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Interview with George Schmidt

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1 **FILE STE-000**

2 MELENA NICHOLSON: Alright, so, my name is Melena Nicholson, with Columbia College
3 and this is George Schmidt. Today is Friday, April 16 and we are at the Burgundy Restaurant,
4 here in Chicago and – what was your years of activism, probably, about –

5 GEORGE SCHMIDT: Probably, uh the most focused was between 1975 and the late 1980's. I
6 was part of a lot of other things I was doing. By 1975 I had been active in what was called the
7 GI movement and military counseling for almost seven years. And in 1975 we started the
8 teachers news paper, Substance, after some of us came back teaching in Chicago Public Schools.
9 Um, after the end of the Vietnam War a large number of us continued doing other types of anti-
10 imperialist work and one of the most dramatic examples of white western imperialism on the
11 planet was apartheid in South Africa, along with the other white supremacists governments in the
12 Southern part of Africa. We also worked with uh, ZANU [Zimbabwe African National Union],
13 one of the two liberation groups in Zimbabwe which at that time was called Rhodesia. And we
14 worked with people in Angola, Mozambique, and few other places in that part of the world. But
15 it grew out of the way in which we came together as a movement as a result of the Vietnam War
16 and the experiences of a lot of people. Especially working class Americans, black and white, uh,
17 in the face in that imperialist monstrosity. So, I'd say roughly from 1975 to the late 80's
18 overlapping from the end of the GI movement and from the time Substance became very viable
19 in the Chicago Public Schools I was also doing these other, other activities. It wasn't limited to
20 Africa. And probably in 1979 we hosted a teacher from El Salvador who was part of the
21 resistance there in a, uh, couple of events against the tyranny in El Salvador at the time. At that
22 point for example, just the memory has uh, over 200 teachers have been murdered at their desk
23 spots in El Salvador, um, it was imperative Regan's uh, and the Jimmy Carter, in the beginning
24 of Reagan's counter revolution. But, um, we focused on, Substance focused on the anti-apartheid
25 divestiture movement, because the Chicago's teacher's pension fund is one of the largest pension
26 funds in, in the mid-west. And there were investments that were made in those days through the
27 pension fund that were in corporations that were doing business in South Africa. So, we were
28 part of the group with the Chicago's Teachers Union that demanded that our trustees on the
29 pension fund oppose them, and it required a couple different layers of work. The first would be
30 just identifying companies that actually had direct corporate activities in South Africa, like
31 factories –

32 MN: Right.

33 GS: -- or direct investments. But then the other kind was the indirect activities, you know, where
34 they were in some kind of supply train. I think we are going to have to go someplace else and I
35 know where if you want to?

36 MN: Uh, yeah. I'm just going to stop the tape real quick.

37 GS: Okay.

38

39 **FILE STE-001**

40 GS: And we are taking advantage of the fact that it is a beautiful spring day.

41 MN: Yes we are. We are outside here. Okay and we're just going to start this tape over. So, my
42 name is Melena Nicholson from Columbia College. And this is – I'm here with George Schmidt.
43 And that's George N. Schmidt?

44 GS: N. yeah, for Neil, N-E-I-L, and Schmidt, the usual way, S-C-H-M-I-D-T.

45 MN: Kay. Today's April 16, 2010. And we are at his home on the front porch.

46 GS: Yeah, this is the home and this is also the office of Substance.

47 MN: (laughs) Home and office of Substance. And your years of anti-apartheid activism?

48 GS: I'd say roughly 1975 to 19 – late 1980's.

49 MN: Okay and when were you born?

50 GS: I was born in 1946.

51 MN: Where?

52 GS: Uh, Elizabeth New Jersey.

53 MN: And where were you raised?

54 GS: I was raised in Elizabeth, Lyndon, and Newark, New Jersey. Uh, I went to college in 1964,
55 and came to college in Chicago in 1966 at the University of Chicago. And I have been here ever
56 since.

57 MN: Kay, and your father's place of birth?

58 GS: My father was born Elizabeth, New Jersey.

59 MN: And, when was he born?

60 GS: He was born in 1917.

61 MN: And where was your mother born?

62 GS: My mother was uh, from Elizabeth, New Jersey and she was born in 1919.

63 MN: Okay, and what's your earliest memory?

64 GS: [Gives a look]

65 MN: (laughs)

66 GS: Um, my memories don't begin until high school.

67 MN: Really?

68 GS: Yeah, my mother was in the army during World War II and she had a real bad war. She was
69 stationed on Okinawa during the entire battle. So she came home with what we now call post
70 traumatic stress disorder. And it affected our family life. Although, it wasn't articulated at the

71 time, but part of the problem I later realized she had was uh, she was a nurse in the first field
72 hospital on the Okinawa Island, during the entire battle from April through August, September,
73 1945. And no one was crediting – this is pretty important for our family history too – no one was
74 crediting woman with having been in combat, at that time in history. You know, now there are
75 woman who experience combat in the United States Armed forces, but a nurse in a field hospital,
76 she was in the evacuation hospital. So [she saw] more of the actual results of combat than
77 almost anybody else. And she did it for six months, so she came back a little bit – She was a
78 good mother and did good things but there were few instances in our childhood when my – I
79 didn't have childhood memories. Probably you know we went to the swimming pool with her
80 and stuff, but, uh, my memories begin after about 8th grade. Just like going to high school, trying
81 to play baseball and work for a living, those usual things. Um –

82 MN: So, you didn't–

83 GS: that's it –

84 MN: – see much of your mother before that?

85 GS: Oh I saw her all the time.

86 MN: Okay

87 GS: She was around, uh; she just slowly had greater and greater problems.

88 MN: Okay

89 GS: You know between, uh, I mean I was the first of four children. My mom and dad were in –
90 my dad was in the army before Pearl Harbor. He was part of the 1940 draft and, um, so they
91 traveled around the country, where he was garrison during most of World War II because he was
92 already a trained soldier. And, they put off having children even though they had this wonderful
93 love and had this wonderful love up to 1940. They put off having children because they didn't
94 think they'd both come back from the war. But when they did, they got right to work so I was
95 born, like, ten months after they were reunited.

96 MN: Okay

97 GS: My Dad was – ended his war in Europe in June 1945 in Austria, and then was back in the
98 United States by the summer, and they were planning to send him to, to the Pacific for the
99 invasion of Japan. The Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings ended that necessity, so he
100 was – he waited in New Jersey for my mom to get home, but my mom was on the other side of
101 the Pacific Ocean in Okinawa and she didn't get home for an extra four months. There was like a
102 traffic jam in the middle of the Pacific. And also, I found out later the United States Government
103 was trying to maneuver, uh, American soldiers into China. But there were huge protests against
104 that in the Philippines, and Burma, and India and other places where US soldiers were stationed.
105 But if some parts of American ruling class had had their way the United States would have been
106 at war with the communists in China and with the Soviet Union by the end of 1945. Instead, you
107 know everybody got home, because they said, okay we beat the Japa– the empire of Japan, we
108 beat the Nazis. Let's all get home. So my parents had to wait though a few months. They got

109 back in December 1945 and I was born in September 1946. They stored it all up. They had three
110 other kids after that.

111 MN: So you're the oldest?

112 GS: Great love story. Yeah, I'm the oldest of four.

113 MN: Okay. What, what sort of rules did they have for you? You know, growing up.

114 GS: I think the most important rule they had was, be honest, and don't be prejudice, except
115 against the Japanese.

116 MN: (laughs)

117 GS: My mother had seen too much of what Japanese militarism did –

118 MN: Yeah.

119 GS: -- on Okinawa. And, um, you know she would, she would literally, she would discipline you
120 if you were any kind of racist about black people in the United States or any stuff like that. But,
121 she, she considered the Japanese just a special kind of horrible people because of the war in the
122 Pacific.

123 MN: Did she ever change her mind?

124 GS: No.

125 MN: No.

126 GS: Um –

127 MN: Did that, I mean you got around that –

128 GS: Well, yeah, but, it's a generational thing, you know, I didn't see what she had to see but, in –
129 for example in the stories from the field hospitals where the American nurses and doctors had to
130 treat first the American wounded the Okinawans, then the Japanese. The Okinawans are a
131 separate people from Japan and they were colonized by Japan and they were treated as an
132 inferior race by the Japanese. Well, some of the Japanese soldiers who were brought in wounded
133 actually blew up the nurses who were trying to – you know, they'd come in on a gurney with a
134 hand grenade underneath them, when you turned them over the hand grenade underneath them
135 would explode. Because they were trained to never surrender.

136 MN: And, did your mom –

137 GS: My mom knew that kind of stuff, had stories about that kind of stuff, and had seen it. Um,
138 you know the history of the battle of Okinawa is just being told now in that new HBO series the
139 Pacific. Because the Okinawa was the end of the line and that's where the United States decided
140 if there was going to be an invasion there would be a million casualties, because the Japanese on
141 Okinawa were so fanatical. There were two instances that stood out that I was told about. One
142 the Japanese elementary school teachers had their kids as young as third grade age, prepare
143 bamboo spears which they used to charge the American infantry lines at sunset one day. The

144 Americans had to machine gun eight and nine year olds who were coming at them with these
145 sharpened sticks. The other one was that the Japanese nurses and other Japanese civilians on the
146 island actually committed suicide by jumping off a cliff on the end of the island with their own
147 children and families. Rather than surrender to the United States.

148 MN: Wow.

149 GS: So, you know, the horror of what was sort of there, we weren't getting a lot of it from my
150 mother. My dad was in the 44th infantry division, and his war he told me later during Vietnam,
151 that they were in the line, longer, more days in the European war than any other division in the
152 United States Army. And the line is that – they call it the thin red line, because it goes all the
153 way back to ancient history, it's the place where all the blood and horror takes place in a war.

154 MN: Yeah.

155 GS: You know the – I meant the war is just a big, a big push of, you know, you push a bunch of
156 people forward until they come up against each other and then they do all this horrible stuff.
157 Whether it's the Iliad and the Odyssey or World War II or today in Afghanistan and all the blood
158 is in that thin red line. And that's where he and his people he was with, in the infantry, uh, were
159 in France, Germany and Austria, they were in the – he said they were in the line for two-hundred
160 and forty-four days. Anybody who said that, who knew what that meant assumed he was
161 knowledgeable. But I use to ask him how he got a, he got a bronze star for how he was in a
162 combat. He was only an enlisted man. He was a sergeant. And I kept asking him when I was a
163 kid, you know, because that's pretty cool that you were a hero, somebody gave you this medal
164 for doing something heroic. And we were raised during the John Wayne years. But he always
165 discouraged that. He said, he never would tell us what, what happened. He just said one night I
166 got lost and I got very lucky. He brought home two German bayonets and he never told me how
167 he got them.

168 MN: Never?

169 GS: But one of his brothers told me he took them off the people that were carrying them. And in
170 order to take those you probably had to kill the person who was holding them. But he never
171 talked about that. And then later when he was very old, he blew his top one time. He always
172 really said how you had to be very accurate about history.

173 MN: Yeah.

174 GS: And there was a story in the New York Times about how this, uh, black, uh, regiment in
175 Europe had liberated one of those smaller Nazi death camps in Southern Germany. And, uh, you
176 know, that there was this whole to-do in the 1990's about how the history wasn't you know
177 getting told. And a bunch of people said that they were in – and I, you know, he said that's not
178 true, your generation is messing up the whole history. And I said how do you know it's not true.
179 And he said, because I drove the first Jeep that went into that place with the 114th regiment, of
180 the 44th division, because that day I was driving the Kernel in command of the regiment. And I
181 said, so you were the first American into this death camp. And he said yes. And I said what do
182 you remember about it most? He said the smell; the smell and the silence. And you know, he was
183 finally talking about something at the end of his life that was actually a part of his war. And I
184 said why didn't you ever tell me or the rest of the family this story before? He was like seventy-

185 four years old. And he said, because there's some evil that words can't describe. And then he
186 stopped. And, and he said just make sure when you do – when somebody tries to tell you what
187 the history is you always try to be as honest as possible about it.

188 MN: right.

189 GS: Because they'll be people who come around and they'll be sure to tell you all kinds of bull
190 shit and he did use words like bull shit, although he never used the F word after he got out of the
191 army he told me. So that's, that's where we came from and that's how they trained us. And I
192 remember one instance, that uh, in 1952 or '53, we got our first television.

193 MN: Yeah.

194 GS: And we had one of the first T.V.'s. It was one of those old black and white things. It was
195 about ten inches, on the side. And he and his buddies, he use to work in the post office after the
196 war, they use to come over to watch baseball. And we were in Northern New Jersey, so we'd get
197 all three New York teams. There were the Dodgers, Giants and Yankees and he was a Yankee
198 fan, but we watched the Dodgers. And Jackie Robinson was playing for the Dodgers.

199 MN: Yeah.

200 GS: The Yankees still didn't have any black players in the early 50's. And, and I remember
201 watching a game with him and some of these men that he had been in the war with and stuff.
202 And this one guy started cheering Jackie Robinson when he was stealing a base and heading for
203 home. He says go black jack, boy can that nigger run. You know, in our living room and my
204 father just looked at me and grabbed me, because he had done you know, this whole thing with
205 us and never used that word and never talked that way. And later I said, what's with this? And he
206 said, you know, these are good men and they're brave men but they're never going to understand
207 about this. That's pretty cool way to grow up.

208 MN: So –

209 GS: (laughs)

210 MN: -- you would say your parents had a lot of influence on you growing up.

211 GS: Yeah. I mean in fact if, uh, if we used the F word, they would immediately discipline us in
212 the old fashion way. And we would never think about calling the Department of Family Services.
213 I mean I learned it by playing at a construction site one day, and came home, and I'd never forget
214 this. This is a memory from probably elementary school. I just said it at dinner and my mother
215 took the mash potatoes, which were pretty hot and pushed them in my face.

216 MN: Oh, no (laughing).

217 GS: ___(??)Don't ever say that word again. And later my dad told me, that word is so loaded it's
218 a word of violence, it's a word that you hear too much.

219 MN: This is the F word?

220 [Noise from a plane going over head]

221 GS: Yeah, the F word and war. It's loaded with violence. It's different from all the other words.
222 And, and it's true. Um, so they taught us that. They taught us that prejudice was a horrible thing,
223 unless you hated the Japanese because of what they did not because of who they were. Well that
224 was my mother. My father always told me my mother was a lovely person, but that was, that was
225 different. You know, she had seen what the Japanese did. Well he couldn't hate the Germans
226 because he was a German- American third generation. His father had been a Nazi of sorts. In
227 northern New Jersey and New York, in that part of the United States a lot of the Germans
228 supported Hitler in those days. But my dad and his whole generation opposed the Nazis.

229 MN: yeah.

230 GS: So it was that kind of complicated nuanced reality that you had to be honest about. It was a
231 good way to learn.

232 MN: And – as you grew up, did the rules ever change? I mean, when did you –

233 GS: Not –

234 MN: When did you parents start telling you more about their experiences?

235 GS: Well, my mother – as my mother unraveled more, she started going into delusions,
236 mysticisms, and hard core Catholic visions. And I didn't experience it as much as my siblings.
237 Because I just sort of tuned it out after a couple of traumatic experiences with her. But uh, she
238 was always interpreting it symbolically, from the view of the Bible. So it got less and less
239 connected to reality. And I had to ask other people what the reality was because the only thing
240 you could be sure of, for that generation was if you talked about the war and asked questions
241 honestly, like you wanted honest answers. There were, there were just certain places where,
242 people would you know, they would cringe, you know if you just said the word. One of them
243 was Bastogne, anybody who was actually there for the so-called Battle of the Bulge, never was
244 able to get warm again during cold weather. Because it was so cold, and there was so much
245 death. Um, that was winter of 1944, '45. Another was Okinawa. Uh, another was Guadalcanal
246 Some of the Pacific islands that was just so horrifying, that anybody who was actually there,
247 actually on the island was considered like special, you know, that they were still alive, and that
248 they had been there. And so my, you know when I talked to people I'd ask them, you know my
249 mother was on Okinawa. And they'd say she couldn't have been. I said yes, she was with the
250 evacuation hospital. And they'd say, oh, shit. That's right. Um, and there was, there was a signal
251 thing about that. That indicates sort of the complexity of all this stuff. I don't think my mother
252 ever went to the washroom after dark, in her life, without somebody with her. She would instead
253 use some sort of device if she had to; because I was told on the island the nurses, there were so
254 few white woman on the island. They were all nurses and they were all in the same place. If they
255 went out after dark, they'd probably be raped, by the American soldiers. Because the American
256 soldiers knew they were going to be dead the next day. So everybody was kind of crazy. So you
257 either had somebody who was going to be your carrying a gun friend.

