

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES

Oral History Project – Fall Semester 2004

AfroAm 297A: Black Springfield: Revisited

Course Instructors: *annalise fonza*, Doctoral Student –Department of Landscape Architecture & Regional Planning; *Dr. John H. Bracey* – Department of Afro-American Studies; and *Representative Benjamin Swan* of Springfield, Massachusetts

General Topic of this Interview:

The general topic of this interview speaks to Mr. Raymond A. Jordan's growth and experiences in Springfield as a young man, college student, and professional. During this interview, Mr. Jordan provides an in-depth look at Springfield's Black institutions, community organizations, churches, local movements and incidents, community leaders, and racial climate. Mr. Jordan speaks powerfully about Springfield's past, including key events like the Octagon Lounge incident, which took place in the 1960's, and a sit-in demonstration that resulted in Jordan's employment as the executive director of the Afro-American Cultural Center at the American International College, which is located on the Hill. Jordan discusses how these local events eventually led to his election as Springfield's first black state representative.

Date: December 3, 2004

Interviewer: Shadae D. Thomas

Place: The interview was conducted in the parlor of Mr. Jordan's home.

Personal Data:

Interviewee: Raymond A Jordan

Birth Date: May 5, 1943

Background: Mr. Jordan is a life-long Springfield resident.

Current Occupational Status: Regional Director, Office of Housing and Urban Development, Boston, MA. Mr. Jordan oversees faith-based initiative programs established by the federal government. In 1974, Mr. Jordan was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives. He served the former 14th Hampden District, which includes the Mason Square area, seven terms (20 years).

Interview Length: 40 Minutes

Biography

Raymond A Jordan is a 61 year old male who was born in Springfield, Massachusetts. He attended Technical High School in Springfield. Mr. Jordan went on to gain degrees from the University of Massachusetts and Harvard as an older adult. He has contributed significantly to Springfield's Black community, serving for several years as the Director of the Afro-American Cultural Center at American International College. Mr. Jordan was active in the Springfield chapter of the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), in which he fought for racial equality and justice on behalf of Springfield's Black citizens. Mr. Jordan also served as State Representative for the 10th Hampden District, now the 11th Hampden District. In these positions of leadership, Mr. Jordan has used his leadership to improve the condition of Blacks living in Springfield and for all residents of the Commonwealth.

INTERVIEWER'S COMMENTS

I think this interview is extremely pertinent to the course, Black Springfield: Revisited. Mr. Jordan is a primary historical resource. He provides first-hand knowledge of how Springfield's Black community developed after World War II. He recalls the struggles that brought about change for Blacks in Springfield, and he discusses the racial, social and economical concerns that continue to plague Springfield. This interview was important to me because I was born and raised in Springfield. I feel that it is imperative to learn about Springfield's past in order to gain knowledge of constructive ways to make Springfield the best place that it can be for all of its residents. Throughout the interview, Mr. Jordan's answers provided me with a greater understanding of Springfield's local history and urban politics.

Shadae Thomas (Shadae): State your name.

Raymond Jordan (Mr. Jordan): Raymond A Jordan, Jr.

Shadae: And, how long have you lived in Springfield?

Mr. Jordan: All of my life; which is ahhh 61 and half years.

Shadae: Okay, so what brought you to Springfield and what area did you live in when you first moved or lived in Springfield?

Mr. Jordan: My father was with the ah U.S. Army, and he came up here on assignment; it had something to do with Westover Field Army and Air Force. I don't how they got together, and he was the first of ah 7 people in his family to locate to Springfield, my mother was the first of (pause) eight in her family – it was like the Underground Railroad. The first two came up, they got married – he came up here in the service, sent for her, they got married. We lived on Wallace Street in the city of Springfield, Six Corners section in the city of Springfield, that's where I was born.

Shade: Okay.

Mr. Jordan: Underground Railroad by way of Curtis, Georgia.

Shadae: Okay.

Shadae: All right, so what were the main areas in Springfield that Blacks lived?

Mr. Jordan: In the North End. The North End section of Springfield was the main area in which the ah Black population lived and the South End of Springfield, and they later ah progressed to the Hill-McKnight area, which is where they predominately live now.

Shade: Okay – so as of now that's where they are?

