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Interview with Reverend Dr. Michael Pflieger

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Columbia College Chicago

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1 *Honors Oral History - Chicago '68*
2 May 2015
3 Narrator: Reverend Michael Pfleger
4 Interviewer: Jesse Betend

5
6 This interview is part of the Columbia College Chicago archives in honors oral history project:
7 Chicago '68. That is part of a collaboration with The Council of Religious Leaders of
8 Metropolitan Chicago.
9

10 [Electronic clicking—Tape begins at 0:00:30:00]

11
12 JB:
13 There we go, record. Just orally agree to have the, you know, interview that we're going to be
14 talking about your, your life and experiences leading up to the year 1968, and perhaps if we have
15 time a little bit about after that but focusing on your religious activism and your life in the church
16 as well as—

17
18 MP:
19 —Sure.

20
21 JB:
22 —1968.

23
24 MP:
25 I'm more than happy to be recorded.

26
27 [both laugh]

28
29 JB:
30 thank you so much.

31
32 MP:
33 sure.

34
35 JB:
36 Do you prefer uh, if I call you Reverend? Reverend Pfleger—

37
38 MP:
39 doesn't matter. Either—

40
41 JB:
42 Doesn't matter?

43
44 MP:
45 Either is fine. that's fine. Reverand is fine.

46

47 JB:
48 Okay.
49
50 MP:
51 Yeah—
52
53
54 JB:
55 Alright. thank you so so much. If you would like a copy of this, I can talk to them about faxing
56 one over or—
57
58 MP:
59 No I don't need a copy.
60
61 JB:
62 Okay. and then would you be comfortable with video recording—
63
64 MP:
65 —Sure.
66
67 JB:
68 —at all. Okay. That'll just take us one second.
69
70 [video camera chirp and sound of set up]
71
72 JB:
73 Okay. Fantastic. So first of all this interview is part of the Columbia College Chicago archives in
74 honors oral history project: Chicago '68. That is part of a collaboration with The Council of
75 Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago. Um, I wanted to get that recorded and um—
76
77 MP:
78 Sure.
79
80 JB:
81 So thinking back I want to start in the beginning of your life and kind of work your way forward
82 towards the year 1968. Where did you grow up?
83
84 MP:
85 Grew up in the Wrightwood community, 81st and Talman on the South Side of Chicago. Went to
86 St. Thomas Moore for Grammar school, Quigly high school, um Loyola University, Niles
87 College and then St. Mary's University for my post graduate.
88
89 [noise from recorder adjustment]
90
91 JB:

92 Thank you. I'm just going to take a second to check the levels. Alright. That sounds fantastic, um,
93 [pause to think] (paper shuffling) What was your favorite thing to do with your mother growing
94 up?

95
96 MP:

97 Um, I suppose one of my favorite things to do with her was um, she—she very much liked to,
98 she liked to engage in conversation about activities and about life and general—she loved the—
99 she always taught me to speak my mind, speak about what I believe in, what I thought about my
100 questions. It was always prompted to speak up and then defend what it is I thought, so I think my
101 mother was my first real instructor, you know, at home, by having to always—prompting
102 conversations and, and looking that we made sure we talked about issues, talked about things—
103 from Grammar school on up she always pushed engagement and conversations and talking about
104 issues.

105
106 JB:

107 How did you see her use those traits in the world around you?

108
109 MP:

110 Well I watched both my mother and my father—two things, one be—would always be very—
111 you always knew exactly what they thought, and they were always consistent, whether they were
112 sitting around the kitchen table at home or they were out with their friends. They were consistent
113 about their values and about their thoughts on things. Secondly, I watched her be a great fighter
114 and defender of my sister. My older sister had um, ugh—was mentally challenged, and never
115 went beyond maybe the fourth or fifth grade, and she became a defender of hers. Both her and
116 my father, but more so my mother, um, and wanted to—became—not only defensive but also
117 very protective of my sister. When they went into Tucson (??) my mother said absolutely not.
118 We'll raise her at home. We will teach her and we will take care of her.

119
120 JB:

121 Was that intimidating for you, with having—how did your parents, sort of, outspoken nature
122 affect you as a child growing up, was it—

123
124 MP:

125 —It became natural to me. That became common in our house, and our house was a great
126 gathering place on the block were many people would come and hang out on the front porch, or
127 we had a screened in porch in the backyard, and it was kind of a central gathering place on our
128 block. But it became natural that when you came to the Pflieger house you talked, you discussed
129 issues, you argued things out to—you know, that just became part of, you know, who I am today.
130 It certainly was in my house at home.

131
132 JB:

133 How would you describe your relationship with your sister, in comparison to your parents?

134
135 MP:

136 Um, I think I took on a lot of my mothers protectiveness for her. I became—I remember I would
137 become very angry when I would see her taken advantage of or hear her called retarded, or

138 laughed at, or talked about. It became something that really grated on me on the inside so I
139 became, um, ugh, very defensive about my sister and protective of her. We were very close.

140
141 JB:

142 Absolutely. Was it—would you say that—how did defending your sister, at the time, make you
143 feel in terms of growing up in the neighborhood you were in. Did it—what was your engagement
144 with other kids in the neighborhood and stuff like that?

145
146 MP:

147 Oh, my engagement with other kids was fine. We, like I say were a very outgoing family our
148 porch was a gathering place, got along well with other young people in the neighborhood. But I
149 know when I would be at places, or we'd be in a shopping mall, or we'd go into the plaza, and if
150 I see people point at my sister or laugh or talk about it, um, ugh, I would become very angry and
151 very defensive. I watched, without consciously naming it at that point, but years later, I could
152 tell—connected all the dots in my life realized how much watching the injustices done against
153 my sister and the prejudice against my sister, laid foundations for the way I became and fought
154 and began, in a sense, the rest of my life on stuff.

155
156 JB:

157 Was there a specific time were you remember having to defend her?

158
159 MP:

160 I remember one time at a shopping center, um, I see kids laughing at her and I ran over and
161 grabbed this one kid and told him 'what are you laughing at?' or just 'stop laughing at my sister'
162 and that was really the only time, that I can consciously remember.

163
164 JB:

165 Sure. What about your father? Were there any specific rules that your father had?

166
167 MP:

168 No, my father was the more reserved, he worked, usually worked—always two jobs, sometimes
169 three jobs. He was very, very—you know, he was the one that was gonna make sure he provided
170 for his family and took care of his family. Worked a lot. We had a good relationship. Um, but he
171 was—I never wondered about his care or his love, but I knew he spent a lot of time working. So
172 in the younger years, particularly, I think I was probably more raised by my mother than my
173 father, but he was always there and always present, but he just was working all the time.

174
175 JB:

176 What did he do for a living?

177
178 MP:

179 Well he had a number of different jobs. He worked for a tool company, he owned his own
180 bedding company at one time, he worked for the 18th ward Democratic organization and the
181 ward office, um, so he had a number of different jobs over the years.