258 MN: uh-huh

259 GS: Or you held it all night. That's one of the experiences of Okinawa. That was probably
260 unique and transferred into our family. But we were taught by all of them that war was horrible,
261 at the same time it's necessary.

262 MN: Yeah.

263 GS: If the United States didn't defeat Nazi-Germany and the empire of Japan, the world would
264 have been a lot worse, even though the American empire has got some pretty nasty quarters. But
265 that's the complexity of the last hundred years.

266 MN: Now you mentioned, uh, Catholics, Cath – Catholics, your mother was Catholic?

267 GS: My mother was Catholic, we were raised Catholics.

268 MN: Okay. And what, what role do you think that had on you?

269 GS: Well, when it got sorted out, the you know, the Catholic Church, in the 1960's, really went
270 through some changes, and a lot of the priests and nuns that I knew I suspect they wound up ex-
271 priests and nuns, by the 70's. But I was out of the church by then. Um, you know, that was
272 Vatican too, and the whole idea of the social gospel. The whole thing that the current Nazi Pope,
273 you know he was fighting against from the time he became the head of the thing for the
274 protection of the faith, [sounds from trucks moving on the street near us] Ratzinger, was a real, a
275 real nasty person the whole time. But, that um, side of catholic theology, liberation theology in
276 South America, um, you know social gospel in the United States, and all that stuff was real
277 present. And like, like in Faust, where Faust, Joseph Faust, talks about two souls or in my own
278 breast, you know one's pulling toward the heavens the other, the other to the darkest side of
279 reality. Well that's what the Catholic Church went through. Now the Catholic Church has a pope
280 I guessed it earned after twenty-five years of clawing its way back up to dismal reaction. Um, but
281 the side that I respected as I was leaving belief, um was the side of these people who were social
282 activists, who were really committed to the, to you know, to trying to establish justice and work
283 for justice. A lot of them were either ex-communicated or silenced. You know the theologians
284 who wrote it the priests who did it in South America. The most traumatic is like – Arch Bishop
285 Romero in El Salvador was murdered by the right wingers. But there were hundreds and
286 thousands of others in the clergy and elsewhere you got to respect incredible (??). But by mid
287 1960's I couldn't, I couldn't devote any interest in the church it was just, it was too messed up
288 and it was easier and better to just move forward and on those things, and respect the people who
289 were doing it from the point of view of religion.

290 MN: Right. So uh, how did you get exposed to things like social – socialism and – was it your
291 parents or school? Or –

292 GS: All of the above. I mean our parents encouraged us to read a lot.

293 MN: Okay.

294 GS: And um, you know, my dad especially, and I don't know how he did this but, he, he had
295 studied every war I ever wanted to know about. Uh [there] was a legend in our family that he
296 had the highest IQ in the 114th infantry regiment, which could be true, I don't know, whether it
297 matters because he was a working class guy.

298 MN: yeah.

299 GS: And he taught you also that, that doesn't do you any good unless you have a lot of money.

300 MN: Yeah.

301 GS: SO he couldn't go to college but he had insisted that we read all the time and try to come to
 302 terms with that and he'd talk about it. And he really focused on the Holocaust. But it wasn't
 303 called the Holocaust back then. You know, he had seen it first hand, but it didn't have a name
 304 until the 60's. And he was just sort of moving into saying try to figure out how a country as
 305 civilized as Germany could do that, because if you can understand that paradox, you'll know it's
 306 always going to be hard to do good, to do the right thing. And then in the 60's when I got to
 307 Chicago one of my, uh, apartments, I had three roommates who were Zionists. Um, and I was
 308 officiated but we got along fine. But all of them had a copy of the book, that is now famous, it
 309 just got written up again in the nation, Raul Hilberg's, *The Destruction of the European Jews*.
 310 That was the book that actually first articulated the history of the Holocaust, and the
 311 meticulousness which with government had created that roads to those camps my father had
 312 driven into in 1945. And uh, I read that. And you know people talked about it. And these guys,
 313 one of them is a professor in Tel Aviv now, in Israel, we haven't been in touch now in years,
 314 because you know I swung way over to the left and you can't be a Zionist professor and have too
 315 many of the friends who do the things I do. But he's a, we got in touch once, and we don't even
 316 talk about it. That generation decided that never again would Jews be unarmed, and just do what
 317 Hilberg, and Hannah Arendt and other people said happened, you know, was just going quietly
 318 you know, to annihilation. And at least I can understand Israel, even when I disagree with it
 319 because of that. Um, but my dad was the one who encouraged us to think through all that stuff.
 320 He also made it impossible for us to, to be pacifists.

321 MN: Yeah.

322 GS: And that caused me an interesting problem because by the time I was confronting Vietnam I
 323 had a student deferment. And I decided I was going to apply for conscientious objector but I
 324 wasn't a Pacifist. Well, I had to explain that to my draft board down in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

325 MN: (laugh)

326 GS: You know because a conscientious objector usually is supposed to be a Pacifist. And so I
 327 went. We had a long conversation. Then the draft board basically said okay, you're a
 328 conscientious objector. But, the reason was, I was the first one Elizabeth, New Jersey. Uh, it
 329 wasn't like Hadeshberry (??), or Berkeley, or probably Harvard Yard, where you could just sort
 330 of do that and everybody'd understood. Everybody at my draft board knew my father, my
 331 mother, or one of my uncles. If you go to Elizabeth, New Jersey – are you in? [Looking down to
 332 the recorder] no? Are you in? You good? –

333 MN: Yeah.

334 GS: If you go to Elizabeth, New Jersey and you go to the old St. Michael's School, which is
 335 what they call down the port off U.S. Highway One between Highway One and the turn pike.
 336 Um, the St. Michal's Church across the street is the school, and in front of the school, which isn't
 337 a school anymore, there's a plaque, [with] the names of everybody who served in World War II,
 338 the largest number is Schmidt's, including my mother.

339 MN: Really?

340 GS: So, you know it's like, well it's hard – hard core Germans but they all fought against
341 Nazism. And so everybody on the draft board knew everybody in my family and their big
342 question was how did you become a commie? I says, well I'm not quite a communist, but yeah I
343 got to tell you this Vietnam War, no. So we had a two hour discussion about the Vietnam War,
344 and then they said – You know they were actually reading the regulations, because I was the first
345 person to apply for C.O. status. And I'm sitting there with all these World War II veterans and
346 government bureaucrats on the draft board; everybody had to go through the draft in those days.
347 And they said to me, Okay, okay we'll take you on your version that you can be a conscientious
348 objector even though you would have probably fought like your father did in World War II. I
349 said you know, Vietnam is my existential moment about it. And they said okay now, given that,
350 do you want to be a non-combatant military service or do you want to be a civilian alternative
351 service? – Because there were two categories. And I said I don't care. I'm just not going to kill
352 anybody for this war. Because the issue my parents taught me was, you go in the army you're
353 going to wind up killing people, especially in the infantry and that's what you're doing. So the
354 war better be a good idea because killing people is pretty–

355 MN: Right.

356 GS: Something you have to think through, not just, well you know. They said you mean you'd
357 go in the army even if you felt this. I said, yeah, but I wouldn't carry a weapon or kill people.

358 MN: (laugh)

359 GS: They said wait a minute. You've got all these objections about the war but you want us to
360 put you in the army so you can – you – you're not going to shut up are you? I said no. they said
361 okay you can do civilian alternative service. We are having enough of a time figuring out how
362 we got you in the first place. The last thing we want to do is put you in the army and have you
363 come back home here. So that's how it happened. But those, you know there were more cities
364 like Elizabeth, New Jersey, than there were places where the anti-war movement was a
365 comfortable way to get, you know, to get around.

366 MN: So what did you do in the Civilian S –?

367 GS: I didn't. I was teaching high school in Chicago. They called me for alternative service, and
368 they told me to report to a uh, a mental hospital in Southern New Jersey –

369 MN: Uh-huh.

370 GS: – where I'd become an orderly and I wrote them back and I said, I'm teaching at DuSable,
371 one of the most segregated and impoverished high schools in the world. You know, it was right
372 next to the old Robert's ____ (??). And I'd like you to tell me how this can't be the acceptable
373 alternative service as a, you know, as a, civilian activity. And then they were suppose to get back
374 to me on it, you know, I got one letter back saying, we are considering your thing, and I sent
375 them pictures of DuSable.

376 MN: Uh-huh.

377 GS: It was a hundred percent black, a hundred percent poor kids. They all lived in the housing
 378 projects, the famous housing projects. And then uh, uh somebody burned down the draft board.
 379 That—

380 MN: What?

381 GS: That draft board was attacked during the anti-war movement. The anti-war movement
 382 escalated into the 70's.

383 MN: Yeah.

384 GS: And that was one of the draft boards that was, uh, burned. (Laughs)

385 MN: Burned? By – by who?

386 GS: I think it was done by one of the Berrigans. Those priests, those radical catholic priests and
 387 nuns. It took place in probably in 1971 right when I was having a debate, maybe, no it would
 388 have been '69, '70.

389 MN: And why, why did they burn it down?

390 GS: They were burning down any draft board they could get to before they were arrested and put
 391 in prison.

392 MN: Okay.

393 GS: I mean people were attacking government buildings. Uh, you know the weatherman was just
 394 this uh, crazy upper middle class version of the same thing. But the people went after the draft
 395 boards. They saw the draft boards, especially in working classes places like Elizabeth, New
 396 Jersey as the funnel within which working class men were sprayed into uniform.

397 MN: Uh-huh.

398 GS: So they did uh, I remember there was a draft board in Catonsville, Maryland where these
 399 radical Catholics went in and they took he records out of the draft board, they just walked in and
 400 started pulling files out, and they took them outside and poured blood on them and they all got
 401 arrested for that. And there was a local board number forty-two, I think was my board, in
 402 Elizabeth, New Jersey somebody just burned it.

403 MN: So then you stayed teaching?

404 GS: I kept teaching. I never heard from them again. And then a few years later the, the army
 405 records center in St. Louis got burned. So I think the army lost a lot of its permanent records of
 406 its whole history. I mean there was a lot of stuff going on in those days. I wasn't part of it but,
 407 you know, I never heard from them again and nobody said come back. Uh, but I have a draft
 408 card. Because they used to – they stamped my draft card with you know the draft categories were
 409 1-A if you were eligible for the draft. There was another category if you had served in the
 410 military and then come out, and then conscientious subject or civilian alternative services, 1-O.
 411 And usually it was a little, bitty, you know, type on a line. They stamped mine in one-and-a-half
 412 inch letters; 1 – O. In red.

413 MN: (laughs)

414 GS: And I don't know whether they had a special stamp made, but –

415 MN: (laughing) just for you? (Mumbles)

416 GS: I don't know, (mumbles) they hadn't had anyone before that.

417 MN: Okay.

418 GS: So they had to figure out something. But I still have the card. I, I share it with people
419 because, you know, when people talk about how, you know, the whole Reagan, post-Reagan,
420 brainwash about how the whole 60's thing was a crazy, hippie, drug-addicts.

421 MN: Right.

422 GS: Self-indulge – I mean, we ended the draft.

423 MN: Yeah.

424 GS: Otherwise kids would face what my generation faced coming out of high school in 1964.
425 You either went into the army or you went into college, or you got a medical deferment and
426 people called you coward for having one.

427 MN: So, after high school you went to University of Chicago –

428 GS: I went through S – a place called St. Vincent College, because they gave me a full
429 scholarship.

430 MN: Okay

431 GS: I think they had a hunch they might still make me into a priest, but that wasn't going to
432 happen.

433 MN: Okay.

434 GS: And then I transferred out of there after two years, because it was kind of scary –

435 MN: Out of St. Vincent?

436 GS: Out of St. Vincent. And the University of Chicago was the only place that would pick me up
437 with a scholarship.

438 MN: And what did you study there?

439 GS: The University of Chicago?

440 MN: Yeah.

441 GS: I had to pick up what I had credits for already. So I finally got a degree in, it was called
442 English and Humanities, in 1969.

443 MN: And –

444 GS: And I spent a lot of my time there either working and trying to survive and – pretty quickly
445 organizing against the war.

446 MN: Uh –

447 GS: Because my friends from high school were all in the military and one was already dead. One
448 was the POW, one was dead, and that's what happened to you if you didn't get into college. Um,
449 so I had some time to think about it and I decided, I was going to have to do something about the
450 war and not just talk about it.

451 MN: So what, what kind of activities did you do in college at –

452 GS: We started doing what became known as military counseling and GI organizing. Those were
453 two separate things. Military counseling was legal counseling for soldiers who had problems
454 with the military. Some of it was for guys who had actually been in combat or who were facing
455 combat, who decided they were actually conscientious objectors. And it's pretty amazing, but
456 one of the things that will make you into a pacifist is killing a bunch of people.

457 MN: Yeah.

458 GS: And so I counseled a lot of people how to do that. And usually they got – they had a pretty
459 rough time, because they were already in the military, they had already served in combat and
460 done their duty. And then they'd go and they'd say I'm never going to touch a weapon again. I
461 am never going to kill anybody again. And you had to do a lot of paper work, if you were lucky
462 enough to have the time. But by then the anti-war movement and the military was also broader
463 than just that pacifist part. Um, there were men and women all over the world who were
464 organizing against the Vietnam War and, and more broadly against U.S. imperialism,
465 everywhere. I mean the women – the main women's army training camp for example was, uh,
466 Fort McPherson in Aniston, Alabama. And that place was as h – as big a hot bed as anti-war
467 activity by 1970, as the huge U.S. infantry bases, like uh, or the armor base, Killeen, Texas at
468 Fort Hood. And we were going around doing legal training and also helping people put out anti-
469 war propaganda. You know, I was on every military base between the Ohio Valley and the
470 Rocky Mountains during those years.

471 MN: What, what – during what years? The –

472 GS: 1969 to 1975.

473 MN: Okay

474 GS: Maybe as early as '68 but it really tooled up in '69 and we just kept doing it. That's what we
475 did. I substitute taught in Chicago when I was around, I drove a cab, and then we'd just drive to
476 Junction City, Kansas and spend a week with people in Fort Riley. That was the head quarters of
477 the first infantry division. Or one of my favorites was it was scary though, because you could see
478 what was happening. Colorado Springs, um, that's where Iron Mountain is.

479 MN: Okay.

480 GS: I don't know if you've heard about this but during the Cold War that was where the – there's
481 this Iron Mountain and they hollowed it out to be the command post for the U.S. military in the
482 events that America got nuked by the Russians.

483 MN: Okay.

484 GS: Yeah.

485 MN: So you –

486 GS: And, and people were organizing. So, I was out there. We arrived at this – a dress up in the
487 hills near the Garden of the Gods, it was like a farm house, you know, and it supposedly was the
488 G.I. Movement Center. It was all these Vietnam veterans and, and, and other people there and
489 they were the ones doing the organizing putting out an underground paper for Fort Carson. And I
490 got there early in the morning and it looked like there'd been an orgy the night before. There was
491 a bunch of naked people laying around.

492 MN: (laughing) what?

493 GS: Who slowly woke up as I walked in, and they said, oh come – oh we're glad you're here.
494 You know. They sent uh, a bunch of women into town and wearing those big granny dresses
495 from the 60's.

496 MN: Okay.

497 GS: To get dinner. They shop lifted steaks in my honor.

498 MN: Oh!

499 GS: And uh –

500 MN: (laughing) in your honor? And you and uh –

501 GS: I was –

502 MN: - who you were with?

503 GS: I was – yeah, me and my first wife. We were training people how to use the law and how to
504 put out a newspaper.

505 MN: How to put out a newspaper. Okay.

506 GS: Yeah, and um, so they had a big barbeque and we ate, and then they had a tank race in my
507 honor.

508 MN: (laughs)

509 GS: They all got stoned and they pulled a couple of tanks – you know what a – you ever seen a
510 tank?

511 MN: Yeah (laughing)

512 GS: Going down – you’ve seen tanks, right?

513 MN: Yeah, yeah I’ve seen tanks (laughing).

514 GS: Well these are like those old, patent tanks from the 1940’s and they’re rumbling across this,
515 this huge field in front of the Iron Mountain, you know having a race. And all these guys are
516 stoned out of their minds!

