

Interview with Dr. Thompson Bradley (TB), Professor Emeritus of Swarthmore College by Alis Anasal (AA) and Haydn Welch (HW) at the Swarthmore College Black Cultural Center on November 2, 2014. Thompson Bradley was a radical member of the Swarthmore faculty in the course of the 1960s, involved with organizing activists within Swarthmore, as well as the larger Philadelphia area. He worked closely with SASS during the course of the 1969 sit-in. The transcription is word for word with the exception of unnecessary conversational words such as "um" and/or stutter starts which have been edited for the sake of cleaner reading and clearer understanding. Dr. Bradley offered clarifications of this November 2014 interview which are marked in brackets.

Alis Anasal: We're just going to introduce ourselves, the camera is rolling now. My name is Alis Anasal and I am a senior in Professor Dorsey's class.

Haydn Welch: My name is Haydn Welch and I am also a senior in Professor Dorsey's class. Today we are interviewing Thompson Bradley, Professor Emeritus of Swarthmore College. First, could you describe for us the atmosphere at College toward the end of the 1960s? We're specifically interested in the relationships between faculty and students and faculty and administration.

Thompson Bradley: Well, of course there were terrific splits over the war in Vietnam, and also around Civil Rights. And to a certain extent one of the things that happened, which was unfortunate but almost irresistible, was as the war began to get worse, and more and more casualties, and the war seemed endless, all of the work that had been going on in the 50s into the 60s, for Civil Rights, was suddenly waning. And, so things came together in a different kind of way. It was a terrible disappointment. It's hard to calculate now, because you could see why it happened. Probably the most important event of those years was when MLK, in 1967, in January, announced his support for the antiwar movement and spoke of the war in Asia as a racist war. I mean he did it in much more grand, polite and poetic language but that essentially was the meaning of what he said. That just electrified everyone. And so, not only here but all over the country, young men and women from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference who had been organizing, and I mean [young] people [and] kids, who were 16 17, 18, came north and worked with us organizing against the war. And one of the most interesting influences that had was its influence on nonviolent struggle, that's a whole different subject but it's very important. This was an issue that was around, of course the Civil Rights activities of the 60s was also important for some people, and so there was a small group of us that was involved pretty much from 1964 on, against the war. And some of us had worked with CORE, or with SNCC, or the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and an organization called SCEF, there were a number of different groups as you can imagine.¹ So I worked in Chester with a number of

¹ Dr. Bradley here refers to several different influential organizations active during the Civil Rights Movement. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was founded in 1942 and, by the

different groups, and ultimately there was this split that came in 1965, 1966, when whites in CORE and SNCC were asked to leave. And then we all did further organizing with other groups like SCEF, and we can talk about that. SCEF did some very interesting things in the south, to say the least. But at Swarthmore there was a growing number of students who were involved in radical activity, so there were a lot of discussions, lots of demonstrations, lots of various different activities. But it didn't touch, and this is the important part of our discussion I think, it didn't touch on admissions. More than one, but a single event may have been the precipitating moment. But I don't want to get ahead of you so you go ahead. But it was very, very volatile [time] very engaged, but was essentially anti-war, and anti-draft and the like.

HW: Were there any divides within the faculty that you can remember, particularly related to the anti-war effort?

TB: Yes.

HW: Can you elaborate on that a little?

TB: Well, I would say, institutions to begin with are conservative, administrations are conservative, education is the passing on of tradition and scholarship and knowledge and it tends to be more conservative, not necessarily in a bad way, but more conservative. So any interruption of that, any act that questions what we were doing, in large part the institution normally responded, listen we have a very important task, we can't be bothered with other issues that don't have to do with the education that we gave [give]. So the faculty, I would say, was divided into three parts, not equal. I would say there was maybe a quarter of the faculty was very against the resistance, all of the anti-war protesting and the like. And then another two quarters were, that's maybe not enough, were sort of silent partners or on the side, they'd say 'I agree with you' but they weren't active. It [Then there] was a small group of us, I can actually almost name them all by name there were so few who were active against the war. I guess our group when we finally

mid-60s, had chapters in most major American urban centers. CORE orchestrated the 1947 Journey of Reconciliation, a campaign to end segregation on interstate travel, helped organize the March on Washington, and played a central role in organizing Freedom Summer in the summer of 1964, along with SNCC and the NAACP, actions aimed at ending and drawing attention to the political disenfranchisement of black Americans in the South. SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, along with CORE, was similarly one of the most influential Civil Rights organizations in the 60s. SNCC worked on a wide range of issues, later embracing an ethos of black power and involved in anti-war activism. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, SCLC, was a similarly influential civil rights organization. SCLC's first president was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Founded in 1957 in the aftermath of the Montgomery Bus Boycott; SCLC was involved in organizing the March on Washington and dozens of other campaigns, including Citizenship Schools. The Southern Conference Education Fund (SCEF) played a more minor role but worked closely with SNCC and other civil rights organizations.

