

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

University History Series
Department of History at Berkeley

Leon F. Litwack

HISTORIAN OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE
AND THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE,
PROFESSOR AT BERKELEY, 1964-2007

Interviews conducted by
Ann Lage
in 2001-2002

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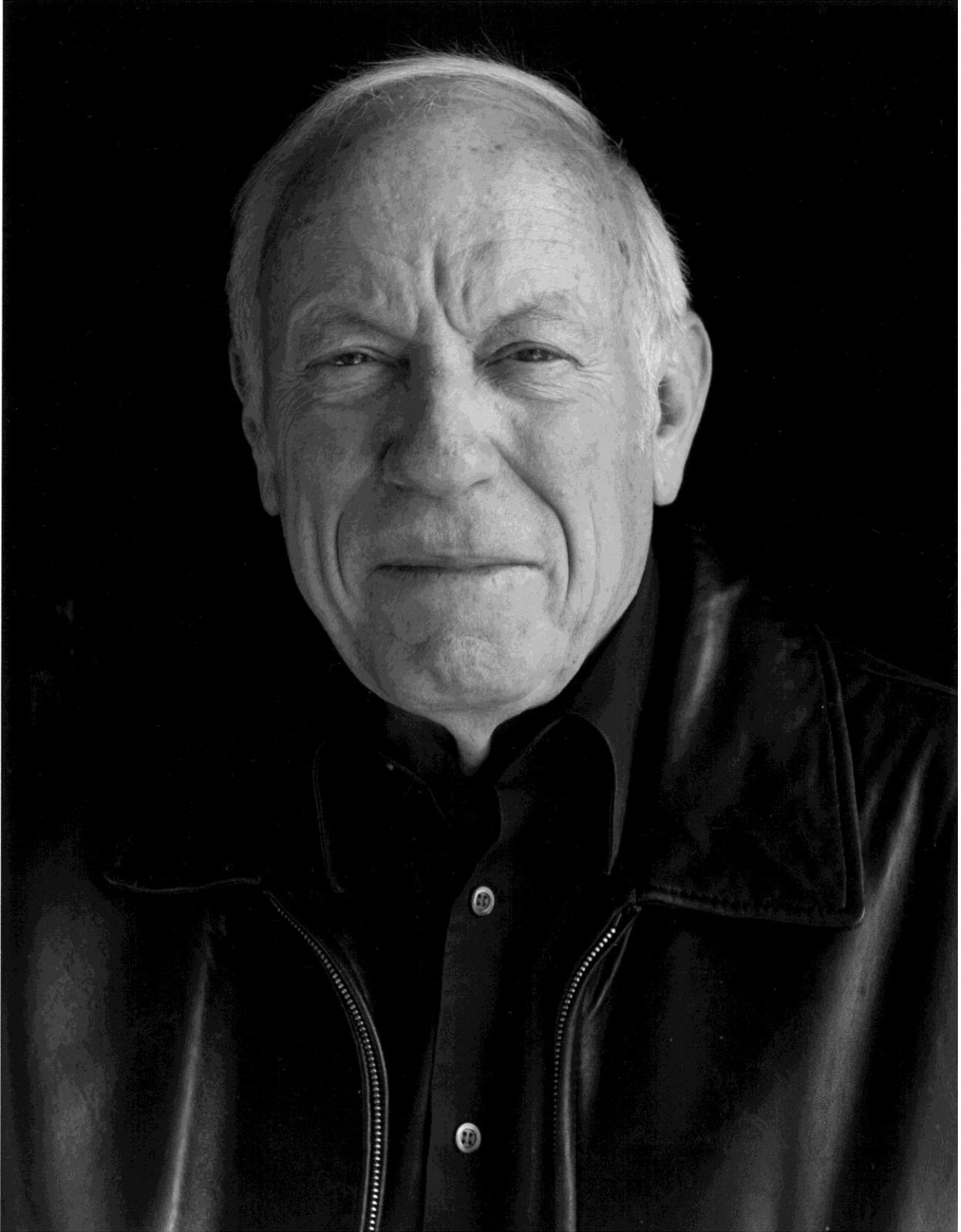
Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the nation. Oral History is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is bound with photographs and illustrative materials and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

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Leon Litwack, 2002.
Photo by Judy Dater

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[End of Interview]

Preface to the Department of History at Berkeley Oral History Series

The Department of History at Berkeley oral history series grew out of Gene Brucker's 1995 Faculty Research Lecture on "History at Berkeley." In developing his lecture on the transformations in the UC Berkeley Department of History in the latter half of the twentieth century, Brucker, whose tenure as professor of history from 1954 to 1991 spanned most of this period, realized how much of the story was undocumented.

Discussion with Carroll Brentano, coordinator of the University History Project at the Center for Studies in Higher Education, history department faculty wife, and a former graduate student in history, reinforced his perception that a great deal of the history of the University and its academic culture was not preserved for future generations. The Department of History, where one might expect to find an abiding interest in preserving a historical record, had discarded years of departmental files, and only a fraction of history faculty members had placed their personal papers in the Bancroft Library.¹ Moreover, many of the most interesting aspects of the history—the life experiences, cultural context, and personal perceptions—were only infrequently committed to paper.² They existed for the most part in the memories of the participants.

Carroll Brentano knew of the longtime work of the Regional Oral History Office (ROHO) in recording and preserving the memories of participants in the history of California and the West and the special interest of ROHO in University history. She and Gene Brucker then undertook to involve Ann Lage, a ROHO interviewer/editor who had conducted a number of oral histories in the University History Series and was herself a product of Berkeley's history department. In the course of a series of mutually enjoyable luncheon meetings, the project to document the history of the Department of History at Berkeley evolved.

In initial discussions about the parameters of the project, a crucial decision was made. Rather than conduct short oral histories focused on topics limited to departmental history, we determined to work with selected members of the department to conduct more lengthy biographical memoirs. We would record relevant personal background—family, education, career choices, marriage and children; discuss other institutional affiliations; explore the process of creating their historical works and changes in the discipline. A central topic for each would be, of course, the Department of History at Berkeley—its governance, the informal and formal relationships among colleagues, the connections with the broader campus, and curriculum and teaching.

¹ The Bancroft Library holds papers from history professors Walton Bean, Woodbridge Bingham, Herbert Bolton, Woodrow Borah, William J. Bouwsma, George Guttridge, George Hammond, John Hicks, David Keightley, Joseph Levenson, Martin Malia, Henry May, Thomas Metcalf, William Alfred Morris, Frederic Paxson, Herbert Priestley, Franz Schurmann, Engel Sluiter, Raymond Sontag, and Kenneth Stampf. Miscellaneous files of the Department, 1915-1929, are also held in Bancroft's University Archives.

² Two published memoirs recall the Berkeley history department: John D. Hicks, *My Life with History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968) recalls his years as professor and dean, 1942-1957; Henry F. May reflects on his years as an undergraduate at Berkeley in the thirties in *Coming to Terms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

Using the Brucker lecture as a point of departure, it was decided that the project would first document the group of professors who came to the department in the immediate postwar years, the 1950s, and the early 1960s. This group, most of them retired, was the one whose distinguished teaching and publications initially earned the department its high national rating. They made the crucial hiring and promotion decisions that cemented the department's strength and expanded the curriculum to meet new academic interests. At the same time, they participated in campus governing bodies dealing with central social, political, and cultural issues of their times: challenges to civil liberties and academic freedom, the response to tumultuous student protests over free speech, civil rights and the Vietnam War, and the demands for equality of opportunity for women and minorities. And they benefited from the postwar years of demographic and economic growth in California, accompanied for the most part through the 1980s with expanding budgets for higher education.

Carroll Brentano and Gene Brucker committed themselves to facilitate project funding and to enlist the interest of potential participants. Members of the department responded with interest, joined the periodic lunch confabs, offered advice in planning, and helped find funding. In the spring of 1996, Brentano and Professor Sheldon Rothblatt organized a symposium, titled "Play It Again, Sam." There, Gene Brucker restaged his Faculty Research Lecture. Professor Henry F. May responded with his perceptions of events, followed by comments from other history faculty, all videotaped for posterity and the Bancroft Library.³

Meanwhile, the oral history project got underway with interviews with Delmer Brown, professor of Japanese history, and Kenneth Stampp, American history, both of whom came to Berkeley in 1946. To date, we have completed a total of seventeen in-depth oral histories with this group, nine of which are now in print and on line. The interviewees represent a variety of subject fields and historical approaches. The series also includes one interview with a faculty wife. (View on line at http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/collections/subjectarea/univ_hist/history_department.html)

Diverse in their personal backgrounds and scholarly interests, the faculty who came to the department in the postwar years had one thing in common: all but one were men.⁴ In the 1970s and 1980s, as more women completed PhDs, women within the academy and the women's movement nationally worked to increase women in tenured faculty positions. The Department of History at Berkeley slowly began to add women to its faculty, beginning in 1971 with the appointment of Natalie Zemon Davis. By 1990, the department had two female full professors, five associate professors, and four assistant professors, of a total tenure-line faculty of sixty-two. During these years, women historians nationally were part of a broader critique of universalist assumptions about history and society that included significant contributions from Berkeley faculty. Feminist scholars, in particular, were integral to the radical changes in subject matter studied, methodology, and modes of discourse in the profession.⁵ The new intellectual and

³ The Brucker lecture and May response, with an afterword by David Hollinger, are published in *History at Berkeley: A Dialog in Three Parts* (Chapters in the History of the University of California, Number Seven), Carroll Brentano and Sheldon Rothblatt, editors [Center for Studies in Higher Education and Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1998].

⁴ Adrienne Koch was a faculty member, 1958-1965.

⁵ Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History* (New York, London: W.W.

programmatic directions associated with an increase in female faculty were accompanied by sometimes contentious battles at Berkeley as elsewhere over the evaluation of academic work, teaching priorities, and curriculum development.

The second phase of the project on the Department of History at Berkeley focuses on the women faculty who came to Berkeley in the 1970s and 1980s. In 2003, Natalie Davis was interviewed during a visit to the campus, and in 2008 we launched a three-year project to document several more of Berkeley's women historians. As in earlier interviews, we explore the faculty member's contribution to her scholarly field, examining the development of her intellectual project and working methods, and probe experiences relevant to understanding the development of the discipline and the department. In addition, we discuss challenges facing women in the academy over the course of their professional careers.

The organizers of this project are grateful to the Department of History and to the many individual donors that have made these interviews possible. The considerable interest in the fruits of our project to date confirms our initial premise that departmental histories and personal memoirs are essential to the unraveling of some knotty puzzles: What kind of a place is this University of California, Berkeley, to which we have committed much of our lives? What is this academic culture in which we are enmeshed? And what is this enterprise History, in which we all engage? As one of the project instigators reflected, "Knowing what was is essential; and as historians we know the value of sources, even if they are ourselves."

Carroll Brentano, Coordinator
University History Project
Center for Studies in Higher Education

Gene Brucker
Shepard Professor of History Emeritus

Ann Lage, Project Director
Regional Oral History Office
Berkeley, California
May 2009

Series List—Department of History at Berkeley

February 2014

- Bouwsma, Beverly Hancock. *Observer of Campus and Community Culture, Berkeley Department of History Faculty Wife, 1956-2001*. 2008, 136 pp.
- Bouwsma, William J. *Historian of European Culture in the Early Modern Era, University of California, Berkeley, 1956-1991*. 2008, 137 pp.
- Brown, Delmer M. *Professor of Japanese History, University of California, Berkeley, 1946-1977*. 2000, 410 pp.
- Brentano, Robert. *Scholar and Teacher of Medieval History, University of California, Berkeley, 1952-2002*. 2005, 370 pp.
- Brucker, Gene. *Historian of Renaissance Florence, University of California, Berkeley, 1954-1991*. 2005, 211 pp.
- Davis, Natalie Zemon. *Historian of Early Modern Europe, Professor at Berkeley, 1971-1978*. 2010, 79 pp.
- Fass, Paula S. *American Social and Cultural Historian and Historian of Childhood, University of California Berkeley, 1974-2012*. 2012, 113 pp.
- Herr, Richard. *Historian of Spain and France, University of California, Berkeley, 1960-1991*. 2009, 256 pp.
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- Jordan, Winthrop D. *Historian of Slavery and Race Relations in America, Professor at the University of California, Berkeley, 1963-1982*. 2009, 194 pp.
- Keightley, David N. *Historian of Early China, University of California, Berkeley, 1969-1998*. 2003, 163 pp.
- Levine, Lawrence W. *Historian of American Culture, Professor at Berkeley, 1962-1994*. 2014, 478 pp.
- Litwack, Leon F. *Historian of the American People and the African American Experience, Professor at Berkeley, 1964-2007*. 2014, 315 pp.
- May, Henry F. *Professor of American Intellectual History, University of California, Berkeley, 1952-1980*. 1999, 218 pp.
- Malia, Martin Edward. *Historian of Russian and European Intellectual History*. 2005, 229 pp.
- Riasanovsky, Nicholas V. *Professor of Russian and European Intellectual History, University of California, Berkeley, 1957-1997*. 1998, 310 pp.
- Schorske, Carl E. *Intellectual Life, Civil Libertarian Issues, and the Student Movement at the University of California, Berkeley, 1960-1969*. 2000, 203 pp.
- Stampp, Kenneth M. *Historian of Slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction, University of California, Berkeley, 1946-1983*. 1998, 310 pp.
- Halperin, Tulio. *An Oral History*. 2013

Donated Collection:

- Borah, Woodrow W. *Woodrow W. Borah interview: oral history transcript*, by James W. Wilkie and Rebecca Horn, 1983. Transcript in Bancroft Library.

In Process:

- Jay, Martin, European Intellectual Historian
Wakeman, Frederic, Historian of China

Interview History—Leon F. Litwack

A celebrated teacher and scholar of the history of the American people and of the African American experience, Leon Litwack has been a Berkeley campus fixture and self-described “disturber of the peace” for most of the sixty-six years since he arrived as an undergraduate in 1948. His oral history documents and reflects on his personal background, education, teaching, and research and writing. It explores his lifelong quest to uncover and to teach the history of race relations in America and the experiences of people long absent from the historical narrative. He has authored four major books and countless articles, including *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (1961); *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (1979); *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (1998); and *How Free is Free: the Long Death of Jim Crow* (Nathan Huggins lectures, 2009). He has been awarded the Pulitzer Prize for history (1980), the National Book Award for history (1981), and the Francis Parkman prize awarded by the Society of American Historians (1980).

As his oral history reveals, Litwack’s focus on the lives of ordinary men and women and his sensitivity to race and racism grew out of his family roots and boyhood experiences. His parents were Jewish immigrants from Russia in the first decade of the twentieth century. They met each other in San Francisco, as members of an anarchist-socialist-Jewish-vegetarian-hiking club. Litwack describes them both as avid readers, lovers of nature, and philosophical radicals. Raised in a largely Mexican neighborhood of the seaside community of Santa Barbara in southern California, young Leon soon began to challenge the prevailing attitudes and historical interpretations about race and labor he encountered in high school. In these years he also developed his love of books and reading; he worked in the public library, read widely, and began to collect books in black literature and history, a collection which is now one of the finest private libraries of its kind.

Documenting his long connection to Berkeley, his oral history gives a picture of the campus and the Department of History during six decades. Litwack came to Berkeley as a history major in his sophomore year. He was active in campus politics, presided over Henry Wallace’s 1949 campus visit, and had a role as a student in the loyalty oath controversy that embroiled the campus in those years. After graduation, he spent the summer as a seaman on a ship to the Far East before returning to Berkeley to begin graduate studies in history in 1951 under Kenneth Stampf. With a break for a stint in army, he received his PhD in 1958 and accepted a position at the University of Wisconsin. In 1964, during the tumultuous year of the Free Speech Movement, he returned to Berkeley as a visiting professor, and that year was hired as associate professor for fall 1965. He retired in 2007 as the Alexander F. and May T. Morrison professor of history after forty-three years as an acclaimed teacher and engaged citizen of the campus. Still an active lecturer and scholar, he is now working on the experience of African Americans during and after World War II.

Leon Litwack is known as a scholar who enjoys and excels at teaching; he is equally at home in large lecture classes as in graduate seminars and estimates that he has taught more than 30,000 undergraduates. He taught the introductory class in American history throughout his career, with carefully constructed, eloquent lectures which often introduced film, music, and other media as interpretive documents. He initiated, with Winthrop Jordan, the first course on African American history at Berkeley and always included the history of often overlooked Americans in

his US history classes. He received two Distinguished Teaching Awards granted by the campus and the Golden Apple Award for distinguished teaching awarded by the Associated Students. An influential mentor of generations of graduate students, he inserted brief comments on each of his PhD students as he reviewed the transcript of his oral history.

Our nine interview sessions were audiotaped from August 2001 through January 2002, the first four in his Dwinelle Hall office on the Berkeley campus, the last five in the library of his North Berkeley home. The transcript was lightly edited and sent to him in April 2002. A stroke in July 2002, along with his teaching commitments and work on the Nathan Huggins lectures and other writings, delayed his review of the transcript for several years. Given his careful attention to style in his books and in the composition of his lectures, it was not surprising that he reviewed the transcript with the same concerns for clarity and precision. He edited the initial several sessions carefully, clarifying his language, correcting facts, adding pertinent details, and removing repetitive language. As we discussed with him our wish to keep the transcript as a faithful record of the taped interviews, he reviewed the later sessions with a lighter hand. His changes throughout were primarily for clarity and style rather than substantive meaning. Additions to the transcript are bracketed.

This oral history is one of twenty-two in-depth interviews on the Department of History at Berkeley; the list of completed oral histories in the series is included in this volume. Most of the interviews can be found online at

http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/collections/subjectarea/univ_hist/history_department.html.

Copies of all interviews and the audio or video recordings are available for research use in The Bancroft Library. The Regional Oral History Office is a division of The Bancroft Library and is under the direction of Neil Henry. Special thanks are owed to Esther Ehrlich for her initial editing of the transcript, to Linda Norton for shepherding the interview through the production process, and to former University Archivist James R.K. Kantor for his careful proofreading of the final transcript.

Ann Lage
Interviewer, Project Director
Berkeley, California
April 2014

Interview 1: August 24, 2001

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

Lage: We're just going to start in a relaxed manner. I want to hear about your parents first. It sounds like you have a very interesting background.

Litwack: I think so. They were fascinating people. I was very fortunate.

Lage: Would you tell me about your parents and their lives?

Litwack: My mother's name was Manya (or Minnie) Nitkin. She was Manya in Russia; immigration officials turned the name into Minnie. My father was Julius Litwack. Both were born in Russia, more specifically, the Ukraine. My father was born in Pervomaisk which is north of Odessa. He spent most of his teenage years, I believe, in Odessa, until he migrated to the United States. He was an activist, a rebel. He said he had been involved—he never told me the degree of his involvement—but he had vivid recollections of the 1905 revolution and had been jailed briefly in Odessa, where Leon Trotsky was also confined.

Lage: Do you have a birthdate for him, to place him in time?

Litwack: He was born on September 9, 1885, and died on September 14, 1964, at the age of 79. My mother was born on December 25, 1891, in the town of Bugoslav, a rural village about a hundred miles outside of Kiev. We'll come back to that story because in 1980, when I went to Moscow State University to teach as a Fulbright scholar, one of my desires had always been to visit my mother's hometown, in large part because she talked about it all the time. My father never talked that much about Odessa, but my mother talked always about Bugoslav and what life had been like in Bugoslav.

They migrated—not together, they didn't know each other until they met many years later in San Francisco. My father came over to the United States in 1906 partly to escape the draft for the Russo-Japanese War, as so many migrants at that time did, but also to escape the persecution of Jews.

Lage: But not because of his activities in the 1905 revolution?

Litwack: That might have been partly responsible as well. My mother did recall—but never went into great detail—did recall the pogroms. She never indicated whether her own family or village had actually been victimized by a pogrom, or whether it was something that they just simply knew because of what others in the area said or experienced.

My mother came over in 1907, arriving on May 22, on the ship *The New Amsterdam*. I can be precise about it only because at someone's recommendation I went on the Internet and found the Ellis Island website. I

could not only trace my mother, but I could actually see a photograph of the ship, *The New Amsterdam*, on which she came to New York.

Lage: Did you find your father's records?

Litwack: No. For some reason—. I'm still looking. I don't know why he doesn't show up or anyone of his family. Someone told me that these immigration records are not complete, that some people's records have been lost, but it was very exciting coming across my mother's record.

They came to New York City, as so many did. Some members of their family had already come to New York. My father had two sisters and two brothers; one brother (Uncle Usher) stayed in Russia and never came to the United States. [My son met Usher's grandson while working for the World Bank in Moscow in 2005. It turned into a family reunion.—narrator's addition] My mother had two sisters. They both came to the United States. I'm somewhat unclear as to how many of my grandparents came over. I never met any of my grandparents. I know some did come over. Maybe two of them came over, and they stayed in New York.

Lage: Do you know why your mother came?

Litwack: I don't know precisely why she came, no.

Lage: It's interesting that she told you a lot about her village but not why she left.

Litwack: One of the greatest regrets of my life is that I did not do—as I threatened to do, although threatened is not the right term, as I planned to do—an oral history of my mother. The kind of equipment that one needs for such an oral history was coming into very common use at the time she was living, and I kept saying, "I'm going to do it." She died in 1972. I kept saying, "I'm going to get the equipment. I'm going to sit down with her. We're going to go through this." My father, I guess it never occurred to me, because I didn't think we had the equipment to do it.

Lage: And you said he didn't talk as much about the past.

Litwack: No, but he would have if I had prodded him, I think. But that's a terrible regret because now that they're gone I cannot put these details together about why they came and the trip over here. I would like to know so much more about their lives; unfortunately I'm not able to tell you as much in detail as I would like to. [As a family historian, I failed.—narrator's addition]

They came to New York City. My mother worked in the garment factories, as so many Jewish-Russian immigrants did. My father, to the best of my knowledge, drifted from one job to another. His brother, Abe, went into textiles and did quite well and was always very kind to my father, and gave

him a few jobs here and there working with textiles. My father, however, had no sense of business; that was one of the beautiful things about him. He could never have been a businessman; as a business person, or as a door-to-door salesman, he was a disaster.

My father ultimately migrated out from New York and decided he wanted to come to California. If anything attracted him to California it was the sheer beauty of the region and wanting to see the country.

Lage: Did he talk in any more detail about that?

Litwack: No. He mentioned, I remember one time, that on his way out he came through Terre Haute [Indiana]. He mentioned coming through Terre Haute because, whether he actually saw Eugene Debs or not, he knew Eugene Debs lived there. Eugene Debs was a very inspiring figure to him.

My father was, from his Odessa days, an intellectual. He loved philosophy; he loved the great books; he loved Russian literature and the Yiddish language and Yiddish literature. He may, in fact, have taught Yiddish in Odessa before he came to this country. He was a well educated person without a formal education, an intellectual without a college degree.

Lage: But a reader?

Litwack: An avid reader, and he would have a great influence on my reading, as would my mother for that matter. My mother, while she was working in the garment factory—and incidently, she worked for a brief period of time at the Triangle Factory, before the disastrous fire—my mother went to night classes. The one she always talked about was the night class that she attended on Shakespeare. When I was reading Shakespeare in school she would always talk about which plays she had studied when she was at night school. It was quite something. She worked this enormous day, like a ten-hour day, and you would think after all that fatiguing labor she would want to just come home and eat and go to sleep, but no, she was very intent on getting some kind of education and an education in what she loved most, literature and music.

Her other great interest, then, was music, and she always talked about how they would take their lunches, or dinners whenever they would see the opera; they would sit in the balcony, or whatever would be the cheapest seats. For them it was a magnificent experience. They were just carried away by the opera. When I say "they," she and her friends, her family, and her fellow workers. Then she made the decision to come out to California.

Lage: Did she make this decision separately?

Litwack: My parents didn't know each other in New York. They had not met in New York, no, no. My father and mother came out separately to San Francisco in 1914. I'm not sure what year he came out.

Lage: With anybody?

Litwack: Yes. My mother came with her best friend Celia, who would become Celia Fox. Celia and my mother came out together. Their photograph, the two of them, with my aunt who stayed in New York—I used their photograph in my textbook to illustrate the chapter on immigration. It's a perfect photograph. There they are in their immigrant outfits. (I think they went to a studio and put on some Russian garb.) It's a wonderful photograph, and I decided why not use my mother's photograph in this essay. Interesting, in one edition of the textbook I used it in the immigration section; in another edition I used it in the section on women.

Already in New York, my mother, in addition to going to the opera, taking night classes in Shakespeare, also listened to lectures. She went to the lectures at the Cooper Union. It's still there in New York, in lower Manhattan.

My mother was also active in the garment workers' union, essentially as an unpaid organizer. She worked, but she was also interested in building the union. She always told the story about how they would follow home some Italian women who were working in the same factory, trying to persuade them to join the union. They came right up to the stoop where the women were entering the house, and as they came to the door a man came out holding a butcher knife, saying, "Stay away from them! Stay away from them!" That spoke dramatically to the tension between the Italian working women and the Jewish-Russian working women when it came to trade unions. In recent years, historians and scholars have examined the causes of racial and ethnic tensions at the work place, providing the context for the stories I heard at home.

Lage: But she recognized them and spoke about them?

Litwack: Yes.

Lage: Did she come with the labor union background from Russia at all?

Litwack: No, I don't believe so.

Lage: It just was part of the community.

Litwack: That's right. That was not her center of activity, but she was proud to belong to the garment workers' union and believed in unionism from that point on.



Leon Litwack's mother on left, his aunt on right, wearing Ukrainian attire, a few years before hitchhiking to California from New York, ca 1917.

Lage: Did your father have a political bent?

Litwack: My father had a philosophical bent, which affected everything, including his politics. My parents met in San Francisco in an anarchist-socialist-Jewish-vegetarian hiking club.

Lage: Does this have a name? [laughter]

Litwack: It didn't have a name, no. That's what all tied them together. They were either anarchists or socialists, and they were vegetarians, they loved to hike, and they were Jewish.

- Lage: And they lived in San Francisco?
- Litwack: There was one house in San Francisco where they often met as a kind of salon. People would come and speak to them as a group. My mother recalled that Emma Goldman came once and spoke to their group. I've seen the photographs of them on their hikes; they're all sitting there on the top of Mount Tamalpais. They look like hippies. They have the, what do you call it, around their—?
- Lage: Bandanas?
- Litwack: The bandana around their forehead. I once told my mother that they seemed like what we call the hippies today. She shook her head, "Oh no, no," she said, "we bathed."
- Lage: What time period are we in now?
- Litwack: 1920s.
- Lage: Have you ever found links between that group and other groups in the thirties?
- Litwack: No, I have not, and I have always said that this subculture somehow should be studied. They had ties to the Petaluma Jewish community. When I first came to San Francisco, at the age of six, my parents spent some days in San Francisco, visited friends in Oakland, and then went out to Petaluma, where they had a number of close friends.
- Lage: And Petaluma was also politically kind of radical.
- Litwack: Very radical, that's right. Some of the people who ended up in Petaluma had also been a part of the hiking club; that I know. Celia, of course, was part of the hiking club. So my mother meets Julius, her husband. Celia meets Harry Fox, and they marry.
- Lage: In San Francisco.
- Litwack: Yes, her best friend.
- Lage: Was Harry Fox a friend of your father's?
- Litwack: Well, they were all friends. They were all together in this group. When I look at the photographs, it's very interesting. My father, he looks wonderful in the photographs, but he just seems like he's almost somewhere else. He was so inspired by the beauty of the mountains and nature, very much affected by that.

These people were not what I would call political activists. If they were radicals, anarchists, or socialists, they were more philosophical radicals, very interested in what was going on in the world. My mother does recall going over with two other women to carry whatever they were carrying, food or books, to San Quentin where Tom Mooney was incarcerated. They were part of the "Free Tom Mooney" movement. Aside from that, I don't believe they were day-to-day political activists.

My mother went to work in a garment factory in San Francisco, close to where the major bus and city rail station would later be located.

Lage: The downtown terminal?

Litwack: Yes. I found her name in a San Francisco city directory, you know where they give you the name of the person and an occupation. For occupation for my mother they had "machine tender," which means, in this case, a sewing machine of some kind. She still did that kind of work. My father is not in the directory, I assume because he was still pretty much a drifter, from one job to another. I really don't know how he sustained himself. I don't believe he taught. He continued to do things for his brother.

Lage: His brother was back East?

Litwack: In New York. His brother would send him dry goods to sell, hoping that that would help him out.

Lage: So maybe he was an independent salesman?

Litwack: Well, he didn't do very well. He tried to sell fabrics door to door when they moved down to Santa Barbara as well, and he ended up usually giving the goods away because he felt so sorry for the people he was trying to sell them to. That was the kind of person he was.

Before they moved to Santa Barbara in 1929, they lived in San Francisco. They loved San Francisco. It was a place of incredible beauty. They loved hiking. My mother once hiked to the very top of—I have that photograph of her—Mount Rainier with a number of her friends, including Celia and Harry. I don't think my father was on that hike for some reason. They also hiked in the national parks. They knew the national parks intimately.

Lage: Would they go up to the Sierra?

Litwack: They would go to Yosemite. They would go to Sequoia. My father climbed Mount Whitney. They just loved the outdoors. They loved nature. They loved the beauty.

They found it exhilarating.

- Lage: But they wouldn't be a group that might have joined a Sierra Club hike?
- Litwack: No, that's exactly right. They were sort of a band of free thinkers. It was really an incredible time. They were in their early forties when I came along, when I was conceived.
- Lage: Now when did they get married?
- Litwack: They probably were married, I assume, about 1927, '28, or '26 possibly. I was born on December 2, 1929. Knowing that I was coming along, they decided to leave San Francisco. Although they loved San Francisco, they decided it wasn't the ideal place in which to raise a child. They thought about what would be the ideal place to raise a child, and they chose Santa Barbara. Meanwhile, Celia and Harry went to Los Angeles. They remained very close to my family, and I always thought of Celia really as an aunt and Harry as an uncle, since I never really knew my New York relatives.
- Lage: You were totally out of touch with those relatives?
- Litwack: Totally isolated from the New York contingent. My parents came out to California, and the rest of the family stayed in New York. One of my mother's sisters moved to Chicago, that was about it.
- My parents moved to Santa Barbara where I was born at Cottage Hospital. The first two years we lived on Olive Street, right off of De La Guerra. My parents always rented. They never owned a home. They never owned a car, never learned to drive a car.
- Lage: That must have been hard in Santa Barbara.
- Litwack: My mother said that she hitchhiked out—again, this is something I wish I knew more about. She always said, "Well, we hitchhiked out to California." My father said the same thing. Now, I'm not sure what they meant by hitchhiking, because after all there weren't that many cars on the road. That would have been a very difficult task. But that's the term she used. That was one of those questions I would like to have asked her. In fact, I tried yesterday to call Lillian Fox, Celia's daughter, to see if she had any recollections of how they hitchhiked out from New York to California. I wasn't able to reach her, but I'm still going to try. [I did reach Lillian. She had no idea how they hitchhiked to California and regretted she had not taped her mother's life story.—narrator's addition.]
- Lage: It seems so daring for anybody, but especially for a woman,
- Litwack: Absolutely. Every time I mention this story people say, "hitchhiked!?" As you just said, very daring. Unfortunately, I can't fill in the details.

Lage: Just coming to California seems daring when the whole family stayed back, and they left, both of them, independently.

Litwack: We think what they did was put together a combination of some hitchhiking, some buses, possibly some trains, stopping many places on the way, particularly when they came to the national parks. My father, early on, probably on his way out to California, fell in love with the Grand Canyon. He always talked about it as one of the most inspiring places he had ever seen.

So they reached San Francisco and then came down to Santa Barbara. We moved from a place on Olive Street to 622 North Milpas Street—again, a house which they rented—and remained in that house until after I went away to college. They had a very nice landlady, who lived right next door, who rented the house to them at a very, very low rate, and I don't believe ever raised the rent. She was just a very generous woman.

What did they do in Santa Barbara? Well, my father looked around to see what the possibilities might be. He came to realize, again, that he was not made for business because even though his uncle continued to send him dry goods to sell, he would go to mostly Mexican families in our neighborhood. They would love to have the dry goods, but they would promise to pay later. It was very difficult for them to pay later, and my father didn't really care. That was a problem, so he became a gardener. He wanted to be outdoors. He loved nature; he loved the flowers and plants. He gardened initially on one of the large estates in Montecito, a wealthy enclave near Santa Barbara, and later became the chief gardener, and I think the only gardener for a time, at the Miramar Hotel in Montecito.

Lage: He found a stable employment then?

Litwack: Fairly stable. I think there were times—after all those were Depression years—there were times when it was tough, but for the most part he stayed at his task of gardening. I remember quite vividly going up, about four blocks, to Haley Avenue where I would wait for the bus that would bring him home from work. It was always a thrill for me to be there at the bus stop when he got off in his gardener's clothes, usually carrying a lunch pail, and I would greet him, and we would walk back to the house. To this day I think about those meetings.

My mother hung out a shingle which said, "Dressmaking and alterations." Indeed, she had a clientele, people who learned about how good she was as a seamstress. They would come to the house, including many of my junior high and high school teachers, who had learned about her skills as a dressmaker. Economically, along with my father's job, that's the way we survived.

We were a poor family, but I never felt deprived in any way. My mother had her priorities. Fortunately or unfortunately, I was her major priority. [laughter]

It seemed like when I was born her life became essentially my life. Her life was looking after me, basically.

Lage: Had they wanted a child for a long time?

Litwack: Yes. Oh, I don't know. I came along not too long after they were married, so I don't think it was something they had tried for a long time.

Lage: You had said they were older. They married late?

Litwack: Yes, they married late. My mother always put a high priority on me and always a high priority on health and food. She was a vegetarian, so I was raised a vegetarian.

Lage: Now, that wasn't so common in those days either.

Litwack: That wasn't so common, and it had nothing to do with religion; it had everything to do with health. I still have her little red book—I used to call it "the little red book"—where she had all the foods described in terms of whether they were good for you or not, or how bad they might be for you, including all meats.

Lage: Did she read a particular journal? I wonder where she got all this information?

Litwack: There were a few books. She generally knew what she was talking about. Wherever she got the information, I don't know. She had her own medical remedies, some of which I thought were crazy. When I would come down with a bad cold she would go out—as you know, Santa Barbara has a lot of eucalyptus trees and there were some very close in the neighborhood—and she would come home with these eucalyptus leaves. She would get a big pan of boiling hot water and drop the leaves of eucalyptus in the hot water and put it under my bed so the fumes would come up. I said, "What kind of witchcraft is this?" [laughter] Yes, it actually did open things up, but I thought this was really wild and really crazy.

Lage: Nobody else's mother did that, I bet.

Litwack: That's right. Then when our child came along, 1957, and I remember when John, our son, had his first bad cold. We went to the doctor and the doctor said, "What you do is you go to the pharmacy, and you get a vaporizer, and you get a little oil of eucalyptus, and you put it right in the vaporizer, and that's the best." And I said, "That sounds so strikingly familiar." As soon as the fumes started coming up I was reliving my childhood experiences, exactly the same thing. Just think—if my mother had made a product out of it, maybe they could have bought a home! [laughter] She watched very carefully what I ate.

Lage: What kinds of foods did she serve? It wouldn't be traditional Russian food.

Litwack: She made borscht. She made fabulous borscht but not with meat, with beets and beet leaves. Her borscht was indescribably good. She made her own yogurt. She got the culture from a Greek family across the street, and she continued with that culture, for as long as she lived, to make yogurt that was incomparable—that is, it was a real comedown to start getting accustomed to the yogurt that you buy in the stores. Now I'm used to it, and it's fine, but her yogurt was so fabulous. She would make concoctions out of nuts, raisins, and dates, churn them together and make little balls out of them. Of course, vegetables. The highlight of a meal would generally be a carrot pudding, or a rice pudding.

Lage: She ate milk and eggs?

Litwack: Milk and eggs, yes. As long as it remained possible to find it, we would always drink raw milk; that was also consistent with her philosophy. I remember once in grammar school, out of curiosity, exchanging sandwiches. I gave a friend an avocado sandwich, and he gave me a ham sandwich, and I concluded that he had the better of the exchange. It didn't do anything for me. When I got to high school I was asked out to dinner a few times, and I had chicken. I liked chicken. It tasted very good to me. My mother, as a result of that, would as a treat make me chicken once a week. She had no problem with it; it was not an issue. She just said, "Okay."

[End Tape 1, Side A; begin Tape 1, Side B]

Litwack: She would bring in fish, as well as chicken, and generally I would have that one night a week. It was like a special thing, on Saturday night. But she did not eat any of it. My father went back and forth in terms of whether he would partake of the fish or chicken. Occasionally she would also make liver, because she thought that was nutritionally very good, and my father would sometimes eat that because he tended to be anemic, and this was apparently a very good thing for him.

I never felt like I was missing out on things. Only, I guess, when I wanted to do things because of the radio serials I would be listening to. I would have loved to have gotten the Magic Decoder from the *Captain Midnight* program, or the *Little Orphan Annie*, whatever toy they were offering. In order to get them, my mother would have to go out and buy some Weber's bread. It's white bread, which she just thought was terrible, and of course she was absolutely right. [laughter]

Lage: That's true. She was way ahead of her time.

- Litwack: Absolutely, way ahead of her time. I felt deprived only in that sense, that I couldn't obtain some of the items that were being sold, obviously very successfully, by these radio programs.
- Lage: You didn't feel too different among your classmates?
- Litwack: No, I don't remember feeling that way. Oh, I do remember just a partial embarrassment when I would invite friends over for my birthday. My mother always had me invite a few close friends over for my birthday dinner, or birthday lunch, whatever the case might be. Of course, I knew they would not be served meat, and they probably expected to be eating meat. That didn't bother me too much. She also would never go out and get a birthday cake. She made her own birthday cake which consisted of apple pie and a graham-cracker crust, which I just thought was fabulous, so fabulous that I don't recall any birthday in which I have not had it.
- Lage: Even to this day?
- Litwack: To this day. Rhoda now makes it, and it tastes just as good now as it did then, especially with a little vanilla ice cream topping. That's always been my birthday cake. It's terrific.
- She had her definite ideas about nutrition, about food, about what was good, and what was not good. By and large, she's been confirmed in her preferences. I read very early on the experience of Jurgis's family in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*. She suspected that was still happening to meat products, despite the Food and Drug Administration.
- Lage: Do you think that had been something that influenced her towards vegetarianism?
- Litwack: I'm not sure where it came from.
- Lage: But you mentioned this whole group of hikers?
- Litwack: That's right. They were all vegetarians, and I'm sure they all came to it not from religious convictions but from the belief that meat was not healthy.
- Lage: Not from the thought that killing an animal is wrong?
- Litwack: No. It had nothing to do with that either. It was just that meat was not healthy. They seemed to have, if you needed them, the books that proved their case. We did have one health food store in Santa Barbara, and they patronized it. That came to be somewhat embarrassing because the owner was German, and it turned out he was also pro-Nazi. When World War II came around he was incarcerated, and my parents were now deprived of these items that they

would buy at the health food store. They didn't particularly like him as a person, but that's another story.

The neighborhood in which I grew up was, by and large, Mexican. That was the term that we used at that time. If you go today to where I grew up, on the corner of Milpas and Alphonse, you'll find there, where our rented house stood, a very popular little Mexican restaurant, called La Super Rica, where people come from all over Santa Barbara, some from L.A.—not so much a restaurant as almost a road-stand. (Bob Dylan once dined there, and it was a favorite of Julia Child.) You enter the place, and there's a little garden area with a canvas ceiling where you eat your meal. You pick the food up at the window, and then you go into the room (essentially my living room or bedroom), and that's where you sit down and eat.

Lage: Is it the same building?

Litwack: No, no.

Lage: It's been torn down?

Litwack: That's right. Next door is an absolute duplicate of the house in which we lived, and that house had belonged to the landlady, who lived right next door. But you walk up Alphonse Street—and I do every year when I go back to Santa Barbara; I always go back to my neighborhood—nothing has changed. It probably now is almost 100 percent Mexican. When I grew up there, I would say maybe more like 70 percent. There were also a large number of Italian families, a few Greek families, like the people across the street from us, but by and large, it was a Mexican neighborhood. My early childhood friends were Mexican, to a large degree.

Lage: Were they English speaking? Spanish-speaking?

Litwack: As I recall, my friends, like myself, were all first generation, and their parents had come from Mexico as my parents had come from Russia. I recall helping some of my friends, in eighth grade or ninth grade Spanish, on doing the homework, which I thought was so absurd because they spoke Spanish fluently. They spoke the language fluently. I didn't speak the language fluently, but I was helping them out with the grammar assignments. [laughter] It made no sense, but I envied them for the fact that they had another language besides English.

Lage: Were there tensions between the different ethnic groups?

Litwack: No, not any that I can recall. If there were tensions in Santa Barbara they were class tensions, which tended to override, remarkably enough, any ethnic tensions. If there were tensions in Santa Barbara I aligned myself with the kids in the neighborhood. That was a neighborhood in which I believed. They were

terrific. I still see some of them. They were terrific people then, and they're terrific people now. Nothing has really changed in Santa Barbara, except the suburbs.

The restaurant, incidentally, serves not the usual fare, that is the tacos and enchiladas; it's central Mexican food, which I didn't know much about, so it's rather unusual. It prides itself on having, as one of the clients that comes to my old living room very often, Julia Child. She is very much taken by the cuisine at this particular place. So if you're in Santa Barbara, I would recommend it.

Lage: Tell me the name again.

Litwack: I think it's just called Super-Rica. [La Super-Rica Taqueria at 622 N. Milpas St.] That was an exhilarating experience for me. When I think back on it now I recall the pride I felt growing up in this neighborhood. I felt very privileged in a way. It was an extraordinary education because I would listen to—I would be over at their house, they would be over at my house—I would listen to their parents talk about their experiences, as I listened to my mother and father talk about their experiences. All their stories fascinated me. I still would say to this day that those stories are what drove me to history, because, as I soon came to discover, historians had excluded these voices from their narratives.

Lage: At the time did you sit at their feet and listen to the stories and ask more questions?

Litwack: I remember listening to some of the stories. I don't really know how questioning I might have been, but I listened to the stories. That would play a role in—certainly, as I said, a major role in becoming a historian. I'll get to that when we discuss junior high school, because that is when I began to really feel the need for someone to tell those stories.

I began working at a very early age. I should look at my social security records, they would tell me exactly what year. I believe I started when I was in grammar school. The Greek family across the street, he made his money by—he drove a truck and he would bring into their garage truckloads of lemons. My first job that I can recall was sorting lemons. Whenever the truck would come into the neighborhood, people who were working for him would suddenly come over to the garage. We would be standing there, separating lemons by size and also throwing out the spoiled lemons. That was my first job. I'm not sure what I was paid. All I remember is that that established a practice that would remain in place for some time to come. I would bring the money that I was given and hand it over to my mother, and my mother would dutifully deposit it in my bank account, and she would always—of course, I always wanted to have a little money for myself. She gave me a little bit, I guess, every once in a while. She would say, "Now one day you're going to be

so grateful for what I'm doing." Of course, this continued through all my jobs, and someday I was very grateful. She just methodically built on that, built that account up.

Lage: Did she say why she was saving it for you?

Litwack: Oh yes, for college.

Lage: For college. So that was an expectation that was put forth early on.

Litwack: Absolutely, absolutely, right. She said, "This is for college." College or marriage. So, I started as a lemon sorter. That's when I got my social security card. Then I also began selling magazines door to door: *Saturday Evening Post*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and *Look Magazine*. I would go door to door. It was tough because people didn't really have any money to buy—

Lage: This was Depression?

Litwack: These were Depression years. I don't remember how many magazines I sold each week, but it was tough. I had to go door to door for a large part of the neighborhood to get up a few sales. I had a few steady customers who would buy the *Saturday Evening Post*. I was staring at Norman Rockwell early on as I delivered the magazine.

Then I got a job delivering advertising newspapers. Advertising newspapers, you simply toss them house to house. Obviously, there's no subscription here. I put a huge pack on my back, and I was responsible for a certain part of the neighborhood, and I would just go door to door, which means I never had a bicycle. Most people had a bicycle when they delivered newspapers. My mother, I guess, either could not afford a bicycle or thought it was too dangerous, or whatever, but I never had a bicycle.

I remember finally talking them into—one Christmas I will never forget—a wagon that I coveted at a hardware store near by, just coveted so much, a red wagon, and there it was. I could not believe it. For me that was just—because Christmas was generally receiving clothes that my mother had sewed. That was a huge Christmas.

Lage: But you did celebrate Christmas?

Litwack: Yes, because I wanted to celebrate it. It was no big deal. We never had a Christmas tree.

Lage: You have said, at other times, that your family wasn't religious.

Litwack: They were not religious. They were very Jewish, but they were not religious Jews. They believed in the Jewish culture. They were proud to be Jewish.

They felt I should be proud to be Jewish. They felt they came from a rich tradition and rich culture. They saw no need to go to the synagogue to be Jewish. There were not that many Jews in Santa Barbara, and the Jews that belonged to the local synagogue were mostly, if not entirely, people from another class; that is, they were business men who had stores on State Street. They knew my parents, but we weren't close to them. They comprised the people who supported the synagogue. My mother and father could not have afforded, probably, to join the synagogue in any event, and they wouldn't have thought to do so.

Lage: Did they observe any Jewish holidays at home?

Litwack: Surprisingly so. Passover, my mother would use matzah. She always made for me something that I always looked forward to every year, matzah brei. It's matzah and eggs, and it's delicious. I always thought it was delicious. It still is. That was all I remember.

My mother's birthday was on December 25th, so we celebrated her birthday. My daughter-in-law's birthday is also December 25th, which is interesting. So we celebrated her birthday on the 25th, but we also celebrated my version of Christmas. We set aside a little area in the living room, not a tree, but just the place where we would put a few presents. That consisted, as I said, mostly of clothes that my mother had made. Sometimes clothes had been purchased, practical things. The landlady, she was wonderful; she was Santa Claus. The landlady would bring over a big bag of little things. She would go into the ten cent store, Kresses or Woolworths, and she would buy me little toys, whatever they were.

Lage: What ethnicity was she?

Litwack: I think she was white Protestant. She would bring these little trinkets and things like that, little toys, maybe a little car. To me it was just very exciting. I recall when I was in about the fifth grade and I went up to see a friend of mine, George "Bee" McWilliams, who lived about five blocks away. I don't think I had ever done this, but I went over there on Christmas morning. I could not believe what I saw! It just seemed unreal. It was a real Christmas there, I guess you would say. He had all these things! [laughter] I just couldn't believe it. But I didn't feel resentful.

Lage: You didn't?

Litwack: No. I knew my parents were poor. When I say "poor,"—terminology is always not entirely clear to me. Were they lower class? Yes, they were lower class, but, as I said, I never felt deprived. At Christmas time, yes, but that's something different.

Lage: What about, did you feel deprived not having a bicycle? Or maybe when you went to your friends' houses they had more of these little cars?

Litwack: I would have liked to have had these things, but I also knew why I wasn't getting them. I couldn't be resentful, because I knew my father worked, and he worked very hard. I loved my parents very, very much, and so I couldn't express resentment against them when I knew they were doing everything they possibly could for me. And I don't think this is just hindsight; I felt that way at the time.

We'll return to this later on. When my daughter chose to become religiously Jewish, we had no objections to it. It came late for her too; it came when she was in her twenties. She had a Bat Mitzvah, and I, of course, as a father, had to say something. I'm telling you this story now because when I spoke I said to my daughter that her grandfather would be very proud of her, and that she should know that her grandfather was the most religious man that I've ever known, but he never stepped inside of a synagogue or a church. There are many different roads to Jerusalem, so to speak. And he was. He was a deeply religious person without having any official religion. He raised me on Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Emerson, Walt Whitman, Gandhi, Tolstoy. He loved John Muir and John Burroughs, the two naturalists. These were his gods, if you want to call them that.

Most of all he loved taking me up into the mountains. We would hike—a lot of hiking trails in the Santa Barbara mountains. When he would take me up into the mountains, we would be all by ourselves, and he would have in his hip pocket usually a tattered copy of—I still have it—Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. We would park ourselves somewhere, and he would have me read some of these poems to him. In this environment he just thought this was the ultimate. He would never snap a flower, because you don't do that, but he would just take it in his hand, or bark, and he would say, "This is where God is," and he meant that. This is where God could be found.

Lage: He talked about it as a religion.

Litwack: Oh yes. You don't find it inside of a church; you don't find it inside of a synagogue. Why would people want to go inside of a synagogue when they could come out here and really see God at work, as God is nature? In that sense, Spinoza had to be one of his idols.

My parents took me to the public library early in my life. Oh, we're getting off from my work experience. We probably should go back to that. I delivered these advertising newspapers, all the time coveting a job as a page in the library, that's what I really wanted. I think I applied when I was in sixth grade. Somehow, they thought I was not old enough. I don't understand why that would be the case. [laughter]

Then, for a short period of time—my mother didn't like this job at all—for a short period of time I got a job setting pins in a bowling alley, a pin setter. That was, of course, before the age of automatic setters. That was a tough job, and I remember—it must have been around 1942—Joe Foss was one of the great marine heroes of World War II. There was a marine base right outside of Santa Barbara where UCSB [University of California, Santa Barbara] is now located, and these marines would come into the bowling alley, and when they bowled they bowled hard, which means you had to watch yourself because the pins could easily come up and hit you in the eye, or hit you in the head, or whatever. My mother never liked that job. She felt I was with the wrong sort of people, and that maybe it was dangerous. I'm not sure she ever knew how dangerous it was.

Lage: You didn't tell her that part!

Litwack: I didn't tell her that. She never came to the workplace. They fired me after maybe six weeks, or two months, because they sold alcohol in the bowling alleys. You know, some bowling alleys have a bar, and it was against state law to employ someone under twenty-one, so that was why I lost the job. I was a very good pin-setter. Especially on Saturday mornings. We would set pins for each other and bowl.

Then, I think it must have been during the eighth grade or ninth grade that I got my job as a page in the Santa Barbara Public Library. I could not think of anything more exciting. That was wonderful, now I'm going to be with all these books. I was an avid reader.

Lage: They had probably been taking you to the library for some time.

Litwack: Absolutely, from the time I was in kindergarten. That was the job that I always had wanted. I loved books. I loved the library. I don't know what I was making per hour, I think it was like 40 cents an hour, or something along those lines, but it doesn't make any difference; it was just terrific work. I kept that job all the way through high school, and then when I went away to Berkeley I would have the job again during the summers, except that I was no longer just a page. Even when I was in high school, they put me at the information desk and at the reference desk. I did very well in those positions. The information desk is the first thing you face upon entering the library. It's a beautiful library, the Santa Barbara Public Library. The first desk, and there I am, and I'm helping people to find whatever they want to find. I thought I was very good at it. I was able to serve some interesting people like Alfred Noyes, the English poet who lived in Santa Barbara; Franz Werfel, who lived about five blocks away, the novelist who wrote *The Song of Bernadette* and other well known books. Less well known, outside of Santa Barbara, Donald Culross Peattie, the naturalist and prolific writer, was a regular patron of the library. So that was fun. I enjoyed doing that. But most of all I just enjoyed

serving the public, and, of course, my friends from the high school and the junior high school, when they would come to the library.

Lage: This was the main public library?

Litwack: Main public library. I would be in charge on Sundays and put up the American flag outside, opening it up. I loved that library job. I especially loved being at the information desk or at the reference desk, either one. When I came to Berkeley obviously what I coveted more than anything else was a job in the UC library, and I was fortunate enough to get one.

That gets to the question of my reading. What do you do in Santa Barbara? Well, you—

Lage: It sounds like there's a lot to do in Santa Barbara.

Litwack: There's not much to do. I feel, to this day, so fortunate that I grew up before the age of television. I was blessed. I know I would have lost a lot in reading if we had had television. I had my little radio programs: *Captain Midnight*, *Little Orphan Annie*, *Terry and the Pirates*, *The Lone Ranger*, Jack Benny. My parents enjoyed Jack Benny as well. They enjoyed Burns and Allen too, and *Fibber McGee and Molly*. They had all these shows; they were okay. That's not too much of a distraction. But I loved reading, and so I just read everything I could get my hands on.

Lage: Did your parents direct your reading?

Litwack: Some, yes. There was some direction.

Lage: What?

Litwack: The classics, they always directed me towards the classics, but then I found out things on my own about books I wanted to read. Often you find out about books to read from reading. I was early on introduced to—by junior high and high school I had read so much, probably more than I have read the rest of my life.

Lage: You had more time.

Litwack: More time. To give you an example, I brought along—I still have these, oddly enough. This is from eighth grade, and I had an eighth-grade English teacher who was wonderful, Louise Forsythe. Whenever we would read a book, we would come up to her after we had read the book, and she would mark down the name of the book. To this day I've kept these cards. Well, that would give you an idea of what I was reading in the eighth grade.

To start off on number one—I'm not going to read all of them to you, just a few. *Berlin Diary* by William Shirer, *Foghorns* by Howard K. Pease—I read all of Howard Pease's books. Howard Pease wrote essentially for a junior high school and high school audience, and these were all adventure stories about a Tod Moran, who worked on a freighter and whose adventures spanned the globe. *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, and all the *Penrod* books by Booth Tarkington. I read all of Upton Sinclair, not just *The Jungle*, but Upton Sinclair had a series of books called the *Lanny Budd* series. Budd was a liberal activist who meets with all the important people in the world.

It was an education. I learned so much from these books. *Dragon Seed* by Pearl Buck, *Around the World in Eighty Days* by Jules Verne, *Mission to Moscow* by Joseph Davies, *Michael Strogoff* by Jules Verne, John Steinbeck's *The Moon is Down*, John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. That was the one book that required the written consent from my parents, probably because of that final scene where one of the members of the family is being nursed by, is it a daughter, or relative? Anyway, I think that was the scene.

Then I would read best-sellers, only because I thought, "Well, if this is the best-selling book in the country there must be some reason, and maybe I should read them." That was probably why I read *The Song of Bernadette* by Franz Werfel or *The Robe*, by Lloyd Douglas; I read those kinds of things as well.

Lage: These are hefty books.

Litwack: *The Seventh Cross* by [Anna] Seghers, *See Here*, *Private Hargrove*, probably because that was a best-seller, *Night Over Europe* by Frederick Schuman, more of these Upton Sinclair books, *Inside Europe* by John Gunther, *Last Train from Berlin*, Howard K. Smith. That's just to give you a sampling of what—I loved Saroyan, so the *Human Comedy* by William Saroyan, *One World* by Wendell Willkie, *Our Hearts Were Young and Gay* by Otis Skinner.

Lage: Was this wartime now? Are we during World War II?

Litwack: Yes. This would have been around 1942, possibly. She was a wonderful teacher.

Lage: Was she amazed at how much you read? This can't be the norm for your class.

Litwack: Oh yes. The only way I ever made the school newspaper was I had broken some record for the number of books read in a school semester. How many books are on this list? Seventy-two books, and that was the second half of the eighth-grade English class.

Lage: That's amazing. You must be a fast reader, too.

[End Tape 1, Side B; begin Tape 2, Side A]

Litwack: In high school I continued to read a great deal. There I'm really introduced to, in my mind, America's, great classics, and I just couldn't read enough of them: Theodore Dreiser's *American Tragedy*, for example. I read all of James T. Farrell's the *Studs Lonigan* trilogy, which I found highly influential. Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sherwood Anderson, John Dos Passos's *U.S.A.*, which, of all the books, probably had the greatest impact on me at the time I read it. It had an impact on me in every possible way.

Lage: Can you talk a little more about that?

Litwack: [It introduced me to the America that lay outside of Santa Barbara, an America I had never seen or experienced. In exposing me to the interior lives of Americans, reading *U.S.A.* raised the stakes in my understanding of American society and its extraordinary diversity. Oddly enough, however, black USA was conspicuously absent.—narrator's addition] I also loved Dos Passos's writing style, which may now be criticized, but I loved it at the time. The way he put the words together, I just thought that was fabulous. The newsreels, the camera eye, these literary devices revolutionized writing, and no one ever tried it again, and probably no one should have tried it again. It worked well for that particular book. *U.S.A.* was a trilogy of more than 1,000 pages, and I just did not want it to end; it was that important to me [because the major and minor characters we met told us about the land of people described some years later so hauntingly in Bruce Springsteen's "Nebraska," songs about the losers in pursuit of the American dream.—narrator's addition]

I mention that in particular because when I teach the big survey course in American history I use literature as well as history texts, because if a literary work can tell you more about a period than a history book can, then I use a literary work. The first time I tried it I used John Dos Passos's *The Big Money*, the third volume of the *U.S.A.* series. What a disaster! The students resented it, it was too long, they didn't understand why they were reading it. I tried my best; it just didn't work.

Lage: Why? What do you think it was?

Litwack: I have had to think about this because I'm very stubborn about this matter and I continue to use *U.S.A.*, but I've changed from *Big Money*, to *The 42nd Parallel*, the first book. The last time I taught was the most successful with *1919*, the second volume in the series. There I had more students who expressed an interest in it and seemed enthusiastic. But I've had to think about this: that is, a book that could be so pivotal in my own education, my own upbringing, why that would not necessarily resonate with this generation? That's a troubling question to me, because I don't think it's John Dos Passos alone. Almost any of the authors I just mentioned to you, I would have difficulty using their books today.

Lage: Dreiser and Farrell?

Litwack: Dreiser, Farrell. Also, my students don't know these people. They didn't even know Dos Passos! That's hard to believe.

Lage: Is it the writing style?

Litwack: In part, it's the writing style. Basically, I think you've got a very visual generation that doesn't have the patience to delve into these books in the kind of depth that they deserve. I assigned in my African American history course, and once in my American history course, to my mind maybe the greatest novel of the twentieth century outside of *U.S.A.*, and that is Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*—certainly the greatest novel since World War II.

Well, I assigned that book, and then I discovered what students tended to do was to go through the book—again, it's a very difficult book, it has to be read carefully—but they would go through the book looking for the plot line. They figured if they had the plot line, that's all you needed, which means they would lose the texture. I stopped using it, because they're not going to read it the way it should be read. I recommend it to certain students who I know will read it correctly, but I'm not going to try to use it again, because I just—not to read that book and become immersed in the texture of the book is to miss it altogether. In many ways it doesn't really have a plot, as such, but it's a magnificent study, and if you could read that book carefully, you would hardly need a course in African-American history. [laughter]

[In no work of history is the paradox of black life in the South more graphically recalled. The nameless hero is deeply moved by the dying words of his grandfather. After emancipation, he had stayed on the same place he had toiled as a slave. He had worked hard, he had raised his children in the etiquette of accommodation. On his deathbed, however, he confessed to having lived a more complex life. And he expected no less of his grandson. (Reading from the book) "Son, after I'm gone I want you to give up the good fight. I never told you, but our life is a war and I have been a traitor all my born days, a spy in the enemy's country ever since I give up my gun back in the Reconstruction." With his final breath, he admonished his grandson, "Live with your head in the lion's mouth. I want you to overcome 'em with yeses, undermine them with grins, agree 'em to death and destruction, let 'em swaller you till they vomit or burst wide open." –added during narrator's review]

Lage: Of course, having had your course the students might understand the book more.

Litwack: That's what I was hoping, that the two would reinforce each other, and you could come back to it. So, reading was really pivotal for me.

Lage: I'm just wondering if your parents were reading some of these same books, or had they read them? Or were your friends reading them, or was this an independent enterprise?

Litwack: It was mostly independent. My parents were not reading these books. Many of them they had already read. In reading as much as I did, it also affected and influenced my writing. I loved to write, and even then I loved doing term papers. I started in late high school fooling around with short stories. And, of course, very often when you're writing your style tends to reflect the person who you've been reading, and I'm sure I was no exception to that rule, particularly when it came to John Dos Passos.

I had really a pretty incredible education from the standpoint of my English teachers and writing. Helen Tessien and Louise Noyes in high school were absolutely superb English teachers. They did two things: they encouraged me in my reading; they encouraged me in my writing. I was just very grateful to them, in part for not getting in the way, and because they inspired me to do much of this reading.

When I wasn't reading, I would—as an only child, I was an only child—I also had fantasy games which I played at home, almost all involving baseball. I was an avid sports fan. I was such an avid sports fan that living on the West Coast was really frustrating, with no major league teams.

Lage: But was there a minor league team there in town?

Litwack: There was a minor league team in Santa Barbara, the Santa Barbara Dodgers. I would go to see their games. I was a member of the knothole club, which was for underprivileged children who don't have the money to pay the general admission. But I needed a team to identify with, because all my friends who were baseball fans identified with some team. So, for some reason, I identified with the New York Yankees. I became a Yankees fan.

Lage: Just picked it out of a hat?

Litwack: Not just picking it out of a hat. I think I always—as I said, when I was six years old my parents brought me up to San Francisco, and we went over to Petaluma as well. From that time on, San Francisco was *the* city. I loved San Francisco. I think when I was six I knew I was going to come to the University of California. [laughs] As soon as I came to this area I knew this is where I wanted to ultimately live. I knew something about Joe DiMaggio, and the fact that Joe DiMaggio had come from San Francisco. That could have been an influence.

Some years later I kept insisting that—because it sounded so good to me—I said, "The only reason I became a Yankee fan is because all of my political causes are losers." That is, I needed a winner, a security blanket. [laughter] I

took a lot of flack from my political friends when Jackie Robinson came along, and they couldn't understand why I wasn't a Dodger fan. To be a Yankee fan seemed like the very antithesis of what political radical progressives should be doing, or should be rooting for. I still have my high school mitt that has NY on it, and Spud Chandler, one of my great heroes of the Yankees. But I didn't see a baseball game, a real baseball game, until I went back East for my research on a doctoral dissertation. It was many, many years later.

Lage: Did you play baseball?

Litwack: Yes, I played softball. I was not that good. I was average mostly, I think because I was thin, after all, I didn't eat meat. [laughter] I don't think I had the power. I was very thin. I loved the sport. I loved playing football too, but I couldn't go out for the varsity football team, because I wouldn't have had the build, and my mother wouldn't have permitted it anyway. Also I was handicapped in the sense that I worked after school. Even if I had wanted to go out and my mother had permitted it, it would not have been possible.

But I loved softball, and I played in the softball leagues. In a team of nine I would generally be the eighth or the ninth batter. I had more passion than ability, until later, I think, when we established a baseball team—the graduate students in history established it initially, and then others came into it. Faculty were invited to join. Reggie Zelnik was a part of this baseball team that met every Sunday out at the School for the Blind and the Deaf, at the old location. Reggie asked me to come out, and I loved it. Every Sunday I would go out there, and I suddenly realized, "Hey, I'm good now." [Suddenly, with additional weight, I had some muscle power.]

Lage: You got bigger.

Litwack: I got bigger; I had the power. I could hit a home run. I could do things that I never could have done when I was a kid. I finally was able to do something in baseball and kept at it for some years. When Eric Foner was teaching at Berkeley as a visitor, he came out as well. My son came out and played. He was very good. He was better built than I was when I was in high school. That was a nice period of time.

Lage: Your friend Tony described some of your games when you would take the roles of the Yankees and the Dodgers.

Litwack: Yes. That's right. [wistfully]

Lage: And also I think he mentioned tennis.

- Litwack: Yes, I played tennis, particularly through the influence of a tennis coach at Santa Barbara High School who was also a political radical and took an interest in me. Tony and I had some very good games, actually.
- Lage: He described you as intensely competitive.
- Litwack: Very intense. I was always intensely competitive, absolutely right.
- Lage: In all areas? Were you in school work, or was this just sports?
- Litwack: I think so. Whenever there was something involving who's going to get the essay, the prize for best essay, I certainly wanted it and worked very hard to try to obtain such an objective. I had a game where I just went over to the junior high school, which was half a block [away], and there was a big wall there. I would throw this tennis ball against the wall over and over again. Of course, the big point was you would throw it and then you would try to make a great catch. I would play out baseball games this way, between two teams.
- I would do the same thing at home. I had a fantasy league, a league that included Latin America and Mexico, as well as the United States. I would find various ways to play nine-inning games, sometimes it would be just by turning to a certain page in the dictionary. A seven is an out, an eight is an out, a six is an out, but a three is a single, a nine is a home run. I would play it that way.
- Lage: These were games that you didn't play out against the wall, but were all on paper?
- Litwack: Yes. I can still almost remember my league.
- Lage: This is what kids did before there was television.
- Litwack: That's right. My league consisted of Buenos Aires. I know that Montevideo always had a good team, Mexico City. [laughter] At the same time I used maps to create fantasy invasions. My country was Antarctica, and Antarctica was also my team in the baseball league. Not an American city, but Antarctica. I played these games where Antarctica was invading Europe, Africa, or Latin America. Well, I'll tell you, as a result of all this, boy, did I know my geography! My geography was better then probably than it is now. I knew the capital, I believe, of almost every country in the world.
- Lage: And this came out of the fantasy invasions?
- Litwack: Yes, plus my fascination with maps. It came out of those fantasy games as well.
- Lage: Was that something the other kids did?

Litwack: I don't know.

Lage: You initiated it?

Litwack: I have no idea. I just read very recently about someone who talked about the fantasy games he had played as a child. I was suddenly struck by that—yes, that was the same thing I did. I didn't realize any other people were doing this. These were also, I think, fantasy games in baseball. I'm trying to remember who it was. It was just somebody I read in the last few days. It was an oral history with somebody not connected with my work.

In any event I loved sports; I still do. I was a great sports fan. Now I'm a Giants and A's fan, but if they can't do it then the Yankees—

Lage: You go back to the Yankees.

Litwack: I go back to the Yankees, right.

Lage: What else about high school? You were on the newspaper. Were you the editor?

Litwack: Yes, I was the editor of my high school paper, and also a reporter for my junior high school paper. I just looked before I came over here, someone had done an ambition chart of the ninth graders. They did a chart one year: name, nickname, and what was the charm of this particular person, and his ambition. I don't know who compiled this. I don't think anyone ever called me this—they had as my nickname "Spud," meaning Spud from Spud Chandler, who was on my baseball mitt, the leading Yankee pitcher. For charm they had "blue eyes." Ambition, "journalist."

I worked on the high school newspaper. I took journalism in the ninth grade. It's interesting, I took journalism—and I didn't realize the consequence—as an alternative to a regular English class. You could take a regular English course or journalism, and I took journalism because I was interested in journalism. My ambition for a time was to be a foreign correspondent. That, to me, would have been the ultimate job. But that was also the year—the ninth grade is the really critical year in which they taught the rules of grammar: breaking up sentences, talking about participles, and all those kinds of things, so I never learned grammar formally.

Lage: Maybe you didn't need it.

Litwack: Even to this day, I'm very conscious of making my students good writers, so I really work hard on their prose. If they ask me what the rule is by which I've altered their prose, I can't always tell them. It's just that way. Of course, I've always thought that my writing skills, whatever I have of writing skills, came from all the reading I was doing. That was as critical as anything.

Lage: Were your parents' English language skills good?

Litwack: Yes, I think they were good.

Lage: Did they speak grammatically?

Litwack: My mother had an accent, my father less so. I think they spoke correctly, yes, as I recall, sure. My father, as I said—they were both well read people. Much of my own reading had been influenced by them. I think early on, for example, they introduced me to Leo Tolstoy and Victor Hugo. I think my mother always thought that *Les Miserables* was one of the great novels. They would be very pleased when I would be reading something that they knew, and that they themselves had read. I had to wait until I got into the army, actually, to read *War and Peace*.

Lage: That was a good time to read it.

Litwack: Yes, it was. It was a very good time to read it. So, I worked on the newspaper in junior high school, and then when I came to high school I edited *The Forge*. That was quite a newspaper. That was a fabulous newspaper when I took it over.

Lage: At the time or after you took it over?

Litwack: I think after I took it over. This had to be the most unique high school newspaper in the country. I was the editor. I had editorial control, well, not editorial control, but I wrote editorials. I had my own column called *Byleon*.

