

# John Carlos Oral History Interview: 2013

conducted by David P. Cline, and transcribed by Sally C. Council  
New York, New York  
August 18, 2013



## Summary

John Carlos discusses his childhood in Harlem, New York, the changes that he saw in Harlem with the widespread use of heroin and the splintering of families, and describes the disparities in education for black children when he was growing up. He remembers the influence of black leaders including Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Carlos was recruited to run track at East Texas State University, where he experienced racial discrimination and was treated poorly by his coach. He explains his protest at the 1968 Olympics, including the symbols that he and Tommy Smith employed to protest racial discrimination, and he describes the emotional impact that the protest had on him. John Carlos was a member of the American Olympic track team and was the Bronze Medalist at the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico, where he protested racism around the world. He later played football in the NFL, and worked as a counselor and track and field coach (9 video files of 9, 127 min., digital, sound, color, 1 transcript of 68 pages). This interview is part of the Civil Rights History Project Interview completed by the Southern Oral History Program under contract to the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History & Culture and the Library of Congress, 2013 with interviewer David Cline and videographer John Bishop.

[Conversation and laughter]

**John Carlos:** Hopefully, they'll sit down.

**David Cline:** Ready?

**John Bishop:** We're ready for the intro.

**David Cline:** Okay. Good morning. Today is August 18th, 2013. We are in Brooklyn, New York, with Dr. John Carlos, very honored to be here talking to you today. My name is David Cline. I am from the Department of History at Virginia Tech University and conducting this interview for the Civil Rights History Project of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Library of Congress. Filming this interview is Mr. John Bishop of Media Generation. We also have Elaine Nichols here from the museum, and our friend is also joining us today. I think that's everything. I want to thank you very much, Dr. Carlos, for being part of this project.

**John Carlos:** It's my honor. I mean, this is a very prestigious interview, and I'm just honored to be a part of it.

**David Cline:** Well, we're very grateful and honored that you've agreed to join us.

**John Carlos:** Thank you.

**DC:** Alright. What I'd like to do is just start, if you could just tell us a little bit about your childhood, where you grew up, and really who your people are, and what sort of influences you may have seen from that background in your later life.

**JC:** Alright. Well, let me just start off by my mom and dad. My dad was born, I would say, probably about 60 years after slavery in Camden, South Carolina. My mom was born in Cuba, migrated to the United States when she was 17, met my dad in New York City. They got married. They had three kids: Earl Junior, Andrew Carlos—well, actually four kids; I'm sorry, I left my baby sister out—John Carlos, and then Carlos. We were born and raised on Lenox Avenue, New York. Fortunately for me, I had the great distinction to be raised between the Cotton Club and the Savoy Ballroom, probably the two most prestigious nightclubs in the world at that particular time. I had an opportunity to grow up there, to learn about how to hustle in front of the Savoy Ballroom, to do a little song and dance to entertain the people and receive those silver dollars—that was the coin of the time for particularly youngsters—to have a guy named Fred Astaire come to me, because I was the type of kid I didn't have the talent to dance and to sing, but I had the talent to go collect the money. And what he told me at that particular time was he enjoyed us. What impressed him most is that we always gave a good show for the money. That was something that stayed with me throughout my career as a public figure in the world of sports, to make sure that I gave the people a very good show for the money. I began to develop in Harlem and, wide-eyed, I would look and see what was going on. At that particular time, I noticed at a very young age that they had a thing called white flight. It appeared that all the white folks had a meeting that night and decided that, "We're going to just move out of Harlem," because they all started moving to the suburbs and left Harlem primarily for black people.

**DC:** What years were these? What year were you born?

**JC:** I was born June 5th 1945, so I would say roughly eight years, nine years into my life, these things started taking place. I recall asking my father why were they leaving? And my father pretty much told me that [clears throat] it was difficult for white folks to accept the fact that most of the domesticated workers that was there to clean the house or what-have-you were starting to move into the apartment buildings and live as next-door neighbors. So I guess a lot of them felt like, "Hey, we can't have this," and they decided to leave. In retrospect now, here in 2013, if you was to go back to Harlem, many of the ancestors of those white individuals that moved out have moved back into Harlem. And it doesn't just appear to be that way in Harlem. It's happening all over the United States. But in any case, I continued to grow in New York. I got a chance to experience what the drug scene was. When I was a kid, the drug of choice for many individuals was a thing called King Kong. King Kong was a bootleg liquor. It was almost—if I was to put that in parallel with something in modern times, I would say King Kong was like PCP.

A lot of these individuals would drink this bootleg liquor and they would go to the roof and actually take off, like they could fly, and jump to their death. And then overnight, King Kong left, and this thing called heroin came in, or smack, or mud, or whatever you care to call it. And that's when I noticed that families started to disintegrate.

When I say disintegrate, I mean explode, in terms of all of the love and affection and the harmony that they had in the household just dissolved. Because at that particular time there used to be a unit, a family unit, to the point where all families got together between 5:30 and 6:00 to have dinner, to have discussion as to what happened in school, "Did you do your homework? How did you make out on your science project?" All of these things were taking place, and then when the drugs came in, it just disillusioned a lot of the fathers. Many of the fathers became, as I call them, "missing in action," because they stopped coming home. They were strung on those drugs and left the families to be raised by the mothers. Mothers try and do the best that they could, and a lot of them, at that particular time, had three and four or five kids. And then, for the mom to try and raise those kids by themselves, it put a lot of unnecessary pressure on them. Some of them started to chippy around with the drugs themselves. Some of them went to alcohol. But the bottom line was it was very difficult for them to survive. Economically, if you looked at it, at that particular time, for a black family in the United States, jointly if they made \$15,000, they was the top of the line. So, when the father left, that cut the income considerably. So then, when you looked in their closet, there was no clothes. You looked in the icebox, there was no food. Anything they had was a hand-down from maybe a brother that was four or five years older than them. They just would hand the clothes down. I began to look around, in terms of what role could I play? What could I do?

**DC:** Now, did your family hang together?

**JC:** My mother and father was strong as the Rock of Gibraltar. My father was a shoemaker. My father was a veteran from the First World War. He had an entrepreneurial-type mind where he was his own man, and he set up his own business and did quite well. My mother came in as a domesticated worker as well. I remember when we were young kids, my mother would take myself and my brother when she used to go and clean the abortion offices all through Harlem, to go in and clean the afterbirth. And I remember I used to go snooping around, just to look and see what was going on. And I saw some things in there that maybe I shouldn't have saw at that particular age. But yet and still I went on to realize that—and I don't want to go into detail about it—but I would say with the drug trade at that particular time, there was the professional-type drugs that some of these professional doctors had in the office, where professional people used these drugs, like entertainers or doctors or lawyers or what-have-you. And then, there was the street drugs, as I mentioned earlier; the heroin was out, just open for the everyday people in the street. But I began to look around, as I said, to see what my niche was. What could I do to try and make things better for my peers, the standard of life that they had, to bring them up to at least the standard that we had in my household?

And I saw a guy on TV that I was very impressed with, a white fellow, used to run around in a green suit and had a funny-looking hat with a feather sticking out of it, and they called this guy Robin Hood. And I began to look at Robin Hood in terms of, “Wow, this is a guy that I want to image myself as, a guy that had no fear in terms of the authority figures.” Because it appeared to me that Robin Hood split the pea in half, so to speak, and made it clear to himself there was two laws of the land: There was God’s law and there was man’s law. And he made it clear that he wasn’t concerned about man’s law.

He was concerned about God’s law, and he did his job. And when I say man’s law, I’m talking about like the Sheriff of Nottingham, you know, the way they presented Robin Hood. And I liked the way he carried himself. So, then I began to look at what was happening in the freight trains. Just like the stagecoach or the carriage would come through Nottingham Forest. Well, the Yankee Stadium and the freight yards over there was Nottingham Forest for John Carlos. And I remember going over there with a couple of my buddies and telling them we was going to investigate what was coming in on the trains. And at that particular time, they were bringing in much food. They had the frozen freight trains where they had—coming out with succotash and starting to develop the frozen food products. They had textiles that was coming through. And my attitude was to go and capture these goods, you might say. And I remember my buddies telling me, saying, “Man, we’re going have fat pockets.” And I said, “No, this is not for us. This is for the people in the community that don’t have.” And a lot of them that I was talking to at that particular time, they wasn’t doing as well as the individuals that I was talking about. So, it was self-serving for them to stock up their houses with clothes and food and so forth, as well. And at the same time, I had to remind myself that my father and my mother were staunch Americans. I mean, when I say Americans, I mean to the hilt, that my father served in the First World War. He was proud of his service in the war. My mother was a foreigner coming to the United States and proud to be an American citizen and just believed in doing things the right way. So, when I’m breaking the law by hitting these freight trains and so forth, they were more concerned about man’s law. And I was more concerned about God’s law. I still had the love and respect for my parents not to let my father know what I was doing, and to safeguard myself, to make sure it didn’t get back to my father that I was breaking into these freight trains. As I began to get older, I heard about this guy swimming the English Channel. At that particular time, radio was our TV, and we used to listen to Johnny Dollar and Dick Tracy and all these guys on the radio. And I heard them mention this guy swimming the English Channel. You know, as I stated, I didn’t know what the English Channel was. I knew that he was in the water. I knew that I was probably the best bathtub swimmer in Harlem.

**DC:** [Laughs]

**JC:** I swam quite a bit in the Harlem River. I lost quite a few friends in the Harlem River. And then—

**DC:** Did you ever swim in an organized swimming pool or anything?

**JC:** No, I never got a chance to swim in a pool. But I developed this thought in my mind that I was going to swim the English Channel. And I remember asking my father, said, “Pop, do you swim?” And he said, “Yes, son, just like a rock, straight to the bottom.” But I asked him, I said, “Daddy, if they swim in the English Channel, do they swim with a knife in their mouth? What about the sharks?” I said, “And then, when they have to go to the bathroom, how do they go to the bathroom if they’re swimming?” Because I never knew that they’d come out of the water and do what they had to do, and then, they’d drop them back in the water, and they’d carry on. But I had the mindset that I was inquisitive enough that I wanted to know how you do this.

How do they set the tide to accomplish the goal? “What did they get, Daddy? Did they get a trophy? Did they get money? Did they get recognition?” And he told me, he said, “Son, they get it all.” So, he told me he would go and research about the sharks and the whole nine yards, and he would get back to me. Well, in the meantime, when he went to do that, they came back on the radio again and they started talking about the Olympic Games. And, “Daddy, what’s the Olympic Games?” Well, he said, “Well, son, that’s when all the great nations come together and they bring their best athletes together.” He said, “It’s like war games, to see who’s more physically and more mentally fit to put their best foot forward.” And I said to him, I said, “Well, Daddy, do they have swimming?” And he said, “Yes.” I said, “Well, Daddy, did they ever have a black swimmer to represent the United States?” And he said, “No, son.” And I said, “Well, Daddy, I’m going to be the first black to represent America as a swimmer.” I developed this in my mind and my heart that this is something that I really wanted to do. One day, my father—I guess, maybe I’m going on, maybe ten months, a year, and my father saw that I had picked this thing up in my mind and my heart and was running with it. And he said to me, said, “Son, we need to have a talk.” I could look at the expression on his face. It was a painful thing, this talk that we was going to have, that he was going to have to give me. I said, “What’s that, Daddy?” And he said to me, he said, “Well, son,” he said, “you’re going to have to get rid of that thought about you going to the Olympics as a swimmer.” “Why, Daddy? What do you mean?” He said, “Well, son, my understanding is a swimmer has to swim three or four times a day to train. Where would you train?” He said to me, he said, “You can’t go to the Harlem River and train. You lose your friends every summer.” He said, “You can’t go to Colonial Pool.” That was the public pool where the black kids go to everyday. He said, “You can’t go there. Too many people trying to cool off. You can’t go to the ocean. The water is too rough.” And I’m saying to him, I said, “Well, Daddy, I’ll join a club.” And he said, “Oh, and you can’t join a club.” And I said, “Well, Daddy, we can’t afford it?” He said, “Oh, no, we can afford it.” “Well, why can’t I join?” And then, he put his hand out like that and he rubbed his hand. And when he did it, I thought he had a bug bite or something. And he was telling me, he said, “No, son, because of the color of your skin.” Before I could digest that and say, “Because of the color of my skin?”—there was another pool up there not too far from the Audubon Ballroom, where Malcolm X was assassinated, called Highbridge Pool, and that was the white area at that particular time.