Mr. Jordan: That's where they are now, but mostly it was the North End [in] the city of Springfield.

Shadae: Ok, um, and wha wha, how was the racial climate in Springfield when you were growing up?

Mr. Jordan: I didn't know any different because of the fact that I grew up in a predominately white neighborhood, and all I knew was I was the paper boy and that when I went to different houses people had different scents in terms of the food, and as far as I knew it was just Black and White, and then really as ah, in elementary school we didn't, ah, have any real consciousness about racial tension or anything. We were like in a class, there were like about four or five Black people in the class and that was it.

Shadae: Um, so has have have you seen it progress um as you got older?

Mr. Jordan: Well, it progressed as I got older when I began to become familiar with the Dunbar Community Center. (Shadae: Okay.) Prior to that ah we resided in our own neighborhoods and I grew up with a with the ah the Italian community, and there were ah ah a few Black families in the area, but we were ah in an area which we were the more well-heeled because we had the first television in the car (Shadae: giggling) and owned a home in the area, and so therefore when the Friday night fights came on, ah in our ah front room where everybody came, there'd be White and Black, Black people watching the fight for the night. We had to watch it from the other rooms – sneak and watch it – because the neighbors would come in there. And...So that's what I remember the most about the uniqueness of that. And ah, since that time the City of Springfield had a reputation as being the City of Homes. It was an outstanding city model and we had an outstanding educational system because we had a vocational school, a technical school, a Classical School, which was for ah business administration, and commercial school, secretarial type, and ah, that was a model that everyone tried to follow. In addition, in terms of parks and recreation, we have, all the neighborhoods had parks. We have very, very distinct neighborhoods; all the neighborhoods had their own particular park. I grew up in Ruth Elizabeth Park, which is in Six Corners, and ah played (pause) sports – ah sandlot sports, in which we played at Six Corners, Ruth Elizabeth playground. We played at South End, we played against the North End, we played against Pine Point, we played against Sixteen Acres or Brightwood. All of the various neighborhoods would have a rivalry in all different sports where we knew each other from the neighborhoods, but it was very distinctive, it was all competitive and ah I think we had a good childhood, and what was more pronounced is that each one of the playgrounds had two or three adults that were employed full-time at the playground, so they knew you. And if they knew that a person was trying to ah smoke a cigarette they could send for you because somebody would tell them. They knew if somebody was having some type of problem within their family, because they would send for you. They would coach the football, basketball, baseball, hockey and all that kind of thing. There was a certain amount of personalization there. And, we did not have as many single parent families at that time we do now, which is really ah ah quadrupled compared to where it was when I grew up.

Shadae: Okay, umm, now a lot in my reading and research we talked about and I read about the Octagon Lounge incident, in terms of the racial climate um, when did that happen, what were you....?

Mr. Jordan: (interrupts)..That was in the 60's, and at that time I had ah (pause) been out of high school maybe like three or four years, I was married for maybe a couple of years. I was probably around twenty-three, twenty-four because I got married at twenty-one, and I worked in a place called Savage Arms in Westfield, Mass, and I worked on second shift. And when you worked on the second shift you go to work at three o'clock and you get out at eleven, eleven-thirty, and at eleven-thirty, on Thursday and Friday nights we'd always try to come back and go someplace to have ah a beer. And ah, there were one or two spots that we stopped off, and one was the Octagon Lounge because that was a (pause) hot Black night spot, it's a night spot. So on this particular night we were coming there ah from Savage Arms in a carpool of five, we all worked in the carpool, coming back from Westfield State, full of grease and oil from working in the

factory and we came down to the Octagon Lounge and mass chaos had broke out, because we saw, ah, all these police cars there and we saw a guy named Sergeant Williams who was very familiar with us at that particular time, and they were just beating people. Everybody was running and I saw the police officer beating people, what have you there, and that was really my first prelude to civil rights because I was there ah on the outskirts, saw a lot of things happen and what have you. Later on I found out that it was a case of police brutality when somebody people had gotten beat up and there was a protest afterwards because the police department and the ah newspaper said that ah they didn't beat anybody and there was just a little disobedience, a little disturbance or something like that, but it was major. And, I said how could these people lie, I'm looking at all of this? So that was a kind of shock to me to see that, you know to see it, then to read it and it's totally different than what you see.