517 MN: What?

518 GS: I mean I was allergic to marijuana so I could (stutters) at least get out of that part.

519 MN: (laughs)

520 GS: But, it was like, you know, it was totally – god. People were just so crazy. And that was
521 before Charley Manson did his thing, but this was like the same kind of stuff that the Manson
522 tribe was.

523 MN: And what were –

524 GS: But all these people were armed.

525 MN: Yeah.

526 GS: They were all soldiers.

527 MN: Uhuh.

528 GS: They’d come back from Vietnam. And I don’t know where all these young women came
529 from, but they were all just there too. (Laughs)

530 MN: And, what was their newspaper suppose to be about?

531 GS: It was an anti-war newspaper, published by the G.I.’s of Fort Carson, Colorado against the
532 Vietnam War and for all things beautiful, good and true and including the Black Panthers, you
533 know, Revolution –

534 (Sound of air plane flying over head)

535 MN: Okay.

536 GS: And anti-imperialism. I mean, whatever people, you know, sort of got the word about, they
537 were for, as long as it wasn’t against the other stuff. And you couldn’t just sort of sit down and
538 tell, tell a bunch of soldiers who had been to Vietnam, now let me explain this. So that was what
539 finally had happened to the war. There was all these guys came back from the war they said no,
540 nope, you made me do a lot of heavy shit, but I am never going to do what you want me to do
541 again. How are you going to tell them? I mean they know how to drive tanks, fly helicopters, use
542 every piece of weapon, _____(??) weaponry you’ve trained American young men to do. And
543 they also have it all, you know? I mean, because, anybody who tells you military secures its
544 arsenals very well, I expect these people could have gotten a couple of tanks off that base if they
545 decided to, and just rolled them through Colorado Springs.

546 (Sound of a child's voice, passing by with his mom)

547 MN: (laughing) now, what was this – or the group you were with doing this?

548 GS: The group we were –

549 MN: The teaching –

550 GS: - with in Chicago was called – The teacher group I was with in Chicago became SUBS,

551 MN: SUBS.

552 GS: Substitutes United for Better Schools. Because –

553 MN: Is –

554 GS: I came back into teaching in 1975 and there were no jobs. Reason there were no jobs was all
 555 the guys who didn't want to organize against the Vietnam War, yet didn't really want to take a
 556 stand, went into teaching and got a teaching deferment. It's a whole generation has that story to
 557 account for. Um, so I come back in '75 into teaching and, and I put out a leaflet when I saw the
 558 pay of substitute teachers had been the same since 1969 when I had started, when I left for a
 559 while to do all this G.I. stuff. And so I put out a leaflet and a petition saying, we should get a
 560 raise, because our pay has been frozen for six years. And this guy called me up, and he says I got
 561 to talk to about organizing. So this guy came over and I was in an apartment in Logan Square at
 562 the time. We met in the kitchen, he says, how do you know how to organize anything? I said well
 563 you know I just spent six years organizing soldiers against the war. He says, well how do you
 564 feel about the war? And I said, well you know, sucked in a lot of ways that I couldn't describe,
 565 but I wasn't there, and I told him – He said, well you don't know the half of – you don't know a
 566 hundredth of how bad it was. I said how do you know this? He said, well, I was in First Marines
 567 I Corps.

568 MN: Wow.

569 GS: For thirteen months. I said, oh. Now in those days, if you were in an anti-war activist like
 570 me –

571 MN: Yeah.

572 GS: And you met a marine. Two things were going to happen. Either you were going to be
 573 friends. Or you were going to fight, and then maybe be friends after the fight. We became
 574 friends. He's the god-father of one of my kids –

575 MN: Wow.

576 GS: You know we're still in touch; he's a retired teacher now. His name is Larry McDonald.

577 MN: Larry McDonald?

578 GS: Yeah, he's – he and his wife moved to North Carolina after he retired. Um, but that – we
 579 started SUBS and then we started the newspaper Substance. And that's how Substance got
 580 started.

581 MN: Mokay.

582 GS: And the look of Substance comes from a newspaper, called Vietnam G.I. Because the paper
583 I had apprenticed on and learned how to do a newspaper layout was V.G.I. which was one of the
584 most famous of the anti-war papers. I just helped, because the guys who actually put it out were
585 all Vietnam veterans.

586 MN: Yeah.

587 GS: Who came back from Vietnam and they'd do something like Jeff Charlotte –

588 MN: How did you get onto that?

589 GS: Well there were people in Chicago doing it. And we were in touch through the legal aid
590 work we were doing. Um, but it was a tabloid newspaper. And it, and it specialized in first hand
591 stories of how messed up the war was. Um, and we would be doing the legal aid and sometimes,
592 you know, like I had mentioned to you earlier, I got called for this late night meeting with this
593 guy who had a box of photographs in the first infantry division, including the battle of Black
594 Virgin Mountain. And, um, you know that's how we give the stories. It was this big network, and
595 part of the deal was we were always very discrete. So if there were ten people interested in – Oh
596 man, I think it would be so cool to do G.I. organizing and – There was also a kind of sexiness to
597 it, where everybody was making close interpersonal relationships as fast as you could do it. Um,
598 and we'd say, okay, well we got to get to know you better, because you know there's layers of
599 security you had to be at least aware of, because the bad guys were pretty serious too. So, we did
600 Vietnam G.I. I was mainly in distribution, I would interview people. But one of the funniest
601 parts, was this was a tabloid newspaper, printed in Chicago.

602 MN: Yeah.

603 GS: And it's mostly mailed to Vietnam. And so the question is: How do you mail an anti-war
604 newspaper to soldiers in Vietnam, during the Vietnam War?

605 MN: Yeah.

606 GS: Well, you get a bunch of catholic girls who had that perfect penmanship, and they would
607 address envelopes in their handwriting, and then you'd spray it with that stuff you use to be able
608 to buy in five and dime stores. I called it, you know, Tijuana whore house cologne.

609 MN: (laughs)

610 GS: So you know, then you'd stuff the paper in this thing and seal it and then, you know,
611 somebody would do the big lipstick thing – and so when the letter got to Vietnam, nobody was
612 going to open it except the person to whom it was addressed.

613 MN: Okay

614 GS: Because it was obviously from her. Only it turned out, you open it up and then there is
615 Vietnam G.I.

616 MN: Awe (laughing)

617 GS: And they had thousands of, uh, addresses of soldiers in Vietnam, many of whom had written
618 and said I want to get your newspaper.

619 MN: Now the – the people in Vietnam wrote –

620 GS: Yeah –

621 MN: - and they wanted it.

622 GS: And, and the reason why it was easier was because, all the Vietnam mail went through
623 A.P.O., San Francisco, that's Army Post Office, San Francisco, same zip code and then it was,
624 you know, to be all the unit numbers you know, and the name of the person. It just took a long
625 time to do the mailing.

626 MN: Yeah.

627 GS: Because you couldn't just send it to an automatic mailing shop and have them all get
628 stamped out. I remember we would drive with boxes of these letters and it was stink up the car
629 with that perfume smell. From here to Milwaukee and every time you'd pass a post box you'd
630 drop ten of them in.

631 MN: Okay.

632 GS: So they'd all be postmarked different.

633 MN: Um –

634 GS: That's how, that was –

635 MN: That's how you spread –

636 GS: - one of the many ways how the Vietnam anti-war movement got built inside the army on
637 the ground in Vietnam.

638 MN: That's pretty amazing.

639 GS: I know it is. It just made common sense as soon as you think about it –

640 MN: Yeah.

641 GS: - right down to those lipstick kisses with that cheap lipstick, people would – you know, they
642 still do that. People would kiss mirrors and say I love you in the men's wash room in some high
643 school.

644 MN: (laugh)

645 GS: Um, it's what young people do or did.

646 MN: You mention –

647 GS: But it worked.

648 MN: Yeah. And you mentioned, though, you had the bad guys. You had to go through layers and
649 you had to get person with people. How would you –

650 BS: Yeah. We had – Our group that did the military counseling in Chicago was called CAMP
651 that stood for Chicago Area Military Project. And we published a newsletter trying to summarize
652 the news of the G.I. resistance. And we did legal counseling. Well, at that time the U.S.
653 government held a huge investigation at communist attempts to subvert the armed forces of the
654 United States. They issued a three volume report, because they, the people who were viewing
655 that stuff, thought that there was somebody at a control panel in Moscow pressed a button and
656 you got people like me to be against the Vietnam War, and I was following orders from, you
657 know somebody at the hierarchy in the Soviet communist party. So did this big investigation, but
658 at the same time, they were also always, they were also always trying to infiltrate what we were
659 doing. Now if we are taking a guy who is AWOL from the military, that's Absent Without
660 Official Leave, or a deserter, and we want them – we want to give them legal aid and help him
661 go back. Usually these are guys who had been in combat and decided they were against the war
662 and they didn't know what to do. Well, in the time we were preparing him to go back, getting
663 him a lawyer, maybe getting him some other help, and doing paperwork, you didn't want
664 anybody around who was going to call up the 5th U.S. Army, which was based here in Chicago,
665 and say hey there's a deserter staying at 2418 North Central Park in Chicago.

666 MN: Okay.

667 GS: You know?

668 MN: Yeah.

669 GS: So we use to be careful about who we would let do different things.

670 MN: Did you ever – [get ratted out]

671 GS: Yeah, we did. There was a horrifying one once. One of my jobs was to do the first
672 introductory things. Say you come in and your all smiles and you want to join the revolution and
673 help us overthrow the empire.

674 MN: Okay.

675 GS: And I'd say fine. And we'd talk for a while and I'd ask where you were from, and I'd get
676 your high school and a few other things like your home address, and I'd do the first layer of
677 checks, and I'd make sure you actually did go to that high school and call a few people. Because
678 you know people lie. At some point they start – the lie starts and you can just tell and you'd just
679 say, no thank you.

680 MN: Yeah.

681 GS: Well, the more sophisticated ones, they would have all their lies lined up and they'd be true
682 up to a certain point. So we had a, we had a final step. There would be one or two women, who
683 would hang out with this person, this person was usually a guy, and if they came back and had a
684 bad vibe –

685 MN: Oh, okay.

686 GS: It was a veto. Didn't matter if everything I found out was true. Because there was a way in
687 which, without being sexist, women just have a better radar about, you know, who not to trust.
688 Uh, and, and so this one guy was trying to get to work with us, he really wants to build a
689 revolution he's been a soldier, he knows how to use weapons, and, and two women said, there's
690 something about him we don't like.

691 MN: Yeah.

692 GS: So I told him, I said, you know it's a big movement, we're just – we don't need any help
693 right now. It's one of those employment – we weren't paying anybody.

694 MN: Right.

695 GS: He wants to make the revolution.

696 MN: Did you ever mistakenly take someone? And –

697 GS: Yeah we did. I had a roommate who actually spied on me. Um, but, but this one was the big
698 one, because we told him not to come back and he left Chicago.

699 MN: Okay.

700 GS: He went to Milwaukee and, and started working Vietnam Veterans against the War in
701 Milwaukee. And one night, you know there was a lot of stuff going on everywhere, three
702 Vietnam veterans in Milwaukee decided to fire bomb a grocery store in the black ghetto that was
703 selling bad food to black people. It was part of the thing with the black panthers. Well two of
704 them showed up for the thing and were shot dead. The third one disappeared. The third one I got
705 a call from Milwaukee, they said why didn't you tell us about this guy? I said you should have
706 asked before it was too late. So he was the agent who told the police this thing was going to
707 happen.

708 MN: And that was the guy you guys turned away?

709 GS: That's the guy we turned away because the –

710 MN: Because of the woman?

711 GS: - ladies said – don't feel good about him. I wouldn't want to be alone with this guy.

712 MN: Oh, my gosh.

713 GS: I mean, I mean you know that's why all this computerized stuff only gets you so far.

714 MN: Uhuh.

715 GS: Because there's a reality that, that's still based on human beings understanding reality.

716 MN: Wow.

717 GS: Because I would have never gotten through, you know this guy's last bit of bullshit.

718 MN: Of course, yeah.

719 GS: And everything he told me was true. He had been in Vietnam, (noise from finger tapping the
720 table) he had been with the Unit he was, he had come from a certain place in Kansas, through
721 Minnesota. But they just didn't feel good with him. So that's how we did it. And that was you
722 know, and it didn't always work. I mean somebody could come through. I always said later the
723 best way to do that kind of stuff, send in Grandma.

724 MN: (laugh) if grandma likes him?

725 GS: Black, black dress – no, no. I'm talking about if you want to – if you want to be a bad guy,
726 send in Grandma. You know Grandma could carry a bomb under her, under her long black dress
727 with her cross hanging around her neck and the rosary beads and stuff. She could go anywhere,
728 because nobody's going to frisk Grandma.

729 MN: No. Nowadays some places will.

730 GS: Nowadays they might even at the airport. But –

731 MN: Yeah.

732 GS: But that's where, you know, that moved into the whole so called anti-imperialist movement.
733 And by the mid 70's with the United States moving out of Vietnam, but still being every place
734 on the planet, we uh, we were already trying to do what we could about these things. Like in
735 1973 the U.S. government helped the – Augusto Pinochet and the Chilean military over through
736 the gov – the elected government of Chile. And you know, led to twenty years of fascism, and,
737 and any number of international crimes and atrocities. The, the G.I. movement was aware of that,
738 you know, because there was guys in the U.S. Navy who were suddenly – their ships were
739 sailing into the South Pacific, when the you know, when the imperial war was still going out by
740 the South China sea on the other side of the Pacific Ocean. So they would, you know – they kind
741 of – we don't know what's going on, but we're heading south instead of northwest. They were
742 off the coast of Chile when Pinochet overthrew Allende. This is back up, you know the empire
743 doesn't, doesn't leave as much as it can to chance, even though it's weak at the human level.

744 MN: Uhuh.

745 GS: Um, the entire struggle in southern Africa was incredible in those days. From Angola and
746 Mozambique south – through South Africa you had these colonial and colonial era governments
747 which were totally white supremacist who viciously suppressing black people, who were the
748 majority in all these places. So, in various ways that was part of our agenda by the mid 70's. And
749 then in the late 70's when I came back into teaching and I don't even know how this happened
750 but, we wound up, those of us who had been part of the anti-war movement and the G.I.
751 movement, wound up working with a group called SAMRAF. That stood for South Africa
752 Military Refugee Aid Fund. And SAMRAF was based in, in South Africa and in England and in
753 the United States. And Military Refugee Aid Fund meant that they were raising money to get to
754 – to encourage white men from the South African military to desert from South African Military
755 when they were doing pro-apartheid, anti-national liberation stuff. Like the South African army
756 was, uh, fighting a war in the area called the Caprivi Strip, in the northern area near, Namibia.
757 And so you know, now and then, just like during Vietnam, these guys who spoke with a different
758 accent, but still spoke English would show up in Chicago and Brooklyn. And it was pretty much
759 the same stuff except that the South African security forces were a lot better at what they did

760 than what we were use to. So SAMRAF got, got turned inside out by BOSS. Uh, BOSS was the
761 South African Bureau of State Security. And they actually infiltrated all the way up to the top
762 and then they just, you know, what they call turned it inside out. They turned it into a thing that
763 worked for South Africa, the apartheid government and not for the opposition. That's – I mean
764 one of the funnier stories of that, I mean somewhere if the medical records still exist, there are
765 two me's in terms of dental records.

766 MN: Really?

767 GS: Because this guy shows up in Chicago, and he's got an impacted wisdom tooth. One of the
768 deserters from South Africa –

769 MN: Okay. The military – deserters.

770 GS: Yeah. Military deserter form South Africa. So, I managed to get his dental problems done
771 under my Board of Education dental insurance.

772 MN: Okay.

773 GS: As me. So I hope if anybody tries to identify what's left of me someday by dental records,
774 they don't get the wrong ones, but, it worked. Uh, you know, you can talk about that stuff later,
775 but that's like – it's like the perfume on the, on the letters.

776 MN: Yeah.

777 GS: It's what you do at the time. I mean this guys was definitely a soldier, who had definitely
778 been in Caprivi Strip, definitely been in the South African army and had walked out of the white
779 South African army over to the black enemy.

780 MN: Uhuh.

781 GS: And said I think I'm on your side. I mean that took a lot because a lot of those black people
782 were not well disposed towards white people.

