support from -- well, I guess any -- I don't think any of the rabbis, I talked to several of them, but I've never asked for it. I would have been shocked if a rabbi had come out politically for anybody, in my race or any other race.

BAYOR: (inaudible). It's sort of outside the --

MASSELL: Yeah, it is. They just don't do it. They just don't do it, and it's probably (inaudible). But I mean, listen, the, quote, "white community" felt generally [11:00] that all the Jews were voting for me, which that's probably, (inaudible) did. But the secret weapon was that they

always thought there were, you know, five million of us or something like that. And so --

BAYOR: Five million in the city?

MASSELL: Yeah, oh yeah. (inaudible). Just in the city limits. But that would elect me, so.

BAYOR: I'm curious about how the blacks perceived you as somebody coming out of a liberal, racial position.

MASSELL: Yeah, I think -- oh yeah, I think -- I mean, I tried to use that. As I explained, I felt that was a benefit, a real benefit. And I tried to explain to them that that was a benefit. (inaudible). Yes. And as you mentioned, some of them may have already felt it.

BAYOR: I'm also curious about whether race in any way was an important factor in decision-making in terms of efforts to help the black community while you were mayor? [12:00]

MASSELL: Excuse me. Can y'all just move somewhere else? We're trying -- we've got a tape recorder going here, and you're right on top of us. (inaudible).

BAYOR: OK. The -- whether there were efforts made to help the black community during your administration, or whether race was a factor in kind of decision making. And I'm interested particularly in the opposition to -- your opposition to the Atlanta/Fulton County merger, which would

have brought more whites into the city. And annexation in general.

MASSELL: Wait a minute. Now you've lost me. Start back with the question again.

BAYOR: OK. Whether racial factors were a part of any decision-making in your administration.

MASSELL: Always.

BAYOR: Oh, always.

MASSELL: Always, yes.

BAYOR: And in particular --

MASSELL: I mean almost always.

BAYOR: In what, in the --

MASSELL: Maybe not in the model automobile I got, but everything else. (laughter)

BAYOR: In efforts to please the black community, (inaudible).

MASSELL: In efforts to do what was right. No, seriously. I mean, I felt so strongly --

BAYOR: Oh, I agree.

MASSELL: -- that it wasn't a -- but now, let me -- yeah, I'm not trying to convince you, but let me explain [13:00] that they didn't always like what I did. Nor did the Jewish community, nor did the labor, organized labor, nor did -- I don't know, I'm trying to think of other groups that supported me. See, these groups supported me, but they --

at no point did anybody go through the whole four years perfectly satisfied.

BAYOR: Oh yeah. That would be impossible, so.

MASSELL: Yeah. And so there were [times?]. But the racial considerations were [uppermost?].

BAYOR: How about things like annexation? I guess it was an important factor there. Tried to bring more whites into the city?

MASSELL: Well, I never thought of annexation from a racial foundation of -- let me see how to explain this. Annexation, in my opinion, was not something to serve a racial need or interest, or balance, or whatever. [14:00] But there were racial considerations as to whether -- what can be done and can't be done, and who will it hurt, and won't hurt, and a lot of considerations like that. But annexation was a -- had a lot of -- more economic than racial. But then that affects, you know, the economy affects race and (inaudible) especially.

BAYOR: I guess what I always heard was that the black leaders were opposed to any more annexation.

MASSELL: That's true. The blacks were opposed to annexation because it would dilute their strength. Whites opposed it from the outside annexation because it would bring in blacks. So they got -- but those are political factors. I

don't know what you gave me, or what you attributed to me there, on the annexation program. My program was what they called the two-city plan, which almost passed, which in retrospect, most people [15:00] think would have been good for the -- around here, most people feel it would have been good. And that was worked out. It -- there were racial considerations in my planning it, the considerations being as to the practical end of whether we could adopt it or not. To plan something, you're (inaudible) that you can't get through that doesn't mean anything. So yes, we felt growth would be healthy for the city economically. And how do you achieve that? Well, like you said, if you just merged city and county, you can't do it, because it would cause a racial grievance. So how can we -- what would be racial reasons that would be supported? And my two-city plan, taking the south side and making that a city, and then taking the north side and making that a city, solved that.

BAYOR: Did the blacks support that?

