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**Joyce Dyer:** First of all we would like to explain to you about the project. We are federally funded under the government and we're expected to last for a year. And this will be—It will be a book, and it's entitled *The Black History of Tampa*. And what we'll do is the county will publish this book and place it in the different archives in Hillsborough County. First of all, we would like for you to just give us a brief biography about yourself.

**Perry Harvey, Jr:** I was born and educated here in Tampa, public schools. I went to Morris College, received my B.S. degree and a master's degree from Atlanta University. During the time that I was going to school, I worked here as a longshoreman. I was on the dock about 1963—Well, I taught public school first, for about seven years. Then I became affiliated in an administrative capacity, with the Longshoreman's Union about 1963. I handled their pension, welfare and vacation funds up until seventy-two [1972]. At that time my father, who was president of this local union—he passed away, then I became president.

JD: Could you give us a background of your father?

PH: Well, my father was born in Thomasville, Georgia. He came to Tampa in the early '30s and he was one of the charter members of this local union. I think they organized about 1935. He became president about 1937. He served as president thirty-five years, until the time of his death in 1972. He was very active in civic and community affairs, one of the founders of Progress Village. During that time they had what was known as "white primary." He sued the county to get black people the right to vote. (inaudible) At the time of his death he was what we call International Vice-President in our union. It covered four states, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

JD: Do you have any records that, you know, showed things that your father did? Maybe as far back as World War II, do you think?

PH: No. Somebody else is lookin' for (inaudible). I guess if you can get 'em together. We were trying to get somethin' together.

JD: What year was the Longshoremen Union established, or founded?

PH: Gee, I don't know, really. Here in Tampa it was 1935.

JD: Has it historically increased?

PH: What do you mean, membership?

JD: Uh huh.

PH: No. In fact, it's decreased, because of automation. A few years ago men used to shovel. Just like anything else. (inaudible) manual labor. Today it's automated. What we call "containerized." "Palletized." In other words, men don't do the work now—machines [do]. Thirty years ago we put forty men at work to load a phosphate ship, which is our largest commodity here that we export. Today we just put one man in the hold of the ship with a bulldozer. And that's typical. So our membership would increase during the war, before the war, during the war. But after the war it was probably 1,000; today we're down to four or five hundred.

JD: You talked about your father started the blacks to vote here in Tampa.

PH: Umm hmm.

JD: Can you tell us a little bit more about this? The year?

PH: Well, it must have been in the early forties [1940's]. See, in cooperation NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People]— They had the "white primary"—white Democratic primary, which is just what it says, for white voters. And through cooperation with the NAACP, they filed suit to eliminate "white primaries." [My father was] Very active in politics till his death. But they were doin' that all over the country.

JD: What's the relationship between the union and the other workers on the dock?

PH: I don't know whether I understand that question. What do you mean, "What's the relationship?"

JD: The relationship of this union, how is it, you know, with the workers? How was the general attitude? Did they help the people? What— Did they really help people? What'd they do for the people?

PH: The union?

JD: The union.

PH: See, it's different here than it would be in some industries. Can you imagine the individual or employer—employee rather—negotiating a contract with the city of Tampa, General Telephone, Tampa Electric? No. They have too much expertise. Too many people involved.

We work for about twenty different employers. Our work is different. We only—somewhat casual labor—transit labor. They only need us when a ship is here. So down through a period of years we were considered somewhat like the farm workers, migrant laborers. They would just come by on the street, herded us like cattle. Maybe we worked and maybe we didn't. Now, over a period of thirty-five to forty years, we eliminated that. Our skills are somewhat—semi-skilled, and some of 'em are skilled labor. But today the minimum is \$2.65 an hour. Our base pay is \$8.80. Fringe benefits, pension, welfare and vacation were never heard of. We have the best pension, welfare and vacation plan of anybody else. And there are just situations—circumstances occur on the dock when there are certain conditions. For example, our men don't work in the rain. There was a time they did. I may sit up twenty-four hours waitin' for a ship, but once the employer calls us now he guarantees us so many hours.