182
183 JB:

184 Was his schedule consistent or was he—
185
186 MP:
187 Pretty consistent. He, I mean, he had a five day a week job and then on weekends he would also
188 bartend at a bar, the neighbor across the street—
189
190 JB:
191 Wow.
192
193
194 MP:
195 He would work in the evening sometimes doing some other stuff so he, he had a pretty consistent
196 schedule but like I say just working.
197
198 JB:
199 How did that make you feel?
200
201 M.P.:
202 That was fine with me because I knew, I mean, [electronic humming] I never doubted his love,
203 never doubted his presence in my life. I always watched him willing to sacrifice for his family.
204
205 J.B.:
206 When you – so, you – you say your mother raised you or spent most of the time with you. Did
207 you have any other siblings?
208
209 M.P.:
210 Just my sister and I.
211
212 J.B.:
213 Just your sister and you.
214
215 M.P.:
216 Yeah.
217
218 J.B.:
219 Did she work as well?
220
221 J.B.:
222 Or was she – what did she do outside of the house?
223
224 M.P.:
225 My sister?
226
227 J.B.:
228 Your mother. I'm sorry.
229

230 M.P.:
231 My mother? She worked, at one point she worked with Firestone Company. She worked for
232 years as (bottle cap hitting table) secretary at the church office, so my mother always kind of
233 worked, too, but she always tried to work around the hours of, of, when I was at home.
234

235 J.B.:
236 How did she juggle having those two jobs or having, working between your father's schedule
237 and having, you know, being able to contribute at the church?
238

239 M.P.:
240 You know in that day, parents did what they had to do and just made sure that we were always
241 covered. You know, when I would leave grammar school and my mother was working in the
242 church office, I would go there and [electronic hum] come and sit in the office until she finished
243 working and then come home with her.
244

245 J.B.:
246 How many hours would you spend at the church?
247

248 M.P.:
249 It would vary. Sometimes it would be an hour; sometimes it could be two to three hours
250 depending on how she had to stay after work and do some stuff so, it would really depend on
251 whatever her schedule was that day.
252

253 J.B.:
254 What would you do while you were there?
255

256 M.P.:
257 Most of the time, sometimes I would sit in the office with her, but most of the times I would go
258 to the kitchen and talk to the lady who was the cook at the church, Mary Bess. I would spend a
259 lot of time talking with her.
260

261 J.B.:
262 What kind of conversations did you have?
263

264 M.P.:
265 [sips a drink] That was Mary, I didn't realize two years later but Mary was really teaching me
266 black history but I didn't know it. She was sharing her life. Her struggle as an African-
267 American woman. She was telling me what she was doing to try and make it better for her kids.
268 She told me some of the prejudice she had gone through and some of the things – the names –
269 she had been called. So, she was sharing her struggle with me. Mary Bess was the first African-
270 American person I had ever met in my life. So it was all very new and different for me. And she
271 was just a dear friend that I looked upon like an aunt or a grandma but then again realized a few
272 years later the kind of stuff she was sharing with me was her struggle, and her history and her
273 prejudice that she had received. I just didn't connect it until much later. She was just a friend.
274

275 J.B.:

276 How did you first meet her?

277

278 M.P.:

279 At the Rectory. You know, she was a cook there. And my mother, um, worked there. And my
280 mom and her were good friends. And so my mom would let me go and sit in the kitchen while
281 she was preparing dinner in the afternoons, while my mother was finishing up in the office.

282

283 J.B.:

284 You describe her as sort of a mom or grandma.

285

286 M.P.:

287 Yes.

288

289 J.B.:

290 How quickly did your relationship become sort of personal and you know -- How would you
291 describe her as a person? Was she very outgoing with this kind of thing?

292

293 M.P.:

294 She was very outgoing. Very motherly. Very caring. You know, she's treated me like I would
295 be her own son and I saw her like I say as an auntie or a grandma. She was -- we just had a very
296 good relationship and it was kind of naturally created because my mother and her were good
297 friends and we just grew into it because I would spend time with her almost every day for five
298 days a week. We just became good friends. And I'd share about whatever was going on in
299 school and she'd tell me what was going on in her life and her kids, so it was just a -- she was
300 like a family member.

301

302 J.B.:

303 Did your relationship with her ever become -- ? Was your family aware of it? Did she ever
304 become like a family friend or was it something that was kept exclusive to church?

305

306 M.P.:

307 No. I mean, she was a friend of our family and sometimes she and my mom would go to the
308 store together and I'd ride with them. SO, yeah, I mean, she was a friend of the family.

309

310 J.B.:

311 Your mom and her were co-workers?

312

313 M.P.:

314 Yeah, they were co-workers at the church and friends. Yeah.

315

316 J.B.:

317 How long did you keep in touch with her?

318

319 M.P.:

320 Well, I mean, I kept in touch with her for a number of years until she retired, stopped working,
321 and then every once in a while we would speak. Because I went on, when I went on to college. I

322 moved out of my house after high school and I never moved back, I never lived back at the
323 house. So we kind of lost touch. I'd talk to her every once in a while every year, so once or
324 twice a year later on in -- in life, but um, until she passed and um, but we um, you know, we
325 didn't stay as close as I probably think that we should have. It's just that my life became very
326 involved on the west side of Chicago. And I was at college and I was in seminary and I was just,
327 you know, engaged in a lot of different stuff, so I could say it wasn't until probably I was in
328 graduate school where I was ordained before I really started to realize what an important deposit
329 she had put in me for who I was becoming.

330

331 J.B.:

332 Growing up in the neighborhood you grew up with [dog barks once] your mom worked at the
333 church. How far away was the church from where you lived?

334

335 M.P.:

336 Three blocks.

337

338 J.B.:

339 What do you remember about the church specifically?

340

341 [00:16:30]

342 M.P.:

343 I mean I basically kind of remember it was a very family oriented, or a center of the community.
344 It was a gathering place. But that was primarily—you know, it was a place for—I had a different
345 kind of relationship because my mom worked there so I knew, you know, more of the priests
346 there better and – and -- But it was certainly, most of the people in the neighborhood went to St.
347 Thomas Moore, that was the church of the neighborhood. But, it was a, now it's so different.
348 My father was involved in the Knights of [00:17:12] (??), the Men's club. My mother was
349 involved with the women's club. So, it was a family gathering place in the neighborhood.

350

351 J.B.:

352 Were there any specific priests that you had sort of a personal relationship with?

353

354 M.P.:

355 Well, the – not really. I mean, I knew a little bit Father Murphy, um, because he was a young
356 priest that came in and he was very, very, you know -- . He drove a sports car. He was like a
357 different – he was a whole different kind of image of priest from me so I thought he was really
358 cool. But the other priest I basically knew through just because I was an altar server, so I knew
359 the priest was who was over those, but the pastor there was – was there – was Father Hayes.
360 Was a very, very gentle, grandfatherish guy and so as close as you could get to him in that day, I
361 looked at him as being this kind, gentle man.