783 MN: Yeah.

784 GS: But then it was a question about how do we get this guy from Namibia to London to
785 Chicago. Now there's some stories.

786 MN: And how – well –

787 GS: I never needed to know.

788 MN: Oh, you never knew?!

789 GS: (Stutters) Well, I did it sometimes from the opposite direction, you know. If you want to get
790 from the United States to Canada –

791 MN: Okay.

792 GS: In 1974. You get an old Ford, and you wear your auto worker clothes, and you drive across
793 the bridge from Detroit to Windsor at rush hour. And who's going to stop you in that flow of
794 traffic?

795 MN: Uhuh.

796 GS: You know the bridge.

797 MN: Yeah, I do.

798 GS: Okay, so know we're in Canada. See how it worked?

799 MN: Yeah (laughs).

800 GS: It was – it was kind of common sense. I mean, unless they were bar dogging and knew –
801 knew your car, and it was on a hot-list.

802 MN: But so to get someone from South Africa –

803 GS: To here? I didn't know. They –

804 MN: They did similar things?

805 GS: I assumed they came through Canada and some part of the British Empire. But he was here.

806 MN: Okay.

807 GS: He was (fumbles words) you know, stayed with us for a while.

808 MN: Prexy actually told us a story about he dressed up as a nun to go across.

809 GS: Okay. Yeah, I could believe that.

810 MN: So, stuff like that?

811 GS: Well, that's – hey, you know there's – right. I mean, everybody I – not everybody I know,
812 but a lot of people had their Roman collar and black jacket and I could never stomach that idea
813 of, you know, I'm a priest –

814 MN: Uhuh.

815 GS: And just grab the bible and – didn't work.

816 MN: So, when did you become – you were in the SAMRAF. You –

817 GS: I worked with SAMRAF. I don't know if I was in it I don't remember what that meant to be
818 in it.

819 MN: So what was your job? To kind of –

820 GS: Well it was –

821 MN: - be a part of it.

- 822 GS: - it was my job to get this guy's teeth fixed, to meet with people and talk about how, how we
823 were going to get stuff printed if we had to get it printed here and you know –
- 824 MN: Because –
- 825 GS: - raise money.
- 826 MN: Okay.
- 827 GS: Um, there was, there was an Afrikaner priest, or minister, named Don Morton, who was one
828 of the people who was running the show.
- 829 MN: Okay.
- 830 GS: He had broken, with uh, apartheid. And his family went back to the original Dutch settlers.
- 831 MN: Okay.
- 832 GS: So you know uh, the Afrikaans view themselves as the white tribe of Africa, and they'll,
833 they'll tell you they've been in Africa longer than most black people have been in the United
834 States. How dare you say they're not Africans.
- 835 MN: Right.
- 836 GS: That African-Americanism, Amer – American – whatever. So Don Morton had, had uh, had
837 broken with – he had been a fairly prominent family, and he had broken with apartheid. So he
838 was living with – in, in New York City, going around trying to organize this stuff. And I
839 remember when he, he sat one night, describing this to us, and they had actually had a funeral for
840 him, back in the church that use to be his Methodist church, because he was a traitor to the, the
841 white tribe. At least that's what he told us, and I believe him.
- 842 MN: Yeah.
- 843 GS: He started crying; I mean he's a man in his thirties, whose whole life came out of that white
844 –
- 845 MN: And he had to leave it.
- 846 GS: - culture. Well he didn't have to – he didn't just leave it. I mean he, rejected it and started
847 working for the other side.
- 848 MN: Yeah.
- 849 GS: You know he supported the A.N.C. and the liberation movements in all those countries.
- 850 MN: Right.
- 851 GS: I mean, so they did – they, they, they said they read – he told us that they had a funeral. His
852 name was no longer to be mentioned as far as his entire family and all of the people he knew he
853 was dead.
- 854 MN: So he had a funeral while – he was living?! Okay.

855 GS: They had – they gave the funeral for him while he was living, back in apartheid land.

856 MN: Oh, my gosh!

857 GS: Those people are pretty intense.

858 MN: Yeah.

859 GS: I mean, the fact that Nelson Mandela has been able to sort of broker some reasonableness
860 with them, I wouldn't count on lasting forever, but it certainly was wonderful, and if we got a
861 nice movie about it, now that everybody's crying about, good.

862 MN: Wow.

863 GS: But that was heavy stuff, and that's what, you know, so we raised money, we helped him
864 out, and then we'd take people – you know it's one of those thing, you take a phone call and
865 somebody's there. And you got to trust the people who handed him off to you, and now he's got
866 a bad tooth so he needs the dentist, we'll take care of that part.

867 MN: So you knew a lot of people who came from South Africa?

868 GS: Not that many –

869 MN: But –

870 GS: Only a handful. They didn't usually get this far. I assume most of them piled up in places
871 like London and –

872 MN: Right.

873 GS: Or in Canada, just like the – just like the people who left the United States during Vietnam.

874 MN: Right.

875 GS: Naomi Cline's child of an exile from the Vietnam War. You know, the woman who wrote
876 *The Shock Doctrine*; writes regularly for the nation.

877 MN: Okay.

878 GS: She's really good on imperialist stuff. But that's – yeah that – Few of them got here and one
879 day, one day we were told SAMRAF had been blown open by the South African security forces.

880 MN: Okay, what happened?

881 GS: At every level. Well they probably – I didn't know all the details, because it was just like,
882 sorry about that.

883 MN: Yeah.

884 GS: We won't be talking anymore. I assume that they rolled up – they called it rolling up the
885 apparatus. They had people all the way from South Africa in the army, because they had contacts

886 in the army who were helping the other side. You don't want to think what happened to all the
 887 people. But it was – I mean nothing happened to us in Chicago.

888 MN: But the – the people who were helping SAMRAF in South Africa?

889 GS: Were probably had a very bad time with it.

890 MN: And of course the records are probably?

891 GS: They may be available somewhere.

892 MN: Yeah.

893 GS: Uh, I don't have many of them we have, have some stuff, because I just kept carrying boxes
 894 around through three marriages and several apartments and homes.

895 MN: Um –

896 GS: But I can't even dig it out, it's in an old box. Maybe I'll pull it out sometime, but you know
 897 how long it took for us to have this conversation.

898 MN: (laughs) how did your parents respond to your involvement in the anti-apartheid
 899 movement?

900 GS: Well the anti-war and the anti-imperialist, anti-apartheid by – My father always wanted to
 901 know what was going on. When I first went home as a draft resistor and conscientious objector I
 902 had to sit down with every adult male in my family and then friends, in Lyndon, Elizabeth, New
 903 Jersey, and explain one on one, over a beer, what I had done and why. I had been a boy scout and
 904 an eagle scout, I had the largest paper rout in Union County, New Jersey, I was the top student,
 905 all that shit, and I went – I was in class in – and I was in high school with the guy who was in –
 906 the most famous POW, from New Jersey, he's in the movie. So I had to sit down and explain it
 907 to people. My father was okay with it early on. (Noise from wind) My mother, went a little nuts
 908 on it for a while, she uh – In fact one night I was home at Christmas in the mid, late 60's and I
 909 was going over to New York for a protest, a G.I. movement protest, I think it was for the – there
 910 were two guys, or three guys at Fort Hood who had been arrested for organizing against the war,
 911 and we were having protests all over the United States. They, they're car was stopped, they were
 912 soldiers, they car was stopped, and the M.P.'s, Military Police, searched the car and they
 913 allegedly found marijuana residue in the lint in their pockets. Uh, which they then identified
 914 through lab tests as marijuana residue. So, they charged them for possession of drugs. But
 915 according to the testimony of military trial, the, the residue had been destroyed during the lab
 916 test. So, you have to take the technicians word – This is military law. So we were protesting
 917 against these guys. These guys got like five years of Leavenworth.

918 MN: Five years of –

919 GS: Five years of hard labor in Leavenworth Federal Military Penitentiary in Kansas. Uh, for
 920 having marijuana, which nobody could find –

921 MN: What?

922 GS: - by the time of the trial. That's what was happening.

923 MN: Right.

924 GS: So, I was going over to New York to join this protest, and my mother said, where you
925 going? And uh, I said I'm going over to protest what's being done to these soldiers. And she
926 said, I knew you were a communist; I'm going (phone rings) to call the FBI right now. You
927 better turn it off; I'm going to get this.

928 MN: Okay.

929 [George Schmidt takes a phone call, while Melena Nicholson turns off tape]

930 **FILE STE-002**

931 GS: (mumbles something that the tape doesn't catch)

932 MN: Oh. [Responding to conversation before the tape starts]

933 GS: But let's get back. So, so my mother said – she, she picks up the phone; it's like two days
934 before Christmas; she's going to call the FBI.

935 MN: On you?

936 GS: Yeah. I said, I'm real sorry about that, and probably said some other things that I would
937 regret later, because I, because I spoke very forcefully in a, in a more colorful language in those
938 days. I just left.

939 MN: So your parents did not support you –

940 GS: Well my dad sort of did, he said he thought it was a bad idea because unless you were rich
941 you couldn't afford to go around –

942 MN: Okay.

943 GS: and do the sort of things I was doing. And then he, you know, he came back from his war
944 and really wanted to go to college. The only way he could really go to college was on the G.I.
945 Bill. But he and my mom were so passionate about doing the family, they did it by the time he
946 woke up, five years later, he had four kids. So he had to keep going to the Post Office and
947 working everyday instead of going to college.

948 MN: Okay.

949 GS: I mean so he knew that from his own experience. But, uh, I remember one thing – uh, so my
950 mom tried to come back from it later, and we, you know worked things out, but – I just left, it
951 was Christmas, and I came back here. It was like sorry, uh, we can't have that conversation, you
952 don't want to understand. So that was just pretty intense for everybody. And uh, (tape picks up a
953 child talking in the street) I remember one guy was a father of a high school buddy of mine. And
954 he called me up when he found out I was organizing (noise from wind) against the war and a
955 conscientious objector and stuff, was – we had – I – it was funny – I – some of the dad's that
956 were, you know, we were more friends than I was even with the guys. But he calls me up and

957 said I need, I need to talk with you about what you're doing. So I went over to his house in New
 958 Jersey. And we sat in his kitchen, one beer, and then coffee, and he's asking me, over and over,
 959 why are you doing this? And I said the same thing you know better than anybody, because he
 960 was a tanker with patent World War II and stuff.

961 MN: Okay.

962 GS: So you know better than anybody what soldiers do is kill other people. So you got to have a
 963 real good reason, and that was what I said to the draft board – and you haven't given me a good
 964 enough reason to go out and kill people I don't know. Straight up. And there for, I am doing this
 965 instead. And finally he stops, and he says, you know, you're right. I said, huh? He said you
 966 know, I was a driver, and, and a machine gunner, on a Sherman, that was those high profile
 967 tanks, that had – maintained in the U.S. Army in Europe in World War II. And then the front of
 968 this thing, there were two hatches; there was a tarot with a canon, if you can picture a tank –
 969 There were two hatches, and when you're going through and you're not buttoned down because
 970 you're not actually in combat, the best way to drive this thing was to have your head sticking out
 971 –

972 MN: Right.

973 GS: of the hatch, and you have a machine gun right in your hands in case you need it.

974 MN: Okay.

975 GS: And as you go through France and Germany, they're going through these towns where you
 976 couldn't even go down these streets, because the buildings have been bombed into rubble and the
 977 tanks are bouncing over the rubble. And he said he came around this – they, they came down
 978 this one street and they made a turn and suddenly half way down the block they were f – [facing]
 979 one German soldier. And so this German soldier is sitting there with his riffle in his hands,
 980 standing there. And this guy tells me this story. And this guy is sitting in the tank, you know with
 981 his head sticking out and his machine gun in his hands. And his job is to cut the German soldier
 982 in half so that the tank can keep going, because you're supposed to destroy the enemy.

983 MN: Yeah.

984 GS: And I said uhuh. And I said what did you do? He said, I stood up and said would you get the
 985 fuck out of here before I have to kill you?

986 MN: (laugh)

987 GS: And I said, and then what happened. He said the guy ran. And that was the best day I had to
 988 whole war, because that was one person I knew I didn't have to kill. And then he started crying.
 989 This grown man, you know, twenty-five years after his war. A-and I asked him, I said did you
 990 ever tell your story to Ed, your son. He said no, I just don't think he'd understand it.

991 MN: So this is why –

992 GS: That's the way that culture was.

993 MN: Yeah.

994 GS: See if you were an anti-war, peace creep, or a coward, you were going to be tested.
 995 (Thumping noise from Mr. Schmidt's finger tapping the table) These men had seen death, they'd
 996 lived with it, and they'd killed people for a good cause. They didn't want their sons turning
 997 around and abolishing that whole thing they had to do, in the name of what they thought was
 998 some hippie abstraction. So that's the way in came down in those conversations, and my mother
 999 was more fiery than my father about it. But she eventually spent a lot of time – I guess she
 1000 prayed about it and did whatever she did, and eventually she said it was - it wasn't as bad as she
 1001 thought. But it was several years, it was kind of horrible, you know because you don't leave
 1002 home at Christmas time and tell your mother to –

1003 MN: Yeah.

1004 GS: - go to hell or whatever. But she was right there with the telephone, she believed J. Edgar
 1005 Hoover was the reincarnation of Jesus in the current age.

1006 MN: (laugh and sigh)

1007 GS: And she wanted to talk to him about her commie son.

1008 MN: Wow.

1009 GS: So that's the kind of thing that happened. I assume it's going to be the same. Whenever you
 1010 resist you better be – you better have good reasons.

1011 MN: So that was your reason to be an activist, instead –

1012 GS: Well I was the complex reasons to be an activist. You know the thing that happens is, by the
 1013 late 1970's we were in the Chicago Public Schools; apartheid, you know, organized segregation,
 1014 the destruction of the hopes and dreams of generations of children. It's not as vicious as napalm
 1015 in Vietnam or the kind of stuff they did in South Africa, but this city is doing the same kind of
 1016 imperial nastiness to the majority of black people, within twenty miles of where we're sitting.
 1017 And you know, it starts happening to the children before they are even old enough to know it,
 1018 just because they're poor and black. So you know Substance is the main thing we did, but South
 1019 Africa, the South Africa work was part of that over all anti-imperialist work. We took it to the
 1020 National Union Conventions, you know. We were part of these anti-imperialist caucuses of the
 1021 American Federation of Teachers. And there was a – there was actually more activity about
 1022 Central and South America than there was about Southern Africa. I think it was the distance and
 1023 also, you know, people can drive from El Salvador to Chicago. You can't drive from Cape Town
 1024 to Chicago.

1025 MN: No. So, then how did you stay informed about South Africa?

1026 GS: Well until the internet, you know there were a bunch of um – there were a bunch of groups
 1027 that published, uh, um, studies, regular magazines in the 70's and 80's dedicated to – to different
 1028 parts of the world. There was MRIP, the Middle East Research and Information Project,
 1029 NACLA; North American Congress on Latin America. There were a few on Africa. Um, one of
 1030 them that I remember, I think was the American Committee on Africa, which was sort of an
 1031 overlap group. And so, I would just sort of stay with that and if something came up regarding
 1032 schools you know, we'd plug it into Substance, but I moved more and more towards focusing on,

1033 on Chicago and on the Chicago schools. But, when the internet came by, you know – now you
1034 can just sort of –

1035 MN: Right.

1036 GS: find some of it. The danger is that everybody thinks that the Wiki entry is probably accurate
1037 when you're likely at best, a little bit accurate. But, um, theoretically, somebody could do for
1038 those struggles – and I hope that's what ya'll are doing – what David Zeiger did for the GI
1039 movement, in the movie, *Sir, No Sir*, which I showed you. It took him twenty-five years to make
1040 the movie, because everybody knows people needed video as well as the narrative – pros-
1041 narrative. And so the movie *Sir, No Sir* exists now. But backing up *Sir, No Sir* is an entire
1042 internet archive of G.I. underground news papers. The actual newspapers, that were published at
1043 the time, by soldiers who were resisting the war in Vietnam. Similarly these Oral Histories that
1044 you're doing, when it goes back through maybe somebody will find Don Morton if he's still
1045 alive; ask him what happened to SAMRAF. I mean I'm just a little piece of the big puzzle.

