

Stanley Charnofsky, Track 2

[Tape 1, side 2 begins]

JB: We're back on.

SC: Okay. Well, interestingly, sitting in Blomgren's office and having Archie dictate to Blomgren each of these points that he told him he wanted, and Blomgren was quite amenable to them. He said, well, that sounds alright, that sounds okay. They wanted- Oviatt came in, they brought Oviatt in. He refused to cooperate with them at all. He refused to say one thing. And they then eventually let him go out, because he sat there angry and upset and wouldn't talk to them in the room. I was in there at the time. So, they just took him out again. But Blomgren kept saying yes. If he didn't agree with anything, he say, well, I don't know, I can't do that. I don't know how we could do that, and the very last one, was there'll be no charges brought for anything that has been said today or anything that has been done today by you. And Blomgren said, I'll sign that, okay. So, he signed the whole thing, apparently. I mean, I was there when he was saying, yes, yes, yes.

JB: As they raised point after point-

SC: As they made point after point.

JB: Were they cooking these points up as they went?

SC: Yeah. It sounded like they were making them up. I mean, you know, they probably thought them out, but they wanted an office, and they wanted advisors that were Black, and they wanted more professors who were Black, and they wanted Black studies curriculum. I mean, you know, these were things that they were thinking about, but they now codified them, you see. At one point, I remember sitting next to Archie Chatman, and I just went (sighs), like that, and he looked over at me, and he whispered, sorry we had to get you into all this, Dr. C. Well, I mean, I was their advisor, so he probably did feel sorry, but I said, well, I mean, I'm involved with it. That's all. After the points were signed, the kids got up and just, they like magically disappeared. But I know, I heard later that they, they called them all together, went down the backstairs, and went out the backway and away and left. But there was a big picture of all the students that had come in under this program, and they got them to the secretaries and they started identifying people that they saw in the room through this big picture. I saw the picture. And they tell me, oh yes, he's one and he's one. He's one, so that they were able to come up with whatever the number they charged – sixteen or eighteen people, I forget the number – by these identifications. And they did charge Eddie Dancer with assault. The other two people, Archie and Howard Johnson and some of the other adults, were just charged with kidnapping and conspiracy, but Dancer also assault.

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JB: You mentioned Oviatt. There is a tremendous amount of bitterness toward him, among both the SDS members looking back after fifteen, twenty years, today, and also among Black students, looking back. What was it about Del Oviatt that brought that out in people?

SC: Well, I can tell you about other meetings we had. At one point, we were all meeting. I remember Earl Wallis was there too as the dean, or associate dean, whatever he was at the time. Oviatt was conducting the meeting, and it had to do with trying to get an office. I think it was trying to get an office, or something for the Black Student Union. And right in the middle of discussing it, Del Oviatt said, well, let's see. We'll have to get a committee together to study this. And Archie instantly said, hold it Oviatt, you motherfucker! And Oviatt's face just turned white. I mean, he's Mormon, you know, and he doesn't swear, or he didn't believe in swearing, whatever. You gonna form a committee, the walls gonna come down around your ears! We don't want no committees! We want what we want! You know, like that. And he harangued Oviatt for a minute or two, and then we got past it. Went on to something else. It wasn't ten minutes and the same thing, an explosion. You motherfucker! What are you trying to do? You trying to get us, you trying to jive us again, you know? And again, Oviatt, well I'm not going to continue with this meeting if you're going to use that kind of language! Absolutely will not continue with this meeting! So later, when the meeting was over, I remember Dave Benson walked up to me. And he was upset, but he also said something about, we got to listen to the message, not the tone. And I remember passing that onto to other people, saying, if a Czechoslovakian comes and asks you a question, you don't worry about the accent. You try to understand the message. And here we're getting street language and we're getting, you know, angry tones, but there's a message that were trying to understand from these hurt kids, and that was the attempt to do it. But Del, you know, he was very righteous. That's the best word. He was very righteous about how the steps ought to be taken. And I think, you know, he refused to compromise in their style, in their angry, street style. There was a guy before Archie Chatman, before Archie Chatman became the head of the BSU, Jerone Walker was head of the BSU. That with an N like in the word no. Jerone Walker. Jerone has gone on to get his PhD and his license as clinical psychologist. I've had him as a guest to my class several times. In fact, I talked to him just, oh, a year or so ago about maybe being in our part-time pool. Saw his wife just recently. She's also works at a community college.