put it together a little bit later had about 14 or 15 in it. And the faculty was over 100 so that gives you some idea; this was not a large group of people. And actually with regards to the admissions, the sit-ins, and all of those activities, it was even a smaller group in fact. That created a different kind of split. But some of the same people played the same roles.

HW: How did faculty, and you specifically, understand your relationships and interactions with students during the late 1960s?

TB: Well, just as background, I went to an all boys boarding school, and I went to an all boys university, and then I went into the army, that was all boys. And so the first place where I had any experience actually that was coeducational was when I went to graduate school at Columbia after the army, and then Moscow University where I studied the year before I came here. It was just a totally different experience. So coming here for me was coming to a place that made more sense. I loved teaching, I wanted to teach, and this was actually an ideal place to teach. I taught here for a very long time and I have to say I never regretted a moment of it. But those years created real divisions, to say the least. And people behaved in, I wouldn't necessarily say predictable, but behaved in ways, I guess the kindest way to put it would be disappointing.

HW: How so?

TB: Well, if we get in to the whole matter of the sit-in, which is maybe the way to do this, one of the most important things to happen at a faculty meeting was when the Dean of Admissions, Fred Hargadon, reported that he couldn't find any black students. I mean it was, it was, beyond belief, actually, and the few of us who were involved and much more involved as that went on, couldn't believe our ears. Because you know, you look at the population of America and, where were they looking? I don't know if it necessarily was, I don't think we've ever discussed, whether that was the last straw for the students here that led to the sit-in, I don't know if that was the case, I really don't.

HW: I'm wondering what connections you had with activist groups and organizations outside of Swarthmore, perhaps in Philadelphia or Chester?

TB: Yes, I worked with SDS in Chester, there was a so-called ERAP project there, there was one in Newark, there was one in Boston, there were a number of them.² And so I went there, because

² Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was one of the most radical and largest student organizations active in the 1960s. It is known primarily for its activism against the Vietnam War. Radical factions within the organization led to its dissolution in 1970. The Education Research and Action Project (ERAP) was an SDS initiative to organize an 'interracial movement of the poor,' targeting and mobilizing poor unemployed whites around issues of racial and economic justice. For more on SDS and ERAP see, Jennifer Frost, *An Interracial Movement of*

a very good student in one of my classes, said [asked] ‘Do you know about this?’ and I said, ‘No,’ I didn’t, and he said ‘Well, join me,’ and so I did. And then that fed into working with a person who didn’t go to Swarthmore and his wife, but who became very important, his name was Donald Jackson, and his wife was named Mary Jackson, but [later] he changed his name to Muhammad Kenyatta, and he was very important, instrumental, in creating what was known as BEDC the Black Economic... Black Economic...whatever it was.³ And he went around to Quaker meetings and churches and said, ‘Time to make some restorative payments, time to make some real act on behalf of all of those people who have been exploited, not only in your country but in your churches,’ and he was fairly successful. But before that he had a group that I was a part of, coming out of the SDS, it was the Chester Committee for Homes, Jobs, and Schools, it wasn’t a catchy title. There were very few of us, it was the two of them and then there was couple, one young white women, one black man, who were a couple, and then another older woman, a little older than I, and I, and so we were this tiny little group that picketed City Hall, and leafleted, so we were this small cohesive group, which then turned itself into a CORE chapter and stayed a CORE chapter until the changes came and the whites were leaving. But we all stayed friends, I mean, we all stayed. It was very tough on the couple, because there they were and they were incredibly good activists, but anyway. There were Swarthmore students who were involved, they were involved when the NAACP were arrested and taken to Media and put in a pen, because one of the demonstrations they had in Chester, a man named Stanley Branche who had created, at that point, the Chester Committee for Freedom Now, which was, again, an attempt to change the whole political structure, the whole racial attitude of the time, very tough to do.⁴ So, much of my time when not teaching was spent *not* here, actually. And that was true for the whole 39 years, in many respects. I loved the teaching and you have to do it, you *should* to do it, right, but there were a lot of other things going on. So there was a small group of activist students, and there has always been a core of very talented, smart and activist students. They went on year by year and [their numbers] grew as the years went on.

the Poor”: *Community Organizing and the New Left* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

³ Dr. Bradley is referring to the Black Economic Development Conference (BEDC) was an organization of black clergymen and business people focused on issues of economic empowerment for black communities. BEDC worked closely with SNCC. In the fall of 1969, preceding the 1970 occupation of the President’s office, BEDC brought Black Panther BEDC organized a teach-in on Swarthmore’s campus, bringing Wes Cook of the Philadelphia Black Panther Party among others. See Ken Kloethen, “Black Panther Teach-In Criticizes Police Repression,” *Swarthmore Phoenix*, December 17, 1969.