So progress has been made due to the union. And we think we have done—we've done very well. We have certain guarantees, good wages, good conditions, that the men couldn't possibly get by themselves. We get it because we have a strong international union. So we've made quite a few gains on behalf of the union.

JD: What was the ratio? How many blacks—how many whites were—?

PH: Well, our union is primarily black. They have a small white longshore workers union. (Intercom buzzes) This type of labor union— Excuse me.

*pause in recording*

PH: I don't know where I was.

JD: You were talking about the benefits of the union.

PH: No, she asked about ratio between blacks—

JD: Umm hmm.

PH: Well, in the South—North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida—the longshore work historically was performed by black folks. If you leave the South and you go up to around the northern states, predominately in the north Atlantic, it's done by

white folks. They only use Negroes up there to break a strike. In the Southwest it's a 50/50 deal, they have black and white over here because of manual labor.

You see, longshore work is very hard and you continuously work. There's no such thing as a coffee break. And if the man doesn't have any more work for you to do he checks you off. So over here in the early years this strenuous work was performed by black folks. Today since we have all the nations, we have (inaudible).

JD: What is the union's relationship with politics here in Tampa?

PH: We try to stay very active. After collective bargaining, after we sit down with the employers then we figure we—politics is our second most important issue. We have what we call the Committee on Political Education. We believe that politics is breath of life. It affects our conditions down at the docks. We tell 'em about Port Authority, about taxes, tariffs have an affect an our wages. Certain commodities are influenced by politics so we deem it necessary. It's the second most important that we become active in politics. We try to and we are very very active in politics on the national, state and on a local basis. We feel it's necessary. Politics affects the air you breathe (inaudible). For example, say a person on welfare, politics affects welfare checks. A person on Social Security, it affects their Social Security check. (inaudible) retirement. Hospitalization (inaudible) hospital. (inaudible) We should stay in the political arena (inaudible).

JD: How about the black leadership here in the community?

PH: What? What about that?

JD: Dealin' with politics?

PH: I don't know what you're referring to.

JD: Like Alton White, you know; do the union back him or will the union back him if he ran for mayor?

PH: (inaudible).

JD: You do?

PH: (inaudible) part of the black community. We (inaudible) but we're very active in politics. Tampa (inaudible) we've got one elected representative (inaudible) school (inaudible). More black people should go for public office. More black people should register to vote. We (inaudible). We have registration upstairs in our union hall. We have registration out in the community. We walk the streets. We provided the funds to hire girls to try to register black voters. And we had a few register, but I don't know; we should have a cooperative effort with all the (inaudible) and this union and other black member organizations. All the other black people of community, we should try and get together and try to help more—get more black people registered to vote. It's going to be

very difficult to get black people elected to public office unless we increase our registration.

JD: You feel like the increase in registration will get a black elected—will get more blacks elected here in Tampa?

PH: I feel it would help. If you have more blacks (inaudible) more compromise with other groups, where right now we don't have (inaudible) enough to talk. The maximum figure in the county would be 20,000 blacks (inaudible). That number may be somewhat exaggerated. We can't elect anybody by ourselves. So the only way we can do it is form a coalition with other groups such as the white labor groups whose problems are the same as ours. And try to do that here. And we had done that on some issues.

Workin' people and black people have the same interest, politically. For example, the people that vote against black folks on their civil rights and so forth are the same people that voted against the labor unions. Today we find ourselves, we have civil rights, but there are other problems that affect us. We're interested in (inaudible), good wages and working conditions. Labor unions are proponents of the minimum wage. That's where you're gonna find the majority of black people so we're interested in that. We're interested in health care. And we see if we can find people who have interests and that—and that's the way that you form a coalition.

We try to do it, but we need more initiative. We work with certain groups, the NAACP and other groups, labor unions, but we still need to get together and form a coalition. If we could get more people on the books then we would have more people comin' to us. But we're no different than anybody else (inaudible). More than anything to get registered. Then there— There is a process of voter education (inaudible) the most important thing is voter registration. Then after you get 'em registered to vote, then we try to educate 'em. But that's difficult.