JB: He lives close by, I believe.

SC: He lives close by, and she works at Mission College, is what. And in any case, Jerone was the head of the BSU prior to Archie Chatman, but he wasn't there that day. He was not around, so he escaped all of the acrimony and everything. But he had the capacity to speak erudite psychology language and gutter street language, Black street language, if you want to call it that. Jerone could do that. So, you never knew who you had at the moment, whether you had the street guy, or you had the college guy, you know. But that was his capacity, and that was what Archie was trying to do. Archie is a very bright man. But he wanted to intimidate with his language, and he certainly got Oviatt upset. But I think- Like another time we went a meeting, just Oviatt, Howard Johnson, Archie and I went into

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Oviatt's office once for a meeting- Oh, that when they wanted to get the room, because they said, we need a small office for our BSU to work out of. And at the time, there was a crunch in space on campus. So, Oviatt was, he was listening to what Archie and Howard Johnson said, and he said he would look into it and see what he could come up with for them. We got outside in the hall, and Howard turned to Archie Chatman and said, the man was jiving us! And Archie agreed, and I said, I didn't notice it. And they said, well, you don't look the same way we look at things. You listen to the words. We have to look at something else. I guess when, I mean, I'm not trying to be mystical, but when a people have been lied to enough, they stop listening to the words and start hearing the underlying message that they get from the body posture and everything else. I imagine they did become adept at seeing through language out of necessity, out of survival.

JB: That would explain a great deal.

SC: Yeah.

10:00 JB: Because he drove them to fury.

SC: Yeah.

JB: The bureaucratic processes and procedures, the labyrinth of all these things that were used to and take for granted, uh, did the same thing. And in fact, may have been used against them, you know, to wear them out entirely, wear them down. I don't know, but it certainly drove them to the wall.

SC: Yeah, oh yea.

JB: Uh, I see different numbers given as to how many people were held captive that day. Thirty-five other numbers. Do you know the definitive number?

SC: I just know who was in our room, and that's all. I don't have any idea. Personally, I have no idea what was happening with the secretaries or any of the other support personnel.

JB: How long were you there, in the administration building?

SC: Well, we walked over there at noon, and I don't think I got out of there until after three-thirty or something like that.

JB: So, a bit more than three hours, certainly.

SC: Oh, certainly, yeah.

JB: What condition were the people who had been held in at the end of it?

SC: I remember going downstairs in the lobby, and it was just furor, turmoil in the lobby and the administration building. And I walked around, and no one paid attention to me, and I eventually went home. I'm just like, I'm just walking around, and that's fine. I was certainly healthy. So, I didn't pay attention to it. Next day, I was in Oviatt's office discussing the whole thing with him. In fact, I remember saying to him the next day, I'm the wrong person for this job. You need a Black and a Latino to be EOP directors! Not a White guy that they don't know, you know. But anyway, as it was, I was only, I think a few weeks from finding I was no longer in that job.

JB: You told the press that. Matter of fact, you were very straightforward about that. They wanted to establish dual EOPs, and they wanted to establish community centers, one in the barrio, one in the ghetto. Do you know what happened with all of that? Because things-

SC: Well, they had teach-ins at that time. You know, they brought in Galarza, Ernesto Galarza came in to talk, and then one of the reverends. Black ministers from central LA came in, and we had a lot of interesting high power people come and do teach-ins on the campus after that, trying to get the students to, trying to get for the students what they really need, regardless of the terrible law-breaking event that went on. And either my memory isn't good enough for it, or I don't remember ever hearing anything about those centers, because I don't recall those things.

JB: Were you surprised when charges were brought, and Bugliosi came in? That this thing had swelled to that proportion? Did you expect it to as of the afternoon of November fourth?

