Queer Newark Oral History Project
Interviewee: Bob Cartwright
Interviewed by: Whitney Strub
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Whitney Strub: Alright, we are recording. Whitney Strub here with the Queer Newark Oral History Project. October 28, 2016 at Rutgers-Newark with Bob Cartwright. Thanks for doing this, Bob. And so this is gonna be an unusual interview in that you are a straight man who's going to tell us about a set of gay figures in Newark's history who are no longer with us.

Particularly, Derek Winans, Ray Proctor, and Frank Hutchins, although anywhere else the conversation goes is also fine. Just to get the ball rolling, if you might give some context with a sketch biography of yourself.

Bob Cartwright: My introduction to Newark was in 1966, when I entered NJIT, which was then called Newark College of Engineering. I became radicalized because of the anti-war movement and the Civil Rights Movement. At the end of my tenure at NJIT, I got recruited into a program at Essex County College called Urban Institute. The program was set up to train college teachers to take positions at Essex County College.

There had been a couple of student strikes and teacher strikes at Essex County College in its first couple of years of existence and the people that started the Urban Institute were heavily involved with that. I got recruited because one of my professors that I had worked with on political activities at NJIT had then moved on to Essex County College. He called me up and recruited me. Then, that's how I met Ray Proctor.

Because Ray and Jerry Lieberman were the two guys that were in charge of the Urban Institute. So I worked underneath Ray for two years with the Urban Institute. We did a community organizing project together the second year of that program and that brought me to the Ironbound section because what we did is we helped to start Independence High School. Ray had known Steve Block and some of the other people that were involved in the program, invited them to speak to us at the Urban Institute, and that was my introduction.

So Then, I worked out of Independence High School for a couple of years. Then, did a variety of things. I took a year off. I went to Europe, played guitar, and went to art school for a while. Then, worked as a part time teacher at Essex. During that time period, I became active with the Ironbound Community Corporation.

That eventually led to an idea I had for a proposal that got funded, and that allowed us to set up a community organizing project. I got hired for that. I then spent the next 15 years working on that project. I edited a newspaper

on trilingual, English, Spanish, and Portuguese, and got involved in a whole bunch of issues in Newark. Okay. I worked at the Ironbound Community Corporation up until 1991 and then, for personal reasons, I had to shift gears and I went back into teaching again. This time as a high school teacher and I did that for 25 years until I retired.

WS: Where was it?

BC: First in Orange, New Jersey for about ten years, and then in Wallington, New Jersey for about 15. Then, when I retired, I came back into teaching college part time. I now teach at Seton Hall and at Berkeley College.

WS: Oh, okay. Just to put a time stamp on all of this, when was Independence High School founded? When was—

BC: 1971.

WS: ’71, okay. So of the figures that we’re speaking about, Ray Proctor was the first one that you met. Okay, so maybe we should start there. Tell me about Raymond Proctor.

BC: Ray was a political partner with Jerry Lieberman. The two of them were professors at Essex County College. They had the idea and the wherewithal to get funding for the Urban Institute. The Urban Institute had some other programs that I really don’t know much about. The main one was the one that I was involved in. They had links with lots of people around Newark.

So for example, and I’m sure that this was due to Jerry and Ray, when I got interviewed to enter the program, instead of what I had expected or what you would normally expect if you’re applying for that kind of thing, some professors are gonna interview you or whatnot. I got interviewed by a group of welfare rights women. *[Laughter]* That was my committee.

It just gives you some insight in terms of how Ray and Jerry thought about things. I don’t know who else has gone through an interview process at all similar to that.

WS: Just to be—okay, I mean I think I understand what you’re suggesting here. Just to be explicit, the idea was welfare mothers are going to interview you for this position because you need to be able to address their concerns and have some sense of their world. That’s the kind of gatekeeping mechanism for—

BC: Right. You have to put it all into context. Welfare rights at that time was strong but losing strength, all right? There had been some changes in

welfare regulations. The main one was that they eliminated special grants. They made it much more bureaucratic. Prior to that, women could form some small collectivity and then actually pressure the welfare board for money on the spot, like, "We need coats for our kids for winter." They would show up at the welfare office and demand money for the coats for their kids.

Then, the regs got changed somewhere around '68 so that you just got—a person receiving welfare just got one grant. The ability of welfare rights women to challenge the system in any way, to make the demands on the system in any way, dissipated I mean overnight. A couple of the women stayed on with the name of the organization for years after that, Ruby Grace and Marion Kidd. After that, they had no power. They had no ability to do anything.

WS: Okay. For people who don't know about this story, what was the Urban Institute? What was Ray Proctor's role, and what was your role?

BC: My role was as an intern. I was going to be trained as a college teacher. I was part of a four-person group that included one other intern, John Pace, and two professors, Mark Galit and August Ruggiero. August is the one that had the relationship with Ray. [*note: political relationship, not intimate*]

What the deal was is that instead of just training somebody as a teacher to include one getting their graduate degree, because that's necessary credential to continue, but also if you do community work. It was a three-part program. The first year, they were sorta lax with us. I wound up doing tutoring with an EOF program at NJIT. I had known the people there. I had worked there before, so it was very comfortable and convenient.