Shadae: Um, okay, and in talking about, about civil rights, what were some of the major organizations um in Springfield?

Mr. Jordan: The N double A -C-P was the group that was ah consisted most of the professionals, people with college degrees and a lot of the people that were of lighter-skinned texture, in my opinion. And the Congress of [sic] Racial Equality was the people that were the advocates and they were more action-orientated [sic] than ah the N double A-C-P. Ah, I was a member of the NAACP because I was enamored with the talents of a gentleman by the name of Benjamin Swan who was a leader, and a guy by the name of Oscar Bright. Ah, they seemed like they had no fear in terms of ah going against the establishment in terms of making our point about ah civil rights. So I was a gopher in the group, with that group. I didn't know too much about what I was doing, but I just knew it was the right thing to do (pause) in terms of protesting for the civil rights movement.

Shadae: Uh huh, would you say that um, so you were active in these organizations, in the N double A-C-P?

Mr. Jordan: I was active in the Congress of Racial Equality, not the N double A-C-P, CORE.

Shadae: Oh, Congress of Racial Equality...excuse me...

Mr. Jordan: At that time it was headed up by a gentleman by the name of James Farmer.

Shadae: Okay. Can you describe in a little bit in more detail some of the um, um issues that you dealt with with CORE?

Mr. Jordan: Well it was – police brutality was the main issue – and we were involved in a number of different demonstrations. And at that time if there was a disturbance in the Black community, ah we had called for a meeting at the Dunbar Community Center to send out the word, maybe like ah two or three o'clock in the afternoon, and that night we could fill the basement of the Dunbar Community Center with two or three hundred people: word of mouth. The word would come, get around saying that there was an irregularity going on in the Black Community and that there's, ah, police brutality or something to that effect, and ah we would, were determined to be able to fill the place. And then people like Ben Swan and ah Oscar Bright

would get up and make speeches (phone ringing in the background), and at that time ah ah the elected official, the guy that was more moderate, who was a guy by the name of Paul Mason, who was a ah, he was a city councilor. And he was always the guy that would say let's be reasonable, you guys are being kind of radical; let's work this thing out, let's sit down, and all the practical stuff. Ah, I had no idea that history was being made by that time because he was the... (Woman's voice calls "Raymond" in the background – brief pause to answer the phone), because I saw the role of the politician who had the responsibility of trying to keep everything under control within the Black and minority community and he was part of the system because he was an elected official (Shadae: Okay.). And so his job was trying to work things out so that everybody would reach some kind of happy medium or what have you. And one of our first guests we had at that time was a young state representative, and I had no idea what a state representative was or who they were, what they did... was a guy by the name of Julian Bond, and Julian Bond had just become the first black state representative elected to the General Court in Georgia (Shadae: Okay.). And so he came and he spoke, and he was a guy that came out of, a Morehouse man, he was a very ah tame looking guy, in my opinion, and he was very very articulate, very very articulate, he talked about the movement, and as he began to talk about the movement you could feel yourself being there. He talked about irregularities, he kind of brought out the whole concept of the Martin Luther King thing together in terms of listening to him, and we just knew that we were just another ah ah spoke in the chain. ... (Shadae: Yeah.) as far as disobedience or the civil rights movement throughout the country, listening to Julian Bond about what he went through... what he went through... trying to get elected as the first Black as state representative there. Again, a part of history being shaped in my life, in that regards. Again I was a person that was what you call a loyal soldier. If you gave me a responsibility, I would get it done. I never had a responsibility that was really too taxing because it was just things that I could get done because I was clearly a blue-collar person who had no idea about this professionalism or how all these things worked. I just did my responsibilities, did my job and I followed Ben and Oscar, because Ben was a great leader.

Shadae: Um, do you feel that these um organizations are still a force in the community today?

Mr. Jordan: No, by all means not. Not at all. Nowhere near the kind of (thinking) of force that were in that particular day because people didn't have that much choices as they have right now. Ah, during that time, the ministers were more pronounced in working with the community, because there were not as many ministers. Now there is maybe seven times as many ministers and churches in the Black community as there were at that particular time. Ah, the other part too is that the civil rights movement was hot across the country with Bull Dog Connor, Bonners, and what was going on in Alabama and the sit-in demonstrations and all that kind of thing, where people had a racial consciousness of it and everybody had a close relationship with the South.