My father mentioned to me—and my father didn't go in the pool that much, but he knew what was going on—and he said to me, he said, "Son, when you and your friends go up to Highbridge Pool and you jump in the water, what happens?" In just seconds, you flash back in your mind and you remember as soon as you hit the water, all the white mothers would jump up and call their kids, "Bobby! Billy! Ricky! Betty! Judy! Get out the water! Get out the water! Hurry up!" And it was very perplexing for me, for the simple reason that, in one sense they didn't want to be me, they didn't want their kids, like something was going roll off me onto them. And in another sense they was putting all sorts of lotion on them, laying in the sun, trying to look like me! So, I was really confused about the whole scenario. And then, my father said to me, he said, "Well, son, let me ask you this question: Are you going to quit?"

And I said to him, I said, "No, Daddy, I'll find another way." Well, by breaking into those freight trains, to show you how God worked, that was my vehicle to track and field. Because we had two detectives in Harlem, Mr. Lester and Mr. Bryant. They were out of 32nd Precinct right there in 135th Street. They knew my father, because my father used to have the poker game on weekends, you know, with the baseball players, Jackie Robinson and all those people when they played, they would all come together. And I remember my father having a conversation with those two detectives. And they were telling my father there had been some break-ins over in the freight yards and they think I had something to do with it. And they was telling my dad that, "You need to talk to John." And my father stopped them, he actually put his hand up and said, "No, you need to talk to him." And at that particular time, I was over at Macomb's Park at a PL track meet. And I wasn't over there to run the track meet. I was over there to get some new Converse sneakers. Because all the kids had new Converse sneakers, and my father was a shoemaker, so I didn't get a chance to get the new shoes. My old man would make shoes. So, in order for me to get some Converse, I would have to go over there—because the kids that was running, they would take their new sneakers and so forth and put in their pants and roll them up. Well, me and my buddies never had no new sneakers, so we would go over there and take our old shoes and leave the shoes and take their sneakers! So, when he came that particular day, they circled the whole park and had cop cars around the park. And they came in and they found me, and I was with two of my buddies, and they told my buddies, "Go sit up against the fence." And they took me into the infield of the track. And Mr. Lester is about, well, he was about six feet, and Mr. Bryant was about six-seven. Mr. Bryant was a big guy.

**DC:** Are these African American detectives?

**JC:** Yes sir.

**DC:** Yeah.

**JC:** Yes sir. [Coughs] And Mr. Bryant says to me, he said, "Mr. Lester has something to tell you." And Mr. Lester said to me, he said, "Let me tell you something, Johnny. There's been some break-ins.

And we think we know who is doing it.” And then, he leaned down into my face real close and said, “We can’t do anything until we catch him, and we’re going to catch him.” And then, he said, “But I have something else I want to tell you.” And I looked at him and I said, “What’s that?” And he said, “You have a talent.” “I have a talent? What talent do I have?” And he said, “You is a runner.” Because the police used to chase us from the Bronx over into Harlem River houses. They’d catch some of my partners, but they could never catch me. And these were like the Irish police, and some of them were portly, but they could roll. I mean, when I say they could roll, they could run! I mean, gun belt, nightstick, didn’t bother them; they was trucking! So, when he said I was a runner, I kind of smirked, [makes smirking sound] like that. And before I could pull myself back, Mr. Bryant smacked me upside my head. And when he smacked me, his fingers landed over here, that’s how big his hand was.

He said, “Don’t you disrespect Mr. Lester!” I said, “Mr. Bryant, I’m not disrespecting him.” I said, “But he said that I’m a runner. Everybody in the neighborhood runs!” And when I said that, I had something in mind specifically based on an incident that happened with my mother. My mother began to work at Bellevue Hospital at night. And I recall my mother going out one night to work, and I guess about an hour, she came back, and her stockings was all torn, and her legs was bleeding. A kid came up and grabbed her purse. And I guess she was holding onto the purse, and he drug her down. Well, she got back up and she came home. Quite naturally, all the men, me and my brothers and my father, everybody was upset. And my mother she said, “That’s alright. We’ll get some Mercurochrome and we’ll put it on there and some Band-Aids.” And then, she held up her purse and she said, “But I got my purse back!” So, when I’m talking about, as a runner, I’m saying my mother is a runner! Everybody in the neighborhood is a runner! And they told me, said, “No, Johnny, you’re special.” And they gave me a number to the New York Pioneer Club to ask me to call a guy by the name of Joe Yancey. He was the headmaster, you might say, of the track program. And I went down there. It was a new experience for me.

**DC:** How old were you at this point?

**JC:** I think I was like 13, 14. And I went in, and I didn’t have any track gear. I didn’t know what track gear was. I went in and I had some Cordovan shoes, some jeans. And they asked me where’s my gear? And I looked at him and I said, “First of all, what’s gear?” And I said, “Man, this is all I have.” He said, “What do you run?” And I said, “Distance,” because when I went out to the track that day, and Mr. Lester and Mr. Bryant caught ahold of me, what they told me was, “Get on the track and run until we tell you to stop.” Well, they forgot about me, and I must have run around that track fifty times! So, when the guy asked me what do I run? I’m a distance runner. So, he told me, said, “Well, here, these guys over here,” the older guys that was there, they were runners, like 660s, Jimmy Brown and guys like that, Frankie Bowen. They’re out there running 660s, and I didn’t know what a 660 was. I didn’t know it was 440 and a 220 put together, you know, a 660. And they were running five of them. Well, they had run one when I got there.

And when I was talking to Mr. Yancey and Mr. Levy, and they told me to go, so I got in there and I started running with them. Now, the first two I won. You know, I just beat them. I saw what they was doing, I knew where the finish line was, and I won. The next one I come back, and the third one I won. And the last one, I'm running, and they had something called "the bear." I didn't know what "the bear" was, and that's total fatigue. I wasn't in shape to do anything. I never trained. I was just running off my natural ability. On this last one, I'm running, and it was like they had a sniper on the roof, and he just shot me, man, and I just exploded and fell out. And I remember them taking me out of the Armory, my partners that was down there, they took me out of the Armory, and we were walking on 141st Street, coming back up to Lenox Avenue. And I remember they was helping me, and it was cold and snow on the ground. And I remember I was coming back through, I'm starting to, getting myself back together, and I hear one of the older guys say, "Man, who the hell that kid think he is?"

Think he just going to be able to come out here and run against us and do the things he's doing." And I was kind of like looking at him like, "What?" And the other guy said to him, said, "Man, I don't know who that kid is, but I think everybody is going to know who he is soon." And I remember telling the other guys, I said, "Man, I think I'm ready. We can go back in and finish that race now." And the rest was pretty much like stair steps, in terms of my career, because they began to see me running the meets in high school. I noticed that a lot of guys didn't have the confidence that I had in my abilities or in their abilities. I began to excel based on what Mr. Fred Astaire said about give them a good show for the money. I remember my first competition. We had gray cotton sweats, the old gray cotton sweats, and I remember I got a magic marker, and I pulled my sweatpants off and I wrote a big J on one of my buttocks and a big C on the other buttocks. My partner said, "Man, what are you doing?" And I said, "I'm putting JC on there, so when they see me jogging, they're going to know this name: JC, JC, JC, Johnny Carlos, Johnny Carlos!" And I went on and built a reputation from high school.

**DC:** Was there a decent track program at your high school?

**JC:** Well, we didn't have a track, as well. You know, we used to train running the hallways. We'd run the hall, and open up the cafeteria doors and run around tables, and shoot back down the hall. And then, when we had a time trial to see who was going to go to the Penn Relays, we used to be over there on the Franklin Roosevelt Drive on 96th and 1st Ave. You know, we would run the there, so to speak, to see who was going to make the team. No, we didn't have anything easy. And I might state that I didn't particularly care for track and field. I still wanted to be a swimmer. I went to Frederick Douglass Junior High School. And I guess because I was such a gangster kid, you might say, because I pretty much ran the school in my time there, in my tenure there, and I didn't get a chance to run [clears throat], excuse me, for the school track program. And I wanted to go to a certain school, a high school, because they had a swimming program. But this particular day, I think I cut out of school, or I played hooky that day and didn't go to school.

And we were filling out the paperwork to go to the school, and they changed my paperwork for me to go to Haaren High School on 59th and 10th Ave, and told me that they had a swim program there in the school. And when I found out that they had changed the paperwork and I was getting my papers that said I'm going to Haaren High School, I don't want to go to Haaren High School! Why am I—what is this? And they said, "That's what you put down." And my boy is telling me, "Man, it's going be alright. They've got a great swim program down there. You're going do well." And when I got down there, they didn't have a pool, much more a swim program! And then, I didn't run track for the school, probably—

**DC:** Then, why did they send you down there?

**JC:** Well, they sent me there because they wanted me on the track program. But they didn't have a swim program. And they wouldn't allow me to get on the track program because I wasn't one of the "right" students, you might say. You know, I was still in the thug element. So, I never got a chance to run for Haaren High School. And then, eventually, I left Haaren High School and transferred to Machine and Metal Trades on 96th Street.

**DC:** We're going to take a little pause here, just— [Recording stops and then resumes]

**JC:** They just gave me an honor last year, I think it was. They went to the archives, because I came back and gave a speech for the board of education, for the principals, I guess, and they went. The woman said, "I found out you went to school here." She dug up some stuff. It brought tears to my eyes, because I forget—I forgot about a lot of the guys, and she made a collage of all the pictures and so forth.

**DC:** So, this is Machine and Metal Trades?

**JC:** Right.

**DC:** And you transferred there in what—what year were you there?

**JC:** Man, don't get me to lying. [Laughs] I can't remember the year.

**DC:** But somewhere in high school?

**JC:** Yeah, yeah.

**DC:** And how did things change once you went over there?

**JC:** Well, they just got better for me, based on the fact that some of the guys I knew, the older guys in my neighborhood, had gone to school there, and they were involved in the track program. I remember we had one group picture, and I was on the team. I was probably one of the younger guys on the team, but one of the bigger guys, as well. I remember we took our first team picture. We had our street pants on and we had the school jersey on, and I felt like I was a part of something at that time, you know, to run with guys that I knew and wanted to excel at something. But once we got out there and got involved in the competition, I realized early that those guys didn't have the same awareness of their abilities as I had of my abilities. You know, they didn't have the confidence that they could beat a lot of guys. In track and field, when you first start track and field, novice is individuals that have never won anything. Open individuals, they have won a medal. They have won something in the past. And when we went in, we went in as novice. And we're sitting on the floor. They bring us all, the novice kids, out and they sit us on the floor. And as we're sitting on the floor, the open guys, the ones that have excelled in the past, they're running their races. And I remember looking at my guys, and they were like horrified that, "Man, we could never beat these guys. Look how fast they are!"

And I remember telling them, said, "Man, they only look fast because we're sitting here watching them. We will be just as good as them when we get out there to run against them." And another thing I noticed that they had songs about Boys High, and DeWitt Clinton, Erasmus. They had no song for Machine and Metal Trades. So, when we got up and we ran, I remember I told them, I said, "If y'all bring me this baton 30 yards in back of the last guy, we'll win, because I'm gonna catch whoever is out there." And we went on and we broke the record in our heat. And I'll never forget. We went to lunch. It was a delicatessen store right there on Amsterdam Avenue by the Armory, and we went there and we ate. And by the time we come back that afternoon to run the finals, they had created a song about Machine and Metal Trades. And I'm nudging them, said, "Man, they're singing about us! They're singing about us!" You know, so that was the start of us having a legendary reputation there. And we went on and we won the final. We broke the record again. But when my legacy started in track and field, in the 168th Street Armory, I ran extremely well indoors. But that wasn't the races. The races was outside after the track meet was over, because I would race against all of the winners outdoors and actually have an opportunity to say, "Look, man, I'll race you, and you've got all your medals," because a lot of the guys, they took so much pride in their awards, they'd pin them on their jacket. And medals that I won, I used to give them to the girls. [Laughter] The medals, they didn't—it was the competition that I liked. It wasn't about the award. If I got an award, I got an award because I wanted to show that I was there. You had to win something to let them know you was there! So, if I took third, it didn't matter. But when I got outside of the Armory, that's when the real competition started. Because I would give a guy, say, "Man, I'm going to give you four car lengths. I'm gonna beat you by three." And it was extraordinary, because I had as many people outside watching these races as there was inside. They didn't even care. It was a formality that we had to go through the process indoors.

**DC:** Right.

**JC:** But everybody was waiting for after the track meet to see what we would do in races outdoors!

**DC:** It was like street ball. It was like—

**JC:** Absolutely! Like, last night I was there, and that's all they were talking about. Said, "Johnny, we were just little kids, but we heard the legend. We heard legends." A lot of them, the younger guys, they never met me and they're looking at me like I'm a living legend. And it'll kind of, like, freak you out, you know, guys looking at you like that. And then, to hear stories that they were saying about your peers that was there with you, things that they were saying about me. I never knew what they were saying. I just found this out last night. But that's what built the legend in John Carlos.