The second year of the program, and my assumption is that this was Ray and/or Jerry that made the decision, was that they wanted all of us that were interns to collectively decide on a project. What they did is they gave us a couple of alternatives. We wound up interviewing Steve Adubato at that point. One option would've been to have worked with him when he was setting up the North Ward Center.

Then, the second thing was to interview Steve Block, who came as the representative of Independence High School. Steve was a very grassroots kind of person, at least he portrayed himself that way at that time. Seemed to be doing something that was more in touch with what our individual goals were in terms of politics. We made the decision that we would help with the high school. Most of the people that were involved in that decision didn't last very long, but I did, and I stayed. I was the only one that stayed.

WS: Proctor co-ran the institute and founded it?

BC: Ray functioned more like as the director of it. I don't know whether he had that title at that time or not. Just if you walked into the office, I think it was over on Commerce Street at that time, he was the one wearing the suit all the time. *[Laughter]* He was there. I don't know whether he had gotten a sabbatical or whether he had gotten some leave time from the college. I don't know exactly how that worked, but he was in the office a bulk of the time.

WS: Yeah, so what was he like? Bring him to life, if you can.

BC: All right. You have to understand this from my point of view at that time, all right? At that time, I was this radical hippie, all right? Walking into this Urban Institute thing. Most of the people were radical hippies like me. Ray was the straight person, meaning straight versus radical hippie. The way that he dressed, the way that he portrayed himself, the way that he kept on top of things.
The details that someone who's an administrator of a program like that would normally deal with, which were beyond my comprehension, all right? Beyond any understanding for me at that point in my life.

So, he was somewhat of an imposing figure, all right? He was probably ten years older than me at that time. As I said, he dressed differently than the rest of us. He's there day in and day out with his suit and tie. So He was imposing in that way. He was the boss, which meant that I had to relate to him as the boss, not as you know, a colleague or somebody else that was an intern.

WS: Yeah. Did people know at the time that he was gay? Is that something that was clear or not?

BC: That's something I tended not to discuss things like that with people. I guess I always had the point of view of, "Whatever you do is your own business, it's not mine." I can't even recall having a conversation with anybody about it. Again, it should've been easy to have those conversations, because we're all these radical hippies. Of course, you're the kind of people that can talk about these things at that time. But I don't recall doing it at all, I don't know. I don't know what it was that made me think of him as a gay man, but something did.

WS: Early on or incrementally over time?

BC: I would assume incrementally. I don't think I could've formed an opinion very quickly. That's true of probably most of the gay men that I've known

in my life, where they didn't fit stereotypes that existed in the '50s and '60s. Certainly, Ray didn't.

WS: Yeah. His gender performance was conventionally masculine?

BC: Yeah. You know you could see—there was a certain amount you know of less macho kind of thing. On the left, that's generally true, right? That men are gonna be less macho. You can't then draw the line real clear to separate.

WS: Did that change over time at all as the '70s went on? Did you stay in touch overall?

BC: No. My last touch with Ray would've been mid '70s I was teaching part time at Essex from '74 to '77. I may have had some touch with him at that time, 'cause I still had some touch with the Urban Institute. But it would've been minimal. The main interactions I had with him were during the period from '70 to '72.

WS: Okay. Did you have any sense of him from afar after you fell out of touch? Did you follow his life at all beyond that?

BC: No, I didn't.

WS: Okay. Anything else I should be asking about Ray Proctor? Or other concrete memories of him in action that flesh him out a little?

BC: No. Like I said, he was just much more the director. Sort of above us all in a certain sense, as opposed to being somebody I would look to as an equal or something.

WS: Mm-hmm. Maybe just one more Proctor question, then. Did other people you worked with, did you have a sense that everyone understood that he was gay but didn't talk about it, or—?

BC: No, I didn't. I was oblivious to other people's opinions.

WS: That's interesting.

BC: If you're gonna be talking to other people, the thing to fill in is how did he get to that position at Essex? I don't know. My assumption is that he was involved in the strikes and that that, then, gave him the impetus to then start something like the Urban Institute. It was an incredibly creative idea. I am not aware of anything similar to it anywhere in the country.

When he recruited me, I was recruited as an anti-war activist. The other two groups he was looking for were civil rights activists and people involved in the women's movement. There were 40 of us that were recruited that year. Everybody came from one of those perspectives. When Ray set up the program, one of the things he included was a retreat for us before we started. For me, that was scary.

Ray had good connections in the Newark community. When he did a retreat for us, what that meant was that he was gonna bring in Newark people to talk to us, to try to educate us, all right? Because here we are, we're just graduating college all of us. What do we know about the community? What do we know about Newark? A lot of the people that were recruited were recruited from distant places.

Myself and John Pace were probably the only two recruited from Newark. That's because of August Ruggiero, 'cause he knew both of us. The idea of putting together community work with college teaching, it's brilliant. The idea of a teacher having a real grasp on a community would be such a positive compared to an upper middle class or a middle class person walking into an institution like Essex County College and beginning to teach and like, "Huh?"

My first day in class, even though I had been active in Newark or whatnot, I was surprised. I walked in, and there was a number of women that were wearing Black Muslim garb. And I'm sure for people who came from other places, that was even more shocking to them.

WS: Ultimately, would you say the Urban Institute was a success?