MASSELL: Yes. [16:00] And in fact, we passed the House through the legislature, and would have passed the Senate except for Lester Maddox, who blocked it. And I don't -- who's this story, this study for, incidentally? Is this your personal, or you plan to publish it?

BAYOR: That's my personal. I plan to get a book out of it eventually.

MASSELL: OK. I'll give you something that I'd like to give you off the record. Just because you're probably interested.

BAYOR: Yeah. I can just turn this off, and --  
(break in audio)

BAYOR: You know, I would just -- well in terms of that then, I guess the blacks were agreeable to certain programs, if they could retain the strength in the city, I guess. I guess that was from (inaudible).

MASSELL: Yeah, everything's a question of moderation, or reasonableness, or --

BAYOR: But you had worked out [into your?] consideration?

MASSELL: Yes, yes.

BAYOR: Which was your constituency at the time.

MASSELL: Yes. Well no, not for that reasoning. Not because they were *my* constituency. Because they were the majority of the city of Atlanta that I represented. [17:00]  
Whether they were supporters of mine didn't -- was not the point. There's a big difference.

BAYOR: But they were the growing (inaudible).

MASSELL: Yes, no question about it.

BAYOR: Oh. So any politician would have to --

MASSELL: This one didn't.

BAYOR: OK. Let's --

MASSELL: Did not think that way. I didn't have to be reelected. I didn't have to serve as a (inaudible).

BAYOR: Well yeah, I guess that's true.

MASSELL: They can always rationalize, and say well I can do this, even though it's wrong, because if I don't get reelected, I can't do anything. You know, (inaudible). I mean, I didn't have to anything crooked.

BAYOR: Were black leaders consulted before making decisions (inaudible)?

MASSELL: In many cases, yes. But --

BAYOR: Was it Jesse Hill, or (inaudible)?

MASSELL: It would depend on the decision. I mean, what the issue was. If it had to do with the highway, no; I would consult some traffic people. It would depend on if it was an issue that [18:00] involved the black community. By all means, black leadership was consulted, but no differently than any other part of the community, any issue that concerned them.

BAYOR: But you were trying to keep that sense of cooperation between whites and blacks that had begun back in the Hartsfield period, I [guess?]?

MASSELL: Oh, that -- tried very hard. But I was the one back when I was president of the city council, the board of

aldermen, that introduced the legislation agreement and Community Relations Commission. And I appointed Andy Young as my chairman, incidentally, and did a great job. But no that, I would do -- I spent more time on that, probably. Now there, yes, everything was racial consideration. Not everything -- some had to do with homosexuality, some had to do with senior citizens, there were other segments to it. But --

BAYOR: But the ties, you tried to keep the (inaudible) voices.

MASSELL: Yeah, right.

BAYOR: That's been one of the things about the (inaudible) unusual to me.

MASSELL: Yeah, [19:00] very important. But see, that's -- all right, now we're talking human relations instead of politics. And yes, I [have no apologies?] for that.

BAYOR: What was the purpose of the Community Relations Commission? Because that was set up when you were president of the (inaudible).

MASSELL: Yes. I introduced the legislation. It was to foster, nurture good relations in our community between different walks of life. Not just racial. And like I mentioned homosexuality -- I appointed an active leader from the gay community to the Community Relations Commission. The



Atlanta newspapers [showed?] how political they are.

This young man worked for the *Journal*. And the *Journal* tried to -- [Jack?] (inaudible) himself called city hall to (inaudible) the city hall reporter, and had him come into my office [20:00] just before the news conference when I was going to announce it, asking me not to name him, because they didn't want to be identified with... Of course, you have to think, that's a long time ago, and it's --

BAYOR: Yeah. Well yeah, I guess the '60s, true.

MASSELL: Still showed their colors. Yeah, the Community Relations Commission served a great purpose. Like I said, we had a senior [citizen?], we had a youth member -- in fact, it was Michael Hollis, now president of Air Atlanta.

BAYOR: [That was important?] into Young's administration. I guess he's the one that killed it eventually.

MASSELL: Yeah.

BAYOR: For whatever reason. (inaudible).

MASSELL: Yeah.

BAYOR: I was also curious about the MARTA rail line. And what I heard from other people so far is that the whole point about pushing the rail line west at first, into the black community on the west side, was to get black support for the bond (inaudible). Is that the way it was, or...?