Shadae: Oh...okay.

Mr. Jordan: We were all like first generation from removed from down South, and so you had that kind of relationship there. So therefore it was much more easy to get people involved with the movement at that time than it is today. Today you have sons and daughters of people from the civil rights movement and they send their youngsters to school saying, "Don't you get involved with all that campus unrest... You're up there to get an education... I better not read

about you getting arrested,” or things like that, and that is the big difference from before. And so, I’m part of maybe like maybe three or four generations of civil rights ah unrest. Ah, I started off in the 60’s as part of a group that was doing it for ah police brutality reasons and ah equal opportunity and then I moved into the aspect of opening up the colleges or what have you where I worked with people who were trying to be, ah, part of the situation which Cornell University started it off; where they did the take over of Cornell University, and these people that took it over were people that were sons and daughters of professionals, and they were going to make it because they got into Cornell University on their own before without any help from financial aid, without any help from ah (pause) ah any special Black programs or what have you. They got there and they said that the S-A-Ts are unfair because you may come from a different background and you can’t be expected to compete with people from the suburbs, sons and daughters of professionals with people that are first generation high school grads, ah to understand some of the questions on the S-A-Ts, ah, when people get there, minorities, they should have some type of helper aids, ah in terms of tutorial programs, to help with a lot of deficiencies that they had. There should be some people in the ah administration that look like them so they can relate to if they have special kinds of problems, and ah ten percent of the freshman class should be persons of color and these, these universities had the responsibility to go out and to ah make a special provision, to go out to seek the minority communities so we could get an opportunity to ah, ah get on that le-, get on a level where we could be competitive with the ah majority community at that time. So in doing so, they did it at Cornell University, and had pictures in the paper of ah some Black students with army coats on and bandoliers and like rifles (pause) on, it looked very very militant, black tams, and they took over the administration building and chained themselves in. Ah, most of the Black community said “Whoa, them boys are tough!” (laughing and inaudible)...they did that and so, they did that and the University’s first impression was, “Let’s kick them out, we’re not going to allow that.” But then they said that if they kick ‘em out, what will the news media make out of it because what they’re asking for, is it really unreasonable? Is it really, this is Ithaca, New York, is it really unreasonable? So they decided they’d wait ‘em out, but in the meantime people began to hear about it and people would come there and rally around the students that were there. So eventually they handed the list of demands to the college president, the college president thought about it and the board, and they decided they would meet some of their demands, and that’s how it opened up throughout the country, they began to have specialized programs to ah, have a certain percentage of the freshman class would be minorities, providing financial aid; they had programs that were not tied into your SAT scores and recruiting minority teachers and what have you. So that started happening all across the country, and in Springfield, a young ah student organization led by a guy by the name of Kathiba Olatunde, he just took a list of the ah demands from the other schools, because everybody had the same demands, and he led a group of students here for a ssss, sit-in demonstration at A-I-C, and they were all set to do a big demonstration, so [inaudible] got the demands and handed them to ah President Harry Cournotes, who ironically is ah resigning this year after I don’t know how many years that it’s been – thirty some, forty some odd years -- and they handed the demands to him and he handed the ah the answers back, because they had anticipated this – it was going on all across the country and he knew it was coming and he knew it was going to happen eventually here (pause). Handed the answers back and as a result they said 10% of the class would be ah minorities. The financial aid piece they addressed that; they came up with a Afro-American Cultural Center, that was one of the demands that was standard, and they wanted to have an administrator,

administrator for the cultural center and programs that would be ah conducive to the needs of the minority students. And then a lady by the name of Mrs. Frazier as a first ah executive director, she lasted for a year and a half, then they wanted somebody that ah was from the community, and Kathibo Olatunde came up with a brilliant idea of hiring a brash young man by the name of Raymond Jordan to be the executive director of the center, cuz I, at that time my prestige in the civil rights movement had increased a little bit, I was a little more brash and could understand a little more, and I was doing a festival called the Black Harambee Holiday, so I did pretty good with that. So I became the Executive Director of the Afro-American Cultural Center at American International College and our theme was pride, the name of the organization was PRIDEs, Persons Ready in Defense of Ebony.

Shadae: Does that organization still exist?