BC: I wouldn't know how to define that. I think it would have to include things that I knew very little about, all right? For me personally, it was a great experience. If you were to evaluate it in terms of its objectives, it was a failure. They did not recruit very many teachers at Essex. I'm only aware of three besides myself. I was offered a full-time position in '72. I turned it down because I wanted to stay at Independence High School. There was one woman who taught biology that stayed on. One guy that taught English that stayed on. Then, the guy that I worked with, John Pace, who stayed on as a math teacher. Maybe getting four teachers out of that group itself is positive, right? I was looking at it in terms of, "Well, you start off with 40 and you only get 4. That doesn't sound too good."

On the other hand, to get four teachers that have been sensitized to those issues, no matter how you get them, no matter how many people you gotta filter through, from that point of view, it's a dramatic success. The one guy that was the English teacher, his name was Larry something or other, I think he stayed there until he retired. Phyllis was the biology teacher. I

don't know whether she stayed for her whole career. John did stay for his whole career.

For me, I didn't accept a position that was offered to me, but I did go back and teach at Essex part time a number of times. They got something out of it, for me. You can call it three and a half success.

WS: It's not still there, is it, the Urban Institute? Or is it still around? I don't have a sense of what happened to it over time.

BC: I don't know. I was aware of it continuing in existence probably until about 1980. Friends of mine that I worked with at Independence High School wound up renting the bottom floor of a two-family house. The people that owned the house were young. The parents had died, right? It was essentially a woman in her 20s who was raising all the kids that were left behind. That woman wound up working for the Urban Institute.

I hadn't even thought about this until I was thinking about this interview. She would have knowledge of Ray for probably another eight years beyond my interactions with him. Her name was Maryanne McAleavy. I don't have touch with her, but I'm in touch with her sister and her brother via Facebook.

WS: Yeah, how do you spell it?

BC: Whatever version of Maryanne it is, and then it's M C and then A L E A V Y.

WS: Oh, okay, great.

BC: I'm pretty sure that she worked with Ray probably until 80 at least.

WS: Yeah, all right. No, I'd love to chat with her. Okay, then, let's talk about Derek Winans. How does he come into the picture?

BC: Derek had been active in Newark probably going back to the early '60s. There was a group at that time, a liberal Democratic Party group called the Americans for Democratic Action. They had a chapter in Newark. The other names from that group would've been Stanley Winters, who taught at NJIT, English, for a long time, and Stanley Aronowitz. Aronowitz had been a labor organizer in a steel mill in Harrison, I think. I think he had a house in Clinton Hill at that time.

Derek was involved already, and then that group became the sponsors for the SDS project that came in in '64. SDS was trying to establish community bases. During that summer, they set up projects in about a dozen different cities around the country. Of course, if you're setting up a

project like that, they were just all coming in from the outside. None of them were from Newark.

You have to have some organizational tie to get yourself off the ground, some sponsorship or something. I think that the ADA group served that purpose for them. They broke with them immediately, because they were all young and radical. The other people were 10 or 15 years older than them. What had begun up there as the Clinton Hill Block Association wound up separating.

The SDS project went into the poorer areas. I guess it would be the eastern end of Clinton Hill, going down towards almost all the way to Frelinghuysen Ave. Okay, Derek had also been—I think he was a reporter for the Wall Street Journal for a bit at that time. When the SDS project got off the ground, Derek had some hand in that. It's a little bit unclear exactly what that was. I'm sure that it included participation and the demonstrations and stuff.

I don't know how much he had initially of the inside track. I just saw "Troublemakers" a couple nights ago, as you did, and you don't see Derek in the film. You do see Steve Block, and you do see a number of the other people that came in with SDS, but you don't see Derek. Derek was also shy with that. Derek stayed behind the scenes most of the time.

Derek also had ties with people in politics, which gave him certain advantages, as we'll get into in a second. The project that SDS set up was called NCUP, Newark Community Union Project. After I guess about two years, two and a half years, it became clear that a project like that in Newark, made up of white students, was ridiculous. The way I heard the story was that some number of black leaders essentially told Hayden and Steve Block and the rest of them, "Look, this is not where you should be. We can take care of black neighborhoods, all right? You're white. Go organize a white neighborhood."

The SDS group, then, did the same kind of search that we did with the Urban Institute later on. They were afraid to go into the North Ward because of Imperiale. They picked Ironbound. Ironbound looked to be an easier place to do something. Derek, at that time, had to be one of the more important people in that NCUP project by '66, probably. He had to be in a leadership position, because what that ensued was him working with Carol Glassman.

Carol Glassman had been one of the organizers in NCUP and had taken a position with the Essex County welfare board. They then worked together. It's a little bit unclear to me exactly what that relationship was at that time. The person that would be able to answer questions about that is either

Carol herself or Jean Dolan. Jean Dolan lives in Carnie now and might be someone to interview. Jean is about ten years older than me, so she's in her late '70s at this point.

Jean was one of the mothers that was organized by both Carol and by Derek. Derek's point of view was to organize young mothers. The rest of the group had this incredibly idealistic vision of youth in rebellion that's going to bring the revolution to America. What they decided to do was to set up a youth center. Eventually, it was two youth centers, one on Wilson Ave and one on Fleming Ave.