MASSELL: [21:00] Neither, that doesn't matter. The problem being that I really wasn't in on that part of -- there were some black leaders -- Leroy Johnson, I think, was in the forefront, I was thinking. But anyway, there were some who promised -- but this was after -- I can't remember -- do you think this was before the (inaudible)?

BAYOR: Well I think the first bond issue on MARTA was -- that was '61.

MASSELL: Yeah, well that was before I -- yeah, I'm familiar with that. And then later, I came forth with a program to do it with the sales guys. And I felt it was a great benefit to the black community. And the sales tax, a little more aggressive, I pointed out that the subsidized fast [track check?] [22:00] took, would actually cost them less than the other -- they would get more money back, because they were the biggest users of mass transit, so I used blackboards when I went into the neighborhoods and showed them where increased taxes would decrease bus fare, and they'd end up making money. So (inaudible).

BAYOR: Yeah, I think Leroy Johnson was really (inaudible) I think that they were the ones pushing to that in the (inaudible).

MASSELL: Yeah, yeah.

BAYOR: But here's what I'm curious about: was there any kind of tradeoff?

MASSELL: Well not -- I didn't. And I didn't -- and I --

BAYOR: Did you hear about any tradeoffs?

MASSELL: Yeah. I'm -- no, I'm not trying to hide from it, I'm just trying to explain that it was not a major factor. It was -- that was, I think, the way it developed. And I'm just really searching my memory now. There were a lot of public hearings, and in these public hearings, [23:00] we would get up and we would explain this, explain that, and answer questions, defend our position, whatever. Most of these were in the black community, but they were also in the white community. And they were, you know, sometimes, oh we want a monorail, and we want buses instead of fixed rail, we want -- everybody has a different opinion of what. And I think it was in those areas where some of them said, "We won't ever even get service, or we'll be the last ones, we always are." And somebody probably said, "Look, we'll give it to you first, or you'll be one of the first, or whatever." And so there was -- felt there was a commitment. But there was never any tradeoff commitment, believe me, with anybody that was in any position of authority to agree with any other group of formal structure, that yes, that you would get their support, we

will do this for you. That was not done. The only commitment that was made was the reduced fare. And even that, [24:00] they went around saying that they got a commitment that it was seven years. That's too something that came up during these arguments -- I mean during these public hearings, and that wasn't really a commitment either. That was just, that was the way the bill was drawn. That -- but the legislature, that it would be (inaudible). So it wasn't a promise to them, yes, we promise you you'll have (inaudible).

BAYOR: Yeah, yeah. The thing is, if the rail line went to this area first, up to Lennox, let's say, how much (inaudible) the black community on a bond issue? If it had gone through in the end of their own territory.

MASSELL: Well, see this was not a bond that was taxed on the property; it was taxed on the sales tax. And it included the bus system, which was one of the best bus systems in the United States, and it included -- and that's what they were using, and that's what they were paying 60 cents for, and we were going to drop it to 15 cents. So it didn't make any difference who went first. Now I won't say any difference, yes, it may have made some difference. You could say that in fact, without that, it wouldn't have passed. Because without [25:00] any one thing, it might

not have passed, because it passed by such a small margin.

I mean I got up in a helicopter, did you hear about that?

BAYOR: No.

MASSELL: And went over the expressways, and the -- when the five o'clock traffic, and used a bullhorn and said, "If you vote yes, you'll get out of this mess." Well, they -- this being the Bible Belt, (laughter) they thought it was God speaking. All they heard was this voice. That was in *Time* magazine. And we did everything, I got on buses in the front and walked through, talking to every person on it, and got off at the back door, and then get on the next bus in the front, and walk through, talking to everybody.

BAYOR: (inaudible).

MASSELL: Any one thing could have won it.

BAYOR: The way I hear it from the blacks -- I talked to a few black leaders already -- and they seem to say yes, we supported the bond or whatever, we supported the idea, and they put the rail line in the west side.

MASSELL: A small part of it, a small part of it. But it was not wrong to put it in the west side.

BAYOR: No, I don't think it was either, but...

MASSELL: Yeah. I mean, there's a lot of people out there. You know, but --

BAYOR: Well, maybe it was just an attempt to show how powerful they were, [26:00] I guess (inaudible).