362

363 J.B.:

364 Did your sister come and stay with you while you were in the office?

365

366 M.P.:

367 No. My sister was usually being taken care of by a next-door neighbor during the day when my
368 mom was at work.

369
370 J.B.:

371 Got you. Which relationship did you feel more strongly? The members of the church—with the
372 priesthood? Or sort of these people that you were maybe spending time in the back office and
373 kind of the experiences?

374
375 M.P.:

376 I don't know if I would say one over the other. I mean, we had friends in the church. Certainly
377 Mary Bess was a friend of mine. The priests were friends – I wouldn't say that I saw any one
378 over the other. I think they all kind of had equal relationships, equal friendliness with.

379
380 J.B.:

381 Growing up in your neighborhood as well, you mentioned that you walked to and from church.
382 How did you get to school?

383
384 M.P.:

385 Walked to and from school.
386

387 J.B.:

388 Would—what was your interaction with police officers in the neighborhood?
389

390 M.P.:

391 Um. It was okay. It was—because there was—the neighborhood had a lot of police officers
392 living in it. It was a very middle-class, white, a lot of police, firemen, city workers, so I mean,
393 they were neighbors. That was my main connections. I didn't see them too much other than
394 being neighbors.

395
396 J.B.:

397 How was religion observed in your home?
398

399 M.P.:

400 It was central. I mean, faith was deep in our house. My mother and father were very strong
401 believers but as—as—and it was, you know, something that – church was not a thing you
402 thought about. It was not a thing you had an option to. You either went to church or you didn't
403 go out. But at the same time my parents were very again—were very progressive and outspoken
404 thinkers, so they, you know, if there was something said or done at the church they didn't like,
405 they'd come home and talk about it. You know? They were very free thinkers, but very
406 committed to the commitments at the church. They served the church. Sacrificed for the church
407 and bow to the church.

408
409 J.B.:

410 Was there a time that they disagreed with someone in the church that you remember?
411

412 M.P.:

413 Oh, yeah. I remember different times I disagreed with something, one of the priests did or
414 something was being done in the church. Yeah, I mean, not – not once in a while, but often. I
415 mean they would always voice what they didn't like. That was them.

416
417 J.B.:
418 Do you remember any specific things?

419
420 M.P.:
421 Not any one thing stands out. Just that you know if it was – if it was something that was said by
422 a priest or said by um, someone in the church that they felt was just wrong or out of line, you
423 would hear about it. They didn't necessarily take it on or fight it but they were verbal about it.

424
425 J.B.:
426 How did that - how did that impact you seeing them--?

427
428 M.P.:
429 Well, it impacted me that I grew up in a house that was, you – you expressed yourself and you
430 had to.

431
432 J.B.:
433 But was it ever, was it ever a question for you to see your parents question the church?

434
435 M.P.:
436 No. It was natural for as long as I can remember. Whether it was the church, whether it was
437 something going on in the neighborhood, whether it was something going on in the city, my
438 parents always expressed what they felt very, very clearly. They had no problem articulating it.

439
440 J.B.:
441 When you went to high school in 1963, I believe, you began going. Where did you go to high
442 school?

443
444 M.P.:
445 Quigley High School on 79th— 77th and Western.

446
447 J.B.:
448 Is that—where did you want to go to high school?

449
450 M.P.:
451 Quigley. It was between there and Brother Rice, but I wanted to go to Quigley. Those were the
452 two possible schools for me.

453
454 J.B.:
455 Was that something that you and your parents discussed?

456
457 M.P.:

458 Yes, we discussed it and my main attraction for Quigley at that point was it was this beautiful
459 school and it had, you know, one of the nicest high schools around. It had a great pool and I love
460 swimming and a great campus and it was walking distance from my house. I walked to school. I
461 was 81st and Tomlin this was 77th and Western. So I walked to school every day. [electronic
462 hum-brief]. Go ahead.

463

464 J.B.:

465 You mentioned that your dad was working a lot. How did you guys afford to go to Quigley?

466

467 M.P.:

468 Well—My parents, part of their m.o. was wherever I wanted to go to make sure that they could
469 support me to go there. They wanted me to have the kind of education that I wanted and do
470 whatever they could do. So, they—they sacrificed for that.

471

472 J.B.:

473 Were you aware that that was a sacrifice at the time?

474

475 M.P.:

476 Oh yeah. I mean, I always knew that I—I. I watched my parents all my life, whether it was my
477 sister or myself—they tried to give us our thing—whether it was music lessons, whether it was,
478 you know, going to something that I wanted to go to. My parents were always—I grew up
479 watching them sacrifice for their kids.

480

481 J.B.:

482 How did you feel on your first day at Quigley?

483

484 M.P.:

485 I don't remember. That was 1963. I know I was excited to be there. I enjoyed going. I loved
486 the school. I loved Quigley. And it was extremely diverse. It was the most diverse high school
487 in Chicago in terms of African-American, Latino, and White. And I loved it. I loved Quigley.

488

489 J.B.:

490 In terms of the diversity within the school [electronic tweet sound], were people just mingling
491 constantly? Was that the first time you'd experienced anything like that?

492

493 M.P.:

494 Yeah, I mean, that was my first experience is seeing all of the different groups, you know, going
495 to one place together. You know what I found at Quigley was not only a good mingling of folks,
496 but also a good identity so there was a strong African-American club there. There was a strong
497 Latino club there and yet everybody I thought really mingled well and shared with each other.
498 So, I—I loved the experience there.

499

500 J.B.:

501 And how conscious were you of the civil rights movement at this point?

502

503 M.P.:

504 A little conscious only because in—right after my freshman year in high school, I went down to
505 Oklahoma and I spent that summer with five other guys from Quigley working at a Native
506 American reservation. And I was there about two weeks before I walked into a store with some
507 of my friends from the Native Americans and the store owner—this was 1964—were told that
508 they couldn't come in because they were Indians but I could come in because I was white. And I
509 had never experienced anything like that before. So that was my first kind of head on with
510 prejudice. I remember calling my mom up and saying, "Oh, I'm moving down here They've
511 got a lot of problems down here. " And my mother laughed and said, "Welcome to America!"