Through the youth centers, they attracted a number of young people and then started having discussions with them. That eventually led to Independence High School. Youth centers failed after about a year. They just stopped 'em, because they went in the direction of Independence High School instead. Derek, on the other hand, thought that that was absurd. He then worked initially with Carol.

Carol and he split within a year or so, because she then wound up at Independence High School and was no longer working with the welfare board. Initially, I think that she provided a lot of the contacts of young women in Ironbound who she was serving and was talking to during that process. Then, Derek working with them and organizing a group. That group became the Ironbound Community Corporation. Their first project was a daycare center. The women were the board. They still are. *[Laughter]* Ironbound Community Corporation is unusual, I think, in that regard. It's not unique, but it's unusual in terms of having control at the grassroots level throughout its history. The first group of women were the ones who defined that. Derek had the ability to write proposals and to raise money. He had contacts within, I think, both the Democratic and Republican parties at that time.

Back at that time, there was a phenomena that no longer exists. They were called Liberal Republicans. There was a governor of New Jersey at that time, Cahill, who was a Republican, but he's probably to the left of any Democratic you could name today. He had people in the Department of Education that were very, very friendly to folks on the left, and Derek was one of them.

WS: Is this because of his family? He came from a pretty wealthy, connected family.

BC: That part I don't know. Derek was real good at talking to people of anybody. He had incredible communication skills and could go back and forth between the two worlds, the world of grassroots people doing whatever and writing proposals and talking to bureaucrats in their

language. It was just very easy for him. The first time I met Derek, I was teaching at Independence High School.

One of the other teachers had an apartment in what was call the Prudential Apartments at that time. Prudential Apartments at that time were really crummy apartments, roach-infested, tiny, smelly, etcetera etcetera etcetera. One of my colleagues at work, Trish Jureski, invites me to dinner. What dinner was that she would cook up something. She was a great cook.

She would invite enough people that it was impossible to sit at a table. You would sit on the floor in the living room, and everybody would eat. Derek was one of the participants. After eating, it's poker time. Derek was a very, very good poker player. There was a number of times in the next couple of years where we would get together, and Trish would cook. After dinner, we would play poker, and Derek would always win. *[Laughter]* Luckily, we only played for pennies. *[Laughter]*

WS: Let me just make sure I understand. I think the narrative you're suggesting is that even though he was on the left, he was more of a pragmatist than some of the more radical members who had more idealistic visions that were not going to be implementable.

BC: Yeah. A pragmatist, I don't know exactly where it came from with him. He didn't espouse a communist workerist kind of point of view or something. He didn't espouse a more traditional, really left thing. It was more like the SDS consciousness about participatory democracy and having that be something that lifts people up. Which is ironic, given that the people who actually were in SDS went in this other kind of direction.

WS: Okay. You agree or disagree that pragmatist is the right word? I'm just trying to think of how to narrativize him properly.

BC: I think it's usable as a word. I would caution you, though, sometimes pragmatist implies bad compromises and giving up on your ideals. I don't think either of those are true for Derek.

WS: Okay, that makes sense, that makes sense. Okay. Let me shift the lens, then, toward queer Newark history. What about his persona? Was he openly gay? Was it something that, again, went unspoken? What was your sense of him at the time?

BC: My perception of him, rather quickly I think, was that he's gay. In terms of speaking about it, I don't remember much talking there, either. Now, it may just be that I was not the kind of person that engaged in those conversations or I was left out of the conversations that other people had.

I'm not sure about that. I think that it would've been easier to perceive Derek as being gay than to perceive Ray Proctor as being gay.

WS: Yeah, and why? How did that manifest?

BC: Speech, body language. Derek was not outrageous in any way in terms of dress or his personal demeanor or anything. It's like you could make a guess, and you would've been right with the guess. There were other people around that time that I do remember engaging in conversations about them being gay or bisexual, but with Derek, initially I don't remember. I think that most of the people around him would've realized that he was gay.

WS: It was never discussed behind his back among—

BC: Well, it may have been, it's just—

WS: Not with you?

BC: Not with me.

WS: Okay. What about the other people? Is that something you can comment on?

BC: Which?

WS: You said there were other people around that were gay or bisexual that people were—

BC: Well, at Independence High School, the first year in particular, the one thing I remember is that there was a group of four, two men and two women, who formed a collective and had a loft in Manhattan. With them, it was talked about, that they were all bisexual and were sleeping in various combinations in their collective. I'm trying to think if there was any others—

WS: That was just accepted casually or people made jokes or snide remarks? How—

BC: No, we didn't make jokes or snide remarks. It wasn't like that they were activists on sexual matters. They were activists on feminist issues, on race issues, on anti-war issues and stuff like that. There wasn't a perception at that point of them being activists in terms of gay rights.

WS: Yeah. These were white teachers?

BC: All white, yeah. A couple of white teachers and one white lawyer. *[Laughter]* I hadn't thought about this. I'm trying to think. Carol was also gay. That became apparent as her relationships changed, where there was a shift you could perceive from relating to men, relating to women. Derek, I never saw Derek have any romantic relationship with a woman.