JD: In your opinion, why is it that blacks fail to register to vote?

PH: They can't relate. In other words, people want to know, "What can it do for me?" And they can't relate. They haven't been educated properly. That's just what my preacher said, that it does everything. It (inaudible) criminal, it elects the police chief, it's—you can go right on down the line. No matter what you do, and (inaudible) you in the community; garbage pick-up, trash collection, your water—all that's controlled by the city. Your roads. Your ordinances. Your housing, you have certain zoning rules black community (inaudible) black businesses run by politics directly in some instances and indirectly—planning commission, zoning commission. Utility rates right now—you see, we're having a problem, all poor people are having a problems, how do they pay the electric bills. Mine is astronomical. It's almost more than the house loan. And people on fixed incomes—many of 'em are black retired people, just can't make it.

Politics controls the Public Service Commission. This controls your utilities, your light, water and the phone bill. So that everywhere you go you're gonna be confronted with

politics. And you can't get that story over to the people. Now, all they're interested in is whether—if it affects them directly then they begin to wake up. But you have to show them it does affect them directly. But they don't see (inaudible). You've got thousands of people on welfare in this county. You've got thousands of people—black folks gettin' food stamps—there again, politics affects food stamps. You've got thousands of black people in public housing. The Housing Authority its controlled by politics, appointed by the mayor. So we can just go on and on. And everywhere you're gonna see people talking about politics. Police protection. In the community politics. And then we have to tell our leaders—these people, yes, it does affect them.

But we haven't been able to do it. And we're no different from no other blacks anywhere else in the (inaudible). We haven't been able to get our (inaudible) get them to work. It's a feeling of apathy. Self-satisfied until it affects "me." Then I'll say we should get involved in politics. That's the way the average person (inaudible). But politics should be a twenty-four hour job for black people, but it isn't.

JD: Do you think that we'll ever be able to get the blacks to relate to politics?

PH: Well, yes.

JD: Even (inaudible).

PH: Eventually, as time goes on, they become more and more aware as it begins to affect them directly and they become educated, but I don't know whether we'll see it during our lifetime. But, we're gradually learnin' more about it so I guess we'll see it. It may at first. We've got Reverend [A. Leon] Lowry on the School Board. We couldn't have done that unless we had a lot of white people (inaudible) us. And we've got some other issues that we're gonna—

But now single member districts, the big issue that's coming up. For example, the city council and county commission are elected city-wide. Some of us feel that if they were elected by single-member districts then you would probably get some black people in the legislature and on the county commission and on the city council. On the other hand, the—certain people feel that single-member districts relate back to the ward politics. You know, and they'd just be interested in their own particular district. We feel that's one of the vehicles they used to keep black folks out of public office. Of course there's another one they can use, but that one's gerrymandering. In other words, they can create the district so that you'd be in that—a populated white area. And just cut all around black neighborhoods and the black people would go to the nearest district. And primarily most of us live in the same neighborhood. But that's one of the things (inaudible) is the single-member districts.

JD: If we had more blacks in office, do you feel that it might advance the black people in the community?

PH: Yeah, they'd be more involved. Naturally. If we were more in public office they'd

know how government works. That's our problem. I understand that. Courthouse (inaudible). Very few black people down at the county courthouse.

JD: But you know, what I find that a lot of black people do is they sit down and they look at people, you know, and they say, Well, they're not doing anything for us. You know, even if you are black. And Reverend Lowry used to be an issue now—you know, is to say that blacks are saying that he's not doing anything in that field. You have a lot of cut-downs, you know. Even if you were to have these blacks in position.

PH: We aren't any different from anybody else. You (inaudible) just like white folks do. But we shouldn't. We shouldn't. Mostly we—you find, for example, most black people are right up behind the same candidate because those people who have interest to the black folks that even things and they be involved too. But you'll find some who can't (inaudible), they aren't gone to just be a black politician just because he's black. We're gonna find we have some differences. But, few and far between anybody else. We are the only people will vote more 100 percent—in most cases we'll vote—100 percent of the time, we will all be votin' for the same people unless we can pick our candidates. And we'll do that more so than anybody else.