**DC:** Do you remember that song from Machine and Metal Trades?

**JC:** No, man, I can't even—it wasn't a flamboyant song. It was something that had to do with Marilyn Monroe's chest or bosom or something like that, [laughs] you know, but it was a strong song. But what I was trying to say relative to me looking at track and field, I began to go to another level in track and field, like what track and field really means to me, and not so much about me getting stardom, but what I could use track and field as a springboard to. I began to realize that the better I perfected my game, the better I can speak, the better I can have a platform to do what I need to do in life. Because I never forgot about what happened on Lenox Avenue. I never forgot about the drugs. I never forgot about the domesticated workers. I never forgot about white flight. And then, at the same time, I'm starting to learn about prejudices and racism and that kind of thing. So, now, I'm really looking at this thing in terms of me being able to use track and field as a vehicle. The better I got, the more I was able to have a platform to get my message off.

**DC:** Now, these days, everybody wants to play ball and get out, right?

**JC:** Right.

**DC:** You know, this is—everyone thinks is the magic ticket. In those days, were sports seen as a ticket out?

**JC:** Well, you know, you have to look back in those days and look at it for what it was. You know, when you sit back and think about what was happening back, let's say, 60, 70, 80 years ago, it was like this: In the area, if they had black kids or minority kids and they had white kids, well, the white part of town, they had a swimming pool.

**DC:** Sure.

**JC:** The black area never had a swimming pool, or the people of color never had a swimming pool. But what they would give us in place of the pool was a basketball court. So, when you sit back and you think about all the superstar basketball players back in the day, Bill Russell, Elgin Baylor, and the guys before them, they became superstars merely because that was what they gave them, opposed to giving them the standard—what all kids wanted in the summer, to be in a swimming pool. But they didn't want us in the water. And the same thing fell. So, everybody was doing a thing in terms of, "Let me perfect my game." But it wasn't my game to say, "I'm playing basketball because I want to be an NBA star. I'm playing because I enjoy the game, and I've perfected my game, and I'm good at it." Now, people started to come and look. But then, on the same time, the people that gave them the park, they began to look at them in terms of economic growth and economic gain, because, "No, we can take these kids now. We didn't know that they was going to build their game like that." And then, you know, the Ruckus Tournament that they have in New York, it was so many individual kids that had to become street merchants, hustling in the street, that had phenomenal basketball talent. The pros wanted them.

They looked at the pros like, "Man, this is my game! You ain't going change my game. And you can't wave no money. I'm making as much money as you're trying to offer me! So, what are you—what are you?" So, that era they looked at Ruckus in terms of saying, "Oh, these kids here have a different sense about them." Like, you know, when Wilt Chamberlain came down or Elgin Baylor came down, all them would go to Ruckus Tournament, and they had their greatness about them, but they found that these raw, natural kids had equal greatness!

**DC:** Yeah.

**JC:** But yet and still, those kids were saying, "Man, you can't tell me nothing because that's my Rolls Royce parked over there." Because they got involved in the street merchantry, okay? It's all about dollars. But with your dollars, you want to give me dollars to control me in the way I play ball. With my dollars, I'm free enough to be my own man and play ball the way I see fit to play ball! And that's the way it grew. And now, in modern times, things have changed. Everyone wants to, you know, just be focused on the dollar. I don't see nothing about what's happening in my community. I'm not concerned about my fellow man. None of those things are taking place now. The bottom line is the almighty dollar. All the drugs that you see in basketball or football or baseball or track and field, they put that secondary, in terms of they should have been moving on this a long time ago. They know the difference in the way Hank Aaron and Willie Mays and them was playing ball opposed to the modern day ballplayer. Or they knew what Jesse Owens did or Tommie Smith or Lee Evans or John Carlos did, opposed to what these kids are doing now.

But they said, “We’ll turn our head to it, because we’re bringing people through the turnstile. We’re making money. We’re getting bigger TV contracts.” You know, all the sponsors want to come in now. But then, you look at sports right now and you say, “Wow, the sponsorship is not as great anymore until the Olympics roll around.” Why isn’t it great anymore? “Because I don’t want to sponsor something, and then pick up the next day and find out that these guys are using drugs and tarnish my product.”

**DC:** Yeah.

**JC:** So, they’re not jumping out there as much anymore. The only time they jump out there is the Olympics. Like, for instance, right now, Mr. Putin, the president of Russia, he’s talking about, you know, “I don’t want gays in the Games.” Well, he’s ridiculous. If he thinks that the gays are not involved in society, then something is wrong with him. Now, if they want to get into a moral clause, my whole line to them is, “When you become God and you show me that you’re God, then you can be a moral figure over these individuals. But until then, you’re just like me. You can’t step in the place of God and say, ‘Because this person is this way or that person is that way, they shouldn’t be allowed to do this or they shouldn’t be allowed to do that.’” And then, I sit back and look at the Olympic Committee and I say, “Shame on you! Shame on you!” Because in 1936, Hitler said, “I don’t want Jews and I don’t want blacks on the team.” The Olympic Committee stepped up then and said, “Oh, wait a minute, Mr. Hitler.

You need to take a seat on this.” Well, when they went to Germany, Hitler still stepped in, and they still buckled and gave in to the fact that they took those young Jewish fellows off the team and replaced them because Hitler was against the Jews. Now, they had the same responsibility to step up to the plate to tell Mr. Putin—and I say, “God forbid!” And here’s a hypothetical statement: If Usain Bolt was to come out, or any noted figure in the sports world right now was to come out and say, “I’m gay,” now this is hypothetical, but if this guy says, “I’m gay,” do you think that the Olympic Committee would let Mr. Putin tell Usain Bolt that he can’t run in the Olympic Games because of his sexual preference? The Olympic Committee would tell Mr. Putin, “You better go take a seat somewhere!” Because he’s the one that’s selling the tickets. But for them to go and do this, and sitting on their thumbs and allow him to do this, it’s absurd, especially in this day and time. But these are the issues that we have to deal with, and these are the issues that these young athletes are going to have to be confronted with later on down the line. There’s no neutrality in this. You can’t say, “Man, I’m going to ride the fence on this.” Either you’re with them, or you’re against it! And if you’re not going to take one side or the other, you’re going to lose the respect of your peers. It shows that you don’t really have respect for yourself when you can’t make a decision at a crucial situation such as that.

**DC:** Do you see the athletes speaking up on this, or do you think they will?

**JC:** Let me tell you this. I think the athletes have a lot of concern about these issues. But I think it's a matter of courage. Because you have to have courage, because people are more concerned not about right, but they're concerned about repercussion. And they have to throw repercussion to the wind and do what's necessary. Because when you make a statement, it's not—the statement that you make is not for you. It's for your kids and your kids' kids, and their kids, to make it a better world for them coming down the line. I can't change what happened in 1936. I can't make an immediate change what's going to happen in 2013. Or, for instance, I couldn't make an immediate change for what happened in 1968, but here we are in 2013, and it made a significant change now, relative to the way people think. It's better for my kids now. It's going to be better for their kids now. So, these individuals, I can't tell them that you should boycott, because I don't agree with a boycott no more. And the reason I don't agree with a boycott is for two simple reasons: Because I equated the boycott parallel with an embargo against a nation. When we put an embargo against a nation, the government don't get hurt. The people of that nation get hurt. The government is still doing business. They're still making money. Then, on the other side, a boycott of the Olympic Games, the Olympic people don't get hurt. Two elements, which are the two most important elements, those are the ones that get hurt: the spectators, because they never get a chance to see the greatest perform. The athletes get hurt, because they've trained all their lives to perform and show their wares, and they don't have an opportunity. So, what I suggest to them, is say, "Hey, man, I would suggest that you evaluate the circumstance which you are involved in, research the circumstance which you are involved in. Search your soul and search your moral fiber to see whether you have the conviction enough to bring your courage up and say, 'I'm going do what floats my boat.'" It's not about what John Carlos tells them to do. It's not about me telling them, "This is my history."

It's about whether you have enough in you to search out and find out the just cause in these things and stand fast to what you believe in. Whatever floats their boat, that's what they're going have to do, because that's what they're going have to live with.

**DC:** I want to go back and catch up with chronology, but let me ask you this one question first, since we're on— [Recording stops and then resumes]

**JB:** We're back.

**DC:** Okay. And this goes to what you were saying about the athletes getting the chance to show their wares. But you all, in '68, you were willing to not run that year, right?

**JC:** Right.

**DC:** Because of—because of wanting to make a statement of what you believed in.

**JC:** Right.

DC: How difficult was that, thinking back? JC: Well, it wasn't difficult for me at all. It wasn't difficult for me at all, because I evaluate the Olympic Games as a track meet. [Laughs] I've been in many track meets. But the bottom line is whether we can make a statement for society. I feel like, you know, medals are great. But medals are nowhere near close to what life is all about. You know, for instance, you know, a lot of people was upset with Jimmy Carter when Jimmy Carter boycotted against the Russians in the Olympics: "Oh, he shouldn't have did it! He shouldn't have did it!" But Jimmy Carter's philosophy was that, "I feel that life is far more valuable than Olympic medals." The only difference with me in that 45-year span is I began to look at who is the sacrificial lambs. The athletes are the ones that's hurt. The spectators are the ones that's hurt. And the powers-that-be that we really want, and that we're trying to get their attention, to have them to have some compassion and consideration, to change their ways, they're still making their money! The Olympic Committee is still selling sponsorship! They're still signing multimillion dollar contracts for TV rights! They still are selling popcorn and Crackerjacks and hot dogs and Coca-Colas! In every form. When you boycott the Games, you're a forgotten cause. Just by the grace of God, I'll say, what happened to us in Mexico City was a spiritual thing. God stepped in. Everything fell right. Like I stated earlier, this was the first time the Games was televised universally in this planet. This was the first time the Games was televised in color. This was the first time the Games was held in a Third World nation. All of these things culminated in what happened on that victory stand at that time! And I can go farther and tell you that when I was a kid on that same street, I was telling you, Lenox Avenue, when I was seven or eight years old, God gave me a vision and showed me an arena. I didn't know what a stadium was. I didn't know what a podium was. I was on a box.

And I went to wave—and I'm right-handed—when I went to wave to the people, I put my left hand up to wave. And before I can get my hand up high, my hand was about the same way it was with that glove, and I went to wave to the people, and it changed like from joy— everybody was, "Yippee-ki-yay" when I first went out there. That's why I went to wave, because it dawned on me at the minute, "Ain't nobody out here but me! They must be applauding for me!" And when I went to wave, it's like somebody snapped their fingers, [snaps fingers] and all the joy and happiness turned into anger and venom and hatred. And that's exactly what happened 15 years later on the victory stand in Mexico City. Now, why did God show it to me? I'm humbled that he reached down on the beaches of the world and picked up a grain of sand and threw it on the table with my name. He didn't say, "You have to do this." I didn't tell them guys that I was trying to wake up to about the boycott, "You have to do this." All I said, "Man, let's put the cards on the table, man, and you make a vested evaluation as to what this all about, and you make the decision." They chose to say, "We're going to the Games." I didn't have the right to tell them you can't go to the Games. You've trained all your life! If you feel like it's more important for you to go, go! But, in retrospect, now they sit back and they say—now, who was right? Because all the time that I was going through trials and tribulations, or Tommie Smith was going through trials and tribulations, or Peter Norman was going through trials and tribulations, they was yippee-kiyaying: "We made the wrong move. They made a bad move. They should have never did what they did."

Now, we done weathered the storm. And I hear kids come back talking about, “Man, you know, I think those statues that they built at San Jose State, I should have a brick down there with my name on it.” “Why should you have a brick with your name on it?” “Well, we all ran together.” “Yeah, we ran together. If that statue had me breaking the tape or passing the baton, I would be glad to have a brick with your name on it.” I said, “But that statue depicts something greater than athletics. You could have been a part of it.” “Well, I don’t understand!” See, and then I say, “Well, let’s take this hypothetical trip again. You want to roll with me, let’s have some discussion about this.” And this is for anybody out there in the audience right now. This is something for you to weigh. Someone approaches you and tells you, “You can make a difference in society. You have to sacrifice in order to make this difference.” You didn’t want to do anything and you thought that you made the right decision. And here we are, 40 years later, things turned around, and you think that, “Hey, I should jump on the bandwagon because I was in that era with you.” Well, let’s go on this train. What are we getting on the train for? We’re getting on this train to have some dialogue, to make you understand why I think a boycott is necessary, to make me understand why you feel it’s necessary for you to go to these Games. So, we have a consensus that we’re going to talk about this? Yeah, let’s get on the train and let’s roll. Now, we’re getting on this train, and it’s just like soldiers going to the First World War. Everybody outside with an American flag, and they’re singing, [sings loudly] “God bless America,” and they’ve got their hands on their hearts, tears in their eyes. And we’re on the train, having this discussion. But as the train’s rolling all down the line, they’re waving the flag and singing the song.