MASSELL: Right, that's exactly why. The same thing when they were -- like I said, saying later, when they tried to raise the fares, said, oh we guaranteed it would be seven, that was part of the agreement. That was just, again, conversation, and some of these rallies.

BAYOR: OK, how about the placement of the Omni? Was that any kind of racial (inaudible)?

MASSELL: Not at all there.

BAYOR: In terms of being a bridge over the railroad gulf, in terms of bringing about [community across?] the west side, or...?

MASSELL: Not at all.

BAYOR: It was just for economic reasons?

MASSELL: That was what?

BAYOR: Placed there for economic reasons, or whatever?

MASSELL: Well I -- no, I'll tell you exactly why it was placed there. It was because John Fulton tried to get me to place it down at Peachtree Center, there, near the Civic Center. In fact, he's hardly spoken to me since. Because the way John Fulton does, let me tell you, he don't ask you or he doesn't suggest, he commands, and he's not used to people saying no. Now see, the Omni, (inaudible) [27:00] right,

so that you understand, the Omni is the only sports facility (inaudible) in the United States that dealt with public funds where there's no call on the tax payer. Regardless of whether it's successful or not, whether they sell any tickets at all. But see, the state is not like that, at most sports facilities around the country have developed where if they sell tickets, yeah, it's OK. But if you don't sell tickets, too bad taxpayer, you pay. But that's an investment we've won at the stadium every single year except last year, 200,000, 400,000 a year out of that. And you understand me, I supported the stadium too, because I thought it was a good thing, even though I thought it would lose money, and it indeed does. Because at the same time, when I became mayor, I said no, you know, one luxury is enough for the city. The only way I'll do it is if I can do it without any call on the taxpayer. Now that took some very specific ingredients to do that. And now we're talking a business deal, [28:00] not a racial deal. So, but it turned about that the -- one of the specifics was that the guy who owned the Hawks owned that land, where the Omni is, [John's cousin?]. And so, we can do a deal there. But anywhere else, we'd have another million, two million, three million dollars, and the whole thing (inaudible) 17 million, so.

BAYOR: So were any black leaders (inaudible) to this decision (inaudible)?

MASSELL: I don't remember [if there's?] blacks everything seen anywhere except for the groundbreaking, throwing basketballs. Well, I mean (laughs) that as a compliment. (laughter)

MASSELL: (inaudible)

BAYOR: Great (inaudible). I was just wondering whether pressure generated by the civil rights movement was more effective in Atlanta than other cities because of this long tradition of cooperation between black and white communities. And what influence that had. I mean, you know, why Birmingham exploded and why we didn't. Was it the fact that what we didn't have here some sort of tradition of sitting down, even if behind the scenes, sitting down --

MASSELL: [Oh, gee?], I'll go [29:00] beyond that and say why did we have this tradition of sitting down? The way we differ from the Birminghams, or Memphis, or some of these other Southern cities, there's several, but one is being the nation's capital for black education. You know, when you've got people who are sitting around a conference table, probably (inaudible), it's a hell of a lot easier to communicate.



BAYOR: And that's definitely one of the big [influences?] of the city.

MASSELL: Yeah. Sadly, you know, in many ways, but at that time, where you had to get together and negotiate with people you've never spoken to, never seen, never, you know, you never understood, two completely different worlds, at least, you know, that was a big help, so they had perfect diction and they had good vocabulary. All these things that all of a sudden, you know, broke the barrier. Another factor that's seldom [30:00] mentioned that I think is due a lot of the credit, is that Atlanta was the headquarters for many of the civil rights movements. So these were not outsiders. I mean, Martin Luther King lived here. SNIC was headquartered here.

BAYOR: It was one of the reasons they were, is because of the black colleges, I suppose.

MASSELL: Maybe so, I don't know. Anyway, SNIC, if that brought SNIC here, or the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. You know, and then everybody -- CORE had a major office here and NAACP had a major office, all these -- so the leadership we were sitting down with were our own people. And that makes a lot of difference to the sort of, you know, you thought they was outsiders, they're foreigners. And so these people, they were going to

Birmingham, and going to Memphis to meet, and they were outsiders coming in there, causing trouble. Highly different.