512
513 [tape is bad up from Welcome to America until [00:27:17]]
514

515 M.P.:

516 -and um, so I got two of my friends and I, 'cause I knew if we asked we could never do it, but we
517 rode our bikes over to Marquette Park to see Dr. King and what this was all about and um,
518 (pause to think) that was life changing for me because of two things I saw there. I saw, one,
519 people who I knew, lived in my neighborhood, went to my church, saw some family members of
520 my friends, um, and there they were in—part of this hateful throwing rocks—and cars were
521 being burned and I just—I'd never seen anger and rage and violence like that. But the second
522 thing was I saw Dr. King walk up through that park and he was not responding to any of that.
523 And um, um, I said, you know, remember riding my bike home that day – first of all on the way
524 riding to the park I passed the Ku Klux Klan headquarters on 71st Street that I never knew was
525 there and later on, in years later I asked my parents, "How come you never told me about that?"
526 "We never wanted you to see that." So they would never drive by that. So I saw that. Then I
527 see this rage of people, some people who I knew. I see Dr. King walking there, not responding
528 to it all, but as his greatest witness of non-violence I've – I'd ever seen. And um, and uh, I was
529 riding my bike home saying this guy. There is something about him. Either he's crazy or he has
530 some kind of power about him. I became obsessed from that point on with Dr. King. I began to
531 read everything he'd ever written up until 1966. I've had a wall in my room that I cut out things
532 in the newspapers that I could find anything about him and put up there and um, he really
533 became like my – the strongest mentor in my life at that point.

534

535 J.B.:

536 You were actually witnessing like neighbors and people you knew from the neighborhood acting
537 – acting violently and being part of the mob?

538

539 M.P.::

540 Right. Screaming. Yelling. Throwing things. Cars being turned over and started on fire. I
541 mean, just all this craziness I'd never seen before.

542

543 J.B.:

544 Can you describe the scene in the park as you got there? Where were the demonstrators? The
545 violent demonstrators?

546

547 M.P.:

548 I mean, it was—it was—there was some all along on the outside of the park and then as you
549 further when you got in, it got thicker and thicker and there was this huge crowd that was kept

550 back by policed as he walked through where there were kind of the um, that must have been
551 more of the yellers and the screamers and race baiters, but those on the outskirts were kind of,
552 you know, getting into a throwing things and, you know, and then I saw you know, down the
553 way there in the park when we were in there was this – um, trying to turn over this car and it
554 eventually started on fire, so. It was just – it was total chaos.

555
556 J.B.:

557 Did you have to walk through the violence sort of to get – to see the stage?

558

559 M.P.:

560 Well, we had to walk through part of it to get – I wanted to get up close – I wanted to see Dr.
561 King so I had to move through some of the outside stuff. But, I mean, it was pretty easy to do.
562 We were three white kids. And this was an all-white group, so, you know, we were just – we
563 were part of it walking through it.

564

565 J.B.:

566 How did that make you feel seeing people you knew there?

567

568 M.P.:

569 I was scared. I was scared because I had never seen anything like this. Never felt anything like
570 that. So, um, I was scared at what I saw but I was mesmerized by what I saw of him.

571

572 J.B.:

573 After you went home, do you – how did that affect how you saw those people in the
574 neighborhood after that?

575

576 M.P.:

577 Well, I know after that I became very skeptical of folks. Of, um, particu—in our house, for
578 instance, you could never use the F-word, you could never use the N-word. They were not
579 allowed in our house. I knew other people used it, did it all the time, but it wasn't in our house.
580 I became more sensitized if I heard somebody saying it to look at them. Or if there was
581 comments being made or racist jokes being told, I would try to constantly make sure that I
582 walked away or if I was there, I didn't laugh. So I became, I went to a sensitizing spirit, I would
583 say starting with that, but the more I read and learned about Dr. King was really what the
584 sensitizing was.

585

586 J.B.:

587 Being that you were white, like you mentioned, it allowed you to sort of pass through this crowd,
588 did you feel like, did you feel any pressure to show people that you weren't like the others?

589

590 M.P.:

591 No. Not at all. I was invisible to be honest with you. Yeah, no pressure at all. People were all
592 into their own thing, so—um, um, you just were there. You know, you could be a participant or
593 non-participant. Most people they were participant, but you know, we were three high school
594 kids. They didn't pay much attention to us.

595

596 J.B.:
597 Sure. So while you were in high school, who was your favorite teacher at Quigley?
598
599 M.P.:
600 (Pause to think) Wow. Who was my favorite teacher at Quigley? I'm not really sure. Probably
601 Mr. Hill was my English teacher and he was probably my favorite.
602
603 J.B.:
604 Was there something special about him?
605
606 M.P.:
607 He was edgy—I mean, he made you study Gwendolyn Brooks and studied black poets and
608 Latino poets and poetry that would be like the spoken word stuff of today. He was just—he
609 wasn't the status quo so he made you look at stuff that you wouldn't ordinarily think or read. He
610 was probably my favorite teacher.
611
612 J.B.:
613 Were there people at the school who were able to further your interest in the civil rights
614 movement and—and Martin Luther King?
615
616 M.P.:
617 No one particular. I would just say certainly some of the black students. Just being friends with
618 them, you know, kind of unconsciously as high school kids would be—hear stuff. The things
619 they had to deal with or went through or name called or whatever. I mean, it wasn't uh, you
620 know, I wasn't, I would love to say that I was that smart or that mature to have delved deeper.
621 But I wasn't. I was a high school kid.
622
623 J.B.:
624 Of course.
625
626 M.P.:
627 And um, I was exposed to stuff because of my friends and learned stuff. Wow! Yeah! But um,
628 no. Not beyond—beyond that.
629
630 J.B.:
631 You mentioned that too, when you saw him you thought, you know, either—Martin Luther King
632 Jr. that is—you thought he's either got a special power or he's crazy. At the time, which were
633 you kind of leaning towards?
634
635 M.P.:
636 Neither really. I just didn't know and—but I said I was going to learn about him. And I did. I
637 spent an enormous amount of time. You know, there was no Internet. There was no—you had
638 to go to the library. You'd try to get the books and watch the newspapers. Try to cut out stuff
639 about it or if there was something on TV about him. So. The more I—the more I learned about
640 him the more I became obsessed with him and what he stood for and what he was about.
641

642 J.B.:
643 What did you do – what did you do for fun while you were growing up or during your time at
644 Quigley?

645
646 M.P.:
647 We hung out a lot at an ice cream parlor on 87th Street and went to movies, played basketball and
648 just um—I was a real outdoors person. We played a lot in the neighborhood with just friends on
649 the block and stuff so and I had some friends that were, um, we, just fun people. We used to
650 hang, hung out a lot of time at this place called Nellie Lane. It was an ice cream place on 87th
651 Street we spent a lot of time at. And um, so, we just, you know, we just—just normal high
652 school fun things.

653
654 J.B.:
655 What did your parents um—what did your parents sort of expect from you after high school upon
656 graduating?