⁴ The Chester Committee for Freedom Now was a civil rights organization in Chester, Pennsylvania. The organization first emerged in the early sixties to push for the desegregation of Chester’s public schools. The organizations goals revolved around better public schools, more jobs, better housing and medical care, and “an end to discrimination.” See “African American Residents of Chester, PA demonstrate to end de facto segregation in public schools, 1963-1966,” *Global Nonviolent Action Database*, <http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/african-american-residents-chester-pa-demonstrate-end-de-facto-segregation-public-schools-19>

HW: Can you speak a little bit about your relationship with Asmaron Legesse? How you came to know each other, and any other details you might remember about him?

TB: Well, I don't know if any of you ever met him, or have seen him.

HW: No, we haven't.

AA: It's so hard to track him down.

TB: He had the most charming smile you could imagine, he was a very handsome man, and he was a very talented ~~and~~ smart teacher. I didn't realize that he was Eritrean, and that he actually had a very important post later on in Eritrea, I think, as head of all education. But he was here, and I had a whole other connection with him that I only learned after all of this. We were friends, but he was put in an impossible position vis a vis the small group of us and the rest of the faculty, that is he was made essentially a black surrogate, to speak...he certainly wasn't colorblind but he didn't necessarily think of himself as one or the other, he was here. He *was* political. And I say that because one of my oldest and best friends, and someone I went to school with who was also a roommate, was, unbelievably, 6 feet 9, and in those years, this is back in the 50s, that wasn't the height you saw very often. And he went, believe it or not, and fought for Castro, for the Cuban Revolution, and then when he wanted to come back, after Castro had prevailed, the revolution prevailed, the United States wouldn't let him back. I didn't know any of this, because Legesse hadn't gotten to Swarthmore, but he [Legesse] was at the forefront of the group that petitioned and fought to get my friend [Richard] Diebold, back into the country, and succeeded. So he was already a man with an incredible sense of justice, but also of incredible integrity, moral integrity. But was put, when he was made the person who was supposed to be the faculty...representative? I'm not exactly sure, it [was] impossible, and it was *insulting*, actually. And though none of us said it that to him, we felt they were actually using him in a really bad way. Not everybody thought that, not everybody shared my politics or the politics of the people in our group. Very good man, though, very articulate, very charming, and very smart.

HW: Do you remember how you met? Or was it just so long ago...

TB: It was bound to happen, because he would have, as I would have, migrated to those faculty members who were activists, and I just, it's funny...how we met... it could even have been over a sandwich or it could have just been encountering each other and saying, you know, my name is.... I just don't remember. I just liked him. And then we saw a lot of him, as I say he was in a very tough position.

HW: In the records we are collecting for the database on black student activism at Swarthmore, it's indicated that you were involved in organizing a food drive for the students while they were in Parrish. Is this account true, do you remember that?

TB: By no means was I the only one. I can tell you the list of names of people who were active if you're interested.

HW: Sure! Yes!

TB: One of the most important was Richard Schuldenfrei from Philosophy, who was also an old and very close friend of mine. We did a lot of organizing for years together. One was the person who was the chair of the Philosophy Department, Dan Bennet. Another was Uva Henka, who was in the department. He was less, but still involved. And then in the French Department there was a very good fellow named Richard Terdiman, was involved. And then there were people around the edges. But we were the core group in the faculty. And we met before faculty meetings, we met after faculty meetings. And amongst other things, I don't remember how it worked, but we were just instrumental in making sure that food could get to students there. Our contact person throughout all of this, specifically, was Don Mizell. Very young, very slim, very much a smaller version of himself now. But he was the most important person---not in the faculty, Etheridge was the most, he was the dignified, almost elder statesman of all of the rest of them, and we can talk about that. How it worked was, I guess we bought food, I guess we got food from the dining room...after all there were students who were very much supportive of the sit-in. It wasn't just faculty, there were very good students who were involved. The credit doesn't go to me; it goes to all of us who were involved.