Mr. Jordan: It still exists. Most of the black students there don't have any idea of what it means, what it's all about, how it got there, nor do they interact with the cultural center. Because now what you have is the sons and daughters of the PRIDEs or those school movements that say to their youngsters going there, "Don't you get involved with that stuff, don't be going by the cultural center," because they remember what transpired at the cultural centers at that time, and that was a big communication network, because most of the schools had Afro-American cultural centers. U-MASS had one that was kind of nice up there too, and they had the CCEMBS [pronounced CEBS] Program. The CCEMBS Program was geared towards ah the minority students, it was geared towards ah providing the financial aid, and at one particular time I did a study up there because they used to give the CCEMBS students their money but they would make the mistake of giving the money at the beginning of each semester. You can't give youngsters (chuckling) a large amount of money like \$2,000 at the beginning of the semester and expect them to buy their meal ticket and make provisions and budget it out. Ah my ooh little young brothers and sisters were broke within three weeks of receiving that money. Then they become an aftermath by having youngsters up there broke. You know they had some little crime-type situations, some bad situations transpired up there because the administration did not understand us, thinking we would be responsible enough to do all these kind of things, and after a while I did a report on it and worked with them and they began to understand how you get the meal ticket and give it out in segments of the money so therefore it would last and go on for a while. I'm rambling right now because what we're trying to do is cram stuff in without really going in sequence, but that's the civil rights movement as I see it.

Shadae: Okay...

Mr. Jordan: Which eventually led to me being a state rep – that's back to Julian Bond, coincidental – ah, led to me being in a position where as I have the ah (doorbell rings), I mean...ah... the whole college takeovers and eventually I became an administrator as a result of those takeovers. I become an administrator, and myself interacted with a young student rabble-rouser, ah, who ends up hiring me and I later end up hiring him at the Urban League, and so... (coughing), and it's just like ah, just like fate in terms of ah, if I was trying to design my life and on paper, it looked like it was a brilliant design, but it was God's hand – because God has always moved me into the right position. I always seemed to get moved whereas I end up, hey,

he's got the qualification for this [inaudible] qualification for that. I could orchestrate it, but I'm, I'm not doing anything, I'm just a pawn (laughing).

Shadae: Okay, just to transition a little bit, you talked about this earlier, the role of the Black church played in the community, so if you could, um, how do you feel the Black church um played a role in the community, um to what extent?

Mr. Jordan: At that time we had ah Reverend Charles Cobb at St. John's Church, and he was very very pronounced. He was very outspoken. He did not see himself just as a preacher or a minister from St. John's Congressional Church, he saw himself as a leader, and he played the role of a leader, so much so that he ran for City Council and also ran for Mayor of the City of Springfield, and he would work towards bringing the community together for various issues. When something went wrong downtown he'd lead the movement against downtown. So much different than today whereas ah a good amount of the ministers today, in my opinion, just think their main responsibility is just taking care of their flock in the church and the church only.

Shadae: Okay, um, so how would you describe, um you talked a little bit about the social atmosphere, but just in terms of what were the places um that Blacks um went to socialize and have fun, um...?

Mr. Jordan: Well, when I was younger the ah point of ah what I call [inaudible] was Dunbar Community Center. After growing up in a predominately white neighborhood and going to a predominately white elementary school, I didn't really get an opportunity and I played for a predominately white athletic teams (Shadae: Uh huh.), didn't really get a chance to interact with ah, aah, a large group of Blacks other than going to church, so the church was one point, and then the Dunbar Community Center, in which at the Dunbar it gave me an opportunity to travel because my father didn't take us around that much. At the Dunbar Community Center playing basketball for the 10-13 basketball team, we went to ah foreign travel, ah, bizarre places like Roxbury, Massachusetts, ah (thinking) Cambridge or Ditchwell Avenue in New Haven, down to Hartford, Connecticut, Waterbury, Connecticut, Bridge - Bridgeport, Providence, Rhode Island. These places were just ah cities and towns we heard about, but to go there and to go to the equivalent Dunbar, to another Black facility there, that was so exciting, and it helped, it really helped to grow up, and that was very, very pronounced in my ah growing up, having an opportunity to do that. And then when you ah (clearing throat) came into junior high school, it was like a ah, ah situation in which (pause) players that you played against with respect to neighborhoods, all the sudden three different neighborhoods would be competing for the same positions on the junior high school team, and then it became even more narrow when that junior high school team went into high school in which you were with people from all over the city competing for the same position, but people who you recognized because you had seen them all during your years of competition in that regards. As far as the civil rights movement was concerned, ah, for a long time I always thought it was White and Black, and I remember we had a Jewish quarterback on the football team and he was clearly the best quarterback of all the white quarterbacks they had there, and for some reason or another they wouldn't play this guy, and later on, about five or six years later on, I realized because he was Jewish and they wanted the Irish guy to play, and so those kinds of dynamics came about. Then I began to listen and pay attention more and then I began to really become conscious of the Italians, the Irish community