So, what did we stand for? Well, we demanded that the *Reader's Digest* be removed from the classrooms. You may recall they used the *Reader's Digest* in public schools, and probably other schools as well, to build vocabulary. I charged that they were building a vocabulary and at the same time propagandizing the students with their very conservative political philosophy. Now I'm quoting directly from my copy of the issue, "For the past few years a magazine has been circulated among the nation's junior and senior high school students as class work despite the fact that it expresses extremely conservative feelings representing only one trend of thought. The magazine is none other than the popular *Reader's Digest*. It has been so well disguised with 'articles of lasting interest' that you would probably be shocked to find that it is not a 'digest' at all, but a staff-planned publication whose ultra-conservative editorial policy determines its selection of articles. It's what you might call slyly reactionary." And then I went on to suggest that the newspaper be removed from the classrooms, "before it can do any more harm. . . . The *Reader's Digest* has no place in school classrooms unless there is also literature supporting the other side. Why is it in history and civics classes, the tenets of democracy are pounded into our heads while in everyday life they are ignored?"

We stood for—this was 1947—we stood in opposition to Harry Truman's cold war diplomacy. We opposed compulsory military training. We made troubles by taking issue with how the vice principal's office issued demerits to students. We thought that system should be revamped. I had a sports editor, Tony Baragona. His crusade that year was breaking the color barrier in major league baseball. I had a feature editor who wrote literary pieces, short stories and movie reviews. Now, he was really quite something, already heavily influenced by D.H. Lawrence, and a number of other writers of that school, people who were far ahead of their time in their literary styles. Jack wrote these unconnected short stories. Sometimes I couldn't understand them but that was all right, I knew they were well written and disturbing. Sometimes they dealt with ugly subjects.

At the same time I had a running battle with the vice principal, Leonard Bowman. He would call me into his office. He would talk about what we were doing and threaten to shut the press down. Then I would get a call from the principal, Harvey Holt, a Tennessean. The principal would call me in and say, "Now, Leon, here we go again. I've been getting these calls from the American Legion, the Chamber of Commerce, or whoever it might be. I'm very concerned with what your newspaper is saying." I would reply, "Well, these are ideas that we have and we feel we need to express these ideas." Harvey Holt, I think, actually took some pleasure in what we were doing. He would only say, "Well, Leon, I want you to just be more careful. You go on back there. We're not going to let the vice principal close the press down. You just go back there, and try to be careful." Then we would do this two or three times until it became a kind of ritual. They never closed the paper down.

At the end of the year, as part of the tradition at Santa Barbara High an awards committee, made up of students and the vice principal as the advisor, recommended that awards be given to the student body president, the vice president, the editor of the school yearbook, and the *Forge* editor. Well, the vice principal was able to persuade the committee that this year we're not going to give an award to the *Forge* editor. But the principal got a call from Washington DC, from the National Conference of Christians and Jews, that the *Forge* had been selected for a special citation because of its special issue on Brotherhood Week, in which we not only talked about brotherhood, but focused on the virulence of racism in this country. The entire issue was given over to the theme of "brotherhood," a word, I wrote, that demands our attention more than once a year. "The problem of race relations must become a part of the educational program. It must be openly discussed and acted upon."

The National Conference of Christians and Jews not only notified us of our citation but sent a representative to Santa Barbara to give us the award that would be signed by President Harry S. Truman. I heard all of this afterwards. The vice principal had to reconvene the awards committee. I did get my

award, and the citation was delivered as promised. To triumph over the vice principal in this way was a satisfying victory for dissent.

This was a special issue. As you can see, on the very front page we feature Brotherhood Week. Then, if you go to page two, we reprinted a column of Frank Sinatra's "What's this about Race: the Voice of Something Solid." Here's my article on racism in America. "Sin, Sex, and Censorship," is Jack's, the feature editor's, expressing his concern. It happened to be February 14th, Valentine's Day. Jack has written here, for example, "For the two governors of Georgia. You two lovebirds, make no mistake, have taught Georgia a lesson: Two heads make a bigger headache." For Bilbo, remember Theodore Bilbo, the racist senator from Mississippi? "You're nobody's valentine, it may be true, but there will always be a warm spot for you, and may all your Christmases be white." It's kind of corny. Then Tony, as sports editor, talks about the Santa Barbara team as being a representation of many minorities. The whole issue is essentially given over to the spirit and practice of brotherhood.

That was wonderful, getting that kind of national recognition for our special issue, but particularly seeing the vice principal humbled in this respect. Essentially, I was a trouble-maker, a disturber of the peace. That's what I'm trying to say.

- Lage: That's what we haven't really discussed, how you developed this acute political sense, and the sensitivity to racism.
- Litwack: Growing up in a Mexican community, I was always sensitive to the issue of race and ethnicity. There were not that many blacks in Santa Barbara, but those who were there tended to live in the same neighborhood, and several of them, my age, became lifelong friends.
- Lage: Was the Mexican community considered a different race at that time? Was that word used?
- Litwack: I don't know if I ever thought of them as a different race. I only remember that when I came to junior high school—this goes back, picking up the story that we started earlier about how that community, and the stories that I would hear from the parents of my friends, would influence what I would do later. In junior high school, I remember the first time I had what we called a history course. The same thing would happen then again in high school. I looked in vain for the stories of my people, the stories of the people in my neighborhood. Those stories were not in the textbooks. Those stories were not talked about in the course. I was saying to myself, "Puritans, Founding Fathers, Pilgrims, what does that mean to me? They seemed very distant. What about the people that I know and whose experiences are as exciting, or more so, and dramatic as any experiences that I read about in the textbooks?"

But these people are not in the textbooks, and I think they should be in the textbooks." So, that already was beginning to affect my thoughts.

I felt myself to be politically radical, some of that coming out of my parents' background. I still recall at an early age—I must have been certainly in grammar school—right next door to us was a dairy, and the dairy had a strike. Of course, when the dairy had a strike, as I well knew, we don't cross picket lines, you have to go somewhere else. Crossing picket lines is just unheard of. I've never crossed a picket line. I go over to talk with the pickets, as I did on this occasion. I remember once the picket at the dairy wanted to go for lunch, or take a break, and I said, "I'll picket for you." I will never forget; he put the picket sign over my back, and I had my little red wagon, and I was going back and forth in my red wagon, in front of the dairy, with the picket sign on. I believed in the union, and I believed in what they were doing. Keep in mind that in those years being pro-union was being very radical. Unions were thought to be corrupt. They were thought to place strictures on where people could work. All the arguments you would hear, I would hear them in school about unions or read them in *Scholastic Weekly*. I remember the magazines we used in school, like the *Reader's Digest* or *Scholastic*; the treatment of unions was always terribly one-sided.

[end tape 2, side a; begin tape 2, side b]

Litwack: In Santa Barbara High School I took American history again—this time with Miss Ethel Moss. She was a wonderful teacher, and she was also the head of Junior Statesmen. I was a member of the Junior Statesmen of America. Again, I couldn't help but be a trouble maker. I would go to these conventions and I would propose what people thought were preposterous resolutions, whether on the issue of the cold war, or racism, whatever, and I had a hard time getting any of these things passed.

Lage: There were statewide conferences?

Litwack: Sometimes they were statewide conferences. There was always a summer camp for the Junior Statesmen, and they would select certain people from the local chapter to attend. I always wanted to go so much—I liked to travel and I never had much of a chance to travel—and they never selected me once. This last summer, when I was asked by the Junior Statesmen of America to be their keynote speaker at their institute in Stanford, I said, "Sure I'll do it." [laughter] I finally got to the Junior Statesmen summer conclave. [And I have returned to speak every summer since that first invitation—added during narrator review.]

Lage: Tony [Baragona, whom I spoke to in preparation for these interviews] mentioned an Asilomar conference.

Litwack: We went to the Asilomar conference in 1947, a statewide meeting of the Junior Statesmen, the only one I ever attended. That was exciting in a number

of different ways. We actually passed some good resolutions at Asilomar. Everything was going well at Asilomar. First, Tony drives up. To my mother, that was almost unheard of, to be in a car with someone who was my own age, but she liked Tony. I was going up no matter. Then we got up to Asilomar. I don't know, I was just feeling—it was great being up there. I didn't get away from home that often, except to go to Los Angeles and be with the Foxes.

Tony somehow had gotten some cigars, and we went out on the beach. I felt so liberated or so grown up smoking these cigars and drinking beer. I acted like I had had a few drinks or something because I suddenly found myself talking to this girl—I as generally shy among the girls—and apparently impressing her. She was a very popular girl in our school. When we came back to Santa Barbara I couldn't believe it when she came to the library when I was working and said that she had given back her ring, or whatever it was, to the boy she had been going steady with. I had no idea what you do when you go steady with someone. I didn't know what my responsibilities were, but it was a part of growing up. Asilomar was a turning point in many ways. Also, to repeat, we passed some very good, actually radical, resolutions. I think we just had the right chemistry working at that conference.

Ethel Moss was also faculty advisor to our chapter of the Junior Statesmen. By this time I had read Howard Fast's, *Freedom Road*. I had read some other works—there was a radical bookstore in Santa Barbara, over on De La Guerra Street, a Marxist-Communist bookstore. I went over there, someone told me about it, and I found some very interesting pamphlets and other things, including a book, *Reconstruction* [by James S. Allen, subtitled *The Battle for Democracy*]. Between reading that book on Reconstruction and then reading *Freedom Road*, I was ready to ask my high school teacher for fifty minutes in which to refute the textbook version of Reconstruction and slavery, and she kindly gave me the fifty minutes. I went to the public library and checked out W.E.B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction* [with the intriguing subtitle, *A History of the Part which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880*]. I read it and devoured it. I came in with a report that I thought was absolutely irrefutable on why the textbook was absolutely wrong about Reconstruction and slavery.

I had my time, and I finished my report, and the teacher looked at the class and said, "Now class, you must remember that Leon is bitterly pro-labor." Well, I didn't know—what did that have to do with—this was a carefully prepared report. Not until later did I try to put things together, and I guess what she was trying to say is, "You know Leon's views on unions and labor, and so therefore we have to question his credibility, essentially, on other issues." In other words, I'm heavily partisan and passionate, and that somehow affected the way in which I presented this version of history to the students. I'm not so sure she thought I was wrong. I thought she was a fairly liberal-minded person. She was the one that recommended that I read Charles Beard's *The Rise of American Civilization*, and that would have a very profound

influence on my historical attitudes. I read a little bit of Marx here and there, but my view of the American past wasn't influenced so much by Marx as by Charles Beard.

Lage: And she put you on to that.

Litwack: And she put me on to that. Then someone at the library put me onto Vernon Parrington's *Main Currents in American Thought*. Those were two seminal works which I read in high school and certainly sharpened my interest in history. I brought along some of the papers I wrote just to remind me, to jar my memory. Here's an eleventh grade paper; I got an "A": "History of the American Negro." I was interested in labor history, too. It's a fairly smooth transition from labor history to the history of working people and to the history of black people in this country.

Lage: But a transition that not everyone makes.

Litwack: You can see, this is a very detailed report.

Lage: That's many many pages long. All handwritten in pencil.

Litwack: That's right, all handwritten in pencil. It's mostly about Reconstruction. Then I had these public speeches that I gave. This is something that I prepared for a memorial for Franklin Delano Roosevelt after he died.

Lage: And where was that memorial, at school?

Litwack: It was at school, yes.

Lage: Were your parents Roosevelt Democrats?

Litwack: Oh yes, very much so. They were Roosevelt Democrats, and I remember the sticker we always had on our garage—of course, we didn't have a car in the garage—we put stickers on the garage, Roosevelt stickers, and then I remember a sticker for Culbert Olson who was running for governor of California, who, indeed, is the governor who pardoned Tom Mooney. There's a lot of material that I kept all these years, including my first stabs at writing short stories.

Lage: That's a wonderful collection!

Litwack: My most vivid memory along these lines, maybe we're jumping up a little bit. Well, that really comes in the college years, my first year in college, where I continued on with my writing. Should we hold that for another time?

Lage: Yes, let's hold that for college. But you were showing this interest in history and the history of the Negro, as we said then.

- Litwack: That's right, yes. As we said then, that's right. I recall, I was so conscious of race and racism that at one point—I remember this so vividly—I was out with one of my good friends, James Denton, who was black, and he said something, and I remember coming back at him. I said, "That's a black lie." Then I thought about it after we said goodbye amicably, and I was so troubled by it. I said, "Why did I say that? And would he be offended by that? Why did I call it a *black* lie?" I thought perhaps that I had been offensive.
- Lage: Did you ever ask him?
- Litwack: No. It's a term that's used all the time, isn't it? "Black lie."
- Lage: Yes. I've never thought of it as connected to race.
- Litwack: No, it generally isn't. But as Winthrop Jordan argues so elegantly and persuasively in *White Over Black*, terminology tells you something about the value placed on color in a society. After all, the bride's dress is always white, suggesting purity, and black is evil. Black is generally connected with things that are evil.
- Lage: Evil and death.
- Litwack: Exactly, exactly. So, that gives you some indication of what troubled me.
- Lage: You were very aware. I'm amazed, thinking back to my own high school years.
- Litwack: Incidentally, you know when I think about it, there were not many blacks in Santa Barbara, as I said, but there were certainly two that I was very close to. One, I just told you about, Jimmy Denton, who bailed me out of algebra, helped me so much in algebra and geometry, and Otey Scruggs who was one of our finest athletes and later on went on to become a very fine athlete in college as well.
- Lage: Football?
- Litwack: Football, basketball, and track, mostly. So, Otey and Jimmy Denton, and then Harold Patton was the third one. Harold Patton came from a more middle-class black family, but Jimmy and Otey, Otey in particular, came from really poor parents. Our parents knew each other, but they were poor parents—poor economically, of course. We did have a tracking system in the schools, but Denton and Scruggs were in the same classes with me all the way through. Jimmy Denton I just saw a couple of months ago. He is a professor of mathematics at Amherst.
- Lage: No wonder he could help you with algebra.

Litwack: Absolutely. The first tenured black professor in the history of Amherst. Otey obtained a PhD. in history from Harvard, where he worked with Frederick Merk. He later came back to Santa Barbara to teach at UCSB, found that you really can't go home again, and became chair of the history department at Syracuse University. He is now retired. We see each other at least once a year.

Lage: That's quite remarkable, really.

Litwack: It is quite remarkable, I think. Harold Patton, that's an interesting one. Harold, as I said, came from a more middle-class black family, but he was the perennial cut-up. He was just always cutting up in some way, always in trouble, so much in trouble that he didn't even graduate with our class. His picture is not in the annual yearbook. I think he graduated maybe a semester later, because he was just always in trouble. But I liked Harold. I always thought, you know, there's something—I think this guy's bright, but he's just a cut-up and he's not going to become—that's his problem.

Some years later—I have a huge library in African American history—one of the finest private libraries in this field, because I've been collecting methodically since high school. One of my favorite bookstores was in New York, University Place Bookstore, specializing in African American studies and radicalisms. I even wrote a piece about it for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Bill French was the proprietor of the bookstore, and it was located—well they had several locations, but it was in lower Manhattan. One day while I was at the store, Bill asked me, "You said you were from Santa Barbara, didn't you?" And I said, "Yes, yes." He said, "Did you ever hear of a Harold Patton?" I said, "Harold Patton? Well, of course, I remember Harold Patton, but I haven't seen much of him since high school. He barely graduated." He said, "Well, Harold Patton is one of the best black book scouts in the country and has amassed himself a tremendous private library in African American literature." I said, "I don't believe it!" I don't know why I should have said, "I don't believe it!" but I didn't. It just seemed so strange, very strange.

He gave me Harold's number, and as soon as I came back to Berkeley I called him. He was delighted to hear from me. He had read my books. He was very proud of me, and all that sort of thing. But we must get together. I wanted to see his library, of course, and he wanted to see my library. We realized that in high school we were, without knowing it, competing for books in black literature at the Book Den, the only used bookstore in Santa Barbara.

Lage: You were both buying back in high school?

Litwack: We were both buying books in black literature. I bought some of my Langston Hughes when I was in high school, for a dollar, or fifty cents. I couldn't afford very much at that time. Harold was doing the same thing, but we didn't know this. I don't think we ever saw each other in the bookstore at the same time.

But we told stories about it when we reunited. I saw his library, and it's a fabulous library. He not only was a great book scout, but he advised libraries and institutions on how to build a collection in black literature.

Lage: When you say "book scout" what do you mean by that?

Litwack: A book scout is someone who goes around finding books. In his case, he was finding books for his own personal library, but at the same time he was advising, as I said, institutions on how to build up a collection in African American literature. Now he had one advantage that I did not have; for quite a number of years he was a road manager for Ray Charles. In fact, he's mentioned a number of times in the new biography of Ray Charles. I looked up Harold Patton, and there were about eight references. He was a road manager for Ray Charles, and wherever Ray Charles would go, all over the world and all over the country, Harold would go. What would he be doing when he wasn't with Ray Charles, and he had a few hours to himself? He would go to the bookstores. That's how he built his library.

Lage: It's so ironic.

Litwack: We became good friends. We would generally meet at least once a year because he would come up, or I would go down there, for the International Antiquarian Book Fair.

Lage: Where does he live, or did he live?

Litwack: Los Angeles. How did he make a living? He worked at a casino.

Lage: Did he not go on with education?

Litwack: No. He was tracked, so he was not with Otey, and Jimmy, and myself in those same English classes and history classes. He was such a cut-up, I guess he was perceived as non-college material. Well, of course, he was college material, it just wasn't his time, but he should have been encouraged to go on to college.

He died, unfortunately, about a year ago. I spoke to him a week before he died. My essay in the lynching book had just come out, and I was coming down to the International Antiquarian Book Fair. He said, "I'm not going to be able to make it. I have cancer in my bones." His wife called me a week later and said he died. They're still working right now on the arrangements for what's going to happen to his library. I'm not really sure at this point. It was fascinating, another fascinating person out of my Santa Barbara High School years. [Patton's library ultimately went to a black college in New Orleans.]

I loved my high school, and I went to all the reunions, except for the tenth. I went to the twentieth reunion, and have gone to all the reunions since that time. I find I go to the reunions, because I so much enjoy the people who are

there. I enjoyed them when they were in high school. I enjoy them as much, if not more, now. It's quite a contrast between going to a high school reunion and going to a college reunion. Frankly, college reunions, at least at Berkeley, tend to be dominated by the old fraternity-sorority culture. I was not a member of a fraternity. I am on the fiftieth reunion committee, but I won't enjoy the reunion in anyway remotely close to—

Lage: There won't be the connections you have with those friends.

Litwack: Oh no, no. The Santa Barbara connection is an important one, and I was privileged to have not only fabulous parents, but I think a very, very good education. I think the world of the teachers that I had—I was very privileged to have those teachers.

Lage: Your teacher may have made that comment about you, but she did give you the opportunity to do the original work and make a presentation.

Litwack: And she did live long enough to know that I got a Pulitzer Prize in history. She could take some credit, absolutely.

Lage: Did you ever have experiences with your black friends that might have sensitized you?

Litwack: One. When I started going to college, my first year I spent at Santa Barbara, UCSB. They were located in the riviera at that time. You know what it was to me? The thirteenth grade. I had to get out of Santa Barbara.

Lage: Was it just the Teacher's College then, or had it already become a UC?

Litwack: It was already UCSB. It was like going to the thirteenth grade because nothing really changed; it was culturally stifling. I was still living at home, and I was just going up to campus. I did have two very good English teachers, and I'll talk about some of my experiences in those English classes next time.

Lage: I was just asking if you had any personal experiences that sensitized you to racial issues?

Litwack: I was going up to Berkeley and my friend Saul Fox—this is the son now of Celia Fox, who had been my mother's best friend—Saul Fox said, "Let's drive up." I asked Otey if he wanted to come, and Otey said, "Sure, why not?" So, we came up to Berkeley. Saul, who was a fanatical vegetarian, wanted to go up to Vacaville to pick fruits so we could eat them, of course—steal fruits, I should say. We did. We went up to Vacaville. He knew exactly where to go for the best figs, or whatever else, apricots. It was a very, very hot day so we decided that there was a public swimming pool in Vacaville, and we went to the swimming pool. We were told that Saul and I could go in, but not Otey.

(The next time that happened, when I was a visitor at Louisiana State University, I had gone out in the bayou country with a black colleague.)

I wasn't surprised, or shocked, it was just, I would say, "Okay, that's the way the system works. Here we are. We're not in Mississippi, we're not in Georgia or Alabama, we're in Vacaville, California." I also knew there were certain places in Santa Barbara, such as the Biltmore Hotel, that did not admit Jews or blacks. I think their policy did not change until after World War II.

Lage: So places you knew to avoid in Santa Barbara.

Litwack: That's right. When I was at Berkeley, even as late as 1951, '52, when I was already a graduate student, my first year, I was a teaching assistant in a course taught by John Hope Franklin when he came out for a summer. This was before he was very well known. We struck up a wonderful friendship from that moment on. Before he left I wanted to take him for lunch in San Francisco. There's a famous restaurant, Schroeder's, and I wanted to take him there. Even then I thought to call Schroeder's to make sure they didn't have a racial exclusion code, or whatever it was. Even then, well it's '51—it's before the civil rights revolution, and I wasn't certain. I just didn't want to have some sort of an incident, along these lines.

Lage: Had you sensed anti-Semitism in Santa Barbara? Or run into it?

Litwack: No, I don't remember being affected by it directly. I'm just trying to think. I never hid the fact that I was Jewish, nor did I ever really proclaim it, since I was not really very religious. If someone asked, "What are you?" I would say, "I'm Russian and Jewish." You certainly knew that you were in a very small minority, one of a very few Jews in Santa Barbara High School, as I indicated to you, and most of them from the other side of the tracks.

Lage: From the wealthy side.

Litwack: That's right. Margie was Jewish, but her father was a tailor in the city, had his own tailor shop, and I would say he was also on the other side of the tracks. It was also somewhat geographical in Santa Barbara, that is there's an east side and a west side.

Lage: But you all went to the same high school?

Litwack: We all went to one high school.

Lage: And did those divisions, east side, west side, take place?

Litwack: That's a very good question, because the junior high school I went to was right in my neighborhood, a block away. Then there was another junior high school, La Cumbre, across town, on the other side of the tracks, that drew

largely from the middle and upper-middle class. This was traumatic, actually. The first few days of high school I'm assigned to my classes; I go to my classes. I did see some familiar friends, like Otey, Jimmy, and Tony. But then I looked around and I said, "Who are all these other people, and where's Al Ruiz? And where is Reggie Robles, and where is Hank Gudino?" These are people that I knew from junior high school. Well, the answer came soon enough when I walked around the high school, and I saw that many of my junior high friends were down in the wood shop, down in the auto shop. They were being tracked; they were not being tracked with our group. Most of the people in my classes I did not know, because they had all come from the other side of the tracks. I hadn't been prepared for that, so that was surprising. I kept thinking I would be in the same classes with all the people I'd been in class with back in junior high school.

Lage: But you did find the two black friends who were not well-off made it into the academic track.

Litwack: Somehow, I don't know how they did it.

Lage: Did many of the Mexicans make it in?

Litwack: One did that I can think of offhand. Several did. Rudy Limon, who lived in my neighborhood and would later on be class officer at Santa Barbara High School. Rudy did go on to graduate Berkeley and Boalt and became a lawyer. But most of the kids from Santa Barbara Junior High were being tracked. We were fortunate.

[End Interview 1]

Interview 2: September 5, 2001

[Begin Tape 3, Side A]

Lage: After our last session I thought of a few things that we hadn't gotten into that I wanted to ask you. The first one is probably not a deep story, but you've mentioned how important music is later in your life, and I wondered what kind of music you listened to as a child?

Litwack: Music was always important in my life, in part because of my parents. We listened to classical music. My parents loved classical music. They wanted me to be a violinist and so I did take up the violin.

Lage: You took lessons?

Litwack: I kept taking lessons until about maybe the ninth grade until I realized, "I'm not going to be a very good violinist." Much to their regret I gave up the lessons, and to my regret later on. It's too bad I didn't really continue on with it.

The musical event of the week was always the Met, the Metropolitan Opera, on Saturday. My mother told me the stories of sitting in the balcony, where the working people sat, way up in the balcony, in New York. They would bring their meals, or snacks. She heard all the great singers. Decades later, in Santa Barbara, Saturday was definitely opera day, over radio, of course, at least at 622 N. Milpas St. Occasionally, I was a little perturbed because there was a particularly important football game that was conflicting with the Met, but my parents usually won out. To this day I love opera and classical music.

In part, that reflected my boredom with pop music, at least what passed for popular music in those days, the kind of songs that were on the *Hit Parade*, the kind of songs and music that were played at the school dances. I thought they were dreadfully boring.

Lage: What was popular at that time?

Litwack: It was the *Hit Parade*. I'm not really talking about jazz. I didn't really get into jazz until I came to college. The songs that were the top ten: Kay Starr, Patti Page. Frank Sinatra did nothing for me when he came along. Popular music didn't grab me until Elvis Presley appeared. I said, "Wow, there's something going on here! That really is important."

For me, music—whether it's classical or popular music, whether it's blues, jazz, rock and roll—it has to be music that really does something for me, just sort of stirs me.

Lage: Emotionally.

Litwack: Emotionally. For that reason I don't like all classical music, and I don't like all forms of popular music. When I would hear the great operas that would certainly move me: Beethoven, Mozart, Bach; they all moved me. Wagner didn't move me at all; that was boring like much of the popular music I didn't like. I had my prejudices. I had my tastes. Probably I didn't like Wagner also because of the German connection, but then I liked—well, there's a difference between Beethoven and Wagner. So yes, music was always being played.

Lage: On radio, it sounds like.

Litwack: All on radio, yes. One time when I was in junior high school, Jack Litwack came out to the West Coast. Jack was Abe Litwack's son. I spoke about Abe Litwack in the first interview. He was my first cousin. He was out there representing his father and dealing with the sale of dry goods. He came to the house. I still see him. We remain good friends. He noticed that my family did not have a record player. Knowing how my parents loved music, he just thought that was a crime. Of course, we couldn't afford one, which is why we didn't have one, so he went out and bought one for the family. I'll never forget that. It was just so wonderful. I think I can still remember the first records on 78 that we bought, Mendelssohn's *Violin Concerto* and Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* symphony. I can remember that because it was such a glorious moment. It was so gracious of Jack to do that.

Music was very important to me. To this day, when I prepare for my lectures—when I sit and look over my notes and think about what I want to do for my lecture—I will usually put on some kind of inspirational music. It has to be a certain kind of music. Very often it is Beethoven and Sibelius.

Lage: That's wonderful. I'm glad we went back and picked that up. You mentioned popular music was not your favorite at the time. What about movies?

Litwack: I did go to movies, yes. I liked movies a lot. On Saturday afternoon that was kind of a ritual. I don't recall going to movies in the evening very often, but I do recall Saturday afternoon matinees. I saw those, yes.

Lage: The next topic is World War II. Were there a lot of war movies and things like that?

Litwack: There were more war movies. I don't recall them that vividly. The film that I recall most vividly, for some reason, was *Geronimo*, a great Western epic, and probably because my father took me to see that on New Year's Eve, and I think it was a twelve o'clock or eleven o'clock showing. That was so exciting for me to stay up that late. I must have been very young at that time. I remember seeing *Major Barbara* because an earthquake occurred while we were in the Fox Theater in Santa Barbara, and we all had to vacate the theater. I didn't see the rest of the film until some years later, but it made a big

impression on me. I do recall, somehow or other, I was enamored with Abbott and Costello. I had to see all the Abbott-Costello films.

Lage: They're still kind of amusing. I wanted to ask you about how Santa Barbara was affected by World War II? How did it impact your life?

Litwack: It had a very real impact. To begin with, I had already taken an avid interest in world affairs and politics starting in grammar school. I had campaigned actively and enthusiastically in grammar school for Roosevelt. I always wore proudly my Roosevelt button. World War II came, and I was very much affected, particularly by the fall of Europe, of Western Europe, and the invasion of the Soviet Union.

At that time, I would have to say I was still somewhat enamored with—or interested certainly in, and in some ways enamored by—the Soviet experiment in socialism. I knew nothing then, nor did many people know anything then, of Stalin's crimes. We knew something about the purges, but somehow those were explained away. That [the invasion of the Soviet Union] I took seriously also because they were invading the country where my parents had come from. They were rampaging through the Ukraine, occupying my mother's home village of Bugoslav, and occupying Odessa, where my father had been born. He had been born close to there anyway. And, of course, we knew what was—we were beginning to know what was happening to Jews who were caught in this situation and obviously did not survive, so that affected me.

The other thing that affected me, growing up in Santa Barbara, is I had some very close friends, very close friends, who were Japanese, born in the United States, but with parents who had been born in Japan.

Lage: You were schoolmates?

Litwack: Schoolmates, yes, schoolmates. In fact, one was Kazah—I forget how to spell his name. In grammar school Kazah and I were caught off campus during the lunch period, and we had to come to the vice principal's office, and we were strapped. We had to put our hand out, and he gave us a very severe strapping, a lashing. That was something I never told my parents about. I never told my parents. They would have been horrified at the idea.

Anyway, there was Kazah, there was Daiki Otsuka, and I soon learned that they would be sent to the camps. I thought that was absolutely horrible, without any justification whatsoever, because they were being selected only because they were Japanese. I had to wonder, "Well, wait a minute, what about Germans? What about Italians?" Not that they should be sent to the camps, but if you're going to have that sort of policy, why single out the Japanese?

In my current events class in the eighth grade—I was taking a course in art appreciation, and for some reason this teacher insisted that the first fifteen minutes be spent on current events. Anyone could get up and talk about what was happening in the world, and I always did. I *always* did. I had something to say about everything. They always knew if no one else was going to say anything, I would say something.

Lage: It sounds like she made this just as a forum for you!

Litwack: Maybe so, maybe so. I recall so vividly, I rose, and I denounced the removal of the Japanese as unjustified. I used the analogy. I said, “Why not the Germans? Why not the Italians?” One student in the class, Clara Betsy Klein, rose to her feet, outraged, said, “My father is a German, but he’s a loyal American! He’s in the military!” She was so outraged that she took her chair and didn’t come after me, but went after the teacher and had to be restrained and removed from the classroom and taken down to the nurse’s office. I’m standing there, somewhat speechless—only somewhat speechless—saying, “Wait a minute, you didn’t understand. I did not mean to—I was not implying that your family should be sent. I’m just saying that no one should be handled in this way.” That’s something I’ll never forget. I followed the war very closely.

Lage: You were young when you did that.

Litwack: Eighth grade, so, yes, I was very young. Eighth grade. I remember the war vividly because I kept an ongoing diary of what was happening on the war fronts and particularly on the Russian front. I became an expert on what was happening on the Russian front because it seemed to me that the Russian front was critical to the defeat of Germany and that ultimately the Allies would move into Western Europe. I also liked the idea of a growing friendship between the United States and the Soviet Union. I came to appreciate that. I saw Stalin on the cover of *Life Magazine*. That indicated a certain [laughs], a certain kind of acceptance.

Lage: We forget that that happened.

Litwack: The entire issue was devoted to what was happening in Soviet Russia. This is *Life Magazine*, you know, a Luce publication.

Lage: This is *Life Magazine*’s “united front.”

Litwack: That’s right, exactly. [laughs] That’s very good, yes. I kept this diary. I still have it. It’s just a fairly large stack. For some reason, I can’t get myself to throw it away. There’s nothing profound in it, and the writing is all right. The best result was that it encouraged me to keep writing. I loved to write. So I would write. And it was very dramatic, and there were always—I might start a

day in the diary by saying, “Victory is near!” with the exclamation mark—all this sort of thing. So the war was important.

My father was an assistant air raid warden for our block. I remember, of course, the blackouts. I remember, as they turned out to be false alarms because a Japanese submarine had shelled some oil wells about fifteen miles or twenty miles north of Santa Barbara at Camarillo—not Camarillo, excuse me, that’s south of Santa Barbara. I’ve forgotten the name of the town now. It was about twenty miles north of Santa Barbara [Elwood]. There was some concern that we might really be subjected to the war in some fashion. Those were very meaningful times, and of course I rejoiced over the allied victory and the Russian victory. I thought they were an ally, after all.

Lage: Were your parents also feeling as tied to the Soviet Union?

Litwack: Yes, sure. It was the country from which they had come, and also there were people there who they had grown up with. One of my uncles, we thought at the time, was still in Odessa. He was one person who usually wrote, but we didn’t hear from him during the war, and then learned that he had been evacuated to Siberia, east of the Volga, beyond Stalingrad.

Lage: For his safety, not because he was Jewish?

Litwack: Yes, for his safety. He returned to Odessa after the war.

Lage: What about after the fall of Europe: the atom bomb, and the onset of the cold war? This is the only time I’ve asked someone who was in high school at the time, but you were so aware.

Litwack: My recollection of the atomic bomb is that it was necessary to bring the war to an end. My position hasn’t really changed. I surprise my students in the History 7B course when I do not, as they expect, denounce the dropping of the atomic bomb. I present both positions, and as I indicate to them, I don’t know of any veteran of World War II—I’m sure there are some—I don’t know any veteran of World War II who has any question about the need to have used the bomb to end the war and bring them home as quickly as possible. I won’t now get into the whole argument about the bomb, but I’m sure that’s the way I felt at the time.

I was angered over the advent of the cold war. I probably put an inordinate amount of blame on the United States for having essentially revived the old anti-Bolshevik line that they had pursued from the time of the Russian Revolution up to the Nazi invasion of Russia. I was also expressing, I’m sure, my disappointment over the fact that Harry Truman, and not Henry Wallace, became president of the United States. I saw Truman’s policy, beginning with the Truman Doctrine, as very dangerous. The breakup of the old friendship—the breakup not of the old friendship, but the breakup of the new friendship, I

should say—between the United States and the Soviet Union concerned me. I thought I understood why the Soviet Union insisted on having a kind of buffer zone, having been invaded twice by Germany within a period of forty years or so, and why they needed to have at least friendly governments on their borders: Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, so forth. No doubt, I overlooked, and maybe I wanted to overlook, some of the invasions of human rights that accompanied the Soviet Union's sphere of influence in that area.

I was deeply concerned over the unification of Germany, and the militarization of Germany even more so. Of course, that came some years later, but I was concerned at the outset about the militarization of West Germany. If I had had it my way, Germany would have remained East and West, at least until my generation was gone.

Lage: So even this recent unification?

Litwack: Yes.

Lage: That's what you were referring to.

Litwack: Yes.

Lage: That's interesting that that stayed with you.

Litwack: I also remember, of course vividly, the Nuremberg trials. I have never had any problem justifying the Nuremberg trials. My only concern—I would have perhaps hoped that several thousand more active Nazis had met the same fate. I've always said, I can't argue that I'm consistently against the death penalty because I would always—if Nuremberg was tomorrow, I would ask for the same penalty to be imposed. If they were not executed, I feared, they would somehow find a way of returning to—possibly even to active participation in the new Germany. I'm not so sure I was entirely wrong in that respect either.

Lage: We won't know.

Litwack: Well, old Nazis—those who were not executed—some of those old Nazis were being rehabilitated not too many years after the end of the war.

Lage: You were a very mature young man.

Litwack: I was deeply interested in politics and international affairs. That was about the time if somebody asked me, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" I probably would have said, "A foreign correspondent."

Lage: I can see why.

- Litwack: Then when I saw Alfred Hitchcock's film, *Foreign Correspondent*, I knew I wanted to be a foreign correspondent when I grew up.
- Lage: I've heard about Bob Wormser and the How and Why Club. Does that have any relationship to your own developing story?
- Litwack: Robert Wormser was a very interesting person. He was a tennis coach at Santa Barbara High School. I was not on the tennis team, but we met because of his politics and my politics. He very much admired my politics. He introduced me to some liberal publications such as *PM*; that was a fairly new publication out of New York which took a very liberal stance. With his encouragement, we formed this How and Why Club, and we had a regular program on the local radio station.
- I don't know how we took that name. It was essentially a panel. There would be four to six of us who would debate the issues of the day. We had a panel on Soviet-American relations. We had a panel on labor, and on labor unions.
- Lage: Did you have pros and cons? Did you have any conservative opponents?
- Litwack: Oh yes, we had conservatives, sure. In fact, I felt really out-gunned on that.
- Lage: On what? The whole group?
- Litwack: It was a pretty good division, actually, an exciting group of diverse views. It was fun.
- Lage: And he was from S & W? [food corporation]
- Litwack: He was a W at S & W, but I don't think he had any ongoing relations with the family. I think he was a person of some wealth. When I came to Berkeley he helped me out. It was not a large sum, but he sent a certain payment every month. Before that, he took me up to San Francisco with three other people. That was my return to San Francisco, having not been there since I was six years old. Once again, I knew that I wanted to ultimately come to this area and live.
- Lage: This was when you were in high school?
- Litwack: Yes, yes. He brought us up and found rooms for us at the El Cortez Hotel in San Francisco, and we had about four days to see and experience San Francisco.
- Lage: Tony mentioned you were in American Youth for Democracy. What was that?

- Litwack: American Youth for Democracy was the beginning of my affiliation with the left. The AYD, as it was called, American Youth for Democracy, was a radical student organization. It made the attorney general's list of subversive organizations. [But if it was, in fact, a Communist front organization we were not aware of that allegation in Santa Barbara. I have come to learn, however, that the AYD was closely tied to the Communist Party.—added during narrator's review]
- Lage: When was it put on the list?
- Litwack: When the attorney general's list was drawn up—let's see, the attorney general's list was drawn up in 1949, or thereabouts, but many organizations had been around for some time. The IWW, for example, made the attorney general's list. I think in retrospect there's probably little question but that the AYD was strongly influenced, if not dominated, by the Communist Party. But that never concerned me. That happened in other organizations to which I belonged. My concern was what it stood for. What did I see in the AYD that interested me? One, it was dedicated to the eradication of racism. It was as strong as any organization—except for the NAACP, perhaps—as strong as any organization in regard to civil rights. It was very pro-labor, pro-union. It was, in my estimation, dedicated to the realization of social and racial justice in this country.
- Lage: The things you cared about.
- Litwack: The things I cared very deeply about. I also liked its stance on foreign policy, and its critique of the cold war and Truman's foreign policy. I thought the AYD was fine. I tried to organize a little chapter in Santa Barbara. We would meet every once in a while. I don't think we had regular meetings, but we would meet in the library, in a room in the library. We would discuss issues and discuss also how we might publicize our position.
- Lage: How did you relate to this, if it was national? Was there a conference?
- Litwack: There were national conferences. I didn't attend any.
- Lage: Were there newsletters? How did you stay in touch with the larger organization?
- Litwack: I don't really know. I'm not even sure the AYD knew that we existed. They didn't seem to take much interest in our little club in Santa Barbara.
- Lage: They didn't send people out to help you organize or anything like that?
- Litwack: No, they didn't, no. I started with the AYD, then the next organization was Students for Wallace.

- Lage: And that was while you were here at Cal?
- Litwack: That started when I was in high school. That was obviously built around the election of 1944, and the candidacy of Henry Wallace. I don't know whether organizationally it replaced the AYD. As I recall, the AYD sort of went out, and Students for Wallace came in. Students for Wallace evolved into the Young Progressives of America. The Young Progressives of America, that's obviously the youth division of the Progressive Party, the party that nominated Henry Wallace and Glen Taylor in 1944.
- Lage: And you were active in all those?
- Litwack: In all of those, yes. When I was in Santa Barbara I organized a chapter of Students for Wallace and I wrote and issued my first political pamphlet. Oh, I'm sorry, that was my first year of college, that's right, at UC Santa Barbara.
- Lage: That's where we want to move next.
- Litwack: Yes.
- Lage: Had Wallace been the Secretary of Agriculture?
- Litwack: Secretary of Agriculture, yes, under Roosevelt. In a deal that was made in 1948—he was vice president in 1944, and in a deal that was struck with some of the more conservative factions of the Democratic Party, he was replaced by Harry Truman in the 1948 election. And, of course, with Roosevelt's death—
- Lage: Whoever made the deal must have known that the vice president was going to become president.
- Litwack: I think many people understood that that was going to be the case. That's right.
- Lage: This segues into your time at college in Santa Barbara.
- Litwack: I graduated high school in June, 1947. The last year of high school was a wonderful year. I was the editor of the high school newspaper; we've discussed that. That was a marvelous experience. At the same time during that year I was feeling very restless. I thought high school should be over, and I wanted to start some new adventures. So I went to the University of California at Santa Barbara, which at that time was located up on the riviera in Santa Barbara. They had not yet moved it out to Goleta, but it was a branch of the University of California.
- Frankly, for me it was like going to the thirteenth grade. I lived at home, and I would walk or take the bus up to the college everyday, do my homework. Nothing seemed to have really changed. I think my mother probably wanted

me to stay at least two years, and then maybe think about transferring to Berkeley, or wherever I wanted to go. I knew I couldn't take more than one year of this. It was really like the thirteenth grade.

Lage: Was it not intellectually challenging?

Litwack: That's not entirely true. It was intellectually challenging, some courses were, at least. The living situation—I loved my parents, don't get me wrong. I loved my parents, but somehow just going back home everyday didn't seem like going to college. But I had two classes that were particularly memorable. Political Science 1 was memorable because I took it thinking that, because of my interest in politics, Political Science 1 was the way to start. I finished that course and vowed I would never take another political science course, and I kept that promise.

Lage: What was it that bothered you?

Litwack: I just thought it was dull. It was boring.

Lage: The approach?

Litwack: The whole approach. That's probably a course that suffered because of the person teaching it. Sometimes that could sour you on an entire field. It happens in history all the time. It happened to me in political science.

I loved writing, as I indicated, and I had two wonderful teachers in literature. One was Douwe Sturman, and the other was George Hand. In those courses I was able to write a great deal, and that's what I loved to do. By this time my writing was heavily influenced by my reading. If it was *U.S.A.* by Dos Passos, I was doing stream of consciousness. If it was James Joyce, I would be in that mood. Or William Saroyan, I thought William Saroyan was fascinating. All those people I had been reading.

[End tape 3, side a; begin tape 3, side b]

Litwack: I wrote a number of short stories, and I recall very vividly a story I wrote in Sturman's course. I thought Sturman was terrific. The fact that he was also for Wallace made him even more endearing. He was a real intellectual, a fine intellectual. We were reading Bacon's [*The*] *Essays*, that was something everybody, I think, read in English 1A. So we're reading Bacon's [*The*] *Essays*, and he told us to write a kind of Baconesque essay. To me, Bacon essays are on death, on life, on marriage, on morals. So I wrote one called, "On Death." I let my imagination go wild. It was really about a man who's dying of tuberculosis, and he's in an ambulance being taken to Bellevue Hospital in New York. I had never been in New York in my life. I didn't know anything about New York. He goes to the hospital, and as he goes to the

hospital, his whole life passes before him. That's what I dealt with. It had a kind of Hemingway quality to it, or so I thought.

Lage: More than Baconesque?

Litwack: Yes, yes, that's right. I thought this was a real—I loved writing it. I came to class, and I was carried away. Sturman said, "I want to share this particular piece with the class," and he started reading my short story. Well, I was overwhelmed, because he seemed to like it a lot. That made my day, month, and year. After class I went to pick up my paper with a big smile on my face, and looked at the paper, and there was a big F, and a little comment saying, "I enjoyed the paper, but it had nothing to do with Bacon."

Lage: And he never made that negative comment when he was reading it?

Litwack: No, not at all. He didn't say when he was reading it, "As a warning to those people who don't fulfill the assignment—"

Lage: He must have really liked it.

Litwack: I think he did. Well, I mean it was—I look at it now; I still have that paper; of course, it's very amateurish, but it certainly—I got a chance to talk about a lot of things I wanted to talk about. It was a good experience. But he was a very inspiring teacher, as was George Hand. In both cases, what I enjoyed about the class was not only the professors but the fact that I kept writing. I was able to write on everything, and that was good.

Lage: But you needed to get out of town.

Litwack: I needed to get out of town. The other thing that had happened in that thirteenth grade, as we sat in the—as "we" meaning my friend Tony, one of my closest friends, Tony Baragona—as we sat in the assembly at the beginning of the term, we were told about the requirement that you take ROTC. We looked at the form that we had to sign, and we noticed it said, "Exceptions can be made for those who—dah, dah, dah—belong to the National Guard, belong to the Naval Reserve, are veterans of the military," et cetera. We looked at each other, and in an hour we were down at the Naval Reserve in Santa Barbara, and signed up for the Naval Reserve, not really, I think, understanding what the implications might be. When the Korean War broke out, Tony was one of the first to be called.

Lage: Oh! And this was just to get out of ROTC.

Litwack: That's right. After ROTC, I had become very inactive in the reserve, so I was essentially dropped.

Lage: Did Tony regret that decision?

- Litwack: No, not really. I think he had quite an experience. He was a frogman in the navy. We would correspond. I started collecting my letters around that time, so I still have a number of Tony's letters from the service, including some very good poems on the Korean War. [I included one of those poems in the eulogy I gave at his memorial service.—added during narrator's review]
- Lage: That he wrote to you?
- Litwack: That he wrote, yes.
- Lage: How interesting. Okay. Should we move you up to Berkeley?
- Litwack: Sure.
- Lage: Was that traumatic for your parents?
- Litwack: I think it was, very much so. I wanted so much to go to Berkeley. I did not apply to any other college. I don't know what I would have done if I hadn't gotten into Berkeley. I hadn't thought about that even, hadn't considered it.
- Lage: Don't you think you knew you would get in?
- Litwack: It was not as difficult as now. I think I assumed—I had decent grades—that I would be able to get in, and I was delighted when I was accepted. Yes, leaving home was very traumatic, for my mother in particular. I think my father took a different view of it. I think he just thought it was a wonderful adventure for me, and I'm going to one of his favorite areas, the Bay Area. I got on that train that took me up from Santa Barbara to San Francisco, and then on the bus to Berkeley. That was the beginning of a whole new experience.
- Lage: Was money a problem?
- Litwack: Yes, money was a problem. Wormser's help was important, but I needed more. My mother had saved all my life for this moment, and so we went into those savings. But I really had to work to make it through college. When I came up to Berkeley, knowing I had to work, I immediately went to the library. I had had all this experience in the library, and they said, "Well, we have nothing now, but we'll call you as soon as something comes up." I said to myself, "How am I going to manage?" My first job at Berkeley was helping to weigh and measure incoming students.
- Lage: Up at Cowell Hospital?
- Litwack: Up at Cowell Hospital. I was the one who would sit there while someone, maybe the nurse, weighed and measured them, and I would fill out the forms. Within a few days a call came, and I could work in the library. That was just

fabulous. I worked in the documents division of the library and that enabled me to get through.

Lage: Where did you live?

Litwack: I lived on Hearst. In fact, [laughs] I hadn't realized this until I started preparing a few things for this oral history—I actually have all the streets on which I lived as a student in Berkeley: Hearst, Wheeler Street, Pasade, Dana Street, University Avenue, Ridge Road, and 2818 Telegraph Avenue. I didn't keep this kind of record. Do you know where this is from? It's from my FBI file. [laughter] They had it all there. [tape paused to pick up phone]

Lage: There's some value here. Those guys were keeping good records.

Litwack: I know. Anyway, I started out living on Hearst Avenue, two blocks below what was then Grove. Now it's Martin Luther King street. I had a room there which I shared with a friend of mine from Santa Barbara, Leonard Phillips. Tony and I were supposed to have been roommates, but his call to active duty in the navy had spoiled those plans.

Lage: Was it a rooming house?

Litwack: No, just a room. I ate in the Oxford Co-op. That was pretty much my pattern through my undergraduate years; I would eat at the co-ops and live away from the co-ops. I didn't want to live in a living unit.

In Santa Barbara I had become interested in Beta Sigma Tau, which was the first interracial fraternity. I joined it with some enthusiasm. The whole idea attracted me a lot. Then I came to realize, when I came to Berkeley, a fraternity's a fraternity. I didn't care whether it was interracial or not.

Lage: Did they have the same fraternity here?

Litwack: Yes, and one of my friends from Santa Barbara had joined that fraternity. I decided I didn't like that kind of living. The co-op, it was a bargain, so that's why I ate in the co-op and put in my six hours of work per week. I started at Oxford, and I went to Cloyne at one point, Ridge another year. I went through a lot of the co-ops here.

Lage: Is that how your social circle developed?

Litwack: To some degree. The co-ops—I don't want to stereotype them—the co-ops were made up of largely young people with fairly liberal, progressive outlooks, as opposed to the fraternities and the sororities, which were the bastions of conservatism then, and probably now. My politics influenced my social life to a large extent. I also had some close friends at *The Daily Californian*, and when I came to Berkeley I thought I would work on *The*

Daily Californian. After all, I had been editor of my high school newspaper, I liked journalism, and one of my very close friends from Santa Barbara—Louis Bell—was on the paper. I came to realize that I could not work on the *Daily Californian*, on my courses, and in politics; one had to be sacrificed, and I sacrificed *The Daily Cal*.

Lage: And you had your job.

Litwack: And my job. That's right. Then I still had friends at *The Daily Cal*, so I was a part of the social circle, and also my political friends. That would in time pose a—not a problem, I just went at it a very different way. My political friends tended to be very radical, many of them Communists, and to my way of thinking, very isolated from what was happening on the campus. They tended to hang out with each other. I didn't want my friendships to be that rigidly defined, so I had many friends, who did not agree with me politically, but I had a good time with them. They didn't have to pass a loyalty oath in order to be my friend. I became very active in the ASUC [Associated Students], which meant that I mixed with people from all kinds of persuasions. My political friends, I realized too, maybe in retrospect, very few of them seemed to have to work. That kind of put me in another category, so to speak. In any event, I had a fairly broad spectrum of friends in college.

Lage: Did you go to football games?

Litwack: Oh yes. Oh, I went to all the football games. I went to three Rose Bowls.

Lage: You were here at a good time for football.

Litwack: I know. Pappy Waldorf's Bears, the Golden Bears. I went to all three Rose Bowls in '49, '50, '51. I went to all the football games. Ultimately, but I'll get into this later, I had a job that I had to perform during all the football games. At times, I also thought I was being fairly, rather imaginative. That is, I mixed my politics and football. I had the bright idea of using the football games as a way of passing out political literature. So we would have our political statement on one side, and we would have the starting line-up of the football game on the other side. Everyone wants a free list of the starting line-up, so they would hopefully read what's on the other side.

Lage: Did your political friends also have an interest in the sports side of the literature?

Litwack: Not particularly. I don't recall that many of them were that interested. I loved sports, and I loved the football team and the games. They were wonderful. I was right there with my white shirt in the Cal rooting section. I can't imagine any of my political friends would have subjected themselves to that.

Lage: You were surrounded by those fraternity boys.

- Litwack: Absolutely. That's right, absolutely right.
- Lage: And all the people who were in the class of '51 alumni group [at a recent 50-year reunion].
- Litwack: Yes, that's right.
- Lage: Where should we go from here? I would like to hear more about your activities in the ASUC, what the political issues were. How do you want to pursue it?
- Litwack: It's hard for me to separate Berkeley from San Francisco—I'm talking about my undergraduate years. I loved San Francisco. It's one of the reasons I came to Berkeley. I found myself spending a lot of time in San Francisco on the weekends, even if I had only enough money to take the Key System train to San Francisco and back, I would do it. I would just walk around the city, hang out in the North Beach area. I began to go to some of the jazz clubs. I probably was underage, but I would walk into Bocce Ball, for example, in order to hear the aspiring opera singers. I started writing stories about San Francisco, probably at that point influenced by William Saroyan's work.

I loved the city. I liked the places like, sort of the forbidden places. What was the best example of it? I've forgotten the name now. It's right down there in North Beach [The Black Cat]. It was considered to be a notorious kind of hang out. It's a restaurant now, I think. In any event, that whole area was very exciting for me.

I'll go through with this story because it deals with the San Francisco attraction. I became a good friend of—I knew his last name, but I don't remember it now—Barney. Barney was a black kid who I met at a political meeting over in Berkeley. He lived in San Francisco. He was a piano player, and he aspired to make it big time in music. His roommate was also an African American. His roommate played, I think, trumpet or trombone. Every Friday night and Saturday night—they lived on Lyon Street in San Francisco—I would go over there, oh, get over there about 6:30, 7:00. It was just a social evening. People would come in and out. We would smoke some dope. We would drink some beer. I don't remember people drinking anything really heavy.

All this until 2:00 A.M., and then at 2:00 A.M. we would all—it was just as if we all knew what was going to happen—at 2:00 A.M. we all got up and we walked over to Bop City. Bop City was an after-hours joint near Fillmore and Post. It was a well-known establishment. There were about two or three of them in San Francisco, but Bop City's where we would go. That was where many of the musicians who wanted to jam would come from all of their gigs. So Barney's roommate would come there; he might have been playing the Fairmont Hotel, for example. They would come from all the hotels where they

might have been playing, or restaurants, whatever, and then they would jam, and jam until about 5:00 in the morning. It was very exciting. And Barney would usually get into the act as well, and play some piano.

Lage: This was new music for you. Was it not?

Litwack: No, it was jazz. I felt pretty comfortable with it already. What I'm describing now was probably my third year in college. I don't think I met Barney until the second year. This is happening around the third and fourth year when I was in college.

My roommate wondered—this was again my third year of college, this is a different roommate—my roommate wondered why I wasn't around Friday and Saturday night. He was political. He was one of my political friends. I said, "Well, I have some friends over in San Francisco." "What do you do?" "Well, we listen to some music." He said, "Well, can I go with you one of these times?" I said, "Sure." I brought him over there, introduced him to all the people there, and we did the usual things.

When it was five o'clock in the morning, we were returning to Berkeley, and all I can remember is his sermon: "How can you spend your time in such a decadent fashion?!" He was very much into Marx—"This is the height of bourgeois decadence and bourgeois degeneracy," he admonished me. I said, "All I'm doing is enjoying myself with some very good people and listening to some very good music." But he thought it was a waste of time and energy.

There's an aftermath of this story, and that is some years later this same roommate goes to Boalt and becomes a lawyer. For a time he was a lawyer for Lenny Bruce, a very controversial comic, one of the great social critics of our time. Then he left the law essentially to—he didn't leave the law entirely—but he left his practice to become a professor in the speech department [now Department of Rhetoric] here at Berkeley. I remember he had just won his tenure. We met once on campus and he said, "Leon," he said, "I understand you've invested in a rock group." I said, "Well, yes. I have invested in a rock group, Mother Earth." And he said, "Yes, I know, they are quite good. I wanted you to know that I'm also investing in a rock group." And I said, "Well," I said, "Al, that's wonderful. I'm glad to know that." I'm thinking in the back of my mind, "Oh my God, what could he have possibly found?" I said, "What's the name of the group?" And he said, "They, well, right now," he said, "they're just playing out of a garage in El Cerrito, but they're going to call themselves Creedence Clearwater Revival," which of course would become one of the top-selling rock and roll groups in the world. I said, "Well, that's very nice, Al. I wish you the best," not knowing what was going to happen. Well, he—that took a little bit of time. He leaves his tenure position at Berkeley, becomes their attorney, and then ultimately the success of Creedence Clearwater, in the eyes of many, helped to create what is now the Fantasy empire in Berkeley, dedicated to producing musical records and films.

Lage: That's the root of the Fantasy empire?

Litwack: Yes, that's it. There are varying stories about whether or not, or how Creedence Clearwater was ripped off to establish the Fantasy empire, but that's the evolution. My friend and former roommate is the vice president of Fantasy.

Lage: How degenerate of him.

Litwack: Yes. [laughs] I think that's a good story.

Lage: Did you ever bring it up to him, or remind him?

Litwack: I don't know if I ever did. I see him from time to time. When I go over to Fantasy—as I go to Fantasy every once in a while to consult on a film—I'll often take the elevator to the top floor. He's a wonderful guy. I still enjoy him.

I want to come back to this relationship between students and non-students when we talk about my shipping out, which comes at the end of my senior year. So we'll take up that at a later time.

I come to Berkeley, and I think I'm interested in history, but not absolutely certain at this time. I also was very interested in drama, but I didn't sign up for any of the drama courses. I considered doing that. I did go over to the California Labor School in San Francisco which was a radical school, with many of the classes at night. People could just come in and do whatever—not do whatever they wanted to, but take the classes there. I did take a class there in acting, in drama [laughs]. I don't think I understood the whole world of drama. They went by the Stanislavski method, and so when my assignment was to act like a tree or a door I said, "This is not for me." Unfortunately, I didn't do anything more with it. I'm sorry I didn't.

Lage: Except as a lecturer.

Litwack: Except as a lecturer, that's right. History interested me, and then I got a chance meeting my sophomore year which proved to be quite memorable. I was taking the survey American history course, and the teaching assistant (also one of my political friends) called me and told me to come over, that someone wanted to meet me. So I said, "Well, that's all right." I went over to his place and was sitting there, and in walks W.E.B. Du Bois.

Lage: Did you recognize him?

Litwack: Oh yes, immediately. If you recall, I had read Du Bois in high school and used Du Bois as the centerpiece for my presentation in the eleventh grade on Reconstruction. Shirley Graham, his wife, was with him. Of course, I'm immediately thinking to myself, "Why does he want to see me?" Well, it turns

out that—this is quite consistent with Du Bois’s interests and with what he wrote in *Black Reconstruction*—he wanted to know what the students were learning in this history course: What was I learning about slavery? What was I learning about Reconstruction? I told him that the textbook, written by John D. Hicks, was terrible on these questions; that it repeated most of the distortions that were accepted doctrine in American history textbooks and American history courses. Then I started telling him about the content of the lectures, and he was indeed very deeply impressed.

The person teaching the course was a young assistant professor, Kenneth Stampp, with whom, of course, I would ultimately write my dissertation. I had, again, one of my political friends to thank for this. I was signing up for a history course. At that time, you could sign up for one of five sections. Stampp would teach one; Armin Rappaport would teach one; Walton Bean would teach one; and Lawrence Harper would teach one. I didn’t know any of these people, so I was going to sign up for Lawrence Harper, and this political friend I met in the Students for Wallace office said, “No, no,” he said, “take Stampp. Take Stampp.” Just based on his recommendation I said, “Okay, I will.”

Lage: That’s probably why you ultimately majored in history.

Litwack: Yes, of course. That’s why I stayed at Berkeley for my doctorate as well. It’s not as though I came to history because I met Kenneth Stampp, but Kenneth Stampp reinforced for me my interest in history and made it so exciting, so important, and so relevant. This was not the most popular history course at that time. Armin Rappaport’s class would be packed mostly with students from the fraternities and sororities.

Lage: Was Rappaport a good lecturer?

Litwack: Rappaport was a very good lecturer, but with very little content. He was anecdotal. Popularity doesn’t always lead to quality teaching. Stampp’s course, on the other hand, was memorable. I came away from his lectures inspired and burdened with knowledge and weight.

I remember my first exam, the midterm. I had already made a promise to myself, what I would do if I received an A in that first exam. I wanted that so much. This is the first part of the course. I picked up my exam, and it was an A. There was a rainstorm, just an absolute downpour outside. That didn’t make any difference. I ran down to the Key System train, went over to this bookstore in San Francisco where I had seen two books that I coveted; one was *The Complete Works of Thomas Jefferson*, edited by Saul Padover, and the other was a two-volume complete works of Tom Paine, edited by Philip Foner [*The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*], and I bought those as my prize for having done so well on the exam.

- Lage: Wonderful. It also says something about grade inflation. An A really meant something.
- Litwack: That's right, it did. Absolutely. That's absolutely right, yes.
- Lage: That's a very nice story. Who was the TA [teaching assistant]?
- Litwack: I don't remember.
- Lage: You don't remember how it happened, or why he picked you?
- Litwack: No. He knew me because of my politics. He probably knew Du Bois for that reason as well, but I don't remember.
- Lage: Were these classes then not such large classes, if they had so many sections. Of course the survey course was required.
- Litwack: It was required of everybody. I think Stamppp's course probably would have had about maybe 200, 250.
- Lage: What else do you remember about other professors and the tone of the department at that time?
- Litwack: It was a very good department. I don't think it was as yet a distinguished department.
- Lage: '48 to '51.
- Litwack: You've asked a very good question. Who else in the history department had any real impact on me as an undergraduate? I took all of Stamppp's courses. I didn't find very much that was exciting in European history. Perhaps I took the wrong professors. I took the professor that most people took at that time, Franklin Palm, who taught modern European history (the French Revolution to World War II). I realized after a few lectures that I might as well just get the Fybate lecture notes and use them to get through the course with an easy A. It was also a very popular course, as I came to realize, for athletes.
- Lage: Did you get [Robert J.] Kerner at all?
- Litwack: No, I stayed away from Kerner. I had heard about Kerner's ravings. I had no interest in him. That's too bad, because I was really interested in Russian history, and the only way I would appease that interest is, some years later when I was a graduate student, I took the course from one of Kerner's students—George Lantzeff taught a course on the history of Siberia. We started at the Volga River, and we made it all the way out to the Pacific Ocean by the end of that course. [laughs]

[end tape 3, side b; begin tape 4, side a]

Lage: Did you take any courses from John Hicks, whose textbook you didn't like?

Litwack: I stayed away from him, probably because of that textbook. Unfortunately, I didn't have a chance to take [Raymond] Sontag's course because Sontag, I believe, at that time was away from Berkeley. He had some sort of appointment somewhere else, so I didn't have the opportunity to sign up for Sontag's course in European history. From everything I heard about Sontag, that would have been quite an experience.

What I remember most vividly, other than Ken Stamp's courses, are the courses I took in literature, where I continued to write. I remember one course in particular that George Stewart taught called "The Long Narrative," where we spent the entire semester working on a long narrative. I decided to cover the Herrick Hospital strike of nurses' aides and orderlies, in which I was also participating as a supporting picket. I told the story of that strike, from the very beginning to the end. I enjoyed writing. I wrote a lot of essays and stories, mostly for other courses in English.

Lage: And were the professors helpful in developing your writing?

Litwack: Yes, oh yes. They were good. I always appreciated the professors who would work with your style. I was writing a lot of political manifestos of sorts, or articles. Unfortunately, I'm a person who keeps most of what I've written, like I still have that short story from my college days in Santa Barbara, but I came to realize at some point that many of the essays that I had written in college had disappeared. I figured, well, out of all those various moves I have made, something must have happened to them. But some years later someone told me that what had happened is that a landlady in one of my places had complained about my radical literature—what she saw around the room: newspapers, magazines, pamphlets. Someone, I guess, had come there and had apparently taken my writings.

Lage: That's amazing!

Litwack: It is amazing. But nothing's amazing when you think about that period.

Lage: Yes, this was the McCarthy period.

Litwack: That's it, that's right.

Lage: Are there any other professors we should talk about? Then maybe we'll go to the loyalty oath.

Litwack: Yes, another professor who was very influential was Charles Gulick in the economics department. Charles Gulick taught the history of labor, and he

taught it from the standpoint of the workers. He was a passionate advocate of trade unionism and a very inspiring lecturer. He really would become wrapped up in the subject. It was a great course. I met a number of good people in that course too, economics teaching assistants, including Doug Dowd, with whom I would be affiliated in the fight against the loyalty oath. So Charles Gulick and Ken Stamp— and Robert Brentano joined the department while I was there. I'm trying to recall whether I had his course as a senior or as a first-year graduate student; it was a seminar on historiography. I'm sorry, I cannot recall.

Oh yes, I had History 101, which is a course you must take in order to graduate as a history major. History 101 is devoted to writing a major research paper. It's really like writing a senior thesis. There would be about eight sections, as there are now, and each one would have a different focus. I was really looking forward to 101; that was going to be—I loved doing research. I looked at all the subjects, and there was not one subject in which I had any interest. I was so disappointed.

I went to the faculty person who was in charge of the course, Armin Rappaport, and I told him of my dilemma. He said, "What do you want to write about?" I told him, and he said, "Well, why don't you just go ahead and write that, and I'll sign you into one of the sections. You can still go there and get whatever information you need about style, punctuation, footnotes, et cetera." That was it. So I wrote my 101 paper on Negroes and organized labor, from 1866 to 1872. It revolved largely around the first attempts to organize a national union among black workers who had been excluded from the regular trade unions.

Lage: This was something you already knew about at the time?

Litwack: I'd read something about it and it sounded interesting, and there were some original source materials available to me, so that's what I wanted to do. That would ultimately become my master's thesis. I would expand upon it for a master's thesis.

Then for Charles Gulick I wrote a research paper on the "march inland," which was part of the history of the ILWU, the International Longshoreman and Warehouseman's Union. The "march inland" was the attempt to organize the warehousemen in the Bay Area.

Lage: You did a lot of things relevant to your political—

Litwack: Yes, that's right.

Lage: Were the professors welcoming of your political passion that went with your academic interests?

- Litwack: Yes they were, actually. Armin Rappaport didn't like my politics at all, but then he agreed to let me do this paper—which was very nice of him incidentally; I appreciated that a great deal.
- Lage: Let's talk about the loyalty oath, unless you want to start with some other political issues.
- Litwack: I was concerned with a number of issues on the campus. First, let me simply say that the Berkeley campus—one of the reasons I came to the Berkeley was because it had such a vibrant political life. When I came here I was absolutely amazed. I loved everything about Berkeley; I loved Telegraph Avenue; I loved all the political groups that were clamoring for your attention. It seemed like you had every variety of radicalism imaginable: the Socialist Workers Party, the Socialist Labor Party, the Communist Party, the Americans for Democratic Action. They were all out there.
- Lage: And where were they? What was the atmosphere?
- Litwack: You'd see announcements of their meetings. They would pass out leaflets at Sather Gate. Sather Gate was exactly where Sather Gate is now.
- Lage: And that was the end of the campus.
- Litwack: That was the end of the campus, that's right. Telegraph Avenue came all the way down to Sather Gate. They were speaking and passing out leaflets, a very exciting political scene. There would be political meetings off campus. Everything involving political advocacy had to happen off campus.
- Lage: Where did the meetings take place?
- Litwack: At Sather Gate and at West Gate. At Sather Gate, for example, you'd be speaking from the back—because I've done it a few times—speaking from the back of a truck. Same thing down at West Gate. Or you'd set up a platform, or soapbox. I think we only had a soap box, but you set up a platform of some kind.
- Lage: What about Stiles Hall?
- Litwack: Stiles Hall was very active, a very active place, absolutely, yes. Political meetings were forbidden on campus by virtue of regental rule. Even though UC was a vibrant place politically, it was also a place that didn't tolerate that much on-campus dissent. Robert Gordon Sproul took a very paternal interest in his students and felt that it was up to him—he assumed, among other things, responsibility for keeping students away from politically contagious diseases. They used to always say students weren't influenced by radical ideas, they were *infected* by radical ideas. Sproul was kept informed of radical activity on the campus. There was, from the very beginning, a very close

collaboration between the administration, Sproul, and Dean Stone, the dean of men, and the FBI, and the Berkeley Police Department.

Lage: Did you know this at the time?

Litwack: Yes, oh yes. Berkeley Police Department had a “red squad,” as it was called. I don’t know if that was their official name for it, but it was the name that people gave it, headed by Inspector O’Meara, who would be at all the political meetings with his little notebook. [laughs]

Lage: So he was well-known to everybody.

Litwack: Yes

Lage: Not an undercover operation.

Litwack: No. That was Inspector O’Meara, and there would be someone there with a camera who would take photographs of everyone; not only those who were speaking, but those in the crowd as well. Politically it was a repressive atmosphere, and yet there was still a very vibrant political life.

My major interest, when I came here, was the Wallace campaign. I arrived in September of ‘48 and the election was that November. I became involved in the Students for Wallace. I became involved then in the Young Progressives of America; that organization continued after the Wallace campaign. Students for Wallace essentially will become the Young Progressives of America. I was chosen as a delegate to one of the first national conventions of the Young Progressives of America. That was in Cleveland. Now I had never been out of the state of California, so this was exciting. I was going to Cleveland!

Lage: Did they pay your way?

Litwack: They took contributions to pay my way, contributions. Two of us were sent, myself and Sonia, political friends. We had a nice farewell at the Greyhound bus station in Oakland, and we got on a Greyhound bus and headed toward Cleveland. I remember stopping in Cheyenne, getting off the bus in Cheyenne or Laramie, and buying a cowboy hat. So when I came to the convention I had my cowboy hat. That gave me admission to any party that was going on.

That was also a political awakening of a kind. The Young Progressives of America, like the Progressive Party, had come to be controlled in part by the Communist Party, which had its agenda. I was one of those who supported the resolution that would have condemned American imperialism *and* Soviet imperialism.

Lage: Both.

Litwack: Yes, both, because I felt that way. Of course, that was completely unacceptable to the dominant faction who quickly called it red baiting. I failed to consider the relevance of that charge since we were condemning American imperialism as well. I realized it didn't have a chance, that we were going nowhere with this. That was only the beginning, though, of an awakening about the politics of the Communist left.