WS: Yeah. Was there a broader sense of homophobia around? This all sounds very casual, and yet—

BC: There would've been a broader sense of homophobia in society, but the people that I'm talking about, we all identified ourselves as being on the left. We didn't share society's point of view. It wasn't that we were pro-gay rights or anything. It was nothing like that. It's just like, "Okay, that's what they do, and this is what I do, and"—

WS: What about the students? Did they have any sense of any of this, and did they react?

BC: That's unclear in general. I know specifics, where—Independence High School is a mess, all right? One of the things that happened was that—how many? At least two of the teachers that I know of were sleeping with students. One was male, one was a female. They both slept with the same student. Given that that occurred—

WS: Who? Was it a male or a female student?

BC: It was a male student and a male and a female teacher. Given that that occurred, the assumption that you would make is that the kid talked to other people. I wasn't privy to those and didn't hear. Some of it I didn't find out until way, way later.

WS: Yeah. The quartet of the two men and two women teachers, just to be clear, they were bisexual and polyamorous, and the four of them were a group?

BC: Yeah. They eventually split. Two of them became a male-female couple, got married, and stayed together for 40 years. The other two just drifted off. I'll give you a little tease. One of them I think won an Academy Award for a short film she did *[laughter]* back in the '80s.

WS: Once we're off the record, I may have more questions.

BC: Right. *[Laughter]*

WS: Derek Winans, to pull it back to him, did you stay in touch with him and work with him consistently, or was this a brief period for you?

BC: Neither. I knew Derek during that period. Derek was very influential with the Ironbound Community Corporation during the ‘70s, especially the early ‘70s. He was the kind of person, he wanted to go in, organize, he had the contacts to raise money. He would raise the money, but then he was always way back.

To be successful with that kind of organizing with young, working class women or poor women at that time, he did a damn good job of keeping himself out of it. Keeping them at the front, making sure it was their thing, and that he would take care of the stuff that they couldn’t do. He did that very, very well.

When he left—at the same time, concurrent with that, he’d organize another group of women. These were African American women that set up a separate school on Springfield Ave. That place existed for some number of years. I don’t know when that closed down. He probably started that one shortly after the Ironbound, but there’s probably an overlap.

Part of the reason that you wouldn’t see him that often in Ironbound is that he was also taking care of Springfield Ave Community School. I think that he did the same thing there, where he organized a group of women and then went out, raised the money and whatnot, but then left it up to them to take on. I never saw him as seeing the director of an organization or the chief spokesperson for an organization. Derek was just taking care of business behind the scenes all the time. There was no ego at all.

WS: Okay, so you did, in some ways, stay connected with him over time?

BC: He was friends, particularly he was friends with Trish. The times that I would interact with him would usually be through Trish. If Trish had a party—if Trish organized a barbecue or something, whatever. That would be that.

WS: Okay. Did you have a sense of him changing over time at all and becoming more vocally out as gay or not?

BC: No, I think it’s more just the times changed. The overall structure of American society changed so that a gay man could get away with more without being harassed. He was also always in situations where it was less likely that that would happen.

His relationship with community groups is that he had skills that the community people didn’t have. He would just give completely of those skills in order to make what they wanted successful. Later on, he became

the chief fundraiser for—what was it called? Youth International Organization, the Wallaces. You familiar with them at all?

WS: No, no.

BC: You might wanna make a chapter—I think that the woman is still alive. They started a program for youth in central or west ward, I'm not sure where. Derek did their fundraising for a long, long time. Many, many, many years. Then, eventually, he brought Trish in to first work with him and then essentially to replace him there. That was another way that—in terms of the touch. Somewhere in there, I'm a little bit confused on exactly which years are which. I also brought Trish into Newark Coalition for Neighborhoods and got her a job there for a couple of years before she went with the Wallaces and Derek. Trish and Derek were always good friends.

WS: In the late '80s, he's one of the leaders of the Newark Coalition for people with AIDS. Were you at all in contact with him on that?

BC: Not at all. At that time, I was very active in organizing for Ironbound during that period. Narrow minded, into my own thing. *[Laughter]* Not paying attention to a lot of other people.

WS: Sure, sure. Were you aware of AIDS activism in Newark around that era at all or no?

BC: No, not at all.

WS: Okay. Any other thoughts on Winans or should we shift gears to Frank Hutchins? I didn't know if—

BC: Shift to Frank. If there's anything else, I'll go back.

WS: Okay. Yeah, tell me about Frank Hutchins. I know less about him than I know about Proctor and Winans. I'm eager to hear whatever.

BC: All right. I don't know everything about Frank. I do know that he grew up in Philadelphia and his family lived there throughout the period that I knew him. He came to Newark and—

WS: When? When is this?

BC: I don't know. Sometime during the '60s. Frank would've probably been 15 years older than me. He'd probably be 80 if he was alive now. Frank was active in the Gibson campaign in '70. From what I can tell, he was one of the leaders. Now, Frank, like Derek, had a very easy time talking

with young women, women that were mothers, women that had kids, women in public housing and stuff.

It was a good dream to watch. He was incredibly good. He works on in Newark, on the Gibson campaign in ’70 and then gets hired by Gibson. I don’t know whether he was the director or assistant director or something of planning at that point. Frank’s ideas were considerably to the left of Gibson’s. I don’t know the details of this.