BAYOR: Did you have conversations in the city going on between the white and black communities, going back to, I guess after the 1906 riot? (inaudible) people (inaudible) talk to each other.

MASSELL: Yeah. Because they were [31:00] local people. I mean, you know, all the way -- the oldest one living is probably [Mars?] (inaudible) the druggist. He was on the city executive committee, elected office. He -- there, back from the '30s, he was sitting around with whites and discussing racial issues. But anyway.

BAYOR: (inaudible) already.

MASSELL: So those were two of the main things, I think. Then a third factor was we, for whatever reason, happened to be blessed at that time with a very courageous, and progressive, and liberal, and intelligent leadership in the media.

BAYOR: Ralph McGill.

MASSELL: Yeah. Ralph McGill, and then James Patterson fit in that mold, and we had people of conviction that we -- that played a big [32:00] part in helping this city get through those hard times.

BAYOR: Well I guess, plus you had people like Hartsfield now, and you, who were also [good people?].

MASSELL: Yeah but, you know, but the Hartsfields and Allens and myself can't do it without strong support from the media.

BAYOR: That's true. And both papers were pretty good.

MASSELL: Yeah. They really were back then. Not anymore, but they were then.

BAYOR: Yeah. And they weren't before then.

MASSELL: No, that's true. (laughter) That's good. Yeah, right.

BAYOR: Yeah. OK, I was also, you know, sort of the last point, and then we can get to the (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

MASSELL: One other thing (inaudible) and I don't know, it's sort of the fourth thing, if I were to list the factors. And that was -- and I don't know the reason for this -- but we had a -- I think, from just my observations, we had a much larger percentage of young leadership, [33:00] with Tom Cousins and John Portmans, and the Charlie Akins, and people who are in that age bracket, who were in the forefront in the business community who were willing to get involved a little bit. I didn't see this when they had riots in Birmingham, and they showed the TV news, it was

always these much older people who were already much more conservative and set in their ways.

BAYOR: Plus it was (inaudible).

MASSELL: Yeah. Oh yeah, and Cecil and I (inaudible) I mean we can go down the list, there were a lot of people in that age bracket then that were much more involved.

BAYOR: Again, that sort of gets back to one of the Jewish [questions?], with Cecil Alexander and [Mars Abram?] and yourself and Rabbi Rothschild. Even [Richard and Rich?], who closed on it, and did (inaudible) of his own store, seemed to eventually work out his feelings, and (inaudible).

MASSELL: I don't know if that's (inaudible). [34:00]

BAYOR: Well he definitely, he came to terms with it, let's say.

MASSELL: Yeah, yeah. That's the way to put it.

BAYOR: Let's go forward to the '73 election. Which I guess was a little more involved, (inaudible). That I guess was more of a very racial aspect to that election, then.

MASSELL: Actually, there were two or three ways to define racial. No question that there was a racial result, in that all the blacks voted for the black candidate. What the Atlanta newspapers tried to paint -- and did very successfully -- as a racial campaign, never existed. The

one term that they took as being racial was "Atlanta's too young to die," which was my slogan in the runoff.

BAYOR: Actually, I came to Atlanta (inaudible) campaign, so.

[35:00]

MASSELL: It's funny, because since then, they've used the slogan, you know, they showed pictures of downtown Atlanta, and deteriorated, and vacant stores, and trash on the streets. Maybe they didn't use the exact same words, but the same things. They -- like Atlanta has, since -- look what's happened to Atlanta. So it has --

BAYOR: Well I know what they think [of that?] slogan, but what did you mean by it?

MASSELL: I meant that I was the best man for the city, that Maynard couldn't run it, and sure enough, he didn't. So, I mean I was -- I -- to me, it was the -- every candidate I've ever known who's ever run seriously has had to come out and claim he was the best man and that the other man couldn't do it. And that's exactly what I was saying. And I was saying that heck, we've got too good a city to hand it over to a guy like Maynard Jackson. Now, there was no reason [36:00] in the world I couldn't use the exact same words if I had a white opponent.

BAYOR: Well there's nothing you could have done here, it really would have -- nothing (inaudible).