and the Jewish community and the Polish Community – figure out the last name, make a connection – oh I get it, but didn't really ah think it was a large problem – just Black or White.

Shadae: Uh huh, so when you um, when you were older and in college and um in your professional career, were there any um specific places that um Blacks went to either after work or ta, ta hang out?

Mr. Jordan: See me being older in college was different, see I'm not traditional. Inasmuch when I came out of high school I worked in the factory and I was a shop steward. I didn't go to college until I was about, till I was around thirty-two, thirty-three years of age. Ah, they had the Lyndon Johnson War on Poverty, in which they took the leaders of the rabble-rousers from the civil rights movement and gave us all jobs. They were called paraprofessionals. They gave us jobs in these anti-poverty programs, and these anti-poverty programs they make you a supervisor, because (pause) the strategy was take the leaders, give them a white shirt and tie, put them in charge, then you leave the ah, the ones causing the problems leaderless. So they hired us all, and we became less militant because (chuckling) we weren't as hungry when we became part of the establishment in that regards. And so in doing so, I used to go to these meetings, and I used to be laughing going to these meetings like I was somebody's supervisor or what have you, and they had college graduates in there and I'd, we'd be listening, and I was always intimidated by people going to college, but this guy got a college degree and he don't sound too smart to me (laughing). We used to have these conversations with ourselves. You know I think this guy is not so smart - so different than - not so smart a person (Shadae: Yeah.). You know if he can do it, I know I can do it (Shadae: Uh huh.). So eventually I was taking a course here and there and I got confidence because I interacted with professionals and what-not, and said, hey, I can do that, and that's how I ended up going to college and it took me until nineteen, I think it was eighty-one, to get the degree. I was on the, the nine-year plan at the University of Massachusetts, because I was married; I'd go to school and take a couple of courses for one semester, take off a semester, take another few courses, go off and on, off and on, so eventually I was able to get through. Then, when I got through I was working in Boston as a state representative and I, ah they came around with this program for Harvard for the ah ah, the Master's in Public Administration. And I said I'd just apply just to apply never thinking that my background was kind of outstanding, [but] because I gotta outstanding civil rights background, nothing planned, I just fit, I got picked early. So, I went there and I was able to get my master's there, but it was, you take eight courses - but I took thirteen courses because I liked that whole alliance they had up there - I took a course at ah (pause) M-I-T, took one at Tufts. I'd go to all the schools, cuz it was kinda fun, you know, doing all that and the courses were very interesting, but even more interesting were the people – those ah conversations in the lunchroom, at break time and stuff were just fantastic because they had so many different bright minds and stuff there, it was like melting pot. I really learned a lot going to school. I really enjoyed ah working on getting that master's degree, in terms of just ah different thought patterns with different people – brainiacs, I loved that part.

Shadae: Okay (chuckling).

Mr. Jordan: And so in terms of places, I didn't even get to the question, the places where we went... (Shadae laughing), there was always one or two night clubs (Shadae: Okay.) in town, and

one would get hot, a new one would come on board and people would go to the various clubs, and there was always after-hour joints, and they began opening up at maybe twelve o'clock and closing at four o'clock in the morning. At that time we had major ah factories here, a lot of blue-collar workers making a lot of money, and they worked the second and third shift. So when they got off the second shift they wanted some place to go to spend the money. So everybody had after-hour joints or houses where they had little parties and played cards and ah a lot of women congregated and all that kind of thing, and so there was always some place to go, there was always some place to go.

Shadae: Were these places, were they Black-owned?