While I'm at the convention I received three telegrams. I didn't even know those telegrams existed until I actually found them in my FBI file. They had copies of the three telegrams that were sent to me, telling me to come back to Berkeley, that they had nominated me to run for representative-at-large for the ASUC Student Council.

Lage: Who sent them to you?

Litwack: Just friends. Somehow the telegrams came into the hands of authorities who kept them.

Lage: As if this was subversive.

Litwack: As if this was subversive. There was nothing subversive about it except to tell me that I had been selected to run for student council. They had taken up a contribution. They were going to bring me back by train so I would be able to get there faster than going back on the Greyhound bus.

Lage: So you had to leave the meeting.

Litwack: I left like one day early, something of that sort. That was the first of my three campaigns for student council.

Lage: Were any of them successful?

Litwack: No, I lost all three. Just like my boyhood idol, Eugene Debs, I went down to defeat. I did get into the finals one time; three others were eliminated and I was one of two final candidates. Here is a placard from my first campaign: "Leon Litwack for rep-at-large. Extend Fair Bear nondiscrimination tradition; reactivize Student Housing Bureau; request voluntary ROTC plan; grad student representation on the executive committee; a compulsory lower-priced ASUC card." I thought that was a very moderate platform. I didn't even realize until I found this placard that I was requesting voluntary ROTC; I really wanted to abolish ROTC altogether.

As for Fair Bear, that became one of my areas in ASUC politics. I became the chairman of the Labor Council. Labor Council had as its primary responsibility enforcement of the Fair Bear agreements. What is a Fair Bear agreement? Well, it's an agreement we draw up between student workers and the various businesses around the university. Let's take Larry Blake's

Restaurant, for example, and the textbook stores. It provided for a minimum wage. They could not pay below that wage. They had to agree to a certain set of working conditions, when, for example, they could take breaks. They agreed to two-weeks notice before they could discharge anyone. This was what we called a Fair Bear contract. We would take the contract—

Lage: Under the auspices of the ASUC?

Litwack: Yes, as the chairman of the Labor Council. I'd take the contract, and the members of my committee, we would go to the various businesses around the campus. We would ask the employers to sign the contract. What would happen if they signed the contract? If they signed the contract, they got to put in their window a poster about this size [8½ x 11 inches] saying, "This is a Fair Bear store," and then we would encourage all students to patronize Fair Bear stores. If they didn't sign the contract they couldn't display the poster.

I'll never forget walking into the—first week of class, in the spring semester, walking into Cal Bookstore—of course it's the beginning of the semester when there are many student workers—and asking them how much they were making. They said—I believe it was ninety cents an hour. I said, "Well," with a big smile, "you're now making a dollar an hour." We had managed to obtain the approval of a new Fair Bear contract that raised the minimum wage. I thought that was a real achievement. I mean, here was ASUC politics that really makes some difference. I don't know why they ever gave up on Fair Bear. It was such a good idea. And the stores were very cooperative; they liked displaying their Fair Bear signs, and nobody wanted to be left out, essentially.

So I went down to defeat three times. One interesting campaign—that was my first year of graduate school. I was running again for the student executive committee as a graduate representative. One of my opponents was someone who had also been a very good friend of mine, a good personal friend, who I'd met at the I[n]ternational-House, Zulfikar Bhutto. Now I didn't know much about Zulfi, as we called him, except that he seemed to have money and we always had a good time. We would go out in his car, and we would—it was a kind of an adventure. [laughs] Zulfi was wild.

Then we ran against each other in a campaign, and I won the primary along with the fraternity-backed candidate, Robert Livermore, so the two of us went into the final. Zulfi was asked if he had any preferences for the runoff, and he said, "Well yes, I'm going to support Leon Litwack, even though we disagree on one issue, and that is the hiring of Communists as faculty members." (Zulfi opposed such hirings.) But I still lost.

A few years later I begin to see Zulfikar Bhutto's name in the news, and I kept thinking it must be his father, who I knew was prominent in politics, and soon came to realize this was not his father, this was Zulfi. Before I knew it, he was

in charge, the head of the Pakistan government. He returned to this country, I can't pinpoint the date, but I believe it was around 1973. I'll have to check on that date. He was here for a state visit. It was during Nixon's presidency. He came back from Washington DC by way of Berkeley, and of course they feted him here. I guess someone knew about my friendship, so Rhoda and I were invited to the reception and dinner at the chancellor's house.

Zulfikar comes down the stairs with his military aides, looking very dapper. There's a reception line, and I'm introduced to him, and he smiles. I said, "I don't know whether to say Zulfi, or Your Excellency, or what." [laughter] And he said, "Zulfi will be fine." We had a very nice chat afterwards in the social hour. His daughter was there, Benazir, who was at that time a student at Radcliffe. I brought him an old clipping from *The Daily Californian* about the election, including his words about why he would support me and where he disagreed. Benazir really went after her father. She said, "What? You believed Communists should be barred from teaching?!" He was very embarrassed. [laughter]

Lage: That's a wonderful story.

Litwack: We had a good time. The end, however, was very tragic. He was executed after a military coup. Here is [looking at photograph] a photo from the *Daily Californian*, when he came to Berkeley in 1973, showing him as an ASUC candidate.

Lage: Oh my goodness! This was a wonderful reunion.

Litwack: There we are running for office.

Lage: I love this. Is this Robert Livermore of the Livermore family with brothers Ike, and Putnam, and John?

Litwack: I think so, yes. He was a very nice guy.

Lage: Tall.

Litwack: Yes. I met his brother on one of the Bear Treks where I was speaking. Very nice person.

Before Zulfi's execution, I organized this mailgram: "To His Excellency General Zia [General Mohammad Zia ul-Haq], "As teachers, administrators, alumni at Berkeley, we're deeply concerned over the fate of one of our distinguished graduates, Zulfikar Bhutto. Some of us remember him as an honors student and as a personal friend. Only five years ago the university presented him one of its highest honors, the Haas International Award for contributions made by a graduate to his native country. We appeal to His Excellency to grant clemency to Zulfikar Bhutto as an act of humanity and in

recognition of the long and close friendship between Pakistan and the University of California.” It’s signed by, among others—I didn’t really have any difficulty getting people to sign from all political persuasions—Chancellor Albert Bowker, Vice Chancellor Ira Michael Heyman, Provost Roderic Park, Dean Kadish at the Boalt law school, Dean Elberg of the graduate division, and on down.

Lage: Once they had given him that international award—.

Litwack: Yes, yes.

Lage: That’s a sad ending to that story.

Litwack: It’s a sad ending. So three times I ran for this ASUC office, and as I said, it was close only once, but that’s all right. The idea was to engage in the debate and to bring out what I thought were the really important issues. Of course the loyalty oath became a major issue, and a major issue in all of my campaigns.

Lage: Let’s talk about that. We don’t really have many student perspectives.

Litwack: The loyalty oath hit students, at least many students, quite hard. In fact, the loyalty oath was the one issue, when I was an undergraduate student here, that seemed to have awakened much of the student body, which was generally very apolitical. This issue seemed to catch on. If you just look at the size of the Greek Theatre audience that came to hear a debate or discussion on the loyalty oath, it would seem as if most of the people were opposed to it. I’m not entirely certain of that, but one would like to think that that was the case.

From a student perspective, it was complicated. We had great admiration for those professors who indicated that they would not sign the oath, or that they would resist the oath. At first that was where the focus lay. One by one, many of those professors would ultimately sign the oath.

Lage: Was that understood by the students?

Litwack: I think it was a mixture of disappointment and a realization that these professors were dealing with their entire life and their entire career. It was also a concern to us because we wanted to have some of these professors around. The professors that might not sign the oath are the ones who would be the most exciting teachers. We were very active in a campaign that would support the faculty, the non-signers in particular.

Lage: In terms of money?

Litwack: No, we didn’t collect money. I know that the faculty was engaged in that kind of campaign. Our campaign was to mobilize students to oppose the oath, to mobilize the ASUC Executive Committee to oppose the oath. I even made it a

matter of—with some controversy—a matter of concern for my Labor Council, because I was chairman of the Labor Council. I said this is an additional condition of employment and therefore comes into our jurisdiction as well.

Lage: But some objected to that?

Litwack: Yes, some argued that we didn't have any right to take a position in this dispute. It did mobilize much of the campus, but to no avail. Then, on top of that, [once the loyalty oath was withdrawn] we got the state Levering oath, which now required all state employees to sign the oath. I should note that in history the major loss from the loyalty oath was [Ernst] Kantorowicz, who was an eminent figure internationally.

Lage: Had you studied with him?

Litwack: No, I had not studied with him. It also pointed up some of the complexity of the case, because yes, he was a non-signer; one had great admiration for the non-signers. He also had a position waiting for him at the Princeton Advanced Institute. Many of the professors, if they had declined to sign the oath, would not be able to fall back on a position of that sort. It's not to say the Kantorowicz did not have the courage of his convictions, but he also had an out, and many professors would not have that out. As much as I opposed the oath, I like to think I understood the dilemma that faculty members faced, and still respect those who fought it and resisted it, but finally decided to sign.

I felt, too, that the only way to have won this fight, if it could have been won, would have been for let's say two hundred, three hundred professors to have signed an agreement that they would not sign the oath under any circumstances, and the university would lose three hundred, five hundred, six hundred, whatever, professors. It's hard to believe the regents would have permitted that to happen.

Lage: That would have been devastating.

Litwack: Yes, that would have been absolutely devastating to the entire university. If something like that could have been effected—otherwise, to leave a non-signer has to become a kind of martyr, one of a—well how many non-signers? A very small number.

Lage: As I've heard it, some of the non-signers, the older members like [Edward] Tolman, actually encouraged the younger people to go ahead and sign it. The older members' careers weren't at stake. They had already raised their families.

Litwack: That's right. The state Levering oath posed a problem for me because I was a state employee. I had my job at the library's documents division, and I was

essentially working my way through college. What was I going to do? Well, we (the student non-signers) decided to ask for an injunction against the imposition of the act, claiming that it was unconstitutional.

Lage: Who was “we?”

Litwack: A number of us who said we’re not going to sign the state Levering oath. We went to court. We were represented by Vincent Hallinan and by Wayne Collins, who had achieved some fame by his defense of the Japanese in the internment camps during World War II.

[end tape 4, side a; begin tape 4, side b]

Litwack: [looking at a picture] I’m the first one.

Lage: Where do you think this article is from?

Litwack: *Daily Cal.*

Lage: Showing you picketing in front of Sproul Hall—the student non-signers.

Litwack: Yes. That’s Max Anderson. These are all my roommates. Jim “Red Dog” Hinds, who disappears, ultimately, and the fourth one is my friend who thought I was more of a bourgeois degenerate than a Marxist. [laughter]

Lage: So this was a little bit later.

Litwack: This would be ‘50. In fact it would be around October of 1950. This is from the *San Francisco Chronicle*. It said, “The University of California will send out its October checks today without regard as to who has or has not signed an inner-state loyalty oath. They have until Friday to sign the oath. So far, there’s no indication that any full-time employee will refuse to sign.” It talks about the suit that we’re filing, the injunction that we’re seeking. The injunction was turned down, so I was still faced with that dilemma of what to do. I decided not to sign. I think that’s when it occurred to me that many of the people who were urging me not to sign were not themselves working students.

Lage: They didn’t depend on their job.

Litwack: That’s right, I did. So what was I going to do? I refused to sign the oath. I lost my job in the documents division. They were very sorry to see me go. The employers I had there were two wonderful women, and they understood why I had refused to sign, and respected that position, and would continue to support me with letters of reference I would need from them.

As chairman of the Labor Council I had to deal with the head of the ASUC—that is the non-student executive head of the ASUC—because I would always

be renegotiating the Fair Bear contract with him. We were often at odds on a number of issues. Again, I always managed to stay on a friendly basis with these people, so we could even laugh about our differences.

Lage: Do you remember his name?

Litwack: Ed Welch. I went to Ed Welch and I told him—I'm sure he thought everyone ought to sign the loyalty oath, I'm sure that was his position, he couldn't understand why anyone would refuse to sign it—I told him as a matter of principle I simply refused to sign this loyalty oath, and I needed a job, and I was wondering if there's anything available in the ASUC. He said, "Well, report tomorrow to the carpenter's shop." I thought to myself, "I can't. I don't know anything about carpentry. I can't saw or nail straight, but a job's a job." So I clocked in, went down to the carpenter's shop, and I stood around for a while. I noticed there were some other young men there standing around. Finally I just decided I would pick up a broom, and I would start to sweep the shavings off the floor, do something. It took me a little while, but then I began to meet the people who were also working down there. I said, "Oh yeah, he's one of the big football players. He's one of the big basketball players. And he's—." I realized I had fallen into a job reserved for athletes!

Lage: Not really a job, it sounds like.

Litwack: Not really a job is right. So here I had taken, as I would often say, "I've taken the most principled position on the loyalty oath only to fall into the lap of ASUC corruption." [laughter] I was going to treat it as a scholarship. I thought I earned the scholarship. I deserved the scholarship, so this was all fine. There were some good carpenters down there, the ones in charge of the shop. They would make some wonderful furniture. We'd put it on the truck, and we'd drive out to Orinda, deliver it to some of the coaches' homes, and have a nice feast out there and come back.

As part of the job, because I wasn't playing football, I went to Memorial Stadium every football game. I'd get there early and I would raise the American flag and the flags of all the teams in the Pacific Coast Conference. Then I would sit in the press box, in front of the banner of the opposing team—that's the only way you could get to that banner—to make certain that nobody came and tried to take down that banner. All this on salary. I was being paid, and I had this posh place to see all these wonderful games.

Lage: It's a nice outcome of your refusal to sign the oath.

Litwack: Yes. And more importantly, I kept working.

Lage: What kind of pay did you get in the library?

Litwack: Same. I was getting about the same pay.

- Lage: But what was it? The one dollar was the Fair Bear.
- Litwack: That was about it. I don't think it was any—that's a good question. I'm not sure exactly what I ended up making in the library and in the carpenter's shop. I became a very close friend of one of the carpenters there. He would often take a bunch of us out. We'd go out on the weekends and have fun.
- Lage: Did you learn anything about carpentry?
- Litwack: No, not a thing. Absolutely nothing. Then the summer that I—I don't know if I'm skipping too far here.
- Lage: Let me just ask you one thing. How many people did not sign the loyalty oath, do you know, how many students?
- Litwack: I don't know. None of my fellow picketers there [in the *Daily Cal* photo] signed it.
- Lage: So there's four.
- Litwack: At least four, that's right. The loyalty oath intensified the cold war atmosphere that prevailed on campus. McCarthyism was real, and it was real on this campus. I don't think I knew the extent of it until later when I came to realize that people were reporting to others about activities which I thought were perfectly legitimate. When I'd go to a meeting—these were open meetings, there was nothing secret about them—when I'd go to a meeting, as I would drive up, somebody was there noting my license plate number. They would then check the number, and they would know who was at the meeting. I never knew this until I, in 1977, asked for my FBI files, and all that's there. I hadn't realized that this group of agents, mostly from the FBI, were spending an inordinate amount of time on us. It made no sense at all. It was rather bizarre.
- One thing I should mention is that I became the head of Students for Wallace, and the Young Progressives. I became the chair. One thrilling moment in my life was when Henry Wallace came to Berkeley. I still can recall that like it was yesterday. I helped to plan the event. It was going to be at West Gate. We had a sound system, of course. I had decided, with all the dramatic flare that I love, that I'd have Wallace and his guests march up towards the stand to the tune of Shostakovich's "United Nations March." I went to the sound person and I wanted to make sure that this was—it's a 78 record—I wanted to make sure that he put it on the right side, because if he had put on the other side it was the Soviet national anthem. [laughter] I was a little nervous until the music started because what an embarrassing thing that would have been if they would have played the wrong song. Paul Robeson was the singer.
- So Wallace and his guests came up to the stage. I was presiding. I got to give the first speech. On the stage, besides Henry Wallace, was a socialist senator

from the Italian parliament; Eslanda Robeson, the wife of Paul Robeson; a member of the left wing of the Labor Party in the British Parliament; and C.B. Baldwin, who had been a part of the Minnesota Democratic Labor Party and campaign manager for Wallace. They were touring the county in opposition to the Atlantic Pact, so it's right after the 1948 election.

Lage: So he had already been defeated.

Litwack: That's right, it was right after the election. It was a very exciting moment, so exciting that of course I wanted a photograph of myself with Wallace, just for posterity, for my children, for my grandchildren. I looked in the *Chronicle* the next day. They had Wallace, but I wasn't there. Same thing with the *Berkeley Gazette* and the *Daily Californian*. "Oh," I said, "I need to have some record." So I went down to the Berkeley Police Department. I asked to see the person who was a photographer at all these meetings. I know he was there. Well, he denied knowing anything about this. I said, "Look, I'm not criticizing you right now. All I want is a copy of the photograph." He wouldn't budge. About a week later a good friend of mine, a student friend of mine, came up to me and said, "Leon," he said, "I have some wonderful photographs of you and Wallace," so I did have it all for posterity.

Lage: Did you ever find it in your FBI record?

Litwack: Yes, oh yes, of course. Not the photograph, but the fact that I had presided over this meeting. Oh yes, that was very much a part of the record.

Lage: Did you have anything to do with the faculty group for Wallace?

Litwack: No. That's a good question. I don't know if there was a faculty group for Wallace.

Lage: I think there was because [Professor] Howard Schachman mentioned that he'd been part of it.

Litwack: Yes, there must have been.

Lage: Do you know if any of the people like Howard Schachman who were involved in the loyalty oath and things like that, had ever asked for their FBI records?

Litwack: I have no idea. Usually, when I ask somebody if they requested their records they say no, they didn't want to see it. I think there was a concern that if people saw their FBI records they might recognize their informants, and they didn't want to know who the informants might have been. When you order your FBI records, as you probably know, all the names of informants are deleted. You really cannot see them; they're rubbed right out. But if you're a historian, or if you're just smart, there's enough internal evidence there, very

often, to know who's making the assessment of you. That proved to be interesting.

Lage: So you did get a sense of who it was in your case?

Litwack: Yes, in my case they went around and talked to people because I was in the army from 1953 to 1955. When I went in the army they had to know whether or not I should be retained in the army because of my political record, and so they would go around to talk to various people.

Lage: Which is more on the up-and-up.

Litwack: I'll just give you one as an example—"Knew Litwack," [reads from document] see, the name is blotted out, "Knew Litwack for approximately four years as a student at the University of California, but has not seen him for over two years." I'm sorry, this is one I think I—I believe this is—I could be wrong now, but I believe this is probably—from the internal evidence, I think it's [Professor of History Armin] Rappaport. "Was out-spoken and antagonistic. Although source has no actual knowledge of Litwack as a member of the Communist Party, he believes that he can be classed as a radical. Subject was very active in minority labor problems at the university, although these issues had no connection with the school or his academic program. Was extremely active against the loyalty oath. When he ran for office in the Associated Students of the University of California, he had a very liberal, if not left-wing, platform. Most of the subject's associates in these ventures were either leftists or Communists. Litwack, although fully aware of this fact, did nothing to disassociate himself from them. Subject is extremely intelligent and mature, is not the type who is duped into leftist activities. Subject's activities can be considered as being that of a leader [rather] than a follower. And source is of the opinion that Litwack realizes the possible consequences of his actions. Believes that unless subject has completely changed since the last time he had contact with him, he cannot be trusted to be loyal to the United States and should not be placed in any position of trust in the United States Army."

Let me take—well, we just eliminate who I think it might be, because as I read it again now, I'm not so sure he knew me that well. These are the telegrams that somehow fell into the hands of the FBI.

While we're on this subject, I had one other— [looking through file] Sorry, I thought I brought it. There's another one that goes right with it. [unable to find it] That one I believe I can definitely identify, and it would be Ken Stamp. It was a wonderful statement; a very supportive statement upholding my loyalty, among other things.

Lage: Did you ever find any evidence that any of the students you were involved with were actually informers? I mean were there any active spies, shall we say, in your network of left-wing radicals?

Litwack: Well, I don't know. There were several levels of harassment, you might say. In the summer of 1957, a fellow graduate student, we came to learn later, worked for the CIA. He was asked if he had any doubts about the loyalty of any of his fellow graduate students—this was in history. He named me and one other Stampp student, and then he went on to write a dissertation on Thomas Jefferson. [laughter]

Lage: It was quite a time.

Litwack: It was quite a time. I'll turn now to the Order of the Golden Bear. That was somewhat bizarre. In my senior year, I was asked to be at the campanile on a Sunday afternoon as the chimes rang five o'clock. There were other students present. We knew only that we had been asked to dress neatly, and that we were about to be initiated into a very important campus organization, the Order of the Golden Bear, about which we knew nothing. Each initiate was met by a different escort. In my case it was Dick Hafner, who was the editor of *The Daily Californian*, and who would become the UC public affairs spokesman during the turbulent 1960s. We were taken to the Senior Men's Hall for a strange initiation ceremony in Latin.

Lage: In Latin?

Litwack: In Latin. It was an impressive assemblage of student leaders, some faculty, some administrators, exclusively male and, reflecting our student body, largely white. The initiation was followed by a gala banquet at the Claremont Hotel where Provost Monroe Deutsch welcomed us into the Order.

Through all of this I kept wondering, "Why am I here? Why would they want a troublemaker like me, a disturber of the peace, in this galaxy of student, and faculty, and administrative all-stars?" This was really the campus elite, safe and sane. So why was I here? Only five votes are required to reject a proposed initiate, so I asked myself, "Were they expressing sympathy for a three-time loser, or, more likely, was I to be the token house radical, the house rebel? Was I being patronized?" I still don't know the answers to those questions. I just know what I would prefer to believe, that perhaps they understood that if I was often an outspoken critic of UC it was because I loved UC that much. I'd like to think that's what they believed.

Then I became active in the Golden Bear, that is, I'd go to the meetings. The idea of the Golden Bear was to bring together students, faculty, administrators where they could discuss all the issues pertaining to the university, including the loyalty oath, without fear of being quoted; so no reporters, if present, could—if they're present they're members of the Golden Bear, and you were

sworn to silence. We had a handshake, a secret hand clasp. We had a pin, which we always had to wear behind our lapel. It's kind of strange.

Lage: And you didn't tell people that you were in it? Was it secret in that sense?

Litwack: It wasn't secret because at the end of the year you could pick up the Cal yearbook and there would be no photos, but there would be a list of the members of the Order of the Golden Bear, going all the way back to Earl Warren. Then, of course, I brought some of my friends; Nathan Huggins was one of my close friends, and that helped to increase the number of African Americans in the Order.

Some years later I went to a banquet when I came back to Berkeley as a faculty member. I called some old friends and said, "Let's go to the banquet of the Order." Some of the banquets were interesting because of the speakers. I remember—well, let me put it this way, I heard this story later on. It came from the former student body president who said, "You were at that Order of the Golden Bear banquet." He said, "This is very strange, because your name had come up for admission as a member of the faculty and you'd been turned down." I had received the five rejecting vote required for a blackball. It was Professor Armin Rappaport who got up and said I did not have the best interests of the university at heart because of my activities in the Free Speech Movement and what followed the Free Speech Movement. He was able to persuade four other people. Okay, that's the background. I walk into the banquet with my friend [a former editor of the *Daily Cal*] and Armin Rappaport came up to me and asked, "Leon, what are you doing here?" I said, "Well Armin, I was initiated as a student." [laughter] Not until several years later did I learn the details of the blackball.

Lage: That's a wonderful story.

Litwack: They don't keep good records, I guess. [laughs] Of course it's much more of an honor to be initiated as a student, otherwise you're more like an honorary member.

Lage: I think that's a wonderful story, and I'm really quite surprised that you were initiated. I didn't realize they tried for even the token radical at that time.

Litwack: I didn't either.

Lage: Do you think your sponsor was someone like Dick Hafner that you must have known from *The Daily Cal*?

Litwack: I'm sure he was one of my important supporters, absolutely. *The Daily Californian* crowd that was in there—not a crowd, but there were probably two or three people in there from *The Daily Californian*—I'm sure they were avid supporters. And the very fact that Dick Hafner initiated me (when Nathan

Huggins was initiated I escorted him in) probably meant that he had been my sponsor or supporter. Do you know Dick Hafner?

Lage: Just by name and reputation.

Litwack: He's a very warm, outgoing person who commands enormous respect from people, and I think that was probably good enough to put me over. But I was certainly surprised.

Lage: That's a great story, kind of a counterpart to some of the other things.

Litwack: I had to laugh when I saw the Order of the Golden Bear was one of the organizations to which I belonged in the FBI report. I wonder if they knew what it was.

Lage: They might have thought it was terribly subversive. Let's see, you talked about Dean Stone. We've probably covered your undergrad years, don't you think?

Litwack: The only memory I have of Dean Stone is calling me in once into his office. I'm a little foggy on what in particular was going on at the time. I went into his office and he essentially wanted to talk to me about my radicalism and wanted me to understand, I suppose, the consequence of what I was doing. He was certainly no friend to free speech and assembly on this campus.

Lage: Do you think this is a good time to take a break and go into your shipping out?

Litwack: Maybe we can do the shipping out.

Lage: We should graduate you first.

Litwack: Oh yes. [laughs] Well, I graduated, technically, in January of '51, though I'm a part of the class of '51 which had its graduation in June. I did not attend my graduation. I was on a freighter heading out to the Pacific. It's something I had always wanted to do, growing up in Santa Barbara with the ocean there, and reading Howard Pease, Richard Henry Dana, Jack London, in particular Jack London's *Sea Wolf*. Oh, I mean the life of the seaman. It's something I always aspired to, and over my mother's objections, decided I would do it.

I was able to get into the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union, probably because of my politics. So I was given a permit. A permit means that you go to the hiring hall and you sit around and wait for a ship to come, and then you try to get on that particular ship. That means a position passed over by someone with seniority. So day after day you're sitting out in the hiring hall. A few times we were loaded on trucks and brought down to the docks because they were expecting trouble with the members of the Sailors Union of the Pacific, because there was an ongoing battle between the Sailors Union of the

Pacific and Marine Cooks and Stewards. They'd cart us down there—all the people in the hiring hall—they'd cart us down there in trucks and we would be on one side of the tracks. You know under the Embarcadero?

Lage: Yes.

Litwack: We'd be on one side of the tracks and these seamen would be on the other side of the tracks, and fortunately nothing happened. It was kind of one group trying to intimidate the other one.

Well, finally I see—it's late afternoon. There aren't that many people around the hall. I'd had some opportunities to go out on ships that were going through the Panama Canal to New York. Now mind you, I had never been to the East Coast—I mean Cleveland that one time, but I'd never been to New York. But I thought to myself, "I'll get to New York in time. I want something more romantic, exotic." I see the *President McKinley* is announced, American Presidents Lines. They want a mess boy. That's about the only thing I can qualify for, really, so I went up to the window and gave them my card, and they gave me the position.

We left that day, or two days later, went under the Golden Gate Bridge, and we didn't see any more land for twenty days, until we came into Manila. That was my first look at a foreign country. And we went from Manila to Cebu, and from Cebu to Okinawa, and from Okinawa to Hong Kong, which, of course, was just the thrill of my life to think that I'm in Hong Kong.

Lage: All the places you'd read about.

Litwack: As soon as we'd entered those waters, after Okinawa, we were also receiving—oh my! I never made so much money in my life. We were receiving extra pay because we were in a war zone. It's the Korean War.

Lage: Yes, that's what I was thinking. You're right next to the Korean War.

Litwack: That's right, we're right across the border in Hong Kong.

Lage: No wonder your mother's worried.

Litwack: Yes, and then from Hong Kong we went to Nagoya, Japan, and Kobe, Shimizu, and Yokohama, and most fascinating of all we went up to Hokkaido Island, and the port of Otaru on Hokkaido Island. All of this was fascinating.

Lage: Did you have time in all these ports?

Litwack: Yes. The shortest, unfortunately, was in Hong Kong. It was forty-eight hours, and that's all I did, just roamed the streets. When I wanted to grab a little sleep

I'd go into a movie theater and sleep for a few hours and then go back out on the streets again.

I loved the people who I was with on the boat. They were just a wonderful group, great crew. Mostly Chinese, Filipino, and black. While we're out at sea for a time I was elected as the union delegate, even though I was not going to be—that's not going to be my permanent life.

Lage: There weren't too many college students, I'm guessing.

Litwack: [laughs] Oh no, no college students, no. [looking at a picture] There's my group. You can see me sitting in the back, down here. This is my friend who sent this little photograph to me. A lot of the cooks, and the stewards, and the mess boys. I had the lowliest of the jobs, making more pay than I'd ever made in my life.

Lage: Did the mess boy wash the dishes and mop the deck?

Litwack: Oh yes. I served the sailors. You see, there are different kinds of mess boys. I was the lowest so I don't serve the passengers. This was a twelve-passenger freighter, and I served the—

[end tape 4, side b; begin tape 5, side a]

Litwack: —the sailors, the black gang—those who worked in the boiler room—and the seamen.

Lage: Is “the black gang” referring to the boiler room?

Litwack: Yes, it's not referring to color. They were just a great group. Many of us would go out together when we'd get to port and became very good friends. It was my first time to really see the world and to live the kind of life I had envied when I was growing up. It was a marvelous adventure. I remember taking with me Louis Parrington's *Main Currents of American Thought*. This was going to be my big achievement. It's a huge book. I think I got to page twenty and gave up on it. I didn't even care about it. I did wonder what I was going to do when I came back.

Lage: You didn't have a plan? You didn't have a plan to go back to school?

Litwack: Yes, I had a plan. Oh no, no, I had applied. I had applied to Boalt Law, and I had applied to the history department graduate school, and I'd been accepted to both. I hadn't decided what I was going to do.

Lage: So were you thinking about that on your trip?

Litwack: I thought about that, but for the most part I just had a marvelous time.

Lage: This union was integrated. Was that unusual?

Litwack: No, not for the Marine Cooks and Stewards. That goes with part of their history. The same was true with the ILWU [International Longshore and Warehouse Union]. The two unions were very close. Our president was Hugh Bryson. Harry Bridges headed up the ILWU. When I was in the hiring hall phase there was a party for all of us who were—well, not all of us, but all those who were seaman, stewards, longshoremen—at the Longshoremen Hall. I went to that party and it was about—I remember the place was just completely smoke filled, and about 12:30 or so Harry Bridges came out, and he said, “I have a special treat for all of you tonight. He happens to be in town,”—and he brings out Paul Robeson, and Paul sang. I remember thinking, “How can he sing with all this smoke in the air?” He was wonderful.

It was a whole different way of life. These were terrific people, but they weren’t intellectual. They respected me. They knew I was a college kid, and they would joke a little bit about it. They wanted to make sure that I went back to college. I thought this was an exciting way of life. I wanted to stay on the ship. They said, “No, no. You go back to college. Go back.”

Of course, it was sad leaving them, but I didn’t leave them as such. You see, I would look in the *Chronicle* and every time *President McKinley* would come into port I was down there at the dock. We’d all go out in the city. It was a very, very good time. The food was fabulous. Food can vary on these freighters, but this was what they call a good-feeding ship. We’d eat the same thing that the passengers would eat upstairs. We had a great cook. I really learned a lot about food on that trip. As I said, I’d go back over there when they would come back, when they would come into port, and we’d all go out.

Lage: And the crew stayed pretty much the same?

Litwack: For a while, for a while. Then slowly but surely some of the people would leave the ship. We’d go to San Francisco; we’d have fun in San Francisco. We’d learn when you’re out there on the sea obviously people are smoking good stuff that they’re picking up at whatever port we happened to be in.

Lage: Now when you say “smoking good stuff” what are they smoking? Marijuana?

Litwack: Dope, marijuana, yes. I wasn’t aware that anyone was smoking anything harder than that. We had one person who had a problem with alcoholism, but that was it. We’d go to all the great places in San Francisco.

One time I had the bright idea, marvelous idea—the ship was in, I was out with my friends—I knew there were going to be like five or six of them. I said, “I’m bringing you over to Berkeley, and we’re going to have a party.” I invited some of my political friends and other friends over for this big party. It

was a total disaster, and I came to realize, “Leon, you cannot mix these two lives. They’re very separate.”

Lage: You could go between them, but—

Litwack: I could, yes. It was just I think my student friends were just sort of shocked over their crudeness, if you want to call it that—I didn’t think they were crude at all. They just had nothing to say to each other. These great champions of the working class couldn’t mix with the working class. [laughter]

Lage: That’s an interesting demonstration you had there.

Litwack: So I never made that mistake again. I did take them over to Barney’s. That was different, that was different.

Lage: I wondered about those lives intersecting.

Litwack: [sigh] I’m sighing only because Barney, by that time, was not doing too well, and it was just kind of sad to see a person on the downhill grade. Anyway, that was a great summer, and the next Christmas vacation I shipped out on the *Lurline*, which was the San Francisco-to Honolulu-to Los Angeles line. That was a big passenger ship. There I was a bellhop, bellboy.

Lage: That must have been a very different experience.

Litwack: That’s a very different experience. Since I was new at it, I was servicing passengers down in the low-priced areas. A lot of high school teachers. That was a very different experience. In fact, I could remember that one vividly because I was much happier when I was working than when I was off duty. I couldn’t seem to get close to anyone; I didn’t want to get close to anyone really. The crew on that ship, a lot of them were into alcohol. I think they were probably into heavier drugs. It’s a short haul so that people who are addicted find those short hauls easier to tolerate for themselves than to go on one of these long trips. They need to be close to their sources.

There were certainly a—we didn’t use the term “gay” then—certainly a large number of homosexual men there. You heard all the warnings when you got on the ship about what not to do in the showers. Nobody ever harassed me in any way, shape, or form, but that was the image of the *Lurline*’s crew. I just found it a very different experience. The food wasn’t as good. We did not eat what the passengers ate.

That was Christmas vacation. Then I was set to go out again in the summer of ‘52, to ship out again, hopefully to Asia, but instead I got married. My wife always regretted that I wasn’t able to have another summer on the boat, but

no, I wanted to marry Rhoda. I was in love. I guess we can probably just end it there.

Lage: Let's end it there, and next time we can do graduate school and marriage.

Leon Litwack

for

Rep-at-Large

Extend Fair Bear non-discrimination tradition

Re-activize Student Housing Bureau

Request voluntary ROTC plan

Institute NSA purchase card plan

Grad student representative on Ex Committee

Compulsory, lower-priced ASUC card

Poster for ASUC election, ca 1949



Leon Litwack at UC Berkeley's West Gate, introducing Henry Wallace at a rally against the Atlantic Pact, 1949. Litwack at microphone, with Wallace, far right. Far left, Eslanda [Mrs. Paul] Robeson; left center, a left-wing member of the British parliament; center, a Socialist Party senator from the Italian parliament.

Interview 3: October 10, 2001

[Begin Tape 6, Side A]

Lage: This is October 10, 2001. You're going to start with a windup of your undergraduate years.

Litwack: I'm a member of the class of '51. We just celebrated our fiftieth reunion. It was good to see old friends again. Berkeley is the kind of place that has such a diversity of students that I can't say that I knew most of the students at my reunion, as opposed to my high school reunion where I knew just about everybody. But still, it's good to see certain people, especially those from *The Daily Californian* who were there. It was a good occasion.

I was a member of the class of '51 and the graduation exercises, all of them at that time were held not in the Greek Theatre or in Zellerbach, but in the track stadium, Edwards Field. Robert Gordon Sproul, who was celebrating his twenty-first year as a president of the university, gave the main address. It was the stuff of which graduation speeches are usually made, that is, limitless horizons, brave challenges, reach for the stars, build on firm foundations, walk tall. We were told—I'm sure every class is told this—that we belonged to a unique generation. That, of course, we already assumed. We were told to conduct ourselves, I think he said, "as straight-thinking, right-acting men and women." We'd been taught what that meant. Incidentally, I knew this because when I was asked to give the graduation address for the Department of History—it was about 1985 or '87—I went to the University Archives and obtained a copy of the graduation address given to the Class of 1951.

Lage: You weren't there?

Litwack: No. I was on a freighter heading out to the Far East, so this was an opportunity—not that I had been curious before—but it was an opportunity to go back and see what was said at my graduation. So, we'll go back to President Sproul. We were told to avoid both misguided conservatives and what he called "insane radicals." Of course, we knew who they were. It was better to be misguided and sane. We were warned about the stormy world that awaited us, mostly beyond our shores, that western civilization was being challenged by a hostile, militant, fanatic ideology. It seems very familiar to us right now, doesn't it?

Lage: It certainly does.

Litwack: And we were told that we needed now a generation of clear-thinking, enlightened men and women who would assume leadership, and, of course, we knew who they were. Finally, we were admonished to be loyal to our government. My draft notice would soon be on its way.

The student speaker, who had been a defensive back on the Rose Bowl football team, reminded us of the war in Korea, that some of us were bound to serve there, and that our enemy, being Asian, had no concept of the worth of human life. Quite an extraordinary statement to make, reminding me of the statement that General Westmoreland would make some years later about the Vietnam War, that the Vietnamese really did not know the meaning of death or the worth of human life. The student speaker in '51 declared that in the Orient this concept of human life has not yet come to be valued, but he said the danger is lessened by the absence of the most lethal of the terrible weapons of war, meaning they do not yet have the bomb. He finally left us with the immortal words of Andy Smith, which are inscribed on the Andy Smith bench in Memorial Stadium, "We do not want men who lie down bravely to die, but men who will fight valiantly to live."

As I read this talk and recalled my own days at Berkeley, I thought what was not said at my graduation was as instructive as what was said. One would never have thought that the University of California had just experienced a divisive and destructive and demoralizing controversy over the imposition of the faculty loyalty oath. In the usual accolades that were given at this graduation ceremony of Berkeley as a truly great university, no one thought to mention the exodus of world-renowned scholars who found the intellectual atmosphere too repressive, too stifling; or the some thirty scholars, none of them Communists or even ex-Communists, who were dismissed for refusing to sign the loyalty oath. In the tributes to the University of California as a marketplace of ideas, no one mentioned the ban on political speakers and on Communists as faculty members; nor did anyone speak to the debasement of intellectual life in the nation, that is the corruption of culture and discourse, the impoverishment of public life.

Having said all of that, I would never want to close my memories of my undergraduate education without saying that it was quite an extraordinary experience. As I think I said earlier, Berkeley was not my first choice, it was my only choice. I wanted to come to Berkeley because of what Berkeley symbolized, what it represented to me. I was not disappointed. Sure, there were some repressive times, as I indicated, but I have always been grateful for having the opportunity to be at Berkeley as an undergraduate, in terms of the diversity of the student body, the kinds of friends that I made—some of whom I agreed with politically, some of whom I disagreed with politically. It didn't make any difference; they were friends and I valued their friendships. The courses that I took; the opportunities that these courses gave me to read more extensively, maybe most importantly of all to write—to write all sorts of things—short stories, long narratives, fiction, nonfiction. It was wonderful. My undergraduate years had to be an exhilarating experience. This was the place to be, and this is still the place to be.

Lage: It sounds like you didn't think about going anywhere else for graduate school, then, or did you?

Litwack: Yes, I did. To begin with, there was this widespread belief that one did not obtain a graduate degree at the institution where you had been an undergraduate, that it was best to expose yourself to a different intellectual atmosphere and to different historians.

Lage: Is that what your professors recommended?

Litwack: I think most of them thought that was wise, and it made a lot of sense to me, so I thought about other places, and of course my mind turned to the usual suspects. I don't know how I thought I would be able to afford any of these places. I would have had to receive a fellowship of some sort. There was Harvard, of course, and there was Columbia. Those were the two in which I had a particular interest.

Lage: You weren't interested in Wisconsin?

Litwack: Oh no. I don't know why, because Wisconsin had, to my mind, perhaps the finest history department in the country in American history. That's a good question. I was always thinking, as many of my students do today, they always think East. They seldom think Midwest, and they hardly ever mention going to the South, even though it has some of the finest universities in the country.

I wrote to Harvard. I just actually found the letter I received from them acknowledging receipt of my letter making an inquiry there. I also wrote to Columbia, and then I spoke with Ken Stampp. Of course, I realized if I stayed here I was staying here because I would want to work with Ken Stampp. I remember he went down the list of faculty at Columbia. It's not as though he had anything negative to say about them, but only, I think, to point up the fact that there was no one there that worked in the fields in which I was interested. That was true at Harvard as well. So my decision was to stay at Berkeley in order to work with Kenneth Stampp. I don't even know if this department was in the top ten universities at that time. I doubt it. The history department had some really outstanding individuals and some who were not so outstanding. Good people, but not quite—didn't have the prestige.

Lage: It hadn't had this time of change that we'll be talking about, I'm sure.

Litwack: That's absolutely right. Kenneth Stampp was working in the area in which I wanted to work. It tells you something about the field that he was pursuing that there was no one else around. When I think about it even now, with a more sophisticated understanding of what faculties looked like at that particular time, I still cannot think of anyone who was really working with such depth and intelligence in that particular field. He was writing at that time what would be *The Peculiar Institution*. Of course, I knew from his lectures what to expect in that book.

That was the decision. The decision was not to stay in an institution; the decision was to work with a particular individual. I always cite that story to undergraduate students when they come to see me and ask me about graduate school. I tell them my story. I say, “You have this kind of choice. You can stay and work with an individual, maybe in a great department, sure. Or you can make the decision to go to a place because of the entire department.” I said, “Either decision you make is a good decision. I have no regrets about making the decision I made, which was to stay and work with an individual.”

Lage: What about the law school idea?

Litwack: Oh yes, then there was law school. That’s interesting that you had to point that out to me again. Frankly, law school, the attraction it had about it was the opportunity to do important work in the struggle for social justice. It had to do with people I admired, like Clarence Darrow—the concrete things that I could accomplish as a lawyer, knowing full well that law school itself, I’d been told, was a dreary experience and intellectually not very exciting. So all of that I expected. But I still had in the back of my mind what I could achieve in the pursuit of the goals in which I firmly believed. That had a great deal of attraction about it.

My parents were wonderful. I could hear the disappointment in their voices when I told them I was considering law school. This is not what they wanted me to be. They wanted me to be a teacher. Lawyers to them were not terribly reputable. Even though they admired people like Clarence Darrow, it was not the kind of profession that excited them, whereas teaching . . .

Lage: They wanted an intellectual pursuit.

Litwack: Teaching was the ultimate. I should be on a campus and teach students, whether it was in high school, college—that to them was supreme. But they didn’t make the decision for me, though they were very relieved when I made the decision.

So I was weighing all of these in my mind when I was out on the Pacific. I had plenty of time to think about these things. I came back into harbor and came over to Berkeley, and I still wasn’t sure what I was going to do. I accepted both. I accepted the invitation to the department; I accepted the invitation to go to Boalt Hall. So I went to Boalt.

I bought my law books and sat in those classes at Boalt. I worked from the very first day because I knew this was a tough decision to make. From the first day I sat down and started going through the work, I wanted to know if this was me or not. Right after [William] Prosser—he taught the great classic torts course at Boalt—right after his course on Wednesday, I walked out. I remember walking out after the lecture and walking right down to the history department and telling them that I was here. They asked, “Where have you

been?" I didn't tell them. I said, "Well, I was detained." And indeed, I was detained.

- Lage: Was this just a matter of a couple of days?
- Litwack: Three days. Two-and-a-half days, actually.
- Lage: "Two-and-a-half days in law school" we'll call this section.
- Litwack: When I walked down to the history department I already knew that I had made the right decision, and I was exhilarated for the rest of the time. I didn't belong in law school. I'm pleased that I didn't go to law school. I'm not made out to be a lawyer, and it was certainly the wisest decision I ever made in my life. So that took care of law school. I left in time to get my money back on my books. It was very important to me, since they were so expensive. So I find myself in the Department of History. I was trying to do three things between January '51 and June of '52. One was to obtain a master's in history. I didn't know I was going to go on to a PhD. I wanted a master's in history. Secondly, I wanted a secondary teaching credential.
- Lage: Was this kind of a safety valve?
- Litwack: In part. Thirdly, I was courting Rhoda, who would be my wife. We were married in July of 1952.
- Lage: When did you meet Rhoda?
- Litwack: In '51. We met as students at the UC campus. Another one of the great glories of Berkeley, that I should meet Rhoda. I guess I was just beginning graduate school. Let's see, January '51, yes. The courtship was only about a year.
- Lage: What was her field of study?
- Litwack: She was one year behind me, and she was majoring in social welfare. We were introduced by a friend who knew both of us. She knew me as a political activist because she was a political activist. She knew Rhoda because she had gone to junior high and high school with Rhoda.
- Lage: Where was Rhoda from?
- Litwack: Los Angeles.
- Lage: Was Rhoda a political activist?
- Litwack: No. She was interested, but she was not a political activist. No doubt I probably brought my influence to bear. Let me put it this way, she came out of

a family that was classic liberal Democratic. There was no big conversion experience that had to take place here. We are about to celebrate our fiftieth anniversary, so obviously it's been a success, if you can judge success by half a century. [laughter]

Lage: Fifty years and still smiling.

Litwack: Fifty years and still smiling and still loving her as much as ever, maybe even more so. It's been good. It was an interesting match in the sense that we came from two different classes. We're both Jewish, but you know about my background, which was really working class, and her background was, I guess, upper-middle class. Her father was a very prominent and very good ear, nose, and throat doctor in Los Angeles. So it was kind of interesting when we had the wedding and the pre-wedding activities—people from two different classes coming together.

Lage: Did that work out okay?

Litwack: They were wonderful.

Lage: They were accepting?

Litwack: Very accepting. Her parents were wonderful. Both of them were very accepting, but her mother in particular was just such a warm and welcoming individual. They all were great in that sense. The only problem I had with my father-in-law—I wouldn't say it was a problem; it was a wonderful problem if you want to call it that—is he was the one that introduced me to drinking martinis. [laughter] I became a great master of the dry martini. I owe it all to him.

Lage: Has that continued?

Litwack: It continued up to about a year ago. Because of certain medicines I'm taking I've been told to lay off on martinis. That's the sort of thing that happens.

Lage: Well, you've had plenty of years of enjoyment of martinis.

Litwack: Yes, and I will be able to drink wine, so that's all right.

Going back to the goals I was trying to accomplish, I was working for a master's degree under Kenneth Stampf. I had also been very much influenced by Charles Gulick, who was in the Department of Economics and who taught labor history—not labor economics; it's a real distinction. He taught labor history, that is the history of working people, rather than the history of the institutions they created. The union was one of those institutions. He was a very inspirational seminarian. I took his seminars. Also a wonderful lecturer. He had established himself as an expert on Austrian social-democratic history.

Lage: And he was in econ?

Litwack: He was in econ. He wrote a wonderful book. I have it right up there, *Austria from Habsburg to Hitler*. He taught labor history, working-class history. Even after he retired, and when I came back to Berkeley in 1964, he would have—I wouldn't call them seminars—he would have small informal meetings at lunch time in his office. He was—[laughing]—I remember him during the Nixon impeachment; he was clipping everything. He was so exhilarated! We had this wonderful group of people. Laura Tyson, in fact, was one of the people that would come up to the office from time to time. People didn't come necessarily on a regular basis but when they could. So Charles Gulick was a very important person to me. I think it was in my senior year, or the first year of graduate school, that I took his graduate seminar, and I wrote a research paper on “the march inland,” which was the effort of the ILWU to organize warehousemen in the East Bay. I enjoyed that immensely. He also would be the third person on my orals committee.

Lage: For the master's or the PhD?

Litwack: For the PhD. So I immediately began working with Ken Stamp. Even as I was writing a master's thesis, I would become a reader in the classes that I so much admired.

Lage: Did you have to sign the Levering oath for that?

Litwack: Yes.

Lage: Was that a difficult decision?

Litwack: That was a major decision.

Lage: Here you'd fought and protested the loyalty oath and Levering oath, both.

Litwack: That's right, both of them. I eventually decided that I would have to sign an oath if I wanted to be a teaching assistant and complete my graduate education. That was very much a part of my education, being both a reader and a teaching assistant. At this point not signing the oath—one, not signing the oath would no longer be part of the larger protest. It was all over. Nobody would notice but me and close friends around me. Also I came to recognize that in not signing the oath I was certainly harming my own education, and I would not be able to fulfill the objectives I wanted to fulfill as a teacher.

Lage: And you might have to sign it as a teacher or professor.

Litwack: That's absolutely right. So I signed the oath and became a reader and then subsequently, of course, a teaching assistant. My master's thesis already suggested where my future interests lay, which is where they had been before.

The master's thesis was on the Negro and organized labor, from 1866 to 1872, so it was in both labor history and what was then called Negro history. It was a topic that engaged me from the very beginning. What happens between 1866 and 1872, essentially, is that, of course, slaves are freed in the South, and there's a large free black population as well in the north, but trade unions—and this would be a perennial problem—trade unions were exclusive, that is, blacks were not welcome in the trade unions. For a time at least, the blacks decided to organize their own trade unions, which was the National Colored Labor Union, the NCLU. That was the story I tried to tell, of their efforts to organize a trade union which would eventually come to be dominated by black politicians like Frederick Douglass, and tend to lose its initial objective, which was to organize workers, and became instead more of a political appendage to the Republican Party that Frederick Douglass, of course, so enthusiastically embraced.

Lage: What were your sources for that? Did you have to travel?

Litwack: No, I did it all here. The sources primarily came from labor newspapers that we had in our library. That was the primary source, *The Workingman's Advocate*, for example, and other papers I could find here and there, including Frederick Douglass' own newspaper, and some of the other contemporary black newspapers. We didn't have many, but we had enough to see me through the topic. At the same time I was enrolled in those dreadful education courses.

Lage: Oh yes, for your secondary credential.

Litwack: Yes, those were painful. I learned nothing.

Lage: Were there a lot of them you had to take?

Litwack: I think you had to take three, as I can recall now: educational psychology; a second one, which wasn't so bad—actually it was fairly interesting because it was a history of education. That one I liked, actually. I shouldn't have said all of them were dreadful. The third one was, I suppose, practical; it was learning how to use audio-visual equipment. So I learned to use a projector. That came in handy. But the educational psychology, I think, was the major course, and that was just terrible. I wonder if I passed that course. Well, I did. It was not good. And then I did my student teaching. That was when I came to know for certain how much I enjoyed teaching students, at any level.

But also, and this is something that only came to my attention, oh, maybe six years ago—I knew nothing about this, but one of my students found this at the University Archives. It's dated June 20, 1951 [reads from letter]: "Dr. Robert Gordon Sproul, President of the University, Administration Building, Campus. Dear President Sproul, This letter is to report to you and to other such officers of the university as are concerned, the recent actions of the

faculty in education with regard to Mr. Leon Litwak [sic]. Mr. Litwak is, according to the University police and the FBI, a person with definite leanings towards communism, if indeed he is not a Communist. Mr. Litwak applied for admission to the course Education 320A some weeks after the deadline, but his petition was granted because he was able to justify his tardiness on grounds of financial uncertainty.” (320A was the student teaching course.) “We could not consistently deny his petition because similar petitions are regularly approved. We did not take our action without first trying to find some basis for excluding Mr. Litwak from our program in teacher education. Dr. Clinton Conrad conferred with Miss Robb, with Captain Wadman, and with Mr. Conrad. All agreed that Mr. Litwak should be discouraged, but none was able to provide us grounds for doing so that would stand up in court. As a matter of fact, Mr. Conrad said that in the circumstances we can do nothing other than to allow Mr. Litwak to register in the credential program. It is our intention to have a meeting sometime this summer with the superintendents of the school systems to which we assign students for observation and practice teaching, and to suggest to them that we may well require all student applicants to sign the loyalty oath as specified in the Levering Act.”

Lage: And you’d already signed a loyalty oath.

Litwak: That’s right. The letter concludes, “Whether we may safely take any further steps to defend the university” —Defend the university, mind you—“I cannot say, but I should appreciate any suggestions which you or any other administrative offices may be able to give us.”

Lage: Now who is this he's writing to?

Litwak: This is from W.A. Brownell, Dean of the School of Education, to Robert Gordon Sproul. There’s other correspondence that follows discussing how they’re going to deal with the situation, but all of them concluding, as did this letter, that there was no legal way they could keep me out, and therefore they didn’t keep me out. I knew nothing of this.

Lage: You didn’t get any feeling from—?

Litwak: I had no reason to even feel—.

Lage: You would have been shocked, it sounds like.

Litwak: Yes, even though with everything I faced in the first four years in terms of political repression, I shouldn’t have been shocked, but yes, I would have been shocked, because I had no inkling whatsoever that this conversation was going on.

So I did my student teaching. I taught history at El Cerrito High School, and then I taught journalism—you have to teach your minor, which had been in

English in my case, but they put me into journalism, which was fine—journalism at Oakland Tech. I loved teaching. I loved teaching high school kids, whether it was in journalism or in history. In fact, one of the journalism students at that time—he wasn't directly one of my students, but he was helping to put out the student newspaper—was Sheldon Rothblatt, who would later be my colleague in the history department.

I enjoyed high school teaching. I had no question in my mind but that if I didn't want to go on for a PhD I'd be very happy to be a high school history teacher. It just excited me a great deal. I enjoyed every class I taught, and, yes, I think the students enjoyed it as well.

Again, the people who were supervising my teaching—I'm going to say it—I don't think really knew anything about teaching. We all had to bring in these extensive lesson plans, outlining everything that we were going to do during a class hour, and we're not supposed to divert from it. That's not what teaching is all about. Teaching often demands spontaneity. You need to react to what the students are saying; or sometimes there's a line of thought that you want to continue, even though you're going to go off of the lesson plan. The lesson plans are not what teaching's all about, but that's what they insisted upon.

Then they would come to visit the class. One day they came to visit the class, and I had divided the class into three parties, because we were talking about elections and political parties. We had a Democratic Party, we had a Republican Party, and we had the Progressive Party—which at that time was still functioning, lamely after Wallace's defeat. It did represent a certain point of view on the cold war, on internal security, et cetera. So the students were divided between those three parties, and each of them would do in this context what they do best. Some of them prepared speeches they'd give. Some were cartoonists, and they did cartoons. I still have them. They did some magnificent caricatures, including the cartoonist from the Progressive Party who showed the dome of the national capitol with a military cap on it! Brilliant. Some would compose songs. Whatever their talents might have been. Art. Whatever. . . .

[end tape 6, side a; begin tape 6, side b]

- Litwack: I think it was a very valuable learning experience for them. I think they learned a great deal about the political parties, and how they functioned, and what they stood for.
- Lage: Did they choose one party that they identified with, or was it a random assignment?
- Litwack: I gave them some element of choice, and in some cases we just had to make sure there were an equal number of people in each party. There was no

problem getting people into the Progressive Party, if only because it was seen as a little far-out. Students are always attracted to something like that.

That happened to be the time that the supervisors visited the class. I met with them afterwards to go over their assessments. They were disturbed about two things: They were disturbed about not staying with the lesson plans, and sometimes not having a lesson plan; secondly, they questioned the wisdom of my including the Progressive Party as a third party.

Lage: Did they question that in a dramatic way, or did they just mention it?

Litwack: They weren't too dramatic about it. They simply thought it was a mistake and that our political system's really about two parties, and that's where I should have stayed, and that by introducing the Progressive Party I became essentially controversial, and we try to avoid that in the classroom. So we had two different approaches to teaching. All I was concerned about was getting my teaching credential. I did finish my master's degree in June of '52, and I also had my secondary teaching credential. No doubt influenced by the fact that I was to be married, a secondary credential seemed like a good document to have—a little bit of security. [The spring class at El Cerrito presented me with a set of dishes and cups for our new home. That was at the end of the spring semester, a month before our marriage.—added during narrator's review]

Then I thought about it, and I thought, "Well, you know, wouldn't it be nice to teach at a community college? Or wouldn't it be nice to teach at a university?" Since I'd done pretty well at my first year of graduate school I decided that I would go on. So '52 to '53 was my first real year of graduate school, an intensive year. I started in January, that's right. This gets a little confusing now, I'm sorry, let's go back. January I graduate.

Lage: January of '51.

Litwack: Of '51, but I have that semester before the formal graduation. That's when I begin working towards the teaching credential and taking some other courses. Then I'm applying for graduate school. I don't really enter graduate school in history until September of '51.

Lage: And when did you get your master's degree?

Litwack: In June of '52. So I entered graduate school in history in September of '51, and entered law school for three days in September of '51, and then June of '52 I obtain my master's degree.

Lage: You got your master's, your teaching credential, and you got married.

Litwack: That's right.

- Lage: And that same fall you went on for the PhD?
- Litwack: Yes. I went on the next fall, September of '52. I began the more intensive work toward the PhD.
- Lage: Once you entered that program were you required to get beyond American history?
- Litwack: Yes, you had to go beyond American history, absolutely. In fact, that first year they had a fairly new program. It didn't last very long, but unfortunately I was one of the victims in the new program. You had to take, yes, a number of courses in European and Asian history. Much more so than now, for example. You had to show your expertise by taking courses in fields outside of American history, but also you had to take some in Asian history, and something in European history, and also something in what you would call ancient or medieval, early modern.
- Lage: Did you have to pass exams in those areas?
- Litwack: No, you just had to take the course as a graduate student. That means the professor will read your exams. It's a regular upper-division course. For example, I fulfilled the Asian requirement. I should have fulfilled it by taking a course in Chinese history from Joe Levenson.
- Lage: He had just come, had he not?
- Litwack: Yes. It just didn't work out for some reason, so I took a course from George Lantzeff, who had been a student of Robert Kerner. He taught a course on the history of Siberia and eastern Russia, essentially. It was a fascinating course in its own way. I don't know if it was intellectually stimulating or not, but it was like taking a course in American history in westward expansion. Exactly the same thing. It was kind of interesting because here you came across various nations, tribes—whatever you want to call them—Uzbeks and others who become a part of the Soviet Russian empire and the Soviet Union. How did they interact? Lantzeff had written his dissertation with Kerner, and he required it of all of us. It might have seemed like the most boring book in the world, Siberian administration in the seventeenth or sixteenth century, but actually in its own way it was interesting.
- Lage: It sounds like an interesting perspective for an Americanist.
- Litwack: Every day we'd come to the course, I just knew we were going to travel about a few hundred miles. We kept going this way. That's the way it worked.
- Lage: Going east.

- Litwack: That's exactly the way it worked, yes. But I did well in that course. I actually liked it. Because of Professor [Paul] Schaeffer I also became really enamored with medieval history. I liked that very much. I was also very much attracted, because of Gene Brucker, to early modern Europe. Those were very good fields with great teachers.
- Lage: Gene Brucker was new on the campus.
- Litwack: That's right.
- Lage: He came in '54.
- Litwack: [pause] He came in '54?
- Lage: That's what our little book on the history of history—
- Litwack: I took Brucker when I came out of the army. That was his first year. When did [Robert] Brentano come?
- Lage: Brentano came in '52, in May.
- Litwack: Okay, May, '52? I must have had him too when I came back from the army. I had them both as teachers.
- Lage: And Levenson and Carl Bridenbaugh came in '50.
- Litwack: That's right. Bridenbaugh would be very important to me. As I was thinking about these other fields, Shaeffer was here, and I took his medieval history course; that was important. And I took the Asian course. Then, of course, I took American history, a seminar with Stamp. So I took those courses that first year.
- The draft notice arrived in February of '52—something like February of '52 or March, '52. All I asked was that I be permitted to finish out my school year, which means that you're asked to waive any rights of appeal. I hadn't even thought about appealing it. It seemed to me that my time had come, and I had to go in.
- Lage: Were student deferments common at that time?
- Litwack: Fairly common, yes. But I believe a student deferment only lasted as long as I was an undergraduate. That's my impression at least. Of course, I never believed in student deferments. I took advantage of them, so I may be hypocritical. It seemed to me when the draft notice came that that was it, and I couldn't appeal on the basis of being a student.

Lage: It sounds as if you didn't sign on to cold war attitudes. How did you feel about fighting in the army?

Litwack: I was not looking forward to the army for all sorts of reasons. One, of course, it was a major disruption in my education. I would be gone now for two years; that's a major break in my education. The idea of being in the army, whether it was in peace time or war time, was not terribly appealing. No, I was not looking forward to it at all, but I knew it was something that had to happen, and it did. In July of '53, I entered the army.

Lage: What was your status?

Litwack: Because I had joined the naval reserve some years before to get out of ROTC—that's the only reason we joined the naval reserve, but I had become inactive—nevertheless, because of that naval reserve experience I would soon go up to PFC [Private First Class], but not until basic training. I went into the army and went immediately to Fort Ord. I went through basic training at Fort Ord. That's eight weeks of intensive infantry training. The Korean War was still on, so we had no idea where we might be sent. You were trained to defend yourself and to advance throwing hand grenades and crawling on the earth under actual machine-gun fire. It's amazing no one's killed. Because you know it's actually—you really do stay down under fire using actual ammunition. You go through all these obstacle courses and whatnot.

So I'm in the army, and I complete basic training. As soon as I'm out of basic training I'm assigned to, I think it was called clerk-typist school. Maybe because of my education [they] decided that clerk-typist would be—or something in the administration would be what I should do. Clerk-typist school was kind of hilarious only in the sense that—well, to begin with we marched from class to class with our notebooks in hand rather than rifles. I think the designation for clerk-typists in clerk-typist school, if you pardon the expression, was titless WACs [Women's Army Corp], a term I remember hearing.

So I learned how to type. [laughs] I already knew how to type. I was a good typist, a very good typist, before I went into clerk-typist school. The only thing I could do at clerk-typist school was to challenge myself, and I challenged myself to the point that I was doing something like eighty-five words a minute with no errors. That was a challenge.

Lage: You had to do something to keep yourself occupied.

Litwack: Exactly, and when the guy wasn't looking I was actually typing 3 x 5 cards from the *American Historical Review*, preparing to go back to graduate school. Of course, the position I would have coveted was that of a teacher in the clerk-typist school. I was very excited when we were in formation one day—no, I'm sorry, I had already finished clerk-typist school, but I was

hoping that they would call me back as a teacher at clerk-typist school because I had become friends with some of the teachers, and they said they'd do what they could. When I came out of clerk-typist school, they assigned me to a company at Fort Ord as a company clerk. Then one day I'm asked to come to see the commanding officer. [chuckles] It was quite an occasion. I'm supposed to go in and see the commanding officer.

Lage: And that isn't a usual occurrence, is it?

Litwack: Oh yes, in a company, sure. I was excited because I thought, "Okay, the summons has come for me to report to the clerk-typist school as a teacher or maybe go to regimental headquarters as a teacher." Instead there's a man there in civilian clothes. This is what he hands me [shows letter], a subpoena to appear before the House Un-American Activities Committee. This is obviously not what I had expected. This was the telegram that followed, indicating when I would have to appear.

Lage: How did your commanding officer present this?

Litwack: I'm not sure if he was in the room. I guess he was in the room when they handed me the subpoena. Me and the first sergeant, we got along very well. He really didn't say anything except, "I imagine you'll want to seek some legal advice." I said, "I certainly will." They sent me off to the Judge Advocate General's Corps, and I talked to them there. They advised me, essentially, that I might want to have a military lawyer to consult, so I came back to my company commander, and I told him this. He said, "Whatever you need. If you want to take a weekend pass and go up to San Francisco that's fine." They were fully supportive without—I don't know how much they understood this situation. I think what was utmost in their minds is that I was a damn good company clerk, and they didn't want to lose me. [laughter] Errorless, we passed inspections with flying colors in terms of our administrative records. They didn't care what I was; they just didn't want to lose me as a company clerk. So I went to San Francisco, and I contacted the American Civil Liberties Union and spoke with them. Other people had also received subpoenas; other people had come to the ACLU in the Bay Area.

Lage: Let me just get the date of this.

Litwack: I appeared in December of '53 because my birthday was coming up.

Lage: December 1 was your appearance and you received the subpoena November 10.

Litwack: I spoke there with Lawrence Speiser, a warm and articulate attorney working in the ACLU, American Civil Liberties Union. I decided that what I would do was take the fifth and the first [amendments]. My position was that I had no problem in talking to them about my political activities. I had a problem

because I didn't think it was their business, but given the situation, and since I had nothing to hide, since I was proud of what I had done, I would tell them about my political experience, but I would not mention names. I would talk about myself; I'm not going to talk about anyone else. Well, you can't do that, as you may know.

Lage: Once you talk, you have to answer all their questions.

Litwack: Once you talk you have to answer everything or be held in contempt. The only way to avoid that is to take the fifth amendment. I took the first, as well, because that's what I really believed, which was that it was an infringement of freedom of expression, freedom of assembly—of freedom of expression anyway. That was my position. Then the only question was should I appear at the hearings in full-dress uniform or my civilian clothes. I could appear in either capacity. I decided I would appear in full-dress uniform. That was a calculated risk, because on the one hand it might impress the committee, on the other hand it might be drawing attention to yourself, which the media could conceivably exploit.

We had a number of problems associated with this. One was that my father-in-law had a heart condition, and this obviously would not be good for that heart condition. So we decided we would not inform my mother-in-law or father-in-law. My brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law were fully informed and were as supportive as they could possibly be. While the hearings were on I stayed part of the time with friends we had in San Francisco, so we'd be right there, but also before that stayed with Jack Sproat and his wife.

While I was at Jack's, I got this phone call. The person had learned that I was to be staying at Jack's. [The caller was a] professor in the history department. He asked me what I planned to do. I told him what I planned to do. He said, "I think that would be a mistake, Leon. As you know," he said, "there are differences even within the ACLU as to what the proper strategy might be." I said, "Well, you know, I feel very strongly about this and am not willing to implicate other people in any way." He said, "Well, if you stick to that position it will be very hard for me to write you a letter of recommendation." I was so astonished and so shocked. I simply said—I didn't say, "Thank you," I suppose. I just said, "I do understand." That was the end of the conversation. It was a conversation I've never forgotten.

Lage: Do you want to say who this professor is?

Litwack: No, I don't think I will. The conversation is so hard to grasp that I have to have Jack remind me every once in a while that this really did happen. I will say it was not Kenneth Stamp. He was fully supportive, as supportive as he could possibly be. He was terrific. Of course I can't say that I expected anything else.

Lage: Was your thinking in choosing to take the fifth, that they would they have asked you about friends who you knew were members of the party?

Litwack: Sure, I knew people who were members of the Communist Party. I had no idea in relationship to my own associations, because after the Young Progressives of America things began to disintegrate, and for a time I was also part of the Labor Youth League, which was, without any question a Communist youth organization.

Lage: So you were in those groups that were on their list.

Litwack: Absolutely. I might have been asked about these people. I would soon know exactly what they wanted to ask me about. We'll get into that later.

Then the hearings take place and I come down to the courthouse of San Francisco in my full-dress uniform, looking actually striking with my big boots and whatnot. I even had my sharp—I had never fired a gun in my life, but when we were doing the drills, learning how to handle a rifle, it turns out I'm an absolute sharpshooter. I got the top medal for expert marksmanship, or whatever it was, which I, of course, was wearing. [laughter] That was kind of astonishing.

One day goes by. They call out the names. Second day goes by, my name was not called. Most of the time is being spent subpoenaing people, listening to testimony from people who knew of or about Harry Bridges. They were very anxious to identify Harry Bridges and to pin him as a Communist, which means they could indict him for perjury. That took a great deal of time. I suppose in some ways I should say I feel grateful to Harry Bridges because they took so much time on Harry Bridges that they just never called my name.

Four days, five days—I can't remember how many days—it's over. They did say they reserved the right to recall those who were not called, but my lawyer led me to believe that that was probably very unlikely. I remember when Congress sent me the—I still have those papers which I was supposed to fill out to get paid. They do pay you for the travel and accommodations while you're there. I never filed them. I never filed them. I didn't want to have anything more to do with that committee, and as it turned out I was never called again.

Lage: How did you know what they planned to ask you?

Litwack: Well, because I'm in the army for—I'm still in the same company as a company clerk—sometimes as a first sergeant, because the first sergeant had some alcoholic problems, so occasionally he just wasn't up to bringing the troops together in the morning. So I'd go out there and bark off the commands. [laughs] I kind of liked that, actually. Essentially I was a company clerk, and I was doing a very good job as a company clerk. Then I receive a

summons to go down to the post office to pick up a confidential communication; I had to sign for it. I went down to sign for it and it came as a—it's a document in another envelope. It took three envelopes. You just take one out and the other, and there it is. "We have this information—" it's from the United States Department of the Army—"We have this information that you have done the following things." Well, they had it all out there.