1046 MN: Yeah.

1047 GS: And I, I can only, you know check out a puzzle, you know the puzzles that I have to try to
1048 tell people how they work now, and they mainly, you know – Chicago's latest horrors just went
1049 toxic and national thanks to Barack Obama and Arne Duncan. Chicago's version of corporate
1050 school reform which is dedicated to the destruction of public education and the continuation of
1051 as much apartheid as possible is now national policy. Arne Duncan, the former head of the
1052 Chicago schools, is U.S. Secretary of Education. So if I wrote everyday for the next ten weeks I
1053 still wouldn't be able to tell the whole story and it is a question whether it would be coherent
1054 enough for people to get just how bad Arty Duncan's record – and how bad the Chicago thing
1055 was. Um, so that's where it goes. I don't know what else – you know I feel good – I'll give you a
1056 funny example. I was – (phone ring)

1057 [Melena Nicholson stops the tape while George Schmidt answers the phone]

1058 **FILE STE-003**

1059 [Tape turns back on to a conversation between George Schmidt and Melena Nicholson. They are
1060 discussing about the importance of keeping one's sources' trust and keeping their identities safe]

1061 GS: -certain entities because they have had a record of trust. But nobody's going to be a hundred
1062 percent perfect, but you also have to know who to trust. And so we've – Substance has been in
1063 business for thirty-five years, and we tell people, we've never burned a source. Burning a source
1064 means you take information in confidence from a news source, then you turn around and reveal
1065 who the source was to the people in power. Um, we've never burned a source. I've been ready to
1066 go to jail, uh, a couple of instances where I was supine on. One in particular to get you to reveal
1067 sources, and you just can't do it. So that phone call who was from a guy who was a very, very
1068 good source for years and now he's very prominent. So the story will be the top story in
1069 tomorrow's Substance website.

1070 MN: Uhuh.

1071 GS: But you know, you earn, you earn the trust of people over time. Hopefully you can keep it
 1072 even if you get a little bit older and a little bit slower than you were when you were able to run
 1073 from one end of the city to the other without thinking about sleeping for four days straight. So, I
 1074 don't know. Where were we?

1075 MN: Um, well I wanted to – wanted you to tell me a little more about Substance and how that
 1076 came about and how –

1077 GS: Well, 1975 when I came back teaching, like I told you, Larry McDonald and I got back
 1078 together, I was interested in protesting the, uh, treatment of substitute teacher's because we all
 1079 wound up being stuck substitute teachers. Those of who had come into teaching after the
 1080 Vietnam generation that dodged the war draft by becoming teachers. Not exactly a heroic
 1081 moment in the history of public education, but it did provide a generation of talent.

1082 MN: Yeah.

1083 GS: So after a few months of organizing substitute teachers, I suggested that, maybe we could
 1084 publish a newspaper, because I knew how to do that from the Vietnam soldiers movement. So we
 1085 started. And we literally came together in pieces. I mean the name Substance came out of the
 1086 organization which was SUBS, which was Substitutes United for Better Schools. And we
 1087 actually gave ourselves the name SUBS, before we knew what SUBS stood for.

1088 MN: Uhuh.

1089 GS: I said, somebody will come and figure out what the acronym is. That's the way things like
 1090 that happen. So, we started publishing every now and then, and then we, by the late 70's we were
 1091 publishing every month and people had to pay for a subscription. And then in 1980, when the
 1092 rolling class foreclosed on the Chicago Public Schools declaring a financial crisis, which was
 1093 really uh, same thing they are doing now, they wanted, they wanted to suck more money out of
 1094 the Board of Ed budget. Um, we actually got center on all, all the protests against that; the
 1095 establishment of school financial party. And we learned how to read the budget documents of the
 1096 government, which is the key to a lot of this stuff. And we've been doing it ever since.

1097 MN: And how did you use Substance for the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa?

1098 GS: Substance, um, in the late 19 – mid, late 1980's published a series of articles, long series of
 1099 articles uh, mostly about the investments of the Chicago Teacher's Pension Fund in South
 1100 Africa. One of the largest pools of, um, of investment dollars that, that there is some public
 1101 access to in the United States is in the Public Employee Pension Funds. And, and so, a bunch of
 1102 activists, including people who were with Substance, started taking the position that there should
 1103 be no Chicago money going to anything related to South Africa. That included direct investment
 1104 from corporations and also included indirect investment and there was a big several year long
 1105 struggle about how far you would take the indirect definition. Um, we, Connie Day, Lou Pyster
 1106 and some other people regularly wrote articles documenting how many dollars were invested
 1107 from the fund of these corporations. And I was the editor. I didn't do the actual research. Other
 1108 people did the actual research, Connie Day; it was Connie Day at the time, now I think her name
 1109 is Connie Prince. Lou Pyster, I think is still around. He's a retired uh, union person and activist.

1110 MN: How do you spell Pyster?

1111 GS: P-y-s-t-e-r.

1112 MN: Okay. You know we actually interviewed Connie Day?

1113 GS: I know. Um, and uh, you know she was – and I remember, it was funny because, she and
1114 Lou never got along on this, but they collaborate a lot of stories, and I'm going to send you the
1115 back issues of Substance when it appears, I'll mail it to you. Um, it's not in digital form. Um,
1116 and editing people on a, on an unpaid staff, for a rinky-dink agitational newspaper that tries to be
1117 accurate, won't pretend to be natural on anything. We always said, uh objectivity is ridiculous,
1118 it's a pretext. But um, my position was if we were looking at nine million dollars of investments
1119 that was okay. We didn't have to take up line space; \$9,104,364.25. Well, the other people who
1120 were on the story, Connie and Lou, liked the decimal point.

1121 MN: Okay.

1122 GS: And there were times when I'd sit there, because also in those days we were just moving the
1123 computer type center – Turn it off for a second.

1124 [Tape turned off for a short break]

1125 **FILE STE-004**

1126 GS: Um.

1127 MN: Connie Day and –

1128 GS: Connie Day and Lou. Well, Lou was carrying this, this fight on, uh as well as me and other
1129 people, inside the Union House of Delegates. We were all elected delegates from schools that we
1130 – that we were at; most of this time I was at Amundsen High School. Um, eventually by the late
1131 80's – and I couldn't put a time on it – that perspective started to prevail inside the teacher's
1132 union. It was especially important uh, at the time because after 1984 president of the teacher's
1133 union was Jacqueline Vaughn who was an old style union politician, but at the time was a fierce
1134 African American female feminist, and so as the movement grew nationally, uh, Jacky Vaughn
1135 became more and more attentive, you know, to this part of the argument; that the pension fund
1136 simply should say no, we should investigate all the investments that were going there. Some of
1137 my friends took a different approach to that. And I remember one of our friends, who is still on
1138 the Substance staff, would get up in the union meetings when we'd approach this and he'd say,
1139 investments for my future and my pension are not a question of black and white. The only color
1140 we should care about is green. Are these investments producing the profits that we need to have a
1141 st – You know, this –

1142 MN: Yeah.

1143 GS: - was a speech. And there was a large body of people (laughs) who would say, you know
1144 that makes sense.

1145 MN: Oh, no.

1146 GS: No, that was – it was – you know –

1147 MN: Yeah.

1148 GS: It was a democratic debate. That CTU's [Chicago Teachers Union] as democratic as you're
1149 going to find in a large organization, and it was always fun.

1150 MN: Yeah.

1151 GS: Finally, I remember, Pyster, there was, there was a vacancy on the Pension Board of
1152 Trustees, and the sure way to get elected, the election was held with all the, all the active duty
1153 teachers get to vote for the six teacher reps on the pension board. And there was a vacancy, so
1154 Pyster was going to run and he was going to be our candidate, but we were the minority faction
1155 in the union. So the key was to get the endorsement of the House of Delegates. We got the
1156 endorsement of the House of Delegates, the union would support Pyster [and] through the
1157 mailing he'd get the votes to be on the pension board. And, and he never forgave me for the
1158 speech I gave, but it won the vote.

1159 MN: Okay.

1160 GS: And my speech was simple, I was a delegate, and I had the right to the floor, and I said you
1161 know we are talking about our pension and our future.

1162 MN: Right.

1163 GS: And we all know Lou Pyster. He's persistent to the point of obnoxiousness; he's dogged
1164 until the point of tenaciousness and beyond. Nobody here would ever use the word – and I
1165 paused and it was like – calm to describe Lou when he's really interested in something. But what
1166 do you want guarding your pension; a poodle or a pit-bull? Vote for our pit-bull, reject the
1167 suggestion that we need another poodle. Elect Lou Pyster to the Pension Board (claps his hands).
1168 – Here's one of the guys from the church. [George Schmidt waves to a friend across the street]

1169 Man from the church/George Schmidt's friend: Nice day, huh?

1170 GS: It's great!

1171 GS's friend: Are we going to (can't make out part of the conversation) on this side of the street
1172 today, or what? Or that's Monday.

1173 GS: That's Monday.

1174 GS's friend: Yeah.

1175 GS: See, we had to have a little battle to make sure we could have that conversation. But it's
1176 worth it. [Earlier before the interview, Mr. Schmidt had recollected a past event which he and his
1177 neighbors had protested against black discriminations in their neighborhood. The friend he had
1178 just talked to was black.] Um, so anyway Pyster got elected to the pension board, and that moved
1179 things forward on the question. Uh, (laughs) but it was like, he said did you have to do that? I
1180 said Lou, that won a lot of votes.

1181 MN: Yeah.

1182 GS: Because the perspective wasn't we weren't electing Mr. Congeniality. We were electing the
1183 person to guard our future pensions. And didn't I make it clear that you were dogged and
1184 determined and everyman we would want to have there, guarding the gate of our dollars. So
1185 that's the kind of thing you have to do and actually, you know, to get the thing you have to
1186 provide people with the information which we were doing with all these articles, because we
1187 were researching real carefully.

1188 MN: Right.

1189 GS: They could get a list of all the investments of the pension fund and then they could take the
1190 list and could play it off against, you know, who's actually corporately active in South Africa.
1191 Um, and then you had to get the power to actually change it, and that meant electing people to
1192 the pension board or changing the minds of the people on the pension board. Finally, during that
1193 time, and this was from 1984 to 1994, the biggest single vote was Jacqueline Vaughn, the
1194 president of the Teachers Union. She should be a legend in Chicago history. She certainly was
1195 the most powerful black woman in Chicago during the 1980's, but she's been literally wiped out
1196 of the history books in favor of people like Marva Collins, who's a total fraud, because of the
1197 white-wash and the brain wash from the Reagan years.

1198 MN: Okay.

1199 GS: Jacqueline Vaughn was a militant union leader, who led three huge strikes.

1200 MN: Okay.

1201 GS: So and, and did a lot of other stuff, including you know, moving towards this anti-apartheid
1202 stance in relation to Chicago.

1203 MN: What kind of strikes?

1204 GS: Oh the strikes we – well the strikes were all just nuts and bolts union strikes, but we struck,
1205 we struck in 1983 for thirteen days when she was vice president of the union, but she was the
1206 public voice because a majority of the kids were black. She was the black vice president at the
1207 time. The president was an Irishman named Bob Healey who was white. And he just very wisely
1208 made sure that Jacky was the person who went up against the black lady, who was the school
1209 super attendant, who would get up and say, you know these teachers are, are hurting black
1210 children. Well, the fact the majority of teachers were black too was sort of irrelevant in the ruling
1211 class line of about what was real and what wasn't. 1984 we went on strike for what I think was
1212 ten days. And then in 1987 Jacky brought us out for nineteen days in September, the longest
1213 strike in Chicago's schools history. And in each one we won and held back this assault that's
1214 been going on ever since on our pay benefits [and] working conditions. Um, then Jacky died of
1215 breast cancer in 2 – in 1994 and it's been downhill ever since.

1216 MN: Oh.

1217 GS: Um, her successor was a wimp. I ran against him and, he was, he was a white guy, but he
1218 ran as a black guy, and Jacky's successor.

1219 MN: Yeah.

- 1220 GS: It was bizarre. I still got about forty percent of the vote but I lost the election.
- 1221 MN: You lost the election? He –
- 1222 GS: In 1994 for president of Chicago Teachers Union.
- 1223 MN: You ran for it?
- 1224 GS: Yeah, that was the last time I ran. I ran in '88 against Jackie herself.
- 1225 MN: Really?
- 1226 GS: And got forty percent and she for two years she wouldn't speak to me, because I ran against
1227 her. Then later before her death, we became kind of friends because I kept telling her, I said this
1228 is deep. This involves shit like South Africa and you know if you went – and then she did go.
- 1229 MN: She went to South Africa?
- 1230 GS: She went to South Africa. This is out there somewhere and this may be something
1231 somebody can find for the labor history project – for your project. Jackie was one of the
1232 American Federation of Teachers representatives to the International Labor Organizations in
1233 Switzerland. And they're the ones who, you know, go out and see all those ten year olds working
1234 in sewing machines for sixteen hours a day in Bangladesh or something like that. Jackie comes
1235 back to a union meeting one month. We have monthly meetings where the president gives a
1236 report and she talks about her visit to South Africa, and this is before apartheid ended. And she
1237 talks about being a black woman in the network of people who were against apartheid in South
1238 Africa. It was like cool.
- 1239 MN: Yeah.
- 1240 GS: Tell me more but she never got to tell it. She died.
- 1241 MN: Oh no!
- 1242 GS: It's there somewhere.
- 1243 MN: Okay.
- 1244 GS: The, the – the House of Delegates in the Chicago Teachers Union kept a stenographic
1245 transcript of every meeting. And I think if you got diggers in your research staff you could find
1246 that. She wound up, because she was talking about how they were visiting people in all these
1247 townships.
- 1248 MN: Yeah.
- 1249 GS: And how they had to travel carefully and you know the usual stuff that you're hearing all the
1250 time if you are doing this project. But suddenly it's the most powerful black woman in Chicago
1251 giving this narrative in relation to South Africa to six hundred teachers.
- 1252 MN: Right.

1253 GS: Who are tired after a whole hard day's work in the schools and now we've come after for a
 1254 meeting once a month. Yep. That's part of the story of the South African anti-apartheid
 1255 movement in Chicago, is the president of the Chicago Teachers Union was part of it.

1256 MN: She – okay so, South Africa had a big influence – the apartheid there had a big influence
 1257 here and apartheid here?

1258 GS: Yeah, and there is a funny last part to that – just in my personal thing. In 1999 I published
 1259 these tests called the CASE Tests in Substance and by that time Dailey had consolidated his
 1260 control over the public schools, and they wanted to destroy me if they could. So they suspended
 1261 me and charged me of copy write infringement – we published the actual test to show how dumb
 1262 they were. And um, they eventually fired me in August 2000. They formally took a vote to fire
 1263 me as a teacher after twenty-eight years, at a board of education meeting. Only one labor
 1264 movement leader – labor union leader in Chicago stood up at that meeting and talked in my
 1265 defense. His name was Jarvis Williams. He was president of Local 46 of the Service Employees.
 1266 And he compared to what I had done to Nelson Mandela whom he knew personally. He was a
 1267 black guy who was head of the janitors – of Service Employees representatives of the public
 1268 school janitors. I just remembered that. And Jarvis got up and he said, you need people who are
 1269 going to stand up and say what is right, even if you disagree with him, blah, blah, blah. Well, a
 1270 couple years later, they forced Jarvis Williams out. Andy Stern was consolidating the Service
 1271 Employees, and the Local 46 was dissolved. It was one of the most powerful black unions in
 1272 Chicago. Jarvis was one of the most powerful black labor leaders of Chicago. Jarvis is put into
 1273 retirement at a very nice pension and they made a – Local 46 became a part of an amalgamated
 1274 Local 73 Service Employees, which is currently under a white woman named, Christine
 1275 Boardman. Instead of just representing the janitors and other people like that in Chicago Public
 1276 Schools, they represent everything from bus drivers in Gary, Indiana to the toll takers on the
 1277 Illinois Toll way. But, that's a real proud moment, now that I think about it, when Jarvis
 1278 Williams got up and the Board of N meeting and did that for me. That's kind of embarrassing for
 1279 me, because Jarvis – I'm not – there's a big difference – but Jarvis Williams if you can find him,
 1280 he has pictures, he had pictures of the old S.E.I.U. [Service Employees International Union]
 1281 office of him with Nelson Mandela.

1282 MN: Jarvis with a J?

1283 GS: J-A-R-V-I-S Williams. And if you call me from Frank Cline's number, Frank Cline would
 1284 still know how to get in touch with Jarvis. But Jarvis was forced out about five or six years ago,
 1285 under that thing that Andy Stern was creating with SEIU Um, but Jarvis would remember those
 1286 details and he – I have a hunch that he had a lot more to do with the anti-apartheid movement. I
 1287 mean it's just coming back.