MASSELL: Well maybe so, but they really grabbed it and ran with it, and did a good job with it. But seriously, stop and think about it. If I had a white opponent, and I [came out with?] "Atlanta's too young to die" and showed pictures with vacant buildings -- which is what we did in those schools, and closed schools and a number of (inaudible) and things like that -- nobody could have said it was racial. So there was nothing, no intent... Helen Willard was my campaign manager. One of the most liberal (inaudible). But better than that, the one who wrote the slogan was Ralph McGill Jr. Yeah, and it had been reported, because he ran the newspaper, he was going to report it. He was working with (inaudible) Wilson, I think, the advertising [37:00] agency or whatever it was, public relations firm, or -- but anyway. And you know, we just -- it never occurred to me that it's racial. Now some of my staff may have said, "Man, this is -- you know, we think this is racial." But they didn't say it to me. If they had, I would have said, "Wait, let's take another look at it." Now seriously, because I -- there's no way in the world would I have wanted to do something that was racial. I did my best to get out the white vote, because I was convinced then -- and I was right -- I was convinced that Sidney Marcus's campaign, and I told him before he ran, I was

convinced, you know, in my first campaign, that the majority of people would vote along racial lines.

BAYOR: Even though you had done a lot for the black community?

MASSELL: Oh yes, yes. Well, they had -- I'll tell you something else off the record, if you want to go off the record again.

(break in audio)

MASSELL: (inaudible). I'm a grown man, [38:00] and I knew what I was doing. What I didn't know was -- and I'll be frank about this -- I thought we still had a majority white registration. And it wasn't until the runoff that I realized we didn't, and that's because of our voting calls, which candidates do, they're a normal procedure trying to get a vote. And we found every third and fourth call almost, the person would say, "Oh, well, I moved to Gwinnett a year ago," "Oh, I've been out of Atlanta two years." I mean just every fourth call. It was impossible. That was when I realized, we're dead. I knew it before the runoff.

BAYOR: Well, but then again you did do simple acts (inaudible).

MASSELL: Oh yeah, oh I got some of the leadership, but see, they had decided, and they told me that, but I knew I

wasn't going to be able to get the black vote. I got 90% of the white vote. They got it down to -- the last article I think said 50%, (inaudible). And everybody picks up the one before, and makes it a little better [39:00] from their viewpoint. But it was about almost 90% of the white vote, but I only got about 10% of the black vote. And it just wasn't enough anymore. And it's the same mix that Sidney Marcus got, and that's the way it comes out almost every election: if you've got fairly decent people running, that you will end up with that kind of (inaudible). And it may be that way for a long, long time.

BAYOR: Yeah. Well it's not surprising, really, considering that they had been --

MASSELL: No. People vote for -- along the lines of what they think is going to be best for them. Hey, that's what election is all about, that you've got a voice to express your opinion for what you want, what you think is good. And you vote for that person who espouses that philosophy.

BAYOR: (inaudible). At the beginning of the '73 election, you had made a charge that there was some sort of deal or agreement between the white power structure and the black leaders to have the whites support Jackson, and the blacks to support Wade Mitchell for council president. [40:00] Do you remember that at all?



MASSELL: I remember that point, but I didn't remember my making it. But I might have. I remember the point being made.

BAYOR: I just (inaudible) that in the newspaper.

MASSELL: Yeah.

BAYOR: I was curious whether there was any basis -- you know, you had knowledge of an agreement that --

MASSELL: Oh they say today that they made that agreement.

BAYOR: Oh they do?

MASSELL: Yeah. But, anyway, they wouldn't ever make it stick, but --

BAYOR: Well, Wade Mitchell lost (inaudible).

MASSELL: Yeah, that's what I'm saying, they weren't able -- yeah, they (inaudible). And I didn't remember that I had said it, but I might have. But I've heard it -- I still hear it, yeah -- from people who would be in the know on something like that.

BAYOR: So I guess the feelings were that while you were having problems with the (inaudible) and business leadership in the community --

MASSELL: Yeah, but see, they didn't support me the first time either. So it's -- that didn't mean anything to me. I mean that was just kind of, to stir up some interest in the election.

BAYOR: But why support Jackson [41:00] than you at this point? Just they had come to terms with it, it's time for a black to become mayor, and --

MASSELL: No, that was the one they (inaudible) back to the first question that you asked me at the beginning of this interview. They thought -- oh yeah, they had thought I could win. I'd have gotten the support hands down.