I just got his superficial version that Gibson got pissed off at something or other that he did, and they had a split, and now Frank’s out of work. By ’72, Frank was out of work. Somewhere around that time, he filed for disability, got disability. He lived off of Social Security for a long time. Frank was active with the Newark Times Council. Newark Times Council got set up for public housing tenants as part of the war on poverty in this sense.

There were people in politics at that time who looked at a city like Newark, saw a Democratic party in power. The Democratic Party was dominated by whites, if not completely white. There was a couple of blacks that they allowed to be part of their team, but it was a white and mostly Italian group. The politics was similar throughout the United States. Every major city was similar.

You had some folks who operated on a national level, who I would describe as left liberals, who had gotten themselves jobs in the federal bureaucracy and who wrote regulations for various things and tried to toss in some progressive content. The content that they wanted for a place like Newark was the ability for groups that were excluded from the political process to have something. I think that some of them had the view that that something, then, would then develop into electoral politics, and that would then lead to a change in the racial composition of the Democratic Party.

Model cities had the community boards. The public housing now had the Newark Tenants Council, which was sponsored by the same money that provided for sweeping the hallways and whatnot. Frank worked with them for a long, long time. Okay. I met Frank probably ’74, ’75, somewhere around there. I met him at a tenant’s meeting that I’d gone to. At that time, we were starting to organize at Ironbound.

I had left Independence High School, but I was working with the community corporation as a volunteer. We were looking for connections throughout the city and whatnot, so I wound up going to some of their meetings. He was good. Frank stayed with that until he died.

Frank was the leader of the Newark Tenants Organization for—how long? Twenty-five years? Rent control had come under attack at one point. Frank, along with Nancy, were probably the two people that saved rent control in Newark, along with Donald Tucker. Okay. You wanna ask me any more about the housing part of it?

WS: Well, tell me about him as a person, the stuff that wouldn't get left in the paper trail.

BC: Frank was imminently likeable. He had a very funny speech pattern, which was a combination of a lisp and a southern, black accent. He very often wore a suit jacket, probably most of the time. It was always something that was incredibly old and tattered. He wore a lot of gold. There was lots of times when he's got gold jangling and bracelets and stuff and things like that. He was a very, very easy person to talk to. Very astute politically. He understood a hell of a lot. There was a lot that I learned from him.

The thing that's incredibly ironic is Cory Booker, his claim, and I think it's true, is that Frank was his mentor. We had introduced them a few years before that. The point there being that Booker, who was somebody that was very, very ambitious and wanted to become mayor of Newark, at that time, he wasn't. He understood that this was a person who could provide him with the insights that he needed to be successful politically.

That happened, because Frank had those insights about everything. You could talk to him about anything that occurred in Newark, and he would give you something to think about, something new that you didn't know beforehand about it. Relationships between different people, strengths of different organizations, whatever about it. Frank knew a lot of stuff.

WS: It's fascinating. Again, I guess same question I ask with all of these figures, did people understand him as gay, and did it go spoken or unspoken?

BC: With Frank, Frank is the one that we actually did speak about. Okay, somewhere around 1978, I had the idea to set up an organization that would provide services for anybody that wanted to do community organizing in Newark. The name of that group initially was The Newark Research Group. I was able to contact a foundation and get a foundation guy on board. Then, he brought money in from a couple of other foundations.

Newark Coalition for Neighborhoods was doing—a number of neighborhood groups, social service types, that were talking to one another. When they got wind of the fact that I had raised the money, they said, "Let's merge the organizations," so we did. I got a couple people on

the board at that time. Then, one difficulty is that those social service types did not—they wanted to have only have people like themselves in the organization. We, on the other hand, meaning the people that I had organized with the Newark research group, we wanted the tenants movement to be part of that. We had a long period of struggle about whether or not the Newark Tenants Organization would become a member. Frank was the president of the Newark Tenants Organization. Eventually, that worked out. Frank came on board. Frank was on the board.

We also were able to get volunteers from various organizations, a list of volunteers we were able to get. The Jesuit Volunteers, and there were a couple of other similar things at that time. At one point, it became an issue that Frank was sleeping with two of the young men who had come in through one of those volunteer programs. Given the fact that it had been difficult to include Newark Tenants Organization in the Newark Coalition for Neighborhoods, it just provided fuel that people could use.

Now, the way things turned out, we were able to diffuse it. It did become an issue. It's one of the few times that I can recall that we actually talked about a person's sexual preferences with regard to the political work that we were doing. At that time, gay rights was not on the table for us. There were these other issues involving neighborhood stuff, and environmental issues, and taxes and whatnot. Gay rights was not one of them.

It was a distraction, and it was a distraction that could be used against Frank and the Newark Tenants Organization. That's why it's different than my perceptions of either Ray or of—who's the other person? Of Derek. I didn't perceive any conflicts like that with those two people, but with Frank, it did become a problem for a while.

WS: How were you able to diffuse this? What were you able to do?

BC: I don't remember even what we did. All I remember at that point was the fact that there was a lot of talk and that it was fueled. The people that would have attacked Frank would have been careful in their attack. It would not have been a head-on, anti-gay thing. They would've used it in other ways, more tangential.

WS: What would that—can you give a sense of that at all?