SC: Well, I had no idea what the consequence of that was. Blomgren, by the way, did not bring charges. And neither did I. But everybody else did. I mean, everyone else was willing to. And there's a little humor here, because we got into the trial, and I was called by Bugliosi, and he made it clear to the judge that I would be a hostile witness, therefore he could cross-examine. That's a legal artifact, to allow you to cross-examine. At one point he said, is it true, doctor, that you refused to bring charges against the defendants? And I said, no. And he walked around the entire courtroom, came back, and said, I want to repeat the question. Is it true that you refused to bring charges against the defendants? And I said, no. Do you know, the meaning, doctor, of the word perjury? Well, the judge said, Mr. Bugliosi, the witness has a master's degree and a doctor's degree and we're not going to explain the meaning of the word perjury to him. We're going to have a recess now, so we'll break for lunch and we'll get back at this after lunch. Well, as soon as they broke, I saw him, Bugliosi get together with the cop who interviewed me right after the takeover. And then, after lunch, he never asked the question again. And the reason was, he phrased it wrong. I never refused to bring charges. Nobody ever asked me to!

JB: (Laughs)

SC: It never came up with me at all. I might've refused, but as it was, it never came up.

JB: It seemed to be an oversight, wouldn't it, on their part?

SC: Well, you'd think so.

JB: We began by talking about EOP at the outset. Do you recall the legislative origins of EOP? They're a bit murky. As I try to fathom- Apparently federal legislation started it and made it a state reinforcement. Do you know anything about that?

SC: I'm trying to recall. I just really don't. I just know that- And I'll tell you, at the time I thought it was just an invention of ours. I thought that we made up the phrase Educational Opportunities Program because it was the first time I'd ever heard it. And President Prator said to me, we want someone to run this program. Would you be willing to? You're an ex-coach, and you have a lot of rapport with the students. Would you like to do this for us? I had gotten involved with minority issues prior that, and things. So, I said alright. But I thought it was a manufactured title just for us. I had no idea it was a national or state title or name, you see.

JB: I'm not clear how that all developed.

SC: I'm not clear either, but... I wrote a book afterwards. Not based on this, but it grew out of a lot of this turmoil in the sixties. It's called, it says white books up there in the closet. *Educating the Powerless* it's called.

JB: You mentioned you'd written about this.

SC: Yeah, and it was published by Wadsworth, and it was used by twenty-five or twenty-six universities in the early seventies. And it lasted about six years and then it became outdated.

JB: It draws on this era and these events. Does it bear on them in the return, does it-?

SC: I don't- I'm not citing the events at Cal State Northridge, but I'm using that as a frustration of education. As how Blacks and Latinos and minorities look at education as a frustrating avenue for them. And my thesis, of course, is that it's not minority that hurts them. Not color of skin that hurts them, but powerlessness that hurts them. So, I call it *Educating the Powerless*.

JB: I'd love to look at that.

SC: Yeah, yeah. [pause] Here it is.

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JB: Thanks. You brought this for me?

SC: Take it with you. Yeah, sure.

JB: What haven't we talked about that we ought to have? What have we not said? Is there anything that we've missed, as you think back over our last forty-five minutes?

SC: Well-

JB: It's been very fast-paced.

SC: Yeah. See, Archie had a different – Archie Chatman, who I consider a very bright man – he had a different political orientation. He said to me at one point that he was a Marxist. And I thought, fine. I don't have anything wrong with that. He's a theoretical Marxist and he believes that the distribution of goods in this system isn't working probably and it ought to be changed. I had no problems with that. But see, he also- If I said to him – which I did at one time when he said that to me – I said, well Archie, you know, you believe that it was the White people who have been violent and vicious over history. He said, I know it! I know it! And I said, alright. Alright, let's for a moment presume that, that it's the Whites throughout history who've been violent and vicious and oppressive. Now, you want to change that by being violent and vicious yourself? I mean, how do you live with that? And he said, I stay up nights worrying about that. He said to me, I stay up nights worrying about that. And the next day he was right back at it doing it again. Because he had to do it. He had to do it for his philosophy, his belief system. I was stunned when he said that.