Lage: This is directed to you?

Litwack: Introducing Henry Wallace, member of this organization, that organization. Some things were right, some things were not right, but it was all there. And then a final paragraph that said, "Any reason why we should retain you in the armed forces." In other words, these are grounds for what would be a general discharge. Not an honorable discharge, but a *general* discharge. General is between dishonorable and honorable.

I read over the whole list of charges, which are somewhere here. Anyway, I think I'm giving you the gist of it, and that is it was essentially a review of my political activity with the emphasis, without any question, on my activism against the loyalty oath. That was what came front and center, anything pertaining to that. [looking through papers] I had one—I thought I had all my documents out here for you, but—

Lage: You are a very good record keeper of these things.

Litwack: I keep very good records. [finds the document he was looking for] Oh yes, okay. I know all this now because I some years later obtained, under the Freedom of Information Act, my FBI files. They put particular emphasis on—let me just read you one example here. They certainly talked about being an official of the Young Progressives of America, "chairing a gathering of students at the University of California that cheered Henry Wallace, candidate for president of the United States on the independent Progressive Party platform, when he appeared in Berkeley."

Lage: He was an official candidate for president, after all.

Litwack: That's right. "Leon Litwack, described as chairman of the Student Progressives of the University of California announced—" this is from the *Daily Californian*, the commercial press—"announced that a rally was planned as the cumulative—culmination—" I guess they just have this misspelled—"action, in an all-out campaign to combat the loyalty oath demanded of the employees of the university. It was announced that Vincent Hallinan would appear on the platform. It was further announced by Litwack that Paul Robeson stated in a letter that he regretted that he was unable to attend the same meeting." I have no remembrance of that whatsoever. It seems like something I would certainly recall. "*Daily Californian* newspaper reporter. Subject a candidate for student office." Now I'm running for office.

“A list of his qualifications, including membership in the Young Progressives, in the campus chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

“The item further stated that subject is against the regent’s policy of not hiring Communists, and is quoted as saying, ‘Competence of a professor should not be based on his political affiliations or beliefs, but on his integrity, his objectivity, and his performance in the classroom.’” I think that still sounds pretty good to me. “And also a report that a protest meeting against the Harry Bridges verdict would be held on the evening of such-and-such, at the Civic Auditorium. Harry Bridges was a well-known West Coast labor leader, convicted in the Federal District Court on the charge of perjury in connection with his application to earn citizenship and denial that he was ever a member of the Communist Party. The article further stated that an auto caravan was being organized to go from Berkeley and that anyone desiring a ride was asked to telephone a certain number.”

Lage: It’s so innocuous.

Litwack: Yes, certainly. It also tells you how much time they were spending in this really unusual activity.

Lage: And the army listed these loyalty-oath related activities?

Litwack: Yes, oh yes, all of these things were listed by the army as grounds for discharge. They also included interviews with people about me, as to whether I was fit to be in the army or should be retained in the army. Of course, all of the names of the informants are all blocked out, but I, in some cases, thought I had a pretty good idea of who they were. I can’t be certain. I knew in the case of my friend Tony [Baragona], my classmate, I knew exactly that it was—I called him immediately when I saw the last line was, “I would trust him with the secret to the atomic bomb.” I said, “It’s got to be Tony” and called him.

I suspect that this was probably Kenneth Stamp. When I say “informant,” what I’m saying is that someone came to his office and said he wanted to talk to him about a student. That happened to me many times when I came here as a professor. “Source has known Litwack for approximately four years as a graduate student in history. Source found Litwack to be an excellent student, quite intelligent, a person of good character. Litwack, who can be classed as a strong liberal or New-Dealer, has shown a great deal of interest in labor movements and the race issue. Though did not know the student in his undergraduate days, he does know that he has a reputation for being extremely active in student political affairs at the university. Since “blank” did not know subject personally at this time, he felt that he could not elaborate on Litwack’s reputation. Source feels that Litwack has undoubtedly matured a great deal since his undergraduate days, that he looks at things in an intelligent and logical way. Sees no reason to doubt Litwack’s loyalty to the United States.”

- Lage: But Ken Stamp must have known you some as an undergraduate.
- Litwack: No, not really.
- Lage: You knew him.
- Litwack: Yes, I took all his classes, but I was terrified about going up to talk to him as an undergraduate. When I went to see him for the first time, inquiring about writing a master's degree with him I remember coming to his little office up in Wheeler Hall, bumping into the chair, looking at the chair and saying, "Excuse me." [laughter]
- Lage: Was he a figure who intimidated people? Was he imposing?
- Litwack: Yes, I think so.
- Lage: He was young.
- Litwack: Yes, I know. I was just in awe of him. That was probably the problem. I had the same problem with some students who told me later on that they were terrified of me. I can't imagine why they would be terrified by me, not at all.
- There's one reason to think that it might not be Ken. It's hard to say, but I would have thought that Ken might have also told these people that these questions about his politics are none of your business, that I will talk about his class work, and that's all. That's the position I took as a member of the faculty, at least, when they came to see me. I told them ahead of time, when the FBI person would come into my office and say so-and-so has applied for a position in this agency or that agency. I'd say at the very outset, "I will discuss—though I'm not happy to do so—but I will discuss with you his competence as a student, but I'm not going to tell you anything about his political views or his political activity. And let me say at the outset that I say this without knowing the name of the student. In other words, if the student is obviously a good conservative, I'm not going to say that. I'm going to simply say I'll talk to you about his class work." That might have been Ken's position, I don't know, but it sounds very much like what he might have said. Some "informants" were not so friendly, including members of the department.
- Lage: But you got those files later. They didn't appear in the initial notes from the army.
- Litwack: Some of the charges appeared in my file obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, and some appeared in the letter sent to me by the army with a request that I respond to the charges and tell them why I should be retained in the army.

Lage: How did you respond?

Litwack: I looked over the list and I said, "Yes, these are correct, and this is what I did believe"—and I don't know if I said "do" believe as well. "These are beliefs that I held, and I held them very strongly. You're wrong about this and this. I don't recall this particular meeting—"

[end tape 6, side b; begin tape 7, side a]

Litwack: The record, as they presented it to me, was essentially correct. After all, it was based in large part on—well, in some degree on informants, but also at times my name appeared in newspapers like *The Daily Californian* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Then I said that yes, I held these beliefs; I did participate in a number of these activities, that I felt very strongly about the loyalty oath. I might have added that I felt very strongly about the loyalty oath as a loyal American. I probably did say that, because that's what I believed at the time [and that remains my position]. I would like to remain in the army, I told them. I feel it's my duty and that there's no reason why I should be exempt anymore than anyone else should be exempt from military service, and I'd like the discharge to reflect the quality of the service that I render, period.

Some weeks later another directive informed me that I have to go down to sign for it, also an envelope in an envelope in an envelope. These, I think, are signed at some point by the secretary of the army. We're talking about—this goes up quite a bit in the hierarchy. They reviewed everything that I said, and their decision was that I should be retained in the army, that I'll not be transferred, which means I'll not see overseas duty. I'll not be promoted, and my discharge will reflect the service that I render. Fine, that's all I wanted, really.

Lage: You probably didn't mind not going overseas.

Litwack: No, but unfortunately this came after all the—I had already survived all the "call ups"—those who would be sent to Korea. Every month Rhoda and I would just be waiting for that day. It's when they posted the names of those who would be going to Korea. Every month I'd looked at the list; my name wasn't there. You'd breathe a sigh of relief; in any event, I probably would not have been going overseas. It was just nice to know that this was not going to happen.

Lage: Did Rhoda move down there so she was with you?

Litwack: Yes. We lived in Seaside, right next to Fort Ord. That's fine. That's all I wanted. Though the company commander and the first sergeant kept wondering why—they kept putting me in for promotion to corporal. I was already a PFC. Every time the recommended promotion would be rejected.

Lage: So this wasn't known by your officers?

Litwack: I don't know if they knew or not. I know that every promotion kept coming back. They must have had some inkling that something was going on here. At the same time, they didn't share this with me. They still valued my service a great deal. I was helping the company commander pass his test for—what was it called? Collegiate status? All officers had to pass a test which demonstrated they had a certain degree of intelligence, I guess you'd say. I was helping him with materials for his history exam and political science. There were all of these components for the examination. So we got along really well. The first sergeant, of course, remained a good friend. I also became the mail clerk at this time—company clerk and the mail clerk. The old mail clerk was discharged because his term of duty had ended.

Then came the Army-McCarthy hearings. During the Army-McCarthy hearings, or in reaction to the Army-McCarthy hearings, as soon as they were terminated, I think most of the departments of the army announced that they would review all loyalty cases. I was obviously a loyalty case, so I suspected that something might be coming my way, but I hoped nothing would be coming my way. I didn't know how they were going to react to the hearings. Were they going to be tougher or what? As I had feared, again I got a summons to go down to the post office, pick up the envelope within the envelope within the envelope, which informed me that everything they said in the previous letter would remain, except for the following, which was hereby deleted, that I should not be promoted. [laughs] I had no idea why they made that decision.

Lage: Maybe they had new criteria for loyalty.

Litwack: Whatever. The next month my promotion did go through so I came out of the army as a corporal. I just was floored when I saw that letter. I didn't know what I should expect, but I thought that was a very interesting decision.

Lage: So the McCarthy years really touched you in a personal way?

Litwack: Even after I'm discharged from the army—I shouldn't say discharged. You're not discharged in those years; you are simply released to the reserves. Of course, I was on inactive reserve. Some years later I got another letter from the army, which really deeply troubled me, which repeated the charges they had made in the first letter. This could have resulted in less than an honorable discharge. I couldn't believe it after everything I'd been through. This was while I'm right in the middle of my final years as a graduate student, probably around '57, '56. I called the ACLU, and the ACLU called me about five days later and reported, "It's been rescinded." That's it. That was the end of it. Very soon my honorable discharge from the army came. Of course, I used the GI Bill to my benefit to complete my years in graduate school along with my fellowships and teaching assistantships.

Again, I'll say of the army experience also what I would say about my experience on the freighters. Obviously I enjoyed the freighters, as I've told you. I did not— [chuckling] no one can say he really enjoys his army experience, but I enjoyed the people I met, the diversity of people. In a basic-training outfit, you really do meet them. I'm so pleased, as it turned out, that I did not go and teach at the clerk-typist school, that I did not go to the regimental headquarters or the division headquarters to work, which was seen as a cushion job, a nine-to-five job. I did not have a nine-to-five job. As company clerk you have to report in at 6 AM. But you know, my work was pretty much over by 10 as company clerk, and then my time was pretty much my own. I used to go over to the library, sit down and do some reading. I enjoyed it. I guess I could say that that part of it I really enjoyed. I really enjoyed the people and serving as a clerk in a basic training company.

Lage: Meeting the variety of people.

Litwack: Oh, you meet a vast variety of people. That part I thought was exciting, fascinating.

Lage: Did you do any political activity in the army?

Litwack: No.

Lage: You didn't talk about the war?

Litwack: No.

Lage: Not the place to do it.

Litwack: No. I certainly thought about what was going on, but no, I didn't do anything. When I came out of basic training the armistice was signed. I took that to mean that either the North Koreans had some notion of who was coming out of basic training, and the fact that I was coming out of basic training frightened them into an armistice, or that the United States Army looked at me coming out of basic training and said, "I think we better agree to an armistice." [chuckles]

Lage: It was good timing.

Litwack: Certainly the timing was very good. We welcomed that without any question. Of course, I would talk to people who had come back from Korea. Some of the people who had come back were also on the base, and I would run into them on various occasions. Some of the people, my company commander for example, had been a tank veteran in Korea. Incidentally, he did not— unfortunately he did not pass his "college" test.

Lage: His test that you helped him prepare for.

Litwack: That's right, so he was essentially demoted from captain or first lieutenant, whatever he had been, to first sergeant. That's what happened. It's too bad; I liked him. He was a good person.

Lage: That's an experience that broadens you, I guess.

Litwack: Yes. It was a broadening experience. That's absolutely right. Just in terms of the people you meet and the experiences that you go through.

Lage: It's so different from graduate school, which is a much more insulated experience. [laughs] How did you adjust to coming back?

Litwack: I should tell you one other story, and that is when I was in basic training—the worst part of basic training is when you go to Camp Hunter-Liggett to go through the most rigorous drills. I had a friend in my company, a very interesting guy, a real character from Los Angeles. He was Jewish. He knew I was Jewish. He said, “Leon, whenever I raise my hand you raise your hand.” This was the guy who really knew when to volunteer and not to volunteer. I don't know; he just had this instinctive grasp of the situation. I would generally have not volunteered for anything, but he knew what to do.

So we were in Hunter-Liggett and the company commander there announces, “Those of you who need to go to Paso Robles for Yom Kippur raise your hand.” I hardly knew what Yom Kippur was, but my friend's hand went up. He's nudging me, so I put my hand up as well, just on blind faith. The platoon commander comes over to me, and he says, “You're Jewish?” I said, “Yes.” “Let me see your dog tags.” I had not put down any religion when I signed up for the army, so they had made me a Protestant. It said P. I said, “Well, that's a mistake. That was just a mistake made at my induction.” He looked at me quizzically. He was from Los Angeles and he said, “All right, you're married, right?” I said, “Yes.” “What's the maiden name of your wife?” “Goldberg.” Because he thought any non-Jew would immediately come up with that name. “Who married you?” “Rabbi Magnin,” one of the most famous rabbis in Los Angeles because he was a friend of Rhoda's family. To those who were non-Jewish, if they knew any name in Los Angeles it was the name of Rabbi Magnin. So I said that, and that was almost too much for him. He said, “I don't believe you.”

Anyway, it was settled, and they did realize that I was in fact Jewish and therefore entitled to go to Camp Roberts, near Paso Robles, where we were feted and fed by the Jewish women of Paso Robles; we'd been eating army food. We played basketball during the day, and I went to my first religious service in my life.

Lage: Except your marriage must have been somewhat of a religious service.

Litwack: No, it was not religious, although Rabbi Magnin did come. It was in a home, not in a synagogue. He came. He gave a little lecture about there will be many books in our lives, that's true. But it was not a religious ceremony. He gave a little talk. I did step on the glass. I did that. That was it. But Camp Roberts was the first time I'd ever attended an actual service. It was interesting. That was two hours each day, and then the other time we played basketball and ate well. My friend really did know. He did this several other times, and every time he did it he was absolutely on target. So I could say the army was also my first religious experience.

Lage: Well, that makes a good story. Should we go back and try to finish up the graduate school experience, or do you want to start fresh on it next time?

Litwack: Sure, I think we can do that. I came out of the army. They gave me an "early discharge." If you're going back to school you can be released three months earlier than the normal time for discharge. Since I had never taken any leave time—my company commanders always gave me these passes, so I had never used any of my leave time—when I added the leave time that I'd never used on top of the three months, which you can do, I could get out for the spring semester of 1955.

That was really quite interesting—traumatic in a way. I'm reading for Bridenbaugh in his social history course—I'm a reader—and taking my other courses, and this was two months. At the end of those two months, I had to go back to Fort Ord to be formally discharged. For three days there I was, back to a whole different way of life, and then I returned to Berkeley and graduate school.

My graduate school days, I enjoyed them immensely. I think I did a good job of completing graduate school. I came back in, as I said, the spring of '55, and I left with my PhD. in June of '58. Mind you, when I came out most of the requirements that we had been held to before I went in the army were already on their way to being revised. It was almost like starting graduate school again.

Ken Stampp's seminar and working with Ken Stampp obviously was the highlight. I also learned a great deal from Carl Bridenbaugh. I took his seminar—he had a very rigorous seminar, had quite a reputation—in colonial history. We read a book and wrote a paper each week. To show you how intimidating it could be, the first week that we met he assigned different books to different people, and we'd write a paper and read the book during that week. I was assigned Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana*. That was a huge opus, written, of course, in seventeenth-century English. It was tough. I worked hard throughout that seminar, and I knew when I came out of that seminar that I could go anywhere in the country and teach colonial history. That was not my major subject, but I could do it anywhere; I knew that.

It was rigorous. Those papers were rigorous. He was a good critic. He was a good critic of the papers. I appreciated that very much. He spent a lot of time on those papers. He did have a seminar prize for the best papers in the seminar, and I did win the seminar prize, which I thought was really quite astounding. I was astounded by it because there were some very, very good people in that seminar. But I worked for it. I worked very, very hard. I would sometimes take issue on certain questions where I knew Bridenbaugh held a different position, but he was very good about that. I didn't persuade him, but he was very good about it. That was very important.

I had a good historiography seminar from Bob Brentano. I also took Gene Brucker's course. I was thinking at that time that early modern Europe would be my third or my second field. Instead, I kept remembering that course on medieval history and decided to make medieval history my third field. So it was colonial, US, and medieval Europe. US at that time was called the national period. There was the colonial period and then the US from the revolution to the present. Almost everyone who took US also took colonial as the second field.

Lage: Did that mean you were examined in colonial?

Litwack: Yes. That means that when the written examinations came I would be examined in medieval history on Monday, colonial history on Wednesday, US history on Friday. Students today really have it soft. They have it very soft.

Lage: How is it different today?

Litwack: Today all you do is pass an orals exam.

Lage: You don't have the written?

Litwack: No. There's a written exam of sorts to get your master's, before you can go on. That's used to determine whether it's advisable for someone to go on or not, trying to catch early on those who probably should not be going on, to save them some time and energy as well. Now it's just the oral examination. The medieval exam, for example, treated you as an equal; that is, your name is not on the exam. It's folded over. You're being judged the same way people are being judged for whom medieval history is their major field. That's what I thought was really quite challenging.

Lage: That would be very difficult.

Litwack: Absolutely, absolutely.

Lage: They're three equal exams basically.

Litwack: Right.

- Lage: You must have done some other preparation for that.
- Litwack: Oh, a lot of—well, reading, mostly just reading, which I enjoyed. I enjoyed reading medieval history, but I didn't know how I was going to do on the examination.
- Lage: Has any of that informed your work?
- Litwack: The medieval?
- Lage: The medieval or the colonial.
- Litwack: The colonial, yes, absolutely, sure. The medieval probably not, except when I go to Europe. But I enjoyed it. It was intensive, but it was—for the most part I found it very interesting. The written exams went well, and then came the oral examination, which would have Kenneth Stamp, Henry May, Hunter Dupree in US and Charles Gulick on the history of labor. It went all right. It was a good exam.
- Lage: What was the tone of it?
- Litwack: Well, the first question was something about the history of American history. That is, when does American history really become a field of study in graduate school; where would you trace it? I thought I would go back to Henry Adams, and sort of use Henry Adams as a starting point and talk about the history of academic history, which turned out to be not a bad guess. Actually, they themselves really didn't know the answer, but they wanted to hear what I would say about it.
- Lage: It's a hard one to give you as a first question, something that might throw you.
- Litwack: Yes, it was. It was indeed. At one time I knew all the questions. I don't know if I knew all the answers. But I remember all the questions that were asked me.
- Lage: Was the tone welcoming and friendly or more "out to get you?"
- Litwack: No, I didn't think they were out to get me.
- Lage: You hear some terrible stories.
- Litwack: Yes. I thought Hunter Dupree was very solid, very good. He asked me about internal improvements. Well, I knew something about internal improvements because I had studied the Jackson period in some depth. I think I answered his questions pretty well. I can't remember now; it might have been Ken who asked me about the history of history. Henry May is the one I feared on that

committee. I would have preferred that he not be on the committee. I think because of that, Ken Stampp made a point of putting him on the committee. He wanted this to be legit, and he wanted me to be challenged. But it worked out.

Lage: Why did you fear him?

Litwack: I don't know, I just hadn't—that's a good question. I had sat in on his intellectual history course. I never took his course, never took his seminar. His course was difficult. He was difficult to figure out, of course, as well. I didn't think that intellectual history was really my forte. I didn't think it was my strongest field. I was about to say, maybe I would have preferred to have had foreign policy rather than intellectual history, and of course then you would have had to deal with Rappaport, who I think would not have been very friendly—who I know would have not been very friendly.

Lage: Because of political differences?

Litwack: I think probably so, yes. (Though he had been very nice to me in the History 101 when he allowed me to do a special subject under his supervision in African American history, in which I was interested.) I thought it was a good oral exam. That's what I was told at least. I think they all agreed that I did my very best with Charles Gulick and the history of labor, [chuckles] outside of US history.

Lage: You felt comfortable with that.

Litwack: History of labor was actually a history of comparative labor movements, so it was comparing the labor movements of the United States, Great Britain, France, Austria, and Germany. This was the outside field. I had to be prepared in all of those areas. That one went so well because it wasn't really an exam as much as a conversation, which, of course, ideally is what an orals is supposed to be. That one was really nice.

When I finished my oral exam and they told me I had passed I was—I can think of few times in my life when I was more ecstatic. At that point—it wasn't true as it turned out, but your conception of that moment is that from now on it's up to you. No more examinations. That's the end of the examination period. Now it's up to you to do what you can do.

Lage: Right, with your writing.

Litwack: In that sense I had reason to be ecstatic. We went out and had a wonderful celebration with our friends Art and Charlotte Zilversmit. Jack Sproat would have been, of course, with us, but he had already gone to Michigan State for his first job. The next morning, 8 AM I believe, I was at the library preparing

to launch the research stage of the dissertation. I tell that story to all my graduate students. They look at me like I'm absolutely out of my mind.

Lage: You were eager to get going.

Litwack: I say, "It wasn't because I was disciplined. This was going to be fun. I was looking forward to it."

Lage: You had your topic.

Litwack: Oh yes. I hear graduate students say, "Well, after the orals we took a vacation. We went here and there." To me that was taking a vacation. It was going down, getting into the library stacks. I loved the good old card catalogue, and then going to the stacks and beginning to—It's very hard to do that kind of browsing now at the library that we were able to do in our day. I resolved to write a dissertation on free blacks in the South.

Lage: In the North?

Litwack: In the South. I'm telling you the way it happened. I had heard Ken talk about free blacks in the South in his course. That sounded very interesting to me. I knew I wanted to do something in African American history, in race relations. Free blacks in the South sounded very good to me, and Ken approved it. He said it was a very good subject. Nobody had really done it.

Lage: In the pre-war South?

Litwack: The antebellum South. That's right. There were over a quarter million free blacks in the South in 1865, most of them concentrated in urban centers, in New Orleans, Savannah, Charleston, and Richmond. Fascinating subject. I worked that entire summer in the archives of the law school. At the end of the summer, I had come out of there with a complete breakdown of legislation in the southern states affecting free blacks, which was a great deal. Then I started reading more on the subject of free blacks in the South. I should say, reading what little there was out there. As I was reading this material, I learned more about the large population of free blacks in the North (some 225,000 in 1860). I hadn't thought about them because Ken had confined himself in the course to the South. I went to Ken, and I said, "I think maybe I want to do the whole thing." As I recall, he still agreed, though he thought that was doing a lot. The more I kept reading the more I decided, no, I want to do the North. Then I became really excited.

Lage: Why did you want to switch?

Litwack: One, because I hadn't thought about free blacks in the North. I hadn't thought about how the North might have treated free blacks. To see how the South treated free blacks was no surprise; it was quite consistent with their whole

racial ideology. But what about the North? Then I began to read that segregation existed throughout the North. They had segregated facilities. I didn't know anything about this. That became important to me, as did the development of black communities and the challenges and oppression they faced in the free North.

Then I came to realize that the abolitionists, even as they were fighting slavery in the South, were also directing their attack on racial discrimination and segregation in the North. That too was something I hadn't really thought very much about. So free blacks in the North in the antebellum period became my subject, and very early on I came up with the title for the dissertation, *North of Slavery*, and that I would use for the book as well.

The research for the dissertation brought me to the East. This was when I made my first trip to the East. (Other than that one trip to Cleveland, Ohio, for the Young Progressives of America convention in 1949, I had never been to the East.) I had never been to New York, the East Coast. Cleveland and back, that was it. We decided to go by way of the South, so that would be our first experience in the South. We left Los Angeles and journeyed into Texas and Louisiana.

Lage: Did you drive?

Litwack: Yes, we drove. We came up to Washington DC where my research began. Then on from Washington DC to New York where the bulk of my research would be done, in the Schomburg Library [135th Street branch of the New York Public Library] in Harlem. New York was also an interesting experience for me because for the first time I really met most of my parents' families on both sides.

Lage: And your parents had not been back either, it sounds like.

Litwack: No, they had not been back. My parents were still alive, so I could report back to them about meeting such-and-such and such-and-such. It was quite a thing.

Lage: That must have been.

Litwack: Family celebrations all over the place for the son of Julius—everyone knew about Julius. He was considered not at all the black sheep, but just this fascinating character who didn't fit any of the stereotypes.

Lage: Didn't want to be a merchant.

Litwack: My uncle Abe who headed up this big textile firm in New York and had come out to the coast a few times, he loved his brother.

Lage: And he had been helpful to you.

Litwack: Yes, he had been helpful as well. That was a wonderful part of the experience. And then, of course, my research. I remember the first time hearing people say, "Why? Are you really going up to the Schomburg? Going to Harlem?" I said, "Yes." They thought it was inadvisable. It's strange; I hadn't even thought about this at all. Anyway, the research also required visits to Washington (the Library of Congress and Howard University) and Philadelphia (the Historical Society of Pennsylvania), which had very good materials. Philadelphia had a very large free black population. Then Boston, because I needed to use the abolitionist manuscripts.

Lage: Was it newspapers primarily that you were looking at?

Litwack: No. In Boston it was not newspapers. Excuse me, newspapers at some places, but Boston was mostly manuscripts of abolitionists. The newspapers, for the most part, I could use on microfilm and interlibrary loan in California. You have to do intensive research before you leave because you don't want to duplicate things. Doing research was much more difficult at that time because you couldn't just hand them this stuff and say, "Make xeroxes."

Lage: Right, you were taking notes.

Litwack: In some cases they would put it on microfilm for you. I also had one of those machines, now it's a collector's item, which you could take into the stacks and you could actually use to duplicate materials. My wife usually did that, duplicated documents that I needed.

Lage: What was it called?

Litwack: A Contoura-Constat, I believe. [a portable non-xerographic photocopier]

[end tape 7, side a; begin tape 7, side b]

Litwack: [Throughout the period from 1830 to 1860, free blacks convened in state and even national conferences. The proceedings were published, and they were all attainable in the archives on the East Coast. I used the Contoura-Constat, for example, in the Library of Congress and at the Schomburg to duplicate these rare documents.- added during narrator's review]

Lage: Were you looking at personal papers of free blacks as well?

Litwack: Oh yes, whenever I could find them. There were not many. Or journals, or any manuscript papers. Those were, of course, treasures. But there was a lot of material available to any energetic researcher. I was embarrassed more by the amount of source materials, which I hadn't expected to find.

Lage: Had people dealt with this topic before?

Litwack: No, no.

Lage: You really attacked a new field.

Litwack: I was so petrified that somebody was going to come out with a book. I remember consulting *Publisher's Weekly* religiously because I was afraid that someone was going to publish in this area. I knew no one was writing a dissertation on it, because that you could find out through the AHA [American Historical Association]. You could send in your topic, and they would tell you if someone was doing something close to the topic.

I had one scare which was when I came to the University of Michigan and I went to see a professor in history that Ken Stamp had suggested to me, Dwight Dumond, who had quite a reputation in the Civil War area. I told him what I was studying, and he said, "Oh, I have a student who's doing that." My mouth just dropped. "What is she doing?" Well, he wasn't sure of how she was going to define the topic, that I should probably talk to her. It turns out—this was the time of the Organization of American Historian annual meetings, or the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, it was called at that time—they were meeting in Lincoln, Nebraska. On our way back to California I went down to Lincoln just to meet this student, Emma Lou Thornbrough, who it turns out was writing a book on the Negro in Indiana.

Lage: Ah, that was okay.

Litwack: That was okay. That was certainly a relief. I just thought it was such a fabulous subject. What I hadn't planned on was that the book would come out at a time when the whole struggle over civil rights had reached a crescendo with the integration of the schools and public transportation facilities, so the timing was absolutely perfect.

There was something else, and that was, of course, my teaching. Being a teaching assistant was very special because that only reinforced what I wanted to do. My first year as a teaching assistant was at UC Davis, which always needed teaching assistants because they didn't have any graduate students in history at that time. I would go up there twice a week on the little train. I enjoyed that.

Lage: I hadn't heard of people doing that.

Litwack: That was terrific. Then I had my TA-ships here and worked as a research assistant with Ken as well. Those were good years. Then, I had just come back from the research trip, and in December of 1957 the American Historical Association had its meeting in New York City. I decided, and Ken decided too, I should go to the meeting because I was going to be on the job market. I had not written any of my dissertation yet; I had just finished the research. I flew to New York; that was a big deal, to fly to New York. It wasn't the jet

age yet, I believe. I had never flown to New York before, obviously. When I flew to New York all I had going for me was an interview with Penn State University—they were looking for a historian. Ken said there were some rumors he had heard that Wisconsin might be looking for someone in the early national period, the Jacksonian period. Of course, when he said that I couldn't believe that I would go to a place like Wisconsin. In our graduate school days we used to always talk about which one was going to go to North Dakota State, which one would go to South Dakota State. That was our estimation of the job market. I thought Penn State would be a terrific job, absolutely.

Lage: Berkeley didn't have the reputation that it had later. It was getting the reputation, maybe.

Litwack: That's right. Obviously, Wisconsin was exciting. He [Stampf] said, "Now Leon, there's a big book out in American history now, one of the books that everyone's talking about. It happens to be on the Jacksonian period: Marvin Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief* [Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1957]. You ought to read it because no doubt they'll ask you about this. Do you know the book at all?"

Lage: I had it assigned in a class here.

Litwack: Oh you did?

Lage: Maybe Ken Stampf's class, who knows?

Litwack: Maybe. So I'm on the plane, going to New York. I'm sitting there reading *The Jacksonian Persuasion* or trying to read it. You know the experience when you read a book and you keep reading the same page over and over again because your thoughts are somewhere else?

Lage: Yes.

Litwack: That's what was happening to me. I knew I could not discuss this book intelligently because I couldn't get into the book. Not until later on did I realize that he had written an article which summed up the whole book. Too bad I didn't know it at the time. So I struggled with it. I guess I could have said a few things about it, but I was struggling with it.

I come to New York for the convention. I have these two things in mind—the one appointment and the one rumor. I go to my interview with Penn State, and I come to the hotel room, the first time that I'd ever done anything like this. I come to the room at four o'clock when my appointment was scheduled. There are about five or six people sitting outside of the room. I said, "I'm here for an interview." They said, "We're all here for an interview." [laughs] I was so—I don't know what I was expecting. I just knew nothing about placement procedures. I went back to my room. I said, "This is ridiculous. I'll just pin

my hopes on maybe something happening at Wisconsin.” I had been invited to the Wisconsin smoker—not an interview as such, but to come to the Wisconsin smoker and meet Professor Irwin Wylie, who will introduce me to his colleagues. Then I sat down and started thinking about my situation. I’d paid all this money to come to New York; I better go back to the Penn State suite and go through this interview.

I went back. By this time there were maybe three people outside the door. My turn comes, and I enter the room. As you come in there’s a chair with a lamp next to it, and the rest of the room is kind of dark. I look around. I see people sprawled on beds, the chairs, and the floor—department people in this one place. It seemed very incongruous to me, and I think they realized it as well because the first question they asked me is, “How many years did you belong to the Maritime Union of the Pacific.” They meant this as a joke because it looked like an inquisition. But I said to myself, “My God, they’ve got my dossier!” [laughter] I looked at them, and I said, “I did belong to the Marine Cooks and Steward Union, but what—” They stopped me, of course, and said, “Oh, we’re just kidding.”

Lage: They had no idea?

Litwack: No. I don’t think they did. The person who was chairman of the department, Joseph Rayback, was a labor historian, so he knew exactly what I was talking about, and that’s probably why he mentioned the Maritime Union of the Pacific, because that was his field. Then they all laughed. I wasn’t laughing, but they all were laughing. I was angry about the wait and this first question. I kept going at them; they kept going at me. In other words, I kept asking them questions about their place: “Tell me about your library. Tell me about research funding,” and all this sort of thing. Then they, of course, started conducting their examination as well. We left with that up in the air, obviously.

Then I went to the smoker. Professor Wylie was taking me around, and I was meeting members of the department. “Well,” he said, “You know, we’ve invited some other people here as well who are also candidates for the position or people who are thinking about the position so you probably should meet some of them as well.” We go up to this gentleman and he says, “Leon Litwack, this is Marvin Meyers.” [laughter] I said, “Oh, very nice to meet you.” I didn’t say, “I’ve been reading your book.” I said, “Very nice to meet you,” and I’m thinking in the back of my mind, “What am I doing here? This is just crazy.” I met other Wisconsin historians, Merrill Jensen, Fred Harrington, for example, esteemed members of that great, great department, which I thought was probably the best American history department in the country. I think many people regarded it as such. So this was really kind of a fantasy for me.

I come back to Berkeley. Within days of my return there's a telegram, an offer at Penn State. I got the Penn State job.

Lage: Did you accept?

Litwack: I went to see Ken, and Ken said, "Try to put them off. I'll call and see what's happening at Wisconsin and tell them." Wisconsin said, "We need about another four, five days before we can make the decision." So I wrote—I just found that letter actually to Penn State—it was a pretty good letter. I asked them about their research facilities there. Some of the questions I hadn't asked them, probably some I had asked them at the session. I hated doing that, but that's the way it works. I came back, and I waited. I knew the day they were going to make the decision. I waited and then a phone call came from Ken—they informed Ken first—that I had the job at Wisconsin.

Lage: So this was before you wrote your dissertation?

Litwack: Yes, that was January because the AHA had been at the end of December. I was ecstatic. Why did I get the job? Well, you know the old saying "publish or perish"? This one was publish and perish. The problem is that they had read Marvin Meyer's book and didn't like it. So he was never really a candidate in that sense. They just did not like what he had done. They disagreed with him, and he was not what they wanted. So they had looked to new people. In my case, they had nothing to read, so as far as they're concerned, "We'll just take a chance."

Lage: Did they like your emphasis on Negro history?

Litwack: I don't know. Probably not, because I had to sell myself as a Jacksonian. The only way I could sell myself as a Jacksonian was to say that I had worked from the antebellum period and the Jacksonian period as well, so I thought I could certainly handle this course. Indeed, they had me teaching that course immediately.

Lage: Did you start right away or did you have a period of time when you were working on your dissertation?

Litwack: January 1958, I sit down with all my notes to write my dissertation. I complete the dissertation in the first week of August. So I get my PhD at the end of the summer, essentially. I wrote the dissertation—I always tell my students this, too—from January to July.

Lage: That is very fast.

Litwack: It is.

- Lage: What role did Ken Stamp have in helping shape this? Or did he have very little?
- Litwack: He went through it chapter by chapter with me. He was a good critic. I just kept writing, and it was looking good. I had no problem. I didn't have to go back really and revise anything. I just sort of went right through it. I think Ken liked that too because I think he was accustomed to having students who spent several years writing a dissertation, and this was rather fast.
- Lage: You're so passionate about the subject you're dealing with. Was it hard to deal as a historian, to be more detached?
- Litwack: No, not at all.
- Lage: How did you deal with that?
- Litwack: I had a story to tell and wherever possible instead of my expressing the outrage, I would have my subjects express the outrage. I don't have to say what Frederick Douglass is already saying or what black abolitionists are saying.
- Lage: So they speak for themselves.
- Litwack: A source that became indispensable for me were travel accounts of the many, many travelers who came to America, including Alexis de Tocqueville in the early national period. They came to America knowing they would go down South and confront slavery, but they hadn't thought very much about the fact that there were blacks in the North as well. This surprised them somewhat, but also blacks in the North were kind of—for Europeans particularly—kind of exotic figures. They didn't see any where they came from. They became very interested in talking with blacks when they could, describing the condition, culture, and opinions of blacks in the North—absolutely indispensable sources. And Alexis de Tocqueville, of course, and de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont in their travel through the North and the South as well had a good deal to say about race relations and the condition of blacks. That was very revealing to me.
- I like to think, at least, that I struck the proper tone. Ken used to always tell me about the reaction to *Peculiar Institution* when he had some of his friends reading the manuscript. I think Richard Current was reading the manuscript and said, "This is fine. This strikes just the right balance." Someone else read the manuscript and said, "No, you need to express more outrage." Ken thought he'd made the right decision. I think he did, too. In my case, with my readers—
- Lage: Not to express so much outrage?

Litwack: No, to have that balance. In other words, essentially to let the subject matter carry itself. In my case, Richard Drinnon was my second reader, who had written the biography—which was quite a passionate biography—of Emma Goldman. He wanted me to express more outrage. I resisted that; I didn't want to do that. I wanted the materials to speak for themselves. The interpretation is there, but I'm not hitting people over the head with the interpretation. I think they understand what I'm not trying to say, what I am saying. I've kept that philosophy. In other words, I don't like the idea of presenting materials and then standing back from the materials and saying, "If you people don't understand what I'm saying here, let me tell you." I don't think I need to do that. I hope I don't need to do that. There are people who will look at my books sometimes and say, "There's not enough analysis, not enough interpretation." We'll talk about this I guess the next time, but I think Eugene Genovese had the best advice—for anyone, an ideologue like Eugene Genovese to say about *I've been in the Storm So Long* [New York: Knopf, 1979], "For people who want interpretation there's plenty of interpretation and analysis." I treasure that comment.

Lage: So a lot of things you're saying, actually, apply to all your books.

Litwack: Yes, that's right.

Lage: The style you've picked.

Litwack: I would say my critique of *North of Slavery* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961], my major critique of the book would be that I did not spend as much time as I should have with black culture and with the interior of the black community. I tried to address that question. I have a chapter on the Negro community. Now I think I would have a different sense of the sources. I may, perhaps, utilize sources that I had not been able to locate at that time but that do exist. It's possible now for people to do community studies of free blacks in the North. When I published *North of Slavery* my hope was—and I think I said it in the preface, as well—that this is the beginning, and if nothing else I hope this book will stimulate many books on the subject. I chose to do the entire North. Obviously there's room for people to do individual states and communities. I hope they will do that.

Dumas Malone, a historian at Columbia, when I went to see him on Ken's advice on my research trip, I told him my subject matter, and he said, "Oh, no, this is a mistake. Do the Negro in New York. Do the Negro in Ohio. That's just too much." I had the same comment when I was doing *Been in the Storm So Long*; "You can't take the entire South." Well, that's the way I worked. I prefer to do it that way. I hope that people will write these state and community histories. I use them in my own work, and they're very valuable, but that's not what I want to do.

- Lage: Did you get any criticism along those lines from your readers of the dissertation?
- Litwack: No, no. The third reader was Seymour Lipset, sociology. That was when he was still here at Berkeley. He raised a few questions, but there was no need to revise anything. I can't remember the questions right now. If anything, Hunter Dupree, as I said, wanted me to be a bit angrier.
- Lage: No, Drinnon you said.
- Litwack: Drinnon wanted me to show my hand a little more.
- Lage: Did you revise much for the book? Was that an intensive activity?
- Litwack: I came back to California at the end of my first year at Wisconsin. I had a summer research grant from Wisconsin. We lived that summer in Santa Barbara to be near my parents, but also I could use the library that was good enough for my purposes. I needed a basic library, but essentially it was a matter of rewriting. What I did in that revision was to expand the first chapter to talk more about the abolition of slavery in the North, then to make a transition. Otherwise it was just cleaning up the book and getting it ready to submit to a publisher.
- Ken Stamp had advised that I submit the revised manuscript to the University of Chicago Press. I took his advice. I was prepared, as everyone was prepared at that time, and I guess still is, to wait seven, eight, nine months until they made their decision about the book. I was at Wisconsin at that time. I remember Jack Sproat was visiting us. He was in our living room. Have I told this story?
- Lage: I don't think so, no.
- Litwack: Jack Sproat was visiting us. I remember that so vividly because I think that's the time Jack was giving up smoking. Anyway, the phone rang—and this was a week or ten days after I'd submitted the manuscript. It was somebody from the University of Chicago Press, and they wanted to tell me how excited they were, that they had read the manuscript and they were delighted, that yes they would like permission to publish it. "Of course," they said, "we have to go through the formalities. We have to send it out to readers and then we have to—it comes to the board of editors. But the editor there said, "As far as we're concerned, this is a manuscript we really want to publish." I remember hanging up—I had gone into the closet with the telephone because they were talking in the other room. I couldn't believe what I had heard. I remember coming out and telling Jack and Rhoda. that I was absolutely elated over this unexpected, fully unexpected development.
- Lage: It had become, as you said, a current issue, or a historical—

Litwack: It was becoming a current issue. The book appeared in 1961, so the first sit-ins had taken place in the South. We already had the aftermath of the Supreme Court decision of '54. Ken had warned me, and he was absolutely right. "You know," he said, "The white South is going to love this book."

Lage: Oh, that's interesting.

Litwack: Yes, and that was absolutely true. I think in the southern press my book was reviewed or mentioned as often in editorials as it was in the book-review section.

Lage: Really? And how did that make you feel?

Litwack: Oh fine. It made me feel good. They were trying to underscore the North's hypocrisy and suggest that the North had resolved its problems—of course they had not—had resolved its problems without federal interference. "All we ask is that you give us the same kind of time and patience, and we'll resolve our problems the same way."

Lage: It's kind of ironic.

Litwack: Very ironic. Yes, that's right.

Lage: What was the reception in the North?

Litwack: I was delighted with the reception. Emma Lou Thornbrough—the person who I thought was going to write this dissertation—reviewed it in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, and it was maybe one of the more critical reviews. She thought I was relying too much on the foreign travelers. I think she was wrong, but it's a legitimate criticism that a reviewer could have made. One of the most enthusiastic reviews was written by a person I admired a great deal, E. Franklin Frazier, the black sociologist who reviewed it in the *Journal of Southern History*.

Also it was a book that was greeted by someone who was already becoming a good friend. Just before I began writing the dissertation, John Hope Franklin came out to Berkeley. It was the previous summer—that's right, the previous summer. He came out to Berkeley to teach a summer class. He, at that time, was at Howard University. He was teaching a course—actually, not black history but teaching the social history of America up to the Civil War, and I was his reader. We struck up a very fine friendship which has lasted until this day. He was so encouraging. He had written his dissertation on free blacks in North Carolina. That was the one big book that stood out in the entire historiography on free blacks in the South. I told him what I was doing. He thought it was a wonderful subject, and he was always a source of encouragement, so that was a delightful summer, meeting him and getting to know him. He had, at that time, published *From Slavery to Freedom*, the

textbook that's made such a difference. [It was published on September 22, 1947, the anniversary of President Lincoln's preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. He inscribed a copy of the book (third printing, 1948) the summer he visited Berkeley, along with my copy of his *The Free Negro in North Carolina*, an inscription I very much cherish—"In the fond hope that you will 'pick up the torch' and light the dark corners of this intriguing subject."—added during narrator's review]

Lage: What age group is he? Is he your age or older?

Litwack: No. John Hope Franklin is, I would say, probably 86. Ken is 88, I believe, and I think John Hope Franklin is either 86 or 88 [John Hope Franklin: January 2, 1915 – March 25, 2009; Kenneth Milton Stamp: July 12, 1912 – 10 July 2009]

Lage: Didn't you interview him? Once you called our office about tape recorders, and I thought you were going to interview John Hope Franklin.

Litwack: Yes, *American Heritage* is still supposed to publish it. I just wrote to American Heritage, and they wrote back and said, "We still plan to publish it," so I'm still waiting for it to appear. [It was published as "The Road from Rentiesville," in *American Heritage*, vol. 53 (February-March 2002), 47-55.—added during narrator's review]

Lage: I don't want to hold you up too much longer, but there may be a few other things about Berkeley and the history department during your graduate studies.

Litwack: Oh yes, we haven't gotten to that.

Lage: I'm wondering if we should pick that up next time and then contrast it with Wisconsin.

Litwack: We could do that, sure.

[end tape 7, side b, end interview 3]

Interview 4: October 23, 2001

[Begin Tape 8, Side A]

Lage: We're going to look at the Department of History from the perspective of a graduate student in the fifties. How much did you know as a graduate student about what was going on and how the department was changing?

Litwack: First, let me say that when I was a graduate student at Berkeley it was a good department; it was not the distinguished department it became in the 1960s. As I indicated earlier, I had stayed for Kenneth Stampf. That's the person with whom I wanted to work. I also profited a great deal from Carl Bridenbaugh in colonial history. But it was mainly Kenneth Stampf that kept me here, and he disappointed me in no way whatsoever. He was a wonderful mentor in the sense that he permitted students to stake out their own territory, particularly in regard to the subject matter in which they wrote a dissertation. That's important.

Lage: Is that unusual?

Litwack: No, it's not entirely unusual, but I have heard so many classic cases of mentors who essentially assigned the dissertation topic, often topics that would assist that professor in whatever book was underway. The classic case is probably T. Harry Williams at Louisiana State University. He was a southern historian and interested in southern military history as well. There were seminars where he essentially assigned each student in the seminar some general on which to write a dissertation, and some good books came out of that.

Ken gave me full leeway. He had certain subjects that he'd been interested in seeing a graduate student explore. I would certainly be very respectful of his recommendations. The subject I know in which he really—he had already talked about the need for a book on the liberal Republicans of the 1870s and 1880s—the liberal Republican reformers of that period. Jack Sproat finished his exams before I did, and he took the topic.

Lage: Was that one you were interested in?

Litwack: Slightly, but not really. I don't think I would really have had my heart in that one. One thing that I've always emphasized with my students is when you pick a dissertation topic you're also picking the subject of your first book. I don't even like to refer to them as dissertations; they're books, and they should think about them as books. Therefore, you need to be thoroughly excited about the topic. You really have to feel committed to the topic. Obviously, it's much easier to be committed to the topic if you make the choice yourself. As I've indicated, I moved from southern free blacks—and Ken thought that was a wonderful topic—and ended up doing northern blacks, which he also thought was a wonderful topic.

As a mentor he was also a very careful reader of my chapters. He was a wonderful stylist, and fortunately I think I was a good writer, which made it even easier, but also I was that much more appreciative of the criticism that he offered because if you're a good writer you want to be even a better writer. Ken taught me a great deal, just as Carl Bridenbaugh had taught me a great deal about writing in the seminar that I took with him. He did everything I could have asked of a mentor.

Lage: Was he a little imposing? I've heard people say that in the earlier part of his life, he was a little scary.

Litwack: Ken was always a bit formal. By the time I reached the dissertation stage I found him increasingly congenial. I think he realized that—he'd had some problems with previous graduate students who had either dropped out, had failed exams, or had taken forever to write their dissertations. I think he perceived that I might be an exception, so that was nice. [chuckles]

Lage: And you were.

Litwack: I did get it out very rapidly, that's right. He offered very good, very solid criticism.

Lage: Was it mainly stylistic?

Litwack: It was primarily stylistic, but at the same time raising some questions about the materials. I think it was Ken, for example, who strongly recommended that in the revision of the book I might consider expanding the first chapter to deal with the abolition of slavery in the North before embarking on the major subject, which was free blacks in the North. I acted on that suggestion in the summer in which I revised the dissertation.

Lage: Before you turned in the dissertation? Not the book?

Litwack: After I wrote the dissertation, the summer afterwards I spent the summer revising it for publication. That's what I spent most of the summer on, expanding that first chapter.

Lage: Okay, now—

Litwack: —about the department.

Lage: Yes.

Litwack: Let me say at the outset that my time as a graduate student was—at no time did I find myself preoccupied with whatever was going on at the higher levels of the department, or the power struggle, as some would say. We heard about it. My sense was that the power in the department rested essentially in a small

conservative group of professors. My perception was that these professors were skeptical of, if not downright hostile to, innovation.

Lage: Innovation in—?

Litwack: In history. In writing history.

Lage: So this was not just power but also how we write history?

Litwack: I think the struggle in this department was not only over the makeup of the department but, of course, it was over what kind of history would be taught, what kind of history would be written. I did sense that there were good guys and bad guys, and obviously I was lined up with the good guys, as I saw them, and that was, of course, Kenneth Stamp and the people around him, who were fighting essentially to remodel this department in some very fundamental ways, and who really moved the department from a good department to a distinguished department. That was their achievement; that was their triumph. They went through a great deal to achieve it, but as a graduate student I, at least, and I think most of the people around me, my close colleagues, I think we were fairly oblivious to its implications, because it didn't seem to affect us personally.

We heard stories of graduate students who found themselves in an orals committee composed of some members of one faction and some members of the other faction and that they felt harassed and intimidated as a result of this. Now, these stories may all have been apocryphal, but we thought they were probably correct. I can't say I knew any graduate student personally who had been a victim of this procedure.

Lage: Were there such relations between the faculty and the grad students that you'd hear stories, for example, about the efforts to hire [William] Bouwsma?

Litwack: I don't recall any. I don't recall Ken Stamp ever discussing the power struggle that was going on. I just don't recall it. We might have, but it's not something that I can easily recall. We, of course, knew about some of the new members of the department, and some of us, of course, worked with those new members. In the changing makeup of the department, we did sense that it was moving from a good to a distinguished department. I cite in particular the appointments of Joe Levenson, Gene Brucker, Bob Brentano, Bill Bouwsma; and, somewhat later, Charles Sellers and Carl Schorske. These people helped to transform this department. One thing, of course, was missing: there were no women and there were no minorities.

Lage: Was that something you noticed at the time?

- Litwack: I think we were aware of it, sure, yes. In being aware of it it only meant that our department was no different than any other history department in the country.
- Lage: Were there women graduate students at that time?
- Litwack: Yes, yes, there were. I don't recall any stories of women graduate students being discouraged because they were women and because of the assumption that they would only be around as long as they needed to find a husband and then would be happy as a homemaker. We had heard those stories, and I think some of those stories have been verified by those who were victimized by it, not just at Berkeley but even more so at the University of Wisconsin, which also, when I came there, had no women in the department and no minorities.
- Lage: Was the issue of no minorities just kind of taken for granted?
- Litwack: My perception is it was a nonissue. No course was taught in African American history at this university or any white university in the country; it was taught only in black colleges. I can vividly recall after I finished my dissertation and Carl Bridenbaugh—as I said, I learned a great deal from him—congratulated me and said, “Well, Leon, now it's time to get back into the mainstream of American history.” I knew what that meant, but also I knew that in part this advice—it was hard to know whether the advice stemmed from his refusal to recognize black history as a legitimate scholarly field or whether he was saying this for my own good, that is noting there were no black history courses in the country and therefore you needed to, as he said, get back into the mainstream. Judging from his later presidential address, I would assume that he was also skeptical of black history as a field.
- Lage: You're talking about his address [in 1962] when he was president of the AHA [American Historical Association]?
- Litwack: Yes.
- Lage: Did you hear that address?
- Litwack: I didn't hear it. I obviously read it, and I was very disturbed by it. It was essentially saying that people like me should not be writing American history. On the other hand, he had certainly embraced me as a graduate student. I had learned a lot from him, and I never felt any hostility from him; I only felt his strong support and encouragement.
- Lage: It makes it sound very odd.
- Litwack: It does sound odd. The other reason is because he wrote a couple of books which I had read in the seminar (I would have read them anyway), *Cities in Revolt* [*Urban Life in America, 1743-1776*], *Cities in the Wilderness* [*The*

First Century of Urban Life in America, 1625-1642], both of which, particularly *Cities in Revolt*, touched very heavily on non-elite groups in the colonial population, and he seemed to handle them with some sensitivity. So I was taken aback by the presidential address.

On the other hand, he had always had the reputation as a kind of a curmudgeon, so the fact that he would—but let me put it this way. In the entire seminar—which was an excellent seminar—I never heard any remark from him that in any way would have suggested the kind of line that he advanced in that presidential address. In that sense, it really came as a surprise as well. It fit one part of him, which is the curmudgeon part, and also he was a kind of an elitist. He was a kind of elitist. That's absolutely right. He's the one who insisted that all graduate students should—well, all male graduate students should wear jacket and tie. We wouldn't dare go into his seminar without wearing jacket and tie. The same thing was true when we read for his course. We were expected to be properly attired; we just knew that.

We knew that stemmed from a certain kind of elitism. I think we all suspected that he probably would rather be at Harvard than at Berkeley and was hoping that maybe he would get to Harvard ultimately. He went to Brown instead.

- Lage: What was the standard graduate student dress in those days?
- Litwack: As I recall, I think we were expected to wear a coat and a tie when we taught. I'm not sure now how universal that was. I think I did. Otherwise, I think we were expected to be fairly well groomed, sure.
- Lage: Do you remember how you were expected to address your professors and also your students?
- Litwack: Oh, yes. Let me use Ken as an example. He was Professor Stamp until I passed the oral exams, and then I think he made the point in a letter that he wrote to me as he was looking at my chapters—he was away for a while—and he signed the letter "Ken." I think that was the [chuckles] sign. I heard this was true of others as well. I only remember that in relationship to Ken Stamp. I'm not sure I ever called Professor Bridenbaugh "Carl," because I did see him in subsequent historical association meetings. You don't think about calling him Carl but—[laughs]
- Lage: Now is that more formal than it occurs today between professor and student?
- Litwack: Yes, yes. My policy is whatever someone chooses to call me is fine. I'll even have sometimes a few, not too often, a few undergraduates who will call me "Leon." I don't say anything. The same thing is true of graduate students; whenever they want to call me Leon they can. Some graduate students wait until they're in the dissertation stage, some use it immediately, and some persist with "professor" until you remind them that it is not necessary.

- Lage: It does seem to be a shift.
- Litwack: I think so. There is a shift towards greater informality. That's right.
- Lage: In terms of this power struggle within the department, was some of this the lingering effects of the loyalty oath controversy?
- Litwack: I think there were lingering effects. I think one could say that the elite, which had governed the department for so long, were generally conservative and supportive of the administration in the loyalty oath fight, which, as you know, had been a divisive issue within the department.
- Lage: As a graduate student, did you continue to be politically active on campus?
- Litwack: Less so. I was politically active my first year as a graduate student because I ran for the UC ASUC Council for the graduate student seat on the council and lost once again. [laughs] My fourth loss, or third, I don't know. And it was on a fairly progressive ticket. That was my last adventure in campus politics, and for the remainder of the time I really stuck to the dissertation. That, to me, was critical, to finish the dissertation before I went to Wisconsin.
- Lage: Now, was that just a matter of convenience, that you needed to concentrate, or was this also a separation of the political self from the historian? Did that have to happen?
- Litwack: Well, it may have been reflective of the absence of political activity in the society itself. This was the McCarthy era. Did I quit politics because I'd been intimidated by the HUAC subpoena and by the questioning of the FBI, et cetera? I don't know. I think it's a hard question to answer. I didn't feel that I was playing it safe because of those things, but I do believe that the climate was such that there were few ways in which you could express yourself politically. Most of the activity at Sproul Plaza was dominated by one revivalist with an accordion.
- Lage: In those days?
- Litwack: That was about it. I do recall very vividly that that semester in which I wrote the dissertation, I would be—in fact, Ken let me use his office. He was on leave, something like that, and I used his office and worked generally to about eleven o'clock, twelve o'clock, at night, and then walked down Telegraph Avenue because we were living on Dwight Way, between Telegraph and College—what is now People's Park. We had an apartment there. Incidentally—not so incidentally, actually—our first child, John, was born in 1957 while I was writing the dissertation.
- Lage: This was a busy time in more ways than one.

- Litwack: This was a very busy time. John was born in Oakland's Kaiser Hospital. That added to the work and to the pleasure, both.
- Lage: No wonder you stayed at Ken's office until eleven.
- Litwack: That's right. Good point. That's a good point. What I do remember, it was sometime before I was to leave for Wisconsin. Telegraph Avenue still extended all the way to Sather Gate, the administration building on one side and a row of stores on the other side, for example, Creed's Bookstore and Jules Restaurant. But some of the stores were already being vacated because they would ultimately be torn down, and, of course, the student union would be erected in its spot. Inhabiting one of those empty places was an office and meeting place of a new organization, just getting off its feet. I had read something about it. I remember peering in the window once, and seeing these students sitting around. They had card tables and chairs and whatnot. As it turned out, this was the organization of the political party that would be the nucleus of the Free Speech Movement in 1964.
- Lage: SLATE?
- Litwack: SLATE. This was the beginning of SLATE.
- Lage: That early on? [formally organized in 1958]
- Litwack: I remember as I looked through the window feeling somewhat envious and also realizing I'm just absolutely anonymous to them, even though I'd been such an activist on campus for so many years, but I was passe now, and this was already a new generation that would come forth.
- Lage: But that might have appealed to you if you were at a different stage.
- Litwack: Absolutely.
- Lage: We're now just picking up loose ends. You mentioned at one point the influence of Charles Beard and Vernon Parrington.
- Litwack: Yes. My first exposure to what would be called "revisionist history" came from my high school history teacher. She's the same one, if you recall, who responded to my paper on Reconstruction by telling the class I was very pro-labor, as if that could explain my view of Reconstruction. Still, she understood my interest in history, and she understood my interest in history from a certain perspective, and she advised me to read Charles Beard's *The Rise of American Civilization*, and after that *The Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*. Someone else, another teacher I believe, or someone at the library where I worked, recommended I read Vernon Louis Parrington's *Main Currents in American Thought*. Those were stellar volumes, the books that few, if any, students examine today, though I still insist that my students read Beard's *The*

Economic Interpretation of the Constitution for their PhD exam so they can discuss the historiography of the constitution.

Those were very important books to me. They really helped to shape my thinking and reinforce, at the same time, what Kenneth Stampp would be doing in his course because Ken Stampp, at that time, was very much a Beardian. Of course, I went to a department, the University of Wisconsin, which was notorious for its appreciation of Beard's work. So this was a fine introduction to my academic and scholarly life for some years to come.

The other book I think had almost as enormous of an influence came in my maybe second year of college, and that was Richard Hofstadter's *The American Political Tradition*. That was very, very important—a critical book.

Lage: In what way?

Litwack: It reexamined and challenged our entire political history. At the same time it reinforced what I had read in Beard because Hofstadter too had been very strongly influenced by Beard, and that was clear from the reading. That was a fantastic book that I certainly mined in my first lectures at the University of Wisconsin.

Lage: Hofstadter is another Stampp connection.

Litwack: That's right. They were close friends, and I met Hofstadter at Columbia during my dissertation research trip.

Lage: Let's move you to Wisconsin. How were things different there, or the same?

Litwack: Well, I drove out to Wisconsin. I had never been there before. Rhoda stayed at home with our child until I had settled us into our place there, and then she would fly out. I drove out and on my way began to think about what was about to happen to me. From the time I received the appointment, the time I interviewed for it, if you had asked me, "What's the best American history department in the country?" I would have said easily, "Wisconsin." And the idea that I'm now going there, that was both intimidating and terribly exciting. Going to Harvard would not have been more exciting because Harvard didn't have as good an American history department. I was going to the very best, and also the place where Ken Stampp had been trained. So I was very excited.

I started to think about what I would be doing in my courses, because I had worked right up to the last minute on my dissertation. I came to the campus the morning after I arrived. I walked into Bascom Hall where the history department was located. It was a non-working day; it might have been a Saturday or a Sunday. I passed the offices with the names of the historians on them, and it was like a young aspiring actor coming to Hollywood and

walking by all these dressing rooms of the great stars. That's exactly the way I felt.

The Wisconsin department at that time had Merrill Jensen teaching colonial history and the revolutionary period. Of course, I had read his books with Bridenbaugh and also for my doctoral exams. It had William Appleman Williams, who was really turning things around in the writing of American foreign policy and would have a major impact on that field, really turn the whole field around; David Shannon, who had written on the Socialist Party in America; William Hesselstine, who had been Kenneth Stamp's mentor, who I already knew was a real curmudgeon. I was introduced to him by one of my colleagues, Ted Hamerow, as his "intellectual grandson." He began talking about dwarfism and cattle breeding in California, or something like that, some bizarre sort of thing. He was just like that; he was incorrigible, absolutely incorrigible.

Merle Curti, one of the great intellectual historians of the country. Howard K. Beale, at that time a very, very important figure in recent American history. These were all-stars. This was the first team. And here I am, the only nontenured person in the department, and for two years I remained the only nontenured person in the department. [Brief section deleted.] Wisconsin was a place that had a history of bringing on somebody for a year or two and then letting them go. I knew that history; I was aware of that. I knew that I was going to be the exception. [laughter] It just felt that way. I had to be. I'm not arrogant, but I just said to myself, "I'm going to make it here because I think I can make it."

Lage: Was this a practice that they had of bringing someone on to teach the survey course?

Litwack: No, it's not like some institutions do, such as Stanford and Harvard, where they bring people on for a three-year appointment and then let them go, and you understand that from the very beginning. This was a tenure-track position. I had heard that one problem that my predecessor had was that he insisted on talking always nostalgically about his native California, so I never made that mistake. I wouldn't have done it anyway. I loved Wisconsin. I loved the university, admired my colleagues. I felt so welcome there! What a warm, welcoming department. Much of the social life in Madison revolved around the department and the university.

[end tape 8, side a, begin tape 8, side b]

Litwack: So I felt right at home, and I immediately began teaching the survey American history course. I had to do both halves of the course: the first half up to the Civil War and the second half since the Civil War. Then I was assigned the Age of Jackson, or, as it was usually listed in the curriculum, the Early National Period, 1815-1848.

- Lage: Which is sort of what you were hired for.
- Litwack: That's exactly what I was hired for. I was right between Merrill Jensen and Hesselstine. I soon realized that neither one wanted me to trespass on their territory.
- Lage: So you couldn't go too far either way.
- Litwack: Yes. Then someone told me a little bit about the history of Wisconsin's history department. They said, "Now, you're teaching the Age of Jackson?" I said, "Yes." "Now do you realize the last person in this department who taught that course on a regular basis?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, it was Frederick Jackson Turner [1861-1932]." [laughter]
- Lage: That must have given you a sense of tradition.
- Litwack: Yes, it certainly did. The course had been listed in the catalogue under Merrill Jensen's name, but Merrill Jensen never got up to the Jacksonian period. He either taught the colonial period or the revolutionary period. Maybe once or twice he'd teach the Age of Jefferson. So even though the Jackson course was listed in the catalogue, it was a course he had never taught. I think they might have had some visitors in occasionally to teach the Jackson course.
- I walked into the course. The survey course was wonderful, and I expected it to be maybe 250 students. I walked into the Jackson course, and I was surprised to find about 125 students, which I hadn't really expected. Then I realized when I was looking at their enrollment cards that fifty of the students were graduate students.
- Lage: And this was your first year?
- Litwack: My first year. Some of these graduate students were probably older than me; many the same age. It was expected of you at Wisconsin that you meet your graduate students separately from others in the course. Well, in order to meet this group of people I had to divide them up into two groups and meet them twice a week, adding to an already very onerous, for me, burden because I'm preparing lectures for both the Jackson course and the survey course.
- Lage: New lectures.
- Litwack: It also meant that I had to read the graduate students' exams. Even though I had a reader for the undergraduates, and a teaching assistant for the survey students, I'd be reading the graduate exams. That was certainly challenging. I really worked harder than I've ever worked in my life. I would finish one lecture preparation, come back to where we lived—University Houses—and immediately go into the next one, and then into the next one, and sometimes read for one course one day, the other course the next day. Essentially it meant

working up a lecture in something like thirty-six hours or so, because I worked right into the wee hours.

Lage: This isn't like you go into your file drawer and pull out an old one and modify it.

Litwack: That's right. It's also not the kind of course—let's say if you have a course of thirty or twenty-five students, if you haven't completed the lecture preparation you can always turn it into a discussion of the books that they're reading or whatever. Here you were expected to lecture, and I did lecture.

Lage: Were there sections with TAs?

Litwack: Sections in the survey American history course, and then in the Jackson course I met with the graduate students separately in small seminars. So that first year was really quite a year.

The important thing is that the reports were coming back to my colleagues that I was doing a good job—that's at least what they were telling me—and that was very encouraging. I got along well with all of my colleagues except perhaps [William B.] Hesselstine. I could never really figure him out. [laughter] Maybe he never figured me out, I don't know. We often met at what was called "the commons," which was the lunchroom, predominately a faculty hangout. There was a history table, and I remember there was a table dominated by members of the English department, sociology, and the other disciplines. After a while I would sometimes eat at the other tables and found that very enjoyable. At the history table, of course, Hesselstine was always holding forth, to the amusement of the other people at the table, because he was obviously out to stir me up.

Lage: Oh, really?

Litwack: Oh yes. To the amusement, I think, of the others, who would always say, "Oh, don't take him seriously." He would always have something to say like, "Well, there are two kinds of historians I don't really like" They were—I don't know if he said "nigger" but he might have—"Nigger historians and labor historians."

Lage: Oh my God!

Litwack: I felt like saying, but I didn't— or maybe I did—that, "Well, you know my master's thesis was the Negro in organized labor, so I cover the ground." He was always offering some other perspectives on the civil rights movement which, after all, was underway at that time. His was a very skeptical, sometimes just downright hostile attitude. But I think part of the time he was really doing this for my benefit. [chuckles] At least my colleagues insisted that was the case.

The one time I shut him up was—he himself was from the South—we were walking together down from Bascom Hall to the commons. The Meredith case had just broken out in Mississippi. I said to myself, “Well, two can play this game.” I said, “Well, Bill, you know I understand why they are upset down in Mississippi.” He said, “Yeah?” I said, “Well, yes. I think these white males in Mississippi feel very threatened by the possibility that black men might come into their campus and be very attractive to their women.” That just shut him up entirely, and he never brought the subject up during lunch that day.

Lage: How did the civil rights movement look from Wisconsin?

Litwack: It looked to me and to most of the people there as a terribly exciting moment in our history. It generated, I think, widespread support as much as I’m sure it generated in California. It was a very, very exciting time.

Lage: Was the student body at all mixed? Did you have many African American students?

Litwack: It was mixed, but I wouldn’t say the percentage of black students was any larger probably than at California. It was fairly small. Wisconsin was an interesting campus in the sense that it’s easy for high school graduates to be admitted from Wisconsin schools into the university, so it was this very odd mix of students right out of Oshkosh and places like that, and the farmlands—after all, Wisconsin is a very rural state—mixing with these very wise characters from Chicago and New York. Wisconsin attracted a large number of students from Wisconsin but also from Chicago and New York. It was an interesting mix, and I found it a very exciting mix in terms of my teaching.

Lage: How did your teaching develop? We didn’t talk about being a TA at Berkeley.

Litwack: Certainly my initiation at Berkeley had been what I had hoped it would be and thought it would be. I just loved being in the classroom. The same thing was true at Wisconsin. I found that I enjoyed the large lecture courses as well. I began at that point to develop some alternative methods of communicating with students. In a lecture that I still give to this day on the IWW [Industrial Workers of the World], I decided to devote an entire lecture to the subject. But I felt that I couldn’t do justice to the IWW as a movement simply by lecturing about them, that since it was such a spiritual movement they should listen to some of the spirituals. So I would take the last fifteen minutes of the lecture and have them listen to IWW songs. I brought in a record player and then they would hear the songs. Now when I do it I come in with slides, the lights are off, and it has a bit more drama associated with it. But that was the beginning, anyway, of my explorations in multimedia which I would continue when I came to Berkeley.

The Jackson course, as I said, was hard going, but my God, they got a very solid course on Jacksonian America. They knew it by the end of the semester, and I knew it as well, keeping up with them.

Lage: I was wondering. You must have done a little digging yourself.

Litwack: I think one fabulous moment that first semester was at the end of the Jackson course when the students gave me a standing ovation, including all the graduate students. I think what they were saying—I hope that they were saying it’s a good course. I think they were also saying—they knew it was my first time, and I think it was also a vote of confidence: “For a first-year teacher you did very well.”

Lage: Well, that kind of thing has been typical for you from what I understand.

Litwack: The graduate students were also, I think, delighted to have a course offered on Jacksonian America, which they thought was a very important period, and it is a very important period. So as far as they’re concerned it also enhanced the offerings of the department, and that was very exciting.

Lage: Did you incorporate black history?

Litwack: Yes, I did incorporate black history into the survey course and into the Jacksonian course. Of course, I had a lecture on the old South; I had a lecture on slavery, but most of the course was about Jacksonian politics and American society.