HW: Could you talk some more about relationships you had with specific members of SASS, such as Don Mizell?

TB: We met daily, nightly. We would meet after the faculty meeting, then a group of us would meet with him and talk, sometimes there would be one or another person. But he was the link. There were two important links. One was Don Mizell with us in the faculty; the other was Etheridge, who was absolutely the most representative of the sit-in. Very different styles. I don't know if you've met either of them.

HW: Yes.

TB: Very different styles. Charming in their own ways, but my god, very different. It was a very interesting political decision to divide the work and the areas in which people did work.

HW: Where did those meetings with Don Mizell take place, do you remember?

TB: We'd either meet outside Parrish. It was dark, it was night. What you have to understand is that these [faculty] meetings went on for hours, until 12, 1, 2 o'clock in the morning, it seemed. It felt like we never slept.

HW: What did you discuss in these meetings?

TB: Say we'd be finished [with the faculty meeting] at 1, 1:15, and he [Don Mizell] would know, he would be around, and we'd go and say, well this is the situation, this is the way in which we presented the arguments (and we can talk about that if you like...

HW: Yes!

TB: This is what came up, this is what it looks like the possibilities and we would say very simple things, 'How is everybody doing, are people getting enough sleep.' We were, for better or for worse, the grownups in this case and felt we had some real commitment and obligation to make sure that the students were ok. And they were. They were very smart and planned this very well and they carried it off with terrific, not only aplomb, but the important word here is dignity. The way in which they continued and the way they ended it, in a very, very interesting way.

HW: Can you speak to the internal dynamics of the administration and faculty in the course of the occupation of Parrish Hall?

TB: It was obviously a shock, and no one could believe that students would go that far, because nothing like that had happened at Swarthmore yet. It had happened in a few other places as you know, and there had been all kinds of other activities out in Berkeley and University of Michigan and Cornell. But nothing like this had actually happened at Swarthmore. And the Dean, Susan Cobbs, was really old fashioned, quiet witty, but rather old-fashioned administrator, teacher. And so for her, this was an act of extraordinary rudeness. I have to say the important thing was for many members, some members, of the faculty who were most offended, they felt insulted, that the students had been rude, and we'll get to that in a second. And the President, who was a very traditional American educational liberal, also felt that this was an affront. And I think the second important part---the first being what Hargadon said that was so *unbelievable*, and that actually created some of the rumblings in the faculty and it didn't take long for things to be ignited by that, but the President couldn't get around the 'affront' and the rudeness. Truly it was as if it became personal in a very touching but not a very productive way. He just could not imagine anyone being rude like that to him, or to the faculty, or the institution. So it was a struggle. So much of the discussion about it; it was a struggle to make the arguments which had to turn on: 'Don't look at the character of the act, look at what the requests are, what the demands are.' And there were two different things, and if you looked at the first you couldn't hear or see the second.

So much of the fight was really repeating, and there must be notes for this, I don't know how many times we must over the nights of those meetings repeated, ad nauseum, pay attention to the demands, pay attention to what's being wanted. Think about it in terms of education. I think, actually, his resistance to this, which is really quite sad, I think in some sense the sit-in did not, and this is really important from the perspective of those of us who were for, not the sit-in, but for the *demands* of the sit-in, which was the important thing. The sit-in was just a way to get attention, everybody knows, it's a political act, it's not the strategy it's the tactic. I think what happened is, he couldn't bend. And to a certain extent, because that happened, the sit-in and all of those activities did not kill him. What killed him was his inability to bend. Really it was just a human frailty of a certain sort and he just couldn't do it. It's as if, you're being presented with something that's simply beyond the pale for you. And you simply can't envisage, can't imagine how it would be, so you just resist it. And you remember what happened to Cornell.⁵ A number of the people couldn't, but they were actually much crueler. He was resisting on behalf of an open, charitable understanding of liberal education that didn't have rudeness and effrontery and demands in it. And couldn't see what the social and political dynamic was that was going on. Cornell was a very different kind of prospect, and a very different kind of anger. He [President Smith] was not an angry man; he was deeply just very at odds with what was happening. You have to understand.

TB: I'm trying to think of Etheridge's first name.

HW: Clinton.

TB: Yes, of course. He was as dignified as the President. It was very, very interesting to watch him. And he was the one who would come in. Now, to give you some sort of sense of the dynamic, some of the faculty members who were most grievously affronted by this got up and walked out when he came in. This is really a very, very sad commentary--they refused to listen, refused to see, refused to hear, and they did that every time he came into the meetings.