1288 MN: Yeah.

1289 GS: So, you want to know.

1290 MN: What – you said Cline, Fran?

1291 GS: Frank Cline –

1292 MN: Frank Cline.

- 1293 GS: is still. You got to keep his name out of the official books, because he is still working for
1294 S.E.I.U.
- 1295 MN: Okay.
- 1296 GS: Just remember it. Uh Frank is still in touch with Jarvis as far as I know. He's a good man,
1297 but he's getting to retirement age, and his job at SEIU is this thing's going to pay him a pension
1298 unless Christine decides to go after him, the way she went after – she fired me finally at SEIU.
- 1299 MN: What does SEIU stand for?
- 1300 GS: Service Employees International Union.
- 1301 MN: Okay.
- 1302 GS: It's the largest union in United States.
- 1303 MN: Okay
- 1304 GS: You can Google a lot of stuff about it; because they have been having a civil war inside for,
1305 for the past couple years. But, um, Andy Stern, who is now leaving as president of SEIU, uh,
1306 according to the New York Times, visited the White House to talk to the president 20 times since
1307 Obama was inaugurated. That's SEIU. But locally SEIU was a much different thing ten years
1308 ago when Jarvis was running Local 46. And SEIU had a hand in the anti-apartheid movement. I
1309 got another example of the anti-apartheid movement I just remembered. This involves Zimbabwe
1310 directly and an- South Africa directly. You know, the black labor unions, like the black churches
1311 at their best, were able to do things carefully in support of the liberation struggles in Southern
1312 Africa that nobody else could do. The longshore locals, south of Baltimore – and I believe this is
1313 true all the way over to New Orleans – were mostly black. The stevedores are the people who
1314 load and unload ships. And during the anti-apartheid struggles, as early as the 70's, one of the
1315 representatives of the Zimbabwe struggles spoke to my classes at a high school in the west side,
1316 when I was teaching at Collins. So this guy told the kids, and these are the poorest kids in
1317 Chicago, they're in _____(??), he was telling them about the struggles for the liberation of
1318 black people in what was then Rhodesia, they were calling it Zimbabwe, but it wasn't Zimbabwe
1319 yet.
- 1320 MN: Yeah.
- 1321 GS: And so to keep – you know the kids say well, what can we do to help you? These are black
1322 kids who had one pair of shoes. He said well you can bring, you can- we need everything. We
1323 need shoes, we need money, but it doesn't look like you have much money, we need shoes, we
1324 need clothes. He said you can bring them to Mr. Schmidt. Bring it to – to him and we'll make
1325 sure they get too Africa.
- 1326 MN: Okay.
- 1327 GS: Okay? What are you going to do? Send it Fed Ex?
- 1328 MN: (laughs) so, what did you do?

- 1329 GS: We filled a truck and sent it to Norfolk, Virginia, where somebody loaded it into some
1330 empty space on ships that were headed to South Africa. And it got offloaded by the black people
1331 who were unloading the ships there. There were two cargos. There was the official cargo, and
1332 then there was the space that the –
- 1333 MN: The extra space.
- 1334 GS: The workers knew was there. Right.
- 1335 MN: Okay.
- 1336 GS: I was told the stuff got through. I didn't see any of it after it left Chicago, but my classroom
1337 filled up. With shit like shoes and, you know, that's the way it happened. And you just had to
1338 hope the person who was taking the truck –
- 1339 MN: You just had to trust them?
- 1340 GS: I mean but who would want this stuff on the truck. It was worse than stuff you would find
1341 on the Salvation Army store.
- 1342 MN: Oh.
- 1343 GS: You know, it was old clothes and stuff. But these kids wanted to do something to help the
1344 struggle in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Angola, and they slowly learned and
1345 probably knew as much about the geography of Southern Africa in those days as they did about
1346 other geographies. It's this hard core west side ghetto.
- 1347 MN: Yeah.
- 1348 GS: Yep, that happened too.
- 1349 MN: So what kind of things did you teach your students?
- 1350 GS: What did I teach them? I taught them whatever I was told to teach them. I taught them
1351 literature if they were sophomores, and it was U.S. literature if they were seniors in advanced
1352 placement. Depend upon the class I always taught them the Vietnam book after – uh, I teach
1353 them literature. I teach them –
- 1354 MN: And –
- 1355 GS: I mean, I – well we'd have conversations about everything.
- 1356 MN: So you taught them, though – you – about South Africa a bit?
- 1357 GS: Well, I'd bring it in if I could.
- 1358 MN: Yeah.
- 1359 GS: Depended on when. If they – you know, if you're a white guy and you're teaching at
1360 Chicago's vast ghettos.
- 1361 MN: Right.

1362 GS: The first day – until you get a reputation in the school, the kids know you're not friendly.
 1363 So, in 1980 I had just gotten out of Marshall High School in the West side. There had been like
 1364 seven substitute teachers and I arrived just before the 1980 presidential election. So I'm the white
 1365 guy that they don't expect is going to last long. Kids come in and say, after Election Day, when
 1366 Reagan won, you're going to put us back into slavery now. I said, well, you don't know me very
 1367 well, but I should explain to you over time when we get to know each other. (Laughs) No, but
 1368 why do you think the election of Reagan means you're going to wind up slaves again? And it
 1369 turns out the precincts happens across the West side went around and told black voters that they
 1370 had to vote against Reagan because he was going to reinstitute black slavery.

1371 MN: Really?

1372 GS: Uh, and the kids at least, a lot of the kids believed it. So, you asked what you teach – some
 1373 of what you teach depends on the number of books, because my principle was every child should
 1374 have a book to take home and read tonight. Well not – most of the schools that I taught at they
 1375 didn't have enough books. They used class sets.

1376 MN: Yeah.

1377 GS: You know, you have thirty books for the room; kid can't take it home, and then the kids who
 1378 want to study or fall in love with the book, wind up stealing the book, from their own public
 1379 school. It was bizarre.

1380 MN: Yeah.

1381 GS: So, I would always fight like crazy for the book, to make sure everybody could take home a
 1382 book. And I always budgeted, I told people you had to budget 120 – 140 %. You're going to
 1383 have a hundred kids in this class; you're going to need 140 books because human children,
 1384 especially in this community, where everything is disrupted, we're going to lose them. Or if the
 1385 kid gets killed, I am not going to ask mom –

1386 MN: Where's the book. Yeah.

1387 GS: - to bring the book back. I mean, I had a kid one day you know, he was – we were in the
 1388 middle of *Huckleberry Fin*, he had finally fa – uh, past the test; Monday morning, kid comes in
 1389 with the drop thing, because the kid had been murdered the night before in a gang fight. And you
 1390 know, and you're supposed to write down which books the family is suppose to return. I'm not
 1391 going to do that. I mean, that's nuts. So you lose a book, you've got to budget for having enough
 1392 books. When you are teaching a book like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, even though, it's kind of you
 1393 know, wishy-washy, you can have a lot of fun with that, because the central theme is race. You
 1394 can also have fun with the fact that, Harper Lee, for all her brilliance, didn't render black dialect
 1395 too well when she does that confrontational scene in the black church. The house keeper,
 1396 Calpurnia, takes the two white kids to the black church and they have a confrontation with one of
 1397 the black people. And the, the dialect is just a little bit – a white person's version. And see we
 1398 can have a little bit of that conversation –

1399 MN: Yeah.

- 1400 GS: - with the class, once you know the class. You know, um, I mean there is a lot of things you
1401 can teach. But I didn't teach – I rarely taught history and social studies. I mostly taught English.
- 1402 MN: Okay.
- 1403 GS: I taught shop for a while. Um, drafting. You know, you teach whatever they are going to
1404 pay you to teach.
- 1405 MN: Right.
- 1406 GS: Until you – But you can do a lot with literature. You know *Moby Dick* is one of the most
1407 incredible. People say *Moby Dick*? If you teach *Moby Dick* as a metaphor for the struggle for
1408 America to find its way in a multi-racial, multi- it's, it's an incredible thing. You teach Huck Fin
1409 as the story for what it's like to be white; and try to deal with whiteness? You can't cut out the
1410 N-word because Huck and the white people around him are using – that's the way they talked.
- 1411 MN: Right.
- 1412 GS: But you got to get the kids to the point in the book where Huck sits there and says – if you
1413 remember it – Huck says, well I guess I'm going to go to Hell because all the Christians say if
1414 you steel someone's property like I'm helping to steel Jim, you go to Hell. He says well I guess
1415 I'm going to go to hell. That's an incredible white thing, right? It's right there in Mark Twain.
1416 Later you can go about how Mark Twain did all the ant-imperialist agitation against the
1417 Philippines invasion. He, he wrote some of the best stuff about the horrors of the Belgian
1418 occupation of the Congo and the brutality of it. But Huck Fin. You got to deal with Huck Fin.
1419 And there is a lot of use of the word nigger in Huck Fin. And a lot of people go, well you can't;
1420 you got to.
- 1421 MN: Right.
- 1422 (Paper blowing away)
- 1423 GS: Uh-oh. Don't lose it.
- 1424 MN: (laughs) [Retrieves paper] got it.
- 1425 GS: Anyway, it depends on what you teach. But I don't believe that teaching should be primarily
1426 preaching.
- 1427 MN: Right.
- 1428 GS: You know you got to work it into the learning of what the kids are doing. If the first book a
1429 kid reads from stem to stern is *Romeo and Juliet*, and that's happened –
- 1430 MN: Yeah.
- 1431 GS: You can teach in the context of a reality that the kids can learn from. That's all. That's how I
1432 teach; or how I use to teach. I've been blacklisted for ten years. They fired me in August 2000,
1433 they black-listed me city and suburbs. I went for suburban jobs teaching.
- 1434 MN: Why did they fire you?

- 1435 GS: Because I violated the board of education's copyright, by uh, by publishing six of the CASE
1436 tests. It's in the old Substance website.
- 1437 MN: Oh, right. You said. Yeah.
- 1438 GS: There's a 7th U.S. Surrogate Court decision by Richard Posner, nineteen pages long, where
1439 he denounces me and uses me as an adjective. He said I'm an extremist. If I had figured out to
1440 compromise instead of publishing the whole thing, he might have listened to my argument. But
1441 because I said you have to publish the entire tests to see how ridiculous it is – You can't just
1442 publish the stupidest questions, because I mean, anybody could say oh well we had one stupid
1443 question.
- 1444 MN: Yeah.
- 1445 GS: But the whole test was stupid. In fact, my favorite was a racist question on World History.
1446 One of my favorites. You had to study the whole test but this question was; the primary job of a
1447 woman in rural Africa is? Huh?
- 1448 MN: Is?
- 1449 GS: A: Gathering food and tending to the needs of the family. B-C-D – it was one of those
1450 multiple choice things. The reason I published the whole thing was you had to just look at that,
1451 right?
- 1452 MN: Right.
- 1453 GS: Africa extends from the Mediterranean Sea to Cape Town.
- 1454 MN: Right.
- 1455 GS: From the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean. Let's do Africa; second largest continent on
1456 the planet; lots of women. This one was resting on the stereotype of rural black women from
1457 southern – south sub – uh sub-Saharan Africa. It was, it was so offensive and they gave it to
1458 twenty thousand high school kids in Chicago Public Schools in 1999. They never gave it since.
- 1459 MN: So because you published it?
- 1460 GS: That's what I got fired for. I got fired for publishing that –
- 1461 MN: But you changed –
- 1462 GS: What?
- 1463 MN: But you changed the – they didn't give it to – out anymore? Because –
- 1464 GS: No they didn't – No they haven't used that test through – or that back of tests since But they
1465 accused me of – the sued me for a million dollars. They said it cost them a million dollars to
1466 develop this pile of garbage, and that I had destroyed the value of it by publishing it. I said it was
1467 worthless to begin with. It was a waste of the tax payers' money. And we did the city a favor by
1468 showing how that example of how the money was wasted.

- 1469 MN: Looking back how do you feel about what you did?
- 1470 GS: Of that piece?
- 1471 MN: Yeah.
- 1472 GS: It was consistent with all the other stuff I did. I mean, you know, it was kind of rough to lose
1473 the teaching bump. But, I mean, if you think about all the people that we've dealt with or
1474 supported or struggled with, just think about Nelson Mandela as the set piece. I mean, Robben
1475 Island was never a picnic. And you know, come on, getting blacklisted from teaching ain't
1476 much.
- 1477 MN: Yeah.
- 1478 GS: Especially because I had twenty-eight years. So, I mean, it would have been nicer if I could
1479 have worked to a full pension.
- 1480 MN: Yeah.
- 1481 GS: You know, Sharon's working – teaching at Steinmetz High School now.
- 1482 MN: Your wife.
- 1483 GS: My wife. Uh, you know, but we've been able to survive. I mean, a lot of people are too
1484 scared to ever be able to do anything. They wake up when they are sixty years old and you know,
1485 they say, I was supposed to do that when I was twenty. No.
- 1486 MN: No.
- 1487 GS: you got to think to do it.
- 1488 MN: You mentioned earlier about, um, Reagan's election and – well how did you react to
1489 Reagan's election?
- 1490 GS: Well, I didn't realize how comprehensively it was going to change things. Um, looking back
1491 now, the intellectual underpinnings of the insanity that we've had to suffer since then were being
1492 seeded with billions of dollars to buy professors and other people to say, this is the way the
1493 world should work. We knew it was going to be worse than it was. Some of us thought it would
1494 have been better if there was a viable social democratic or socialist party in the United States.
1495 Because the democrats are at best a week ally in the struggle for social justice. But the
1496 republicans were metastasizing into this horrible thing that exists today, uh, starting with the
1497 preparations to elect Reagan. I mean, the, the Reagan years were – it was funny because in a way
1498 it was the black and white was so much easier. There was a thing that I never checked out, but
1499 somebody said that Reagan's policy on South Africa was; what do the white people want? And
1500 that may have been true. That he actually said those words. You know, our policy; whatever the
1501 white people want. Um, it was hard to imagine before hand, although, now we have lot of
1502 examples how totally well orchestrated bullshit can dominate an electoral contest. But Arnold
1503 Schwarzenegger was the genius of the same thing in one of the largest countries on Earth. So,
1504 you know, anybody who thought that a third rate actor, Ronald Reagan, couldn't become

1505 president of the United States – I mean, a fourth rate actor could become governor of California
1506 with the same stuff, right?

1507 MN: Right.

1508 GS: We've got to know this. Um, the Reagan policies internationally were so, you know, if you
1509 look at all the Iran contra and all this other stuff, they were so uniformly racist, imperialist, and
1510 just ugly. I mean the support for the contras in Nicaragua, the murders of there. You know the
1511 support for all those torture regimes in South America. Young critical support for Pinochet's
1512 dictatorship, um, was breathtaking. And it was hard to communicate to people during those
1513 years. You know we've got to organize with a better strategic idea of what we are for, because
1514 these people know what they want and what they're going to do. There – and then with the fall of
1515 communism and the collapse of the Soviet Union after 1989, the problem was that there was this
1516 triumphal, international capitalism that gave us the mess we have now since uh, 2008. But it was
1517 all built into that, that horror. I don't know what else to say. It's an era that I think is passing. But
1518 it's substituted individualism for, for, for social understanding and collective responsibility;
1519 substituting greed for a sense of the common good; substituted white-supremacy and white-male
1520 supremacy at its worst for – even though they were smart enough to recruit their Condolisa
1521 Rice's and their Barack Obama's to do certain things. Um, and I put him in that category even
1522 though, we got two pictures of him here; one of him with my wife and kid and one of him with
1523 my brother at the White House.

1524 MN: Was – how did they meet –

1525 GS: Well, Barack use to come around the Union a lot when I was working for the Union.

1526 MN: Uhuh.

1527 GS: So, it was easy to get his picture taken. You know, you didn't have to pay thirty thousand
1528 dollars just to have a picture taken with Barack Obama. My brother's picture, my brother is one
1529 of the last survivors of the stone-wall riots, which gave birth to gay liberation and stuff – gay
1530 pride.

1531 MN: Right.

1532 GS: He was a working class kid from New Jersey, who was also a gay artist. So he was at the
1533 Stonewall when the shit hit the fan.

1534 MN: Really?

1535 GS: And he – he was – I guess he was catholic and conservative enough that he never had
1536 partners who were too risky. So, unlike most of the people who were there he is still alive.