657
658 M.P.:
659 Well, college was never a question. It was always a given that you were going to go to college.
660 Um, and um, they wanted me to seriously kind of make some decision when I was going to go
661 forward in this seminary—the priesthood thing. You know? No pressure to go or not to go but
662 you need to make up your mind what you're going to do, so going on to Niles College and
663 Loyola University—it was a seminary but it was affiliated with Loyola so I took most of my
664 classes at Loyola so I had kind of like the best of both worlds in one sense.

665
666 J.B.:
667 How early did discussions of the life in the priesthood begin?

668
669 M.P.:
670 How early did we do what?

671
672 J.B.:
673 How early in your life did discussions about going into the priesthood begin?

674
675 M.P.:
676 Well, I had thought about it in high school. I mean, I thought about it in grammar school
677 actually because of my relationship with the church and—and um so I had thought about it there.
678 Then, high school, I thought about it when I was going in, but then we didn't think about it a
679 whole lot until mostly senior year and I would say that it probably coincided with two things.
680 One, because um, um, I was learning about Dr. King at that time. It was very, very clear that he
681 did what he did because he was a minister. Not because he was a civil rights activist or but he
682 was a minister. He did what he did out of his being a minister. And at the same time then I was
683 having to make some decisions about college. So, um, yeah. So that's—that kind of affected um,
684 um, my thinking more and more about it. So in college, I dabbled back and forth. I mean,
685 wanted it, didn't want it. But I got very involved in the West side of Chicago in a church there
686 and that kind of—the priests that were there were very, very influential in my life and as a result

687 I think helped support me going into the priesthood because of I admired them and what they
688 stood for. And other folks like that. And other priests I met during that college time.

689
690 J.B.:

691 Sure. When was um—when was the first time you stood up to your parents?

692
693 M.P.:

694 I actually stood up to them a number of times when I was growing up –

695
696 [laughs]

697
698 J.B.:

699 I imagine.

700
701 M.P.:

702 -- in the house, but I mean, um, I don't think really standing up to them. When I said I was going
703 to move to the West side of Chicago and live at that church, you know, I think my parents were a
704 little concerned. Not so much that I was moving to the west side, but was I going to put aside
705 my academics because they were supporting me, they didn't want me to drop out or not do my
706 college thing at the same time. So, it was very important to them that, you know, they were—so
707 they were very, you know, not happy with it, but I told them that I needed to do this for me and if
708 I was—I would promise them I'd stay in school or promise them I'd graduate from college but I
709 needed to do this. So, you know, as long as my grades stayed up and I would – I would continue
710 in school, they were fine with it.

711
712 J.B.:

713 You were going there to do work with the church, right?

714
715 M.P.:

716 Work with the church, yeah. You know, they realized soon I – I started out there I was going
717 like once a week. Then it was twice a week, then I moved in there. And um, so, they were
718 seeing this. They knew me and when I'm in something, I'd go in it all the way and so, um, you
719 know, they were just very concerned because they, you know, I was going to be the first person
720 from our family to go on to college. My mother and father hadn't gone. My sister obviously
721 hadn't gone and they wanted me to have a college degree no matter what I did. So that was just
722 a big concern to them that I would drop out.

723
724 J.B.:

725 It's interesting too because it's—it's sort of the work that you were interested in doing. How
726 would you—what were you doing on a day to day basis there?

727
728 M.P.:

729 At Precious Blood, the church?

730
731 J.B.:

732 Yeah.

733

734 M.P.:

735 Um, I would work with the young people in the neighborhood. The priest that was there and
736 myself started a youth center on Western Avenue and trying to make that go. Do things, mostly
737 with youth. Um, I put together a choir there for the church on Sunday mornings. Um, we did
738 outdoor movies in the summertime. So it was primarily a youth center—it was youth and then
739 the choir. So those were the main things I worked with. And I got involved with the Panthers
740 organization because they started meeting at the church and I was really intrigued by them
741 because I saw them doing more in the neighborhood to help people than any of the churches
742 were so I—I wanted to learn about them. 'cause they were always again so demonized and um, I
743 saw all the good they were doing and then, um—So I got involved with them and then I would
744 start—

745

746 J.B.:

747 How did you first meet them?

748

749 M.P.:

750 In the neighborhood. I met Fred Hampton and—and Larry Johnson, probably the two people I
751 got to know the most and um, knew Mark Clark but only, not as well as like Fred Hampton or
752 Larry Johnson. And um then volunteered. At that time they were doing the breakfast program in
753 the projects and um, um, so I got involved with going and uh picking up bread from the stores
754 and bringing it to the Panther's headquarters.

755

756

757 J.B.:

758 Did people in the church, um, people in the church obviously knew that they were – they were
759 meeting there and that you were working with them and stuff.

760

761 M.P.:

762 Uh huh.

763

764 J.B.:

765 Did your parents know that you were in—getting involved in the civil rights movement at all?

766

767 M.P.:

768 Oh yeah. I mean, they knew it. Um, I mean, I remember one of the nights down at the
769 Democratic convention, my mother, how in God's name, saw me on TV and got in her car that
770 night and drove to the church at eleven o'clock at night furious with me because she was worried
771 about me and I wasn't even there. I was still downtown. So, it wasn't a philosophical problem,
772 it was a fear for her son problem because she saw this stuff going on—

773

774 J.B.:

775 —Of course.—

776

777 M.P.:

778 —She saw what was happening on TV. She saw all the police and what was happening. And
779 she was worried about me! But she was furious that I had not told her about it. And, in a sense,
780 it was on purpose um, because I knew my mother would be extremely worried for me and would
781 do everything in her power to discourage me not to go. So, I didn't want her to worry. Um,
782 and like I say for her to have seen me on TV that night it was one in a million chance.
783

784 J.B.:
785 Do you know what she saw exactly?
786

787 M.P.:
788 No. they were just showing a group of the protestors and for whatever reason, you know, I guess
789 a mother knows her son. So, she saw me in the group and she said it was me. She tried calling
790 the church and um they said I wasn't there. So she ended up getting in her car at one point and
791 just driving down there. But um, she did not wait for me. She insisted that I call her when I got
792 home and I did. We didn't have cell phones so she couldn't call me. I couldn't call her. Um, so
793 yeah, but it was—she was very worried about it.
794

795 J.B.:
796 Sure. So um, you had—you're going into college and or you're graduating Quigley and you're
797 getting ready to go to Niles and you're working at Precious Blood Church, um, when did you
798 finally make the decision to go into the priesthood?
799

800 M.P.:
801 I don't think there was a moment I remember. I just saw that evolve more and more to that while
802 I was at Niles because (car honks) and I, you know, there's no question because of Dr. King, um
803 [reflective pause] because he made it very clear that you know, you can—you can pass laws to
804 stop people from lynching. You can pass laws to stop people from segregation but you couldn't
805 pass laws to change somebody's heart. That had to be done through the power of God and
806 through faith, so I wanted to change hearts and change lives— I wanted to change the way I saw
807 America. And um, I didn't want to be a lawyer to do the legal thing. I wanted to be a minister to
808 do the heart thing. And um, so it was over those years and particularly Dr. King and—and—um,
809 and the Civil Rights Movement.
810