JB: Fascinating.

SC: Yeah.

JB: I've talked with Bill Burwell about this at length. It's the same kind of ambivalence in Bill, in retrospect. But, as I understand in Bill's case, it is in retrospect.

SC: Well, Bill wasn't quite the leader that Archie was. I liked Bill, but I didn't think he was quite the force that Archie Chatman was.

JB: Bill would acknowledge that too.

SC: Would he?

JB: He explains why.

SC: Oh, did he.

JB: A bit older.

SC: Yeah, okay.

JB: He and Jerone, as he explained it, chose Archie to lead the BSU, as he was young and had ties to the athletes.

SC: Um-hm. That's interesting to me, to hear that.

JB: Well, if anything comes to mind, uh, we can always turn this back on again.

SC: Okay.

JB: And at any point, so...

SC: I'll be glad to do it. I mean, I have- To me, it's history, it's a memory, and it was powerful time in my life, but I think- What's sad, for me, is that, here we are, you know, so many years later, and it's not that much better for Blacks in our system or in our school or anything. I mean, there's avenues that weren't there before, but the system is just not built to help the poor people or powerless people. It's just not set up right, that's all.

JB: What was generating their actions was heavily a sense of prospect. They were trying to break into the institution.

SC: Right.

JB: And that sense of prospect and hope had started from the beginning. Look at the condition of so many Black males to tell. We can see it statistically, it's horrible.

SC: Yeah. That's right. You know, one other thing I just thought of; one of the things that Archie demanded in one of the meetings was he wanted to have, like biology, for example, taught. He wanted Black biology to be taught. So, he, you know, some of the academicians were saying, what is Black biology? Biology is biology, what are you talking about! What he meant was, that if a Black dude was teaching it, and he was using examples, he used examples that tuned in to the Black students in his class! Instead of what they called White examples. You know, White references, and so on. That's what they meant by Black biology or Black history or Black psychology. They wanted people to teach it who could tune in to them and use references in their historical world or their present world. People didn't understand that. They resented the notion that these disciplines could be made Black and White. They didn't understand that they were talking about the way of communicating the information, not manufacturing new information. And I think that's a critical point. They were not anti-intellectual in any sense at all.

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JB: Your point, that point, never came through. I never saw that through.

SC: No.

JB: That's central.

SC: Yeah, because it was-

JB: That's where the cross-cultural curriculum of Pan-African Studies for example, spread across the general education program, came to a crashing halt, as you recall.

SC: Yeah.

JB: Right at the hard sciences, for that very reason. Science is not ecumenical. Science is monistic. And the point of examples, the point of how to convey it, the pedagogical point- Like we're all sitting on EPC for several years, I'd never heard that point made. I was administration. I never heard that point made.

SC: Really.

JB: That's fascinating.

SC:(Both talking at once) That's the way I understood it.

JB: Looking back on it, it sounds to me for you almost like a kind of out-of-body experience.

SC: It is.

JB: You did see through the façade and the role-playing and then they occasionally would key you into it. Is it-?

SC: They took me into con- Almost like they took me into confidence periodically, that they were making a show.

JB: You didn't feel frightened.

SC: I didn't feel threatened by it. I didn't feel like I was going to be hurt in any way at all.

JB: The others did, though.

SC: Apparently. Now, Sam and I play tennis every week. Sam Winningham, but we don't discuss this anymore. We never raise the issue. Sam is a wonderful guy. He's not the least bit prejudiced. But he said too that he thought he had something at his neck, is what I was told.

JB: Right. Yeah. Well that's what I read. And the reference was to knives, but it was in a, you know, it was in *Scene* magazine, it was a staff report. Who knows who wrote it, or who bought it(??). I don't know.

SC: Yeah, I don't know either. But there were- I saw, only weapon I saw all day was a pen knife that he was cleaning his fingernails with, Eddie Dancer.

JB: Well, that was pretty fast.

SC: Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]