1537 MN: Yeah.

1538 GS: And now he's just sort of famously regarded and he lectures on, on the Stonewall.

1539 MN: Wow.

- 1540 GS: Sop when Barack was trying to kiss and make up with Gay America, after all that bullshit,
1541 my brother was one of the two people that was invited to the white-house to get his picture taken
1542 with the president and the first lady.
- 1543 MN: What is your brother's name?
- 1544 GS: Thomas Lanigan Schmidt. He uses my mother's name and my dad's.
- 1545 MN: Okay.
- 1546 GS: You can Google him easy.
- 1547 MN: How do you spell Lanigan?
- 1548 GS: L-A-N-I-G-A-N.
- 1549 MN: Okay.
- 1550 GS: I mean –
- 1551 MN: That's interesting.
- 1552 GS: But you know we'll – I don't know what he thinks at this point about Barack, but I'm – that
1553 whole community was kind of angry that they were pushed back after helping elect Obama. And
1554 when Obama appointed Arne Duncan and tried – and pushed the Chicago Plan on American
1555 Public Schools, I mean that was it for us. And that's not even counting Afghanistan. You know,
1556 or Timothy Geithner or any of the other things that are out there as a fact of history. But that's
1557 okay. I mean, I rather that Michelle Obama can be the first lady of the United States than Nancy
1558 Reagan. I mean, that's a good thing.
- 1559 MN: Yeah.
- 1560 GS: You had to sit there in front of a TV in the 1950's, you know I said I didn't have many
1561 memories before high school, but I never forgot that scene with Jackie Robinson. And that was a
1562 whole generation. That's, that's the way they thought. You know.
- 1563 MN: Yeah. What about Reagan's policies on South Africa? How did you feel about –?
- 1564 GS: (laughs) we opposed them completely.
- 1565 MN: Yeah.
- 1566 GS: I mean, the, you know, that was across the board. That was part of the divestiture – I mean, I
1567 remember the Reagan people tried to slide – I forget the guy's name. What was it? Sullivan?
1568 Minister from Philadelphia, who tried to come in as a broker for a compromise on divestiture,
1569 and uh, that began under Reagan. Um, I forget what Sullivan – I mean you're asking me to
1570 remember something that was a while ago. Um, American Foreign Policy has – is unlikely to –
1571 well, it's better now than it was.
- 1572 MN: Right.

- 1573 GS: I'm glad we elected Barack Obama. But I'm glad people are learning that you can't have too
1574 many illusions about somebody who is going to get to the presidency courtesy of the Democratic
1575 Party.
- 1576 MN: Um, how did you participate in anti-apartheid boycotts?
- 1577 GS: What do you mean? The boycott of South African goods and stuff?
- 1578 MN: Yeah. And like, what about the – or protests, marches?
- 1579 GS: If there was marches and we had the time, we'd be at them. If there were – you know the
1580 main thing we did, like I said, was through the Union and through the stuff in the schools.
- 1581 MN: Right.
- 1582 GS: And the biggest thing was that our focus was on that pension fund and that as a model for all
1583 the pensions that had the control. You know, just to frame that, Chicago Teachers Pension Fund
1584 has, has, has um, twelve trustees who decide on all the policies. Six of those are elected by the
1585 active teachers who are working in the Chicago Schools. Three are elected by the pensioners;
1586 two are by the board and one by the principals. So, if you have a democratic chance to actually
1587 influence that policy, you have to elect people to the trustees as the CTPF [Chicago Teachers
1588 Pension Fund??]
- 1589 MN: You have to elect trustees?
- 1590 GS: You have to elect trustees like a told you, we elected Lou Pyster.
- 1591 MN: Yeah.
- 1592 GS: And that person then has to go to the trustees meetings, which are public, and speak out for a
1593 policy.
- 1594 MN: Right.
- 1595 GS: Against a guy who is equally _____(??). Who gets up and says the only color I care about is
1596 green. So, you know, that's a long, that was a long struggle. But we did it.
- 1597 MN: Yup
- 1598 GS: And then, suddenly – I remember I was teaching at Bowen High School the day of the
1599 election in South Africa. You remember that? I don't know if you have seen the movies of the
1600 election.
- 1601 MN: No.
- 1602 GS: People stood in the sun for 8-12 hours. You know, some without bringing enough water. So
1603 they could vote for the first time. There were pictures of black people lined up –
- 1604 MN: Yeah.

1605 GS: - for blocks, waiting to vote in the townships and stuff. And I, I was at Bowen High School,
 1606 which was half Black and half Mexican. (Phone rings). Most of the teachers were Black and
 1607 other. Hang on. I got to get this real quick. [Answers phone] Hello?

1608 [Tape turned off for a short break]

1609 **FILE STE-005**

1610 MN: Okay, we're back.

1611 GS: Good. So what did we do? You know there were marches, there were protests, but our focus
 1612 was what I said.

1613 MN: Did you ever do like Coca-Cola, Polaroid boycotts? Stuff like that,

1614 GS: Probably. I don't even remember. If I look at the – you know we've got the visual records,
 1615 so there might have been an ad sometime, you know one of those Coca-Cola can ads.

1616 MN: Yeah.

1617 GS: I mean, I remember IBM and some of those places were less directly tied, but they had some
 1618 sort of connection, and we were dealing with that. I'll have to find it. I'll have to mail it to you.
 1619 You are going to have to give me your card and some place I can send some stuff when I photo-
 1620 copy.

1621 MN: Yeah. That'd be great.

1622 GS: Because you know, at least we kept the – we, we put what we had in print. I remember other
 1623 stuff, but I haven't gone back and read those papers in a long time.

1624 MN: Um –

1625 GS: That's why I like journalism. You put it there, and if you're accurate the first time and well
 1626 edited you can go back and say, oh, that's what happened. You know?

1627 MN: You were talking about the election, in South Africa.

1628 GS: Oh. Most of the – I was on the second floor of the Bowen annex building, that was where
 1629 my classroom was that year. And most of my colleagues were black teachers. At the time the
 1630 majority of teachers were black, that's been wiped out by Mayor Dailey and Arne Duncan too.
 1631 He has gotten rid of over 2,000 black teachers in the past seven years by closing so called failing
 1632 schools. Um, but I remember some of them had TVs in their room and they were watching that,
 1633 because it was so big. And I remember one woman just sitting there crying, and one great
 1634 teacher, veteran teacher, twenty-five years experienced, the whole – she just sat there crying
 1635 looking at that, that line. You know, it's just what it's about; this is what it must have been like
 1636 in 1865. You know that was the analogy. Um, and I was always glad when I was working close
 1637 to large numbers of Black people to be able to have that, you know, get that feed back to
 1638 understand that from that perspective. Um, that explosion of voting just meant so much to so
 1639 much of the world. It was like Grant Park in November 2008 when Obama won. You know it
 1640 was like – um, all these things are going to lead to disappointment later because the motion is so

1641 great and reality is going to come by – but yeah that was, that was part of that thing about the
 1642 election. Then when – you know I was skeptical when, when Nelson Mandela said he was going
 1643 to try to work out a reconciliation, because –

1644 MN: The Truth and Reconciliation –

1645 GS: Yeah, because I – you know, I knew people who had been tortured by various right wing
 1646 regimes and I wrote about that kind of stuff and I don't personally feel a lot of Christian charity
 1647 to people who do that to other people. You know the people who – who was it Steve Biko? That
 1648 they killed, fractured his skull when they were beating him uh, I forget who –

1649 MN: Uh, that sounds like it.

1650 GS: Yeah. You know, but there were hundreds who were treated that way. Um, uh, that movie
 1651 *Sarafina*, uh, is about a black woman, teacher, played by Whoopi Goldberg in South Africa. You
 1652 know, I mean, all those regimes do the same thing to the people who were rounded up opposing
 1653 them. Whether it's the Vietnamese, or the – you know they are just very nasty. And they pay the
 1654 most sadistic human beings to do horrible things to other human beings. So to say we are going
 1655 to have a Reconciliation, um, that's amazing to try to do that. Only Nelson Mandela could have
 1656 tried to even bring it off. Because he had been on Robben Island, he had suffered, you know as
 1657 much as anybody. But I don't think even he could try to calm the rage of the people who, who
 1658 had lost their, their loved ones to that kind of treatment. I mean you should only spend a few
 1659 days actually researching what they actually do when they decide to do that to people. You don't
 1660 ever need to study it farther than that, but it's unforgivable. That's why we have human rights
 1661 laws in the world and why this whole thing was around in Afghanistan and the Whole War on
 1662 Terror on Iraq and Afghanistan has been so nasty. Because you know, to give the green light to
 1663 that stuff officially – There's the Ice Cream Man, he is looking over here hoping that my boys
 1664 are going to run out, but they're not here. See.

1665 MN: (laughs) um –

1666 GS: Anyway.

1667 MN: How would you propose then for – instead of the Truth and Reconciliation report?

1668 GS: I, I personally think that – well let's put it here, because I'm not going to interfere with
 1669 South Africa's right to how it's going to define how it's going to -

1670 MN: Okay.

1671 GS: - under its current leadership. I think, now that it's come out today that the head of the CIA
 1672 helped destroy the interrogation tapes, I think those men and woman who uh, supported and
 1673 carried out torture on the behalf of the United States, this is not harsh treatment. Harsh treatment
 1674 is a euphemism for torture. Torture is a systematic sadistic application of pain, psychological and
 1675 physical to another human being – for whatever purpose. It's usually to terrorize a group. Those
 1676 people should be brought to justice. Now you can't bring them to justice in the sense that you
 1677 can make them endure what they made other people endure, but they at least should be stripped
 1678 of any power and, or dignity that they would have in the community, because they had to make a
 1679 personal decision to do those things, or to be part of an apparatus that did those things. And that

1680 would go to the South African security people who did those things to other people in South
 1681 Africa. And I would apply it, because we talked about necklacing earlier; it probably applies to
 1682 certain people in the Black forces too. Um, but unless you are going to defend a civilized
 1683 standard against that extreme, you really are going to start losing the ability to have a civilized
 1684 society, real quickly.

1685 MN: Yeah.

1686 GS: Um, and, and you know this is the city where police officials, not just officers. I mean, and
 1687 you know, street cop is going to slap you around. I mean, I got slapped around in September
 1688 having a run in with a street cop for leafleting in front of the union meeting when I was not
 1689 supposed to. We worked that out by the next month. But a police officer is going to slap you
 1690 around maybe, because it's a harsh job in a town like this. It's not true maybe in the suburbs, but
 1691 for the police to handcuff somebody on, on a radiator and then, turn up the heat, which is what
 1692 police officers did in this town to people. That, that has to be stopped.

1693 MN: Yeah.

1694 GS: Whether it's in Chicago, Cape Town, or Tehran.

1695 MN: Have you ever been more than slapped around as you say?

1696 GS: No, but I had – I was arrested once with a person who was. In 1968 Democratic Convention
 1697 we had a six person team and one of our people was a, was female, and so she was separated
 1698 from us and they really were nasty to her. Um, I was with a couple Vietnam veterans and some
 1699 other people. We were down in the U.S. Army was in Washington Park during the convention,
 1700 and we were talking to them because we were doing the GI movement thing. And most of the
 1701 people I was with had just gotten back from Vietnam and were males, but this young woman
 1702 from Minneapolis came along. And so we were arrested and we were put in a cell. She was
 1703 taken. She didn't get out after another day and a half. But one of the things they did to her was
 1704 they hand cuffed her arms behind her back and then they made her lean with her head against a
 1705 wall. And they slowly moved her feet back farther and farther. And they put a pin right next to
 1706 her eye.

1707 MN: (gasps)

1708 GS: this is in Chicago in August 1968.

1709 MN: 19 – August 1968, Chicago.

1710 GS: When she came back, she couldn't talk about it for a day and then we finally sat her down
 1711 because we were together. We were kind of like an infinity group. Well what did they do? And
 1712 she finally said it.

1713 MN: That's traumatizing.

1714 GS: Uh yeah. Oh, she was never going to go out and protest again. I mean it's one thing to
 1715 believe all that Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi stuff. It's another thing to have a couple of
 1716 sadistic female police officers decide how much they could make you suffer when you are
 1717 absolutely unable to see any way out. So that's what happened. Uh, and you know, worst than

1718 anybody that was with me that day was this, one guy was this whole pacifist thing and it turned
 1719 out he was claustrophobic and he hadn't told us. So we all get thrown in this two person cell.
 1720 And he starts going into melt down, and we had to hold him the whole day. I mean, man, if
 1721 you're claustrophobic you can't do your Gandhi thing. Sorry. Next time tell us.

1722 MN: Yeah.

1723 GS: You know that's the complexity at the ground level of all this kind of stuff.

1724 MN: So you spent a little bit of time in jail you'd say?

1725 GS: Just a little. Just a couple times I was taken into custody for stuff. That one in the convention
 1726 I later – it was funny because I had short hair and you know, most of the convention arrestees
 1727 were hippies, but I was with a bunch of soldiers who had come back from Vietnam, and we were
 1728 talking to soldiers. And so when it came to trial the arresting officers testified that we were all
 1729 hippies and my lawyer just had a picture of me from the day of the arrest. He was like, do you
 1730 recognize this person? That looks like him. You just testified that he was a long-haired hippie. Is
 1731 that him? Your honor? End of case.

1732 MN: Um, And anything – were you ever in jail for anything for the anti-apartheid movement.

1733 GS: No, no. Nope, and I, I missed the big demonstration at the beginning of the Iraq War, and a
 1734 friend of mine was the oldest person in the cell down on 111th street when they did that big round
 1735 up on Chicago Avenue. He said this is kind of cool. He was 60, and he said, most of the people
 1736 with him were in their twenties. He said this is a new generation. I said it's about time. That's
 1737 good. They were pretty scientific and mean about it. No. I was never arrested on – and I can't
 1738 remember. Might have been some stuff that happened, but you know.

1739 MN: Right. Now, what event or person would you say was the most influential in your
 1740 experience as an activist?

1741 GS: There's a lot of them. There's just a lot of them. You know, in every, in every – I'll give you
 1742 an example. We marched against segregation and racism during the anti-apartheid years 1976 we
 1743 marched into Marquette Park as a group called the Martin Luther King Jr. Movement Coalition.
 1744 Marquette Park at the time was 100% white and there was a Nazi Office right there at the 71st
 1745 and Rockwell. And on the wall of the building, a three flat, was painted the swastika and it said
 1746 niggers, go home, in like five foot high letters. So we get to march and we had a permit, but only
 1747 200 of us were allowed to march and they provided six police officers. We go to the corner of
 1748 71st and California, somebody from the city of Chicago conveniently dumped a load of concrete
 1749 on the edge of the park so that people could throw stuff at us, and there were 2,000 white people
 1750 there trying to kill us. Minimum 2,000. I mean, so, you know, so the sky filled with shit.

1751 MN: Oh, my gosh.

1752 GS: Into the street. And, and, so, I remember distinctly, this is the kind of thing that's valuable,
 1753 two things; one, is the leaders of the march, which was a couple of Black ministers and this
 1754 lawyer I know, had moved ahead of the march about ten feet so they were getting pummeled the
 1755 worst, but we had to stay in the street because most of the marchers were black. And if you were
 1756 black you were color coded for destruction if you went onto the sidewalk. And I thought you

1757 know, those people are still standing, that's really admirable. And I'm ducking shit too, but you
 1758 know, I'm just looking at them thinking this. And then I noticed this one white guy who was a
 1759 real outspoken activist type, he disappeared into the white side of the sidewalk. I suddenly saw
 1760 him over there being white. It was an incredible example of how white can be a privilege So that
 1761 he could get out of the street and become white, he wouldn't be – all this stuff happening. So that
 1762 sort of the –

1763 MN: So –

1764 GS: The, the yin and yang of it. You know you've got the –

1765 MN: How did –

1766 GS: So, I – you know – that day those people who were standing in the street – you know – you
 1767 asked for who is your role model. I mean there is hundreds of them during the war, men and
 1768 women who stood up to the war from inside the armed forces. Uh, when my son Danny, who is
 1769 in college now, was young, and Sharon and I got married, we needed a Sunday school for him.
 1770 His mother and I were divorced and she was suppose to provide him with her Christian
 1771 education, but she wasn't doing it, so we said okay, got her clearance, because it was in the
 1772 divorce thing. He's going to go to Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago, because, Sharon's
 1773 Presbyterian plus Dutch reform. Depends on which church she likes to go to. I don't know if
 1774 you know Fourth Pres. But it's worth on Sunday. It's the church across the street from the
 1775 Hancock building.