And then, somebody says, “You know, man, I have a better understanding now of why it’s necessary for me to make a statement. I’m not saying that I’m going to boycott. All I’m saying to you is that I understand.” “Oh, you understand? You mean we have a consensus that we understand why it’s necessary?” Now, I’m reaching for the red lever. You know what the red lever is on the train. I’m stopping the train. “What are you pulling the lever for?”

[Phone rings] [Recording stops and then resumes]

**JB:** Okay, we’re back. **JC:** Get going?

**DC:** Yeah.

**JB:** Reaching for the red lever.

**JC:** So, “What are we pulling the lever for?” “We’re pulling the lever, man, to stop the train, because if we have a consensus, the consensus don’t mean naught if it’s just a consensus that we know about. We have to stop the train to put the banners on the side of the train to let the world know that we have a consensus about the pros and cons of this boycott, that potentially we might pull it together to do this.”

Now, as the train begins to roll after we get the banners on, all of those people that's out there singing "God Bless America," they're no longer there, because they don't like the fact that we're talking about we're going boycott the Olympic Games. They don't like the fact that we're talking about we're not going to represent America. That's like the soldier saying, "I'm not going to war for you." "We don't like the fact that you're saying you're not going to war." So, okay, we're rolling. Now, in the place of those people that was out there—they're no longer there, but you know what took their place? Bombs and missiles and firebombs, coming through the train, and the train's on fire. It's smoke and mayhem. And now, here, 45 years later, you come back and tell me you deserve a brick? "Well, if you deserve a brick, step on up here. I need you do something for me." "What's that, John?" "Open up your shirt. Pull up your pants' leg. Roll up your sleeve." "What are you looking for?" "Man, I'm looking for burns. If you don't have burns on your body, such as Mr. Smith, or such as Mr. Norman, or such as John Carlos, then that means when things got hot, you bailed." And that's exactly what happened. And you know what came to my mind from that point, is that individuals get locked up in the fact that, "I'm afraid to offend my oppressor." Those individuals that got their foot on their neck or that are holding them from getting fair education or fair housing or fair healthcare, they are the oppressors. But, "I know you're wrong, but I'm afraid to offend you, because you might get mad."

**DC:** Umm. **JC:** Well, shit, John Carlos don't care whether you get mad, because I'm going die one day anyway! I might as well die standing on my feet than wallowing in the mud. And they have to understand that. I'm a loving guy, but yet and still, I was raised to be responsible. And I'm being responsible, if to no one else, to my kids and to their peers.

**DC:** Um-hmm. Let me ask you, you talked about influences, you talked a little bit about your family, maybe a little bit more about your parents. But also, we're talking about your days in track and high school and all. And I know you got to listen to and get to know a little bit Mr. Malcolm X, if you could talk about him. **JC:** Yes. Well, let's go a little bit deeper than Malcolm X.

**DC:** Okay.

**JC:** When I was a kid, I was looking for religion. Why was I looking for religion? Because there was a lot of voids in my life. A lot of things I'm thinking about, they just didn't have answers. So, I'm seeking out answers. So, I found God. I found religion. And I found a church called Abyssinian Baptist Church. And I told my mother and father and my brothers about it, and we decided that we was going to go to Abyssinian Baptist Church. We get to the church and we see Adam Clayton Powell, Senior. Adam Clayton Powell, Sr. looked like my father! But then, one day, we went to church, and Adam Clayton Powell, Sr. was sick. And he came out to the pulpit and he said, "I'm not doing well. I have a fever. I'm not going to preach the sermon today. I'm going to let my son preach the sermon." And I'm asking my father, say, "Who is his son, Daddy?"

And I see this white fellow over there putting on the robe. My father pointed, "There he is, there." And I said, "Where?" He said, "The guy putting the robe on." I said, "Daddy, that's not his son. That's a white man!" He said, "No, son. That's his son. That's Adam Clayton Powell, Junior." And when he got up there and preached, it wasn't about the color of his skin. It was about the content of his heart and his spirit and his mind, based on what he was preaching. And then, the thing that he said after, which was probably more profound to me, is to tell the people to "keep the faith." That's something that was like every day, because he felt the pain and he knew the hell that people was going through, people of color, not just here in the United States, but around the world. And at the same time, I remember my father telling me years ago, "He's not passing." And I'm looking like, "Passing what, Daddy?" And he said, "He's not passing to be a white man." And I remember looking at my father and saying, "Daddy, you're telling me that people are ashamed of who they are, that they would try and be somebody else?" And he said to me, he said, "No, son, they're not ashamed, although some of them might be a little overzealous." I didn't know what overzealous meant. So, he says to me, he says, "Son," he says, "it's not that they don't want to be black. On the other side of the street," he said, "where white folks live, their standard of life is better. If they can go and have a better standard of life, then they cross over if their skin is fair skin that they can pass and be a white man to have a better standard of life."

And you know what I equated that to? It's not that people want to leave Cuba and risk their lives coming across the water, or leave Haiti and risk their lives coming across the water, and for us to project and say, well, "Cuba is bad," or "Haiti is bad." They ain't leaving their country because they think their country or their president is bad. They're leaving their country and risking their lives for the same reason those light-skinned, fair-skinned individuals crossed the line. It's because they want a better standard of life. And any man, irregardless of what your ethnic background is, should want to have a better standard of life for their families. So, I learned these things very early. So, I got a hold of Adam Clayton Powell and I put him in my system. There was another guy, Marcus Garvey. I began to study Marcus Garvey, because they used to have the Marcus Garvey Parade up and down New York and Harlem. And my brother used to be one of the tumblers flipping the stick in the air and the whole nine yards. And I used to look at him, but then I began to look away from him and began to look at the symbols that they had behind him in the parade. And then, I'm starting to, "Who is this guy Marcus Garvey? And what is Marcus Garvey noted for?" Marcus Garvey got ships, and he told black people in America, said, "Hey, man, I've got these ships! Get on the ships! Let's go back to Africa so you can meet up with yourself! You can find out who you are!" In retrospect, when we look at that today, that's the biggest flaw that black people have. We still in 2013 don't know who the hell we are as a race of people! So, that's one of our biggest problems now with the drug scene, with the filthiness of rap music, and the disrespect for seniors, and the whole nine yards, based on the fact that we've been hidden from ourselves. So, okay, so I studied Marcus. Paul Robeson. I studied Paul Robeson. That's one of my greatest heroes, because this man sacrificed everything for the mere fact that he had everything.

He's a baritone singer. He's a Rhodes scholar. He's an entertainer. He's a movie star. He had everything going for him. All he had to do was zip his lip! But it wasn't about him. He said, "Man, it's about my peers. It's about my neighborhood. It's about my community. It's about those that doesn't have what I have, that can't speak for themselves." So, the same thing that I did, he did. He used the talents that he had as a springboard for him to be a voice for people. They called him a Communist. They called me a Communist in 1968, the same reason, and you know why they called me a Communist? Because I had the left arm up, opposed to the right arm. Okay? But it didn't stop me or deter me from what the truth is and where I need to go. It didn't stop him. I mean they took his passport away from him. They did a tremendous amount of things to him, but it didn't break his spirit, in terms of where he was going. Then, I hear, as a young individual—there on the radio one more time—this guy speaking on the radio. And I'm saying, "Wow! This is profound! Who is this guy?" Well, they say his name is Malcolm X. Oh man, I love what he's saying! Because I ain't heard nobody outside my father speak the way he's speaking. Now, here's somebody—my father didn't have no corner where he can go get on a box and speak to the community. But he did speak truth in the house. Now, here's a guy on the radio, speaking for the world to hear. Who is he? Malcolm X. Name Malcolm X? I didn't know about the Muslim sect. His name is X? Then, they said he was coming to head the mosque on 116th Street. Now, 116th Street at that time was drug-infested.

That's probably why they put the mosque there, to try and clean up some of that. And when he went down there, I remember telling my father, I said, "Daddy, I'm going down to 116th Street to hear Malcolm X." And my father said, "Son, when you go down there, don't you get in no trouble." "No, Daddy, I ain't looking for no trouble. I'm going to hear him." And I remember going down there and sitting in the front row the first time and listening to him in awe. When I went in there, the first thing that blew me away is, I went in there, just like I was looking for Adam Clayton Powell. "Who is Malcolm X? Which one is Malcolm X?" "Over there." Malcolm X was a fair-skinned dude, light-skinned, and I'm looking at him, saying, "Man, that can't be Malcolm X. This guy's blowing too black for him to be Malcolm X." Sure enough, when he started talking, my lip fell open. It was him. And I'm sitting this close to him to listen to him. And I can just feel the blood just run through my body, man. I couldn't sit still. I was—just with excitement for me to be there and see somebody live that I could touch that was talking like that. Because the way he was talking is the way I was feeling, because I'm seeing what's happening in my community. And at the same time, when you see these things, man, it's a difference when you see them and your peers don't see them. They're still into basketball. When we was younger, they're still into "spinning the bottle," they're still into playing "Post Office" with the girls. And I'm looking at—it's something deeper than that. I don't have time to spin the bottle and play the post office and jumping jacks and and all. I'm trying to get to the meat of things. And here he is talking the exact same way I was feeling. So then, I started to go back. I think the second or third time I went there and I asked him, I waited around and I said to him, I said, "Mr. X, is it possible I can go with you from this location to your next location?"

And he looked at me and he smiled. I'll never forget; he had a big dimple in his chin. And he says to me, he says, "Why do you want to go with me?" And I said, "Because I want to learn. I want to ask you questions." And he liked my answer. And he said, "Yes, you can come with me," he said, "if you can keep up."

**DC:** [Laughs]

**JC:** Now, I didn't know what he meant "keep up," until it dawned on me when I was walking with him was like walking with my two older brothers, because they were tall and they were fast walkers. I used to have to jog to keep up with them. And with Malcolm, I had to jog to keep up with him just the same. But I was learning a lot from him, and I had built a bond with him. And when Dr.—when Malcolm X got killed at the Audubon Ballroom, I was supposed to be there that Sunday. And we decided, me and some of the guys I was with, Machine and Metal Trades and the track team, that I was going to go try and get my driver's license that Monday. And we took a road trip and drove up to Buffalo, New York—not Buffalo, but Bear Mountain. And we passed by West Point, and just as we passed by West Point, it came on the news that Malcolm X was shot. Man, we turned around. We shot back to the hospital. By the time we got back to the hospital, he was gone, and everybody was milling around. And I can tell you, man, probably the better part of 40 years, not 40 years, but 20 years of my life, I felt real bad, felt like if I was in the Audubon Ballroom that day, I could have did something to prevent him from dying. It took 20 years for me to digest that Malcolm X was born into this world to die that day! I was born into this world to be on that victory stand in Mexico. Certain individuals are born to be here to do certain things. Like that young kid, Trayvon Martin, he was born to die that day, to try and wake society up. And just to be in that fold, man, just to be there, you're humbled.

When you really figure it out, you begin to look and say, you know, like, "Martin wanted to live, too." When I sat in the meeting with Martin Luther King, and after the meeting was over, and the meeting—the consensus of the meeting was he wanted to be supportive of the Olympic boycott. You know, and that's a heavy thing. You're involved in the Civil Rights Movement. You ain't no athlete. How are you getting involved in the boycott? And after the meeting, I asked him, I said to him, I said, "Mr. King, have you ever played any sports?" And he gave me a little smart remark like, "I can't play pool." And I remember when he came out of that room in the hotel, I remember sitting there, and I'm looking at the luminaries that was there that we'd seen on TV. But I still didn't put the dots together to think that I'm going to be in the presence of Dr. Martin Luther King. In my household, Dr. King was like God's first lieutenant that he sent here. That's the way we was raised to believe this. And, man, I'm sitting there, and when that door opened and Dr. King walked out, like, I was like livid, like, "Whoa!" And he could see that I was, like, out of my element, and probably me and some other people that was there, too.

If Dr. King wanted to be a Def Jam comedian, he could have been that, because he cracked some jokes. He saw and he cracked jokes, man, and he loosened everybody up. Then we got in the meat of the conversation, and he said that he didn't want to be the number one figure for the Olympic boycott, he wanted Harry Edwards to do that, but he wanted to be second-in-command. And when he come back from Memphis, he was going to go full-blown.