HW: So it was just his mere presence that caused... he didn't even say a word?

TB: That he had the effrontery to be who he was. Yes, I don't even know if they could *see* him. They may have been able to see the color of his skin, I have absolutely no idea, but they knew where he was from. But he was very good, very serious. He must have been a senior or a junior,

⁵ In April, 1969, 100 black Cornell student activists occupied Cornell's Willard Straight Hall. The takeover was the culmination of a two-year campaign by black student activists to force Cornell to create relevant spaces and programs for black students and increase black admission. Student occupiers were armed, fearing further attacks from white students. Images of student activists emerging from Straight Hall carrying guns and sporting bandoleers became part of a sensationalized national conversation about black militants. See Ibram H. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement* (New York: St. Martin's Press LLC,) 183.

but he was very serious and almost, you know, a young scholarly debater. But he'd lay out the things they [SASS] had to say, and then he would leave. And the people who walked out would come back and the discussions would begin. And they [the discussions] would go on for hours.

HW: How did the other faculty member react, when some faculty would just leave when Clinton Etheridge arrived?

TB: Well there was, as there is in all kinds of communities, there's a very large, I'm not sure if the correct word is "passive," but there's a very large sort of unspoken, inactive part of every community that may have been bothered. I have to say that many years later, people would say "I really did back you," but I have to tell you honestly, they were so far back we couldn't see them. It was not as if there was lots of active support from large members of the faculty. They probably might have been embarrassed, should have been I think. But that wasn't what came up; it was never discussed in the faculty that I know of.

HW: After the occupation of the admissions office in 1969, how did the faculty dynamics change regarding the original SASS demands--admissions, blacker faculty members? How did that change?

TB: Well, one of the things that was part of the argument we wanted to make. This is about education. This is not people saying, close down the college. This is people saying, open up the college. Open up the education; create an expanded and transformed education. We said it in a lot of different ways. Stop looking at the surface, look at the content, look at what it was. So ultimately, of course, we were hiring all kinds of people who had never been on the campus before. And suddenly, low and behold, it was possible to find students. Turned out not to be very hard. Believe it or not, it just worked. So what happened is - there's a kind of healing process that went on; not evenly, and not easily. Not everyone was pleased to have new black colleagues in the faculty, not everyone was welcoming, but in the main, I would say, it was a slow, it must have been for those new faculty members (I know because I knew some of them very well), not easy, just not easy. But we had changed as a college. The makeup of the college was different. And it's a little bit different. I've always thought of it, since I'm old enough to have seen this happen after the Second World War and after Korea, when the veterans came back. These were people who had come back from war. They were a very different kind of presence and a very important one for all of us. It was hard to be just young and stupid when you had people like this around with you who had had all this experience that you had been saved from having to have. So to a certain extent, the same was true here; now we were living in a time when there was a whole new kind of intellectual, moral, and social presence that was unmistakable. You can't not notice the difference. And you could feel it in the courses that were being offered and the kinds of things that were happening. So it was a different place. And it was going to be tested a year later with the Cambodian invasion.

HW: Also, a year later there was the 1970 protest at the President's office. I was wondering if you could talk about that at all, were there similar reactions among faculty to the 1970 protest as there were to the 1969 occupation?

TB: Well there'd been a number of times, later on, over South Africa; there was a sit-in [in the President's office] that a number of us were involved in. I have to say I didn't *sit in*, I just joined and talked with the people there, we were all together. But it wasn't so much the [an] occupation of the President's office [over Cambodia] --- [it was] that we went down to Tarbles, which was still the library, and we called a strike. And then we went into Philadelphia, to Penn and to Temple. It was actually almost the [our] same people [faculty group] that had been involved with the SASS occupation of the admissions office. Almost identically the same people, although we began to add one or two here and there. It became this group, which ultimately turned itself into a New American Movement, which was kind of a Socialist [organizing group.]

HW: Could you discuss in more detail the strike that happened?

TB: Well, we just simply called off [all classes]. Tarbles was filled, upstairs and downstairs, it's a very different looking place now, but the place was packed and we just said, classes are over, we're on strike over this and we need to do something about it. And it worked. It worked at Temple, it worked at Penn. Not as successfully as it did at Swarthmore. Out of that came a course that we created called Philosophy 10, which was again, we were trying to create a new curriculum--but the spirit of it, it's important to note the continuity, was from the sit-in, the whole notion that education is something that can transform, can change, and it can have a different kind of role and it can expand in what it considers.