BC: A conversation that two people have and it's like, "Blah blah blah blah blah Tenants Organization, blah blah blah blah blah Frank Hutchins blah blah blah blah blah. Did you know?" That shit.

WS: Oh, okay, so gossip and insinuation behind that.

BC: Which could fuck things up.

WS: Gotcha. Did you actually have to discuss this directly with Frank at all?

BC: No, no.

WS: Do you know at all how he did respond?

BC: At that time, yeah, he kept doing what he was doing for a while. *[Laughter]* Eventually, the two young people left and it stopped.

WS: He never explicitly addressed his own homosexuality verbally?

BC: No, but with Frank, it was much more obvious, because of just the way he carried himself. It's difficult to separate out different kinds of perceptions, because part of it is that within black culture, the thing of men wearing gold and whatnot is much more accepted than it is in white culture. I'll just give you a brief story on the other side of it. I was working in Orange Public Schools, and the assistant principal was a guy who was a big, African American guy. He looked like a football player. He could play for the Giants.

He got attacked at one point where they were trying to fire him because of personal issues. He was also a minister of not a mainline black church, not AME or Baptist, but some subsidiary genre or something of it. He would come to school very often wearing pastel suits and a lot of gold. *[Laughter]* The first attack that they levered against him was a letter. The letter was, "Blah blah blah blah blah blah, blah, blah, blah, and you dress like a pimp." *[Laughter]*

Males of that category, of being a pimp, would also wear gold. There's this very hard for a white American to grasp exactly how people existed in a black community and what the styles were and what it meant and such. It may be that those of us that were white exaggerated the import of how Frank dressed. Nevertheless, it was true. *[Laughter]*

WS: The episode with the two young men, you said that happened in '82 or was that earlier? You said the group started in '78.

BC: Yeah. This probably would've been somewhere between '82 and '85, somewhere around there.

WS: Okay, but it didn't wind up derailing his political standing?

BC: No, no, no.

WS: That's interesting. The two young men, I think, were both adults, technically?

BC: Clearly adults. They were in their early 20s.

WS: Okay, yeah, just wanted to make that clear.

BC: There was nothing involving anything illegal or anything like that. It's just that at that time, most of us were less accepting. It was easier for a gay man to become a victim of other people talking about him, even if they didn't confront him, even if they didn't turn it into a political issue themselves. Their ability to talk about a person's back could be destructive.

WS: Was there more gossip that would then circulate around Frank, or was it just this flare up around this episode and then it receded?

BC: It was mostly a flare up. It receded. One of the advantages that we had at that time is that Terry Suess was working for us. Terry was not gonna be the person that was gonna create any issues there. Trish was working for us. She was not gonna raise any issues. The staff at NCN were protective of him. It was more board members that would've tried to use it.

WS: Okay, that makes sense. Did you have any further sense of his personal or intimate life beyond this one glimpse?

BC: No, I didn't know who he slept with or stuff like that. The thing that's ironic with Frank is that a few years after that, he became an Evangelical Christian. *[Laughter]* I don't know what at that point he did with his sexuality. Now, he was older now at that point. He didn't get into that until, let's see, '90s. Let's see, he died, what, 2005 or so.

The last 15 years of his life at least, he was super into religion. *[Laughter]* He got into gospel music like crazy. He joined a church. He related very, very strongly, identified very strongly at that period with the church and his religion. Go figure. *[Laughter]*

WS: That's interesting. By the time he met Cory Booker, he was already into his Evangelical phase?

BC: Yeah, he would've been doing that. My memory from that is that the first time it came out was in the late '80s or early '90s where we were doing an event with Frank at Essex County College. He brought in gospel music. That was the first time I was aware of it.

WS: Yeah. Do you have a sense of his mentoring relationship with Booker?

BC: It lasted a long time. Cory came into Newark as a housing attorney. I think he was at a legal clinic at Seton Hall at that time. Nancy was doing the housing organizing with Frank. Nancy and Frank were very close. I would also encourage you to interview Nancy about Frank.

WS: Yeah, yeah.

BC: Just to go over it again, if you want more information about Derek, Jean Dolan would be a person to interview.

WS: Yeah, definitely, yeah, got that.

BC: If you wanted more about Ray Proctor, Maryanne McAleavy. Then, I don't know whether August Ruggiero is alive. I don't know whether Jerry Lieberman is alive. Both of those two individuals would be able to talk about Ray. Likewise, Steve Block would be able to talk.

WS: I've spoken with Steve actually.

BC: Have you talked with him about Ray?

WS: Yeah, yeah.

BC: Okay. Yeah, so back to where we were going.

WS: I'm just curious about the Hutchins-Booker relationship.

BC: Relationship, all right. We introduced the two of them, because Frank's NTO and Cory's coming in and he's doing housing attorney kind of work. Cory clearly had ambition. It was clear literally from the first time I saw him. The first step was to go for central ward councilmen. I think George Branch might've been a councilman at that time that Cory defeated. Cory was an outsider. Cory was from upper Bergen County. Cory was upper middle class in terms of his background. Cory could pass for white. Frank was none of those things. Frank was Newark for 30 or 40 years. Frank knew it from the ground up. Frank knew where the bodies were buried. Frank knew where the connections were. Frank knew who to be afraid of. He knew who to go to talk to. The advice that he could give Cory was invaluable. That's Cory's version of it.