Mr. Jordan: Oh yeah, oh yeah, they were Black-owned and some, some of the clubs were White-owned, but they were managed by Blacks, like this place called the Columnander the famous joint downtown, which was ah very, very popular place, they used to bring in these night club acts that would start on Thursday, end on Sunday, and you know like on Broadway ah the third and fourth under-study who may be one hair ah less talented than the one that's got the first position.

Shadae: Yeah.

Mr. Jordan: Where the first position person is more political than the one in the fourth position (Shadae: Uh huh.), these nightclub acts were people that were just one step away from making it.

Shadae: Oh...okay.

Mr. Jordan: And ah, people just loved to get dressed up on Thursday, Friday and go down to the nightclubs; everybody see each other, you know, get a chance to dance and let off steam. And during that time there was another phenomenon going on that...like the Elks Club and the Masons – was that no matter where you were in Black society within those Black organizations, if you were a Mason you become in charge [as] the Worshipful Master of the Lodge, you were somebody in that group. That's why you got so many Black clubs and organizations because somewhere you were somebody. You may be the janitor at the ah department store, but at the church you were the head deacon, and you were in charge and they didn't talk until you said they could talk (Shadae: laughter and agreement). You may have been ah, had a ah, a bad hand dealt to you as a bank guard or whatever you were doing in your regular society, but at the Masonic Hall and the Elks Club you were somebody, because you were elected or earned certain position or certain prestige there. That's why the whole strategy or...or...development of those social organizations was so important, cuz there you were somebody amongst your peers. If I were doing a doctoral dissertation, I'd always do it on that, on how all these black organizations how they spun up, because of that.

Shadae: And Springfield was very rich with these organizations, with the Masons and the Elks, or...?

Mr. Jordan: No, very average, all urban cities had them, and they still have them. If you were like, when I used to go politicking for the big guys like ah Dukakis or Kerry or somebody, if I was going to Des Moines, Iowa, the first thing I would ask for is where is the Elks Club, cuz the Elks Club would tell you where the, where, where else to go. Or, I'd give 'em my Masonic handshake and somebody would tell me where the Lodge was. From the Lodge I could spin off and find out what was going on, ah, and professionals could do the fraternities situation. There was always some type of common denominator to get you into different places.

Shadae: Okay, and last question...(interruption), okay and last question, how do you feel Springfield has changed over the years, and what do you hope.....

Mr. Jordan: (Interrupts)...It's no longer the City of Homes, no longer the City of Homes. I think the ah minority community has gotten more complacent. I think that people more or less go for themselves, ah, I don't think the community of faith and the Black and Spanish community is as active in the ah ah community affairs as they should be. The separation of the haves and have nots is more pronounced, and the whole culture of drugs, and the last two generations are not the same the way they used to be, where the young people used to lead the movement and now they wait to be led, and when we were younger, we ran the old guys out. But now, the young guys say, "You old guys aren't doing anything to bring us along." That's the biggest difference in my opinion.

Shadae: And um, what do you hope for the future of Black Springfield?

Mr. Jordan: That we'd have ah some young people emerge so we can follow and get advised. I always wanted to do... I wanted to be the advisor, I want to be the old man with some young person that's really up and coming, and we can ah help do the strategy, raise the money for them if they want to run for office, and do the kinds of things that we learned. We learned a lot and we've gotta impart the knowledge. And that's what we're looking for, is somebody that ah wants to come up to the ranks and work. Too often we have people that want to come in and join the church one day and become chairman of the board the next. They want to start being a politician without understanding how it is to stuff the envelopes and what it takes to become the politician. Or they want to be a community leader without having the foundation for that. People say, ah, are you qualified to lead, are you qualified to run for office? Had nothing to do with qualifications. Anybody can have a bachelor's degree or have these kind of ah, experiences in certain positions, it's marketability. Are you marketable? Can you get elected? Can you convince people to support you and follow you? And that's the whole thing about marketability, it's not qualifications, cuz the qualifications are really, can you fog up a mirror. Anybody can fog up a mirror.

Shadae: Well thank you very much for um letting me interview you, um, I really appreciate it

Mr. Jordan: You're quite welcome, I'll say that it's a very, very difficult interview to do without sequences and stuff, but you, you know, you just let me ramble so that's good so I appreciate that!