HW: Did you provide any sort of extracurricular support for student activists during this time?

TB: It was hard not to do that. We were all organizing together [around the Sandinistas and the resistance in El Salvador]. Yes, we met and did all kinds of things together, and that continued right into the 70s, into the 80s, into the 90s, and then I retired. But yes, going down to Fort Benning. This is not probably part of your life but in the University of Central America in Santiago, 6 priests, Jesuit priests, and 2 women were killed by the soldiers trained at Fort Benning, and the Arena party arranged it.⁶ They were slaughtered, and very interestingly, and I won't go further, what they did is that they shot each one of the priests in the head, as if you can

⁶ On November 18, 1989, an elite unit of the Salvadoran army gunned down six Jesuit priests and two others because of their purported associations with "subversive elements" in the Salvadoran Civil War. Their murders marked a turning point in the Salvadoran Civil War and drew international attention. See "Report of the UN Truth Commission on El Salvador," United Nations, April 1, 1993, pg. 47.

kill an idea; kill the intellectual life by shooting the brain. So we, actually, again a small group of us called for ending all classes and spending a couple of days simply discussing the moral responsibility and the intellectual responsibility of those of who were teachers. We lost the vote, but we created a whole other consortium; fourteen other schools around here, with the University of Central America. What turned out to be a vote that we lost was actually a winning bet. But all those sorts of things emerged one from the other. And certainly what Philosophy 10 was about and certainly the activities with the students was very definitely one, and I remember Muhammad Kenyatta and his wife came while we were sitting in and classes had stopped and we were down in Tarbles. And it was a terrific reunion, because we had been quite good friends--we argued all the time; I would argue for socialism and he would argue for nationalism, and we would continue these conversations over and over, you can imagine. We were friends who disagreed in serious ways, and it was, I'm sad to say, one of the last conversations I had with him. He died a quite young man, just a year or so after that. He was a very young man. The internal momentum, intellectual momentum, out of the sit in, and the whole idea of thinking about education, forced us for the first time to stop being so lazy and to think about it so we created this course which we then for one year held at the college. I guess it was the fall of 1970, spring of 1971.

HW: How did Swarthmore's identity, or rather reputation, as being a liberal, Quaker institution compare with your experiences at the college and your own perceptions of the college?

TB: Well, I don't have any religion, wasn't brought up with much that I could think of, but coming here was very interesting for me because there is something about the Quaker tradition--not all of it--that I think really seemed very constructive, very creative. And one of the things is that it teaches you, among other things, the difference between voting and consensus. Consensus is really an incredibly long and drawn out process. But if you can get it, one of the things that comes with that is that you don't get people saying "Well, I voted against that so I'm not going to do anything to help." All of us are part of the process. And I learned this here. I also worked for the American Friend's service committee and various different committees as part of anti-war activities. But here I learned it mainly. But what happens here is that you get consensus, then people are really part of the decision. I always liked that. I also don't like titles, so I would often ask students to call me by my own name, which is what Quakers do. I'm not a Quaker, you have to understand, I just that it was a very good way, so, I don't need a title, you don't need a title, so you call me by my whole name and I'll call you by your whole name and we'll have the kind of equal, in that sense, equal relationship. And it actually tended to work pretty much, because students really liked using the whole name, as you can imagine. It was if they were getting away with something, but it couldn't have pleased me more. So yes, those parts of the tradition I think are really very important and were very important for me. And then my wife's family, some generations back, they were Quakers, Quaker travelers around the eastern shore of Maryland and

North Carolina, places like that. But that's not part of my tradition. I'm, unfortunately, brought up in the Puritan culture of New England.

AA: I was wondering if you remember anything about how you became involved with SASS activists, and the beginnings of that conversation before the takeover happened. Because, when you referenced Dean Hargadon's statement, it coincides with when the admissions report was put on display in McCabe and that was part of what, in our understanding, prompted the more direct action in January. And I'm wondering if you remember any of your interactions with SASS members or faculty members in the months preceding the takeover?