**DC:** Can we just back up a minute and say what that meeting was?

**JC:** The meeting was—

**DC:** And who Harry Edwards was.

**JC:** Harry Edwards, Professor Harry Edwards was the organizer, he and a fellow by the name of Ken Noel. They were the organizers for the potential Olympic boycott of the 1968 Olympics. Tommie Smith had made a statement in Japan about a possible boycott, and I think that came off of the top of his head. It kind of snowballed to the point where people started talking about it. And I think it clicked and it resonated with Dr. Edwards, Professor Edwards, and Professor Noel. And then, they started putting it together to organize it. And when they did this, I was off the scene. I wasn't on the scene. I was going to school at East Texas State, dealing with my own enclosed racism. And when they started becoming public, then I heard about what was happening in San Jose with the potential boycott. So, I'm stepping up, speaking, and fighting the racial issues there at East Texas State University.

**DC:** Let's just catch up chronologically, and then we'll get to that.

**JC:** I need to take another potty break.

**DC:** You need to take a break, too? **JC:** Yeah. [Recording stops and then resumes]

**JC:** I got—

**JB:** We're back.

**DC:** Great. So, you just tell us a little bit how you ended up at East Texas and what you faced when you were there?

**JC:** Okay. As I stated earlier, I was married my senior year in high school. We had petitioned to get an apartment in a city housing project. I was running track at the time and I was running a track meet in New Jersey. There was guy named Pete Peterson, I think. He was a student at East Texas State University, and he saw me run. And he said, "Man, you thinking about going to college?" And I said, "Not really." And he says to me, he said, "Well, listen." He said, "I think I can get you a scholarship." And he said, "I'm going to give your name and number to the coach."

I guess he saw some talent, probably, that I took for granted. I'm just doing my thing. And the coach called me. He said, "Listen, I'd like to offer you a scholarship and, you know, you can come down. It's nice. It's nice down here. It's no prejudice or anything. And, you know, when you go away to the track meet, all the wives and the kids go on the bus to the track meet. You get a chance to ride horses, the whole nine yards." So, I'm thinking to myself, I said, "Wow, that might be nice," you know, get a chance to give my daughter—because my oldest daughter was born then. I said, "It might be nice to give my daughter a chance to grow up outside of the city. It might be a nice situation." So, I said, "Okay." And at the same time I was supposed to leave to go to East Texas State, I got notification from the New York City Housing Authority that we was accepted to get an apartment in the project. You know, and you're thinking—I'm thinking economics then. I'm saying, "If I've got an apartment, and my rent is going to be—it's a ceiling to my rent, and, you know, I'll be able to sustain myself." Then, the scholarship came. So, it was a decision I had to make, you know, as to whether I was going to go to East Texas State, or whether I was going to just stay and work in New York and be satisfied with the gift that God gave me, in terms of having that apartment in the project.

**DC:** But you wouldn't be running if you took that.

**JC:** Oh, well, I could run for the clubs and so forth, you know.

**DC:** Okay.

**JC:** So, I had some dialogue with my wife. And I was telling her, I said, "Well, you know, it might be nice for our baby to get a chance to grow up outside the city." And I was telling her, I said, "Well, if we're going to go, I'll go down and I'll check the turf out," so to speak. And my wife told me, she said, "No. If you go, we go. We are family." So, I ain't going to argue with that. It's a fact. So, I said, "Okay, we'll go." And there was a fellow by the name of Dennis Dice. He was Jamaican, American Jamaican. I guess he was born in Jamaica and left when he was young.

[Sounds of conversation in background] Hold on a minute.

**DC:** Okay, Dennis Dice. [Background conversation continues]

**JB:** We're rolling. [Background conversation continues]

**JC:** Okay, so yes. I thought you turned it off. [Background conversation continues]

**JB:** We're still rolling.

**DC:** Okay, Dennis Dice.

**JC:** Yeah, so Dennis Dice was a young guy. You know, we grew up together. Well, we didn't grow up together, but we used to run track in New York together. And he was young, had his wife and young daughter, as well, and we were going down there. And, you know, Dennis had a different agenda. Dennis was born, I think, in Jamaica, and he used to make statements about he wasn't black, he was Jamaican. And I think Dennis was getting confused, his ethnicity with his nationality. And I was trying to make him understand, you know, he was a darker skinned black person. And I was trying to make him understand, I said, I mean, "You're saying you're not black, you're Jamaican. And the bottom line is, if the police was to kick down the door right now, he's going to probably whip you up more than me, just based on the texture of your skin. So, don't say that you're not black. You are black." So, but when we got down to Texas—you know, we was buddy-buddy. We was going to have each other's back. But when we got down there, the great divide came. You know, he looked at the coach and said, "Let me slide up under the coach and be the coach's—" I don't want to say "boy" but I don't know no other way to say it. You know, that's what it was, and I saw that right away. But, even greater than that, when I landed in Dallas-Fort Worth, and it was nowhere near the monstrosity airport that they have today. It was a little box, you know, like boxcars almost. And I remember seeing the bronze statue, the Texas Ranger bronze statue in there, and somewhere in the new airport you can still see it. But when I looked to the right of the statue, I saw a sign say "Whites Only." It was the restroom. And then, I saw another sign say "Coloreds." It didn't say "Coloreds Only." It just said "Coloreds," and anybody else that wanted to go in there. But then, I began to notice that the white restroom was pristine. Man, it was clean. You know, it looked like you could cook eggs on the floor, it was so clean. And then, the colored restroom, man, it had water running, toilet paper on the floor, gnats and flies. Then, I'm looking at the water fountain in the airport. You couldn't go there, it was whites only, and they didn't have no black water fountain. It was just whites only. Like, what happens if you need some water? And then, when the coach came, my name changed from John Carlos to Boy. And I was really offended then, because I was a young man at the time. But what offended me is because I had my daughter with me and my wife with me, and he's calling me Boy. And I'm telling him, I said, "Coach, my name is John Carlos. My name ain't Boy." And then, he went so far as to use this word "nig-gra." And he said it fast, and I thought he was saying "nig-ger."

And I remember the hairs raising up on my neck. And I looked at him. I said, "What'd you say? What'd you call me?" And my wife was kind of like pulling on my arm, "No, baby, he didn't say that. He said something else." And I remember telling her, I said, "What he said, he's damn close! He better be careful!" And from that point on, I knew I was going to have problems. And I was always the type of individual to take my parents into account, in terms of the economic base. They didn't have the money for me to pick up the phone. I'm sure if I had called them and said, "Daddy, I made a mistake. I need to get out of here," they would do what they had to do to get me back there. But I wouldn't do it. I said, "We're going to tough it out." And when I got in town, I realized that the school had just become integrated possibly a year, maybe two years before I got there.

So, you know, like as I stated earlier, you know, we've been supposed to be emancipated for 150 years, and we're still just above being a slave, you know, in a lot of instances. And down there, it was pretty much that same way. Although they said we were a fully integrated school, they still had the old slave master attitude. I remember when my daughter was outside playing one time with a little white kid. And, you know, kids don't know nothing about no race. They're just kids having fun. And the father must have looked at the window, and he saw his daughter playing with my daughter. And he went and he screamed at his daughter, and screamed at my daughter, and used the n-word again, and telling his daughter, "I don't never want you playing with this little—!" Now, my daughter didn't know what it meant, no more than I knew what it meant. I had an experience like that with my great-uncle in New York. She didn't know what that word meant. But it was just the tone and the way the man confronted her. It scared her, and she came to the house crying. And I asked her what happened. And she said the man started hollering at her and screaming at her and telling his daughter don't play with her. And I went outside, and the dude was trying to get out of line with me. And I remember getting in this guy's face. And in the back of my brain, I'm saying, "I'm going to have to leave here, because if I kill this man, everything that I stand for is going to go out the window. But I can't stay here and allow them to do what they're doing." And the school was—I'd say, had racial problems, from the president all the way down, just above the janitors of the school. All of the maintenance people were black. But they had a divide that was so deep. And, then, at the same time, they didn't—never experienced individuals such as myself coming down there. You know, like I said, I was my own man. They couldn't dictate to me. I remember the coach telling me, say, "John, whatever you do, don't talk to none of the white girls down here." And I remember telling him, I said, "Well, Delmer, you're telling me don't talk to the white girls. Well, what if the white girls come to talk to me? What do I do then? You tell me don't talk to them." I remember going to the Texas first indoor meet, at like a Cow Palace there in Dallas. And I remember Delmer Brown's wife got, you know, sarcastic to me and started talking all kind of off-the-wall nonsense, and I had to set her straight and tell her, say, "You know something, Mrs. Brown?" I said, "Let me just say something to you. The steaks that you have on your plate tonight, you're getting them steaks on your plate as a result of what I'm doing." So, I said, "Let's not get this confused as to what my role is and what your role is. You're used to telling those other kids that.

Don't come telling me nothing like that." So, right away, her eyes rolled back in her head, because she wasn't ready for the response that I gave her, nor was Delmer Brown. I had a situation where I'm running. I done run everything during the course of my time there, all the track meets and winning everything. And I remember—now, Bobby Morrow was a great sprinter, won the 1956 Olympics, the 100 and 200, and he's out at Abilene Christian, and I might say, a class guy, a class act. I have much respect for Bobby Morrow. But Delmer Brown made a statement after I had run a track meet, and he said, "John Carlos is as great as Bobby Morrow!" And I guess Bobby at the time was, you know, like God's gift to Texas.

DC: Umm.

JC: And a lot of the people was offended that he said that a black man can be as great as Bobby Morrow. And the next day, he got up and retracted the statement.

DC: Umm.

JC: Yeah, you know, and I looked at that and I said, “Oh? Well, I see where he’s coming from.” But towards the end of our relationship, we were getting ready to go to the Lone Star Conference. There’s a fellow that I—I can’t say I befriended him. He befriended me and made me comfortable down there, a fellow by the name of Terry Barnett, a white fellow. I could go so far as to say Terry Barnett—I put Terry Barnett in the class of John Brown and Peter Norman. You know, he was a white guy that was on his own plane and had love for humanity. And he came to me and he told me, he said, “John, I know things is rough here, man,” he said, “but if you and I stay together, man, we can make a difference here.” And I liked what he said. And we became buddies and we stayed there.

And I remember when we was getting ready to go to the conference. Like I said, I had run everything. You know, just like Jesse Owens in Berlin, you know, run everything. And you’re tired. And we’re getting ready to go to the conference meet, and I walk in the locker room. And this is the day before we’re supposed to get in—and we didn’t go on buses. We went in station wagons. So, he’s got on the wall he wants me to run a 350, then he wants me to run a 280, then he wants me to run a 150, and, you know, for time. So, I’m looking at it and saying, “Man, I’m not running this. This man is crazy!” So, my boy says, “Man, don’t make no problem.” I said, “Man, he’s out of his mind. I’m not running this. If he don’t know that I’m capable of doing it now, why am I going to run this to prove something to him? I’m not doing it!” So, we get out there. He’s got his stopwatch. He says, “Now, come on, son! Come on, now, you know you’re my horse! I want you to run so-and-so!” So, when we started off with the 380, on the turn, and I took off running. And I must have run maybe 60 yards and I stopped running and I walked. And they was building a platform for the graduating class that year in the stadium. And I walk all the way around the track and I’m walking down. And he walks down and he picks up a hammer and he starts walking towards me and he told me, “Nigger, I’m tired of you!” And I looked at him and I told him, I said, “Delmer, let me tell you something.” I said, “You better hope that that hammer is licorice, because if you come to me with it, I’m gonna make you eat it.”

And I remember his son, Danny, was on the wall. And I said, “Danny,” I said, “Why don’t you come down here and take this ass-whipping for your father?” And the son said, “No, I’m not in that. I’m not involved in that.” But then, I remember stripping down. I took my shorts, my jock, everything off, right there on the field. The guys were out there playing football. And at that time, if a black man dropped the football, they called him all kind of “stupid this,” and “stupid that,” and the whole nine yards, you know. And a lot of them was caught in a quandary where I couldn’t figure out why they was accepting this.