BAYOR: I was also curious if you had any idea of why blacks supported Jackson rather than Leroy Johnson [in the campaign?].

MASSELL: Well, the black community -- and I don't find fault with this, because the people -- I said earlier that to a large degree they're still maybe a less educated, less informed. And so, excuse me, they are more likely to take the suggestion of a handful of leaders. And the leaders serve a purpose and very carefully [42:00] trying to pick the person they think is best and then advise the (inaudible).

BAYOR: Yeah, Jackson got the (inaudible).

MASSELL: Jackson got the best (inaudible).

BAYOR: Also, I was wondering why blacks supported [Fowler?] versus [Hosea Williams?]. Any thoughts on that?

MASSELL: Well, see, (inaudible) I said a minute ago that votes were about 90-10, assuming we got two reasonably good

candidates. Hosea is such a wild man that you can't consider him as a reasonably good candidate.

F: Excuse me, this is for \$50 and she's leaving very early in the morning. Do we have any cash here that we could cash this?

MASSELL: I don't think so.

F: Do you -- I mean do you personally have any, or...? That you might take it until Monday? I know, I know.

(break in audio)

BAYOR: OK. In other words, blacks saw Fowler as a more, I guess, [43:00] legitimate leader, something they could deal with, than Williams was --

MASSELL: Yeah, they just really didn't take Williams that seriously. They thought he would embarrass them, the leadership did. But I think that's purely it, rather -- not one to be embarrassed. Now, they would have supported him over an idiot white candidate.

BAYOR: Oh sure, or a racist.

MASSELL: Yeah, or a racist, yeah. And you'll find that, believe it or not, I think most whites even would support a black over an idiot white. (laughter)

BAYOR: I'd hope so.

MASSELL: Yeah, I think they will. I think when it gets down to it, if you end up with a race that you've got -- well

[Lionel C. Loeb?] (inaudible) if he would have run for mayor, and he'd be the, for some reason the -- well mayor, you're going to have a black, but I'm trying to think of a, you know, a situation where you had a majority white. They would not vote, elect him over a [44:00] decent black.

BAYOR: Williams made a statement during the campaign that what you were saying apparently, and how they were interpreting what you were saying was stirring up anti-Semitic feelings among young blacks. I don't know if you remember that or not.

MASSELL: No.

BAYOR: Any indication of that? Or was that just Williams sort of shooting off at the mouth a little?

MASSELL: I don't remember (inaudible). There wasn't any indications.

BAYOR: All right. Basically then on what I would say that would just sort of sum it up, that black decisions or black leadership did play a role in your administration certainly, in terms of your (inaudible) and then --

MASSELL: Yes. It also got me elected. No question about that. And beyond that, they got representation in city hall. I mean, I think that's the best way to put it, that with the majority black constituency, [45:00] and one that had been suppressed for, you know, 100 years in this city, but they

had great needs. And those needs were met satisfactorily,  
I think from their viewpoint, and from my opinion.

BAYOR: I guess [we're very privileged?] there was not a black  
candidate in 1973, (inaudible).

MASSELL: Oh yeah.

BAYOR: All right. I'm -- I still have a lot of people to  
see.

(break in audio)

MASSELL: You can put out that red --

(break in audio)

BAYOR: I'm just curious who you approached within the black  
community in terms of decision-making. Who you had ties to  
in the black community. Calhoun?

MASSELL: No. Sam Williams probably. Yeah, he was probably my  
closest ally. Jesse Hill was close. We used to work  
politically with Leroy Johnson (inaudible). But --

BAYOR: King Senior? Or you didn't get to --

MASSELL: Yeah, yeah. Used to meet with him some, pretty  
frequently. He was of a different school, but no, at  
different times I'd meet with any number of [them?] --  
Benjamin Mays or... I mean, they were all involved. But  
I'll tell you, that's [been?] something that's changed a  
great deal, with regard to black involvement. I appointed  
the first black --

(break in audio)