TB: Well, this was kind of an emerging crisis. So, it wasn't any single thing, but you're right, it [Hargadon's report] was in the library, and it was available for everybody to read, and, in my own case, it wasn't so much as I was working with SASS students, to tell you the truth, I was working with students who were politically interested, they happened to be students of mine or we had gotten into a conversation, it was much more like that. It wasn't like they were organized or we were organized necessarily. Actually the sit-in, in some very important sense, created the organization SASS. There were people who had met and talked and done things but this was actually the bonding that came out of that would never go away. So we weren't so much doing that but, doing what you normally do when you're an organizer, meet with people who were active. And you talk about what it is. But behind all of that was the notion, this is the place where we teach. We have certain ideals about learning, and the opportunity to learn and what it means. So when this was presented, and then was presented as kind of a "No, we can't find any students," and all of us were incredulous, then when we began talking with various people, and there were also white students. It's important for you to know, by the way, that this wasn't an exclusively black/white, it was people working together. What happened was, I realized, this was really about the education that we claimed was a very good one, that we were a part of. And many of us had been effected---our small core, group-- by the Freedom Rides, by the work of CORE, SNCC and so forth. So it just made sense. Often when you're politically involved, you don't so much think about intellectual steps that you took, you do that in a different way when you're making an analysis, or making a critical analysis, but when you're actually acting a certain way, it comes out of your critical analysis.

HW: One thing I'm curious about is the contrast between the actual actions SASS members took during the sit-in, and the way that the sit-in was reported later on in various media outlets, because a very common thread was, 'Oh, these students are militant.' Which was interesting because that was a very specific non-violent direct actions that SASS members took.

TB: Yeah.

HW: So, I'm wondering about your thoughts about this idea of militancy and whether that was reflected among some of your colleagues, because you did talk earlier about President Courtney Smith's effrontery at the rudeness of SASS, and I'm wondering if the perception of SASS members being rude ever translated into SASS members being militant.

TB: It's important for you to know that he never said that, that's an interpretation. It's not a claim against him; it's an analysis of his reaction. It's a little bit as if I came storming into this place, in a loud voice and an unpleasant fashion, for everybody here, and said, you know, this place should be different from what it is. And people would say, 'Who are you and who gives you the right to do this,' --he was the *President* of this place, who was very famous for doing something very important which was when earlier on, in the 1950s, when he went to the Board of Managers and said, we have students who do not want to sign the oath of affidavit (this is not a part of your life but it was part of our life) and don't want to be part of the military draft, and if they do this they will not be able to get any federal funds. So he did two things, he went to the Board of Managers and said will you put of the funds for any student who, for moral reasons, will refuse to do this, and the Board of Managers said 'Yes.' And then he went down to Congress, this is the same man, by the way, so I want to be fair to (Because he didn't particularly like me, but it wasn't a popularity contest, we were colleagues in that sense) so he was a man who went, then, to congress and made the argument, there is something wrong with this kind of invasion into the rights of young people and into the academic world. He didn't prevail, those things continue to this day. Students, I think to this day, are "obliged," if you will, to register. Anyway, so that is the man. But importantly, he couldn't bear the effrontery of it, the questioning of all the traditions he felt he and the college stood for. And in some sense it was too great a thing to withstand. All of us have a breaking point, it just depends where it is and what it is. That was his breaking point. Other faculty members who, I would say, felt even more strongly didn't have either the courage--and this is an unfair statement from me--the courage or the moral courage to stand up and make arguments for their position. They simply walked out of the room and refused to participate.

HW: Do you have anything else that you'd like to share with us?

TB: Well one of the things that happened during all of this was... you all have heard of Angela Davis.

HW: Of course.

TB. Her sister went here, to college. A very beautiful, very talented, and very independent young woman. And during the sit-in, I had a completely separate meeting with her and another student called Sam Jordan. Fania had been a student of mine, I really liked her a lot, she was very talented. I don't remember whether she was my advisee or not, to be honest, I just can't

remember. But I certainly saw her a lot. And admired her brains and liked her. But she sort of disappeared, and for all intents and purposes, at least to my knowledge, she had nothing to do with the sit-in or anything of that sort. She and Sam Jordan were part of a much more radical nationalist group that they were working with.⁷ And they came--we talked about that. [At that time] I and another friend had a fund that paid for things that nobody else would give money for. For people who were jailed, or had to have bail or whatever it was, and it was a fund for anti-war, sort of [and other] more radical activities. So I gave them a check for what they were doing, it was not a huge sum of money, whatever it was, and then I never saw her again, I regret to say. I don't know what she and Sam [went on to do]. I don't even know if she graduated, from Swarthmore, to tell you the truth.⁸ She was certainly smart enough. She came from a very, very, interesting family, which was a very left family. One of the nice things about the college, which came as a result--this is sort of one of those unintended consequences--one of the nice consequences of his [Courtney Smith] act of going to Congress and his act of going to the Board of Managers for people who, on principle, refused to capitulate to whatever the regulation or the law was, is that all kinds of families who looked at [came to look at] Swarthmore as a place that was hospitable to the left, or to the radical politics. One of the joys of teaching here, for me, was to come from the Soviet Union, studying, and to meet lots of leftist students, who'd come from these [families] Red Diaper babies, they were called.⁹ Not all of them were necessarily very radical but all of them came out of this tradition. So there was already a common--two common features. One was the experience all of us had, the other one was this commitment to a notion of an open education, which should have led to an easier transition after the sit-in, but that was a step too far, I guess, for some people. And certainly, unfortunately for the President.