In one of the PhD. Exams, I found myself on the same orals committee with Hesseltine—and Hesseltine asked the student, [voice deepens] “Well, I see you took Professor Litwack’s course on Jacksonian America. What did he teach you in that course? What did you learn in that course?” Well, he gave the wrong answer as far as I’m concerned. He said, “Well, I learned a lot about the old South and slavery.” Of course, that was Hesseltine’s domain essentially, and it really only occupied a small portion of my course—though I was proud of the lectures I gave on the subject. Hesseltine, I think, just grumbled a bit, realizing that I had invaded his domain. Really I had not. After all, slavery was also part of the Jacksonian period, and that’s part of the reason I wanted to deal with it. You could not deal with the Jacksonian period without dealing with sectional tensions; you can’t deal with sectional tensions unless you grapple with the whole issue of slavery, which is what I decided to do.

At the end of my third year at Wisconsin, June 1961, our daughter Ann was born in Madison at University Hospital. That completed our family, John and Ann.

We had the next year—I had a grant at the Huntington Library. No, I had a grant, a Social Science Research Council faculty fellowship, which I chose to use at the [Henry E.] Huntington Library in San Marino because it would give me the opportunity to begin research on my next book. What was that to be? Well, it was to be a book on the origins of the Jackson movement. That appealed to me. I liked political history, but also if you deal with the origins of a political movement it's going to include a good deal of social and cultural history as well, at least I intended that it would. Also it came out of a reading of a very fine book by George Dangerfield called *The Era of Good Feelings*, which really showed me some of the vast potential of that period, using political history to illuminate as well the force of race and slavery in American Society.

Lage: So were you thinking you would be a Jacksonian historian at that time?

Litwack: Oh yes. I can't say that I was without ambition, and one of my objectives, of course, was to stay at Wisconsin. To get tenure at Wisconsin seemed to be the realization of all of my finest dreams. That was it; that was what it was all about. So I was going to make it as a Jacksonian because that's the only way I knew I would be able to obtain tenure.

So we came out to Huntington and spent the year there doing research on the University Hosubject. I enjoyed the research. I not only went to Huntington Library, but I used the archives at Columbia, Princeton, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Library of Congress, and the New York Public Library. I had boxes of notes on that subject, and it was a fascinating and demanding subject.

While I was out at the Huntington I met a number of historians, and the resident historian at the time was Allan Nevins. While I was there Allan Nevins was already in the planning stages of a series of books that he thought would be very important called *The Impact of the Civil War*, and that would be distributed according to subject matter. The series would include the impact of the war on agriculture, literature, the constitution, women, and blacks.

My book, *North of Slavery*, was being reviewed at that time. Allan Nevins asked me if I might be interested in a volume on blacks. That was a tough question. At first I kind of dismissed the idea by just saying, "That would be nice, but I have other obligations." The more I thought about it the more it appealed to me, but I did tell him, and he knew, of course, I was there researching this book on the origins of the Jacksonian Party. He was certainly willing to wait. I said, "Well yes, I would like to do that." That would be the impact of the Civil War on the Negro—because that was the term that we still used—and it would be from essentially 1865 to 1900. Most of these volumes extended through the end of the nineteenth century.

Most of them did come out. Daniel Aaron wrote a very fine book on the impact of the Civil War on literature. Mart Massey wrote on the impact on women, Paul Gates on agriculture, Harold Hyman on the constitution; so it really had a good group of people working on that area.

Then I returned to Wisconsin and not too long after my return I had a call from the University of Rochester, and they said they'd like me to come out and give a paper. They also made it clear they were looking for a historian there, a historian in that period—the Jacksonian era. In my mind, of course, I knew I did not want to go to Rochester. I wanted to stay at Wisconsin. But you're told how the game is played and you learn that fairly soon, and you are told that if you get an offer from a reputable institution you use the offer to advance yourself at the place where you're now located, taking the risk, of course, that they'll simply say, "That was very nice; go on." [laughter] That can happen too.

I certainly did not want to leave Wisconsin for Rochester. In the first place, I just thought that the Wisconsin department was far better and wondered if they would regard Rochester even as a competitive institution. But I went there anyway. It was the first opportunity I had had to put together my materials on the Jackson movement. I worked hard on the lecture, not only because I wanted the lecture to be good, but also because I'm now able to examine my research materials and see what I can do with those materials.

I gave my lecture, and it was all right. The reaction seemed to be pretty good. For a visiting person who's being considered for an appointment, a department usually will have him talk not only to the professors, but also to the graduate students. So three graduate students took me out to dinner, and we talked about a lot of things. At some point I really had to ask them a question that was uppermost in my mind, "What did you think of the talk?" And they said, "Well, yes," they said, "it was very good. Very good. But," they said, "it was hard to believe that the talk was coming from the same person who had written *North of Slavery*," which they had enjoyed very much. They sensed, in other words, that I was in a totally different area, and I guess bringing to the subject a different degree of emotion perhaps, or commitment. They had never heard me lecture on black Americans, but they said it was hard to believe the same person who wrote *North of Slavery* had given this talk. Well, I thought that was a very interesting reaction.

Lage: Perceptive.

Litwack: Yes, that's exactly it. The more I thought about it, while perceptive, I found it to be—I don't recall precisely the chronology here, but I do recall that I began to drop the idea, or thinking about dropping the idea of the Jacksonian volume. I was very excited, even more excited now about the *Impact of the Civil War* volume and the opportunity to return to African American history.

Then came the invitation in 1964 to come to the University of California as a visitor. I had come the previous summer to teach summer school and then I came out for the academic year 1964-65. Ken made it very clear to me—at the very outset he said, “We need someone to teach a survey course for that year. This is not a lookover.”

Lage: Oh, he did?

Litwack: Yes, “There is no position, but if you’d like to come out and spend a year in Berkeley we would like you to do so.” Rhoda and I talked about this, and we liked the idea of coming out to Berkeley, but I also remember saying to Rhoda, “This is a very, very much of a longshot, but if there’s any opportunity for me ever to come to Berkeley this certainly couldn’t hurt.” I felt that the way in which I handled the large survey course might influence them to think that I could be kept there. But it was a longshot, and it was not foremost in my mind when I came here. I just wanted to do a good job.

Lage: And there was no position, or at least you were told.

Litwack: That’s absolutely right. So I walked into History—then it was still called 17—History 17A and B. I taught both 17A and B. That was really something. Wheeler Auditorium was full.

Lage: Was this a bigger lecture hall than you were used to at Wisconsin?

Litwack: Yes, it was bigger. Wisconsin classes were about 300, 350. Wheeler was full and Wheeler had about—at that time could hold close to 1000. That wasn’t all the students; my class consisted of about 1500 students.

Lage: Where were the rest of them?

Litwack: Well, that’s a good question, because 17 operated this way: if you took—let me get this right now—17A for three credits, and you attend lectures and take the exams—. If you’re taking 17C you receive five credits, you attend the lectures, take the exams, and you enroll at the same time in two hours of section with a teaching assistant. So that’s the way they divided it. And what they did was to put in Wheeler Auditorium those who were taking it for three credits. Those who were taking it for five credits would see my lecture just before they went into the discussion section.

Lage: On television.

Litwack: On television, that’s right. They were all televised. I remember so vividly once going to the second floor of Wheeler—and the whole row of classrooms there—and then looking into each classroom and there I was on the screen and all the students were watching me. One time I even went into one of the classrooms to see what it would be like, and I was so turned off by the whole

thing. It had its amusing moments, as someone who stopped me in the cafeteria line would say, “Oh, you look much better on television,” or words to that effect. Or people who would say, “I’ve been in your course, but this is the first time I’ve seen you in person.” I didn’t mind trying to reach that many students, that was fine, but I didn’t think that was the way to do it. I still have problems sometimes convincing people of this, but there is a real difference between teaching 700, 800, 900 students even in Wheeler Auditorium and teaching them by television. I have always maintained that, and I still do.

Then in that same year, ‘64, of course the Free Speech Movement broke out.

Lage: Yes, you were here in quite an active year.

Litwack: Quite a time to come. CBS ran a documentary which sought to explain the Free Speech Movement. Much of the film consisted of the leaders of the Free Speech Movement as voiceovers as you saw scenes across the campus. Prior to this, CBS had contacted me and said they wanted to get some shots of my classroom, and I said “Fine.” They came in with the cameras, and I just said, “Don’t disrupt the lecture.” Well, before I knew it the camera people on both aisles in Wheeler were moving down the aisle, their back turned to me, with their cameras going over the students as they were writing notes and that sort of thing. I finally stopped them. I said, “Would you please leave or go to the back of the room? You’re being very disruptive,” because they were being very disruptive.

Well, they would have the last laugh. One of the things they wanted to talk about—because that’s what the Free Speech Movement was talking about—was the impersonality of education at this big monolith. And what better example than to focus in on those students sitting in those little rooms with the television set, seeing me. So first they show me in this huge room and then they shifted up to those classrooms. Meanwhile, the voiceover is talking about the multiversity and the evils of the multiversity, and here, of course, is one of them.

Lage: This must have really hurt.

Litwack: It really did hurt. Not only that but they were to have come originally to my lecture—coincidentally to my lecture on the Wobblies, but they couldn’t make it that day so they came to the next lecture which is always on the populist movement. There’s one section of that lecture, very brief section—maybe two minutes—where in order to talk about the background of the agricultural revolution I cite some figures. I don’t do that very often, but I did at that time because it dramatizes the points that I was trying to make. That’s what they fastened on. So not only is there this huge course, 1500 students, but listen to the boring material they have to hear. That hurt me more than anything else.

So that was my experience with the survey course. I think I did it for only two years and then we reverted back to what we now have which is all students being in 17, now it's A and B, and there's no longer that differential. I did it that way for two years.

Lage: So all the students are in the same lecture class?

Litwack: That's right. They all take it, and they are all assigned to sections, yes.

Lage: Is there more to say about Wisconsin? Should we move you here, to Berkeley?

Litwack: Well, yes. [pause] About my third year there there were some other nontenured people, a few young people there. I guess the important point is that *North of Slavery* came out, and it was well- received. It must have been in my fifth or sixth year there that I was advanced to tenure. So I got my tenure at Wisconsin before having to show them any of my research material or writings on the Jackson period. That was very important.

Lage: And you got your tenure on a black history topic.

Litwack: That's right, exactly right.

Lage: Did you try to introduce the idea of a black history class, or was that premature?

Litwack: No, that was premature. My experience at Wisconsin was terrific. I couldn't have asked for anything better. I'm a native of California. I actually happened to enjoy the winters in Madison. I didn't like driving in the winters, but I loved being able to work with the snow falling outside. I thought that was terrific. I loved the falls. I had never seen a fall in my life really until I came to Wisconsin. I enjoyed the winters. Rhoda less so because she was the one who kept bundling up the kids and unbundling them and whatnot. I think for Rhoda though it was not so much the winter itself as how long it lasted. When she saw the first spring breaking out in March she would be very excited, and then, all of a sudden, of course, it would go right back to winter again, and that always caused some dismay. Anyway, that was a very good time.

So I'm here at Berkeley and I'm told by several people in the department that they're considering me for a position. Well, my first thought was, "Don't think too hard on it. Wait until it really happens."

Lage: So you loved Wisconsin, but you wanted to come back?

Litwack: Berkeley's the only place in California I would have come back for. If, you name it, if Harvard, Columbia, Chicago, whatever, had come to me and said, "We want you to come to our place," I certainly would have thought about it,

but it would have been hard to leave Wisconsin, and I may not have. This was different.

I was told they were considering my name for an appointment. I remember working in my office here, and I knew the department was meeting just right down the hall, very strange. Then Ken Stamp stuck his head in to say, "It went through."

And you know, I still didn't really believe it. Nobody understood this. At that point the regents still ratified appointments. Because of my background at Berkeley, I kept thinking, "Oh, they're going to find something in my records or whatever it is, and the regents will stop it." When I heard the regents had, as they usually do, approved the appointment, then I really celebrated.

Lage: We're going to talk about the Free Speech Movement later, but this was all going on at the same time?

Litwack: Yes, it's all going on at the same time. I was told by Ken that I had the offer, and I called Wisconsin. Irv Wyllie was chair of the department. The word had already gotten out that I might be staying. We were so certain, incidentally, that we were coming back to Wisconsin that we had bought a house before we left.

[end tape 8, side b; begin tape 9, side a]

Litwack: We felt that rather than go back to Wisconsin and look for a house we would buy a house before we came out to California. We bought a house in Sherwood Hills, in fact, that had been inhabited by a professor of Scandinavian languages, Professor Hagen, the father of Uta Hagen, the actress. It was a very typical kind of Wisconsin house, but I could certainly see myself living there. There would be a lot of leaves to rake, but it was a beautiful place.

I get the offer and called Wisconsin. Irvin Wyllie is the chair. I tell him what has happened, and he says, "Well, Leon, give us a couple of days so that we can meet. I'm sure we'll come up with something." He asked me a lot of questions, and he told me, "You don't have to teach the Jackson period if you want to move into some other subject." They were that anxious, I guess, to keep me. He asked, of course, questions about salary, and what do I need, what do I want? I don't know how I really handled this, but we talked for ten, fifteen minutes, hung up, and I sat in my office for fifteen or twenty minutes, just sat there. I called him back, and I said, "Irv, this is ridiculous. Nothing you can offer me, even twice my salary, will move me back to Wisconsin, and it has nothing to do with the department." I said, "I love my department. If I could exchange departments I would love to bring the Wisconsin department out here." I said, "For me, and for us, but for me too, it's a matter of where I want to live the rest of my life. Everything is positive about my Wisconsin

experience. I don't feel I'm leaving a great university for another great university." Well, I guess I did believe that, actually. In other words, it had nothing to do with the offer; it had nothing to do with my colleagues; it had nothing to do with my course offerings, had nothing to do with my salary, had nothing to do with my teaching load.

Lage: They really couldn't make any changes that would affect your decision.

Litwack: That's it. That's it. This is where I wanted to live. I really think that's true, that if they had offered—which of course they were not going to do—if they had offered to double my salary and reduce me to one course a week, I would have made the same decision. That's how I felt about coming back to Berkeley.

Lage: Can you say what it was about Berkeley?

Litwack: Yes, it's the excitement of the place; the intellectual, social, cultural milieu; the physical beauty—I was very much taken by oceans and mountains. Wisconsin was a beautiful state, mind you, and sometimes if you closed your eyes you could pretend that Lake Mendota was the Pacific Ocean, but nothing can be a substitute for the ocean. So it was not the Berkeley department, not even necessarily the university itself, but the whole area that made it essentially non-negotiable.

Lage: What about how you felt regarding the students and their involvements?

Litwack: Wisconsin's a very exciting place. As you know, soon after the outbreak here they had an outbreak almost as far-reaching as the one that affected Berkeley.

Lage: So their students were politically aware?

Litwack: Absolutely, yes. And they had a large number of indifferent students, as Berkeley did.

Lage: At what time of year did all this happen? Spring?

Litwack: The spring is when I heard of the appointment and when I got the appointment, yes.

Lage: Who else was here in American history then? Charles Sellers must have been here.

Litwack: Charles Sellers was here then.

Lage: And Lawrence Levine.

Litwack: And Lawrence Levine. Richard Abrams, Robert Middlekauff. One of the benefits of the power struggle, the outcome of the power struggle, at least, was that it did put people like Ken Stamp and Henry May and Carl Bridenbaugh and ultimately Charles Sellers in a position to essentially build the department. The choices they made, I thought, were outstanding, with Lawrence Levine in particular, and Robert Middlekauff in particular, people in European history, in Asian history, Fred Wakeman, Irwin Scheiner. They were building a terrific department.

Lage: So you were coming back to a different department.

Litwack: Yes I was, absolutely. Oh, excuse me, one of my close friends from the very beginning [Reginald] Zelnik in Russian history.

Lage: Who just arrived that year.

Litwack: We arrived the same year. Actually, I think we met maybe for the first time as we were in a line for the reception at the chancellor's house for the new faculty. Not the first time we met, because we recognized each other, but the first time we really had a chance to talk. I had already met most of them because I'd been here that previous summer. So most of those people, I think they were all here at that time as well. So it was a return home and also a return to familiar faces.

Lage: Very nice. I don't know where you want to go from here.

Litwack: The Free Speech Movement.

Lage: I'd like to have a little more on the other things that were happening, like civil rights. Did you get at all involved in civil rights activities when you were at Wisconsin?

Litwack: Mostly by way of lecturing to various groups on the subject—the student groups, other groups. The only political controversy in which I participated was over the loyalty oath that was being demanded for participation in the National Defense Act fellowship program. I was one of those who opposed that loyalty oath for the same reasons I opposed the loyalty oath here, and felt that it was a political condition being attached to a fellowship. This led to a very intense debate in the academic senate in which I participated. We lost because most people felt, “We don't like the loyalty oath, but we can't say no to the money.” Or you protest the loyalty oath, but you still take the money. That was a very popular position, and I opposed that position. I was quoted quite prominently in the local Madison newspaper, which I think was supportive of my position. I remember one of my colleagues calling me to congratulate me, and I said, “Oh my God, I probably really screwed myself up in terms of my staying at Wisconsin.” He said, “On the contrary, now we can't let you go.” [laughter]

Lage: That's one way of looking at it. Did any of your students take part in civil rights actions, or were you aware of the students going to the South for the summer?

Litwack: At Wisconsin I was not, but I'm sure that some of that was happening because they were as committed politically as students at Berkeley. I don't recall even when I was at Berkeley of any of the students that I knew going to the South. There must have been quite a number of them, but I wasn't aware of it. They didn't come to my office and tell me what they were planning to do, or come back afterwards and tell me what they had done. Some years later I would talk to some of those students but not right at the time. Mario Savio, of course, had gone to the South, but I did not know him then.

Also, when I came back to Berkeley much of the civil rights activity at Berkeley had already been concluded, that is, the sit-ins organized by CORE [Congress of Racial Equality]. For example, I know Charles Sellers and Larry Levine had been very active in the sit-ins. Much of that activity had already happened while I was at Wisconsin, so when I came back here the primary activity, of course, was the Free Speech Movement. For someone who had been through the political wars of the fifties it was almost unbelievable, particularly—as I think I mentioned in an earlier interview—when I spotted Inspector O'Meara at the top of the student union looking down at this crowd of 5,000, unable to fathom the extent of the protest. Then I really knew things had changed and changed quite dramatically.

Lage: Your old friend.

Litwack: That's right, my old friend.

Lage: That's kind of ironic, isn't it, that you were back as an establishment figure?

Litwack: That's right, absolutely. Faculty, almost by definition, seemed—with a few exceptions—like the establishment. I was fully supportive of the Free Speech Movement, fully supportive of much of the student protests. The day after the sit-ins and the arrests, [I met my students in Wheeler. I told them there would be no class today, that it was inappropriate “to study, if not to celebrate, the rebels of the past while we seek to silence the rebels of the present.” —added during narrator's review] That was the only time I ever dismissed my class. There were many other opportunities to do so.

Lage: There were, during the war protests.

Litwack: But I felt very strongly that I had to continue to teach. During the post-Kent State protests, when many classes closed down altogether—some professors had a much longer vacation that year—I was teaching the black history course, which had been inaugurated in 1968 with Winthrop Jordan. I moved the course off campus to one of the churches. I've forgotten which one now; I

know it was on Bancroft. But I made it clear to the students that if any of them felt uncomfortable about meeting in that church, or felt that they had paid their tuition, and they should be taught on campus where the class was supposed to meet, that I would meet with them, even if there were only five or six students. None took me up on the offer, but I would have done it because I felt that my job was to be in a classroom if students wanted to come. If students choose not to come that's obviously their right, which I would support and even admire, but that I have an obligation to be in the classroom, particularly for students who have worked hard to put themselves through college and were entitled to be taught.

Lage: When you did dismiss your class that time had you just not thought this through, or did you have a change of heart, or was the circumstance different?

Litwack: No, I knew what I was going to do when I walked in.

Lage: But why that time did you cancel it?

Litwack: [The urgency of the moment shaped my decision.] This was something so close to home. Here were some 850 students who had been arrested the previous night, including many students who were taking my course, and I felt that I needed to give them our support. That's why I made that particular exception. Would I do it again? I don't know. If I were to do it again, I might have thought about some sort of alternative lecture, or I might have thought about a statement in the very beginning and then gone on with the lecture. When I was asked to walk out during the affirmative action protest, I said, "No," but I did talk about affirmative action and then went on with my lecture. It seemed to me more important that I continue teaching them.

I've also always felt an obligation to our working-class students—of which there are quite a number at Berkeley that work themselves through college—and we owe them an education. Some professors didn't teach the last four weeks of that spring semester, including at least one of my colleagues. But he kept collecting his pay. He didn't ask to have his pay terminated, and it wasn't terminated. Here are students who had paid for their education, and many of them had worked very hard to pay for their education. I just couldn't walk out on them. I would feel very uncomfortable doing so.

I had another dilemma I had to face and that was during the Vietnam War. At one time, if you recall, during the Vietnam War they changed the draft so that in order to maintain your student deferment you had to maintain a certain grade point average. I think it was something like a B or B-minus average. Well, you can imagine what happened. It led to students coming to me and saying, "Professor Litwack, I'm getting a C-minus in this course. If I don't get a C-plus or a B my average will go under what it's supposed to be and you'll be sending me to Vietnam essentially." In every case I simply looked at these students and said, "I can't play God, because if you don't go, someone's going

to go in your place. The person who's going to go in your place is someone who couldn't afford maybe to come to this college. Working-class people, white, black, Chicano."

As it is, to a large extent blacks and Chicanos constitute a disproportionate percentage of the fighting force because they did not have the privileges that college students had to seek draft counseling, to seek legal advice, to find avenues that would enable them to avoid military service. I thought that was eminently unfair, very unfair. I did not believe in student deferments. I didn't believe in one when I had one and decided I would not appeal my draft notice because I would just go—when my number came I would go. I didn't believe it in the Vietnam War either because—and I had to always point this out to students: that if you go to Canada, if you go underground, if you fake a physical—as many did—the draft board doesn't care. They'll simply go down to the next person on the list. You're avoiding your own involvement, but someone's going to take your place.

Lage: That must have been a hard message for some of them to listen to.

Litwack: It still is. It somehow deromanticizes the antidraft movement. It's hard to talk about because I certainly have an admiration for people who protested the war and said, "I will not let myself go." I was more supportive of people like David Harris, however, who said they would not go and then spent their time in prison, suffered the consequences of their actions. By spending that time in prison it seemed to me he was acting in the tradition of dissent. Anyway, that was a complicated—I shouldn't say that; it was not a complicated question to me.

Lage: No, it doesn't seem like it. You seem very clear on it.

Litwack: I didn't have to think twice about it.

Lage: Maybe a difficult message to deliver. What about your activity during the Free Speech Movement? Did you get involved in the Committee of Two-Hundred?

Litwack: No, I was a visitor, so as a visitor from Wisconsin I could go to rallies; I could go to meetings; I could be supportive in every way I possibly could, but as a visiting professor you don't serve on these committees or vote in the Academic Senate. By the time I had my tenure appointment here that phase of the movement had pretty much passed.

Lage: Did you go to Academic Senate meetings?

Litwack: Yes I did, absolutely. I could go there as a visitor. I couldn't vote as a visitor, but I could certainly attend the meetings. I didn't speak, but I could have spoken in the meetings as well.

- Lage: Reggie Zelnik was telling me that that key meeting, December 8, they actually took roll and excluded people who weren't Senate members. He could not go because he was not—
- Litwack: He could not go because he was an acting assistant professor.
- Lage: Did you go to that meeting, do you remember?
- Litwack: I did go to that. I might have thought that I shouldn't be there, but I was there.
- Lage: So you didn't open your mouth?
- Litwack: I didn't open my mouth. I might have even voted, I don't know. When they asked who's in favor I couldn't sit there without— [laughter] as if I'm a guest. But I probably should not have been there.
- Lage: What was Larry Levine's role? Had you become good friends with him by this time?
- Litwack: Yes. There was a group of us at the very outset who really came together both socially and politically, and that would be Larry Levine, Reggie Zelnik, Irv Scheiner—those in particular.
- Lage: Did you get involved in the meetings? I think there was a lot of history department faculty involved in this sort of planning.
- Litwack: I certainly went to those faculty meetings that took place.
- Lage: Informal.
- Litwack: Yes, some informal. Certainly in the official departmental meetings we used to discuss our response. I was not a prime mover or activist in the free speech fight. It was frustrating. I still felt as a visitor from Wisconsin, as a member of the University of Wisconsin faculty, that there were certain things I really couldn't do.
- Lage: It was an awkward position to be in.
- Litwack: It was, I know. That coterie of faculty members that I just mentioned, that persisted all the way to the present time.
- Another important thing that happened, of course, here was that in 1968 I sat down with Winthrop Jordan, and we decided that we would institute a course in black history called, "The History of Black People and Race Relations."
- Lage: Is that something that professors can just do that easily?

Litwack: We had to get the approval of the department, and I think it had to get the approval of the administration as well. I think we had to apply to an Academic Senate committee.

Lage: Committee on Courses.

Litwack: Yes, to have the course approved, and we had no difficulty having the course approved.

Lage: This was '68?

Litwack: It was '68. If you put a hold on me for a moment, I just should get this. [tape off, then on] I believe I kept the catalogue for the first time—I've only kept two catalogues; one my first year of teaching, and the second one, I believe, is the first time the course was offered. Let me just check and make sure. I think that's the only reason I have this catalogue. [pause as Litwack looks through the catalogue] Yes, 1969 to '70, so I think we began to discuss it in '68. It was called 169A and 169B, "The History of Black People and Race Relations in the United States, 1550 to the Present." Winthrop Jordan would teach the winter semester, and I would be teaching it in the spring semester.

Lage: How did that fit in with what was happening elsewhere in the country? Was this a trend?

Litwack: Yes, it was beginning to happen elsewhere. I think even when I was at Wisconsin I believe I had heard that Leslie Fishel, who would later become of the head of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, had started a similar course at Oberlin. By the time I offered this course other similar courses were being set up at other universities.

Some universities, in fact, were getting on board very quickly because they felt they had to without necessarily having the right personnel on hand to teach the course, which is really what happened, I think, at Harvard. I'm not sure what year they finally offered the course, but they looked around and I guess looked around their own department to see who could teach this course. They came up with Frank Friedel, who was a fine historian of the Roosevelt era and a fine biographer of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, but his only experience—and that's why he was given the job—was that he had worked in southern history with William Hesselstine at Wisconsin.

Well, it was a bad appointment. Frank Friedel is a wonderful person and an outstanding historian, but he wasn't the person to teach that course, and black students sensed that they had been done in in this regard, because if the need had been for a course in European Renaissance or English history or French social history they would have found someone who had been trained in the field. By acting the way they did in regard to black history they were

demeaning the field. It was saying that almost anyone could teach the course, which I'm sure they probably believed.

But here it was different because—and I think that was so critical to the success of the course—two people who had been trained in the field taught the course; they had published scholarly studies in black history; they already had demonstrated an academic commitment to black history before it had become so fashionable. The weakness is that both of us were white, one might say. Well, I've taught that course since 1969; not once, to my face at least, has any student questioned why I should be teaching the course.

Lage: Even at the height of the black nationalism?

Litwack: Even at the height of the ethnic studies strike, the Third World strike—even at the very height of all this activity, no one had ever questioned that we should be teaching the course. Students ask another question, which is an altogether different question and which I'm happy to address, "How did you ever get interested?" All right, that's a good question. I don't mind talking about that.

I think Winthrop Jordan's experience has been pretty much the same. He ran into some problems in his first semester of teaching the course, because the first half of the course includes the slave trade, and he, as an historian had to talk about the involvement of Africans in the slave trade—the involvement of Africans in capturing Africans and selling them in the slave trade. "Oh no, that didn't happen." That was part of the revisionist gospel at that time—that black people would never sell their own people into slavery. Now the involvement of Africans in the slave trade is acknowledged. It's not even controversial any longer, but at that time it was controversial, and Jordan had some challenges and the ability to respond to them with authority. That was the beginning of the black history course—I believe because of the way we had taught the subject, it is a course that achieved academic and scholarly respectability and attracted hundreds of students.

One thing I always make clear in the first lecture in that course, and ever since I've taught the course, is that this is a serious course in history. If it's black politics that you want, then don't come here; this is not for you. This is not a course in self-esteem; this is not a course of heroes and heroines; this is a course dealing with a very complex, very rich subject—not so much a period of history, but it's about the history of black men and women in the fullest sense. That is, because black Americans, given their circumstances, did not keep journals, did not keep diaries, there's no extensive correspondence to be found among southern blacks in the era of slavery; they had to express themselves in other ways, a diverse number of ways.

So that's what we're going to do in this course; we will examine black expression in every sense of the word. I want them to know that this course is as rich, as complex, as challenging as the history of any people, and that's

how they should treat it. I think hopefully we implement that promise—they can see in action that’s what we’re doing. So even students who have told me—they’ve told me many times; they said, “I came into your course, but I wondered what I’d learn because I took black history in high school or at a community college.” They said, “Well, it was a totally different experience.”

- Lage: When you started that course it seems as if it were quite a significant departure from the usual slicing of history chronologically into time periods, which is what you see mostly—time periods or countries.
- Litwack: That’s right. It wasn’t really very different for me because I had been teaching the survey American history course. It’s not as though I dropped all my lectures on black history in the American history survey course. Of course, I kept those lectures. It’s just that I expanded upon them and gave them much greater depth.
- Lage: Was there a segment of the department who thought why not just continue to incorporate this into U.S. History?
- Litwack: Oh yes. I think there were, from the very beginning, people who were skeptical of a course devoted—a segregated course in black history.
- Lage: Yes, a segregated course. How did you answer that? I’m really thinking about as you were starting this.
- Litwack: I think I just answered that by saying it’s a rich and complex history in its own right, and, of course, you can’t study African American history apart from American history; you can’t study American history apart from African American history. I think you can study them separately as separate entities but you’re never going to teach African American history without being aware of the American experience itself. I never found that to be a problem, but there are always people who are skeptical of this kind of specialized course, as you might call it.
- Lage: Women’s history met the same skepticism.
- Litwack: Women’s history exactly the same. Social history, cultural history. I remember that was a matter of considerable controversy when I was at the University of Wisconsin, because someone like Hesselstine would say, [voice deepens] “Well, we don’t need an economic historian or a social historian or a cultural historian; we all teach social, cultural, economic history,” so there’s no reason to have what he would regard as artificial divisions. I think there are people who certainly felt that way about a course in African American history. Some could argue that position from the perspective that you’ve just suggested, that they very much believe that the African American experience ought to be taught, but it should be taught in all courses and not just set over

here in some sort of academic ghetto. I understand that position, but I think you need to do both.

Lage: On the other side you must have been challenged, perhaps, by people who were forming the African American studies department.

Litwack: Not to my knowledge. What people may say behind our backs I don't know. I was supportive of the African American studies department. I was hoping that it would be a department that would not be entirely politicized, but rather it would be a department that looked at the black experience in this country in the same way in which I looked at the historical experience of black Americans.

Lage: But was it?

Litwack: Fortunately it became that fairly soon, once Bill Banks came in as chair of the department.

[end tape 9, side a; begin tape 9, side b]

Litwack: Once he came in he resolved that this would be a department with a focus on scholarship and, of course, on teaching, that it was not to be a political arena—certainly people would have political commitments.

Lage: Had it been that in the past, before he came?

Litwack: Yes, it had been. Certain people had political commitments, often far-reaching political commitments, but after Banks the focus would be on scholarship and not polemics. I think it's probably one of the reasons why the African American studies department separated itself from the ethnic studies department. Very soon, for example, our course was a required course for students in African American studies. They never really set up an identical course that would be taught in the African American studies department. Ula Taylor, who's there now, does a survey of African American history, but there's no real conflict here between what we offer and what they offer, and many of their students come into my seminars and also come into the black history course here.

Lage: And does the black history course offer a broader perspective?

Litwack: The black studies department, of course, is not just composed of historians. So you have people looking at it from the standpoint of sociology, psychology, art, literature. Ula Taylor's specialty is the Garvey movement. There's been no conflict at all, that I'm aware of, and members of our department sit on their advisory board. I sit in on PhD exams in African American studies; African American studies people sit in on exams in our department. When she was here, and she was so indispensable, Barbara Christian very often would

be sitting on our committees. So we had a very good working relationship with African American studies. The loss of Barbara Christian was really a terrible loss, not just for the African American studies department but for the university and for the history department. [Christian died in 2000 at age fifty-six.]

- Lage: She knew a lot of the history of all these programs, too.
- Litwack: Yes, she did. She was so good. She was so thoughtful, so perceptive, so engaging in her lectures and her interaction with people.
- Lage: Did you say ethnic studies never got past that politicization?
- Litwack: I think ethnic studies, as I understand it—and I don't know very much about Native American studies, but I knew something about the reputation of courses in Asian American studies and Chicano studies—they tended to be more ideological, more theoretical, which may not necessarily be bad. Ronald Takaki has made some important contributions as an historian in Asian American and ethnic studies. It seems to have a different feel to it. I won't say anything more, because I haven't really sat in on those courses. I hear about the courses from other students.
- Lage: I think it's an important point. It's something that I would like to pursue a little bit, how these departments that grow out of a political struggle fare. Women's studies, for example.
- Litwack: I don't know about women's studies, but certainly I think African American studies did move in a different direction.
- Lage: It went into the College of Letters and Science.
- Litwack: That's right. I think it was less political, less polemical, with a greater focus on scholarship. This is said with all due respect to the work of Ron Takaki, which is considerable and substantive.
- Lage: You mentioned that your course and Jordan's course grew out of need. Did the Third World College demonstrations feed into this or did they come after it?
- Litwack: They fed into it, but the largest impact was the civil rights movement, which certainly affected the teaching of American history and the scholarship of American history. Out of that commitment came other commitments to other areas. What we're really talking about is finally looking at peoples who had been pretty much ignored in the standard conventional history: certainly black Americans, without any question; Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, working-class people, so that ideally if you teach a course on the history of labor nowadays you'd have to teach a course on the history of the working

class. Labor history was seldom taught in history courses. In economics, when such courses were taught, it was institutional history—the history of trade unions, the history of organizations, rather than the history of the people who make up the working class, most of whom do not belong to the trade unions.

African American history essentially modified in far-reaching ways how we teach American history. American history could never be taught again in the same way, and that was an enormous impact.

Lage: African American history and also the events of the sixties, it seems that you're saying.

Litwack: Yes, the civil rights movement had an enormous impact on my profession, no question about it.

Lage: I wonder if we should stop today and take this up fresh next time.

Litwack: All right, good.

Lage: Because I think these topics are important, and they lead to your further scholarship.

Litwack: I agree, absolutely.

[end tape 9, side b; end interview 4]

Interview 5: October 30, 2001

[Begin Tape 10, Side A]

Lage: We talked about Wisconsin, and we got you here to Berkeley. Why don't you talk a little bit about the scene here.

Litwack: I left Berkeley in 1958 to teach at the University of Wisconsin. When I returned to Berkeley six years later it was quite a different place, because America itself was becoming a very different place. That is, that rather harmonious political and intellectual and social system, characteristic of the past several decades, was coming apart. The legitimacy of our institutions, our dominant values, our assumptions, were being questioned as never before.

Historians, like others, were profoundly influenced by the conflicts generated by the civil rights movement and the war in Vietnam, but particularly the civil rights movement. In response I think growing numbers of scholars, white and black, began to examine hitherto neglected groups and social problems. They looked at people who had spent their lives in relative obscurity, who had never shared the fruits of affluence, who had never enjoyed power. These, after all, were the very people who had initially inspired my interest in history. In trying to capture their historical experience, and then writing about their historical experience, I suddenly found myself with a lot of company, and that was a good feeling.

Lage: So you had already been on this track?

Litwack: That's right, yes, ever since high school, when that interest had been stimulated.

When I did research for *North of Slavery*, went to New York in 1957 on a research trip, of course I went to the Schomburg Library in Harlem, one of the principal depositories for materials in African American history in the country. I stayed there about six weeks. I was using the rare books and manuscripts. I was the only person. There were others that came into the library, almost all black, who went into the reading room and read the newspapers, magazines, and some of the current books, but I was virtually alone, using the mostly rare archive illuminating the African American experience.

Lage: The only one studying?

Litwack: I can recall once meeting August Meier. That was the first time I met him. He had come back just to check a fact or something like that. He had already used the Schomburg. That, as I recall, is the only person who came to use any of those materials while I was there. When I returned ten years later, in 1967, to find some materials for *Been in the Storm So Long*, the library was packed

with a whole new generation of mostly young scholars, white and black. I think this dramatized what had happened to the entire field.

Lage: Did they take a different path than you? Did you notice a difference in their point of view?

Litwack: No, I think some very good history came out of those historians. Yes, there were some exaggerations, there was some romanticizing of the black past, some canonization of black heroes and heroines, but that's true of any history. Our own history had been dominated by such historians for such a long time. Think about George Bancroft, for example, who on every page celebrated the virtues and uniqueness of America. Every ethnic group and every racial group has written history that suits their purposes, that suits their objectives. No doubt African Americans produced such historians as well, but largely I would say the work that came out of these historians was outstanding. You can look around my library here; much of this comes out of that generation of historians, who began to reconceptualize slavery and Reconstruction. The African American experience didn't simply become a part of the historical mainstream, it really transformed and redefined the mainstream. American history, I think, would never be the same again.

Lage: It wasn't a byway, but was considered to influence how American history was treated?

Litwack: Absolutely, yes. For example, what sets off this country—we are told for so long that what explains the uniqueness of the United States is freedom, and most presidents, of course, talk about it. That explains why we are so special. But that's to read American history without the presence of African Americans. Once you begin to incorporate the African American into American history, as my friend and colleague Nathan Huggins once suggested, then you might be forced to reinterpret the American experience in such a way that freedom is not the word that best defines it. You might have to change the terms in which you think and talk about American history and American life. I think that's really what happened, because the enslavement and the violent and legal repression of black men and women has defined an extraordinary part of our history.

Lage: This must affect the way you teach American history as well as the way you teach your African American history.

Litwack: Absolutely, and that goes back to my Wisconsin years when I could not teach African American history but taught the survey American history course and the age of Jackson. Of course, I incorporated in both of those courses the experience of black men and women, free and enslaved blacks. I didn't save my African American materials for the course I teach in the history of African Americans and race relations. That would be silly. Of course, it belonged in

the general courses in American history, as did many of the books that I assigned to my students.

So it affected the ways in which we taught history, how we wrote history, and it affected us in, I think, very fundamental ways. That was a positive achievement, in large part, of the sixties and of the civil rights movement.

Lage: Another thing, it seems to me, is that it takes the attention away from class and puts it on race as a defining way of looking at history.

Litwack: I think it did, though now it's much more fashionable to talk about class than about race. Race we now—some argue race is simply a—what is the term they use?

Lage: A construct.

Litwack: A construct. Yes, a construct. Well, in the lives of black Americans it's been more than a construct; it's been very much a part of their day-to-day life.

When I lectured in China in 1983—I gave a lecture there for a number of students and faculty, a special lecture, and the chairman of the department introduced me. I gave my lecture. It was on African Americans and race relations; that's what they wanted me to talk about. At the end of the lecture the chair of the department stood up and, addressing the students in Chinese (I had to be translated) he said, "Now students, that was a very fine lecture, but we as Marxists understand that it's class and not race that counts, and that explains everything." I responded by saying, "Oh, I wish you were right. How simple it would be if you were right. But unfortunately that's not what our history affirms."

Lage: Was there then a discussion about that?

Litwack: We had a discussion. I found in both Moscow and in Beijing—antipathy might be too strong a term, but they looked upon blacks somewhat suspiciously. In Beijing, for example, we came to learn—because there were African students staying there as well, and we talked to some of them—that the Africans who came to China were all males, no women. Well, you spend six years in a country like that, you like to have some female companionship, but to do so, if you're African, is to incur usually the wrath of members of the family, if not of people around the family. I was told on many occasions by students from Africa that they would board a bus and sit next to a Chinese woman, and she'd leave her seat. Who knows what the source of this might be? That problem continues to plague us.

In Moscow, there were not that many African students in the main university where I taught. Instead, they were about a mile away in Lumumba University. Why were they in a separate place? I asked some colleagues. They said,

“Well, they were once a part of Moscow University, but we found it better to have them separate. I think they enjoy themselves more this way.” That was the explanation. “And when they were here they often dressed very ostentatiously; they played their music too loud,” I mean, he began to repeat all the stereotypes that I had heard so often in this country.

Lage: These were Africans from Africa?

Litwack: These were Africans, that’s right.

Lage: What were they doing in Moscow?

Litwack: They were studying.

Lage: Studying particular fields?

Litwack: They were studying all fields. These were countries that had been wooed, people that had been wooed by the Soviets—

Lage: I see, but yet they weren’t accepted?

Litwack: —as a part of their attempt to expand their influence in Africa. The same thing is true of the students who went to China. Some of them might be studying history—they usually studied important fields in agriculture and science that they could apply to their own country when they returned.

Lage: Let’s move on to more of your thoughts and observations about the sixties. I know you were a visiting professor during FSM, but you were present and you were teaching. Did you pick up a strong sense of alienation? You mentioned before that you thought it was civil rights that was the key issue which led to the advocating for change. Another strain was this sense of being alienated, of putting tremendous blame on the university and wanting educational reforms. Did you see that?

Litwack: It was a combination of things. First there was the issue of free speech. A few years before there had been the issue of political speakers on campus. Well, they won that fight before 1964, but only about a year before 1964. Then it became a matter of setting up tables at Sather Gate [Sproul Plaza]. What were those tables for? They were to recruit students for the civil rights movement. So the Free Speech Movement, it was everything about civil rights, yes— in part, obviously I shouldn’t say everything—but civil rights was the largest component, and it had my full support.

I’ve always thought that Mario Savio, for example, represented the very best that came out of the sixties. Not Jerry Rubin, who I thought was more of a clown. Mario Savio was a courageous and a very humane individual who never liked to be glorified as a person. I think that’s one of the reasons why

they chose to call it the Free Speech Café and not the Savio Café, because I think Savio's family objected to that, because that's not what he would have wanted. But I have said on many occasions that Mario Savio brought to my alma mater, gave as much to my university as any of the Nobel Laureates or financial benefactors or fabled coaches, and I would still stand by that, absolutely.

Lage: What about the movement as a whole? Because he was just one person in this group. Did you come to know any of the other students?

Litwack: Oh yes, I got to know quite a large number of them. Bettina Aptheker was in my seminar, got to know her. To me it was just terribly exciting. Here were young men and women who were making a very strong commitment to the kinds of things in which I believed, to the visions of a better world I had always embraced. I mean the sixties will always evoke some mixed memories because the majority of students, like the majority of Americans, didn't protest, didn't demonstrate. If you're at Berkeley and you're an engineering student you might have thought the sixties just passed you by because you would have missed most of the action. But this is not surprising. After all, social activism and dissent are rare qualities in human life; passivity and accommodation are far more characteristic. But as I keep trying to tell my students in my course, throughout our history men and women have braved unpopularity and both state and private violence to make a commitment to social justice. That was what happened at Berkeley, that was what happened in large parts of the United States, inspired by the civil rights movement.

Of course, Mario Savio had just come back from the Mississippi summer when he came back to Berkeley in 1964. At places like Berkeley and other places around the country significant numbers of young people came to believe that direct personal commitment to social justice was a moral imperative and that social inequities are neither inevitable nor accidental but reflect the assumptions and beliefs and decisions of people who command enormous power, including the university administrators. Well, these were important perceptions. So what began at Berkeley as a protest to obtain a very traditional liberal freedom, freedom of speech and advocacy, soon brought into question the official version of reality.

Lage: It really did challenge in so many ways. Actually, Jerry Rubin did too, in a more outrageous manner.

Litwack: [hesitantly] Well, yeah. He never appealed to me. I thought he was frankly kind of opportunistic. I remember when he ran for mayor. It was very interesting, when he ran for mayor at first he took on that kind of outrageous quality, but then when he sensed that there might be a possibility of winning he suddenly began to look more and more like a politician. I eventually voted for Bill Miller, who was running on the anarchist ticket, whose campaign

poster consisted of him—I think he was standing nude, giving the middle finger. I think he was a more genuine radical than Jerry Rubin.

Lage: I don't remember Jerry Rubin running for mayor. Do you remember the year?

Litwack: I would just guess it was probably '68, around that time.

Lage: Well that's a telling vote, I would say.

Litwack: Yes, it was. It was a protest against both of them.

Lage: So many people who embraced the Free Speech Movement—I'm thinking more of the faculty, the older generation—they were troubled as demonstrations on campus became a little more violent, more confrontational. How did you react? I'm thinking of the antiwar movement and then the Third World protest.

Litwack: I felt strongly about both issues. I certainly felt strongly about the antiwar movement. I wanted the war in Vietnam to end. I wanted us to withdraw from Vietnam. I thought it was a terrible mistake to have gone into Vietnam in the first place, and that was not thinking about it in retrospect; I was thinking about it from the very beginning. So I appreciated the fact that one had to take some more drastic actions to capture the attention of people.

Now, I don't know to what extent the antiwar movement brought the war to an end. I think it probably placed a limit on the weaponry that could be used in that war, might have prevented it from becoming a nuclear war. I think it helped to block the expansion of the war, but maybe Cambodia and Laos prove me wrong. So some of the actions—trying to slow down the troop trains, blocking the induction center in Oakland—I thought those were certainly drawing attention to how strongly students felt about the war.

When some of the actions resulted in the destruction of property, as in Oakland, I thought that weakened the cause. When I saw demonstrations destroying property, I thought perhaps they were agents provocateur who were being hired to sabotage the movement, dishonor the protest. I felt the same way about students who went down Telegraph Avenue smashing windows. I thought that was absolutely stupid, counterproductive, playing right into the hands of the people they professed to dislike. One of the obvious results is that some of the small businesses couldn't afford to stay there, and they would move out and maybe a chain franchise place would take their place.

Lage: I'm sure they weren't thinking that far ahead as they were breaking the windows.

- Litwack: No, no, it was just absolutely stupid. For example, one of those strikes came into Dwinelle and went down to the second floor and smashed all the professors' windows. With what purpose? This I thought was really counterproductive.
- Lage: It's interesting to see where people draw the line.
- Litwack: Going back to something I think we talked about earlier, one had to make some decisions. For example, the Cambodia protest, as schools almost closed down, we didn't close down, but some professors, including some professors in my department, told their students to go out and work for the end of the war and dismissed class. In some cases some professors gave their students all A's or B's and said, "The semester is over." I never hesitated on that one. I would not shut down my class. Under no circumstances would I have done that. I did that one time, as I mentioned, after the December 2 sit-in.
- Lage: In '64.
- Litwack: Yes, and that's the only time. I conducted a seminar that I can recall very vividly in the basement of Wheeler while there were police outside and we heard—it sounded like some kind of commotion. All I did was to tell the students to move into the middle of the room so that in case windows were broken, flying glass would not hit us. But I never thought about dismissing the seminar. So my feeling was—and this is just to repeat what I said earlier—was that as long as there were some students who wanted to come into class I would be there for them.
- Lage: Did you ever get challenged? Did students in your seminar, for example, ever say, "We should be out there on the line"?
- Litwack: No.
- Lage: Nobody questioned it?
- Litwack: No. I should say that in the—was it Cambodia? I think I've mentioned this before. I think it was maybe Cambodia where I moved—no, it was the Third World strike where for a certain time I moved the class off campus, but always made it clear to the class that anyone who objected, anyone who felt that he or she had the right to hear my lectures on campus, I would honor their request. All they had to do was inform me, without any penalty. No one did. I don't know whether I intimidated them or not. I certainly didn't try to. But anyway, the lectures went on as usual. It was right across the street on Bancroft, so it was not an inconvenience for anyone. When I chose to continue those courses I don't recall that we lost that many students. I think most people were still there, and hopefully they were there because they found the courses very relevant to what was happening around them.

Lage: That's the main thing I wanted to ask you: In terms of activism, were you an activist in the sense of organizing political actions, or were you an activist as a teacher? How did you express your concerns about these social and political issues?

Litwack: I would go to meetings that discussed actions. I would not characterize myself as having been a leader in any respect. I certainly gave it all my moral support.

Lage: Did you sign petitions?

Litwack: Oh yes, I signed the petitions. I put my name on many petitions—some of them published, some of them not published. I never hesitated, and I still don't hesitate to do that for some issue that I feel very strongly about.

As I recall, I believe the only time I walked the picket line was more recently for a strike of graduate student assistants. I might have walked the picket line earlier; I don't recall now.

Lage: What about demonstrations? The People's Park demonstration or any of the antiwar demonstrations?

Litwack: My whole family marched in that marvelous protest parade.

Lage: I think everybody in Berkeley was there.

Litwack: I think everyone was there. You're absolutely right. I don't think there was anyone left in their homes. We certainly all marched to protest what the National Guard and what Reagan was doing to this campus.

People's Park was important to us because, after all, our son was born on People's Park. We lived in an apartment, Dwight Way above Telegraph, a nice apartment. It was one of those places later torn down. For what? They said for student housing, and that's what they should have done. If they didn't do that, then they should have been open to alternatives, and People's Park was one of those alternatives.

Lage: You also did some writing. I came across something, "Beyond the Point of No Return: From the Cold War and Reaganism."

Litwack: Yes, that was, I guess, a form of activism. It was a conference to suggest that we had alternatives to the cold war. I was not a keynoter, but I think I introduced the entire forum and the proceedings were subsequently published. That's really what it was about; what are the alternatives to the cold war?

Lage: Maybe you'll come up with the alternatives to our current—.

- Litwack: Maybe. We need one. We need one, that's for sure. [tape turned off, then on]
- Lage: We're talking about modes of activism. You mentioned that you hoped your students found your classes relevant. That was a great word in the sixties.
- Litwack: Yes, I know.
- Lage: Did you change your subject matter or your teaching style mainly to be more relevant?
- Litwack: Not substantially. I did not want in any way to politicize my courses. In fact, I think they were just as relevant before 1964 as they were after 1964; that is, more relevant in terms of grappling with the issues that became a focus of the 1960s and 1970s. I always try to revise my lectures. So, for example, the lecture I give on American foreign policy in the Caribbean: on several occasions I used American-Cuban relations as a case study, and I expanded on that during the Cuban missile crisis. Later on I added a section on Nicaragua. I thought it was relevant, and it wasn't political as much as an attempt to give students a context in which to think about our policies in Central America.
- Lage: You were lucky; your course was already relevant.
- Litwack: I thought so. I did think so, yes.
- Lage: What did you notice in the history department at large? How did it weather this turbulence?
- Litwack: Well, I think it split the department into three factions. There were the—I'll call them progressives or leftists, whatever term you want to use; there was a moderate faction, which went along with some of the protests, but not all of them, and had reservations about the means of dissent; and then there was a conservative faction that was alienated by the entire business. Some of those people left the university, a few of them in disgust. So I think we probably—in large part due to what was happening around us—lost people like Henry Rosovsky, and—who were some of the others who left? I didn't know Professor Lyon, but I think he was one of the people who left in dismay.
- Lage: Was Rosovsky on the conservative side, or was he disgusted at the university's reaction?
- Litwack: I think he was disgusted by the whole thing and by the students. I think he was fearful of what the students were doing. I didn't know him that well, and that's only an impression. Hunter Dupree, I think, left in large part because of what was happening here, and that was true as well of Armin Rappaport.

Henry May would be a good example of someone who was in the middle, trying to see some good on both sides, but I think, generally speaking, he was critical of the students.

Lage: In some departments they were just torn apart: sociology and political science.

Litwack: I don't believe we were affected that much. I don't recall not speaking to any colleague, or some colleague not speaking to me because of what was happening outside. Strongly disagreeing, yes, but that's fine. That's what it's all about.

Lage: Why do you think history did not get torn apart as some of the other departments did? Is it the nature of the discipline, or is it the people involved?

Litwack: I think it's the people involved. I think we're, generally speaking, a very collegial department, which means we have a respect for other people's views and other people's actions.

Lage: Is it partly also a result of social relationships? I've had a lot of people mention the various parties of the history department. [laughter]

Litwack: I suppose so. There was a good deal of camaraderie in that respect. We had our share of those in our house. We had what we would call "rock 'n' roll dance parties," and we had large numbers of faculty by invitation who would come, including Ken Stamp. I can't recall whether Henry May came to one of those or not. The Bouwsmas certainly, the Bruckers, the Levines, the Zelniks, the Scheiners.

Lage: Listening to the music of that current generation, the younger generation?

Litwack: Not just listening, but the whole point was dancing. The first dance party we gave, my colleague George Stocking, who later went to University of Chicago—

[end tape 10, side a; begin tape 10, side b]

Litwack: George Stocking walked in. No one else had arrived yet. He looked, and he saw I had put up strobe lights, the whole works.

Lage: Give me details now.

Litwack: He said, "Oh Leon," he said, "this is not going to work. You're not going to get these people out there to dance." Well, he could not have been more mistaken. Everyone was out on the floor dancing. It was fun. It was a lot of fun. And it was a broad spectrum of the department.

Lage: Of age groups as well?

- Litwack: Yes, yes. As I said, Stampp and the Bouwsmas and the Bruckers were all there. It represented some of the younger members of the department as well. It was fun. I loved—this gets into my musical phase.
- Lage: That’s okay. I think this is a good time to do it. We’re talking about the sixties and changes at that time. I don’t know if this was a change.
- Litwack: Well, I grew up with pop music that was in my childhood and big band music: Glenn Miller, Freddy Martin, Tommy Dorsey, Frank Sinatra. I didn’t think much of any of them; they bored me. And the Hit Parade. I remember the Hit Parade, Kay Starr, and whatever. I found that very uninspiring music. So I listened primarily then to some folk music, but mostly classical music. I would listen to the classical music, as I do today, to the kind of music that really inspires me. I love to write with certain composers. I usually, when I’m reading my lecture notes, before going into lecture, at home, I’ll put on some music that inspires me.
- Lage: Some classical music.
- Litwack: Oh yes, something like—before going to lecture one of my favorites is to put on one of Sibelius’ symphonies. I use music not only for my writing and for my lectures, but I enjoy classical music very much. Of course, I was raised in a family where we heard classical music all the time. Opera. My mother had gone many times to the Met, sitting in the balcony, always telling me about Caruso and those people that she heard.
- So that’s where I was until Elvis came along. I knew people who were making fun of Elvis and the way he would gyrate. I saw him once on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, and I said, “Wow, he sounds good, sounds good.” I liked his music. And then when the Beatles—
- Lage: Would that be when you were in Wisconsin?
- Litwack: [pause] I think—yes, it would have been when I was at Wisconsin, because that’s when Elvis came into play. I think Elvis may have even come into play while I was still here. He’s a fifties product. Yeah, that’s right. He led me then to people like Little Richard and Chuck Berry; I thought they were all great, terrific. Then I became very interested in soul music, listened to a lot of that.
- The primary experience I still remember in Berkeley was going into the record store where you could still listen to records. You could take a record out and go into a little room and put the record on. And I saw this record and I remember reading something about it somewhere, and I said, “Well, this looks interesting. It looks like a pretty weird guy on the cover.” It was Bob Dylan’s first album. I put it on, and I just thought that was terrific, very different than anything I’d heard before. I bought it immediately, brought it back to University Houses where we lived in Wisconsin and put it on. I think it must

have been spring or close to summer, when doors would sometimes be open to the commons around which the houses stood. My neighbor heard it, Charles Glaab, an urban historian, and he said, "What kind of crap is that?" He was a jazzophile. He was very much into Mingus, and Davis, and Monk, and Cannonball Adderley. I said, "Hey, this is good music. This is good stuff." Well, we disagreed. I was hooked on Dylan from that time on. Bought every one of his albums and just heard him a week ago here in San Francisco.

Then, when I came back here, everything began to explode. I was just very excited about the Rolling Stones, the Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, the Jefferson Airplane, the Doors, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, and many others. The first rock concert I went to was the Buffalo Springfield in San Francisco, and then I started going to the Fillmore, the Avalon, heard all the greats. My favorite festival was probably the Mount Tamalpais Rock Festival, where I took my son.

Lage: How old was your son?

Litwack: I had taken my son to the last Beatles concert, August 29, 1966. We went to the last Beatles concert in San Francisco, in Candlestick Park. I think my son was eight years old. I still have a photograph of him shouting as the Beatles come out. It was great. That concert was only disappointing because you could hardly hear the Beatles above the roar of the young people, but it was fun. It was quite memorable.

So I took him to the Mount Tamalpais Rock Festival. Now, I think I have a pretty good ear for rock music. I felt that I almost discovered Bob Dylan. Most of the people going to the rock festival were going there because of the feature attraction, the Grateful Dead, and the second group, the Jefferson Airplane. But I went up there because I wanted to hear this new group that performed simultaneously but in a different location, so there weren't as many of us there. They were mostly at the Grateful Dead and the Jefferson Airplane. This group called itself the Doors. I had listened to their first album and I thought they were terrific, absolutely terrific. And they were. I still think they are.

Then, about this time, a year after I came back to Berkeley, because of these interests I would always be going into Discount Records. What was it called? It was one of the chains. It was right on Telegraph Avenue. As you came out of Sather Gate [past Bancroft Way], it was over on the left. I'd always go in there to see what was new. I remember once when I went in there the Jefferson Airplane were out there passing out little leaflets, advertising their first album, which I thought was very good.

I met Tracy Nelson, who worked at Discount Records. Tracy had come from Madison. I had not known her in Madison but I knew her parents because her parents ran a little place called Nelson Stationary, right in the little shopping

district near where we lived. So we talked. She helped me select some records that I was using in my African American history course.

I always believed that African Americans, like others, have expressed themselves in many different ways, and why limit ourselves to one form of expression, the written word, when much of the African American tradition and culture is encapsulated in their music? So the first time I taught the course I had students listen to Paul Robeson, Muddy Waters, Robert Johnson, certainly, and one record of gospel spirituals. The bookstore didn't understand when I said, "These are all assignments in the course." They only handled books. So I worked it out with Tracy Nelson that students would come into Discount Records, and they had a special section for my students, and provided a special discount as well.

One time she said that she was going to form a rock group, and would I be interested in being an angel, that is, an investor? Well, we didn't have that much money, but I had just received a royalty check for *The American Labor Movement*, the paperback that I had written. I took the royalty check—it was probably \$600, \$700, or so—and I invested it in Mother Earth. That was the name of the group, Mother Earth. It was made up of Tracy Nelson as the vocalist. The other members had largely come out of the Sir Douglas Quintet, which had been a Texas group. Well, it was really exciting being on the ground floor of a rock group. Quite often I would drive Tracy over to San Francisco where they rehearsed in a big warehouse.

Lage: Did you listen before you invested?

Litwack: No, I had faith. [laughter] I didn't listen before I invested, I had faith. So I went to a rehearsal. This is really quite an experience. It's like nine in the morning, ten in the morning, which I always thought was a little early for cheap whisky and dope, but that's what they're passing around. Now, I was not partaking, but I came as the—[laughter]

Lage: You didn't inhale.

Litwack: No, that's right. I had done that earlier. But that's the way they were getting themselves set up. I thought they sounded great. I had the experience of going to the Avalon when they broke into the Avalon, and then going to the Fillmore when they broke into the Fillmore. Then the first album came out. If you open up the Mother Earth album for the centerpiece there's a group—a picture of the entire group, which I have a copy of in my office at school, and there I am in the back row, and there's my son sitting right next to Tracy in the front row. It's a great photograph. It's a great photograph of the sixties because it's taken in front of their house on Oregon Street, below Shattuck. It's very much a sixties scene. Mother Earth went on to make about six albums. Now Tracy lives outside of Nashville. She's one of the finest, if not the finest, white country-blues singers in the country, and she's still making albums.

I also became very fond of dancing rock ‘n’ roll. I’d never been a dancer. I would be very awkward in going out there and doing a kind of—what is it? The four-step? Not the four-step.

Lage: The fox trot?

Litwack: No, I couldn’t even do that. I didn’t really enjoy it because I didn’t enjoy the music, but I loved dancing to rock ‘n’ roll. I just thought that was terrific. We started dancing in the house. Then we started having the dance parties. That was the first one, I think, the one where George Stocking made his remark. He was so wrong. Not only did it work, but it led to still other parties. Colleagues would come up to me and say at times, “Well, I hope I get to come to one of your rock parties.” Of course, they were automatically invited. These were people I never thought would be interested.

It was fun. As I said, it was a lot of camaraderie, and it’s good music. My feeling about rock ‘n’ roll and soul music and gospel and hip hop—I don’t like all of it, as I didn’t like all of classical music. Unlike my mentor, I couldn’t stand Wagner. [laughter] I just couldn’t stand Wagner. [My feelings about Wagner have changed significantly in the last several years.—narrator’s addition]

Lage: Was that a political statement?

Litwack: I wonder. I wonder how much of it was political. That’s a good question. I don’t like Strauss. There are some classical composers that just don’t inspire me in the same way as some rock ‘n’ roll didn’t particularly inspire me. Some of it is just fabulous. I became a great fan of Guns and Roses, which some people would really be turned off by. I’ve become very close now to hip hop.

Lage: I was going to ask you about that.

Litwack: What the hip hop does—these are people who come out of a different kind of alienation. Most of them come out of the urban centers. They perform some of the same functions as the blues artists of the earlier part of the century, the middle part of the century. I talked about rock ‘n’ roll and soul, and I should certainly talk about blues, which I listen to a lot and enjoy a great deal, and jazz for that matter. Whatever my mood is, I will listen to that music. Right now I have the CD changer back here in my study. You put six records on there. The first three records are Mozart piano concertos and the last three are Miles Davis. They work well together.

Lage: I can see that. I don’t know that I could see those followed by hip hop.

Litwack: No. Hip hop I couldn’t write to. Hip hop is just something to listen to and enjoy. I listen to a lot of hip hop in the car. It seems like a good place for it. It has a message, an important message, I think, about alienation in the ghettos,

a “cry from the streets,” as Ice Tea called it. Some of it, on the other hand, is purely opportunistic, simply to make money.

Lage: And some of it seems so almost vicious.

Litwack: Well, some of it is vicious.

Lage: And antiwoman.

Litwack: Every time someone says that I say, “Yes, but think about the blues.” People have no problem with the blues as a musical form even though the blues, in many ways, degraded women and also was very violent at times. When I first assigned a blues album in my black history course several black women came up to me and said, “Why do we have to listen to this? This degrades us. It degrades black women.” I said, “Well, maybe that’s why, because we have to understand what’s going on here.” I still think it’s a very important form of black expression, no matter how—well, degrading’s not the right term—no matter how subversive, I’d say, it might be.

So it’s the music that captures me, that captures my moods—different music for different moods, of course. But it has to be inspiring music, music that excites me inside.

Lage: So that’s the continuity? You like music that speaks to you.

Litwack: The reason for the Mozart and the Davis—they’re wonderful compositions—I don’t rise out of my seat when I hear that music, but it’s good music to work with. Some of the most inspiring music is not music you can work with. Opera, for example. I love opera, but I can’t work very well with opera.

Jumping ahead just slightly, but in this vein, when I was president—have I mentioned this or not? When I was president of the Organization of American Historians, my convention, so to speak, which is the convention in which I gave the presidential address—we can get into that later on—was in Philadelphia. It was 1987. I wanted to do something very different. The opening night is usually reserved for a very important session about a particular historical problem, with well known historians there the opening evening, kind of a keynote for the convention. I wanted something different, so I put on—I worked hard at it, but I put on a program called “American History, American Music,” which is simply to say, “This is a very important part of American expression and something we historians need to take seriously.” So I brought up Son Thomas. We didn’t have much money to do this, and most of the artists gave their time; we just paid for their transportation and lodging. Son Thomas, one of the last of the Mississippi blues artists, who still lived in Mississippi; Bill Ferris, who headed up the Center for the Study of Southern History at the University of Mississippi,

arranged to bring him up there. Tracy Nelson came, and Pete Seeger. I induced Pete Seeger to come up. He didn't have to go very far.

Lage: Had you known him?

Litwack: Nope, it's the first time we met. He had just published a book on his music, on American music with a kind of left perspective, and I think he also saw this as an opportunity, which is fine, to advertise the book. Well, that was some evening. The place was jammed. I couldn't imagine any opening session of a convention to be more exciting than this one. And it also said something. That was the important thing; it also said something.

Lage: Do you think people took that message? Did you see changes like that among your colleagues? Not just at Berkeley but elsewhere, introducing music and other forms of expression?

Litwack: Oh, I think so. Oh yes, in that respect I think, yes. I think from that point on, in fact, more and more conventions featured musical "entertainment." Now there's hardly a convention that doesn't have it. [Conventions have since returned to a conventional format, that is, a historian addressing a historiographical problem.—narrator's addition]

Lage: But, of course, yours is more than entertainment, too.

Litwack: Yes, that's right.

Lage: Were there also speakers about music, or did the music speak for itself?

Litwack: The music spoke for itself. I didn't want to have any scholars performing, no. Just these artists were enough. I gave the presidential address, and after the presidential address there's usually a reception. People are holding their glasses of wine and talking to each other, which is okay, but I always found those to be a little stuffy, so mine was going to be different. We were going to have a DJ and have great rock 'n' roll music in one room. Then there will be another room closed off so people can still, if they want to they can have their little conversations and have their little glass of wine. Well, we had the crowd in our room, and it was great. [laughter] It was a huge, huge success. I carefully selected the music. I always carefully select the music, whether it's for my dance party here or for the DJ to play. In fact, we did not have a DJ.

Lage: You were the DJ!

Litwack: I was the DJ. That's right. We had a DJ for our high school reunion. No, no, I put it all on tape, and I brought the tapes. We had a great sound system. That's what really helped, great sound system. And again, everybody was out there.

A few of my successors, Larry Levine for example, employed a similar technique after his presidential address. Only about two or three, I think, have done it since that time. I noticed that the Southern Historical Meeting, which will be in November, after the presidential address everyone is going to a party in the corridor which will be, I think, blues music, primarily. [I will be president of the Southern Historical Association in 2008, and the convention will be in New Orleans. The presidential address, "Fight the Power," will address race relations in the recent past and will use rap music. There will be entertainment (Tracy Nelson) after the address, and dancing.—narrator's addition]

Lage: What was the topic of your address in 1987? Did it fit into this theme?

Litwack: [hesitantly] Well, yes. This is 1987, so it's the bicentennial of the constitution. The address talked about the bicentennial in the context of the African American experience.

I think we've pretty much finished rock 'n' roll. For me it was a very exciting event. It wasn't just sheer entertainment. As I said, it underscored for me the importance of music, dance, humor, whatever, as a form of expression, particularly in a marginalized population.

At about the same time my good friend and probably my closest colleague, Larry Levine, was writing *Black Culture, Black Consciousness* [:*Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977)], which makes, of course, this point. That's a book that had an enormous influence on our profession. I remember when the book came out. I've forgotten the year now, when that book was published. I read it just before it was published, actually, and I just thought it was pathbreaking. Absolutely.

Lage: In what way, particularly.

Litwack: Well, *Black Culture, Black Consciousness*, the point that it's trying to make, among other things, is the variety of expression in the black community and how many of their ideas, many of their moral concepts, their preoccupations, are communicated through their music and their humor and their folklore. And he combined all of these.

Lage: Nontraditional.

Litwack: We had some disagreement about the title. We always have disagreements about titles. He said "Black Culture, Black Consciousness," and the subtitle is "Afro- American Folk Culture from Slavery to Freedom." And I said, "Black culture, black consciousness. Well, that's what the book is about, yes, Larry, but bookstores are going to put it into the sociology section. And I'm not sure

it's a title that will grab people when they see it there." And Larry said, "No, no. That's what the book is, and that will be the title."

And when I wrote my book, *Been in the Storm So Long*, Larry thought that was not a good title because it doesn't tell you what the book is about. So that's where we have disagreed.

Lage: Who has turned out to be right?

Litwack: I think we're both right. [laughs] I think we're both right. There's a good argument for Larry's position.

I was going to say something more about *Black Culture, Black Consciousness*. I could not understand why it didn't immediately receive the adulation that it deserved. *New York Times* did not review it. I don't believe *The New York Review of Books* reviewed it. It seemed to me like it was being ignored until the historical journals picked it up. What I found is I would go to meetings—and Larry wasn't going to that many of the professional meetings—people began to talk about it, and I think as historians began to read it they quickly passed the word to others. Five or six years, ten years later, you suddenly realize what a major impact it had on the profession.