You've got other classes out in the community. As I've mentioned, the working class, the Latins, Hispanic groups, and they're all strugglin'. You got teacher factions out there. You've got the power structure of the community. All those people got a different view of how things should be done. We're human beings so we're gonna be the same way. We're not gonna be any different. And once we get exposed to politics we see right now can't even afford to. Frankly, I—personally, I think Reverend Lowry is doing a good job. People criticize him but I think there's so much he can do and he has to serve all the people because black folks just didn't elect Reverend Lowry. If he had depended on black people to get him elected he wouldn't be there now.

JD: That's right.

PH: I think he had the newspaper, the power structure, everybody—he's highly qualified and they felt like he could serve. And he is highly qualified, an articulate speaker, well-learned man. A prominent college professor. He went to Harvard [University] or Yale [University] then he taught at Morehouse [College]. So you had a highly qualified man there for the School Board. Probably the most qualified person on the School Board. Now we—I can't criticize Leroy Harris either.

JD: (inaudible)

PH: But—I don't think it's the best thing for this community, but (inaudible) he's (inaudible) a smart, intelligent young man and he thinks for himself. I think it might not be the right time but I can't criticize (inaudible). My philosophy is that I may not like what you do, but I respect your right to do it.

JD: The Longshoreman Hall—Union—it used to be located over Charlie Moon's bar?



PH: When they were first organized, I understand they had an organizational meeting there. I imagine it was thirty-five [1935] or thirty-seven [1937] over the bar, located on the corner of Harris [Street] and Central [Avenue]. And they're the years durin' my—I don't remember being there but I as far as, say, thirty-eight [1938], thirty-seven [1937]. They were up top of the Odd Fellows Hall on the corner of Scott [Street] and Central for years, until about 1940—1939—1940. Then they bought what was then the old Union Baptist Church; it used to sit here. They stayed here in the old church building until 1951, I think. In 1951 (inaudible).

JD: Do you remember any of the businesses that were located on Central?

PH: Yeah, vaguely. I'm not much of a historian. Let's see, well, you had all the doctor's offices there in the Anderson Building coming—there on the corner of Scott and Central. Across the street was the Palace Drugstore. Of course, the Palace Drugstore was run by white folks. Opposite it was what we called the Greek Stand, somethin' for a quick lunch and—come on down across the street, the Savoy Bar, I remember that vaguely. And Watts Sanderson had his bar next to him (inaudible), that was in the early '40s—late '40s. And over there Lee Davis had his (inaudible) Dusty's Pool Room, very popular. And (inaudible) Farragut had a bar, it was something like the 400 Club. Then you had the old Central (inaudible). Then you had Charlie Moon's bar. And I guess about in the early forties [1940's] they moved to—during the war—down near the Military Police Station (inaudible). And (inaudible). And (inaudible) then Rogers had their—well, they had their dining room there which was the best place in town for black folks to eat (inaudible). (inaudible) system (inaudible). Mr. (inaudible) Harris and his sister operated Rogers Dining Room. (inaudible) I said (inaudible) on the corner of Central and Cass [Street], they had (inaudible) they built their own building; it was some type of social club. I remember when I was growing up they had to cross the street—an empty lot over there, they had the Plantation Club. A simple club.

Now that's about all that I remember. I understand before my time when they had a black grocery store. You'll have to get somebody else who—black family had a grocery store on Scott Street but I don't remember it. I remember it vaguely but I don't know. Someone older than me could tell you.

JD: Do you belong to the Lily White [Lodge]?

PH: Lily White? No.

JD: When did you become president of the union?

PH: Nineteen seventy-three.

JD: Is there anything in particular you might want to talk about or just the union?

PH: Everything? I talked about everything.

JD: Okay, thank you.

PH: Okay, you're welcome.

*end of interview*