I figured it out later, and that was because if they had left school, they would have been drafted before they could get into another school, and they would have been right in Vietnam. And it took me a while to figure that one out. Why wouldn't you step up and say certain things? You know? They wouldn't do it. So, anyway, I took all my stuff and threw it in his face and I said, "Man, I'm done!" And I went inside and ripped my name off the locker, took all my stuff, took it over by the thing. And I'm in the shower, and he comes up in the shower, "Now, son, I might have been a little hasty." And I'm looking at him and I said, "Delmer, leave here. Leave here." Because I was so mad [thinking], man, you about to die in here. "Just leave." And I remember calling my wife and telling my wife, "Start packing. We're leaving." And my wife was working for—this guy was the mayor of the town, but he was the chairman of the Journalism Department in the school, too. Now, my wife got the job with him—incidentally, I might add, my wife gave up a job. She was the executive secretary for one of the generals over on Ellis Island. I don't think it was Ellis Island, another island over there, but anyway, she was the general—so, when we got down there, they had promised all, the job, you know, like the bus trips and the whole nine yards. We got there, and there was none of that. So, when I said to them, I said, "Look, if y'all don't have nothing for my wife, I'm gone." Then, all of a sudden, she got the job with this guy. So, I'm telling her, I said, "Well, we're leaving." So, now, I'm up in the Student Union, sitting out on the terrace, and I'm telling all the guys, saying, "Man, it's been a nice run. I love you guys." I said, "But I'm getting ready to get out of here." And they told me, "What do you mean you're getting ready to go?" So, they had like a walkway. We're up sitting on the balcony area. And it was like the vigilante committee, all the coaches. They done got together. They're coming and they walk up, "John, we'd like to talk to you." And I said, told them, "Yeah, well, okay." "Well, we'd like to take you to lunch." And they had like a little cafeteria down in the Student Union building. So, I said, "Well, if you're going to take me, to feed me, all of us guys are together, you take all of us and feed all of us." So, they took them down. They didn't particularly like it, but they did it. And they took me to a separate table and they tell me, said, "Well, John, you know, Delmer Brown might have been hasty in what he did, and he didn't mean this, and he didn't mean that." And I said, "No, he meant it." I said, "I meant what I said, too. I'm getting up out of here. Ain't nothing you can do to tell me." And they left. But my friend Terry Barnett came to me. And Terry said to me, he said, "John," he said, "man, I know how you feel and I saw the incident." He said, "But, man, you know, we made a commitment. We made a bond. And the bond was to win the Lone Star championship." And he said, "John," he said, "there's no way in the world that we would ever win this thing if you leave here." And he said, "Man, I just hope that you would stay with the commitment that we made, you and I made."

And I told Terry, I said, "Terry, that's the best thing I heard all year." I said, "Yeah, you're right. We're going to go and we're going to win the Lone Star championship." We went. We won. Now, when the football team won—the football team at that time was probably about 85 to 90 percent white. And when they won, they gave them these big-ass rings. When we won the conference in track and field, they gave us a little shoe with a flake. It wasn't even a diamond. It was a flake. And I said, "What's this?" He said, "This is what you get for winning the conference."

I said, “No, man, I don’t want that!” I said, “Everybody on the track team deserves no less than what you gave the football team.” “We’re not going to give you that!” I said, “Oh, you’re going to give it to me.” I said, “It ain’t that I’m asking you to give it to me. I’m telling you to give it to me.” I said, “I earned it! And everybody on this team earned it!” So, we eventually went and they gave the rings up, and we still have the rings today. But it had gotten so ridiculous down there, not just there in Commerce, but throughout Texas. I had a situation where I was in Austin, Texas, and I was with a reporter and a photographer, these two white guys for the school. And I went into a bar to buy a beer. It was a hot day. I went into a bar and I had to go to the restroom. And I told the bartender, I said, “Barkeep, get these guys what they want, and I’ll have a beer.” And I go in the bathroom and I come out. They’re drinking. Ain’t no beer for me. There was two Hispanic guys shooting pool. So, I say, “Barkeep, where’s my beer?” He just ignored me. He went on. So, then, I say, “Hey! Barkeep, I asked for a beer!” He said, “We don’t serve niggers in here.” I said, “I didn’t ask for a nigger. I asked for a beer!” And when he said something smart again, I reached across the counter and I grabbed him. And I drug him and started to drag him over the counter. And the two Hispanic guys that was playing pool, they rolled up and had the pool sticks like bats to tell me to let him go, and I’m backing out of there. But when I backed out of there, I wasn’t concerned about the Hispanic guys, I wasn’t concerned about the bartender, I was concerned about the two white guys that was with me. I said, “Man, I’m buying the booze for you, and you’re going to drink, and you ain’t concerned about my beer? I ain’t heard y’all say, ‘boo.’” So, now, I’m starting to look at them. And then, it dawned on me. It escalated in my brain. It wasn’t even about them no more. It was about the fact that I was running all over the country with East Texas, Texas, on my shirt, on my jersey. So, I’m not just representing East Texas State University. I’m representing the state of Texas. And here I’m in the state capital, and I go to a bar, and merely because of the color of my skin, I have to be disrespected and I can’t be served. Or we get on a bus and we’re going somewhere and we stop to eat, and the coach tells me, “Well, you black guys stay on the bus. And the white kids, we’re going to go in and eat. Tell us what y’all want.” And I have to step up and tell the coach, say, “No, man. That’s not the way I see it. If y’all go in the restaurant, we damn sure go in the restaurant!” Said, “If we don’t go in the restaurant, you don’t go in the restaurant!” And he was like offended that I’m confronting him like this. But I’m looking at him. I said, “No, man, that’s not—I don’t know how it was yesterday, but this is how it is today.” So, with these things, man, I had to go.

And I decided, I’ve got to leave East Texas State. And I think it was really came to a crux when he came at me with that hammer, because when he came with the hammer, I’m reflecting on what happened in Austin, Texas, about the fact that I’m in the state capital and I’m representing the state of Texas, and I can’t even get a beer. So, it all kind of meshed together that it’s time for me to leave. I left. I went back to New York. And I was helping my mother paint her kitchen, and the phone rang. It was Professor Edwards. And he called me and told me, he said, “John,” he says, “there’s some people that are having a very important meeting, and they asked me to invite you. Do you think you can get away?” And I asked my mother, I said, “Ma, they’ve got a meeting. They asked me would I come.

You think I can go?” And she said, “Yes, son. I can take care of the painting. If they’re inviting you to the meeting, you need to be there.” And I remember going down to the Americano Hotel, right across from the old Garden. I went down there, and I remember walking into the lobby. You know, kids that grow up in New York, you know, all that—we had the major mega-hotels downtown. We never went in the hotels. And I remember going into the hotel and sitting in the lobby and looking at the chandeliers and the big pictures and mirrors. And I’m saying, “Man, I could get this chandelier, take to my house,” because my mother loved furniture, and she was a perfectionist. My mother was the type of woman, she’d put plastic on the sofa and you can’t sit on it for ten years. [Laughs]

**DC:** [Laughs]

**JC:** Same way, huh? Yeah, so I shook that off, and then I went to the desk and I asked for SCLC. I didn’t know what SCLC was at the time, but I asked for it. And they told me, “Oh, yeah. Go up to so-and-so.” And I went up there and I knocked on the door. And I believe it was Andrew Young that came and opened the door. And I was in awe of Andrew Young, because I envisioned Andrew Young as being like, 6’3”, 6’4”. And when I saw his stature, I was like in shock! And I’m thinking to myself all that time, I said, “God, the guy that was shooting his picture must have been laying on his back and just shooting everything up, because he looked so tall.” But he was cordial. He was nice. He invited me in. “Would you like soda, juice, water, milk, a sandwich, cookies,” you know? And I’m sitting there and I’m just, you know, looking at these people and just think that I’m watching these people as a kid on TV, and here I am in a room with them. But like I said earlier, I never put the dots together, even fathomed in my mind, that Dr. King was in that room, or that he was going to come to that room. And I’d say like 20 minutes later, he opened up a back bedroom door, and he walked out there, man, and I was fit to be tied! The first thing I thought is, “Man, my mother needs to be here, a rock in my pocket or a bug on my lapel! She needs to be here right now!” And I remember when I got home and I told my mother what happened, and my mother said to me, she said, “Well, son, I was there. I was there through you.” You know, it was just heavy. But I asked Dr. King about him—did he play any sports? And he said, “No, I can’t shoot pool.” And I asked him, I said to him, I said, “Well, Dr. King, why would you—why would you get involved in the Olympic Project for Human Rights?” And he said to me, he said, “John,” he said, “That’s a good question.”

And he says to me, he says, “Imagine you being in a lake. And you take the rowboat and you row out to the center of the lake. And then, you bring the oars in and you sit there and you be still. And everything is still and serene.” He said, “And you reach down and you pick up a rock. And you reach over and you drop that rock. What happens?” And I said, “It creates vibrations.” And he smiled and he said, “Yes, it creates waves.” He said, “Well, that rock is that Olympic boycott.” He said, “Now, it will arouse anything in that lake and anything on the shores of that lake to let you know that something is amiss.” He said, “That’s the Olympic boycott.” He said, “And the greatest thing about it is that you will wake the world up in a very nonviolent way.”

That carried me over to Mexico, in terms of that demonstration! I wanted to do something that would be so powerful that it would reach the ends of the earth and yet still be nonviolent. We didn't no violent overtones whatsoever. And the second thing I asked him, I said to him, I said, "Dr. King," I said, "you said if you come back from Memphis, and you told us in your speech, in the meeting there, that they've threatened your life. They sent you a letter and told you that they had a bullet with your name on it, and you wouldn't have to wait long. If they're threatening your life, why would you go back to Memphis?" And he looked at me. And when he looked at me—I used to have shades on, dark shades. Well, I still wear dark shades a lot of times. But I took my glasses and put them on my nose, so I could look dead into his eyes. I didn't want no glasses between—I wanted to see his eyes. I'm looking for fear. When a man tells you that somebody told him they're going to kill him, you're supposed to seem a little shaky then. The Rock of Gibraltar. And I didn't see nothing but love in that man's eyes for society. He said to me, "John." He said to me, he said, "That's a better question than the last one." He said, "But, you know, I have to go back to Memphis and stand for those that won't stand for themselves and stand for those that can't stand for themselves." And when he said that to me, my whole life came full circle, because all of the things that I have been doing in my life was the same thing. I just never had a phrase or title or caption I could put on it. But he just lit me up when he made that one statement: I have to go and stand for those that won't stand and those that can't stand. That's the crux of it, and let me know that his life was second and passé. He said to me, "They can kill me, but they could never kill me." In other words, "I will be greater in death than I am in life for what I stand for." And I tell people, I say, you know, "Dr. King lost his flesh, but his spirit and his meaning and his energy and his vision will live for eternity." How many people can say that, that when I leave here, they'll remember what I stood for? There's not a whole bunch of people that's going to get that in life. And I go back and I tell you, I say, you know, when you sit back and you think about what he told me, it made me begin to think about the fact that, you know, they've got like John Wayne, Liz Taylor, Rock Hudson, all these luminaries that they had in the entertainment field, whether it's music or the movies or what-have-you. But when they die, they're gone. But you sit back and you look at Paul Robeson. They talk about him every day. Rosa Parks. They talk about her every day. Harriet Tubman, every day. Gandhi, every day. Tommie Smith, every day. Peter Norman, every day. So, it began to make you think. Nelson Mandela. Every day they'll be talking about him. Okay?

Based on the fact that these individuals that I said, the movie stars, they were manmade icons, and these other individuals are God-given icons. And that's the big difference. Why is it that they remember them, but they don't talk about John Wayne? When was the last time you heard them talking about Liz Taylor? You understand? But I hear them talking about Rosa Parks all the time. And people have to start looking at these things and trying to have some understanding, you know, like everybody's got the voids in their lives like I told you I experienced when I was a kid. The difference is I was trying to fill the voids. A lot of people are still running around in a quandary and don't understand the package. They can't put the package together in their head. That's why a lot of people don't stand for anything other than the dollar, because they think the dollar is their god.

**DC:** So, at the time of that—you had already qualified for the Olympic Games at the time of that meeting, for the Olympic team?

**JC:** No.

**DC:** No?

**JC:** Um-um.

**DC:** But it was a good bet that you would?

**JC:** Well, it was a question as to whether we wanted to go. You know, if I was healthy, there was no way in the world anybody could beat me and stop me from making the team. You know, and when I went to the Games, I didn't go to the Games for the medal. You know, by the time I decided I was going to the Games—the reason why I went to the Games, opposed to staying home like Kareem—Kareem and I had a conversation one time, and I told Kareem, I said, “Man, you're the NBA. If you choose not to go to the Games, and you say I prefer to stay home for my studies, who's going question that?” I said, “But me, if I stay home from the Games, man, what they're going do is find somebody that's just as capable, because America was the number one track and field nation in the world. So, if I chose not to go, someone else is going to get in my place and go. But the difference was: Would they represent John Carlos the way he felt he needed to be represented on that victory stand? That's the main reason why I went. It wasn't about no medal. The only medal consciousness that I had is that I had to win a medal to get on the victory stand. Now, I didn't go there anticipating taking third. I was giving the medal to Tommie. But, see, that's where God steps in. God put Peter Norman there to make this thing solidify. Understand? We've got 50 million white people running around on the planet. Out of 50 million white people, I don't think we'd have found two to match Peter Norman.