I didn't know how close they were. I knew that they knew each other. I knew that Frank was talking to him, because Frank would talk to me about talking to Cory. I didn't know how much value Cory put onto it until Frank's funeral. Cory shows up at his funeral, and no entourage. He's

there by himself. At this point, he would've been mayor of Newark at that point.

Mayors of Newark I'd watched for the last 45 years. They never show up anywhere without four bodyguards, and two lackeys, and somebody that's there just to pick up coffee for them or whatever. Cory walks into the funeral parlor with nobody. I'm like, "What's this all about?" Then, takes the rostrum and talks for 45 minutes about Frank. It's incredible. You might want to go talk to Cory Booker.

WS: We'd love to talk to Cory Booker.

BC: If you could get him, he will have better insights than any of the rest of us. He spent more time one-on-one with Frank for a good ten years than anybody. When Frank was dying, Cory would go to the hospital and read to him. If I were you, I would try.

WS: No, I agree. There's something fascinating about passing on the torch of being that bachelor political leader in Newark.

BC: Well, to take it one step forward, Cory's gay. He doesn't admit it, but he's gay. I've heard the stories from people that have been at clubs with him and whatnot. There's that there, too. It's not just passing on the torch in general, it's from one gay man to another gay man.

WS: Did anybody videotape the funeral?

BC: That's a good question. I don't know. It would be great footage.

WS: Since we're talking about Booker, anything you'd add? He's fascinating, right? In his public persona, he's very elusive in a very almost playful way about his own sexuality. He certainly doesn't go out of his way to disavow at least a non-normative identity. He certainly is not publicly out as gay. That is a narrative that circulates among political insiders in Newark?

BC: Yeah, the same thing happened with McGreevey. McGreevey, I knew about McGreevey being gay a year before it came out. The reason I knew is because I knew gay men that partied with him. Those were the stories I got about McGreevey. With Cory, it's similar. You go someplace, you talk to somebody, "Yeah, I went to such and such club out in Long Island," or "This is what Cory does on the weekend." The stories were individual perceptions from people.

WS: That's interesting. Yeah, one wonders where he's gonna go with his public persona. It seems increasingly safe to be out and gay as a politician in New Jersey, especially at the state level as senator.

BC: Yeah, but Cory's not gonna be a senator forever. Cory's gonna be president. Before Barak Obama came on the scene, I was sure Cory was gonna be the first black president. From the first day I met him, I'll never forget. I met him at a restaurant in Ironbound. I come to an event that Nancy had sponsored. She said, "Oh, I gotta introduce you to this guy, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." I get introduced to Cory.

He gives a little talk, because he was running for central ward council at that point, I think. It's like, "Nah, this guy, he's not going for council. *[Laughter]* This guy's gonna be president." He was just such a presence. He's all buffed up in terms of his body and whatnot. Looks like what every—with the shaved head and stuff. He talks back and forth between Newark kind of talk and Harvard kind of talk. After Hillary.

WS: *[Laughter]* Yeah, he's got a long—

BC: Well, he's still young.

WS: - gestation period here.

BC: If Barak Obama had not got nominated in 2008, and Hillary had gotten it instead, right now we would be talking about Booker running for president. He's gotta wait another eight years. *[Laughter]* Anyhow, the point being there is that I doubt that he's gonna come out. If he was satisfied being a senator from New Jersey, he could come out. Running for president, tougher nut.

WS: Hmm, another eight years, who knows? Things have changed pretty rapidly.

BC: That's true. You could be completely right about that. We will see.

WS: It's also a good hook, right? We've had the first black president, the first female president—

BC: The first gay black president *[laughter]*.

WS: Yeah.

BC: The first white black gay—sorry. *[Laughter]*

WS: Anything else that I should ask you, because I know you've got a parking meter running. I do have one other question I wanna ask, but it's not related to this, once we stop recording. Anything else for the queer

Newark oral history project that I should think to ask you or that you would add here?

BC: Hmm. I would just underscore something. The thing that I notice with all three of the people that we've discussed is their ability to relate to women. The view that I had is that part of their success is because they were not involved in a normal—not normal, not involved in your typical male-female interaction. That part of it that always comes into play otherwise, as we've seen with Trump and everything, it didn't come into play with these guys.

Their ability to talk to women, it was extraordinarily good. They got a comfort level with people. They were able to function in a leadership role and to do it in a way that was not domineering, that didn't call attention to themselves. That was just very progressive to do that kind of thing. I was impressed by all three of them with that ability.

With Ray, it was more with the welfare rights women that were around the Urban Institute all the time. With Frank, it was with tenants and whatnot. With Derek, it was the ability to start both the project at Ironbound and the project on Springfield Ave.

In all those things, it was basically all women involved. Yet, you had a male coming in and doing the organizing, but doing it in a way that empowered the women instead of just puffing themselves up. That was impressive, particularly with Frank, 'cause I watched it more with Frank.

WS: No, that's fascinating. Well, thank you. Thank you for doing this interview. I think it really adds a lot to our understanding of some people who just aren't here to speak for themselves. Thank you.

BC: You're welcome.

[End of Audio]