1776 MN: Oh okay. Yeah.

1777 GS: On North Michigan. It's the rich people's church.

1778 MN: Okay.

1779 GS: So we go to the church.

1780 MN: Yeah.

1781 GS: And he goes to Sunday school. One of the Sunday school teachers was a guy, I found out
 1782 after we get to know people, had been one of the first West Point–

1783 MN: OH.

1784 GS: - graduates to become a Conscientious objector and oppose the Vietnam War.

1785 MN: Wow.

1786 GS: And you know this is twenty years later, he's teaching Sunday school at Fourth Presbyterian
 1787 Church in Chicago. We talked about, you know, -- you don't even know who all these people
 1788 are. You meet them over time, maybe later or maybe the day people are throwing bricks at you
 1789 trying to kill you. That day in the street I remember one scene – There was a bunch of very well
 1790 organized, hard core Trotskyites in this march with us, from the youth against the war in fascism,
 1791 it was called.

1792 MN: Okay.

1793 GS: And we all, by the way, we used hickory two by fours and three quarter inch ply wood to
 1794 hold our signs, not that thin stuff.

1795 MN: Okay.

1796 GS: the reason was, we had a hunch it might get rough.

1797 MN: Yeah.

1798 GS: And you really want to have hard wood if you are going to have to defend yourself. But
 1799 anyway the, one of the things, these crazies were throwing at us was these quart beer bottles.
 1800 They, they drink half the beer and then they throw the thing and they see it spinning end over end
 1801 with the beer foaming out. And I'm watching this woman, and we're trying to bat these things
 1802 away with the sticks, and one of them got this woman –

1803 MN: (gasps)

1804 GS: - right on the forehead. And she went down and you know, when you get cut across the
 1805 forehead there's a lot of blood. And she went down, she came back up, and her comrades –

1806 MN: Yeah.

1807 GS: - made sure that they stayed with her and held her up and that she was able to finish the
 1808 march. Because it wasn't like she could leave the March and say, excuse me I have to go to the
 1809 hospital, because these assholes on the sidewalk were going to kill any of us that were in the
 1810 street.

1811 MN: Okay.

1812 GS: So that's uh, you know, I, I forgot her name. But that, you know, when you're talking about
 1813 who you admire, there's the official people you are suppose to admire.

1814 MN: Like –

1815 GS: Right.

1816 MN: Martin Luther King.

1817 GS: Martin Luther King, etcetera, etcetera, we give holidays to them. But then there's these other
 1818 people whose courage –

1819 MN: The every day –

1820 GS: - actually, everyday. You know like, the people who bought that church, you just saw them,
 1821 you know and they – they're just doing all kinds of good stuff right here in this community,
 1822 despite Eddie Cortez, but everybody else is cool with it. Um, and I – there's a lot of examples if
 1823 you think back through life, there's lots of examples like that. Because that's what really matters
 1824 for, for kids. And if we're going to set an example, you want to set an example for your own
 1825 children, and you want it to be solid and live. Not something where you preach one thing and
 1826 you practice another. You know, if you say you want to be, if you say there should be a faithful
 1827 relationship between parents, and they should respect each other and respect the children, then

- 1828 you don't go and have affairs on the side. You just are consistent. If you – if that's your thing
 1829 then you don't do the other. Uh, I don't know that's – I could probably think of fifty or sixty
 1830 people and some of them I could still name. I hope that would help, but that would be the
 1831 perspective it would be in.
- 1832 MN: Okay.
- 1833 GS: And there is a lot of people I know, you know. It is just an incredible number of people, who
 1834 have shown more courage under the harshest circumstances than anything we could imagine.
 1835 And South Africa gave a lot of examples of that and, and produced a man whose name will be
 1836 remembered for centuries.
- 1837 MN: Nelson Mandela.
- 1838 GS: Nelson Mandela, but he knew he was a leader of a people not just, you know, the big guy.
- 1839 MN: Yeah.
- 1840 GS: Now I'm not sure the people who are following in his wake are capable of the same sort of
 1841 wisdom. But that's okay.
- 1842 MN: This one is a little more broad, but how has being active in the movement changed your
 1843 life?
- 1844 GS: (laughs)
- 1845 MN: Enriched, you know diminished? (Laughs) um –
- 1846 GS: Um –
- 1847 MN: Changed your characteristic?
- 1848 GS: I can't think of any other life I could have lead, it was a – you know.
- 1849 MN: Rewarding?
- 1850 GS: Well, one of the biggest rewards came uh, two days ago; Sharon and I celebrated our twelfth
 1851 anniversary. Sharon and I met because she admired Substance and wanted to write for Substance.
 1852 And I had gotten out from a bad marriage and was raising Danny, here. Uh and working my ass
 1853 off. And I mean it was like we got married. So you know, activism quote, paid off. Uh, with true
 1854 love and happiness and they all lived happily ever after. How's that?
- 1855 MN: Sounds good to me.
- 1856 GS: I mean the rest of it is all like, all the usual good stuff, you know I can look my kids in the
 1857 eye.
- 1858 MN: Yeah.
- 1859 GS: And I can say here's what I did and why. You know what did you do during the war,
 1860 Daddy? I did this. That's important, because when you're raising your own children you have to

1861 be able to be as honest as possible with each age. You know, their developmental stages will
1862 change. But when my older guy – when I was sued for a million bucks, he was nine years old,
1863 and his mother hated my guts, she was my ex. So when it got on TV, and it was on all the TV
1864 stations –

1865 MN: This was at Substance?

1866 GS: Yeah because of substance, this is when we published the CASE tests –

1867 MN: Okay.

1868 GS: - and among other things that creepy question about African women. Um, and he saw it, his
1869 mother encouraged her to believe I was edited for stealing a million dollars from the children of
1870 Chicago. Not for infringing on a copyright that the mayor and the spin misters at CPS are going
1871 to try to spin that way. It took a while for him to get comfortable with what actually happened
1872 and to sort out the facts. Two weeks ago, during a vacation, we went to Berkley to see him,
1873 because he might graduate within the next six months if they are offering the courses, and his
1874 little brothers won't be able to see him as an undergraduate and all the glory of that, and that we
1875 wanted them to see.

1876 MN: Right.

1877 GS: In Berkley, so we flew out there. And, and you know, by now he's real comfortable with
1878 everything I've – most everything I've done. I think for a long time he felt bad that I divorced his
1879 mother, but I think now that it was better for everybody that that happened. But it's really good
1880 to be able to have that. Uh, but it was rough at the times when, you know I was doing stuff that,
1881 you know, she told him that I was going to lose the house, I was going to lose my job, he was
1882 never going to be able to do the things he wanted, because I was going to go bankrupt. And it
1883 was all my fault for being crazy.

1884 MN: So, like, you wanted to be a good role model?

1885 GS: No, I just felt that it was responsibility for you to be consistent and fair and honest and then
1886 you would be one. I think there's a difference.

1887 MN: Okay.

1888 GS: You know, you don't say, I'm going to be a role model.

1889 MN: Right.

1890 GS: you say, I'm going to do what's right, work for justice, try to print the news accurately, not
1891 blow a source if I get an off the record source on a news story.

1892 MN: So you weren't worried about the role model aspect but the –

1893 GS: No, the role model aspect comes with I think the other things. It feels pretty good to be able
1894 to say that stuff, and even to not remember a lot of it. If I go back now and send you the Connie
1895 day stuff, um, you got to write how I can mail you a pile of stuff here, now that we've gotten this
1896 far. So write the whole thing there. [Hands Melena a notebook]

- 1897 MN: Okay.
- 1898 GS: Name, address, city, state, zip, email, and phone number.
- 1899 MN: And, what was your biggest – this is also probably could apply to many answers – um, your
1900 biggest contribution to the movement? It's one of the required questions.
- 1901 GS: (laughs) you know what's cool about that question?
- 1902 MN: What?
- 1903 GS: You would have to ask people going all the way back to Lyndon, New Jersey, and
1904 continuing until today; in different, in a lot of different movements; anti-war, GI, schools, anti
1905 apartheid. So, I couldn't say, because that's something other people have to say. Maybe
1906 ultimately if you get to be sixty-three years old and you could still be doing this stuff, then you
1907 can – when younger people say I really want to work for justice and go out there and get that
1908 fiery passionate thing that you see. And some old person says oh, you'll grow up. You can say
1909 well I know some people who never grew up and that sense. You know, if it's wrong it stays
1910 wrong, no matter what age you are looking at, right? So maybe that will help at his point, right?
1911 Because I can't run around and go out and run up and down in Colorado Springs where people
1912 are going to have a tank race for me. I don't do that anymore. But if there's other people doing it
1913 we're fine. So I think that's the way I'd have to view it.
- 1914 MN: So just passing the word on –
- 1915 GS: Yeah, that's why we got the website. It's easier to get it now. Although, it's still hard to find
1916 it. I mean, there is so much sludge on the internet, that's just wonderful(??).
- 1917 MN: Yeah.
- 1918 GS: There's a funny story about how you can be naïve. My second wife was Romanian. I got
1919 involved in the Romanian movement against the communist dictatorship in the late 80's.
- 1920 MN: Uhuh.
- 1921 GS: And um, helped publish a newspaper called, Democratic Romania, for a thing called the
1922 Romanian Freedom Formarea. And after Ceausescu was overthrown, I thought freedom of the
1923 press in Romania would mean stuff like Substance. Couple months later, the new free press of
1924 Romania started coming out from Romania; you know what most of it was? The freedom to, to
1925 porn.
- 1926 MN: Oh.
- 1927 GS: The mild tabloid newspapers now had Miss Page three everyday like the British tabs, and
1928 the hard core stuff was coming out all over Eastern Europe within a year. So much for the first
1929 amendment (laughs). You know, that what freedom is.
- 1930 MN: Yeah.
- 1931 GS: So, never, never assume what's going to come out of the struggle that you helped.

1932 MN: That's funny.

1933 GS: That sure, took me a while to get my head around it. This guy I was working with, on the
 1934 Romanian Freedom Formarea, he was an exile. His wife was back home in a town called Arad.
 1935 He comes in one day and he's crest fallen. I said what's the matter man? He opens the local
 1936 newspaper to page three. Miss Page Three, topless, was his wife. He says what am I going to do?
 1937 I said I never go there on this kind of thing. I don't know what this means, man. So you know,
 1938 freedom has a lot of meanings.

1939 MN: Um, looking back now, what would you have done differently? If you could do it over
 1940 again?

1941 GS: Probably would have been, a lot less impatient with people who weren't putting in with the
 1942 intensity – At times I was pretty tyrannical. You know, I mean people contribute as much as they
 1943 can, at the level they can, and you have to be aware of that. But if you really get into a thing, you
 1944 can get, you can get really tunnel vision about the people around you, and lose the ability to be a
 1945 part of that. You know, complex humanity is swirling all around you. So whenever you get really
 1946 intense about a form of activism or a cause, you have to have some way of recognizing that all
 1947 these things are going to end. Apartheid ended. The evils and injustices in South Africa continue
 1948 in different form. But once, you know, if all your energies are devoted to ending apartheid and
 1949 you're going to sacrifice the people around you and everything else to do it, you may be making
 1950 a mistake. You got to step back. Take one day out of seven off. Relax. I think that's a big thing
 1951 you have to do. And I, I – there are other times in my life where I could have done a better job of
 1952 noticing that. I mean every night before we go to bed now, we read or tell bed time stories to the
 1953 little ones.

1954 MN: Yeah.

1955 GS: And the one I usually get stuck with is making up a monster story for the little one. He just
 1956 has to have these two fictional characters defeat a monster. And then at the end of every night,
 1957 every night at the end of the story they go to bed again and they all live happily ever after. And
 1958 you have to have that.

1959 MN: Yeah.

1960 GS: And that's got nothing to do with defeating Arne Duncan's education plan and etcetera. You
 1961 know, because the five year old is going to set the agenda. And we won that fight too. (Laughs)
 1962 [Waves to a neighbor] That's the woman who runs the church programs. I mean that was kind of
 1963 – that one almost just sort of flowed, but when it was in her own back yard it was kind of funny.
 1964 When Eddie went toxic about the black people –

1965 MN: Eddie –

1966 GS: Eddie Cortez, the guy two doors down. That was his wife out there by the way. She's a very
 1967 nice person. She came to me one time; she said I got to tell you Eddie's not a racist. I said okay,
 1968 you tell me. I am just saying, okay, you tell me he's not a racist. This just means everything he
 1969 did was racist. And we're going to stop him, and I don't care what he thinks about black people,
 1970 he's just not going to make this block into a hot bed of craziness. Story end; we won. I better uh;
 1971 I better get you back to the El.

- 1972 MN: Okay.
- 1973 GS: You may need to ask more questions, and we should wrap this up because –
- 1974 MN: Yeah, I just got –
- 1975 GS: You got your time.
- 1976 MN: - one more left. What –
- 1977 GS: Do it.
- 1978 MN: What challenges does South Africa face today, do you think?
- 1979 GS: Well, South Africa has been stuck as part of the new global economical order and neo-
 1980 liberalism. That's depicted very well in some fictions. Uh, I think it's been analyzed very, very
 1981 well in Naomi Klein's book, *The Shock Doctrine*. She has a big section on it, on South Africa.
 1982 And uh, it's kind of nice that we are in the same boat. I mean the neo-liberal, which is basically
 1983 finance capitalism at its worst, agenda is to do this to all of us and now they are doing it here in
 1984 the United States. And the schools are the cutting edge. Um, so well we can get back to this
 1985 internationalist perspective. It's kind of sad that they had to undergo that incredible class
 1986 bifurcation in the society rather than moving towards more equity. But I, I wish them well. Can
 1987 you imagine being a South African gold miner?
- 1988 MN: No.
- 1989 GS: I mean, well, anybody who goes down in the Earth, whether it's coal miners in West
 1990 Virginia, or China, or South Africa they're going to be the hard core struggle for justice at some
 1991 point. And so we'll also be staying in touch with the unions. You know, that's the – *The Shock*
 1992 *Doctrine* does a good job of linking all that and we're just writing the latest chapters because the
 1993 Obama administration is pushing that same agenda on behalf of finance capital. Which some of
 1994 my friends call neo-liberalism, but I prefer the classical descriptions.
- 1995 MN: And you said that was *The Shock Doctrine*?
- 1996 GS: Yeah the book is *The Shock Doctrine*. It's by Naomi Klein. She's a Canadian, whose parents
 1997 went into exile during the Vietnam War. She writes regularly for the nation and she's written a
 1998 few books on Globalization and basically, all they are saying is we told you so because it's
 1999 coming home to the United States now. They did it in Eastern Europe and the – from 1989 on.
 2000 Jim Veil who writes for Substance covered the Yeltsin era in Russia. You know, the people who
 2001 built solidarity and over-threw the tyranny in Poland wound up getting the same, same shit as the
 2002 people in South Africa are getting now. They'd be a hard press to stand together and say, wow,
 2003 we're the same. The ship yard workers from Gdansk, Poland and the miners from South Africa.
 2004 But it's true.
- 2005 MN: Yeah.
- 2006 GS: It's a class thing.
- 2007 MN: Um. Is there anything else you want to say?

- 2008 GS: Nope, thanks. Good luck to you. I'm really glad that um, Columbia College is doing this.
- 2009 MN: Any – any more names of anti apartheid activists that you think would want to help?
- 2010 GS: I'll think about it as I look back through this, now that we've uh, we've gone through this.
- 2011 MN: Yeah.
- 2012 GS: Because if I come up with somebody, I will send you. The main I would say, if it's possible,
2013 um, is – see if you can locate Jarvis Williams.
- 2014 MN: Jarvis Williams.
- 2015 GS: Because there was an entire part of the American Union Movement – Prexy knows this too –
- 2016 MN: Okay.
- 2017 GS: But to get that on, on the record is very important, because there is a tendency for so-called
2018 progressives to view American Unions as sort of a big lump of semi-conservative, self interest.
2019 And that's never been true. So, you want to use the washroom and stuff?
- 2020 MN: Um –
- 2021 GS: I'm going to and then we'll go. I'll drive you back to the El.
- 2022 MN: Okay, thank you very much for this.
- 2023 GS: Okay.
- 2024 [End of final tape]