MASSELL: I was just going to say how times have changed. I appointed the city's first black department head in the city's 125-year history at that time. And it happened to be a very important one, and it happened to be the first department head opening that I had, remembering that at that time, the mayor didn't have the right to remove department heads except for cause. [47:00] So I took what I got, and then I'm told somebody retired, or their term expired, I didn't have an opportunity to appoint. So the first one that came up was the personnel department. What could be more important than the head of personnel (inaudible)? Trying to increase black employment and opportunities within the city government. But I was determined that we would not appoint anybody, black or white, unless they were qualified. And finding a black personnel director was extremely difficult, who was qualified for that position. And I remember (inaudible) black leadership, calling all of [them, I think?] 10 or 12 of the black leaders in my office, and saying, "Hey, look, I want to appoint a black to this position. But I need your help; I can't find one. We've looked high and low. You help me find one and I'll appoint him." Now the difference between then and now is that not a single one

said, "[All the same?] go ahead and appoint him. There are plenty [48:00] of other ones." They all agreed, "Yes, we don't want you to appoint somebody unless they're good. We'll help you find somebody, and we'll look, and we'll look, and we'll look." And we looked for a year before we found him. We had this position open, I think it was 12 months, before we filled that position, using the acting director in the interim. And then we brought one from New York. The second one -- the second department head I appointed, the second opportunity I had, which was also black, was public works, went all the way to the Virgin Islands on that.

BAYOR: Nobody in the local community (inaudible).

MASSELL: No, well. See, we really -- now these people -- never, ever did any white business person or leader, civic person, or religious leader, or civic or social -- nobody in leadership that I know of ever questioned either one of these appointments, because they were excellent people. And so not only did they serve the community well, the citizens of Atlanta who were paying their salaries, [49:00] but they served race relations well, because they proved to people that hey, you know, the fact that a person's black doesn't mean they can't do their job, because here's an

excellent personnel director, here's an excellent public relations -- public works (inaudible).

BAYOR: (inaudible).

MASSELL: Yeah, it really meant something.

BAYOR: So in terms of your appointing, though, it would be -- you said it was the right thing to do, plus (inaudible). You really seem to (inaudible).

MASSELL: Well, I [didn't see it as serving my?] black positions, I saw it as the right thing to do, and I thought that it would help race relations in the city.

BAYOR: Which I'm sure it did.

MASSELL: Yeah. Oh they did, those two particularly. The third one, who I was able to elevate from inside, to the prison -- the head of the prison board, or whatever it was called. And so. Now, of course, [back then, see?], they didn't even ask me to appoint [50:00] the police chief black. The black leadership didn't even ask for it. And if you look at it in the light of the question you just asked me, I would say that I would have thought probably that would have hurt race relations. Even if I had a real qualified candidate, I think at that point -- remembering for instance that it wasn't too many years before that, that blacks weren't even allowed -- black policemen on the force



weren't allowed to arrest white people [or?] give them a traffic ticket, you know.

BAYOR: You would have thought it was moving too fast?

MASSELL: I would have thought, yeah. That probably would have hurt race relations. Not too fast for me, but it probably would have hurt race relations.

BAYOR: That's -- maybe it would have, who knows?

MASSELL: Yeah. Well I don't know. I interviewed a couple of blacks, but they weren't qualified. And of course, it ended up the white that I wanted, some people thought he was a racist. And that caused more problems. Inman, John Inman. I got a lot of (inaudible) [51:00] in the white community as well as the black community.

BAYOR: (inaudible) the whole story.

MASSELL: [Yeah, that's about?] the whole story.

BAYOR: Yeah. Well it's very interesting.

MASSELL: Well, I wish you --

(break in audio)

BAYOR: (inaudible).

MASSELL: I'll just say, another factor that helped us back in the '60s and the early '70s in the race relations probably was due to the influx of people in Atlanta from all over the United States, and some abroad, for that matter, that brought fresh thinking, new ideas. [We had?] people who

had already maybe had some experience in integration in school, or in college, so it wasn't completely foreign to them. There are only 27% of us natives left in Atlanta, so that was really a benefit.

BAYOR: [Well, I agree?]. That was sort of my feeling when I came, the -- actually I was surprised how, how segregated the city was in a lot of ways. And [it seemed?] something that was just a throwback. [52:00] So I guess if I had come here in the '50s, it would have really seemed like (inaudible).

MASSELL: Oh yeah, it sure would have, yeah. And still, Atlanta was an oasis for the rest of the South, especially rural areas.

BAYOR: I spoke to Reverend Borders, and he said --

END OF AUDIO FILE