Lage: So people read it, and it must have had relevance for their own work.

Litwack: Absolutely. It had relevance for my work when I was writing *Been in the Storm So Long*, and it certainly had relevance for what I was doing and still does.

Lage: Did it affect your use of sources?

Litwack: Oh yes, I think so. I probably would have done so to some extent, but I was even more sensitive to the need to incorporate other forms of expression into my writing. It was a very important book for me. So was Eugene Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll* [*The World the Slaves Made* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1974)]. That was an important book.

Lage: Why? What was good about that book?

Litwack: [pause] Let me put it this way, if I had to assign one book to my students on slavery, I wouldn't have to think twice; I would assign Kenneth Stampp's *The Peculiar Institution*. I still think it's the finest book on slavery, not only because he's my mentor; I just think it's a very solid book, and that would be the way I would introduce students to slavery.

I'm not sure that Eugene Genovese could have written *Roll, Jordan, Roll* without Stampp first having written *Peculiar Institution*, so it textualizes it in some way. I liked his sensitivity to master-slave relations on a number of

different levels. I liked his use of the—because I was using it to a large extent—I like the way he used the narratives, the WPA interviews. I liked the way he talked about day-to-day life in the quarters; relationships between whites and blacks, and relationships among blacks in the quarters. I liked the central role that he assigned to religion. It's a book that I had read in manuscript. Gene was at Stanford at the think tank that year when he was finishing *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, and I was writing *Been in the Storm So Long*. I read his manuscript, and the first hundred pages were all theoretical, good solid Marxism. Then the book really started taking off. I remember in responding to Gene I said, "Gene, this is a fabulous book. Don't ruin it. You've got to take out this first hundred pages. At least pare it to three or four pages because you're going to lose your reader. This is such an important book that I want people to read it, and I think it's going to turn them off with that introduction." Well, I don't know if it was just me, or I think other people offering the same opinion, but he did precisely that. I think he cut it down to maybe four pages, five pages.

So when I wrote *Been in the Storm So Long* I asked Gene to read my manuscript. He was a great reader, a terrific reader, a very careful reader. I learned a lot from his criticisms and appreciated them very much.

I had met Gene much earlier. When Kenneth Stamp's *The Peculiar Institution* was published Gene reviewed it in *Science and Society*, which is a Marxist journal. This was rather interesting; that is, it's not usual for a Marxist journal to publish two reviews of a book, one pro and one con, but that's what they did in this case. Herbert Aptheker wrote a very positive review, which was followed by a review very critical of Stamp. The author's name was unknown to me. I think it was Jack Sproat who managed to track him down. It was Eugene Genovese writing under a pseudonym.

Lage: Why did he write under a pseudonym?

Litwack: I'm not sure. I don't know the answer to that. I probably knew the answer and then I've forgotten. We tracked him down, and that was the year the AHA [American Historical Association] convention was in New York. Jack and I conspired to bring about a meeting of Ken Stamp and Eugene Genovese, which we did. Ken had read the review.

Lage: And he knew by this time who had written it?

Litwack: Yes, that's right. As it turns out, Gene still thought highly of U.B. Phillips, which of course Ken's book had been designed to repute. Why? Because I think it conformed more to his Marxist perspective of the slave-holding class.

[end tape 10; begin tape 11, side a]

Lage: When did you make the decision to write *Been in the Storm So Long*?

Litwack: A few years after I was back here I really began the research. The book does not appear until 1979, so it's a long time. And there were a lot of other things going on in that time. I had been attracted in my teaching to multimedia—not only attracted to multimedia but using multimedia in my classroom and then making a movie from one of those multimedia presentations, which we can talk about later.

So with *Been in the Storm So Long* I was trying to tell a very simple story: that is, what happens to a people who have been enslaved all their lives and on a certain day are told they're no longer slaves? I thought it strange that no one had really asked this question before. People had asked the question, but I don't think there had been a really full answer.

Lage: It hadn't been examined thoroughly.

Litwack: That's right. Well, I thought that was an interesting question. That very simple question required more than five hundred pages to answer, and it required it because it's such a rich experience, and because freed slaves manifested their freedom in so many different ways. If some people were looking for a thesis it might have been difficult to find, if only because they did respond in so many different and complex ways, so I couldn't say that a majority of slaves responded one way or the other. They didn't take public opinion polls of slaves in those years, [and if they had, slaves would have no doubt told the pollster what he or she thought the pollster wanted to hear.]

I think what I did say, however, is that most slaves did find ways to express their new freedom. It might have meant moving down the road to the next plantation, just to show that they could move. It might have meant changing their names, as many did, or taking surnames, as many did. It might have meant legalizing their marriage. It could take many different forms.

Lage: I just was looking at the book yesterday. What I particularly noticed was the four letters that you have.

Litwack: Oh yes.

Lage: Particularly the last one.

Litwack: Especially Jourdan Anderson. Jourdan Anderson is wonderful.

Lage: Where did you find that?

Litwack: [I found the letter in an old book in my collection, published in 1865, edited by Lydia Maria Child, *The Freedmen's Book*. It is a book of essays, most of the authors (like Child) are white abolitionists. One of the contributors, Jourdon Anderson, a newly freed slave, has dictated a response to a letter from his old master in Kentucky asking him to return from Ohio, to which he

fled during the war, to the plantation and to work for him. The response, dictated by Jordan, sent on August 7, 1865, is reprinted in its entirety. It is such an extraordinary letter that I chose to reprint the entire document in my book. To paraphrase it would be a disservice to the reader, and to Jourdan Anderson. This is the reply:

Dayton, Ohio, August 7, 1865

To My Old Master, Colonel P.H. Anderson, Big Spring, Tennessee

Sir: I got your letter & was glad to find that you had not forgotten Jourdon, and that you wanted me to come back & live with you again, promising to do better for me than anybody else can. . . . It would do me good to go back to the dear old home again and see Miss Mary and Miss Martha and Allen, Esther, Green, and Lee. Give my love to them all, and tell them I hope we will meet in the better world, if not in this. . . . I want to know particularly what the good chance is you propose to give me. I am doing tolerably well here: I get twenty-five dollars a month, with victuals and clothing; have a comfortable home for Mandy (the folks here call her Mrs. Anderson), and the children, Milly Jane and Grundy, go to school and are learning well; the teacher says Grundy has a head for a preacher. They go to Sunday-School, and Mandy and me attend church regularly. We are kindly treated; sometimes we overhear others saying, "Them colored were slaves" down in Tenn. The children feel hurt when they hear such remarks, but I tell them it was no disgrace in Tennessee to belong to Col. Anderson. Many darkies would have been proud, as I used to be, to call you master. Now, if you will write and say what wages you will give me, I will be better able to decide whether it would be to my advantage to move back again. . . . Mandy says she would be afraid to go back without some proof that you are sincerely disposed to treat us justly and kindly—and we have concluded to test your sincerity by asking you to send us our wages for the time we served you. This will make us forget and forgive old scores, and rely on your justice and friendship in the future. I served you faithfully for thirty-two years, and Mandy twenty years. At twenty dollars a month for me, and two dollars a week for Mandy, our earnings would amount to eleven thousand six hundred and eighty dollars. Add to this the interest for the time our wages has been kept back, and deduct what you paid for our clothing and three doctor's visits to me, and pulling a tooth for Mandy, and the balance will show what we are in justice entitled to. Please send the money by Adams's Express, in care of V. Winters, Esq., Dayton, Ohio. If you fail to pay us for faithful labors in the past we can have little faith in your promises in the future. We trust the good Maker has opened your eyes to the wrongs which you and your fathers have done to me and my fathers, in making us toil for you for generations without recompense. Here I draw my wages every Saturday night; but in Tennessee there was never any pay-day for the negroes any more than for the horses and cows. Surely there will be a day of reckoning for those who defraud the laborer of his hire.

In answering this letter, please state if there would be any safety for my Milly and Jane, who are now grown up, and both good-looking girls. You

know how it was with poor Matilda and Catherine. I would rather stay here and starve-- and die if it came to that--than have my girls brought to shame by the violence and wickedness of their young masters. You will also please state if there has been any schools opened for the colored children in your neighborhood. The great desire of my life now is to give my children an education, and have them form virtuous habits.

Say howdy to George Carter, and thank him for taking the pistol from you when you were shooting at me.

From your old servant,
Jourdon Anderson

As I wrote in my book, the number of Jourdon Andersons who came out of slavery remains difficult to determine. But in 1865 more than one former slaveholding family found their place overrun with men and women who evinced the same spirit and the same determination to work under conditions that would in no way compromise their newly won freedom. What happened to that spirit and to that determination would profoundly affect race relations and the nation for the next century.

There was some question—I understand the skepticism—as to whether Jourdon Anderson’s letter was genuine or a figment of some white abolitionist’s vivid imagination. Historian Carl Degler, among others, cast some doubt on its authenticity in his very thoughtful and positive essay review in the *Virginia Historical Quarterly*. (The reviews were almost unanimously favorable (except for George Gilder in the *Wall Street Journal*) Not only were the reviews very positive but they appeared in all the right places, for example, C. Vann Woodward in the *New York Review of Books* and Eugene Genovese in the *New York Times*.)

My response to those few who questioned my use of the Anderson letter was not to travel to Kentucky or Ohio to verify its authenticity but to suggest that even if it was apocryphal, it did no violence to the historical record but captured the spirit which tens of thousands of freed slaves exhibited after emancipation.

In August 2012, more than thirty years after the publication of *Been in the Storm So Long*, my attention was called to an Associated Press dispatch co-authored by Allen G. Breed and Hillel Italie, entitled “How did ex-slave’s letter to master come to be?” One of my former students, Amy Lippert, an assistant professor of history at the University of Chicago, saw it in a local newspaper and sent me the article. It included a photograph of Jourdon Anderson and began, “the photograph, scratched and undated, is captioned ‘Brother Jordan Anderson.’ He is a middle-aged black man with a long beard and a righteous stare, as if he were a preacher locking eyes with a sinner, or a judge about to dispatch a thief to the gallows.” What followed was the story of Anderson’s remarkable life—“a very real person and the very real author of

his story.” A biography, the article added, is underway.—narrator’s addition, 2013]

Several films and books have, in my opinion, captured the diversity of slaves’ responses to emancipation, reinforcing what I suggested in the book. For example, the Jane Pittman novel by Ernest Gaines. [Looking through his bookcase for this book]

Lage: I see it right there. *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*.

Litwack: *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*. She describes the aftermath of slavery this way: the news comes to the plantation, and some of the slaves, particularly some of the younger slaves, are ready to go. They’re all getting packed up, and they’re ready to leave. Some of the older, more conservative slaves hold back; they say, “Wait a minute, we don’t know—where are you going?” I think the others are saying, “It doesn’t make any difference; we’ve just got to get out of here.” Well, these are two important positions. It was just fascinating to see that conflict. As I looked at the letters and looked at the documents, looked at the interviews, there were many divisions of this kind. And when you looked at the records of the slave holders themselves who talked about what happened and how their slaves dispersed and how some remained with them. Generally those who remained with them they said remained with them only for maybe a year, and then once they understood what it meant to be free, they too would take off.

The other movie that did a good job on this was *Roots*. When freedom comes the slaves in this plantation meet around a table; they look at each other and say, “Okay, what next? What do we do now?”

Lage: It is such a dramatic moment.

Litwack: A very dramatic moment. One of my favorite stories is when the—I’m not sure if it’s the plantation holder or a union officer comes out to the fields where some slaves are working in Tennessee, and he says, “You’re free.” The slaves look up at him and essentially they say, “How free?” That’s why I called one of my chapters, “How Free is Free?” We’re still living with that question. [That is also the title of my book based on the Nathan Huggins lectures; it will be published in late 2009 as *How Free is Free?: The Long Death of Jim Crow* (Harvard University Press)—narrator’s addition, 2009]

Lage: You started out, it seems, to write about the period from the war through the end of the century. What happened there?

Litwack: I gave that up. As soon as I got into the materials I realized that no, I wanted to write about the emancipation experience. There was enough just right there. So I withdrew from the Allan Nevins series and decided I’m going to do this on my own, because it was just such an exciting moment.

- Lage: You would have just skimmed the surface if you—.
- Litwack: That's right. I wanted to tell the full story.
- Lage: Talk a little bit about sources.
- Litwack: I used, very extensively, you can see them right here, the WPA [Works Progress Administration] interviews.
- Lage: Now that's controversial in itself, from what I understand, the validity of those interviews.
- Litwack: Yes, they had been questioned and some historians had been reluctant to use them. I found them to be very valuable. Why do people question the interviews? Well, they question them because the former slaves were so old by the 1930s, when the more than two thousand interviews were conducted. Slaves who lived that long might have been better cared for, presumably, in slavery. That was another question.
- Lage: Did they in general have a more positive view of slavery than one might expect?
- Litwack: Yes, yes, that's right. They were being interviewed by whites, and we don't know really to what extent they were more open with whites they knew or whites from the North or whites from other places. Some whites who they knew from the community had the job from the WPA and interviewed them. Those they didn't know might have been less revealing. They might have been more open with people in the community. Or it might be the reverse; some might have been less open with people in the community and more so with people outside the community.
- In some instances there's no question but that the slaves told the questioner what they thought the questioner wanted to hear. That's going to happen, of course. My feeling is that these have to be used very carefully. As I tell my students, if you're going to be consistent and find these worthless, then you would discard most of the other sources that you habitually use, which means newspapers, diaries, letters, politicians' speeches, congressional records. Just like those sources these are full of paradoxes and filled with contrasts and contradictions. In other words, you have to be as distrustful of these interviews as you are of *The New York Times*.
- Lage: And put them in context, just as you—
- Litwack: That's right. Exactly. So what did I learn from the interviews? Where were they particularly useful? Well, they were very useful in telling me about their relations with their masters. Even when those relations tended to be good, it was the way in which slaves chose to evaluate their masters. So if there was a

mean “massa” and a good “massa,” it might be that the “massa” is good because he doesn’t whip his slaves. It might be the “massa” is good because he gives them ample food and clothing. He might be good because he gives them their holidays. He might be good because he allows them religious expression. Slaves would have different priorities depending on their own feelings. One learns about those priorities and how they evaluated those priorities. You learn a lot about—oh, you learn a great deal about folklore.

Lage: Why about folklore?

Litwack: Well, in part because questioners ask about folkways, or they became a way of describing the traditions and daily practices of black men and women.

Lage: I see. So that’s one of the interests of the project.

Litwack: Right. The interviewers, for example, wanted to hear all about home remedies, the things that ailed you. That was another problem with the interviews, and that is that the interviewers went in there with a standardized form that had the questions they should ask. Some of them followed the form rigidly, others would permit the ex-slaves to wander off and get into other areas; that’s when the interviews become particularly interesting.

The Florida interviews were mostly by black interviewers. The Fisk University interviews, which preceded the WPA interviews, were also by black interviewers entirely. Zora Neale Hurston, for example, was an interviewer in Florida. Without any question those interviews are much franker.

Lage: You can see it.

Litwack: That’s right. In using the others—the vast majority of the interviews very carefully, you can learn a lot about family; you can learn a lot about differences between the house servants and the field hands; you can learn about the degree to which the quarters represented a kind of community in which field hands learned what was going on, because the house servants would tell them.

One thing—and this is what really got to me. I don’t care how old you are, what condition you are in, one thing you’re going to remember, and yes they did, one thing you’re going to remember as vividly as if it was yesterday was the moment you were freed. That’s something you do not forget.

Lage: And that comes across vividly in the interviews?

Litwack: Absolutely, absolutely. That’s where I found it indispensable.

[Begin tape 11, side b, in the middle of the tape]

- Litwack: And I don't believe anyone had really used the slave narratives for that specific purpose, though Eugene Genovese had some good material along these lines in *Roll, Jordan, Roll*. That was for me the real treasure.
- Lage: Could you tell from the way they told their story that this was a more important moment? Did it have more reality in their words?
- Litwack: For some, yes. For some it was simply responding to a question, but for many it was something—they would eventually get to it, one way or the other. They also remembered quite vividly what happened when union soldiers came to the plantation.
- Lage: And you mentioned that a lot of those union soldiers were black.
- Litwack: Some of them were black, yes. To tell the story of black regiments coming to the South as an army of occupation, that in itself is mind-boggling. Some who had just been slaves a few months before are now marching with uniforms, guns in their hand, as an occupation army marching to the South. That was a great story to tell.

For that story I was doing research in the AME Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia. I was down in the basement. I was actually looking for some materials there on the church in the South, didn't find too much about that. I was downstairs, and I literally stumbled across on the floor a newspaper called the *Christian Recorder*, which was the organ of the AME Church. I opened it up. In fact some of the pages were even beginning to crumble as I opened it up. Well, I'm just amazed at what I'm finding here! I arranged to have them brought up from the basement. I paid and brought in an outfit to microfilm it, with their permission, of course, obviously. As the microfilm people arrived, there are people coming from all parts of this church kind of looking, seeing what was going on here.

This was again an indispensable resource. Why? Because during the Civil War and after, black soldiers would be writing to the newspaper about what they were experiencing, what they were seeing. Chaplains would go into the South, trying to—the best example would be Henry McNeal Turner, who becomes a great black leader in the South. He goes in as a chaplain with the union troops, and he writes back to his church, the AME Church where the *Christian Recorder* is published, with his impressions every week in terms of what he's seeing, where they're going, what's happening, how they're liberating slaves, how they're interacting with the former slave owners.

It's again a very fabulous source, and that's the important thing; that is, if what I read in the slave narratives, WPA narratives, was somehow contradicted by the contemporary evidence I would have to think very seriously about whether this was reliable or not. But instead, they reinforced each other. The same is true of the actual slave narratives, the narratives that

slaves themselves wrote, where they talked about what happened after the Civil War with emancipation.

Lage: And they're consistent with the other sources?

Litwack: Yes.

Lage: Had anybody used the *Christian Recorder* before?

Litwack: It had been used in a volume that James McPherson edited on the *Negro's Civil War*, as the book is named. He had a few selections from it. I'm not sure where he found them. There were some other issues around. This was the only place, I think, that had the full run of the *Christian Recorder* for the war years and the postwar years.

Lage: Is that microfilm now at Berkeley?

Litwack: Someone subsequently put on microfilm the entire *Christian Recorder*. I think it was Al Raboteau, who was with the African American Studies department at Berkeley. That was another rich source.

Then I went into the papers and diaries and journals of the slave holders. Like the slaves themselves, or the ex-slaves themselves, the slave owners, too, described very vividly what happened on their plantations when freedom came. Many of them were traumatized by what happened. I think that was one of the major—I wouldn't call it a surprise necessarily, but I was so struck by how slaveholders talked about how their most trusted slaves and those thought to be the most faithful slaves were the first ones to leave. That was something they simply did not understand. Some talked about a mass exodus; some talked about slaves who remained on the plantation, but these were perceived as a very different people.

Lage: They behaved differently?

Litwack: They behaved differently, yes. They didn't recognize some of them as the same people who had been their slaves.

Lage: Was it almost poignant to hear them talk?

Litwack: Oh yes, they could feel it. Mary Chestnut was a very good example because she detects in the early days of the war in her diary—she's quite good on this—she's beginning to feel a change in the demeanor of her servants, without saying anything about the war, but she notices a change in their demeanor when they hear the guns at Fort Sumter. I think she was very perceptive, very discerning about their reactions.

So some of the journals were very useful, and of course many of the journals were kept by women, and invariably the women are themselves traumatized by the loss of their servants, their cooks and whatever—the people who did the household work that some of them were now forced to do, much to their chagrin, much to their chagrin.

Lage: It was just a sense of helplessness?

Litwack: A sense of absolute helplessness. Rather than emancipation showing how dependent slaves had been on their masters, it really showed how dependent masters had been on their slaves. Only in one case, and that was a memoir written in the 1890s, did any of these women, did *any* of these women, ask the question of how could their black servants and cooks have done this work for so long while also having families and trying to make a life for themselves. No one really asked this question. Once they began to work, they understood, to some degree, what was involved.

Lage: So there wasn't much sensitivity?

Litwack: No. The women showed very little sensitivity to their black help. All they could do was complain.

Lage: And what about the men?

Litwack: [pause] The same. The same would be true of the men. Mostly the men are talking about what's going on on the fields and the women are talking about what's going on in the house.

Lage: Were they traumatized by some of the battalions of black soldiers?

Litwack: Oh yes. That was a fear throughout the South. Any black man in a uniform was immediately suspect. One of the first demands made by the South after the war ended was to get the black troops out of there, and really the North did a pretty good job of bringing them out as soon as they could. A black in uniform, particularly holding a rifle, was simply regarded as inflammatory. That remained true until the 1950s probably, the 1960s. The same thing is true after World War I. The same thing was true after World War II. Blacks would come home in their uniforms, and the sight of them in their uniforms, even during the war, was an anathema to the white South. In many instances they were stripped of their uniforms, literally stripped of their uniforms in the streets, and told to put on their overalls. The only uniform that a white southerner wants to see on a black was a pullman porter's uniform. That's the only one that will pass judgment.

Lage: As you did this research did it create feelings of your own towards white southerners?

Litwack: Towards white southerners? Yes.

Lage: Although you have seen that this goes on everywhere.

Litwack: Sure, sure, oh it does. Union soldiers were by no—they were themselves very divided. Some of the slaves had very bitter memories of the union troops coming through their area and not only looting the whites but also looting the blacks. Also blacks didn't like the idea that Union soldiers were coming into the fields and tearing up the fields. The former slaves were working these fields, and they wanted to continue to work these fields but of course for their own benefit, not for the benefit necessarily of the masters. So there was a lot of resentment of the white troops in that respect.

There are vivid stories told by the black troops as well. In one regiment—this is Henry McNeal Turner who was reporting in the *Christian Recorder*—two black women come to a Union camp, and they had been beaten by their master. The Union soldiers sent out a patrol, and they find the master, and they brought him back to the camp. They tied him to a tree, and they gave the whip to the two black women to mete out their own sense of justice. This is a very moving moment. The same thing is true when the black regiment comes into Richmond, goes to the slave prison where the slaves were confined and threw open the doors. It was quite a dramatic scene.

This was such a dramatic part of the war that I could not understand why Kenneth Burns, when he had—what was it?—eleven hours, never told this story.

Lage: About the emancipation of the slaves.

Litwack: Never really went into what happened to master-slave relations during the war, the drama that was being carried out on each plantation, the upstairs-downstairs kind of drama. That was my major disappointment in the movie. I've expressed it. I wrote an essay in a book on the Ken Burns movie which critiqued it for that reason. There's no excuse when you have eleven hours why you can't tell this story. He doesn't avoid slavery; he takes great pride in how much he deals with slavery. But he misses the main story, misses the real drama. I'm not one of those—he tended to think—he doesn't have any respect for critics.

Lage: He does not?

Litwack: No, no, he can't tolerate criticism. When historians in particular try to cite problems with his film he dismisses us because we don't understand drama; we don't understand making movies; we are ivory tower—confined to the ivory tower, whatnot. Well, it's absolutely wrong. I was trying to talk about dramatic, very dramatic moments, that he missed.

Lage: He could have gotten so many from your book!

Litwack: Yes, that's right.

Lage: He must have read it.

Litwack: I don't know whether he read it or not. The records were there. He could have used any of those records to make the story.

So that's what I tried to do in *Been in the Storm So Long*, and it was so—I mean I just couldn't believe the reviews. It started with Eugene Genovese in *The New York Times*, C. Van Woodward in *The New York Review of Books*. The way it was reviewed in various newspapers throughout the country. I was paying particular attention to the reviews in the newspapers because they're very important to me. So it was an exhilarating moment, absolutely exhilarating and, of course, when the Pulitzer Prize came that was even more exhilarating.

Lage: Well, it's a wonderful book. [end tape 11, side b, end of interview 5]

Interview 6: November 12, 2001

[Begin Tape 12, Side A]

- Lage: Today is November 12, 2001, another day in the life of the United States in this time. We're at interview six with Leon Litwack. We were going to talk today about teaching, particularly undergraduates, and all the things that go along with that, like textbooks and visiting professorships.
- Litwack: My teaching career—well, I guess it was really launched as a teaching assistant in the history department at Berkeley, which I enjoyed very much. I think I already knew even before then that I wanted very much to teach. I think I realized that, of course, when I was student teaching classes in history and journalism at El Cerrito High School and Oakland Tech, getting my secondary school credential. I think we've talked about that.
- Lage: Yes, we did talk about that.
- Litwack: I already knew that I loved being in the classroom, and whether they were high school students, college students, I just love the process. I love teaching.
- Lage: Can you say what it is that you love about it?
- Litwack: Well, it's the excitement of sharing with others what you have been able to learn. Since I had been such an avid reader, going back to junior high school and high school, it was particularly exciting to communicate some of those ideas to others. But something that's always been critical to me is the ability—the hope sometimes—the ability that you can make a difference with students. I mean, that's what it's all about: Can you make a difference, a critical difference, in their lives?
- When I started teaching at Madison I was immediately teaching the survey American history course, and the same course I would be teaching at Berkeley, History 17 when I first came here, now it's History 7. In Madison the class was about, oh, 250, 350 students. When I came out to Berkeley the class size in my first few years here was about 1400, 1500.
- Lage: It just seems unbearably large!
- Litwack: It's a very large—it filled—how did they work this? Well, this was quite a set up. In Wheeler Auditorium—this is not repeating what we've done before?
- Lage: We may have talked about this.
- Litwack: Okay, I wasn't sure whether we had done this. With the Free Speech Movement?
- Lage: You told about having TV screens, and having the TV show come in.

Litwack: That's right. Okay. So that lasted for about two or three years, and then we went over to the system that we now have, which is there's one class of History 7A/B. All students are in sections. All students are taking the course for four credits, so I have the entire class in front of me; they're not hidden away in various places. I've always taught in Wheeler Auditorium. Now the class size is about—and it's been pretty constant—it's stayed at about six hundred or seven hundred each year. I figured as though—I think I added this up once. Between that class and the African American history class, I have taught at least 35,000 students at Berkeley. I guess if you combine it with Wisconsin then it's quite a number of students. Why is that important? Some people would say it dehumanizes education, dehumanizes the whole process of teaching. I'm sure there are students who come into that big auditorium and see another 699 students there and say, "Oh my God, this is dehumanizing, really." Or, "I feel alienated," or whatever. Okay, I'm sure there are people who feel that way, and I understand that.

I've always, however, been a strong advocate of the large survey courses. I think they can be very important, as they were important in my education. When I think about it, I had a nice mix as an undergraduate at Berkeley. I had some large lecture classes where I never knew the professor, and I had some small classes, particularly in the English department, in writing classes, in literature classes, where I was very close to the professor. I had both experiences. And I had had some history courses that were small, and I enjoyed those small classes. But I have to say, at the end of four years, and when I went off to do my own teaching, I think I learned more in the big survey courses than I did in the small seminars.

Lage: Why?

Litwack: Well, the small seminars were fun. There was wonderful interacting, and of course learning to write was important, but all of this is colored by the fact that I had four lecture courses with Kenneth Stampp, and those notes from those courses stayed with me for years. I learned a lot in those courses, a great deal.

Lage: So it's the quality of the lecture.

Litwack: Exactly. Now I also had a big lecture course in European history, the big basic European history course, and I think also the course on the French Revolution. Well, I finally, as many people did, came to rely on the Fybate notes because it was silly to go in and listen to this person. I liked reading the material, because the French Revolution, after all, is fascinating, but not the way he communicated it. I still got an A in the course, but I just used the Fybate notes. The course was notorious, actually, I suppose, for the number of athletes who found their way into the course knowing it would be a very easy course, and I guess it was very easy.

My feeling about teaching a large class like History 7 is that most of these students are taking the one history course they will take at this university. They're engineers or chemists; they're biochemists; they're in all kinds of fields.

Lage: They're satisfying their breadth requirements.

Litwack: They're satisfying their breadth requirement, or now the American cultures requirement. So that's in many ways—that, in many cases, is why they're there. Also, for many of them, the last experience they had with American history was in high school, and unfortunately, for many, it was a disaster. They memorized dates, memorized treaties, congressional acts, etcetera. So my feeling is, "All right, I've got one chance at you, one chance at you, one opportunity to make you realize that history can be exciting, that it can be stimulating, and that it can be terribly important, because in a certain sense it's giving you a history as well." That's what I try to communicate.

Now, you can do that in a variety of ways. I knew lecturers who—there was standing room only because they were very popular. But, essentially, there was not much substance in the course. In other words, you can go into a large lecturer course and tell a lot of anecdotes and jokes and whatever—

Lage: Entertainment.

Litwack: Entertainment. I don't mind entertainment. I probably entertain to some degree as well, but there has to be some substance to it. There has to be some reason for it. For example, when I do my IWW lecture the last fifteen minutes or twenty minutes of the lecture is given over to IWW songs. Now, yes, that's entertainment, but it's more than entertainment because the IWW, to a large degree, was a kind of spiritual movement, and these are their spirituals. In order to come to grips with the IWW and what it represented you have to *feel* that movement, and you can feel the movement best by listening to the songs. So beginning at Wisconsin, in my second year of teaching I think, I introduced songs into the course, the IWW songs.

Lage: Do you talk about them as source material?

Litwack: Oh yes, absolutely. Why am I using these? Absolutely. In the very beginning—well, I'll get to that a bit later. When I came to Berkeley I found myself teaching a massive course in Wheeler Auditorium, but a few years later a fire burned the auditorium, and I was then teaching the course up at what's now Pimentel [Hall], which had wonderful audiovisual.

Lage: Is that the one that has a revolving stage?

Litwack: Yes, that's right, that's right, yes. When I did the Wobbly lecture then I decided, "You know, it's much more effective when you can turn the lights

off, when you can really feel that music.” So I turn the lights off, and while they’re hearing the music they’re seeing slides of the Wobbly movement so they can see what these people look like. There are some wonderful photographs from that period and also some cartoons from the Wobbly newspapers which are also very much a part of that movement, because it’s a movement, unlike some, that really had also a sense of humor. It comes out so nicely in those cartoons.

So for me part of the excitement of teaching the big survey course, which incidentally is my favorite course and I think always will be. It’s the last course I would give up. I would give up my graduate seminar and even my upper-division course before I would want to give up the survey course. Now, if a new colleague comes along and is just perfect for that course I’m not going to be dragged out; I’ll walk out.

Lage: Do you teach it every year?

Litwack: Every year.

Lage: Every year. The last half of it.

Litwack: Yes. When I first came to Berkeley they wanted me to teach the entire course, which is what I did at Wisconsin, so I did teach the entire course. Then about my fourth or fifth year here my colleague Charles Sellers took an interest in teaching the first half of the course, and I said, “Fine, it’s yours.” Since that time others have taught the first half of the course, so I do the second half of the course. There are a few years when I’ve been on leave for the entire year and I have not taught the course. Otherwise I’ve taught it every year of my teaching. I know it’s somewhat unusual because in so many cases—and I think it’s a mistake—in so many cases the person who teaches your survey course in the department is the last person you hired.

Lage: Who just does it by default.

Litwack: And the first promotion that some people feel they’ve gotten, the first promotion is when you’re told you’re no longer teaching the survey course; they have someone else to do that. Well, I think that’s unfortunate. Not that these young people aren’t capable, but in some ways the more experienced professors should be teaching the survey course and the graduate seminars should be taught by the last person you hired because they’re really up on all the literature; they’ve read everything for their prelims, and in some respects have read much more than you have. So I think we have our priorities sometimes mixed up. But again, it’s a critically important course, too, because it is the one course that so many students will be taking.

There are some good examples at Berkeley of people who should be teaching the survey course, doing so. I'm thinking about Glenn Seaborg, who I think taught—he was chemistry, right?

Lage: Right.

Litwack: He taught Chemistry 1, as I recall, for many years. Many people remember that. There was another well-known—I'm not sure if he was a Nobel laureate or not who always taught the survey—[Joel] Hildebrand.

Lage: Hildebrand was famous for his teaching.

Litwack: That's right. He did the same thing. That's good. I think that's the way it should be.

What I want to do in the survey course, to begin with, I want them to know that history is about people, and that's where the focus will be in this course. It's not to say that I don't want them to know certain dates, but as I tell them, "I don't want you to drown in those dates. I want you to know why, if they're important, why are they important." Yes, they should know the important acts that have been passed by Congress, but I'm more concerned that they know the consequences of those acts, that they know the consequences of our policies, whether they're positive or negative. They should know what happens after these things are passed and how they affect the day-to-day lives of people. So that's where the focus is, on the people who we once called the inarticulate. Why? Because they didn't leave any of the kinds of materials that those who dominated the historical records who left their journals and their letters and the kinds of things that historians have always used.

How do you tell the story of the inarticulate? Well, of course you have to go outside of the so-called traditional sources. They've articulated their feelings on everyday matters and on far-reaching matters in ways that we once thought we would not be able to obtain, but it rests essentially in their music, in their dance, folklore, and obviously in the history of African Americans this becomes particularly important.

What I have said on more than one occasion is I've learned as much from African American novelists, poets, musicians, and storytellers as I have from historians. They've informed me in ways that historians could not inform me. I think, for example, of, let's say, the poetry of Langston Hughes or Sterling Brown, or the prose of Jean Toomer or Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright or Zora Neale Hurston, or Toni Morrison. I, of course, think of the musicians who have profoundly influenced me in my work, whether they're the giants of jazz from Louis Armstrong down to Coltrane, and Miles Davis and down to Chuck D in hip hop, but also the blues men and the blues women have been so critical in my work, T-Bone Walker and Muddy Waters and Skip James and Robert Johnson, Charley Patten, Ma Rainey, of course Bessie Smith, Billie

Holiday. I could sit here for the next ten minutes and reel them off, but they have had an enormous impact on me, and I want to communicate them to my students as well. I want my students to feel history, not just to read it, but I want them to feel history. I do that in part through the lectures and what I choose to focus on in lectures.

I use a textbook, and I wrote a textbook because I'm teaching the survey course. I wanted a textbook that I felt comfortable with that they could use. The textbook has always been for me—I tell my students this, “This is a road map. I don't want you to take this textbook and sit down and memorize it. This is a road map so you don't get lost and because I don't want to do what the textbook does.”

Lage: So you don't give them that framework that the textbook does.

Litwack: That's right, I want to deepen some of the historical experience that is covered in the textbook. They can get their facts and figures from the textbook. I don't want to do that. At the same time, I don't want it to dominate their reading in the course. In addition to the textbook, I assign usually about ten paperbacks, ten books, essentially.

Lage: What kinds of books?

Litwack: I'm just dealing now with the American history survey course—we'll start with W.E.B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk*.

Lage: The course starts with the Civil War?

Litwack: Oh yes, it starts with the Civil War, and comes down to the present, that's right. Then I will use a book on the American Indian experience, even though I don't have a good lecture on that yet, but there's a good reader by [Peter] Nabokov called *Native American Testimony [: A Chronicle of Indian-White Relations from Prophecy to the Present, 1492-2000]*, which is, in fact, the testimony of Native Americans. It's all from their documents and from their speeches, talks, interviews, et cetera.

Then they'll read a book on the American working class, and often it will be a novel. Now they use Thomas Bell's *Out of This Furnace* [Boston, Little, Brown and Co., 1941]. Then I need a book that will give them some sense of life around the turn of the century, the early part of the twentieth century. If I can't find a good history book that will do that—I mean a good readable history book—then I will resort to—not resort to, but then I go to literature. So a book that I like to share with them, because it had such a profound impact on me as a child, was John Dos Passos' *USA*. So I'll give them either—now I'm giving them *1919*, or it could be *The 42nd Parallel*, or it could be *The Big Money*. *1919* seems to work most successfully. Now this is a

difficult book for my students. To begin with, students don't seem to be that accustomed to reading, so when you give—

Lage: Has this changed over time? Are you talking about right now, or has this been your experience all along?

Litwack: I think it's changed. I think there's even less patience now with reading than when I first started teaching. There are just too many other distractions. Now you're asking them to read a four-hundred-page novel, and it's only one of ten books in the course.

Lage: Plus the text.

Litwack: Plus the text. It's a lot of reading, and they complained about the reading. I would have thought this reading is so exciting; I mean, how could they possibly complain about it? Some of them realize that. There are people who are terribly turned on and excited by reading Dos Passos, and others who say, "Why have we read so much, and how do we apply—?" How do you take a novel and apply it to a history course?" That's a question that my GSIs [graduate student instructors] have to work out with their students.

Lage: You get feedback from your graduate students.

Litwack: Oh yes, and from my students. I read their evaluations every year, and I learn from their evaluations. Some books I've dropped because of their evaluations, and some books I'll read their evaluation, they may be negative, and I'll say, "Well, whether they like it or not this is a good book for them." I don't do that very often, but I've done it in the case of one book. I've done it in the case of Sinclair Lewis' *Babbitt*. For some reason my students resisted this novel, and it's the book I usually assign on the twenties. I've accused them sometimes of resisting it because it reminds them too much of themselves or their parents. [laughs] That's being kind of cruel. Now I'm not using it the last few years because I use Dos Passos in its place. You can't give them too much. But I like *Babbitt* a lot. It's a good book.

I go back and forth on the thirties. I've used *Hard Times* by Studs Terkel, but now I've changed to using Studs Terkel's *The Good War*, on World War II. I've tried John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* for the thirties. Then, for the postwar period, World War II and the postwar period, they'll read portions of *The Feminine Mystique*. Oh, I've forgotten a book—Richard Wright's *Black Boy* for the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century on the black experience. That's always been a very powerful book for my students. *Coming of Age in Mississippi* by Anne Moody for the civil rights movement. Michael Herr's *Dispatches*, which is one of the most powerful books, I still think the best book written, on the Vietnam War.

Lage: They're all very much firsthand accounts.

- Litwack: They're all firsthand. I don't assign historians. The only historian they read, actually, is just me. That's my textbook. [laughter]
- Lage: So they're not looking historiographically, at the history of the history on a certain topic? Or all the different viewpoints on—?
- Litwack: That's right. That was the approach that I adopted. I think I told you what happened when I went off to Wisconsin, about picking textbooks.
- Lage: I don't think so.
- Litwack: I was driving to Madison. Our son had just been born and Rhoda was going to come out later on the airplane, so I was driving by myself. I had just finished the dissertation. I hadn't even thought about the courses yet. Now I was beginning to think about them. In a couple of weeks I'm going to start teaching for the first time, at least two major courses, and I hadn't made any preparation for them.
- I had once lectured for Ken Stamp when he was going off to a convention. He had me lecture on the War of 1812. I put a lot of time into that lecture, two weeks or so into that lecture, and now I have to come up with a lecture every day. When I came to the War of 1812 in my course I thought, "Well, I've got a lecture in the bank." I took it out and looked at it, tore it up. By that time I was going in a different direction in terms of how I would be teaching.
- On my way to Wisconsin I thought about what I would be doing. Of course, some time in that spring I had to tell Wisconsin what books I would use. I was working on my dissertation; I couldn't be distracted. I remember finding very useful what was called the *Amherst Series in American History*. They would take an historical problem, like Progressivism for example, or Populism, the New Deal, and they would have the views of maybe six or eight historians, so it was historiography.
- Lage: I remember using those.
- Litwack: Yes. They were pretty good for preparing for prelims, I thought. I guess I picked out six of them, and that was going to be our reading list. I came to Wisconsin and began teaching and I began reading these Amherst pamphlets. Dull! I thought they were very dull, particularly for the students, some of who would come to me and say, "If you historians can't make up your mind, how do you expect us to?" I pledged at that time; I said, "I will never use a book that I, at least, do not find exciting and readable, eminently readable," and I think I've held pretty much to that promise.
- Lage: It is dull, but I remember it gave me the sense that there are a lot of different points of view about what all this is about.

Litwack: That's right. There are times when I will give them some historiography, for example, on Reconstruction. I'll remind them of what at one time had been the interpretation of Reconstruction and how that had changed. I'll leave it to the GSIs to give them more specifics on the history of the history of Reconstruction, and to also—I urge my GSIs to do this, that when we come to Progressivism and Populism you should familiarize the students, or at least expose them, even if briefly, to other points of view, because I'm not going to do that.

I've always said I have my style of teaching. I would never say that my style of teaching was better than any other style of teaching, so the person who goes in there to teach the course and who with every lecture talks about the historiography, "Here are Progressives, and here are how different people—" that's fine. And if that's what that person is comfortable doing, that's what he or she should be doing, and I would be the last person to be critical of it. In fact, I think it's good for students to have courses like that in history, as well as a course like mine where you're going to hear my interpretation of Progressivism, or my interpretation of the twenties.

So that's how I have approached my teaching and what I assign in terms of the reading. Again, the readings are meant to bring them closer to the history of people. I say "ordinary people." I don't like to use the expression "ordinary people" because ordinary people have done extraordinary things. It's the "inarticulate," as some say, or "history from the bottom up." I don't like that expression either. I don't use it. But they are going to hear the stories of the working men and women who have made up, throughout history, the large mass of people in this country. That goes back to my initial experience with history, and that is hearing my parents and hearing the largely Mexican men and women in my neighborhood talk about their experiences. And here, some years later, I finally have my chance to relate those experiences to others.

Of course, when I wrote the textbook [*The United States*], I had that very much in mind. I wanted them to feel the history. [looking through his textbook] For example, here's a section on the immigrants. What I've done here is to show a—I love photographs. I chose all the photographs for my textbook because photographs to me are another—like music, like art, are another form of historical documentation. They're rich, and they shouldn't just be used to illustrate a book. They are as much a part of a book as the text. I want them to get a sense of who these people are. Of course, I had to put in there a photograph of my mother, her closest friend Celia—these are the two who hitchhiked out to California—and this is her sister who stayed in New York. They happened to be in New York at this point, but they're wearing some obviously Russian costumes.

Lage: That's wonderful. And you don't identify them.

Litwack: No, no, they're just immigrants from abroad. I've told some of my students who they are. Some of the GSIs found out so they tell their sections. That's okay; that's no problem.

Lage: Should we talk now a little bit about this book?

Litwack: Yes. This is the book that I used when I started teaching at Wisconsin. I used the textbook written by Richard Hofstadter, Daniel Aaron, and William Miller, in large part because Richard Hofstadter, as I've already noted, was one of the most influential historians in my life. Richard Hofstadter, Kenneth Stampp, Charles Beard. Those to me were the giants, and the chance to use Hofstadter's textbook was irresistible.

Let me start, before we get into the textbook, my first published book was *The American Labor Movement*.

Lage: 1962.

Litwack: This again tells you a lot about why I do these things. That was '62? Oh, well, *North of Slavery* is '61, so I guess this one came out shortly afterwards. Now, I wrote *The American Labor Movement* because going back to high school I had had such a difficult time with my teachers and my fellow students on this subject, you know, the unions. They were just so anti-union. Unions were just in bad repute, particularly in a place like Santa Barbara, and here I was always defending the unions.

Lage: You even had the reputation.

Litwack: That's right, which is why that teacher, in response to my talk on Reconstruction, said that, "Children, or students, you must remember that Leon is bitterly pro-labor." So it goes back to that time. The idea of *The American Labor Movement* was to inform students of how workers were affected by the Industrial Revolution, by changes in the workplace, and why workers found it necessary to organize into unions and go out on strike. That's the simple message that I wanted to get out there.

[Begin tape 12, side b]

Litwack: There's the testimony of workers and in some cases their leaders and representatives. So *The American Labor Movement* I published with that in mind. I initially, for many years, used it in my course. I think it's still in print, but it would need to be revised. So *The American Labor Movement*, I wrote that, or edited that, with that one objective in mind.

Now the textbook I had been using was Hofstadter, Aaron, and Miller, and the representative of Prentice Hall came to me and indicated that Hofstadter really didn't want anything more to do with the textbook, meaning he didn't want to

continue to revise it. Aaron had just written one chapter, essentially, on intellectual history, and Miller—he wasn't retiring because he wasn't a professor—but he was interested in other things. "Would I come in to take over the textbook?" The attraction here was I had no interest in sitting down and writing a textbook from scratch, but to come in the back door and slowly but surely take over the textbook, that was very inviting because I could do—you know, every four years I would be doing more and more and revising until finally the book would be all mine. Also, I loved taking over this book because it was to me the best-written textbook, and I think many agreed that for years it remained among the better-written textbooks.

Lage: What changes did you feel were necessary right from the start?

Litwack: What I thought were necessary from the beginning were again the reasons I came into teaching: I wanted more on working-class Americans; I wanted more on African Americans; I wanted more on minorities and on immigrants. I began to integrate more of those materials into the textbook.

When I confronted the idea of doing an entire textbook it occurred to me that I didn't want to spend the rest of my life working on textbooks and revising and whatever. I had a lot of other things I wanted to do. So I thought it would be very helpful if I could split the task and bring in someone else to do the first half of the book, and that's how I invited Winthrop Jordan, my colleague at Berkeley, who I think had already published that wonderful, wonderful book *White Over Black*, to do the first half of the textbook, and he agreed to do so. We were then, from that point on, "Jordan and Litwack." His responsibility was America up to the Civil War, and then I would pick it up from the Civil War and bring it down to the present.

Lage: I see you're on the seventh edition here.

Litwack: It's no longer in print. It's gone out of print in large part because I just didn't want to spend the time revising it, and because I think the publishers felt that "Jordan and Litwack" were kind of old history.

Lage: Did Jordan stay with it the whole time?

Litwack: Yes, the entire time, and we went out at the same time. Prentice Hall was not terribly warm about this. They just didn't ask for anymore revisions.

Lage: When was the last one, '90, '91?

Litwack: The last edition of the textbook came down to the election of Bill Clinton, that was it. And I really didn't want to do anymore.

Lage: How did you change it over time?

- Litwack: Between the two of us we introduced a lot of new material, not only on minorities. We did a lot in that area. I think African American history was more fully integrated into our textbook than probably any textbook on the market, as it should be, because both of us, that was our speciality, that was what we did. Win also did a great deal with family, the history of family and the history of women. I did some with that as well. I added some large chunks of material on women. As I look at the history book, it wasn't just a matter of having a section here and there on women and on blacks, but also integrating them more fully into the mainstream, so to speak.
- Lage: Which does mean rewriting totally, not just adding, "And what were women doing in these years?"
- Litwack: That's right. It's more than just adding sections, though in some cases we could do that, too. It also meant in the text itself. Of course, if you had to add material you have to find places to reduce material. You just can't keep the book growing larger and larger. So that was another responsibility that we had, to know what to cut and what to add.
- Lage: How did you do with the women's history, since it's not really your field?
- Litwack: I read. I read a great deal. Many of the changes I made in my lectures, based on new materials, I would make in the textbook as well. There comes a time, though, when you don't want to lose some lecture material to the textbook since you're using the textbook in your classes. For some reason students are very sensitive to materials that are repeated from the textbook to the lecture, even though it's the same person. It bothers them somehow or other. The expression will go around, "Oh, he's just reading from his textbook." Well, of course, it's not in any way true, but if anyone even suggests that, it sends— [laughs] That's the worst thing that could happen because we know that some of the most notorious classes taught are the classes where the professor's simply reading from a textbook. So I've very sensitive of that, and I will often say in lecture, "As you know from the textbook dah, dah, dah, dah," so they will understand that I understand that I have dealt with this in the textbook as well.
- Lage: What about introducing other minorities?
- Litwack: Oh yes. We've brought in materials on—mostly in my section, I brought in materials on Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, expanded the section on immigrants. Winthrop Jordan did a lot with that material as well, and did probably more than I did with expanding sections on American Indians, and particularly looking at the history of American Indians in the colonial period and the early national period. I also added a new lecture on the Indian experience.
- Lage: Did you have to work with Jordan to make the tone consistent?

Litwack: We read each other's copy to some degree. We certainly talked about what kind of revisions we wanted to make, and what would be our emphasis this particular year, so that the changes that would be made in, let's say, family history in the first half of the book would also be made in the second half of the book, so that was a wonderful collaboration. When he went to Mississippi it was still a good collaboration.

Lage: Why did he leave here to go to Mississippi?

Litwack: Well, that's a difficult question. I think I was one of the very few people who didn't act shocked. I mean, you don't leave the University of California at Berkeley to go to the University of Mississippi, do you? [laughter] That's unheard of. I didn't think so. I had already been in Mississippi several times and at Oxford.

Win went to Oxford as a visitor for a year and became very much enamored of the place. His marriage had broken up in Berkeley. He met a wonderful woman, Cora, in Oxford. They decided to marry. She was getting out of law school and I think wanted very much to practice in Mississippi. I think for Win it was also an opportunity to put Berkeley and a broken marriage behind him and start anew. I think he also loved the place. At first I was a little surprised because Win came from a New England background. You would think that Mississippi would be the other side of the coin there. But no, I think he really accommodated well to the place. It was a real loss for me. It was a real loss for the department.

So the textbook was written very much with my class in mind and teaching the survey course, something I was always proud of. I wanted Prentice Hall to make the most of it, that, that is, I was one of the very few people with a textbook in American history who actually taught the survey course. Most textbooks in history are written by professors for whom the survey course is something in the past. I always like to put that forward, that this is the book I use in my own teaching. So that was another part of enhancing the teaching experience.

Consistent with my desire to familiarize my students with what I call the varieties of culture documentation, I not only would bring in songs, as in the IWW lecture, but I have used films. Again, films can be marvelous documents. They can sometimes tell you as much about a particular part of American history as anything I could possibly say in a lecture hall.

Lage: Do you mean films that are popular?

Litwack: Not necessarily popular films, not necessarily Hollywood films. Sometimes they can be also very good. Larry Levine, for example, uses films in a very creative and imaginative way in his course on the 1930s because they worked very well in that period. Films did not—and like the multimedias, which I'll

also come to—they don't replace lectures. The old saying—I remember high school teachers were sometimes accused of that as well—they show a movie because they don't want to have to teach that day.

Lage: I think it's probably true in many cases.

Litwack: I'm sure it gives them a rest. They can use a rest, actually. My students and colleagues, I recall, sometimes raised their eyebrows when I would come down the hall carrying a slide projector or motion-picture projector. "What is he doing? Why isn't he teaching?" As if that's contrary to teaching. Of course it's not; it's quite consistent with teaching.

So through the years I've used a variety of films. For example, this year, and this is what I've been doing for the last four or five years, or ten years actually—these films have stayed pretty constant. I've been very satisfied with them. After my second lecture on Reconstruction, they will come in, and I will talk briefly about the mythology of Reconstruction. Then for forty minutes they will see sections I have already excerpted from *Birth of a Nation*, so they'll get a real feeling for that film. At the outset I used to bring them in at night to see the entire film, *Birth of a Nation*, which is still not a bad thing to do, but I find that forty minutes will give them certainly a good taste of the film.

Most of the films are concentrated in the last four weeks of the course, so they will see *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*, a film on which I was a consultant. They will see *Freedom on My Mind*, on which I was also a consultant, which is a fabulous film that deals with the Mississippi summer of 1964. Why is it fabulous? Because it does more than just tell the story of what happened. Basically it's a story about commitment, about young men and women who make a commitment to civil rights and social justice. They're willing, essentially, to put their bodies on the line—who go to the South, go to Mississippi, explain why they're doing it and what they're doing, and it brings you up to date on what they were doing twenty years later.

It's a wonderful film and especially good for students because—some of them think that there's too much pessimism in my class; they are searching for alternatives and sources of hope. *Freedom on My Mind* is very upbeat—to me it's an upbeat film even though some of the activists faced death, and some died. They weren't necessarily victorious in all respects, but it just does tell you about why some people—a small minority, but still some men and women, white and black, did make that commitment to social justice. I want them to know who these people are and why they made that commitment. Of course, in my mind I'm saying, "I'd like some of you to be able to make the kind of commitment that these people made." So *Freedom on My Mind* is a wonderful film with that in mind.

Berkeley in the Sixties, for which I was also a consultant, is another film I use each year, along with selected excerpts from the Monterey Pop Festival.

Lage: Do you like *Berkeley in the Sixties*?

Litwack: Yes, very much, yes. [laughs] I'm laughing because here was a film on which I was a consultant, and we really were consulting. That is, Mark Kitchell, who was a terrific guy who produced the film, he came to me early on and said he wants to do a film on Berkeley in the sixties; would I be interested in consulting? I said, "Oh sure, that's a wonderful idea." Essentially the consultants, beside myself, were my colleague Reggie Zelnik in the history department, Troy Duster in sociology, and Ruth Rosen and Todd Gitlin were added on a bit later.

At the beginning when Mark Kitchell was projecting his idea for a film, he asked me if I would be a consultant. He also began talking to some of the activists, asking them if they would be willing to be interviewed, among them Mario Savio and Michael Rossman. The word got around and all of a sudden I get a message to come to Reggie Zelnik's house because there's going to be a meeting of people about this film. So I go there. I think at that point I was the only one—maybe Reggie was already a consultant, I'm not sure. But I had already talked with Mark Kitchell, and I thought what he had in mind was very good.

Well, Mark Kitchell must have been about maybe twenty-eight, twenty-six, twenty-five. The activists, at this point, were at least in their mid-forties. The question—nobody raised this question, of course. I think I jokingly raised it at one point. I said, "It sounds as though this meeting is about whether we can trust anyone under thirty to make a film about us." I think a lot of people were very concerned about that. They felt that one of their own should be making the film and not this young punk.

Lage: It does seem to make sense in that group that people would want to control their own stories.

Litwack: Yes, they wanted to control their story, absolutely right, and that was the main problem we confronted in the film. Mark Kitchell, like many good film makers, had gotten a degree at NYU. For his master's—I guess they call that a master's thesis, where you make a film; it was a fascinating little film—he made a little documentary about the making of *The Godfather*. What does that mean? It's focused on the relationship between the filmmakers and the neighborhood in which they shot the film: the demands that were made by the neighborhood, the concessions that had to be made to them about how many they would use in the film itself, about what permanent facilities they would build in the neighborhood. It's a wonderful film about that particular story. So I was very impressed with what he had already done. I tried to convey that to

the others in the room, most of whom went away saying, “Yes, we’ll cooperate.”

But you’re absolutely right, they wanted to control the story, and unfortunately that led to the one person who agreed to be interviewed withdrawing from the film, and that was Mario Savio. That was very unfortunate. As I’ll say many, many times, Mario Savio represented to me the very best of that generation, selfless and devoted, committed, a marvelous human being in every respect. I think he just felt very uneasy about what this film might ultimately say, and felt that he needed really to have control over his own material, at least, and the interpretation.

Lage: And he couldn’t have that?

Litwack: No filmmaker can make that kind of concession. It’s just impossible. Savio appears in the film, but that’s from documentary footage. He’s not one of the main characters, as one would say Michael Rossman is, so that was a loss, but I think Mark Kitchell’s absolutely correct in not giving him essentially censorship over—

Lage: —over what clips to use, basically, because Savio himself could control what he said in an interview.

Litwack: That’s right. It would be the interviews with him and to what degree—once he had said something on the camera—to what degree he could change what he had said on the camera and possibly, too, to say, “Well, if I don’t like the film I want you to yank the interview.” I’m not sure what the exact negotiation’s about. But it was a parting—a congenial, more or less, parting of the ways. I believe Mario Savio actually liked the film once it came out. I don’t see why he wouldn’t.

Lage: Did you think the group as a whole liked the film?

Litwack: It was a fascinating experience being a consultant because, as I said, we were really consulted. We met periodically—more than periodically, we met fairly frequently. We went over every aspect of the film. It’s Mark Kitchell’s film, don’t get me wrong. It’s his film, and he deserves all the credit. But he certainly used us, as one should use consultants. Very often, when you’re a consultant on a film, they want you as a consultant so you’ll write a letter to the NEH so you can get money for the film. Then, once they have the money, they’ll maybe send you a first draft of the film, but you’re not brought into it in the way that we were brought into this film.

Lage: He wanted your help with the presentation.

Litwack: He absolutely did, yes. It was fairly harmonious. I would have strengthened, perhaps—I love the music section, the counterculture; I probably would have

done more with it, but that's simply because of my own interest. We had one basic disagreement. We—well, I think I was probably more outspoken about it than others. The film had been pretty much completed and then it was probably Ruth or it was someone else who said, "Wait a minute, what about women?" The first segment was on the Free Speech Movement itself on the Berkeley campus. The second segment was on the antiwar movement, both in Berkeley and Oakland. There's a third segment on the counterculture. There's a fourth section on People's Park.

Lage: Wasn't there something on the Black Panthers?

Litwack: I'm sorry, there was a section on the Black Panthers, yes, five sections. You're absolutely right, thank you. What about the women's movement? And I said, "Wait a minute, this is a film of Berkeley in the sixties. The women's movement is not really until the seventies. It's really a seventies movement. Inspired, yes, by the sixties, but it's a seventies movement." Well, Ruth would have none of this. Think about all the consciousness raising groups that were already being established in the sixties. I said, "No, no, no, no, this is going to be tagged on, and it's going to look that way." I really was opposed to it. "If you want to do something, it was too late," I said, "to do that now."

If you really wanted to bring women into the film then the way to do it would be to integrate them into every section of the film. Now that would be terrific, but we should have thought of that in the beginning. That is, the role of women in the Free Speech Movement, black women in the Panther movement—wow that's a, whew, that's an explosive subject by itself—the degree to which the roles of women in the movement were often determined by the fact that they were women, the chores that were assigned to them—though women certainly did occupy some leading positions in the Free Speech Movement. I said, "If you want to bring women into the fabric of the film in order to suggest why a women's movement would appear in the seventies that's one thing, but to do what you're proposing to do, it seems to me is unnecessary—it's going to look like something that's been just tagged on, and I think that's a mistake." Well, I still think it was a mistake.

Lage: Did they do it? Did they tag it on?

Litwack: They did. They did, and it looks that way to me. I always say this to some people and they say, "Yeah, it does have that feel about it." And, of course, who was one of the primary witnesses or characters? Ruth Rosen. Now, I like Ruth Rosen very much. We're very good friends. She's a good person. But I don't believe you should have one of the consultants suddenly appear in the film, because how can we sit there and say, "No, get her out of there"? [laughter] It's impossible, because she was at all the meetings. It's just something I had to go along with it.

Lage: She did talk, if I remember—it's been a long time since I've seen it—but she talked about all the things you mentioned, how women's consciousness was raised—.

Litwack: Once they had brought her in then they used her also in the People's Park section, yes, as well as the women's movement. I just think that didn't work.

My only other critique of it was I thought the end was rather weak. It was, I know, inspiring, upbeat. It had a mass rally and Pete Seeger singing, "We shall overcome." I said, "I think it's a little—" trite was not the word I used, but, "I think we can go out with something more exciting than that. This is a happy ending and the sixties did not have a happy ending. Well, it had a mixed ending, let's put it that way. I would have liked that, that kind of an ending.

Lage: Did you argue for that?

Litwack: Yeah, I argued for it. I argued the same thing with Connie Field for *Freedom of My Mind*, which I keep telling you is just a great film, but I thought the ending was a little too upbeat. Actually, by '64, the end of '64, '65, the whole movement is starting to come apart. We already know that it's coming apart, and I think that would have been necessary. I think what was not attacked—what I wanted to do at the end of the film, of *Freedom on My Mind*, is to—what I do again in my lectures, in my class, and what I'll be doing in my writing, and that is to focus on people coming to grips with the revelation that the problems involving black-white relationships cannot be resolved simply by civil rights legislation, that, as Malcolm X kept arguing, "I'm not going to sit at your table now that it's integrated. I'm not going to sit at your table with nothing to eat and call myself a diner. You've got to eat some of what's on that table." That's what it's all about. That's the way I would have gone out, because that would have also given it some direction in terms of what is happening to the movement itself and the reason why the movement fractures or fragments in the late sixties and the seventies, and that's what I think that film should have confronted, as any history of that period needs to do as well.

So I use these films. Oh, going back to the films I use in the course, I'm using Michael Herr's *Dispatches* as a book, and I use *Hearts and Minds* as a film to go along with that book. That still has an enormous impact on students who knew little or nothing about the Vietnam War. This certainly reveals the war to them in ways that I do not think even they had imagined. It is the most powerful film on the Vietnam War. I also like *Apocalypse Now* very much. I would think of using that, if *Hearts and Minds* was not available, but *Hearts and Minds* has, I think, even greater impact because it's a documentary. It's extremely well made.

Some students think it's too one-sided, that it has a position to argue and kind of slants the materials. No, I would say just some students, and some of the

very perceptive students, feel as though they have been manipulated by the film. I understand that. I'm willing to talk with them about it. I still think it's a good movie, but I love students who come in with these points of view.

Lage: Yes, I would think that would be very encouraging.

Litwack: Absolutely.

Lage: And do they come into your office?

Litwack: Some will, yes, or I'll talk to them. Some are very upset and come right up to me right after the—I always go to the film showings, even though I've seen them ten, twenty times. I want to be there. I want to be there to talk with them after they come out of the film. It's also just good to be present because I always give an introduction in Wheeler before the film begins, a five- or ten-minute introduction.

No, I want my students to be questioning all the time. They can question my lectures. I sometimes tell them the most boring blue book to read is a blue book that just regurgitates my lectures. I want them to think. I want them to articulate their own viewpoint. That to me is part of the process, and that's what this is all about.

Lage: Do you feel like you're successful at that? Do the blue books show that level of engagement?

Litwack: To some degree. I guess it will always be true in teaching, especially if you're in any way an effective teacher, that with some students you become—and I hate this, it's true though—for some students you become God, and “God wouldn't tell us anything that wasn't correct.” [laughter] I regret that. Maybe it's because I'm more of a formal lecturer, I don't know. I think it just can't be helped. It's just a feeling of someone who's older and experienced, he must know.

Lage: Or a student who accepts authority more readily.

Litwack: That's right, that's right, and I want them to question authority, of course, and that includes me as well as anyone else.

This semester I'm going to also try to get a film which I just saw, and I think it's terrific—by a woman, a film writer—oh, her name just escapes me. She's done some wonderful documentaries, and she has just done a film called *My Generation*. Barbara Kopple. Barbara Kopple, who did a wonderful film on labor history that I've also used in my class about a strike in Minnesota. *My Generation* is about the three Woodstocks. You know, there were three Woodstocks. There's the one in, what was it, '68? '71? My goodness I can't even remember now. How terrible.

Lage: I think '68 sounds right.

Litwack: Okay. I keep thinking '68 [August 1969]. There was the first Woodstock, then there was a revival Woodstock maybe, what, ten years ago? And then there was still another, a third Woodstock, a few years ago. She does all three Woodstocks, going back and forth between them.

[end tape 12, side b; begin tape 13, side a]

Litwack: The first Woodstock is shown all in black and white, the other two in living color. What the film is about—and that's a fascinating subject, you can look at American culture—it's about the commercialization of rock 'n' roll. It's what happens when the heavy corporations begin to move in and essentially dictate the format, dictate the products that will be made available to the people coming there. It is astounding. It talks about different generations. You get a certain sense of what this new generation's all about.

Lage: And some of those are your students' generation.

Litwack: That's right. So I think this is the perfect film to show. Some may think it's putting too much emphasis on the sixties, because they will have already—I'm still going to show them *Berkeley in the Sixties*; I'm just going to add this one on. It's a good film, so why should students mind seeing another film?

I bring them all onto campus at night for the films, because they are all obviously more than an hour—two hours, two-and-a-half hours. I give them Friday off of that week from the lecture to compensate them in some sense for the time that they're spending at the films. Again, these films are part of the course, an integral part of the course, as I have to tell them. And they're questioned. They're not so much questioned about, "What did you think of such-and-such film?" But the first essay question, which is usually a broad, sweeping question that will have them look at a subject from maybe the beginning of the course through the end of the course, and I'll want them to integrate into their answer their readings and the films that they've seen.

Lage: Do you have your GSIs grade on how much they bring in from all the different sources?

Litwack: Sure, sure.

Lage: So you do kind of check up.

Litwack: Oh absolutely. We want the students to talk about how the films illuminated a particular subject or aspect of the course.

In addition in this course I have two multimedias. How did that all start? Well, they moved me, when Wheeler burned, to what is now called Pimentel. As I

walked in there I saw this magnificent control booth in the back. I saw this revolving stage. I saw the television sets hanging down from the ceiling—there must have been forty in that auditorium—so when the chemistry professor or physics professor is performing an experiment down below, wherever you're sitting you can see it because it will be on the television set.

Lage: They were way ahead of the humanities in their use of multimedia.

Litwack: They were. So I said, "Well now, there must be some uses for the historian." Then I started putting together a presentation—this is around 1968. I came to feel that, after all, what happened between '63 and '68, or '70, was pretty amazing. As a historian I felt I could only do so much in a lecture. I turned to multimedia as a way of talking about the sixties that I couldn't do in lecture.

Again, I wanted them to feel the sixties. I also wanted to impress upon them that everything they were about to see and hear are historical documents—the television footage, the motion-picture footage, the photographs, the slides. There's the soundtrack—which is often not at all directly related to the films and the slides. Almost everything is original documentation. There's no narrator. These materials, if they're good enough, if they're powerful enough, will narrate themselves. It's impressionistic. It doesn't go in chronological order; it's very impressionistic. There's everything one would have seen and experienced in the sixties.

Lage: Like a montage.

Litwack: Like a montage. It's an R-rated film. There's nudity, there's all the words that one—well, I have the wonderful Country Joe and the Fish fuck yell, for example, which was at Woodstock. You know that one, don't you? "Give me an 'F,' give me a 'U,'—" it goes on like that. Everything's there. At the same time, my hope is that it's more than entertaining, that it will stimulate discussion.

Lage: Did you have a lecture on the sixties before this multimedia presentation?

Litwack: Oh yes. No, it doesn't replace a lecture, there's a lecture before that. They've been prepared for it in two ways. The multimedia presentation actually begins in the fifties. It includes McCarthy, it includes HUAC, it includes Eisenhower. It brings in the fifties as well. They'll have had several lectures in preparation. They will have had a lecture on the internal security crisis, so when they see McCarthy and HUAC they'll know what that is. They have a lecture on American life in the fifties, which is portrayed in a number of ways in the film. They'll even know something about the music of the fifties, as I've talked about the music of the fifties. I integrate the music of the fifties into that film as well as the music of the sixties. So there's a lot of great music in this—I was able to run rampant with all my—

Lage: You were having fun.

Litwack: Oh, I was having fun. I was having fun, but I was also trying to do something that I thought would be important, to make some sense out of the “insanity” of the decade.

The film begins, as I simply said, begins with a military plane coming in at Travis Air Force Base from Vietnam with wounded veterans. As they were coming in, the sergeant, or lieutenant, I’m not sure, comes in to the plane where the wounded soldiers are all lying on their beds on each side of the plane. Starts talking to them about what their rights are, what they can now do returning as wounded veterans. It’s pretty bizarre, but it—I think he’s answering all the cut-and-dried questions about what happens once they land: do you have any leave time coming? Recuperation leave? Employment opportunities? And he goes through this routine.

Lage: Where did you get this from?

Litwack: I had to look very carefully for documents that I wanted to use. I remember seeing the film that CBS did on the day we landed on the moon. There’s one little segment in there—I had taped it, two hours, thinking I might find something. I did. I found this one little segment because one thing that happens almost every day, including the day we landed on the moon, is that planes came into Travis Air Force Base with wounded from Vietnam. So that’s how I got the footage.

That footage I considered to be my overture for the film on the sixties. That’s why I had it—I had it at the very beginning. Then it quickly moves impressionistically back into the fifties and sixties, and then has a number of different segments. The opening is actually that plane—a massive cargo plane. When it lands, the cargo section opens up to permit vehicles carrying wounded servicemen to move them to the military hospitals. Someone came to me who was very inspired by this presentation and said, “I love the beginning, how the womb opens, bringing you into the film.” I said, “Oh, that’s very nice.” I hadn’t really thought of that.

There are parts of the film in which the audience may not be certain what’s going on. While they’re hearing Martin Luther King and Malcolm X in the section on civil rights, and Albert King, a blues man, while they’re hearing that, all they’re seeing on the screen are hair ads from television, whatever people do to their hair.

Lage: Black and white?

Litwack: Just white. Hair ads. I think it’s very successful, works very well. Lenny Bruce is also in the film. Few students knew who Lenny Bruce might have been. Again, it’s all very impressionistic; I have to really underscore that. It

ends with paintings from an obscure painter by the name of George Tooker. Some of his paintings now adorn the covers of sociology textbooks. He is a painter that, well, certainly more than any I knew, captured much of the alienation and depersonalization of the period. [holding up textbook covers and illustrations] These are the kinds of things I use in my film as well.