811 J.B.:
812 Was activism the reason that you – did you see – would you have been dissatisfied with the life
813 of simply providing religious counsel?
814

815 M.P.:
816 Oh, absolutely! The activism was absolutely the DNA of it. You know? Um, my frustration
817 today is that religion and churches do not do activism. They have become businesses. But, I
818 mean, the Barragons (??) [00:46:42] and—and Dick Morrisroe who was shot at Selma and Jack
819 Egan and George Clements, the people that I admired and looked up to and sought out, you
820 know, the Oscar Romero's in South America. Those are the folks that—that formed and shaped
821 me and in those days it was more the norm. Today it's the exception. You know, you had -- you
822 know you look at Selma and see, realize how many priests and nuns were involved in that,

823 priests involved and nuns involved in—in Montgomery; priests and nuns involved in Chicago in
824 —in racial justice. So it was—it was the DNA of my faith.

825

826 J.B.:

827 When um, when was the first time that your faith was challenged in undergrad?

828

829 M.P.:

830 Well, I think it was constantly challenged. Um, I saw the church starting to change in its
831 policies. I watched the cardinal at the time tell the pastor that the um, Black Panthers had to stop
832 meeting there. Um, I watched at that time the pastor of the church, Jerry Maloney [phonetic] had
833 put a big sign on the front of the church there facing the Eisenhower Expressway saying about
834 the Vietnam War, stop this Goddamned War and then he was confronted and he had to take that
835 down. And so I mean, I saw, I was beginning to see that—you know, that it wasn't a natural for
836 the church to fight issues. It was becoming now more and more distant for the church. So, that
837 was a constant um, um, evolution for me.

838

839 J.B.:

840 You mentioned the sign that the – the pastor put up and – and kind of, the Black Panthers being
841 told not to stay there, how—how did you feel about—where did you come down on—at the time
842 were you outspoken about that with other members of the congregation?

843

844 M.P.:

845 —Yeah. I was very outspoken. I was very supportive of the pastor. And I, um, he was like a
846 hero to me. And um, you know, then I saw the racism, you know, as I more and more I—I grew
847 up and matured and watched and saw the racism. Saw the—what was being done to the Panthers.
848 Saw the execution of, um, of um, the Panthers and their headquarters. Uh, Fred Hampton and
849 Mark Clark, you know, it's just um, I was realizing, you know, how the injustice and the racism
850 of the city. I was watching this evolution of civil rights and—[bell rings] and, um, justice were a
851 constant fight by the system. By the powers that be, so, I was seeing it more and more every day,
852 that it was. Probably it was always there but, um, became more and more naïve to and at Loyola
853 University I became the organizer for the anti-Vietnam war movement and um, uh, the more
854 involved I got in that, the pushback we were getting from Loyola University and you know,
855 some friends of mine that were ahead of it at Northwestern. We led this big march where we met
856 for Northwestern Loyola shutting down Lake, uh, shutting down Lake Shore Drive and um,
857 watching the resistance and watching the police and um, yeah, so I mean there were just
858 countless things. Whether it was on the west side, the projects and realizing the inequality of
859 what people were living in, to the personal experiences from people, to the Panthers, to the
860 Vietnam War movement and so I was realizing and learning very quickly that um, the fight for
861 justice was not just a issue. It was fighting against the entire mainstream of America.

862

863 J.B.:

864 Wow. How involved were you in politics at the time?

865

866 M.P.:

867 Not as much involved with politics, only the local level as we started to really fight against the
868 alderman in that ward which was Vito Marzullo and he was a true, uh, ward boss and we started

869 fighting against him on some issues in the—in the ward, but other than that it was more—I saw it
870 as, you know, the government, you know, and uh, particularly before the Democratic Convention,
871 seeing it there, whether it was the Vietnam War and, you know, the—the having to push against,
872 uh, Johnson and the rest who were continuing this—this madness. And so I didn't see it local as
873 much as I saw it national.

874
875 J.B.:
876 How did you feel about Johnson?

877
878 M.P.:
879 Uh, I was angry with him. I didn't like him even though I realize he had done some good things,
880 but then, I can't even remember when he came out of office. When did Johnson leave?

881
882 J.B.:
883 Um, I should know that.

884
885 M.P.:
886 I can't remember that, but you know –

887
888 J.B.:
889 I think it was '68 when or no—He announced he wasn't seeking –

890
891 M.P.:
892 Right. I'm not sure exactly but I looked at the government of America as being this government
893 of the status quo. So I started to begin to look at government as being this—this um, without
894 personalizing it a whole much of just a—this institution that was um, continuing racism,
895 protecting it, continuing war, continuing um, injustice, and, um realizing that changing things
896 was going to demand a fight.

897
898 J.B.:
899 What was your first or what were your expectations as far as becoming drafted, as a college
900 student you were—?

901
902 M.P.:
903 Well, it was funny. I was absolutely against it. I was part of this big thing we did of burning our
904 draft cards and going through all that, but, I was a little naïve of the fact being in seminary there
905 was an exemption for me anyway, um, but it was more the symbolism for me than the reality at
906 that point.

907
908 J.B.:
909 When was the first time you had to say goodbye to a drafted friend?

910
911 M.P.:
912 I don't remember the first time. I just remember the folks that I went to school with, uh, who
913 were being drafted and um, I'd say about half of them it was fine, [beeping sound] but there were
914 some that were absolutely—that's not what they wanted to do and I just thought despite the war,

915 despite all those—that issue—up here, [gestures above head] I was very much against somebody
916 being forced to go do something that they did not want to do and I just thought there was
917 something unjustified about that.

918
919 J.B.:
920 How did you feel about the war?

921
922 M.P.:
923 I was absolutely against the Vietnam War. I thought we were, um, we were over there killing
924 people and destroying a country we had no business being in.

925
926 J.B.:
927 How conscious were you of the—or what was your opinion of the protesters—

928
929 M.P.:
930 —I loved them.—
931
932 —who had been protesting the war?

933
934 M.P.:
935 —I loved them. I thought these were my people, you know, the flower children were my people.
936 They—they um, these were the—these were the righteous that were standing up for what they
937 believed. And it was mostly young people—it was people my age. So I, that was my—who I
938 identified with.

939
940 J.B.:
941 How did you feel about the Yippies and some of the more—characters of the protest?

942
943 M.P.:
944 Um, I probably identified with them just because they were—we were protesting the same thing.
945 My group of protestors was more of the Loyola, Northwestern University students. It was more
946 the college students that I was working with and connected to but, you know, uh, the folks out in
947 San Francisco, the flower children there and others around this country, you know, you felt that
948 you were all connected even though um, it may have been very different in different places, but
949 you always felt connected. I mean, I was very much into the, at that time it was the coffeehouses
950 and sitting around and talking about how you were going to turn around the world and change
951 the world and, you know, between coffee houses and—and smoking weed and—and sitting with
952 other young people your age—none of them who had a dime in their pocket and you were going
953 to change the world. That was my life.