**DC:** Peter Norman was the Australian.

**JC:** The Australian.

**DC:** Who took the silver.

**JC:** That's right. See, so God's sent the right—anybody could have won the silver medal of white ethnic background. But anybody wouldn't have had the audacity as Peter Norman.

**DC:** Um-hmm. Can you talk—tell us a little bit—so, you had decided not to do the boycott. King had been assassinated.

**JC:** Right.

**DC:** And you did decide to go participate in the Games. When did you start to form this idea of making a statement at the Games? And how did Peter Norman do it?

**JC:** Well, we decided that we was going do something, but we thought we would do it in the sense of this boycott. But when the boycott was resolved, or dissolved, it was a matter of me saying to Tommie, “Man, I’m disenchanted by the fact that the boycott was called off, and I want to make a statement.” And that was at the end of the quarter semi. That’s when we came together and started putting together, in terms of artifacts that we was going to bring out. And then, we roughly had 25 minutes before we went out there to figure out exactly what we was going to do and how we was going to do it. Nobody knew what we was going to do. Peter didn’t know what we was going to do until we started dealing with it in front of him. And I asked Peter, I said, “Man, do you believe in human rights?” And that’s when Peter began to tell me about his mom and his dad were Salvation Army workers all of his life. “Of course, I believe in human rights!” I said, “Would you like to wear an Olympic Project for Human Rights button?” And he said, “Yeah,” so he started reaching for mine. I had to pat him on his hand, “Get back! I’ll get you one.” And then, we had some white guys from Harvard University, rowers, and one of them was Paul. And I asked Paul to throw down a button to me. And he’s looking at me like, “You’ve got a button.” And I’m trying to say, “It’s for Peter.” And he took the button and he threw it down. And I pinned it on Peter just before we walked out there. And that’s how Peter had the Olympic Project for Human Rights button. But it was deeper than him having the button. It was the conviction that he had. You understand? That’s why I said Peter, you know, in our trials and tribulations, and his trials and tribulations, all they told Peter, “All you have to do is denounce those guys.” Peter never flinched. He never backed away. He never denounced us. He never turned his back on us. He stood fast. That’s why I said when Peter died, said if I have to walk to Australia from the United States, I’d have got to walking right away, because I was not going to miss his service and miss being there for him in his demise. I mean, one of the greatest human beings of all time. That’s why I put Peter down with John Brown. Understand? That’s why I put Terry Amos—I mean, Terry Barnett down with John Brown. Because these are white individuals that rose above the norm. They knew about repercussions at that time. But they wasn’t concerned about repercussions. They was there because it was the right thing to do. But you sit back and you say, they don’t talk about John Brown. They don’t talk about Robin Hood. They don’t talk about Terry Barnett.

You understand? They don’t talk about Peter Norman. You know, half the people in the United States or around the world don’t know the suffering that Peter Norman had to go through. Peter didn’t raise his fist. Peter didn’t disrespect his nation’s flag. All Peter did was put on a button and say, “I commend these individuals enough that I would want to be in support of these individuals.” And let me tell you the character of Peter Norman. They built some statues at San Jose State. And when they started building those statues, I got a call, and somebody told me, said, “John, you know, they’re building a statue, and they’ve got you and Tommie, and Peter’s not there.” I jumped in my car and I drove to San Jose from L.A. I went there and I said to them, I said, “What’s the deal here? Y’all didn’t put Peter up?”

I don't want my statue going there! I don't want to be a part of this!" And they said, "Well, John, what do you mean you won't be a part of it?" I said, "Well, why Peter's not there?" And they said, "Well, John, it's the students that raised the money for this." I said, "I know the students raised the money for this." [They] said, "But Tommie Smith and you went to school here. Peter didn't go to school here." I said, "That's irrelevant about whether he went to school here! It's about the energy and the effort and the meaning behind what we did! It isn't about which school you went to." And then, one of them stepped up and said, "Well, Peter, didn't want to be there." I left them and I went to the president, Dr. Kassing at the time. And I said, "Don, I need to make a call." He said, "Make a call where." I said, "I need to call Peter Norman in Australia." Just by heart then, I call. He picks up the phone. And he said, "Who's this?" I say, "It's Carlos." "Blimey, Carlos!" You know, in his British accent, I mean, his Australian accent. And I said, "Peter, I have a question here." He said, "What is it?" I said to him, I said, "Man, you don't want to be a part of the statue?" He laughed. He said, "John, I would love to be a part of this statue." He said, "But let me tell you the way I see it." I said, "Let me hear the way you see it, because there isn't no way that you can tell me that you shouldn't be there." And he says to me, he said, "Listen." He said, "I didn't do what you guys did. I supported what you guys did. I supported you then, I support you now, and I will always support you." He said, "I think it's only fair and apropos that I not have my statue there, so when people come from around the world to come to that school, they can take their picture standing in my spot and supporting what you guys did." Now, let me tell you something. I'm going to say this right now, loud and clear. I love Tommie Smith, but I don't think Tommie Smith would have ever did what Peter Norman did in that sense. That was—that's a man's man, to say, "Man, I put the world before I put myself." And that's what it's all about, man, to sacrifice yourself for the world. That's what Jesus Christ did. You sit back and you think about—you know, I think about New York here when I came through, when I broke the world record at the trials. "John Carlos! I own New York! John Carlos! Great!" Thirty days later, after the demonstration, same paper, "John Carlos! Neighborhood Bum!" My father's in the hospital, dying, he's got tears in his eyes! "Why did you do those bad things?" Based on the headlines in the paper! But, you know, I said to my father, I said, "Pop, read the paper!" I said, "You don't know Rap Brown. You don't know Stokely Carmichael. You don't know Professor Edwards. You don't know Tommie. Do you know John Carlos?" "Yeah, son.

I know you." I said, "Well, the same thing they're saying about those individuals, they're saying about me. Nobody knows John Carlos on this planet better than you!" My father started crying. I started crying. Just like my father embraced me when I told him I had that vision, I embraced him. And I'm hugging my father and tears running down my eyes, tears running down his eyes. And I'm saying, "Man, if they can bamboozle my father, I can imagine what they're doing to just the grassroots people in society." But you sit back and you think about the fact that they call me a troublemaker. That's a heavy word, a troublemaker. But then, you know, I heard that word so many times until I began to look at that word and evaluate that word and turn it upside down and turn it over.

And, you know, I started seeing visions after that. And you know what I found? I found Gandhi, a troublemaker. I found Martin Luther King, a troublemaker. I found Paul Robeson, a troublemaker. I found Nelson Mandela, a troublemaker. I found Jesus Christ, a troublemaker. But I found at the same time that John Carlos is in damn good company to be a troublemaker with those individuals! Because those are the true fighters for society. All of us was called troublemakers.

**JB:** Could we um? [Recording stops and then resumes]

**JB:** Okay, we're back.

**DC:** Okay.

**JB:** Can I—maybe you want to ask the same question.

**DC:** Let me just go.

**JB:** Okay.

**DC:** Okay. If you could—you started talking a little bit about going out to actually do the demonstration, but can walk us through that? I mean, when you started, when you first said, “Okay, we’re going to do something,” and were putting together what you have with you and what symbols—

**JC:** Okay.

**DC:** Can you sort of describe that and what it felt like when you went out there? And then, what it felt like actually on the podium?

**JC:** Alright. Well, the first thing, relative to the symbols, it’s something that Tommie and I had discussion at the end of the quarter semi when we decided that jointly we wanted to do something to make a statement. You know, the boycott is over, but we felt very strongly, we have a strong conviction that something needed to be said. And we came to the conclusion that, by making a statement, we had to bring symbols to solidify the statement. He started talking about, “Well, I have some gloves.” Bring the gloves.

I had a black shirt to cover up my USA jersey, merely because I was ashamed of America, for all of America’s history, relative to people of color, or society. I was ashamed of them, so I wanted to cover up my USA with that jersey. Tommie had a black scarf for all the sacrifice of black people in the land. I had beads. I wore the beads just for the simple reason that there were so many black people that was lynched throughout the South for years upon years.

I had these beads on for those that was thrown overboard in the maiden voyage, and those that was thrown off the island over there in Africa, to the sharks, that no one ever said a prayer for. These are the symbols. We took the Puma shoe out there, merely because I represented Puma, and Puma represented the poor people. It wasn't like Adidas. You had to be a superstar to get some Adidas. Puma shoes, if you was poor and couldn't afford it, they would give them to you. I saw that they gave them to you. So, I wanted Puma to be a part of that. That's why I took my shoe out there and had Tommie take his and put his out there.

**DC:** You had the socks, too, right?

**JC:** Yeah, then we wore the black socks with no shoes to illustrate poverty. And people were still walking back and forth 20 miles to get to and from school, didn't have no transportation. And yet and still, we're still talking about them going to the moon and land a spaceship a half-mile from where they say they're going to land it, but they tell me they can't stop a cockroach or they can't stop a rat from eating kids in the ghetto. So, all of these things were combined to make a statement. And then, the glove. In my estimation, the glove— everybody talking about the glove and the fist. Well, before there was a fist, there was five people, five continents, people of color. One of them jumped down and said, "Man, if I can move this pebble across the road, I can make a significant difference in society." But he jumped down and he tried to move it. He can't move it. Another guy said, "Man, I saw what you did wrong. You didn't put your hips into it." He jumped down. He tried. He can't do it. But eventually they came to the conclusion if we all put our minds together and put our bodies into it, we can do it. And when people come together, that becomes a very powerful force. That's what that was about. It wasn't about destruction and tearing America down or blowing up the Statue of Liberty. We was just letting them know that we are a powerful force, not just merely on the track, but in society, and you're going to have to accept us as being a part of society. Here's a statement I made when I was 23 years old about the fact that they are trying to hold us down, like we're five steps below the ladder. And every time we try to reach up to pull ourselves up, they step on our hands and don't want us to climb up. They don't even want us to pull ourselves up. We didn't ask you to give us anything. We said, "Open up the door, like James Brown said, and we'll get it ourselves." But you don't even want us to touch the door! So, that's it, in a nutshell. We went out there. And we went out to the victory stand. You know, the first thing I thought about when I went out there was that vision, because the same way that those people responded when we raised our hands was the same way they responded in that vision. The second thing I thought of was my father telling me about the quest that he had when he was in the First World War when the war was segregated and they had the white sergeants and the lieutenants and so forth that came in to lead the black troops. I thought about how he talked about what it was for a black man after they served in the war to come home and how they were treated. I thought about my days there at East Texas State. I thought about my era in New York and Harlem, in terms of how they dropped the drugs on Harlem—to solidify what I was doing in my mind and make me sound and know that what I was doing was the right thing.

And when it all culminated, when everything was said and done, my last thing that went through me was, “They can never ever put shackles on John Carlos again.” They will never ever incarcerate me in my mind or, as they say, to chain me to the ball. I’m a free man. And if I had to lose my life as a result of that, well, so be it. I’m ready to die. I’m going to die anyway. But I prefer dying with a smile on my face than to die with agony and turmoil and know that I never did anything about it.

**DC:** So, what was the response right then in the stadium? And then, how did that sort of snowball?

**JC:** Well, it was a double-edged razor, because the people that was there from the country of Africa or any Third World country, specifically those people there of Mexico—they had a tragedy that had taken place in Mexico 10 days before the teams started coming in, when they gunned down, you know, in my estimation, it was like close to 2,000 students. They just gunned them down in the square! And they told them, said, “Yeah, just handle your business and get them people out of the way, and the United States team will come.” That’s like saying, “Open the guns on them. Do what you have to do.” They took those individuals’ bodies and threw them in the furnace until they couldn’t put no more in the furnace. Then, they got the National Guard to get the National Guard ships to come in and take them out to the ocean and dump the rest of the bodies in the ocean. And disguise, “Let’s get the Games—let’s have the Games go on.” And then, one time, they’re talking about 50 people died. Then it was a 150 people died. Now, they’re talking about 1,500 people died. It was closer to 2,300 people, in my estimation, that lost their lives as a result of this. So, you know, you had to have justification in yourself and circumvent your mind to make sure that you’re not making a fool of yourself, you’re not making a mockery of what you’re doing. Yeah, questions are going to come to us, names are going to come at us. They’re going to try and do everything to put us down and to make us look crazy, and the whole nine yards. But we had to stand fast and have the answers when they start shooting them. They didn’t like the answers that we was giving them, but they could not deny the answers that we was giving them, either.