Lage: From your textbook.

Litwack: Yes, from the textbook I'm showing you. I can't find the artist here, but that's okay. I thought he might be familiar to you.

It's a real downer ending, because that's the way I saw the end of the sixties.

Lage: In what respect? What's the downer for you?

Litwack: I saw so much of the promise of the movement [pause] being taken over, or manipulated, and I would say also undermined, so that that endless drone of, "Right on, right on," became rather meaningless. A movement that had at one time prided itself on, among other things, its sense of humor, prided itself on its creativity, and prided itself on its openness. Unlike previous movements, the movement of the sixties was not really tied to any one ideology. For many of them both capitalism and communism could be condemned.

I thought by the end of the sixties it had lost much of that inspiration; much of that had really dissipated. It was becoming more locked in ideology and had lost much of that initial openness. Those endless drones of, "Right on, right on," said more about the decline of the movement than about the militancy of the movement.

Lage: You didn't see it being lost in the counterculture?

Litwack: Well, much of it, yes. Much of it was absorbed into the counterculture because the counterculture at least held out the hope, or the promise perhaps, of instant gratification. [chuckling] Something that the counterculture supposedly condemned, instant gratification, because that was very much a part of our consumer culture, it seemed to me that they succumbed to it as well.

At the same time the counterculture was pretty much taken over by the dominant culture. America has been pretty imaginative at times in how it has taken over movements which at first are a challenge to the existing institutions, and as taking them over made that movement challenge itself. I think that happened to some degree in the sixties as well. Advertisers moved in and seized all the symbols of the sixties and used them to sell goods. Beatles songs are now being heard in elevators—what do you call that? Muzak. They weren't the Beatles, they were orchestrated versions of Beatles songs. You began to hear rock 'n' roll used to sell goods on television.

Princeton University gave an honorary degree to Bob Dylan. What's going on here?

Lage: Even though you liked Bob Dylan a lot.

Litwack: Of course, I liked Bob Dylan. I still do. Something was happening here, and I think the counterculture was being corrupted. And the political culture was not being co-opted as much as it could now be very conveniently ignored because of the level of the rhetoric and because of the content of the rhetoric. I think that was unfortunate. Of course, the black movement had come apart because it had seen many of its promises betrayed, many of its expectations betrayed. I don't believe that one could be as optimistic as some were in the early seventies.

Having said all that, the contributions of the movement were enormous. Many people retained the initial commitments and still follow those commitments to this day. That's why I keep saying Mario Savio represented the very best of the movement.

Lage: And he came right at the beginning.

Litwack: Yes, but throughout, as he becomes a part of the antiwar movement, and later on as he becomes a part of the struggle for affirmative action, he stays constant throughout. People like Jerry Rubin to me were clowns; they were clowns.

Lage: And became very commercial.

Litwack: And some of them became very commercial, investment bankers, for example. That's right.

Lage: Where did you put the Black Panthers and the very adamant black separatists in this?

Litwack: Panthers are a very complicated movement. One can readily understand how they originated and why they would have originated. The initial idea of the Black Panthers was that Oakland police—who had a notorious reputation in regard to black people—should be shadowed, followed around to make sure that when they made arrests they did not beat up the person being arrested, make sure they followed the letter of the law, which is why Bobby Seale and Huey Newton began to carry with them law books as well as guns.

They made some contributions to the black community, particularly in the food programs. They were influential far disproportional to their actual numbers, which were never really that large. I think it will be many years before someone can actually write a history of the Black Panthers. It had so many different sides to it.

Lage: You hear a lot about drugs and violence.

Litwack: Yes, that's right. It's all a part of it.

Lage: Repression.

Litwack: Not just violence. We're not talking about violence so much against police.

Lage: No, I mean against their own.

Litwack: Against their own, exactly. They seem to have come apart from within. Now, mind you, this may also have been a tribute to the FBI agents who were themselves Panthers, or who were informers for police agencies. After all, J. Edgar Hoover had tried to sew the discord among civil rights groups by spreading false rumors. I would believe that within the Panther movement too there were those who were just trying to stir intramural clashes, and succeeded.

It's more than that. I can't put all the blame on police agencies either. One example would be, if you look at the platform of the Panther party you would think, "Wow," and somebody's even said this. In fact, the exhibit on the sixties at the Berkeley Art Center right now has a section on the Panthers which talks about them as being one of the few organizations of this period, that made a full commitment to female equality, because it's right there in the platform. Well, it may be in the platform, but that was not the reality. That was not the reality. All you have to do is read some of the memoirs, published memoirs of Panthers, or the oral history of some of the Panther women to know that there was a real double standard in the Panther movement. That's just one example.

It's a very complicated story. There are still few people who want to tell the full story of what Huey Newton was accused of and to what degree he might have been guilty of what he was accused of. I do have a student who is part of a—well, he's not part of a new generation; he's probably in his late thirties now. He will be writing a dissertation on the decline of the Panthers and he was himself a Panther. That should be very interesting.

I've had some of my graduate students and undergraduates in seminars write on such questions as the relationship between the Panthers and the black community in Oakland. I've had some write about women within the Panther movement. These have all been very revealing. Certainly it's a marvelous subject to be explored.

Lage: It's still a little early maybe.

Litwack: I think it may be still a little bit too early because some people still don't want to really talk, for good reason.

- Lage: Did you get involved personally at all? Did you know any of the Panthers?
- Litwack: Yes, I knew some because they would come around my office. Some of them were—I think maybe one or two might have been in my class. We would talk. I guess we've gotten away from the multimedia presentation.
- Lage: We did.
- Litwack: I'll go back to multimedia just to finish that off. The idea of the multimedia—we're talking about the ending, why it had a kind of somber ending. When I first did multimedia, you see, my students had lived through the sixties, they had their own version of the sixties. That's what made it so remarkable, because we could sit and talk about this film. They could question all the decisions I made, especially the ending. They'd say to me, "Professor Litwack, why did you end with that down beat when you should have ended with the Rolling Stones singing "Street Fighting Man?" I said, "Well, that's your perception of the end of the sixties, not my perception. This is indeed a personal statement, because it almost has to be. After all, it's hardly history yet." Now it is.
- Lage: Now to your students, that's ancient history.
- Litwack: That's right. I still use it because as long as it will stimulate discussion it's worth using. I made a decision—at one point I could keep adding to it. I kept changing it every year, like you change a lecture. I remember in 1972 or '73, I added a section on Watergate. It just didn't work. So I made my decision at that time, around 1972, "That's it, I will make no more changes. I'm going to allow this to become a historical document, or historical relic," as I sometimes will call it. When I show it today I tell my students that: "Nothing's been done to it since 1972, so see it for what it was, a kind of a document of its time." That worked out nicely.
- The way it worked is that I'd have maybe two slide projectors, two motion picture projectors, and these images were flashing on and off. Sometimes you'd be getting film footage, sometimes you'd be getting slides. Sometimes you'd get both films. I had two films that worked side by side, or sometimes one would be replaced by slides. Meanwhile, all these television sets up there invoked still another image. What we did with the television sets is they were largely showing all the standard TV shows of the fifties and sixties: *I Love Lucy*, for example. All the shows were just continuous, just like people kept their TV sets on all the time, remember? Nobody ever turned off their TV set. Even if they're not in the room you walk in, their TV set's on. This just goes on continually throughout the entire hour presentation.
- Someone came over from KQED, I guess, or PBS, and had been told about this presentation and asked if I'd like to make a movie based on the presentation. I said, "Of course I will." Hence a film was made called, *To*

Look for America, with an NEA grant. It appeared in, oh, I would say probably '72, '71.

I still remember Terrence O'Flaherty was a film critic for the *Chronicle*. He reviewed my film and said, "Now we can understand why those students at Berkeley are in such an uproar." He didn't like the film. He didn't like it at all. That's okay.

Lage: Did he think you had been inciting the students?

Litwack: I think he feels films like this can do nothing more than incite the students. I didn't think it was that kind of film at all. In fact, I think in some ways it was very critical of the movement in its later stages. I have someone doing, "Right on, right on, right on," and it sounds just as I intended it to sound, like an endless, meaningless drone, particularly when you see the images that accompany it. But anyway, the film worked well in forcing students to reassess their view of what happened in the sixties, and what didn't happen.

I've taken the film around the country—oh, I don't know in how many places it's appeared. I generally go with the film. I don't just send out the film, because I want them to see it as multimedia, even in my class. The film I made is not just one image. I still supplement it with all kinds of other images and the film.

Lage: So not only do you use this film, but then put other images up?

Litwack: Yes. The film's just one image, that's all. I don't think it could replace the multimedia dimensions, so I still take it wherever people want me to take it. I go there. I did a road trip once.

Lage: What kind of venues?

Litwack: Well, this was a fascinating road trip. I remember one of many. As I said, I've shown this at maybe forty, fifty universities over twenty years or so. This road trip started at the University of Lake Forest, nice small little college outside of Chicago. It worked very nicely there. Then I went to the University of Iowa. That's the kind of audience I want. They're raucous. They really went with the movie. They reacted. You can't ask for a better audience than that, reacting while the film is on.

Then I went to Amherst. Boring. What a boring audience. You're at one of these prestigious little Ivy League colleges—I had the feeling that the students—I think I was right—this was so different, this was so new, the students didn't know how to react and had to wait for a professor to tell them that it was all right to react. That's how I interpreted it.

Lage: What time period are you taking this around? In the seventies?

Litwack: Yes, right after I made it. Yeah, they were a boring audience.

Then I went to Wesleyan, Yale. They were okay. They were better than Amherst. Then I went to John Jay School of Criminal Justice in New York. That was a good audience, terrific audience, terrific audience.

On the way back I had agreed to come to Logan, Utah—Utah State. This is Mormon territory. When you show something on campus, it's a community affair, so a lot of people were out there. As sometimes happens, where you're going to be situated depends on the facilities. This one, the only way I could do what I had to do was to have all the equipment right in the middle of the audience. That's where I was sitting. I remember distinctly one woman turned to her husband, probably someone in her sixties or so, and said of the film, "Well, that was kind of interesting. I'd like to read the book."

Someone else got up—because we have a question-answer period—he said, "That was very interesting Professor Litwack, but you know, that was not our sixties." I said, "You're right, I know." Sure, it has a kind of Berkeley perspective, and I can't pretend that this was all-American. I said, "I tried to represent other portions of America, but I can sympathize with your remark." I thought it was a good critical comment, and in many respects quite true. It was a good audience.

I think my audiences here are always very good. They react throughout. I took it once to Oakland High School; they wanted me to come and do it for the entire assembly of students. They were just terrific. They were so terrific that in one segment, for three minutes—almost three minutes—there's no sound, just the slides, back and forth, one week's dead in Vietnam. Remember *Life Magazine* devoted an entire issue to one week's dead in Vietnam? Little photographs, they could be like—they looked like little passport photographs. They might be in uniform. They might be their high school graduation picture. That was powerful—it's a powerful issue and it's a powerful presentation. I think I was absolutely right not to have any sound at all.

At Oakland High school, of course, you had mostly blacks in the audience. Every time a black face came up they were counting, "One, two, three." Nobody's ever done that before. Then, right after that, and then after the segment with Martin Luther King and Malcolm X and the hair ads, I'm moving to the next segment, and I hear these voices out there in the audience. It's a very reactive audience. I think, "What are they saying?" I listen more closely. "What about the Chicanos? What about the Chicanos?" I was embarrassed because they were absolutely right. Other than a couple of slides of Cesar Chavez, there was not a particular segment. I don't think I could of—if you started doing segments for every group, then that's going to be the film. I had hoped that the slide showing Cesar Chavez in the march on Sacramento would suffice.

So the audience reactions have been very rewarding. I felt good about them and I still feel good about the impact of the film.

They asked me to show it—or I asked to show it, I should say, at the American Historical Association convention in Boston. This was fairly soon after—it hadn't even become a film yet, it was still multimedia.

Lage: It was before it was produced?

Litwack: Yes, as a film. So the convention was probably around '71 or '70. The AHA had never had this kind of request before. You didn't show movies at conventions then; now everyone does it. They didn't know quite what to do with it. First, they could have turned it down. They accepted my—

Lage: You proposed?

Litwack: I proposed it. They accepted it and they said, "Well, yes, but we'll treat this as a session, so we're going to have a chair, we're going to have two commentators." I said, "Okay, all right, that's okay."

Lage: Hold on one second—

[end tape 13, side a; begin tape 13, side b]

Litwack: They gave me wonderful facilities. They brought in a professional sound system, so I knew it was going to be terrific. I was operating it in back. The place was packed, because it was so different, so new; it was just packed. It ended. It had a very good reception. The two critics were John William Ward, who would soon be president of Amherst and wrote a fine book on the Jacksonian era—*Andrew Jackson: Symbol for an Age*—and Kenneth Lynn, who was more of a cultural historian—he just died a few months ago. They were the two commentators. John William Ward liked it very much, and Kenneth Lynn did not like it. That's fine. It made for a good discussion. [laughing] I remember as Kenneth Lynn was doing his critique, kind of a scholarly critique of the film, he didn't like the film at all, but he wouldn't—he's very—

Lage: Did he have a chance to see it beforehand, or was this off-the-cuff?

Litwack: No, they had to do it off-the-cuff. He, as I said, was critical. You know, wait a minute, one of them—it might have been Kenneth Lynn. I had been out on the coast showing this before the AHA. I believe he actually was able to come an earlier showing, so he'd had time to prepare.

While he was talking, someone went to a blackboard—you know how they have blackboards in front of the session of the AHA? Someone went to the

blackboard while he was talking and wrote on the blackboard, “The media is the message,” and he walked out. [laughter] That was funny.

So that presentation’s had a very interesting career. I decided to move from that to another presentation because, again, I felt that I could say only so much about the Great Depression of the thirties. One had to go to other forms of documentation to make your students really feel the period. Now, of course, I lectured on the New Deal, and I have a lecture on the Great Depression. I put a lot of emphasis there on how it affected people. Of course, they read *Hard Times* by Studs Terkel, and they get an even more graphic description of conditions.

I put together another multimedia presentation. This one was not made into a movie but I still use it. It’s called “Nothing to Fear,” after Roosevelt’s famous statement. Here was another opportunity to do something I thought would be very good for the course as well. No decade that I know of is as rich in photographic material as the 1930s. The thousands of photographs from the Farm Security Administration, Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, and others. What wonderful images they are. I did my work at the Library of Congress where they have—all these are housed in one big room there. I took a large number of those images, mixed them in with the music of the thirties, mixed them in with motion-picture footage, because there was some—well, two kinds of motion pictures. There was, for example, *Wild Boys of the Road*, which really tried to focus on conditions in the thirties, about runaway kids. But there were also all those glittering musicals, to make you forget about the hard times, and some of the music that made you want to forget about the hard times, “Sunny Side of the Street,” for example—it’s just one example that comes to mind.

One song that reverberates throughout the film, or that’s heard throughout the film, is “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” But each time they hear it it’s a different version. By the end of the film, when they hear it the last time, it’s *The Coconut Grove* and has Rudy Vallee singing, “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime.”

Lage: Who was the first one?

Litwack: I’ve never been able to identify it. It was off of a newsreel. No, I’m sorry, the first one the singer is my one—I don’t like to even admit this—it’s my one intrusion, because otherwise the soundtrack is all thirties. It’s someone from the Weavers. It’s in the overture. The overture is “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?”

Lage: Do you know the history of why Bing Crosby sang it? Is he one of the ones you have?

Litwack: No, I don’t have that—I believe he did sing it though.

Lage: He did sing it.

Litwack: It's a Tin Pan Alley song. It's not a folk song; it's not a protest song. It was Tin Pan Alley all the way.

Lage: But it seems so removed from Hollywood.

Litwack: When I showed Rudy Vallee at the end singing it, it's also to bring us close to the end of the film and to the extent to which people—because I talk about this in lecture—people are becoming kind of bored with the unemployed, and also benefits and whatnot for the unemployed were being cut back as soon as the war breaks out. So it seemed to me that Rudy Vallee at the very end singing it tells you something about the cooptation of the song itself.

Throughout the film there are about four breaks in which you see nothing on the screen. The screen goes black for about twenty seconds, and you hear Nazi marching songs. Everything stops and you hear this to give you an indication of what's happening elsewhere that's going to have a huge impact on the nation of the thirties. Toward the end of the film, as they're hearing Orson Welles's famous broadcast, which I also lecture a little bit about, you know, the "War of the Worlds," the Nazi marching song becomes full blown and you see Hitler and you see the troops. Then you go into the wonderful scene from *Casablanca* in which the singing of "La Marseillaise" drowns out the Nazi marching song. At the end you see American soldiers embracing their loved ones at the train station as they go off to war.

Both of these presentations are still a part of the course and they will stay part of the course as long as they pass my test, which I think is a fairly severe test, that is if they do not become simply entertainment and nothing more than that.

Lage: Do you judge by watching the students or by who comes in to talk to you?

Litwack: By watching the students and also by what my TAs report. Did it generate some discussions, did it generate some questions? As long as it does that, it works. I think it's also important simply because it deepens their understanding of the period. They can now visualize the period. How can you forget those faces—those Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange faces among others—Arthur Rothstein and others. Those are powerful, powerful images—Margaret Bourke-White.

Lage: I want to come to your class next semester. [laughter]

Litwack: I think I've talked about almost every aspect of the course in terms of the kinds of documentation that I introduce. All of this hopefully adds up to what I hope will be an experience for the students.

Lage: Now you didn't talk about the assignment you make.

- Litwack: Oh, yes. Oh! How could I have forgotten that? Most of my students never forget it. These are mostly freshmen and sophomores, and now for more than a decade—when did James D. Hart leave the Bancroft?
- Lage: I would guess '88, if I had to pick a date. [James D. Hart, director of the Bancroft Library, 1970-1990]
- Litwack: Let's say around '85 then, I made an assignment in History 7 that every student in that course will have to write a research paper of eight to ten pages on a topic that lends itself to original research in the library. It could be a question, a question that's of some interest to them. I want these to be questions that they themselves are interested in, so I try to extend it as far as possible for the students to pick their own, depending on what their interests might be. If it's sports, they can do something in sports. If it's music, they can do something in music.
- One example I cite is the incarceration of the Japanese. What did the black press have to say about it? A racial group being selected on the basis of race alone. That's it. All they have to do is go off to the black newspapers, look at them around December and January, February, March of '42, and that would be a research paper. So, papers like that.
- Obviously, I'd like them to use the Bancroft Library because it has some of the richest sources around, but of course when you have a class of six hundred or five hundred you can't very well have six hundred or five hundred people descending on Bancroft. I think they were traumatized to even have ten students come in there, because I think, at the time at least, there were some at the Bancroft who felt that that's not what they were there for.
- Lage: Right, and at that time undergraduates didn't use it that often.
- Litwack: My argument is that that's exactly what they're there for. So we had a summit conference with myself and Jim Hart.
- Lage: What was his attitude?
- Litwack: Well, he wanted to be cooperative, but he said, "We just can't deal with these numbers." I said, "I do understand that." We, I think, came to an informal agreement that there would be a limit of about one hundred students. That's still a lot, of course. I don't think we can maybe have that many going in there, but a hundred students would be the limit. And I said, "That's fine, that's fine."
- Lage: So how did you limit it then?
- Litwack: Well, we limited it in terms of the subjects. At the very beginning every GSI has only so many students doing work that would involve the Bancroft,

mostly California, Western subjects. I'm sure there are others who go in there anyway, which we can't control, but I know there has been no complaint, at least to me.

If the people at Bancroft could hear how some of my students respond I think they would feel that all their work has not been in vain. Some of them are absolutely transformed by sitting there and holding these documents. It's something they'll just never forget. They've told me how excited they had been, and that's wonderful.

I want them to use the documents. I want them to get their hands dirty. I want them to go into the stacks and just sit there in the stacks. I always tell students that the card catalogue—at that time I guess there was still a card catalogue—was okay. But what you're really doing there is getting the call number for your subject. Then you go to the stacks and you just sit there and go through everything in that section, because there are books that are going to be valuable to you that you would never think might be valuable from just seeing their title on the screen or in a card catalogue. I want you to get your hands dirty and go in the documents division, for example. There's just wonderful material there, original documentation.

That was the idea; that was the ideal at the very beginning. It's become more difficult now as the Internet has put all this stuff on there. I, to the extent that one can enforce it, I do have a rule that there are only two websites which I'll permit them to use, the Library of Congress and Bancroft websites. If they can convince me that another one is sufficiently reputable and has material that they couldn't acquire elsewhere, I'll consider it, or have the GSI consider it. So they can appeal this if they want to. I don't want students writing their research papers based on websites. I want them in the library, and learning to use the library.

The library, unfortunately, hasn't made things any easier for me by its renovation, and by the fact that half the books are now in storage.

Lage: You can't browse.

Litwack: No, you can't browse. You see, to me this was all about browsing. I love browsing. I love browsing. I learn so much from browsing and I wanted to share that with my students. Now it's very, very difficult. You can be squashed to death if you browse. [chuckles] [by the compact shelving in the stacks.]

Lage: There are more and more websites now that are digitizing and putting up a whole run of newspapers.

Litwack: I know. As I become more aware of them—for example—I shouldn't say two websites. Also the *Harper's Magazine* website I've okayed because now it's

all going to be available on—that's fine, that's fine, sure. I want them to still use the library, that's all. I want them to use the documents in the library. That's been one problem.

It would be early eighties that I probably just started doing this. The other problem now is that there are thousands and thousands of little research papers out there. You know how fraternities and sororities like to keep their files on exams and research papers? So we have to be very creative, inventive, in how we can control that.

There's one very simple thing you can do. It's surprising how simple it is sometimes. In the first place, you can do it by the kind of subject they select. One thing we make them do—because students don't think too far ahead—they have to commit themselves to a subject in the second week, or third week at the most, of the semester. Once committed to the subject that's it; they can't change the subject. So we try to have them commit themselves to a subject in which they're very interested in, and they don't think ahead that they're going to have to still do the research for it, and that they just can't go to the library and say, "Well, no, I think I'll do this other subject instead." That's when you get into trouble.

Lage: Because they're finding a paper somewhere.

Litwack: That's right, that's right. You still can't control it altogether, but you know—

Lage: That must make you feel bad, when you put so much energy into it.

Litwack: Well, my feeling is that for the students who do the work it's going to be a terribly valuable and rewarding experience. For the ones who still manage to just pick up someone else's paper, they have to live with that, that's all. I'm sure it won't—for many it's not going to bother them at all, but then, okay, that's not going to bother me then either.

Lage: Have you made any historians out of people through this assignment?

Litwack: Oh yes.

Lage: I know that's not your main goal.

Litwack: No, no it's not, but it's always wonderful to have someone come up to me and say, "I'm a history major because of this course." I say, "What were you?" And they'll say, "Oh, I was pre-med." I say, "Uh-oh, I better not meet your parents." [laughter]

Lage: I was an econ major until I took Mr. Angress's History 4b. It was so wonderful I became a history major.

- Litwack: [Tom Werner] Angress. That's interesting. He's still around, you know. He's still around. The Levines see him. He's a very good friend of Levines. [Tom Angress died in 2010.]
- Lage: He was just so energetic and made modern European history come alive, and also had lived through some it.
- Litwack: That's right. That's absolutely right.
- Lage: The rise of Hitler.
- Litwack: He was very good. I think he did not get his tenure?
- Lage: He didn't get tenure.
- Litwack: That's right, that's right, yes. He completed his academic career at SUNY Stony Brook, I believe. He comes here occasionally. So how are we doing?
- Lage: Do you think we've completed this topic pretty well?
- Litwack: I think we've completed the teaching. The only thing we haven't done, which we can start off with next time, would be the graduate students, and the upper-division course in black history.
- Lage: Of course we did not get to the visiting professorship. But that's okay, we'll work it in.
- Litwack: Jeez, that two hours went fast.
- Lage: And another film, *Jailhouse Blues*.
- Litwack: Oh, yes.
- Lage: We don't have to talk about every single thing you've done, but if you think there's anything we need to cover, let's do it.
- Litwack: Since we just talked about these multimedias, why don't we start next time with films, and then go to the visiting professorship.
- Lage: And do you want to talk about mentoring graduate students?
- Litwack: Okay, yes. And then the graduate students.
- Lage: Then I want to get back to African American history and *Trouble in Mind*.
- Litwack: And *Trouble in Mind*.
- Lage: And what you're doing now.

Interview 7: November 20, 2001

[Begin Tape 14, Side A]

Lage: Last time we talked about undergraduate teaching and also your films and documentaries, but the one thing I didn't ask you was how the student body at Cal's changing over the years might have affected your teaching.

Litwack: Well, the changes, since I came here in 1964, have been really quite extraordinary, primarily reflected in the fact that now whites are a minority at Berkeley. It's a change that I have been in a very good position to observe, since every year I teach the massive survey course where we get some six hundred or seven hundred students. When I first came here, as you know, we were getting more than a thousand. So I can observe that class.

Every class to me has its own personality. They may think that they're just a big blob out there, and I couldn't tell the difference between one or the other, but really, frankly, I do. Each one does really have its own character.

Lage: Each year you feel that?

Litwack: Every year I feel that way, sure. It's a different class. If someone said, "I was in your course in 1989," I wouldn't be able to say, "Oh yes, I remember that one vividly," but at the time I'm teaching it, it does have a real personality. You never quite know what to expect.

Of course, I've seen those faces change, obviously, in those thirty-five or so years, with the larger influx of Latino students, more students of African American descent, even though we don't have nearly as many African Americans as we ought to have, but nevertheless it's better than having the very few that were here when I first came here, when I was a student here. So this has really been an exciting change.

And then, of course, the large number of Asian students; not just Chinese and Japanese students, but the students from Vietnam, the students from Laos and Cambodia and the Philippines. That's an extraordinary part of our diversity and one that I certainly have welcomed.

How does it change the way I teach? Well, I have an audience out there, a student audience out there, at least, that's far more sensitive to some of the materials that I'm teaching. In a day of diversity, the white students, white Caucasian students in the class, probably need history more than ever before to familiarize themselves with other groups in the population. It makes me sensitive to including them, of course, in our history. For so long, these were people who had not been included in our history, so that has changed the nature, at least, of my teaching, changed the content of my reading list as well as my lectures.

As for their views, yes, there have been some changes. Berkeley tends to, however, attract—and that’s what, to me, makes it the most exciting place in the world—kind of an iconoclastic student population. I’m asked this question all the time: How do these students today differ from the students in the sixties? There’s an assumption that goes with that question that they’re much more conservative today, that they’re not these wild-eyed radicals going off on their political binges. Well, there’s some truth to that, yes. They’re probably, to some degree, more conservative. There may be more Republicans at Berkeley in 2001 than there were back in 1965.

What I find is that students still have a fairly progressive attitude, a liberal, progressive attitude. The difference is that they feel much more cynical about their ability to affect changes in our society. In the sixties, students were excited about the possibilities for change; they were optimistic about the possibilities for change. They worked very hard in the conviction that they could turn this country around; they could turn American society if not upside down, they could turn it in some very principled ways. It remains a question as to how much they did change the country. That’s something that historians will be discussing for some time to come.

Students today are more cynical about politics, more cynical about government, but mostly they’re more cynical about their ability to effect changes, which is why I like to introduce them to films such as *Freedom On My Mind* about the Mississippi summer of ‘64, because that is a film about commitment, about young people who make a commitment to social justice. I, of course, want them to see and feel that particular generation, yes, in a hope that some of our students today will make that same kind of commitment.

Lage: You have taught the sections also. Don’t you often teach one of the sections?

Litwack: Yes, I do.

Lage: What kind of discussion goes on?

Litwack: I haven’t taught the section for a while, but sections, again, very much reflect the nature of the course, because I make a policy of not announcing which section is going to be mine until the course begins. So when students sign up for my section they’re not signing up for a section with Litwack; they don’t know who will be their GSI. Then I suddenly walk in. That’s the way I wanted it. I just wanted it to be a representative section and not hand-picked from the best students in the course.

So that gives me a kind of close-up view, but office hours do as well. There’s always a long line of students. I could have office hours all the time.

Lage: Do they come to talk about societal problems as well as the class?

Litwack: Oh yes. They come to talk about everything: the content of the course, about the implications of what I'm teaching for our society today, or because of the course, they may simply have some questions about what's going on today and would like to get my feedback. Of course, I want to get their feedback as well, so it doesn't become necessarily a question-answer, but hopefully becomes a conversation in which I can learn something from them as well, about how they're relating to what's happening, and how they use materials in the course, how materials in the course help illuminate for them what's happening in our society today.

Lage: You talked about how different the students at Iowa were from the students at Amherst. Now are the students from Berkeley different from one or both of them?

Litwack: They were more like the students from Iowa, that is in the best sense of the term. Thank God they're not like the students at Amherst. More spontaneous, more willing to take chances, more willing to take risks in their actions as well as in their thinking, and that's good.

Lage: Will they challenge the viewpoints you give?

Litwack: Absolutely, of course. I think they're much more willing to challenge. That's a very good point. I think they're much more willing to challenge a professor than students at, let's say—I'm using Amherst only as a fall person, who place perhaps more implicit faith on what this professor is saying or writing. Here, I think they tend to be, as I said, sometimes more cynical. But there are those at every institution. There are those who, because you're up on the platform and you're the professor, you're God, and you know the truth, the real truth. You try as much as you can to dissuade them of this idea. It doesn't always succeed.

Lage: Do any of them complain about your course content or think you don't include enough of one thing or another?

Litwack: Yes. I read their evaluations. They all write evaluations at the end of the semester, and I make a point of reading all of them. There are those who are very critical of the course for being too leftist, for spending too much time with minorities. There are some who might say, "There are times when I thought I was in a course in African American history." As far as I'm concerned, that's all good.

But I learn from their criticisms and appreciate them. I could have a hundred students who write that this is the best—and some of them do—this is the best course they ever had at Berkeley. I could have one student say, "This course was a disaster," and that's the one I always remember [laughter], the one I always have to really contend with.

I will sometimes change my reading list based on their reactions to the reading list. It doesn't mean if they dislike a book I will then drop it; it depends on why they dislike the book. Sometimes you have to give students books, well, that they need to read, whether they like it or not. But I do learn from those. They certainly react as well to the films, the whole approach of the course.

I think one good example came in part from the evaluations, in part from people coming to my office hours. I remember the first couple of Reagan lectures; they were absolutely really devastating, no holds barred. There were some anecdotes of a humorous nature, which, I mean, you know, Reagan had so many of them you didn't know when to stop.

Lage: You mean some of Reagan's anecdotes or things about him?

Litwack: No, no, Reagan's anecdotes, just using his own words. That's more than enough. Well, I came to realize that the disparagement of Reagan was so—I wouldn't say extreme, but that the devastating nature of the critique of Reagan, I think I lost some people who tended to think I was being unfair, that I was being too selective in what I chose to use, or perhaps taking things out of context. I recall, as a result of that, I altered the Reagan lecture. I dropped all those anecdotes that really kind of mocked him and instead said, "No, no, we'll treat this person as a serious president."

Lage: Yes, a phenomenon, after all, representing something.

Litwack: Just as in the case of Nixon, I usually always start with Bill Clinton's quote. When Bill Clinton went to the Nixon funeral he gave a talk there which said, "We should judge Richard Nixon not simply by Watergate, by a view of the excesses, but by his entire career." I always say, "That's exactly how we're going to judge him, not just by Watergate but by his entire career, beginning with his days on the Un-American Activities Committee."

Lage: Have you had much complaint from more conservative students? Are some of the Vietnamese students who came here, or whose families came here as refugees, do they tend to have a different view on US policy?

Litwack: Oh, I've had a number of them come in and talk to me, especially in the week that we're dealing with Vietnam. They have all seen *Hearts and Minds*, which, as you know, is an absolutely—again I'll use that term, overuse the term—a devastating critique of American policy in Vietnam. They are very interesting. They've come to me and said, "Well, you know, at home we have been taught a very different view of that war." So they find this very interesting, and they appreciate now having to look at an alternative explanation. None of them ever said, "You have distorted. This is unfair." They've simply said that this is a version that they were not entirely familiar with. I thought that was an interesting reaction.

Again, I enjoy my conservative students very much. I love for them to come in. I've had them come in; we would exchange views every week. Those are some of my favorites. They're terrific, and I think they appreciate my openness to them.

I will not tolerate a GSI using the grade system to penalize any student for his or her views, whether they're in written form or expressed in a section. I emphasize that my students do not have to adapt themselves to any kind of line. I always tell the students in the beginning of the course, I don't have a line, essentially. If I thought I could take all of historical phenomena, as some historians have done, and hang it on some kind of clothesline, maybe I would do it; but I've never found a clothesline that would work. So they're not going to find any one particular line in the course, other than the fact that I want to include the histories of all peoples who have made up this extraordinary country.

Lage: That's very interesting. This leads right into teaching in foreign settings, or outside California, particularly Moscow and Beijing. You must have found a different student body in those settings.

Litwack: Every time I've decided to go elsewhere to teach I go because it's going to be a very different kind of experience. I don't want to go and teach as a visitor at a place that's like Berkeley. So I'd have no reason to go to an Ivy League school as a visiting professor, or even a major big-ten university. Instead, domestically, when I've gone as a visitor, I've gone to the University of South Carolina in 1975, to Louisiana State University in 1985, and to Old Miss, University of Mississippi in 1990. Those are the places I really enjoy, in part because that's an area about which I write anyway.

For me to go to the Soviet Union was as exciting as it could be. One, of course, because my parents came from Russia. Secondly, my curiosity about the Soviet Union. So we went, my wife and my daughter and myself—

Lage: How did the invitation come?

Litwack: I was a Fulbright professor. I was named by the Fulbright committee as the—the term is, I guess, just the Distinguished Fulbright Visitor to the Soviet Union.

Lage: Did you apply for that? You must have.

Litwack: Yes, I did apply for it. But you're also encouraged to apply. You'll sometimes be encouraged to apply by the host institution, which we'll call, for the purpose of this conversation, MGU, which means Moscow State University. I believe I was the fourth or fifth Fulbright professor to the Soviet Union, so the program had to be established then around 1974 or '75. I believe one of my old colleagues from Wisconsin, [Edmund] David Cronon, was the first

Fulbright professor there, and David Brody, when he was at UC Davis, preceded me by a couple of years, and Robert Kelley at UC Santa Barbara had been the previous Fulbright professor when I went there.

So it was 1980, and we were to leave in mid-January, 1980. Our son, who had worked in Russian studies, was already in Russia; he was at Leningrad State University studying economics. By that time his Russian was good enough so that he went there actually as a student, not in the category of exchange students. He was simply a student at Leningrad State University. There's a sort of special program, and they would only take people who really knew the language, so he would be like any other student. He'd have a Russian roommate. He'd be in regular classrooms, listening to the lectures course in Russian, and he would write the exams and papers in Russian as well.

Lage: Impressive.

Litwack: We were very impressed. The fact that I went there as a Fulbright in the same year was a coincidence. It just worked out that way. Of course, we were delighted it did.

We were to go in mid-January, and then in December, I think it was in December, the Soviet Union invades Afghanistan, and President Carter responds with a number of actions to penalize and punish the Russians for what they've done. When he went on television to announce the moves that we'd make against Russia, we were—I was of course very concerned that the Fulbright program, the exchange program, would be one of the victims. And it came very close.

There were a number of programs, cultural exchanges, that were terminated. He even used the term "cultural exchanges." I said, "Uh oh, do I come under that heading?" Fortunately, the Fulbright program did not. Although I must say, I had colleagues who advised me not to go. I think some of them were concerned about my safety. I know certainly some family members were concerned about our safety. I think some felt that not going would also be a statement, a political statement. My feeling was that this exchange program was simply too valuable to sacrifice, that what we could bring to their knowledge of America and what we could bring away with our knowledge of their society and their culture have worked in the best interest of this country and worked in the best interest of their country, for that matter, too. So I was just nervous that it might be called off, but fortunately it was not.

We got on the plane and headed for Moscow. To arrive there and to be there was an absolutely incredible experience. My future colleagues and students met us at the airport and transported us in sub-zero temperature to the university, where we were living in an apartment, a very comfortable apartment, wonderful place, at the university, right in the dorms—not the

dorm area, but the university. This was a section reserved for foreign students or foreign visitors.

We arrived, they showed us into our apartment. There waiting for us were some other students, and they had this big party, the table all laden with food and vodka and whatever. What a wonderful welcome! I recommend it to our own department for our new faculty; couldn't be treated any better.

Lage: Did they speak English?

Litwack: Yes, yes. All the people we dealt with there, with a few exceptions, spoke very good English. The students—I had about sixty students in my course—their language skills varied from absolutely first-class to some who were having more difficulty with the language.

Certainly we all fell in love with the Russians. [chuckles]

Lage: Really? Is your wife of Russian descent as well?

Litwack: Yes. Her background includes some people who have come over from Russia as well. In fact, when I was considering my whole experience there, I sort of disagreed with my predecessor, who had thought that Russians were profoundly different than Americans.

Lage: This is David Cronon?

Litwack: No, this was Robert Kelley. Maybe I'm exaggerating slightly, but I came away at least feeling that I had met no people more like us than the Russians. Yes, in comparison, let's say, with the Chinese, the French, Italians, the Dutch, Germans, even Englishmen. What was I referring to? Well, it was essentially a felt pride of country with all of its flaws, just as we have a certain pride in our country with all of its flaws. Certainly a sense of ethnic identity. The really outgoing hospitality and warmth, symbolized by the most unforgettable and firm embraces that you receive, and also, yes, a certain stubbornness, a certain intolerance. We differed perhaps in the extent of bureaucratic invasions into one's life. The bureaucracy, of course, in a country like Russia was extensive and often a real nuisance.

The students loved American music. One of the best things you could bring over to them at that time were discs of American music. They danced to it with even greater fury and imagination. They read avidly whatever new American fiction they could lay their hands on, and they were very eager to show us their own cultural triumphs and artifacts.

One evening, I had been told there was a dance party over in one of the dorms, so I just—Rhoda, I think, had a cold at that time, so I just ventured over to see what was happening. I could hear the music very soon. I brought along some

of my own discs as well. Pretty soon they had me sitting at the table with the DJ, when I wasn't dancing, and playing some of the music that I had brought over. It was a wonderful night. It could have happened in probably any college campus in this country. So I was very, very close to the students.

The course they wanted me to teach was a history of American politics from the 1890s to World War I, essentially the Progressive Era. Well, that was not my period of expertise, but it's all right. I'm an American historian so I can teach anything in American history, but also, even though this is not what they had asked for, I said at the very outset, "You cannot separate politics from our culture and from subjects such as the American working class in this period. Race relations in this period would also be covered. To me they all are part of our society, and to just take politics and move it over here and forget about the other was a real mistake." Well, they nodded their heads in agreement. I still don't think that's what they wanted, however. I recognized that they were involved in a project—

Lage: Are you talking about the students now?

Litwack: Graduate students and faculty were all involved in a major multi-volume history of American political parties, so they wanted lecturers who would feed into that interest, which is fine. I certainly spoke about political parties, but again, I cannot separate political parties from other things that are happening in this country. Again, they nodded their heads, it seemed like they agreed with me. But I noted that when I was lecturing—any time I was lecturing about political parties and politics, oh their hands were moving furiously, taking down everything I had to say. When I lectured about race relations, African Americans, working class, the pens were often still. They would listen to me and be very—

Lage: You'd think this is what would interest them.

Litwack: Nope. That's the problem. The problem is they felt, "No, no, we know all of that. We know about how black people are oppressed. We know about how the working class is oppressed." Well, frankly, they knew that as a generality, but they had no real depth when it came to the complexities of race relations or the complexities of working-class history.

So that was interesting. I did lecture to them about, of course, Populism as well as Progressivism. I thought their interests were rather narrow. When they talked about their dissertations that they were working on, the graduate students, these were—not all graduate students, but a large portion of them in my class were graduate students—they were all tied, as I said, to very narrow political parties. I remember one student said, when I asked him what he's working on, he said, "The Democratic National Committee in the election of 1952." I thought to myself, "What a dull topic." I suppose they would find out

how these committees worked, but very few of them were venturing in any areas outside of American politics. That was, I thought, disappointing.

They were well-read in American history. The American history program had been underway there for at least a decade, if not longer, under Nikolai Sivachev, who's himself very well-informed, and who was a very astute observer of American politics. He was away for some of the time because he was actually covering, as an historian, the Reagan campaign in America for the presidential nomination.

They all had to pass a final exam for the course. There were no midterms there. There was a final exam, and the final exams there are all oral. So you sit in an office, and a student comes in one at a time, and I ask them questions. There was also a member of the faculty present. [chuckling] Whether they're there to observe their students' politics or whether they're just there to see how a student performs, I'm not sure.

What I chose to do—and this, I must say, threw some of the students—I chose to ask them interpretive questions. They came in, I think, by and large, expecting factual questions, and expecting me to ask them, “Well, what are the five major points of the Populist platform.” But instead, I would say, “I know you've studied Populism in your own textbooks, what Russian historians have written about Populism or Progressivism,” let's say. “I know you've had lectures from your own professors about Populism and Progressivism, so I'd like you to explain how their interpretation differs from my interpretation.”

Well, the best of them were very good, but that really kind of threw them. In the first place, they're not even sure—some of them are not, like our own students, are not certain what you mean by “interpretation.” That in itself is a tough one. So I would lead them along in some cases, but I did not just throw out factual questions at them, and I think they found that a little disconcerting.

Lage: Did you get a sense that the atmosphere might have prevented them from thinking they could speak freely about things like that?

Litwack: No, I had the feeling they were pretty free to say what they wanted to say. Maybe I'm naive in that respect, but no, I didn't feel that they were holding back anything.

Lage: With the professor in the room observing.

Litwack: That's true. That's a good point. I did wonder about that, whether it would have been any better. I don't know why I didn't raise that question with the professor saying, “I'd much prefer to just meet with them in private.” But I had met with them in private on a number of occasions. We had talked about their dissertations. They would come to talk to me about dissertations; there

was no other person present. I'd have office hours; there was no other person present. So they had every opportunity to see me one-on-one.

Lage: It may have just not been in their preparation to have this kind of interpretation required.

Litwack: That's right. Then I gave the chair lecture. Every Fulbright professor gives a chair lecture which involves the entire department of history, which is a large department. American history is obviously just a very small segment. For that lecture, I needed to have a translator, which is a little arduous because you do about a paragraph at a time and then the translator does his work. I was to have translators as well in Baku and Tbilisi, which we'll get to later.

This translator was very, very good. He had translated for every leading American visitor who had come to Russia. I think the last time he'd been a translator was for Edward Kennedy who had been there some weeks earlier. So he was very good at it. He's also the person who was a primary teacher in English for most of the students in my class. He was the top person teaching English. I remember asking him one time, I said, "With the procedure that we're following here, I could just sit in a chair and [chuckles] just read these things to you and you could just—"

Lage: Or he could have your written lecture.

Litwack: That's right. I'm up there with all these motions, and he said, "No, no, no, no." He said, "You have to do this just as you would be lecturing to your own audiences, because your motions—they can see that there's some really important point being made. They can see how excited you are about a certain point." No, they watch you carefully. He said the real test to whether you're succeeding or not as a lecturer is if they're looking at you rather than the translator. [end tape 14, side a; begin side b]

Litwack: I decide to lecture to the department on the subject that I thought might have a broad appeal to historians, regardless of their field of specialization. I chose to call my lecture, "Historians and the Anonymous American." As historians, I suggested, regardless of our particular fields, we have tended—whether it's Russian history or American history—we have tended to depend on the kinds of people who kept diaries and journals, who preserved their correspondence, who wrote books, edited newspapers; that is, exceptional individuals, men and women who had the leisure and the income for those pursuits. Of course, this is the same philosophy that directed my teaching and my writing in this country. So it's been the viewpoint, as I had to tell them, the viewpoint of the political and economic establishment, that left most of the documentation that has for so many years dominated our historical writing. This, in turn, I argued, had limited the kinds of questions that we have asked, has restricted the studies in which we have engaged.

The thrust of this lecture—and I’ve given versions of that lecture in this country, of course—the thrust of the lecture was to describe how American historians have needed to develop new methodologies to study the so-called inarticulate in our history. The lecture generated some vigorous exchanges from good questions, particularly on comparisons of Soviet and American historians in the field of labor history. When I talked about working-class history in the United States and the ways in which recent historians are looking at individual workers, not at the institutions, they immediately said, “Well, of course, as Marxists we’ve been doing this for some time.” I shook my head. My contention, based on Soviet works that I had read translated to English and on speaking with historians there, was that their historians, and this is what I said, suffered from the same shortcomings as our own historians—paying more attention to the institutional history of trade unions than to the lives and thoughts of the individuals who made up the working class. Well, they might have disagreed with me, but I thought it was a criticism, and I wanted to make it. I’m sure I was absolutely right.

Lage: Did they disagree at the lecture? In questions after?

Litwack: Oh yes. Well, in the discussion they insisted, for example, “Well, our historians are well in advance of yours because as Marxists we’ve always cared for the history of workers.” My answer was, “No, you cared more about the history of organizations of workers.” Few of them directed themselves to that particular category.

Lage: Did you sense that they attempted to put things in a Marxist framework whenever they could?

Litwack: They tried to. So did the students. Sometimes it came out a little shallow, as if the students felt they were going through a certain motion that they had to go through. When they were doing that they weren’t nearly as interesting, but sometimes—

Lage: Did you ever discuss this with Nick Riasanovsky?

Litwack: I’m not sure. We talked a lot about our visits.

Lage: Because I remember his telling me about conferences that he went to where there would always be this elaborate attempt to put whatever they wanted to say in a proper Marxist framework, to kind of make it safe to go on.

Litwack: That’s right. It sometimes has that feel about it. They seemed to be reacting very spontaneously, making some very good points, and all of a sudden you see they feel the need to put this in the context of their ideology, even at times if they have to stretch things to do so.

I also showed them my multimedia that I had constructed in this country, which I had to preview, as I did in Shanghai. They wanted to see it first before they said I could go ahead and show it.

Lage: The institution did or the professors?

Litwack: I think it was actually the department, some of the heads of the department. Maybe they brought in some other people as well to look at it; I'm not sure. See, there was a problem here with my lectures and with the multimedia, because they represent a critique of our society. Before I went there, I thought about this: How would I adapt my lectures to this different audience in a different country with some very different views of history and what has happened? I decided I would change nothing, that I thought the best thing I could do in terms of representing my country was to indicate to them the degree to which we would subject our history and our institutions to critical scrutiny, with the hope that they would do likewise.

Lage: Did you put it in that framework ever?

Litwack: Oh yes, I did. I didn't say with the hope that they would do likewise.

Lage: No, but I mean the framework of a willingness to question.

Litwack: Oh, absolutely. I said, "We are proud of dissent. Part of this course is going to deal with the history of dissent in our society, because it's one of the greatest strengths of our society, and there are, after all, some wonderful examples of dissent in America in the 1890s and the early twentieth century, there's no question about that." The same thing was true of the multimedia, which was in some ways a scathing critique of American society.

Lage: Which one did you show?

Litwack: The fifties and sixties multimedia. I said that to them in the introduction. I said, "The fact that I can present this to you—what I'm presenting to you is what I presented to my own class, because in our country we believe in the need to subject our institutions to this kind of scrutiny." It's hard to know exactly what they carried away from the presentation. They all claimed to have liked it a great deal. I'm not sure. I'd like to think, at least, that they got the point.

I also was asked to show it at the American Embassy. That engendered some controversy. I think some of them came away feeling I should never have shown this to the students at MGU, because it was so critical of our country. Again, I tried to make that same argument. I said, "You're going to have to understand that we're speaking to the strengths of our country, not to the weaknesses of our country, when we make this kind of presentation."

Lage: You didn't convince them, it sounds like.

Litwack: I'm not sure I convinced them altogether, no. I think there were some who absolutely—in fact, one—the public information officer, I think, was very upset. It made for a big article in the *LA Times*, on the controversy at the embassy over what a visiting US professor was showing his Russian students. [laughter]

Lage: Interesting. Maybe they expected you to be another public information officer.

Litwack: Well, yes, and I think some of my colleagues at Moscow State University would have preferred that. I think they tended to feel a bit uncomfortable with professors who were so critical of their own country. I know that in some ways they really prefer—I mean they were wonderful to me. They were warm, compassionate. We're still wonderful friends, but I think if they had their choice they would have preferred a conservative historian, who would feed into all of their assumptions about America and American historians. Of course, this would be a firm defense of American institutions and American history. I think they would feel much more comfortable then. I think I made them feel somewhat uncomfortable.

While this is all happening several things occur. I'm not sure if I talked about this previously or not. It's in April, and we're sleeping in our apartment, and the phone rings about four in the morning, which often happens—not often, but sometimes happens in Moscow—they start talking in Russian, and I don't know who they are. Obviously, they've gotten the wrong number. But this time the phone call is for me. It's my editor at Knopf in New York [Asbel Green] to tell me that I had won the Pulitzer Prize. That was very special. We still have the photographs of the celebration that began immediately with bringing out that wonderful Soviet champagne from the refrigerator and toasting ourselves.

Lage: [laughing] At four in the morning?

Litwack: At four in the morning, yes, and then, of course, we had a party later in the day for my colleagues. We had a party for people from the embassy. I had some of my colleagues come up and congratulate me, and say, "You know, that's like winning the Order of Lenin in our country." [laughter] I said, "Well, thank you. That's nice."

It resulted in an interview with the *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, which is one of the major Communist organs in Moscow, which printed most of what I said. It didn't print everything I said, because in answer to some question I indicated my disagreement with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and questioned what the Soviets were doing there, the same questions I had raised with my Russian colleagues. When asked about it, or maybe I volunteered it, I said, "You are getting yourselves into what we went through in Vietnam. It just has all the

makings of another Vietnam disaster for you.” They shook their heads, as one of them did, and said, “Oh no, no, no, you don’t understand, we have the Red Army.” [laughter] Well, you know what happened there.

So that was the Pulitzer event, which was really an event. Then the next event was soon after we arrived in Russia our son came up from Leningrad to tell us that he would be married to Nadezhda Balyabina, or Nadia, for short. The wedding would be in Leningrad. Of course, we all went to Leningrad.

Before that, we had had an opportunity to—Nadia’s from Moscow. She happened to be in Leningrad when they met. We got to know her, but also, and this was very special—we even actually broke the law and went about fifteen miles outside of Moscow to meet her parents, who lived in the suburbs.

Lage: So that wasn’t allowed?

Litwack: No. Your routes are restricted to a certain area. We went out there. We even went out there on several occasions. Nobody ever bothered us. We met her parents. Her father was a career Red Army man, who had now retired. They were, oh, as gracious and as warm and passionate as you could possibly imagine. Then we had them over to our place at the university as well. So that was special.

Lage: Was that all right, to entertain unofficial people?

Litwack: That’s a good question. I had to intercede—set it up with the guards as they came into the university campus. They would not have been admitted into the campus if they were just coming themselves. John, our son, was there to translate, to ease their passage into the university. It worked.

We went to Leningrad for the wedding, which was performed at the Palace of Marriages, an old wonderful Russian palace. After entering the palace, you wait your turn for the ceremony. The guests arrive, then you’re formally announced, and you walk up this beautiful staircase. As you come into the ceremony room, there’s a live string orchestra, which is playing appropriate music. We take our seats. There must have been maybe twenty, thirty people there, friends, relatives, maybe forty. This woman comes out. We have this wonderful photograph of her, a large woman with a big sash across her chest with the hammer and sickle emblazoned on it. She announces that we’re here to bring together in marriage Nadia Balyabina of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and John Litwack from the United States of America.

The ceremony takes place, and then after the ceremony we do what’s traditional in Russia. Two things happen after a wedding; we only did one of them. After a wedding, the bride and groom, with their closest family members, will generally go to the—what we’d call—the tomb of the unknown soldier of World War II. Then they would go to their favorite courting site,

and you'd rent a car for this purpose. On the top of the car two circles indicate the wedding rings. We didn't do the unknown soldier, but we went to the bank of the Neva where John and Nadia had spent many hours in their courting. There you open up a bottle of champagne. Then in the evening you have the wedding party in one of the city's large hotels. It was an incredible time.

Lage: That's really quite a union, at that time, in 1980.

Litwack: Yes, very exciting. I told my Russian colleagues that this was happening. I'm not sure how pleased they were by it, but I think they appreciated the fact that I notified them that this was going to happen.

Lage: Your colleagues there.

Litwack: My colleagues there, yes.

Lage: What would have disturbed them?

Litwack: Well, the idea that an American professor would come here with a son, and the son would take one of their own away from them, you see.

Lage: Even though really that's not the way it happened.

Litwack: Even though it was coincidental, but nevertheless. Let me put it this way: My colleagues were so eager that this program be maintained, that it should be perpetuated, which means that you have to have the assent of American authorities and the assent of Soviet authorities. They wanted nothing that would in any way raise questions about the program, which is why they were concerned about my multimedia, and which is why, to some degree, I suppose, they were concerned about John and Nadia.

Lage: Did they need to get special permission, John and Nadia, to marry?

Litwack: They certainly had to get a permit of some sort, yes. Then, of course, Nadia had to apply for migration.

Lage: Was that difficult?

Litwack: Well, we were told that it could take anywhere from six months to a year. It took actually about four weeks. We were delighted. We'll never know. John thinks it had to do with my Pulitzer and the interview in the *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. He thinks that was really what did it. I don't know. Also, when we got back, they worked through Congressman Dellums' office and hoped to expedite it in any way we could. Whatever it was, whatever it took, it worked. I think the fact that we had been there, that I had been there, and the fact of the prize, and the publicity that it was given, certainly was important.

Another thing happened when we went to Leningrad for the wedding. Because of the Pulitzer Prize, the American consul there wanted to have Rhoda and me over for lunch, and said, “Oh, we have another visitor who will be there as well.” We went over there for lunch and the other visitor was Lowell Thomas, of all people.

Lage: Oh my! [laughter]

Litwack: Who, at that time, was spending his birthday—he liked to spend his birthday in a different place in the world, and he wanted to spend this birthday in Leningrad. So we had this one interesting conversation with a world traveler.

Lage: How did you hit it off with Lowell Thomas?

Litwack: Well, it was mostly listening to Lowell Thomas. [laughs] It was the day in which Carter launched his doomed move to rescue the American hostages in Iran, which, of course, had turned out to be a minor—well, a disaster, a major political disaster for Carter. A lot of the talk was about that particular event.

Lage: Were the Soviets interested in your ties to Russia in relation to your parent’s emigration?

Litwack: Yes, they were interested, sure. Though I do remember once saying, “Well, you know, I’m also Russian,” and they said, “Oh no, no, no, you’re not Russian, you’re Jewish.” [laughter]

Lage: That’s interesting.

Litwack: That is interesting.

Lage: Did they identify you or had you identified yourself that way?

Litwack: They immediately knew I was Jewish because of my name. That was it. That pretty much gave it away. I didn’t detect any real anti-Semitism.

Lage: But that remark is very telling.

Litwack: Well, that remark is just a matter of how they deal with questions of ethnicity, that’s right. I thought that was—yes, I thought that was interesting.

Lage: Because you had always thought of yourself as having this Russian connection.

Litwack: I always thought of myself as Russian-Jewish, actually. If someone in school had asked me, “What’s your nationality?” or if I had to write it down, I would say, “Russian-Jewish.” I think my mother and father felt that way; they were Russian-Jewish. But always put the emphasis on “You’re not to just say

Russian, you're Russian and Jewish." To the people in the Soviet Union, you were Jewish.

The question of the treatment of Jews in the Soviet Union, the question didn't come up very much. We had heard a few things here and there about it, knowing that the position of Jews is certainly not a secure one, that there were a number of Jewish students at the university. I don't believe there were any Jewish students in my class who were—I'm sorry, there may have been one who came to talk to me, actually. There may have been just one.

Then, because it was the year of the Olympics, 1980, the university was going to close down one month earlier in order to make the way for all of the people who would be coming for the Olympics. Of course, the American boycott of the Olympics had already happened while we were there, which caused some disappointment, obviously, a lot of disappointment, but they said, "No. This is still going to be the greatest Olympics of all time," which is what we tried to say about Los Angeles, right? Neither one really made it because both Russia was absent at ours and we were absent at theirs.

So instead of my teaching that extra month, which is what I would generally be doing as a Fulbrighter—this turned out to be really quite fortuitous—they asked me to go to Georgia and Azerbaijan to lecture for two weeks in each place. We flew to Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, where we were very warmly greeted. In fact, we couldn't understand why the plane had stopped before reaching the airport. There it was. Then all of a sudden I see this car or jeep coming right up to the plane, and they asked us to come off the plane to be escorted away. I'm sure it made all the other passengers as happy as can be. [laughter]

Georgia was really quite interesting. We were greeted by, and he became our steady host there, the minister of the Environment, whose son was one of my students at Moscow. He took us everywhere. It was a remarkable time. We went out into the country, beautiful, beautiful country. We went to where they make the great cognac from cognac and wine. We were feted everywhere.

A memorable event in Georgia, as elsewhere in the Soviet Union, was the anniversary of VE [Victory in Europe] Day. (Georgia is where Stalin is from, of course.) We saw the big parade that came along the streets of Tbilisi. They marched along with flags and banners, and they would always show Marx, Engels, and Lenin, but not Stalin. Toward the end of the parade, however, I noticed there were now signs with Stalin as well. I asked somebody about this. They said, "Oh, at such and such time we went off of national television."

Lage:

Oh! How interesting.

Litwack: Then we were taken to Gori, which is Stalin's hometown, where we were feted—we were the guests of the Communist Party of Gori, at a big luncheon. We had first been taken to the Stalin museum. There is a Stalin museum there.

Lage: Was this standard treatment do you think?

Litwack: I don't know; I'm not sure.

Lage: For foreign visitors?

Litwack: I think probably so. People like ourselves, they probably would take you to Gori. We had to go through the whole museum. I asked someone the same question I asked when we went through the Lenin museum in Moscow; I said, "Wait a minute, where's Trotsky?" [laughter] You knew that he had just been eliminated from some of the photographs.

Lage: How did they respond?

Litwack: Well, my friend Victor, one of my Russian colleagues, when I asked that question in Moscow, he was very astute. He said, "You know, you must understand, Leon, these are essentially museums of propaganda." It was really quite something for him to say this, "These are museums of propaganda." He said, "In time, Trotsky will reappear." I thought that was very interesting. But he said, "You just have to treat them now as places of propaganda." He was very proud of his museums, but he knew exactly what they were, what the purpose they served. And he probably, no doubt, believes that our museums served the very same purpose in this country.

At the luncheon, the toasts, of course, begin, very quickly. I was anticipating the first toast. It would no doubt be to Stalin, and then maybe Stalin and Roosevelt, or something of that sort. The person gets up to give the first toast. He said, "Let us now toast Eisenhower and Zhukov." The two winning, of course, the major generals of World War II. It was, after all, the anniversary of VE Day. From then on there were other toasts, but nobody toasted Stalin.

Lage: Because of your presence, do you think?

Litwack: I don't know. I have no idea.

Lage: It may not have been politically correct for them either.

Litwack: I don't know whether it was because of our presence or not. I have no idea. After a while, like at many of these functions, you run out of things to toast. I remember it came time for me to toast someone. We had toasted everyone you could think of, so I got up there, and I said, "To our mothers." Oh, wow, they just looked at me and they just—some of them just began to—tears. What a wonderful toast. I was the hit of the occasion. [laughter]

Lage: It was inspired.

Litwack: It was an inspired toast. I had really hit the spot with that one. I think they all felt, why hadn't we done this earlier? Why hadn't we toasted our mothers?

Lage: They've probably done it ever since.

Litwack: That's right.

Lage: How did you hold up with the vodka? They had more practice on that.

Litwack: Yes, I'll tell you what happened when we went to Baku. We went from Georgia, where I lectured for two weeks, focusing on the civil rights movement. They said I could do anything I wanted to do, so I decided to focus on the 1960s and the civil rights movement. They didn't know that much about it. The Moscow department chose Slava Nikonov to accompany us to Tbilisi and Baku, and he became a very good friend and a steady companion for the month. We would meet in the morning for breakfast, as in Tbilisi, and we would discuss what's going on in the world; we always did that. He had just read *Pravda*, I had just listened to BBC, and I would say to him, "Did you read about the massacre of students in Kabul?" He said, "No, no, there's no massacre of students in Kabul. There was nothing on it in *Pravda*."

Lage: Could he have listened to the BBC?

Litwack: Probably could have. Oh yes, anyone could listen to the BBC, I think, if they wanted to. We just had very differing interpretations of what was going on, a very different version of reality.

Incidentally, when he came there with us—they knew, of course, he was coming from the department and may have also known that he was coming to look after us as well. They said, "Well, Mr. Nikonov, you can take the week off or two weeks off because we plan to translate Professor Litwack into Georgian." Now, that's interesting because that really underscored the sense of identity in Georgia, that "We're not Russians. We are Georgians."

And Slava had already warned us. He said, "These are kind of a troublesome people." He knew also there was a tremendous amount of corruption in Georgia. Corruption, I think, to Slava probably meant that Georgia was handing over less of its money to the Soviet government and also the fact that free enterprise, in a certain sense, thrived in Georgia, particularly among the cognac people and the wine growers. It so happened also that—we didn't learn this until somewhat late in the game, because Slava didn't talk about it—Slava also had a very illustrious grandfather—Vyacheslav Molotov.

Lage: And he didn't mention it?

Litwack: Not until later on. Then we talked about it; he had no problem talking about it. His father, we knew, was a diplomat, so I think Slava, even at that time, probably aspired to the same goal as becoming the foreign minister. Who knows? He may still become that.

Lage: Have you kept in touch?

Litwack: Yes. I haven't talked to him for about a year now, but he's visited us. We've had him in our house. He's stayed with us several times. Then we've seen him, since the time we were there as well. I always sensed he was a survivor so it didn't come as a surprise to me. What did come as a surprise to me was to learn a few years after we had been there it (it was still the Soviet Union) that Slava had become the chief of the Communist Party at Moscow University, and he was now a member of the faculty. After the end of the Soviet Union he became politically active, was elected once to the Duma, where he sat. He was not reelected.

Lage: Did he continue as a Communist?

Litwack: When he was a member of the Duma I'm not sure whether he was actually a member of the Communist Party or whatever—there were so many different organizations at that time. Then he aligned himself with, as it turned out, I think the wrong faction, which was supposed to come to power and did not come to power. He's now become a major figure in—he operates a public relations firm for politicians. The politicians hire them to manage their campaigns.

Lage: Sounds very American.

Litwack: Yes. Very often when National Public Radio is doing a report on Russia, Slava would be the one they spoke with, because his English was so perfect. We heard him many times on NPR in that capacity.

I'll say one other thing about Georgia and then move on. I was walking on the streets one day, walking back from the university to the hotel where we were staying. One of my students comes along, and we stop and we—she spoke some English. I told her how much I was enjoying myself—

[end tape 14, side b; begin tape 15, side a]

Litwack: I was being very positive in my assessment of my experience in Georgia, and she just kind of looked at me. She said, "You don't understand," she said. "You're in an occupied country." That was the only real outburst of that kind, and I'm sure she spoke for many people in Georgia, but no one else had articulated it in that way. I must say, I found that interesting, but also I found it very surprising. Maybe I shouldn't have. Maybe I was just surprised

because she was willing to articulate that point of view. I've forgotten where the conversation went after that.

Lage: It's probably one you didn't repeat there.

Litwack: No, that's right. Then we went to Azerbaijan. I was the first American Fulbrighter to be brought to Azerbaijan and to Baku, the capital, the major city there. That was also a very good experience because even unlike Georgia, the American history program there was just getting off its feet. They'd never had a Fulbright visitor before, so they were hungry; they really wanted everything I could possibly say there.

Lage: They didn't make you just talk about those twenty years of politics.

Litwack: Oh no, no, not at all. I may have also lectured on the civil rights movement there, I'm not sure. In Tbilisi I know I showed the multimedia presentation. They were so excited.

Lage: They responded differently than in Moscow.

Litwack: Even more so, because they began cheering when the music came on, rock 'n' roll. The music track they just thought was fabulous. They insisted, after it was over, that I show it to them again, because they wanted to hear it. Unfortunately, the projectors don't always work very well in Russia, and in Tbilisi after I had shown the film to them—I don't know why I hadn't noticed this before, but most of my film was on the floor. It had fallen off the reel, and that was, of course, a major effort. I think I did show it again, actually, because people had heard about it who weren't there, and they wanted not just to hear the soundtrack, see the scenes of America. They were deeply moved by it.

The fact that it was a critique of our society was probably just completely lost on them. They just cheered the views that they were—

Lage: Did the group in Moscow act this excited about it?

Litwack: They were more restrained, that's how I would describe it.

Lage: And how about in Baku?

Litwack: You know, I don't recall whether I showed it there. I don't recall what happened in Baku. I'm not sure.

Baku is a beautiful port, even though it's really the old oil port of Azerbaijan. We went out on the Caspian. They took us out there. We were, again, warmly greeted. We were taken to a remarkable park. One of the major differences in Azerbaijan, of course, is that you become very much aware of the Muslim

influence there. Things are quite different, and they look very different than they do in Georgia. We were taken to a park of architecture, which I wonder why we don't have them—maybe they do exist in this country. I don't think I've ever been to one. They cover all the various periods of Azerbaijani history for this park, and for each era they have what's a typical house or shack or hut, or whatever it might be, representing all different classes.

Lage: For the ordinary person?

Litwack: Well, I think they represented some different classes, but most of them were, I think, where the average people lived. Well, as often happens in Georgia and in Azerbaijan, in both of them, in terms of hospitality, we came into one of the homes and we walk in; there's this big feast that's been prepared for us, and I really mean a feast. We were in kind of a tent structure, sitting on—how would I describe it? This must have been obviously an earlier century because it was kind of a dirt floor, and where your feet hung into kind of a little trench around—forming a kind of a table, you see.

I sat on one side with Slava and Rhoda—Ann stayed, actually, back in the hotel. Then the chair of the department was on the other side along with his translator. I had my translator, he had his translator, and the toasting began. I could tell at the very beginning, because I had been doing a lot of toasting up to this point, especially in Tbilisi; my God, in Tbilisi we drank all the time.
[pause]

I'm stopping because I'm trying now to—[pause] You know, I think this park of architecture was actually in Georgia, I'm sorry, not in Azerbaijan. Yes, I'm sorry, because in Azerbaijan we also had a great banquet with a lot of toasting in a kind of Moroccan-style restaurant that was just terrific. The park of architecture was in Georgia.

So here we are. We're facing each other with all the—and I could tell at the beginning that the pace of the toasting was much faster than in Moscow. I had been warned about this. Bob Kelley actually had warned me, because he was a victim of what we would call alcoholic poisoning, which came just as a result of drinking too many toasts.

How much you drink is how you register your enthusiasm over the toast. Let's say you toast somebody's health, and then you chug-a-lug, chug-a-lug. If you only wish this person half a health you can drink half of it and stop.

Lage: But it has a meaning.

Litwack: It has a meaning. So I went right along with them, drank it down. For that I won the award. [looking at the award], no doubt prearranged. That's kind of what it looked like [a replica of the glass used in the toast]. I won the award, and the glass made it to Berkeley and is a perfect pencil holder.

Lage: That's a pretty big container.

Litwack: Yes. So the chair of the Tbilisi department and I exchanged toasts, many toasts. I noticed people around us, some of them would get up and leave, knowing what was happening, I suppose. They went out, ostensibly, to have a cigarette outside the tent structure. At one point, we were getting down to the nitty-gritty. I remember toasting and then very carefully bringing the glass down and letting what was left in the glass fall to the ground. The translator across the way shook his finger at me, and he said, "Oh no, no, no, no," and quickly filled up my glass.

At one point there was a toast in which the chair of the department started toasting and the content of his glass just sort of came all over his shirt. He was out of it, and he conceded defeat. I accepted his concession. Then we got up to leave, and as soon as I got up Slava took me by one arm, my wife took me by the other arm, I looked at the chair and I said, "Well, I guess it's really a draw." [laughter]

Lage: It sounds like kind of a dangerous game.

Litwack: It is a kind of dangerous game; you're absolutely right.

Lage: Do they get into cars after this?