AA: Do you remember what she [Fania Davis] and Sam Jordan were working on? Sam Jordan has also come up for us in conversations about the sit-in. He's referenced in FBI files as an "outside agitator," because of his involvement with students and I'm wondering if you know...

TB: I wish I could tell you. Among other things, I, like many people who were involved in this, barely ever slept. I had a continual headache for weeks, for the period of time. So not everything is crystal clear. It was some kind of organizing, but it was sort of parallel to...He [Sam Jordan] may well have... but no one in the sit-in, Clint Etheridge or Don Mizell, ever talked about Sam Jordan. But there was also a kind of tact, and a kind of, you know, seriousness about not naming names and doing things of that sort. So each of one of us took the stance that we did, and were careful how we talked about what happened. So they may not...they may have just said that they

⁷ Fania Davis and Sam Jordan were both heavily involved in Lancaster city's African American community. They are credited with helping to build Lancaster's Black Panther Party chapter called "Black Arise" in 1967.

⁸ Fania Davis graduated from Swarthmore College in 1968. She and Sam Jordan were married in 1969.

⁹ The term 'red diaper baby' is used to describe a child of parents who were members of the United States Communist Party or were sympathetic to communist goals.

needed it for their organizing work, they must have told me something, it sounded like it was some sort of grassroots radical organizing. And yet the thing, more than anything, that you have to understand, there are two worlds: there is the world here, and that was not the world that was interesting to Fania Davis and Sam Jordan. They weren't worried about the dynamics, the social, racial, educational aspect of the College. They were interested in the kinds of issues that were Civil Rights and radical Civil Rights, is what I would guess. So, if you lived here, and worked here, as I said at the beginning, you lived two lives. I lived a life that I loved, and taught, and loved teaching and I taught for a pretty long time, and then all of the activity--every once in a while the College would just pull you back in-- I was doing a lot of organizing with students, or organizing outside of the College in the 60s until 1969. And the sit-in pulled me back, and the next spring, with the invasion of Cambodia, that event not only pulled me out but also back into the college, and so forth. But most of my time not teaching or working with students was spent not here. It was just a whole other political parallel life.

AA: Does anything else that stands out to you when you remember that time? Particular anecdotes or memories for you that sort of define it? Because it seemed to be part of such a longer process, for you, as an activist, and radical students at Swarthmore, but in thinking about this specific time, I'm just wondering if there is anything that stands out?

TB: Well it was, the word that I've used before and the word that I'll use again, it was the extraordinary, mature, dignity of the students who *cleaned* the admissions office before they left, who put everything back the way it was, they exited with incredible dignity; they exited as the victors, in a very interesting way, with none of the sort of, unpleasant, sort of 'sneering,' or whatever it was. And in general, it's seldom that in that kind of way, you get to know someone as well as all of us, in the smallest group, got to know Don Mizell. Because later on I would talk with him when we had the sit-in in the President's office, over [divestment in] South Africa. I remember he said, 'Where are you,' and I said, 'You're not going to believe this, I'm in the President's Office,' and he said, sort of joking, 'What, again?' That kind of thing. But he was just absolutely a very dynamic and important sort of organizer and Clint Etheridge was really sort of the father, or elder statesman of the group.

HW: Great, thank you.

AA: Thank you so much. If there's anything else. I'm sure that we could talk for hours...

TB: Yeah, because all of those things became part of what it was to be a teacher here. I can't imagine my life without any of that. Even the heartbreak of some of it, and the difficulty of some of it. It was what real intellectual life...One of the things I really loved about being here, is exactly it isn't about grades, it's about moral intelligence, and it's about the intellect and the intellectual life. And it's that that seemed to me we were teaching. And what all of those events

did, is forced us to think back on, what does it mean to be an intellectual, what does it mean to be creating a condition where people are not worried about their grades and about getting ahead, but are worried about how to live their lives in accord with how they think. And that was the joy of all those years. Like what you're doing now. This seems to me what people should be doing, among other things; it's part of it all.

AA: Thank you so much.