**DC:** Did you have supporters?

**JC:** Yeah, my mom and my dad and my brothers and sisters. My family supported me, and my God supported me. I didn’t need no more support than that. You know, a lot of people loved what we did. But the powers-to-be, those that were in power and had some weight, they could have did certain things, no! Didn’t nobody pick up and say, “Let me send them a dime, because I know they ain’t be able to feed their kids, They can’t, you know, get milk to feed their kids, or groceries.” Ain’t nobody support us in that sense, to think about, “Well, man, after they did that, we know it’s going to be terribly hard.” Ain’t nobody sent us a dime. But years later, one of my biggest supporters and one of my dearest friends before, during and, years later, after, was George Foreman.

Where they they tried and put, divide it, because George waved the American flag and ran around, and they tried to make it like I hate George, or George hate me for what I stood for. And that was so far from the truth, so far from the truth. But at the same time, when you sit back and think back, in 1968, all they had was a rightwing press. It wasn't no liberal press for me to go and talk about, you know, what I thought about George. I ain't never knocked George for waving the flag. I wished I could have waved the flag, but it wasn't a flag-waving opportunity for me. I'd have loved to wave the flag. But at the same time, in order for me to wave the flag, the flag have to let me accept them as I did, and they have to accept me as they should have. They didn't accept people of color. And right now, when you sit back and you look at the Republicans, with the way they're doing things right now, it's almost like they're telling you, "Yeah, man, everything that went down in the 1960s that you fought for, that everybody felt like they're comfortable with, they're taking it back!" I mean, everything that is out there right now. We put a black man in the White House, probably one of the most brilliant men that ever walked the halls of the White House, and they're trying to do everything they can to slap him down. And to all those blacks that might not like Barack for what Barack does, they don't understand the mechanisms of the White House. They don't understand for a black man to go in the White House, it takes him the first four years just to find the key to the private bathroom, much more anything else, in terms of trying to get legislation done. Now, my father used to always tell me, and I'll put this out to anybody that wants to go public against Barack, and tell him, say, my old man used to tell me, he said, "If you don't have nothing good to say, don't say nothing." And that's a lesson that a lot of people should learn. Because they ain't doing nothing but shooting their selves in the foot when they're trying to denounce a man that's going through hell and high water to make this a better society.

**DC:** So, if I can ask how that—so, how did that moment in Mexico City resonate in the years that followed for you and for Peter and for Tommie?

**JC:** Well, it became a beacon for society. I don't think that it—it holds up in any ethnic group. In his country, people resonated around that demonstration. In your country, people resonated around that demonstration. In Cuba and Africa and Asia and anywhere on this planet, there's people that resonated around that particular demonstration because they know what oppression is about. They know this demonstration was for people to be treated as human beings, to be civil amongst one another, to give everybody the same opportunity that you want for your kids. So, everybody gravitated to it. You know, white people had indifferences, too, where they had slavery, where whites enslaved their own people. They don't want to talk about it, but it was there. And people can still—when you sit back right now, you go to anywhere, you go to Italy, you go to Greece, you go anywhere, they're still going to change that they related. It ain't just black people. This is a universal thing. See, and they try and make it like it was a black thing, and they forget what that button said that we wore on our chests. It says Olympic Project for Human Rights. That's for humanity! It wasn't for me. And that's the way it still stands today. It resonates throughout the world.

Any Olympics they go to, whether I'm there in the flesh, it doesn't matter, because I'm there just based on my energy. And I can live with that. I don't have to go to the Olympic Games, because a lot of kids tell me, say, "Mr. Carlos, you know, you're everywhere. You're still sitting in your living room, but you were at the Olympic Games in Munich, you were at the Olympic Games over there in Australia." Somebody called me and told me, said, "Man, you know, you didn't come to the Games," he said, "but, you know, they've got an 80-foot wall with you on that wall. And everybody that goes into that stadium, and everybody that leaves that stadium, or everybody that drives by on the train sees that 80-foot picture of you," people stopping to take pictures of it. At San Jose State, people come from all around the world that would never go to San Jose State. They come to San Jose just to go through that campus and stand there and take that picture. So, yeah, I'm very pleased with the fact that God picked that little grain of sand up and threw it on the counter and said, "Johnny, you can be involved in this. I ain't putting no pressure on you. It's your decision as to whether you want to do it or not," because we all have choices in life.

**DC:** But there was an arc to it, too, right? I mean, that powerful moment kept resonating and kept—but sort of came back. But there were, you all paid some prices for having done that.

**JC:** I don't talk about the prices. The only thing that I would say that I regret in the whole scenario is the fact that I was young, and I didn't think the thing all the way through, in terms of how to protect my family better. Other than that, I have no misgivings whatsoever. You know, it's a hurting thing for me to even sit here and just think the fact that my wife, my first wife, couldn't take it and took her life. It's a hurting thing for my kids to have to endure that. It was a hurting thing for my kids to have to sacrifice in school merely because I was their father. It was a hurting thing for me not to be able to give my kids a Christmas for many years, just based on my beliefs. But, at the same time, when all the dust settled, I said, "My kids would have had to go through a 1,000 no-Christmases. My wife would have had to kill herself a 1,000 times. Because what I did in Mexico City was far greater than her life and my life or anything that ever happened to my kids, because it ain't about me. It's about all of us." And that's the end lesson. I ain't worried about the bad things that happen to me. I remember when I used to do certain things, and my father didn't particularly care for it. He would tell me, say, "Son, you've got 48 hours. You've got 48 hours to make me understand what you did and why you did it." Now, if he didn't agree with what I said, and he got that ass, so be it. Get the ass. But I believed in what I did, and I'm going to get out tomorrow and do it again, because I believed that I'm right. It ain't about that you want to whip me, and that's what America wanted to do. America wanted to tat-tat on this ass, because they didn't agree with what I did. But I ain't worried about them tat-tatting on this ass. I'm worried about when they come to the realization that, you know, through all the thick-and-thin, when all the dust settles, we can't get around the fact that those two individuals was right.

And you know how it is, man, to sit back in your old age—and remember when I got involved in this thing, I was 23 years old—but to sit back in your old age, and everything become crystalized in your mind, and you start to realize that, man, you did something that only one other person on planet Earth before your life, during your life, or even after your life can actually say that they did this. Just two people on the planet. That's a heavy thing, man. And then, to realize that it was for the betterment of mankind.

**DC:** Let me ask you, too, because I know it did resonate, obviously, and it did affect lots of people. But then, you also had another part of your life where you were affecting people one on-one, and that's as a teacher. And I know there were some—maybe you had some trouble earning a living at first, and then ended up being a high school teacher.

**JC:** Well, I was always a teacher. It wasn't about the high school. I've always taught. I taught individuals because when I was a kid, I learned from older individuals. And I always felt like the best way to communicate with a kid is to melt that kid down and become a part of that kid, you understand, like two candles melting and blending together. And that way, a kid can feel good about learning something. And, you know, they say, "Man, there's something about you," a long before they even know who you are. Like, for instance, that affair that I went to last night. I had so many youngsters that was there. When I was out there doing my thing, they was like—

**DC:** What was the event last night, just for the record?

**JC:** It was the New York City First Annual Reunion for all track and field athletes that ran for the PSL and the schools in New York. And so many of those individuals that come to me and tell me about things I did to them and did for them, and showed them, and took the time with them. And then, the bottom line was for them to tell me, say, "Man, when you came to me, you was like an idol at that time. You was a legend at that time. But when you came to me, you didn't come to me like you was over me. You came to me like you was a part of me. You know, you made me feel good. You made me feel happy that you took the time. Or you would come and see me run a race, and then come over and tell me, 'Hey, man, you need to do this, you need to do that, and it's going to help you,' and then realize at the same time how quick it helped me. It wasn't like it helped me down the line. It helped me immediately." And for me to hear people say that, it's just like what you said about how you resonated with people one-on-one. And that's been all my life. That's a part of me. You know, I feel good that I'm doing that. And yesterday, I would say, was probably one of the most profound times of my life, because I don't really get a chance to hear people tell me what I did and how I touched their life. But I heard it in abundance last night. You know, and I left there with a feeling that everything that God showed me and told me in that vision in my life is coming to truth, even to that point last night. Time for me to take a break, too. [Recording stops and then resumes]

**JC:** But, in terms of what I had to sacrifice, I don't want to scare them. Unidentified Female: Well, I'm not scaring them, but they don't realize that part of history, and I think it's important.

**JC:** Okay. Female: So, if you can, fine. If you don't, I understand. [Crackling sounds]

**JC:** You know, the biggest sacrifice is losing your loved one. That's the biggest sacrifice, and that's an emotional sacrifice. You know, sometimes, you know, people ask me that question. It's hard for me to, even all this time later, it's hard to talk about it. You know? So, you know, relative to what happened in those areas, I prefer to let them lay, because it doesn't really matter, you know, about what they did to me. What matters to me is where we came from that and where we're headed. That's the important thing to me. Sacrifice, I mean, you sit back—God sacrificed. Paul Robeson, everybody sacrificed to make—you know, everybody knows that there was sacrifice involved, in terms of personal sacrifice. That's irrelevant. The initial thing is: I gave my all to make better for those that come after me. That's the most important thing. If anybody thinks that, you know, they did something, and they was rewarded for it, or they wasn't punished for it, or they wasn't put down for it, they're mistaken. I mean, they don't have a clue as to what park they're in, much more, you know, where they are in space and time. I mean, you sit back—I remember, if I looked at something that was painful, I had two individuals that grew up with me in the sport, and these are two noted individual Olympians. And I remember one day sitting in an airport with these two guys in Washington, D.C., and we were waiting on a plane. It was about three or four o'clock in the morning. And I remember them leaning across the table and telling me, said, "Man, you really screwed up your life. You know, you screwed up your life so bad they ain't never going to let you work in America, your kids are going to go through hell, you know, you ain't going never find a job. You really screwed up." And they went so far as to say, "Man, I don't even know whether I feel comfortable sitting here with you right now." And these are the guys that I grew up with! And I looked at them and I said to them, I said, "Let me tell you something, man." I said, "Have you ever seen a hummingbird?" I said, "A hummingbird [makes whirring sound], and then he just stops." I said, "That's me." I said, "You see somebody fall off a bridge, and they don't go down. They're treading water." I said, "That's me." I said, "Man, I didn't go down. I just stopped." I said, "Now, you think you're up here?" I said, "I was up there." I said, "Let me tell you this. I'm going rise again. And when I rise, I just pray that I remember to be me and be humble and never disguise myself to be like you guys." And I remember this guy had a big golf tournament every year, and he'd invite all, everybody, but never invite me. But when I started rising again, I get a call, "Hey!" "Well, I'll be darned! Who dug you up? What cemetery did they dig you up to call me?" So, everybody that tried to put me down in my life, you know, they've all come back knocking. Because now they want to be in the picture. Because now they want that brick. You know? And I tell them, I say, "Man, I love you more than yesterday and less than tomorrow, but I can't change history and I will never attempt to change history. If you was in the picture, then you were in the picture! But if you wasn't in the picture, I can't put you in the picture now, because you have a change of heart 40 years later, because things look like it's sunny on my side of the street now."

So, you know, to talk about things like, you know, the negatives, I would have to talk about those people, as well. I don't want to talk about that. I don't want to talk about, you know, the pain that I had to deal with to see my kids suffer. I don't want to talk about, you know, the fact that you had to go to welfare and try and get some sort of assistance during Christmas just to have one [gift] under a tree for your kid during Christmastime. You know, I don't want to talk about the mere fact that I never had groceries in my house at one time. And, thank God, I had one partner named Ron Freeman that came to my house, didn't say a word, just looked and saw it, and the next thing you know, he come back to my house, two hours later, with bags of groceries. Things like that I'll never forget! And wherever I go in life, they'll always go with me! But for me to get up and talk about it? That's not what I want. What I want to talk about, man, is how we can still come together and make this a better place for our children and our children's children. That's the most important thing, you know. Sacrifice is going to go everywhere. Everybody that did something in society has sacrificed. You think about John Brown, with all he did to fight against all odds. You think John Brown didn't know that he was going die? And do you think that he didn't know that he was going to die for people that wasn't even of his race? He knew about the sacrifice of his life! Do you think Dr. King didn't know that he was going die? Or Gandhi didn't know he was going to die? Or Malcolm didn't know he was going die? All of them knew they was going die! But it didn't deter them. They wasn't concerned about the sacrifice, and some of them, like I said, made the ultimate sacrifice. But it didn't stop who they were. They ain't sitting back and, "I don't want to do it because I might die." Forget that! Let's talk about what comes from sacrifice, from the hurt. Okay? Yeah, I got days where I stayed in the dark, man, and had tears roll down my eyes. But at the same time, I got days where I smiled in the sun, as tears still rolled down my eyes for happiness, as well. And that's it.

**DC:** I think we've hit it right there. [Laughs]

**JC:** Right on, right on. [Recording ends at 2:06:42] end of interview transcribed by Sally C. Council