954
955 J.B.:
956 What kind of—what kind of music did you listen to?

957
958 M.P.:
959 Oh! I'm terrible at names but um, um, uh, Moody Blues and uh—

960

961 J.B.:
962 Yeah, sure.
963
964 M.P.:
965 —The Van Halen’s and uh, I mean the whole group and Chicago actually um, I kind of dated a
966 little bit, this uh, one of the girls—Jim Pankow who was the former founder of the Chicago
967 group—They used to practice in the garage and his sister and I used to hang out a little bit, so, I
968 would hear them when they’re just starting out playing in the garage before they became
969 Chicago.
970
971 J.B.:
972 No way! Really?
973
974 M.P.:
975 Yeah.
976
977 J.B.:
978 Wow. What did you do for dates? What did you do to hang out with people?
979
980 M.P.:
981 Well, didn’t do a lot of hanging out. I mean, we, my hanging out in those days was sometimes
982 sneaking into a bar before I was old enough and get fake I.D.s and all that stuff but I was more
983 into coffeehouses and sitting around and talking about how we—we were going to be the big, you
984 know, we were going to be the revolution that changed America. We were going to take down
985 the government. We were going to, you know. That was my life. You know. That’s the group I
986 felt most at home with.
987
988 J.B.:
989 So as the DNC, the summer of 1968 leading up to the democratic national convention, when did
990 you find out about the protests that were going to be happening?
991
992 M.P.:
993 I think I found out about them from the very beginning because I was connected to that group.
994 So I knew about it. We were—we were doing a whole bunch of stuff, you know, in different
995 places. Downtown, at Loyola, at other places, you know, and then mostly the north side because
996 that’s where I lived at that time, and—and, um, but um, I was (yawn)—excuse me—it was
997 mostly around the university and the settings that the conversations and planning and then
998 sometimes in other places on the North Side where they would be having meetings or having
999 other coffee houses where people were meeting at, so, I knew about it from the beginning and
1000 [pause to think] when the convention was coming here, I was a big you know, groupie of the
1001 Joan Baez’s and Peter, Paul, and Mary, so I was asked to be part of this little group that was kind
1002 of helping take Mary Travers around. They separated them actually. I never, not really sure
1003 about that why, but take them to different places where they were performing and trying to um,
1004 keep the groups enthused and—and stirred up. And um, so I was a part of that with her.
1005 Sometimes they would meet at a place together and sometimes they would break up going
1006 different places, trying to get around and meet as much people. And then I remember the night

1007 going down to the Hilton with her and she wanted to get up to the front. And um, so we pushed
1008 our way up to the front of the line of the, um, uh, at the Hilton and Grant Park and [yawns]
1009 weren't there actually very long. I guess there had been a number of warnings that had gone on
1010 before we got up there. But we got up there. It almost seemed like it was instantaneous but it
1011 might have been a couple minutes before, um, all of a sudden there was this – the police were
1012 just moving on us like, you know, an attack. And there was tear gas and I got hit on the head.
1013 And, what I – what I most remember about all that—clubbed by one of the police—but what I
1014 most remember about that, more than anything else, even being hit—was Mary Travers. As they
1015 were coming and you heard some of the people screaming and crying and everybody was – Mary
1016 Travers let out a scream that for me symbolized the pain of everything that was going on. It was
1017 just like a—I don't know how to define it. It was just a, it was a scream that like touched you in
1018 your gut and um—'cause I remember, I think that's actually how I got hit is because I just stood
1019 there. I was paralyzed by it. 'cause her scream for me seemed to articulate um, the um, uh, the
1020 pain, um, the anguish, the injustice all wrapped together and it was the sound of all that going on.
1021 And that, you know, that's as real for me today as when it happened.

1022
1023 J.B.:
1024 What happened to Mary?

1025
1026 M.P.:
1027 Well, we got her out of there and she got out of there and I mean, she, you know—I don't
1028 remember a whole lot more than—we ended up getting separated at that point. And she was
1029 with some other people. She was fine. Um, but it was—that evening—that evening in Grant
1030 Park, um, was, um, [pause] it was frustrating when they said that, I guess it was, was it
1031 McGovern that came out first or Hubert Humphrey, which when they were coming out to talk to
1032 the crowd—I can't even remember who it was at this point, that's how vague it was for me, but it
1033 was, what I remember about that was the feeling that we had all this encouragement, all this
1034 strength, all this unity, all this anger, all this us we're ready and we're going to change the world.
1035 It was like the flexing of the muscle of the system to say no, you're not. And it was kind of an
1036 awakening for me—the power of the system. And they flexed the power of the system. And, you
1037 know, the only thing it did for me, it connected me back to Marquette Park. Because Marquette
1038 Park, it was a bunch of crazy, white people. This time it was a bunch of crazy police. So it was
1039 a different level. This was the system. Those were just idiots. Or racists. This was the system
1040 saying no, you won't. So it was a—it was eye opening for me. Probably good. Good that it
1041 happened that day because years and years and years and years and years later um, fighting the
1042 system whatever it may be—one system at a time—I don't get easily discouraged because I've—
1043 been there, done that. You know, so, it was an awakening to say wow, this is the system. This is
1044 the police. Then, seeing that with Hanrahan and the state's attorney and the Panthers on the West
1045 side and um, it was um, it was – it was an experience.

1046
1047 J.B.:
1048 When, um, when you—when you got to the protest was there any expectation that the police
1049 would be—

1050
1051 M.P.:
1052 —When I got where?

1053
1054 J.B.:
1055 When you were at—When you first got to the protests was there any expectation that the police
1056 would be violent?
1057
1058 M.P.:
1059 No, I think the protest was to, you know, I – I’m a college student. I’m naïve. And I think the
1060 protest was basically to say to the system, we’re not going to allow this. And then seeing the
1061 system say we’re not going to allow this. That was the meeting of two very strong coalitions—
1062 the status quo of the government and the protests from the street from primarily the young people.
1063 And hitting head on and um, so, it was—it was an awakening. I think the only expectation is that
1064 we were going to—We felt unbeatable. And um, and they came with everything they had.
1065
1066 J.B.:
1067 Did that—what was the emotion that—that sort of conjured in you as—as it was happening?
1068
1069 M.P.:
1070 The emotion that—the emotion right then was painful and hurtful and how can this be and all of
1071 that, um, but, you mature and you realize that’s how it is. [chuckle]
1072
1073 J.B.:
1074 Was your impulse—you know—I know some people ran and others engaged and fought back.
1075 Was your impulse to go in one direction or another or was it just pure chaos?
1076
1077 M.P.:
1078 I think to fight back was probably, is my nature. S o I think that was my nature to fight back.
1079 But it was also made me step back and say damn! This thing is bigger than I thought.
1080
1081 J.B.:
1082 What happened after you got hit? Do you need a moment by the way?
1083
1084 M.P.:
1085 Pardon?
1086
1087 J.B.:
1088 Do you need just a moment?
1089
1090 M.P.:
1091 No, I’m just trying to—if you can hang on for one quick second. I am—I am probably going to
1092 have to be done in about twenty minutes because Spike Lee is on his way over here to talk to me
1093 so.
1094
1095 J.B.:
1096 Oh sure. Is that for “Chiraq?”
1097
1098 M.P.:

1099 Yeah. Yeah.
1100
1101 J.B.:
1102 Cool. Very cool.
1103
1104 [sounds of phone and walking around]
1105 We're doing pretty well. I'm going to try and get us through the rest of the Democratic National
1106 Convention. If we do run out of time I did want to ask a little bit about Martin Luther King's
1107 assassination. Is there maybe some way that we can talk at some further point or something like
1108 that?
1109
1110 M.P.:
1111 Yeah, it's just uh, my thing is just my life is like—I've got a funeral tonight. I've got two
1112 meetings before the funeral. [to Corey on phone] Corey, when Spike gets here, let me know,
1113 okay? They should be coming here for me.
1114
1115 Corey on phone:
1116 Okay. [faint talk]
1117
1118 M.P.:
1119 [to Corey] Yeah, they just—did they call you?
1120
1121 Corey:
1122 [faint]
1123
1124 M.P.:
1125 Okay, just let me know. She said she's about fifteen minutes out. Okay. Thanks.
1126
1127 J.B.:
1128 Okay Well, let's uh—you have fifteen minutes?
1129
1130 M.P.:
1131 Uh huh.
1132
1133 J.B.:
1134 Do you need any time further than that?
1135
1136 M.P.:
1137 No. No.
1138
1139 J.B.:
1140 Okay, let's just—
1141
1142 M.P.:
1143 I think—when they get here. Depending on if they get here in fifteen minutes or less.
1144

1145 J.B.:
1146 Or not. Yeah. Okay, so you told me uh, we really did get into the story there and I'm sorry, we
1147 got a little bit distracted. [pause to think] Oh, oh, what happened after you got hit in the head.
1148

1149 M.P.:
1150 Uh, uh, I mean, they pushed us back so that it became, at that point, I mean, people running.
1151 You know I was running to get out of there. I'm not one to sit there and enjoy pain, so I was part
1152 of the running. Then we regrouped over in another area, but um, um, I'd say it was a—the
1153 physical pain was secondary to the emotional pain that it was this awakening for me this system
1154 is not about to be transformed or changed by a group of people who say they're going to change
1155 it. And they wanted to make it clear. It was violent. It was angry. It was power at—at just
1156 demonstration of power at its—at it's best. So, it took some time sucking all that in and
1157 processing it.
1158

1159 J.B.:
1160 Walking away from—how, how did you expect the war to end at that point?
1161

1162 M.P.:
1163 I think I really expected it to end how it did end. By people in this country putting enough
1164 pressure on the government to say no. And the political pressure—I believed that then. I believe
1165 that today. You know, I don't believe there is anything that we can't change. I just believe we
1166 lack the will and the endurance to do it. you know, I watched the same thing happen when we
1167 fought hard against apartheid and pressuring to do economic um, um, (pounds his fist twice),
1168 economic way to do in South Africa to stop the trades and the rest, I mean, economic sanctions.
1169 Um, so I believe government can be changed by the power of the people. I just think we no
1170 longer seek to do it. But I think we're now too divided to be united around a common target. So,
1171 that's my problem.
1172

1173 J.B.:
1174 Did you know that members of the church were involved with the protest and—and being
1175 attacked by police officers?
1176

1177 M.P.:
1178 The church I was at at the time? Not really—
1179

1180 J.B.:
1181 —Or just in general, the religious leaders?
1182

1183 M.P.:
1184 I was doing that more, not so much with Precious Blood. I was doing that more with Loyola
1185 University. So, um the racial and the Black Panther stuff was there. And the anti-war, Vietnam
1186 war stuff was more, I was tied into with Loyola University and Northwestern University. So, um
1187 they were not as connected.
1188

1189 J.B.:
1190 (cell phone buzz) Oop.

1191
1192 M.P.:
1193 Yeah, so I um, the—the—the war thing was parallel to it, but not integrated with.
1194
1195 J.B.:
1196 I feel like you did address this already to a certain extent, but how do you feel like, 1968 as a
1197 year with Martin Luther King's death and uh, Bobby Kennedy being shot and the demo—you
1198 know, being there first hand with the protest, how do you feel that affected you going forward?
1199
1200 M.P.:
1201 I think it affected me a couple ways. One is it um, it—it made me realize how serious this was
1202 and taught me at an early age if you're not willing to pay the price of this don't get in it. But also,
1203 um, the—the necessity to be rooted in it. It pulled me more into King (buzz) 'cause I realize
1204 when I was in the, with the Loyola University students, it was a different, different, um,
1205 connection, um, then, um, uh, the King spiritual thing. So, it was um, (phone hitting table) I
1206 realize that you better have something bigger than you that you were rooted in to deal with this
1207 stuff.
1208
1209 (knock on door)
1210
1211 M.P.:
1212 Yeah, come in.
1213
1214 Corey:
1215 They just went in to the front doors.
1216
1217 J.B.:
1218 Okay.
1219
1220 M.P.:
1221 They just came—they went in the front door of the church?
1222
1223 Corey:
1224 Uh huh.
1225
1226 M.P.:
1227 Okay.
1228
1229 Corey:
1230 Someone just went to let them in.
1231
1232 M.P.:
1233 Okay.
1234
1235 J.B.:
1236 Well, that's it. Yes. Thank you so much.

1237
1238 M.P.:
1239 Thank you so much. Um, I've got a crazy life.
1240
1241 J.B.:
1242 Don't—don't worry about it. If I could just maybe ans—if you could answer this as we walk or
1243 something—what do you want from your congregation?
1244
1245 M.P.:
1246 I want to create a congregation of leaders who are agents of change. That realize that their job is
1247 to change society wherever they're at every day.
1248
1249 J.B.:
1250 Alright Michael Pflieger, Reverend.
1251
1252 M.P.:
1253 Thank you very much, sir. I appreciate it.
1254
1255 J.B.:
1256 It's an honor and a pleasure. Thank you so much.
1257
1258 M.P.:
1259 Oh! It was mine. Thank you very much.
1260
1261 J.B.:
1262 You, as well.
1263
1264 [End of interview]