

Interview with Edward Whitfield by Bridgette Burge

Preface and Index

Interviewee

Edward Leroy Whitfield

Interviewer

Bridgette Burge

Interview Dates

February 26, 2006

Transcription

Emily Baran

Place

First part of interview conducted at the Beloved Community Center, Greensboro, NC. Because of noise we moved down the road to a meeting room upstairs at Faith Community Church for the second part of the interview.

Collection

Heirs to a Fighting Tradition: Oral Histories of North Carolina Social Justice Activists

Heirs to a Fighting Tradition

Heirs to a Fighting Tradition: Oral Histories of North Carolina Social Justice Activists is a multi-phased oral history project which explores the stories and traditions of social justice activism in North Carolina through in-depth interviews with highly respected activists and organizers. Selected for the integrity and high level of skill in their work dedicated to social justice, the interviewees represent a diversity of age, gender, and ethnicity. These narratives capture the richness of a set of activists with powerful perspectives on social justice and similar visions of the common good. These are tales of transition and transformation, sea change and burnout, organizing successes and heart wrenching defeats. These are the stories of the Movement. This collection will be a valuable addition to the modest amount of literature about contemporary social justice activism in the South.

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Description of the Interviewee

Edward L. Whitfield was born on June 25, 1949 in Little Rock, Arkansas. He graduated from Little Rock Central High School in 1967, ten years after the 1957 school integration. As a presidential scholar, he went on to Cornell University in New York where he was majoring in Mathematics and Philosophy. In 1969, he served as the chairman of Cornell's black student association and later as the 1st Vice Chair and international affairs coordinator of the Student

Organization for Black Unity. Whitfield received substantial notoriety for being one of the leaders of a student takeover of the administrative building as part of a campaign to create a Black Studies Department. Just before graduating from Cornell, he came to North Carolina to teach mathematics, physical science and mechanics at Malcolm X Liberation University. Displeased with the curriculum at Duke University, students along with community activists established MXLU. After its closing, Whitfield continued as a community and labor organizer, a peace activist, and a stalwart advocate for educational quality and equity for African-American children. Ed chaired the Greensboro Redevelopment Commission for nearly ten years. He unsuccessfully ran for public office on four occasions: Greensboro City Council in 1983; Guilford County School Board in 1990 and 1992, and Guilford County Commissioner 1996. He was involved with the Greensboro Peace Coalition and the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which examined the context, causes, sequences and consequences of the murder of five anti-Ku Klux Klan activists at a protest on November 3, 1979 at the city's black Morningside Homes housing community. He has been a writer, a musician, a frequent commentator on radio talk shows, and worked as an electronics specialist with Lorillard Tobacco Company in Greensboro.

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