Litwack: They do indeed.

Lage: Do they drive?

Litwack: I think they have drivers. They generally have drivers, just as we had a driver.

Azerbaijan, as I said, was also a wonderful experience, and I was sort of being a kind of pioneer in bringing American history to this place. I strongly recommended, when I got back to the United States and wrote up my report, that Azerbaijan henceforth be included in places where Fulbrights would visit and that we should make some effort to bring Azerbaijanis over to this country. They were wonderful, a wonderful country.

Lage: Was there a particular reason why?

Litwack: It's just their hunger. They wanted really to establish some kind of American history program.

This also pretty much informed our visit to—which we can talk about—my visit to China. That came in 1983, I believe it was '83, 1983. That was a result of an exchange between a new program that had opened up, an exchange program between the University of California and China. That was not a Fulbright; it was the University of California that had arranged for that

exchange. I don't know how many actually went under this program. By and large this program had brought to China engineers, people in biochemistry, biology, et cetera. It had not been used very much to bring people from the humanities there. That was what made my going there somewhat unique.

We flew to Beijing, where we were housed—this was so fortunate, because almost invariably American visitors to China, whatever they're there for, are housed in a particular hotel—the Friendship Hotel. Fortunately, we escaped that fate. They thought they would try something different, and they housed us on the campus. We had an apartment on campus. We ate in the—I guess you can call it a cafeteria where international students stay. But we, as distinguished foreign visitors, were exceptional in that we had a table for ourselves in the dining room. The students all went up to the window where they received their food for the day; we had our own chef who brought us—because he was trying to learn English, he brought us each day a menu in Chinese and in English of what we would be eating, and then the courses just began to come. We had never eaten like this before. We've had wonderful Chinese banquets, but nothing approaching this at all.

Lage: Every day!

Litwack: Every day. When we came back to America it took us a long time before we could go back to a Chinese restaurant. It was fabulous. You could eat as much as you want, so it's not as though you are overeating, necessarily. It was just great, great food. I've never had anything like it since that time.

In China they wanted me to lecture on the United States in the sixties. They said, "We were in the midst of our cultural revolution, and we kind of lost touch with what was happening elsewhere in the world, including the United States, so we want you to lecture on the fifties and the sixties." That's what I did. Again, it had to be translated.

Lage: How long were you there?

Litwack: We were there six weeks. It had to be translated in a classroom that was often as cold as it was outside. I have photographs of myself lecturing in my overcoat. I think Rhoda took the photograph. I'm lecturing—I'm not in my overcoat this time—I'm lecturing, and there's a blackboard in back of me. At the blackboard I'd written certain terms—because they're all trying to become familiar with English—so I wrote certain terms in English that I'd be talking about. So you can see me lecturing. In the background I'd written up there "rock 'n' roll," "yippies," "hippies," "Beatles," "Rolling Stones." Some of the terms that I would be using.

Lage: Were they familiar with these phenomena?

Litwack: That's a good question. I wondered about this too. They knew something about rock 'n' roll as a genre. I said, "How many of you here—" I had just mentioned the Rolling Stones—"How many of you here know the Rolling Stones and can tell me anything about them?" Not one hand went up, anyone who knew anything about the Rolling Stones. I said, "What about Bob Dylan?" No recognition. I said, "Well, the Beatles." Then one hand went up. I said, "Yes, yes." They said, "Oh yes, we know about the Beatles. Wasn't John Lennon a Beatle?" I said, "Yes, yes." "Oh yes, we know about them because we know that John Lennon was murdered in New York City." This is what they knew. No doubt it was part of a continuing reminder by Chinese media of crime being rampant in the United States and claiming as a victim even someone like John Lennon of the Beatles. That's all they knew about it. They had very limited access to American—

Lage: Did they know current pop music?

Litwack: No, not really. Particularly unlike the Russians in that respect.

Lage: Of course, I bet it's different now.

Litwack: When we were in Shanghai at the end of our visit—in the last week we were able to visit other parts of China. When we were in Shanghai—whenever you're in Shanghai you have many Chinese come up to you who want to be your guide, and everyone on the streets just want to talk to you to practice their English. And in this one case I said, "Well, being in Shanghai it must be at least nice to—" because I'd noticed in our hotel we could turn on the television, and we'd get a lot of Hong Kong broadcasts. He looked at me and said, "Oh, no, no, no." He said, "That's just for you, people in hotels. We cannot get that in any of our televisions."

Lage: Were they more guarded than the Russian students had been?

Litwack: More guarded. Perhaps more guarded. I remember in speaking to my students in Beijing, I said, "Well, I look forward to meeting many of you when you come to the United States as research or teaching assistants." They looked at me like I was out of my mind. [laughter] They looked at me and sort of said yes, but you just had the feeling that this was not about to happen. Of course, it will happen. At that time it seemed pretty far away.

At the time, the one important glimmer of dissent had to do with what was being posted at the university. All of a sudden, there were people posting things at the university on blackboards that were—what do I say?—a challenge, in some way, to what was happening. Not in any real overt sense, but it was the first glimmerings of what would later, of course, become a much more extensive movement of dissent.

Lage: How did they respond to your lectures? Did you get much discussion?

Litwack: Yes, they responded with enthusiasm because it was all new to them. They wanted to learn, and they thought it was a fascinating period. Again, we put the emphasis here on, I did in the lectures too, on dissent as being one of our—we learn from our dissent. Dissent's one of our great strengths in the United States. I think that point came across rather clearly to them.

The American history program there was just getting off its feet. Unlike Moscow, where students were really up on the historiography, knew many of the historians—we could discuss Hofstadter, for example, we could discuss Van Woodward. That would not have been possible in China.

I did lecture outside of Beijing as well, the most memorable one being in Tientsin, which used to be a kind of international city before the Communist revolution. You can go from the Russian sector to the French sector to the English sector, and each sector has its own architecture, based on what the occupying colonial power might have been. There I lectured on race relations. That was where the chair of the department, after my lecture, got up and looked at the class and said, "We thank Professor Litwack for being with us and sharing his views. Of course, as Marxists we know that it's really all a matter of class and not race." That's when I said—I think I may have said this earlier—that's when I said, "Oh, I wish that were true; it would be much easier if that were true." I said, "I disagree with you. Race plays a very important role."

Did I talk earlier about the African students in China?

Lage: I don't believe so.

Litwack: Well, that was to me very interesting. Go back to Russia for a moment. Russia has a place called Lumumba University, which is not too far from MGU. Because I'd asked where—I could see that there were not many black students at MGU. They said, "Oh no, the African students, most of the African students, are in Lumumba University. I said, "Why are they separated? Why not Moscow University?" He said, "Well, there were always some problems we would have with the African students. They would dress too ostentatiously. They would play their music too loud," and they started to repeat all the stereotypes to which we subjected blacks in this country. I thought that was really pretty amazing. I tried to point out—I said, "What are you talking about they play their music too loud? You're imposing the stereotypes." That was how they had rationalized—things worked better, people got along better when they were away, separate. In China, as I spoke to many of the African students at the university—

Lage: There were a number of them?

Litwack: Yes, there was quite a number from Africa. Well, one could criticize the African side of this program too: they were all males. They were sent there for

four years; they would not return to their country for four to six years. No female companionship, so invariably some of them would want to date Chinese women. Well, that was just forbidden. There were violent encounters as a result of some fraternization between Chinese women and Africans. They told me, at least when they would get on a bus, a public bus, and sit down next to a Chinese woman, invariably she would get up and leave the seat.

Having confronted both the Lumumba University stories and what happened in China, it does raise some really interesting questions about race, because we're not dealing here with large black populations, we're dealing here with just small groups, and yet a kind of tension, obvious tension, between the African students, the African population there, and—

Lage: Do you have a conclusion to draw?

Litwack: I don't have one—that's something I've been working on—except, it certainly has something to say to that whole argument about race and class. Whether race is a false construction or not, in the minds of many people here in this country and elsewhere, it exists, and it exerts a nefarious influence, obviously.

In China, the American history program was just getting off its feet. The program needed books, it needed a continuing flow of people, and I hoped that that would continue. But for us it was just to be in China, just to mix with the people there, and to have a chance to travel and see other parts of China. We went to Shanghai for about five days. Then we went to two outlying cities that were famous for their lakes and beauty. That was at their insistence; they wanted us to see more of China than simply Beijing. Both experiences in China and Moscow were unforgettable.

I have to go back again to Russia, because there is something I neglected to talk about—it was, I guess in many ways even a highlight of my trip there. When we were in Baku we were to return to Moscow and from there we'd be returning to the United States. I asked to go to Kiev, because my mother, after all, had always told me about Kiev, and she had come from Boguslav, about 100 miles outside of Kiev. She talked about it always.

Fine, so we flew from Baku to Kiev. Once I'm in Kiev, I had to apply for permission to go to Boguslav. We were willing to get on a bus and just go ride off there. They asked if we had relatives there or family there. I said, "No, no, it's where my mother had come from. She had always talked about Boguslav, and I wanted to see it for myself." They considered it for a few days, and they came and said to me, "Well, we will permit you go to Boguslav, but you must hire a car." I said, "Couldn't we just go on the bus?" "No, no, you have to hire a car." I said, "Okay, fine." If he had said, "It will cost you a thousand dollars, I would have found a way to pay it. I would have paid it, gladly." He said, "Well, it will cost you—" I think it was the equivalent of fifty dollars a day for one day. I said, "Fine."

The driver picked us up very early in the morning. It took about two-and-a-half hours to get out there. When we came to the town limits, and I saw the little sign there—because I knew Russian by this time. I could read Russian. I saw, “Boguslav,” I was beside myself. We stopped the car; of course, I took a photograph. I was emotionally overcome, to think that I was actually in Boguslav, the town that I as a child had heard about so often from my mother.

It was really like history had passed it over. It was still a small farming town. We came into the little town, came right up to the little building that housed the mayor, who obviously had been alerted to the fact that we were coming. He was out there to greet us. Took us on a guided tour—

Lage: How many inhabitants, do you think?

Litwack: I would say maybe two or three thousand, at most. When we were driving around, sometimes the car would have to stop because cows were crossing the road. He took us to an ongoing wedding in Boguslav. Then at about 11:00 in the morning we had finished his tour. We were able to get there by 9:00 or 9:30. We finished the tour. He knew very little English.

Lage: And you didn't have a translator with you.

Litwack: I tried my best to talk some Russian. We came to the mayor's office, and he sort of said, “That's all. That's Boguslav.” I said, “Well, thank you,” in Russian, but my family—my wife, my daughter, and myself—we would like to be able to spend the rest of the day, until maybe 6:00, 7:00, just walking around on our own, to see all these places, to feel this town that my mother had talked so much about.” He said, “That's fine.” I told the driver he could come back and pick us up around 7:00, and we had the rest of the day to ourselves in Boguslav.

Again, I was absolutely overwhelmed by the experience. We walked down to the creek.

Lage: Had your mother painted pictures for you, given you specifics?

Litwack: Yes, yes. The only thing we didn't have was her old address. I did not have her address, even the name of the street. I didn't know which place she'd lived in. We went to a cemetery, but I'm sure there was somewhere a Jewish cemetery—but he didn't say anything about a Jewish cemetery, and I guess I didn't ask—where I might have found my great-grandparents. As far as I know, the Jewish population of Boguslav was pretty much wiped out by the Nazis. They came right through. I remember the day when the Nazis—I was reading the newspaper avidly in Santa Barbara—the day the Nazis captured Boguslav. It was named along with a number of other villages. I remember also when it was retaken.

- Lage: Your mother must have been really upset by that.
- Litwack: Sure. Even though we had no relatives, I believe, at that time, living there. But I knew everything that she had talked about. So when I went down to the river, and I saw these older women washing their clothes on the rocks, down by the river, well yes, that's what my mother always talked about, and they're still doing it.
- Lage: Time really did pass them by.
- Litwack: Time had passed it over. It was an unbelievable day, just to think that I was here. It was great. It's too bad my mother wasn't here to know it. [She died in 1972.]
- Lage: She would have loved that.
- Litwack: Yes. Aside from Beijing and Moscow, my overseas teachings included Sydney, Australia, where again I lectured—this was a mini-course in the history of African Americans at the University of Sydney.
- Lage: How did that go over? Did they draw any parallels with their own history?
- Litwack: The African American history class there is a very popular class. It's taught by Shane White, one of my very close friends and colleagues who invited me to come there. Shane has written extensively on African Americans. I took over his class for that period of time. They were again a very eager—a wonderful audience. I would occasionally bring up the question of implications for the history of the aborigines in their country. They would kind of look at me and say, "Oh, no, no, you don't understand. It has nothing to do with aborigines." So aborigines were a difficult, if not inferior, people. They saw no parallels, even parallels between our Indians and the aborigines. Well, they knew I wasn't accepting that argument, anymore than Shane would accept that argument. Shane believes that there are obvious parallels and implications, but I couldn't quite get that through to them. Still, they were a wonderful audience, very receptive, very bright.
- Same thing is true in Helsinki where I lectured there on pretty much the same subject, a kind of mini-course on African American history. which for many of these students was absolutely brand new. They had always heard stories about how blacks were treated in America, and yet that's all they knew. They had really not studied it in any sort of depth.
- Helsinki, Beijing, Moscow, Sydney, those were my overseas teaching experiences. All of them very different, obviously, and wonderful experiences.
- Lage: Did Rhoda enjoy these?

Litwack: Oh yes, absolutely. It was great. We had a week also in Japan—but I wasn't lecturing there—on the way back from China where my colleague Irwin Scheiner happened to be at that time, so we had a wonderful time with Irv and Betsy as they showed us Tokyo, and we went up also to Kyoto. I've lectured to audiences as well in Berlin and in Paris, and Czechoslovakia. I've tried to take the message wherever I can take it. [chuckles]

[end tape 15, side a, begin tape 15, side b]

Litwack: I have been a visiting professor at three southern universities. As I said earlier, if I wanted to teach as a visitor somewhere else in this country, I would want to teach in the South, because that's the area about which I write. The first experience was in South Carolina in 1975, where one of my closest friends, Jack Sproat, was at that time chair of the department. I must say that my experience at South Carolina—both my experiences, all three of them, but mostly the experiences at Miss [University of Mississippi] and South Carolina, certainly, I think helped me immensely in my writing, not only because of the sources that I uncovered at the libraries there, but just living there for, in each case, for about six months.

Lage: Just being in the South?

Litwack: Absolutely. Just being in the South after that period of time.

Lage: Even though it was so much later than the period you were writing about.

Litwack: Oh, but you've got to get the feel for the country. That's what was important for me. I really had a wonderful feel for the country, as well as for the people, mostly by just traveling around the state. I knew so many of these towns and villages from my research, and just to be able to be there and to feel them was exciting.

The experience that really stands out, I suppose, would be Old Miss, just for the fact that it's the University of Mississippi, to begin with. Secondly, unlike my experiences at LSU [Louisiana State University] and University of South Carolina, where I was asked to and wanted to, teach the survey course in American history, just as I teach it here, at Oxford, the University of Mississippi, I chose to teach the history of African Americans from the Civil War to the present.

Lage: As you teach here.

Litwack: Yes. That course had not been offered there before. There was a course in the catalogue on the history of African Americans, and my very good friend and former colleague here, Winthrop Jordan, taught the first half of the course, up to the Civil War, because that was his expertise, and he wrote that masterful book, *White Over Black*. But the second half of the course had not been

offered. They had had an African American in the department teaching the Great Migration, which certainly is in that period, but that was not an entire course in African American history.

Lage: Did you get a sense of why this was?

Litwack: No, I think they just hadn't had anyone that wanted to do that particular period. I don't think it was anything deliberate. I don't think so.

Lage: It wasn't unwillingness to address the difficult issues?

Litwack: I don't believe so, no. and not certainly in what we'd call the modern—the post-integration period of the history of the University of Mississippi.

Bill Ferris was largely responsible for bringing me out for that semester. At that time he was head of the Center for the Study for Southern History, which, of course, had its headquarters right on the university campus. I had met Bill earlier. I think we first met through Larry Levine and then I'd come out to Old Miss on a number of occasions to participate in conferences there. So this was a return, in that respect.

The course was made up of about a hundred students, I would say maybe ten of them graduate students. All of them—because I asked them at one point—all of them from Mississippi with the exception of one who came from Memphis. It was obviously a learning experience for them.

Lage: What was their racial composition?

Litwack: Oh, very few blacks in the course, very few. These were mostly white students, which is fine.

To give an example of what a course like this can accomplish, among other things—the usual lecture I gave on the age of Jim Crow included the experience of lynching and Jim Crow. Two young women students in the course came up to me, and they said, “Professor Litwack, that was certainly an interesting, a devastating lecture. We just didn't know about lynching.”

Lage: They didn't know about lynching?

Litwack: They knew that there were lynchings; they just had no idea what that really meant. Here I'm giving them concrete examples, and some of them right in their own state. Wherever I go to lecture in the South—and I can do this so easily—I can talk about lynchings that occurred in their own community.

Lage: Because you know about so many of them.

Litwack: That's right, exactly. They were really horrified by that, those examples, absolutely horrified. They also said, "Professor Litwack, you were kidding us, weren't you, or putting us on about the separate drinking fountains." I said, "No, no, that happened. Just like in the railroads and the theaters, and et cetera, everything I just said in that lecture." I said, "There's also a very classic photograph that shows two drinking fountains. One's a very modern fountain which says, 'White,' and the other's a rickety little thing, and it's attached by the same pipe where you see a black person getting a drink."

I said, "Where are you from in Mississippi." They said, "Brookhaven." I knew something about Brookhaven. I said, "Did you go to public school?" They said, "Yes." "What was the racial composition in your school?" They said, "Well, you know, about fifty percent black." Then they said, "Oh yes, now we know there were segregated schools; we know about that. But we didn't know about these other things." I said, "Well, you should have learned it."

Two weeks later they come back up to talk to me after class. They say, "Professor Litwack, we were home over the weekend, and we spoke to our parents about what we were learning in this course." Now of course, I'm anticipating the very worst. I'm thinking, "Not only are you learning this misleading information in your history class, but you're getting it from a carpetbagger from Berkeley. Berkeley of all places!" But that's not what they said at all. "We talked about it with our parents, and our parents said, 'Well, yes, yes, everything you're learning in this course is correct, and it's about time you learned it.'" Well, I had to think about that afterwards. I said, "What do you mean it's about time? Why hadn't they taught them?"

Lage: It sounds almost like the Germans after World War II.

Litwack: Exactly what I thought about. I thought about the Japanese after World War II, the way they eliminated World War II from the textbooks; and I thought about the Germans after the war where it took time for that new generation to begin to learn precisely what had happened because Germans didn't want to talk about it at all, or if they did talk about it they talked about it as something that they didn't know anything about at the time. So I thought that was really quite—

Lage: So the parents at this point are saying that, but they hadn't thought to teach what they knew to their own children.

Litwack: I said, "You're from Brookhaven. Now, if you're from Brookhaven you should know one of your more illustrious citizens by the name of Tom Brady, who was a judge," elevated to the court, I think, by Kennedy—one of those deals he had to make in order to get one of his own justices through.

Judge Tom Brady wrote this pamphlet, *Black Monday*, which is on the day the Supreme Court handed down *Brown v. The Board of Education*. I mean, he's

a real racist. You can see by the pamphlet here, “Black Monday, segregation or amalgamation, America has its choice.” You should look at this. This is just to give you an idea here. [shows pamphlet to Lage] Published by the Association of Citizens’ Councils, so he’s a member of the White Citizens’ Council. State rights. Here’s the hammer and sickle ripping up states’ rights. So civil rights is all a Communist plot.

So I said, “Tom Brady’s from Brookhaven.” One of the girls said, “We know Tom Brady. He lives just a few doors away.” She was always calling him Uncle Tom—I mean uncle in an endearing sort of sense. She said, “Oh, he would never be—he couldn’t be the same Tom Brady.” I said, “He’s an ardent segregationist, an ardent racist, believes firmly in white supremacy.” I didn’t have to say much more. I didn’t have the pamphlet to show them. They couldn’t believe it, couldn’t believe it.

They again came back to see me. “Oh, Professor Litwack, everything you said about Mr. Brady was absolutely right.” They thought it was so devastating to know that, to learn that. He’s still a neighbor, but they obviously were beginning to feel somewhat differently about him. So for some students, I can tell you, the course was a real learning experience.

Lage: How much discussion went on in that class?

Litwack: I opened that one up—since there were a hundred students I could open that up for questions. I can’t recall any real vigorous debate. They wanted clarification of certain issues, but I didn’t have the sense of someone in that class wanting to take the position of the white supremacist. If they did, then they kept their mouth shut.

Lage: But did you sense that these girls were not unusual? Were the other students also surprised?

Litwack: I don’t know. That’s a very good question. Maybe I should have followed up by asking other students how much of this information was readily available to them. Because it looked like a pretty good cross section of—to the extent that one can tell. Though maybe they were not a cross section, for why would they sign up for such a class? The fact that they would sign up for a class in the history of African Americans already probably had to tell you something about the students.

We often went out into the Delta, the birthplace of the blues about which I had written and planned to write even more. We had a friend, Keith Dockery, who lived on Dockery Farms, named after her husband and her father. Dockery Farms is known as one of the real birthplaces of the blues. We had met her previously when we had gone to Moscow, to the first international conference on William Faulkner. That was something that Bill Ferris had set up. I haven’t talked about that; we can’t talk about everything. But we had gone to Moscow

to be part of that conference. They drew some of the people from Mississippi, like Keith Dockery, coming from this very distinguished family, and we really got to know her and to enjoy her presence.

In turn, she invited us to come out to Dockery Farms. I couldn't believe I was actually sleeping in the same house. It was almost like being invited to—for me it was almost like being invited to sleep in George Washington's bedroom, because to think of what had gone on in this place!

She even arranged to bring—Charlie Patton was one of the great blues men. Charlie Patton had worked at Dockery Farms. She arranged for us to meet his nephew, who was already in his seventies by this time. And Patton's nephew and his wife came over to the house on an invitation from Keith Dockery. I also noticed that—no reflection necessarily on Keith Dockery—I also noticed that they came through the back door, and I came through the front door. We sat there, and we had a nice conversation. Then they sang, a cappella style, “Been in the Storm So Long.” They had brought the sheet music that they use when they sing that song. I think they no doubt knew that that was the title of the book that I had written.

So Rhoda and I went all over the Delta, exploring its nooks and crannies. Coming to Old Miss afforded me the opportunity to meet Robert Palmer, who I considered the finest historian of the blues. His book, *Deep Blues*, I still recommend as the best book written on the blues. He had once been the music critic for *The New York Times*, but unfortunately he had problems with alcohol and drugs, and finally left *The New York Times* and came out to Mississippi to live. We met. He would teach an occasional course at Old Miss on the blues. He promised to take me on a tour of the juke joints. Only Robert Palmer could get you into the best juke joints in Mississippi. You have to have somebody who knows—

Lage: You can't just walk in.

Litwack: That's right. You don't just walk in.

Lage: What are the juke joints?

Litwack: The juke joints began early in the blues era, early in the twentieth century, where blues people could perform. It could be a store; it could be a home. At a certain time, everything is moved around—the furniture, whatever it is—and it's turned into a party. People come to the party. It's like a rent party in New York, where they sometimes help to pay the owner's rent or whatever it is. It could be a store; it could be a home; it could be a shack just converted for this particular purpose. It would often have to exist with the acquiescence of local authorities, so there was no doubt a payoff of some kind so that local authorities would not raid the place.

Well, some of the finest blues men and women got their start in the juke joints, just as many of our greatest jazz musicians got their starts in the rent parties in Harlem and Chicago. In fact, they always said you weren't really a blues man unless you'd been initiated into the rent parties. That's what it was all about.

Unfortunately, I missed that tour.

Lage: Why, what happened with Robert—

Litwack: The woman he was living with just called and said he was—I knew exactly what she was saying. He couldn't do it, couldn't make it, which means he was in one of his [pause], one of his troublesome periods.

We had a wonderful luncheon with him. He talked about his project, which was essentially to be a book on the origins of the blues. His mind just traveled all over the world in terms of the influences on African American music. Extraordinary mind. When he died, just shortly after we were there, it was just such a loss. It was just a real loss.

Lage: Do we have juke joints in Oakland?

Litwack: [pause] Well, I'd think you'd have—yes, you might have the equivalent of something like a juke joint in Oakland, but it would be more like a bar where people could come in and play. So I don't know if it would exactly fit that term. The juke joints in Mississippi, at least, most of them are not in the town, but out in the rural countryside. So you might have a place that operates in the daytime as a gas station or a country store, you know, where people come, and at night it operates as a juke joint.

Lage: Why was Dockery Farms so important in—?

Litwack: It was one of the largest farms in that area, the Delta, and it had one hundred or two hundred, maybe three hundred families living on the farm.

Lage: White owned?

Litwack: Oh yes, Dockery was very white. White-owned. Black-worked. There were other big farms in that area, too. Muddy Waters came from another farm maybe twenty-five miles away. One of the souvenirs I brought back from Mississippi—Keith Dockery wanted me to have it. Since we were driving we could bring it back. There was an old commissary where the black workers got their goods. They had to take down the commissary some years ago. Now it's all mechanized. There are not nearly as many workers. She insisted I take some of the bricks from the old commissary. One of them holds up the door to my study. [laughter]

Lage: Anything else about that experience in the South that we should record?

Litwack: Louisiana State was different in the sense that, as I said, I was teaching a course on the history of the United States. The same thing was true at South Carolina. It's wonderful when you can have an impact. I'm not sure about LSU, whether I had much of an impact there.

Lage: Was that a whole semester?

Litwack: It was a whole semester, yes. It was always hard to tell how the students were reacting to you there.

Lage: They weren't as forthcoming?

Litwack: Well, not quite as [pause] —I don't know how to—I still had a good time there. Lectured Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Right after my Friday lecture, from nine to ten, I went to my car. My suitcase was already in the backseat, and I was on my way to New Orleans. If I had to do it all over again, I would have lived in New Orleans and commuted to Baton Rouge. I didn't care much for Baton Rouge as a city.

I also had an experience there with my black colleague, Dan Littlefield. He was one of the few African Americans on the history faculty—in fact, the only one. Before I left LSU I wanted to go out and hear some good zydeco, or good Cajun music. So I, of course, went to the right people to get their recommendations. They said, "The best one is Breaux Bridge." Breaux Bridge has probably the best zydeco, Cajun place, and there was also a place in Lafayette.

So we went out there, Dan Littlefield, an African American colleague, and myself, and also one of my graduate students who had been taking my seminar. I think there were about three males, two females. We went to Breaux Bridge and had dinner there, and then we went out to the club and drove into the club parking lot. There were all these big American cars there, for some reason.

As soon as we entered the club, I could tell something—all of sudden people just sort of stopped what they're doing. Suddenly, I see the proprietor coming toward us, and he's motioning like this, meaning we shouldn't be coming in. It still took me a little bit—in the South it still took me a little time to figure out what's happening. He came right up to us. He said, "I'm sorry, you can't come in here; this is a private club." Well, I knew this was not a private club. The person who told us to come here would not have told us to come if it's a private club. I was at the head of our group and my instincts took over, or whatever it was, or my insanity took over, and I said, "I want to see your charter." As soon as I said that he started to push me toward the door, telling my friends they could come in if they wanted to, but I was a troublemaker. He

was very clever—of course, he knew they were not going to go in and leave me outside. Secondly, he was obviously being very careful not to violate the Civil Rights Act by simply saying, “We don’t allow niggers or Negroes or blacks into this establishment.” We knew that was the issue; of course, that was the issue. So we left.

Lage: Did you just have one black person?

Litwack: Yes.

Lage: None of the students?

Litwack: No, just one, Dan Littlefield. So we left and went to Lafayette, went to the club that was recommended there. We had no problems whatsoever, went right in, it was fine. Got back to Baton Rouge, and my friend Dan called a friend of his who was the head of the NAACP chapter in Baton Rouge, who said, “You went to Breaux Bridge? You should have told me. You can’t go to Breaux Bridge.” He pointed out what is still probably very true: there’s still a difference between the rural South and the urban South. The urban South, yes, blacks can go pretty much where they want to go in terms of restaurants, rides, transportation, whatnot. In the rural South, you have to be very, very careful.

Lage: Is there still violence?

Litwack: There’s still violence. The only thing we brought back—my only souvenir from Breaux Bridge—oh, I don’t have it. It’s being put to use somewhere else right now—it’s a roach killer. I use it for flies. It’s a roach killer.

Some years later I’m coming home from campus, and I’m listening to NPR. I suddenly hear “Breaux Bridge.” Well, what had happened in Breaux Bridge? The same thing had happened in Breaux Bridge, except this one had become an incident where they turned away the people who wanted to get into Breaux Bridge, but they had come there for a purpose too. The people they turned away happened to be a number of black and white undercover agents for the Justice Department. What I heard on NPR was that they had leveled a stiff fine—the judge had already ruled on the case—they leveled a stiff fine on this establishment, and they also forced it to take out a full-page ad in all the newspapers in that region saying, “We are open to all people regardless of race, creed, color. We apologize for any previous embarrassment we may have caused.” That was a nice follow-up, at least, on what had happened when we were there. So that was certainly a reminder that there are some real differences between the rural and urban South in race relations. Subsequently, I read a fairly long piece in *The New York Times* where the correspondent addressed that issue precisely.

Lage: Was Dan Littlefield from the South?

Litwack: No, he had come from Illinois, so he was relatively new to the South as well. He now teaches, actually, at the University of South Carolina.

Lage: It would be interesting to see more precisely how this informed your *Trouble in Mind*.

Litwack: It did, yes, right. Well, it will have an impact on the book I'm working on now, because it will force me to look at—you have to be careful of—yes, there's been enormous progress in some areas, and other areas history has passed it over. In fact, if you look at the Delta and travel in the Delta, it seems like history has passed it over almost entirely. You come to little towns now, and half the town now is essentially boarded up because blacks have left; they've gone north. Some of them are almost like ghost towns.

Lage: How did you relate to white southerners? Did you find them warm and appealing?

Litwack: Oh yes, sure, I had no problem at all with white southerners. I enjoyed their company. I loved listening to them. To me, the richest accent in this country is by far the southern accent. I love the southern accent. Rhoda and I, when we were in South Carolina—our first experience living in the South—would sometimes go to theaters just so we could stand in line and listen to the people talk. We were carried away by the variety of southern accents. I don't know of any dialect in this country that to me is as rich and expressive. I love it. Some people look at me like I'm—they say they can't stand the southern accent. I look at them, and I said, "Well, it's the loveliest accent we have in this country. But save me from that New England, Midwestern, and New York accent." Those are the ones that grate on me, actually. Not the southern accent.

Lage: The southern's so melodic.

Litwack: Oh, it's melodic. It's just beautiful to listen to. Oh, yes. I enjoyed very much the people we met there. I tend to enjoy people almost everywhere though.

Lage: It would appear so.

Litwack: I traveled through the country, and my way of traveling through the country and learning something about the country—when I first went to Wisconsin our child had just been born, so Rhoda flew out to Wisconsin, and I drove to Wisconsin. I later would drive to Baton Rouge by myself and come back. We both drove, of course, to Mississippi. But when I drive by myself—I've done it three or four times now—my procedure is to leave the hotel or motel I'm staying in around 5:00 in the morning, get a hundred miles under my belt before I stop for breakfast, and then go on until about 3:00. Then I'll stop at 3:00 at some place that I think will look interesting. I'll spend the rest of the day and the evening, of course, in that town, and I'll get to know the town.

Lage: By walking around.

Litwack: I'll walk into the local bar and have a couple of drinks and find out where a good local place is to eat. Just essentially get the feeling for the town. I've done this for the West, Midwest, South. It doesn't make any difference. I just find the country to be absolutely fascinating in that respect.

Lage: I think we'll stop on that note and pick up next time.

[end tape 15, side b]

Interview 8: December 17, 2001

[Begin Tape 16, Side A]

Lage: Today we were going to talk a little bit about the evolution of the field of African American history: what changes you saw and what conflicts. David Lewis, in *Historians and Race*, describes the fourth generation of scholars of African American history, which he considers those coming of age after 1970, as “a jumble of untamed egos, conflicting paradigms and research agendas, and extreme variation in standards. A burgeoning and increasingly contentious universe.”

Litwack: That’s a good description. Oh yes, yes. I think that’s a very good description. I guess then I belong to the third generation? [laughter]

Lage: I wondered what generation you saw yourself as. Not this one.

Litwack: I suppose, in some ways, the third generation. I sometimes think of myself as in the first generation of white historians, maybe the second. I mean, if you think about people like Herbert Aptheker, for example. But certainly there were not many people in the field of African American history when I entered that field, as I indicated earlier.

Lage: It wasn’t a very respected field.

Litwack: No, it was not a very respected field, which is why, as I mentioned in an earlier interview, my professor Carl Bridenbaugh told me that after I finished the dissertation it was time to get back into the mainstream of American history; certainly African American history is not a part of that mainstream. It was not respectable enough to warrant a course. There were no courses in African American history, outside of black colleges.

But the field of African American history is as old as the attempts by African Americans to obtain their civil rights and their freedom in this country. So the early pioneers of African American history, you’d have found them in the antebellum period, people like William C. Nell, who published probably the first history of black Americans. There are a number of them in the antebellum period writing about black history, who are blacks themselves. William Wells Brown would be another example. They were using history as a way of justifying emancipation and justifying freedom. George Washington Williams wrote the first full-length history of African Americans, *History of the Negro Race in America*. That was published in, I believe, 1883, 1885.

Lage: You’re pointing to your volume there. Your two volumes, it looks like.

Litwack: Yes, I’m very proud of those volumes. This was a fully researched and authoritative work, which didn’t gain much attention outside of a small circle of people.

Then I suppose the two individuals who emerge as the real pioneers of what we would today call black studies, African American history, would be Carter G. Woodson, who founded The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, also the founder of *The Journal of Negro History*; this in the early twentieth century. Soon afterwards, or actually almost at the same time, W. E. B. DuBois.

Lage: Were they both in the North?

Litwack: Both in the North.

Lage: In New York?

Litwack: Well, DuBois came out of Massachusetts originally but was educated at Harvard and also educated abroad in Germany. Carter G. Woodson was located primarily, as I recall, in Washington DC. That's where the journal was published. Carter G. Woodson published, oh, certainly more than a dozen important, pioneering works in aspects of African American history that nobody else had looked at, in addition to his text, *The Story of the Negro*, as he called it. He wrote a book about the education of the Negro. He also wrote a book later on called *The Miseducation of the Negro*. He wrote a book on the black church. He wrote a book on Negro migration. He edited a major work of original sources, *The Mind of the Negro as Reflected in Letters Written during the Crisis from 1800-1860*. Then he did *Free Negro Heads of Families in the United States in 1830*, a magnificent work of diligent research. He published a book called *The Negro Professional Man in the Community* by his own publishing house, Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. It also published Woodson's *The Rural Negro*, and *The Negro Wage Earner*. He collaborated with Lorenzo Greene on *The Negro Wage Earner*. So he was very prolific and published innumerable articles as well.

W.E.B. DuBois published his first book with Harvard University Press in 1896, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870*. It had also been his doctoral dissertation. He soon followed this work with a monumental historical and sociological study, *The Philadelphia Negro*, based in part on fieldwork and extensive interviewing. *The Souls of Black Folk*, published in 1903, a collection of essays on history, culture, race, and labor, would have a major impact, and I always assign it in my black history course.

When he returns to writing history, after leaving the NAACP in the early 1930s, he sits down and writes I suppose some would say his magnum opus, *Black Reconstruction in America*, which is one of the books that first inspired me to take an interest in black history. That's probably the most important work in that respect, where he challenges the whole dominant thesis of what happened during Reconstruction. It's from that book that historians since that time have moved the whole history of Reconstruction in a very different

direction. But when *Black Reconstruction* appeared it was ignored, ignored by historians, ignored by the public.

Lage: Who published that? Did Harvard continue to publish him?

Litwack: I actually have the original volume with the dust jacket. It's published by Harcourt, Brace, and Company.

Lage: So he got very respectable publishers.

Litwack: Yes, he did get respectable publishers. I love the subtitle. That struck me at the very moment that I saw the book for the first time in the Santa Barbara public library: *Black Reconstruction: a History of the Part which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880*. This was published in 1935. At the time he was a professor of sociology in Atlanta University. The book was not only ignored by historians but *The American Historical Review*, which is a principal organ of our profession, did not review it at all, which is really astounding, really astounding when you think about that. It was really ignored and only came to be appreciated some years later when other historians, black and white, turned their attention to Reconstruction and began to reconstruct the history of the history of Reconstruction. That book remains a very important influence in that respect.

John Hope Franklin, of course, is also an important pioneer. When I first met him as a graduate student at Berkeley, when he came here to teach that summer in 1957, I believe it was, he had already published *From Slavery to Freedom*. That became a textbook that would be read by millions of Americans. It also had an impact.

Lage: He came here to teach in '57. Do you know how that came about?

Litwack: It was a summer course. He taught a summer session course, not on the history of black people but on the social history of the United States, and I was his reader. That's how we met, and we've been very good friends ever since that time. In fact, I've already done what you're doing. I did a long interview with John Hope Franklin at his home in Durham, North Carolina, which should be published probably in the February issue of *American Heritage Magazine*. My first attempt at oral history. [The Road from Rentiesville, Litwack, Leon F., *American Heritage*, Feb/Mar2002, Vol. 53, Issue 1.]

Lage: How old is he now?

Litwack: John Hope is now about eighty-six and is as sharp as ever.

Lage: So those were the pioneers.

Litwack: Those were the pioneers.

Lage: But still not really accepted.

Litwack: Other people should be mentioned because they're again also often neglected. Somebody like Alrutheus A. [Ambush] Taylor, who in the 1920s to 1941 also did a series of books on Reconstruction in particular states: Virginia [1926], South Carolina [1924], and Tennessee [1941]. All of these, again, rewriting and reconstructing the history of that time.

Lage: And using new sources that others hadn't used?

Litwack: Well, using new sources, but as with DuBois, it was not simply a matter of finding collections which had been ignored. It was also looking at the same collections but coming away with different conclusions, and also looking at the evidence in a much larger context, or maybe looking at materials that previous historians had neglected, but within collections that everyone knew about, so it wasn't as though they discovered some treasure trove. What they discovered was that previous historians had really distorted the history based on materials that were available to them, which means there were no excuses, that they had an agenda, essentially.

Lage: An agenda or just tunnel vision?

Litwack: Well, tunnel vision, but also agenda. The agenda was to persuade Americans that black people had once been given their full civil rights, the right to vote, but had essentially squandered them in an orgy of corruption. Therefore, one can understand why the white South would want to put restrictions on blacks as voters, as office holders, and even as fellow Americans. So the whole era of Jim Crow was in many ways justified by what the white South claimed had happened during Reconstruction, a story that would be accepted, by and large, in the North and, in part, as a way of avoiding responsibility for what was happening in the South. So yes, I think one would call it really an agenda, and it included liberals as well as conservatives. Someone like Claude Bowers, who was a liberal Democrat, published some very, you might say, leftish books on Thomas Jefferson, for example, also wrote a book called *The Tragic Era* on Reconstruction, which informed generations of Americans about the so-called orgy that took place at that time.

I've asked a few of my graduate students to think about it, but no one has done it yet, but someone needs to do a history of the history of Reconstruction, because that would be a fascinating story.

Lage: Can you describe a little bit about how black history became legitimized within the historical profession and here at Berkeley?

Litwack: It became legitimized largely through the impact of the civil rights revolution, the whole civil rights movement, which called attention to the ways in which black people had been dealt with, had been treated, and had been written about. So what emerges is a new interest, or an interest, even, in African American history.

In any situation like this, there's apt to be, on the part of some, an overreaction; that is replacing old lies with new lies, or replacing old myths with new myths. Certainly it's happened in the history of every people, and I suppose it was bound to happen in the history of black people as well. So for some there was a tendency to romanticize, to use history as a social therapy, a political therapy, and to manipulate the facts with that noble end in mind.

Lage: Was this fairly obvious to you, for instance, as this evolved.

Litwack: I felt it was, yes. You winced; at the same time you understood the motive behind it. You understood why black people would now want to take great pride in their past, allow for hardly any criticism of that past, almost any internal dissension. But to me that was showing disrespect to the field, because it wasn't necessary to engage in these kinds of polemics.

What I try to explain to my students in the very first day of the course on the history of African Americans and race relations is that if they're looking for social therapy, if they're looking for politics, they should go somewhere else. What I want to make clear to them is that the history of African Americans is a history as complex, as full of ambiguities, as the history of any people, and also as rich as the history of any people, whether it's the history of the English people, the French, the Russians. So I want them to take the course seriously in that context. That means that we have to deal with the fact that there is no one black voice, and you try not to trivialize this history in any shape or form.

You also, of course, have to look for other kinds of sources, as I've indicated. It's very important because most black Americans did not leave the kinds of journals and newspapers and whatnot that other people had, that white people had left, for example, privileged white people.

Lage: Was this something that was discussed at the meetings of historians? The problem with romanticizing?

Litwack: It came up in meetings. I attended a few meetings that were really close to being exclusionist.

Lage: Would this have been in the sixties, seventies?

Litwack: In the sixties. There were historians like Herbert Gutman who were virtually shouted down. Why? Because they challenged the accuracy of his work, or challenged his history? No, because he was a white man invading their terrain.

There was some resentment along those lines. I was very fortunate; nobody has ever questioned my teaching this course or writing in this field as a white person, but others have not been so fortunate.

Lage: Why do you think that there's this difference in treatment?

Litwack: I cannot really explain it. Maybe Herbert Gutman happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time when he was vigorously attacked for what he was saying about the black family, even though what he was saying about the black family was his very important corrective of how the black family had previously been distorted and maligned. But it had nothing to do with it. It wasn't the content of what he was saying as much as the fact that he was saying it. Maybe if I had given a paper that same meeting the same thing would have happened. I was there as an observer; I was not there as a participant. I mean, I was not there as a paper presenter.

Lage: I think Ken Stampff told me he had been challenged also.

Litwack: Yes, yes, I think that's right. Well, he was challenged in large part because of the phrase that he used in the introduction to *Peculiar Institution* that came to be badly distorted. That is that essentially black people are—what is it? Black people are white people with black skins?" No, that's not quite there. Let me get it. [goes to get the book] I should know that one by heart by now. [reading from *Peculiar Institution*] "I have assumed that the slaves were merely ordinary human beings, that innately Negroes are, after all, only white men with black skins, nothing more, nothing less." When Stanley Elkins, in his book on slavery makes his critique of Stampff, he quotes it the way so many people quote it, "that Negroes are, after all, white men with black skins, nothing more, nothing less," leaving out "innately," which is really the point that Ken was trying to make.

Well, I think another reason why people picked on Ken for this particular line is because it underscored for them one of the limitations of Ken's book and that was not dealing in any real depth with black culture and with black autonomy. But, of course, the people who wrote about black culture and black autonomy, as many of them would confess, could never have written their books without Ken's book having been written first.

Lage: What did they wish that he'd explored more?

Litwack: Well, the fullness of and the varieties of black expression and the ways in which they respond to their situation. The kind of thing that Larry Levine would do in *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*. The sort of thing that Eugene Genovese would do in *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, looking more at the quarters, at the people who lived in the quarters, the resourcefulness with which black people tried to grapple with the limits they faced.

- Lage: A different book really. He was looking at the plantation records.
- Litwack: That's right. If I had to pick one book on slavery to assign to my students it would still be Stamp's *Peculiar Institution*.
- Lage: Because?
- Litwack: Because I don't think any book is as good at exploring the relationship between the slaves and the big house, why slavery came to be, the profitability of slavery, which for many was a revelation, the extent to which slavery imposes on African Americans a kind of day-to-day oppression. Also, it does not neglect black protest, not at all, but rather than emphasize slave revolts, I think Ken is very compelling in his argument about why there were not as many slave revolts and about what we call day-to-day resistance to slavery. I think he did exceedingly well. I like some of the chapter titles he used. From the standpoint of the masters, "To Make Them Stand in Fear." From the standpoint of what the slaves were doing, "A Troublesome Property." And his last chapter, "He Who Has Endured." It was certainly not that Ken was in any way oblivious to the depth of that response, but probably didn't do as much as he might have done with the breadth of black response.
- Lage: It's complicated being an historian.
- Litwack: It is. We all expect to be revised at some point.
- Lage: No one expects to really do the definitive history.
- Litwack: That's right. I remember Samuel Bemis wrote a two-volume definitive, it would seem to me, definitive biography of John Quincy Adams. He dedicated the book to the future biographers of John Quincy Adams. I thought that caught it very well.
- Lage: What happened with this group coming of age after 1970? You talked about the sixties a bit, and it sounds like the beginning of the black power movement.
- Litwack: Well, the black power movement comes into being. History in some ways becomes a tool that is used to advance the black power movement, advance the idea of black autonomy, of black independence. In the process, some history is distorted, some history is manipulated. Again, this has been true of every group in our population that has written about its own history.
- Lage: Including women, do you think?
- Litwack: Oh, I think so, absolutely, sure. History becomes a matter of heroes and heroines, and it's just not that easy.

- Lage: Has that settled down now? Is that a thing of the past?
- Litwack: I think so. The other thing is we had also a first generation of young black scholars. That raised some problems in some areas because you had some very gifted people who were appointed to some very good positions. As soon as they'd arrive on campus they would often be the only black person in the department, if not the only black person in the university, so they were on every committee you could possibly imagine. They all wanted such and such to be in this decision or that decision. If any problems arose with black students, well, they would bring him out, or her, to deal with the problem. It was really a black man's burden that they had to bear.
- Lage: In terms of being able to advance their own scholarship?
- Litwack: That's right. Then after five or six years the department would say, "Wait a minute, where's your work? Sure we'd like to promote you, but where's your written work?" as if they'd had that much time to devote to it. But you still had some very important people emerge from what I would call the first generation of black scholars after the—what would we call it?—the rediscovery of black history. People like John Blassingame, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Sterling Stuckey, Tera Hunter, and Robin Kelley, and ultimately some of my own students fit into that category, like Clarence Walker and Waldo Martin.
- Lage: What about hiring black historians at Berkeley? What was the course of that process?
- Litwack: In the beginning of the civil rights turmoil and the new emphasis on black studies there were many of us in the department who wanted very much to appoint a black person. Our first attempt to do so was first to invite Nathan Huggins to come to our campus as a visitor. That must have been around 1971, '72. I think I've talked about Nat before. Nat and I were undergraduates together at Berkeley, knew each other quite well. He almost worked with Ken Stampp and decided—someone gave him a fellowship to Harvard. He decided to go to Harvard, where he worked with Oscar Handlin. But we continued to meet.
- His first job was at Long Beach State College. They had called me, said they had an opening in American history, did I know anyone. I think at that time I was still possibly at Wisconsin. I said, "Well, yes, I do happen to know someone who'd probably be very interested: Nathan Huggins." They were very excited when I told them about Nathan Huggins. For some reason I didn't say anything—they didn't ask me—I didn't say anything about the fact that he was African American. [laughing] He came, I think, to some—the story that was related is somewhat ironic, but I don't know if it's a funny story or not. One of the things they wanted to avoid doing, apparently, was to hire another Jewish person in the department. [laughing] When Nat showed up,

well, they achieved their objective, or thought they had achieved their objective, but they had an African American. Actually, Nat's really half Jewish, half African American.

Lage: [laughing] That's even more ironic.

Litwack: So he's at Long Beach. Then my friend Jack Sproat at Lake Forest calls, and he has an opening. I recommended Nat. Nat goes to Lake Forest. Then he went to the University of Massachusetts, at the new campus opening in Boston. Then we brought him out that year. He had just finished or was finishing his book on the Harlem Renaissance. We had him for the whole year. He was terrific. We immediately began to move to hire him. We had a vigorous discussion in the department, but the department voted to hire him or to make him an offer. At the same time Columbia made him an offer. It was a very difficult decision for Nat. He finally decided to go to Columbia. So that was our first major effort, and we would have had our first black historian if Nat had agreed to come.

[end tape 16, side a; begin side b]

Litwack: I was working in African American history; Winthrop Jordan was working in African American history; one could say Larry Levine was certainly in African American history, so we already had three working in that area. As far as the course itself was concerned, which we had started in 1968, that was a course that Winthrop Jordan and I got started and divided between ourselves; he did the first half, and I did the second half.

That's an interesting story because this is what happened to my good friend Otey Scruggs who I'd been to high school with in Santa Barbara. He also went Harvard the same time as Nat did and was also interested in African American history. The Harvard approach was to say, "If you're African American, why don't you do something else for your thesis, your dissertation?"

Lage: They thought it was better for their development as a scholar?

Litwack: That's right, that's right. Nat decides to do a dissertation under Oscar Handlin on Boston charities in the antebellum period. Otey Scruggs, under the direction of Frederick Merk, decides to do a dissertation on migrant workers in California. After those two had finished their dissertations, both actually went into African American history, both teaching and writing.

Going back to our hiring a historian in our department, we continued to look for people, and we continued to ask people if they were interested. I remember once talking to John Blassingame about the possibility of coming to Berkeley. We were interested, I know, at one point in Sterling Stuckey, who was at Northwestern. One of the reasons I went to the meetings of the Association for

the Study of Negro Life and History, among other reasons to go, was to look for people and to interview people—not interview, but to discuss with people their interests and whether they’d be interested in coming to Berkeley.

Our next major move, however, was to hire Waldo Martin.

Lage: Was he the first African American?

Litwack: Yes. We also have an African woman who teaches African history. Waldo becomes the first African American in the department, yes.

Lage: When you say you were looking for possible hires, was the department semi-officially asking you to do that, or was it a group within the department?

Litwack: I think both. Larry, Win, and myself were particularly interested and actively trying to bring someone here. Others in the department were certainly sympathetic or were trying to do only—as some would always say, “Yes, but we expect the same standards to apply to these people as to any other appointment we’d make in the department, and that would be an insult to the field to lower our standards in any possible way.” Well, I’m not going to argue with that. I don’t think we did. [tape interruption]

Let me say something more about the department and then I want to go back to the whole field of African American history. Before Waldo Martin joined the department—keep in mind that there is a Department of African American Studies, and we had a very good relationship and continue to have a good relationship with them. They were hiring people, and I must say their search committees did a much better job than ours. They hired Albert Raboteau, who did a manuscript that would be published by Oxford Press on slave religion, an outstanding young historian. We profited from that relationship because ultimately we gave him a half-time appointment in our department. So I suppose technically one might say that Albert Raboteau was the first African American in the department, but it was African American studies who brought him here. The same thing would be true some years later of Earl Lewis, who came here also in African American Studies. We also gave him some status within our department—another outstanding young scholar in the field. Both of them left Berkeley, Raboteau to Princeton University and Earl Lewis to University of Michigan. [Lewis would subsequently leave Michigan and become provost and executive vice president at Emory University. He was elected in 2012 to be the next president of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.—added during narrator’s review.]

Lage: Is there a problem with competition for good black scholars?

Litwack: Oh yes! Enormous competition. Oh, absolutely. It’s sometimes hard to hold onto people because they get fabulous offers elsewhere. I think we’re always able to match the offers; it’s just the matter of the individual trying to make a

decision about where he wants to live. It's always hard for me to believe they wouldn't want to live here. [laughter]

Going back to what happens to the field of black history, I just want to make myself very clear. What I was trying to suggest earlier is that in the name of studying the history from the bottom up, which was a very faddish expression, that some fad, some triviality, some distortion, was bound to emerge. In that search for a usable past, which is again a term that one heard many times, complexity was sometimes ignored. As I said, new myths sometimes replaced old lies. I think partly to offset that stereotypical notion of black passivity, some historians reacted by dramatizing only the heroic moments, and some gave way to sweeping exaggerations, to a variety of romanticisms, canonizing black heroes, and again to that misleading notion of one black experience, one black voice, without even the suggestion of inner conflict and dissension, or as I would say, as if to deny the very humanity and diversity of black Americans.

I wanted to underscore the point I made earlier that there was nothing unique about these efforts, that almost every immigrant group has tried to maintain ethnic interests and identity. Nationalists have invoked history for their cause and abused it for their own purposes, and history as a form of socio-psychological therapy designed to build self-esteem is hardly a new phenomena. It's never been good history, and it's still not good history.

- Lage: Is it fading away now would you say?
- Litwack: Yes, I think so. There will always be some of it around, as there is with American history. Every history produces its heroes and its legends and its myths, and the history of white America, after all, is replete with it.
- Lage: Absolutely. During these years, the sixties and seventies, when you think of the height of the black power movement, was your thinking about race challenged at all, or your own sense of yourself as a white man with this great interest in black history?
- Litwack: I don't recall any.
- Lage: I don't mean just outside did someone challenge you, but inside did you feel questioning?
- Litwack: No, not at all. I felt that I was making an important contribution to African American history, to the teaching and writing of African American history, and that that was as important as many other efforts that were being undertaken in other areas. So I felt, in some ways, I think within myself, at least, I always felt that I was part of what might be called a struggle, but obviously as a white person living in the North, my position's going to be rather different in that struggle than African Americans, for example, who were right on the battle lines.

Lage: I would just guess that the way you've described growing up and always feeling a part of the struggle of the common man, that it would hurt to all of sudden have the black power movement come along and say, "No, you're not a part of this."

Litwack: That's interesting. I never looked at it that way. I guess I never took it personally. [laughter] I think I understood what was happening in the black power movement. I could appreciate what was happening in the black power movement. I thought Stokely Carmichael's rhetoric was very compelling.

But also, there was something pathetic about it. Pathetic is maybe not the right term, but you sense that [pause] that they couldn't win, because power in this country rests with white people, and you can't take that power away from white people unless you really challenge them where it counts, in the economic hierarchy. So I didn't—it's like Booker T. Washington. Sure, it's fine for blacks to open up their own stores, but how do they compete with the chain stores? Blacks who would be asked why they patronize the chain stores when they should be patronizing their own neighborhood store would say quite simply, "We can't afford to go to the neighborhood store when we can get much better prices at the other stores."

The same thing with political power. All right, let's say you gain political power—and they did gain political power, right? Mayor of this city, mayor of that city. Just as they would come into power, the economic infrastructure of that city would move elsewhere; the tax base would begin to move elsewhere. It was like you couldn't win. So blacks achieve political power in the cities, and whites move out of the cities. It's a very tough battle. Expectations are still raised and disappointed or betrayed.

So yes, I could appreciate the rhetoric of the black power movement, but I didn't expect that it would bring about any kind of real revolution.

Lage: Very complex stuff. Any more to say about that?

Litwack: When you look at the field of African American history today, what you're struck by is the quality of the young white and black scholars who are now engaged in research in that field. It's quite an extraordinary development. Even just in the last ten years you've had a—you just go to any bookstore or any convention now, and you see all these new books coming out, and many of them are really very, very good. There's still much to write about. The field was ignored for so long that you couldn't run out of subjects too readily. Many of my own graduate students, of course, have been a part of that movement, and I'm very proud of that. I'm proud of the kind of work that they have produced and are continuing to produce.

Lage: Should we look at your graduate students now?

Litwack: Sure, yes. That would be a good transition.

Lage: That seems to follow, doesn't it?

Litwack: Absolutely. That follows perfectly. I've had something like twenty-five graduate students who have gone on and finished a dissertation. I now have eight graduate students working with me, which is really quite a substantial number, and apparently more in the wings. I'm proud of them—of course, everyone is proud of their graduate students, I would think, and I'm proud of them too. They have really written on a diversity of subjects; they have not all written on African American history, because I don't insist that they have to write on African American history. I'm also an American historian, and if they want to write in American history, and they want to write their dissertation with me I'm generally very receptive. If there's someone in the department who I think would be much more helpful in terms of competence in the field I might suggest that to the student, but the student may have some other reasons for wanting to do their dissertation with me, and as long as I feel I can bring something to it I'll agree and usually the other person who may have more expertise can come on as a second reader.

I'm proud of the fact that they have written on a diversity of subjects. I'm also proud of the fact that they have demonstrated a real independence of mind. In other words, I don't think I have produced a Litwack school, where they all will repeat the same general line, or adhere to the same general line, because I don't think there is any general line. I want my students to think independently, to challenge me, for example. That's great.

I'm also very proud of them for the ways in which they've written their dissertations. That is, many of the students who come to work with me, I think, come to work with me because they're attracted to one thing I happen to say very early on: "Don't forget you're telling a story." You can say that to a group of graduate students in a seminar in the first day or two, and they look at you in shock, because supposedly that's old history. They're thinking that it's not really sophisticated or analytical or whatever you want to call it. You can't tell the story and be analytical. I think that's what students sometimes think, and, of course, they're wrong, absolutely wrong. I think many of my students have understood that you can tell a good story, and it can be a very important and compelling story, and that history is mostly about people. And I like the fact they've written clear prose, have told the stories and told them well. I think that's one reason why an overwhelming majority of my students have published their dissertations.

To give you an idea of their diversity of field and publication, I'm going now from the—I'll start from the bottom, that is the first students. [reads from list] My first dissertation, my first student at Berkeley, which is also another story that's appropriate here—Robert C. Toll, who wrote his dissertation on black minstrelsy. It was published by Oxford Press in 1974 as *Blacking Up: The*

Minstrel Show in Nineteenth Century America. Bob Toll went on the job market, as did most of my students, but could not come up with a tenure track position. He did have some problems with where he would teach, because his wife had a very fine job at one of our Oakland high schools as a librarian. But I recall a job opening at Wayne State, a respectable institution, and a job in African American history. So I, of course, recommended Robert Toll. They had scheduled an interview with him. He was to fly out to Detroit for the interview.

I get a call from the head of the search committee. He says, "I'm sorry we have to make this call, but there's something we need to know." "Yes?" "Is Robert Toll Negro?" And I said, "No." They said, "Again, we're really sorry, but we're looking for an African American—" or it was Negro maybe at the time—"to fill this position." I, of course, was not very happy with what they had said.

Lage: What date are we talking about now?

Litwack: Well, let's see. He finishes his dissertation in '72. We're talking about '70, '71, '72—those years.

They said, "Do you have any African American students?" I think that was the time when they asked me that. I said, "Yes," because I did have some actually. They said, "Could you recommend them?" I said, "No, because they have some really top institutions looking them over, and I don't think they'd be interested in Wayne State." I was so angry. I wouldn't have said that ordinarily, I don't belittle a place like that, but I was absolutely angry. To have raised someone's expectations as they did! There should have been some way they could find this out before they scheduled an interview, before they had him buying a ticket to go back for an interview.

Well, Toll, as with a number of my students, has had this problem: they're trained for teaching African American history, and there are many positions in African American history, but mostly these are departments that are looking—I understand this, you see. There's a dilemma here. I understand it. They're looking for an African American in the department.

Lage: That's true. And maybe the students who are going to take those classes are expecting certain things.

Litwack: That's right. A student, a more recent student, Patrick Rael teaches African American history at Bowdoin College. He was hired at Bowdoin College I think in part because Bowdoin College had had some black faculty members teaching that course and had lost them; they went elsewhere. Why? Because there was no black community in that area, and some of them wanted a black community, just as my student, Clarence Walker, I think, wanted something more than Wesleyan, Connecticut, had to offer.

Bob Toll wrote a fine dissertation, followed up with some other books on popular culture, but would never teach.

Lage: So he never did get an academic job.

Litwack: No, he never did get a job. He became, essentially, a freelance writer. I think he occasionally taught as a visitor some places, but he remained in the Bay Area.

[Edmund] Lee Drago teaches at the College of Charleston. He's always taught there. He's published his dissertation on black Georgia during Reconstruction, published as *Black Politicians and Reconstruction in Georgia: A Splendid Failure*, and he continues to be productive, now has three books and has stayed in the area of African American and southern history.

Clarence Walker was my first African American graduate student. He wrote his dissertation on the history of the African American Methodist Episcopal Church during the Civil War and Reconstruction. It was published in 1982 as *A Rock in a Weary Land* by Louisiana State University Press. He's a maverick. He's the one who really can anger some blacks and whites on the left because—not that he's conservative, but he has a very independent mind. When he deals with black history, he has little patience with the romanticizers. [He refuses to transform as rich and complex a subject as the history of African Americans into an exercise in "relevant" politics or into a search for usable heroes.—added during narrator's review.]

He also deplores the people who think they have found everything in Africa, so he comes out harshly on the Afrocentrics, as he did in *We Can't Go Home Again*. You know what that's about then. *We Can't Go Home Again: An Argument about Afrocentricism* [2001]. Before that he wrote a book called *Deromanticizing Black History* [1991]. A rigorous scholar and demanding teacher, he is also a wonderful person. He teaches up at UC Davis. At first he taught at Wesleyan. He decided he didn't want to stay at Wesleyan. Came out to UC Davis. He's been very active in the profession. He's articulate and is willing to say what he thinks on all occasions.

Kenneth Kann wrote a dissertation on working-class culture and the labor movement in nineteenth-century Chicago. He was my first student who wrote in an area that I had once been very interested in and still am interested in, and that is in labor history. After two years he gave up on a history position and went to law school. He's now a lawyer, but continues to write history. He's written two books on the radical/Communist/Jewish community in Petaluma.

Lage: Oh yes, I've heard of his work.

Litwack: Nick Salvatore, I suppose, one might say has been my most successful student. That's very relative; I mean they've all been successful in their own

way. Nick wrote a magnificent biography of Eugene Debs, *A Generation in Transition: Eugene Debs and the Emergence of Modern Corporate America* [1977]. That was his doctoral dissertation. The book was published as *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist*, published by University of Illinois Press in 1982. It won the Bancroft Prize for the best book in American history. He followed that up with a book on *We All Got History: The Memory Books of Amos Webber*, published in 1996 about an obscure black man who left this fabulous journal that Nick found in the Harvard library, which he went out to edit and use as a basis for the work itself.

Nick is at Cornell University and a real leader in his field, one of the prominent labor historians in the country. He writes again—he's a labor historian and he teaches labor history, but he's written about Debs, he's written about Amos Webber, this free black in the North, and he's now engaged in writing what's going to be a terrific book on the Reverend C. L. Franklin, the black preacher in Detroit whose records of his sermons sold as well as the best-selling black singers and black artists.

Lage: He's a current figure?

Litwack: No. The Reverend Franklin died about ten years ago, maybe fifteen years ago, but his sermons were famous, rightfully so. His daughter, Aretha, began singing in his church. Her first record was actually a record of gospel songs from his church. So this is going to be a terrific book. [It was published in 2005 as *Singing in a Strange Land: Reverend C.L. Franklin, the Black Church, and the Transformation of America*. The book helps to illuminate the Great Migration, the diversity of expectations and backgrounds black parishioners brought to the church, and the broader responsibilities undertaken by the urban church as the traditional center and unifying institution in the black community, in this case, Detroit in a period of considerable social and racial upheaval.—added during narrator's review.]

Byron Skinner was my second African American student. He became the president of San Jose City College and wrote a dissertation, which was not published, on the impact of Double V, the civil rights movement during World War II.

Teddy Tunnell teaches at Virginia Commonwealth. He's published three books, most of them dealing with a much needed re-evaluation of Reconstruction in Louisiana.

John Lawrence was a different kind of success story, I suppose you'd say. He wrote a book on the labor movement in San Francisco. But he became the chief of the legislative staff of Congressman George Miller, so he went into politics. He always says his history comes in handy everyday. There's not a day that he doesn't use it in some way. [He just recently retired (February

2013) as the chief of staff for Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi.—added during narrator’s review]

[Waldo Martin is my closest colleague and one of my closest friends. He came to Berkeley after graduating from Duke University. He wrote a dissertation on Frederick Douglas, subsequently published in 1984 by the University of North Carolina Press (*The Mind of Frederick Douglass*). Less a biography than a history of black thought, he places Douglass firmly within both American and African American intellectual traditions. Through Douglass, Martin succeeds in illuminating the paradox of racial identity and American culture and race relations in the nineteenth century. He suggests dimensions of Douglass's thought that are both new and revealing, and he probes more deeply than any previous scholar the tension in Douglass between his identities as a Negro and as an American. His second work, *No Coward Soldiers*, was a study of black cultural politics in post-World War II America, based on the Nathan Huggins lectures he gave at Harvard University. His most recent book, co-authored with Joshua Bloom, is a history of the Black Panther Party, *Black against Empire*. An essential, deeply researched, and insightful study—the best so far—of the complex history, inner workings, and conflicted legacy of the Black Panther party as it waged its relentless battle for constitutional rights and human dignity in the streets of urban America. Few if any works have examined as carefully and as thoroughly the extraordinary apparatus and arsenal of repression the Panthers had to overcome in their brief and ultimately tragic history.

Based on his service in the Department and his national reputation as a scholar, Martin was named in 2012 as the Morrison Professor of American History. It had been my chair until retirement, and I could not have been happier with the choice.—added during narrator’s review]

It is difficult to talk about black Chicago without consulting James Grossman’s landmark book, *A Land of Hope: Chicago Black Southerners and the Great Migration*. This was his dissertation and first book, published in 1989 by the University of Chicago Press. The subject of the black migration to Chicago seems at first glance obvious and familiar, but as one considers the several questions raised by Grossman it becomes more elusive and demanding. What happens, he asks, when a largely landless agricultural black work force migrates to a modernizing, industrializing, overwhelmingly white city, bringing to the new community and to the workplace its own mores, values, and cultural baggage? Grossman served as director and vice president of the Newberry Library in Chicago before assuming several years ago the position of executive director of the American Historical Association.

Susan Glenn also wrote on labor history, but she wrote—

Lage:

It’s the first woman you’ve mentioned, by the way.

Litwack: Yes, that's right.

Lage: What year was that?

Litwack: Well, the first woman actually was Marina. I should say Marina Wikramanayake, when she was my student at Wisconsin. She is Marina Fernando today. Technically she got her degree at UW with Richard Current, because I had left Madison to come to Berkeley. When I was at Madison she was my student, and I read her dissertation as well, but I wasn't officially on the committee because I was at Berkeley. I always think of her as my student. I think she thinks of me as her mentor as well. Her dissertation on free blacks in South Carolina would be published by the University of South Carolina Press.

Susan Glenn wrote her dissertation in women's labor history, a study of women workers in the American garment industry from 1880 to 1906. You can imagine how excited I was to direct this dissertation, as this had been my mother's work experience as a new immigrant in New York. It was published by Cornell University Press as *Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation*.

Lage: Was that a narrative?

Litwack: Yes. All of these are in many ways narrative history. Yes, I think she told a very good story, yes.

Lage: It seems like there would be a lot to that subject.

Litwack: She's followed up with a very different kind of book called *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism*, which Harvard Press published just last year, in 2000.

Lage: That sounds like a very different treatment.

Litwack: Very different, that's right. I think that's more in the direction she's probably going. I think women's history is where she'll do most of her work. Well, I guess the first book is women's history too, as much as it is labor history.

Patrick Miller wrote a dissertation, "Athletes and Academe: College Sports in American Culture, 1850-1945," 1987. Terrific dissertation.

Lage: It's an unusual topic?

Litwack: Yes, yes. Sports history, which is like Negro history was twenty-five years ago. People don't pay any attention to sports history; it's not respectable. How can sports history not be respectable?

- Lage: I don't know. Think of how important it is to American life.
- Litwack: If that's not a part of American life and American culture—I don't understand these biases that we sometimes have. Perhaps sports history always suggests to people historians who are going to write stories about ball games. Well, that's part of it, but that's not the real essence of it.
- Lage: From the title of this dissertation it doesn't sound like this.
- Litwack: Oh no, this is a very important study of the relationship between the academic community and sports, going right back to 1850. The importance of sports in the Ivy League, for example, the first rivalries, and the impact sports would begin to have on the university itself. What I cannot understand—I've told him this every time I see him: "Publish! Publish!" This is the kind of person—very few around—who will put their manuscript in the mailbox, and half-an-hour later come back to wait for the mailman to come pick up the mail so he can take it back home again. Oxford Press gave him a contract years ago. I still hope he'll finish it, because it's so important, so—
- Lage: You mean he hasn't finished the dissertation?
- Litwack: He has not revised it; he finished the dissertation, got his degree in '87, but that's a long time ago. His contract from Oxford came shortly after they saw the manuscript. They liked it. I said, "You can—" I thought it was essentially publishable as a dissertation. It's well written. [This is a very important manuscript and I fear it may never appear, despite my pleas to the author. Focusing on the emerging role of athletic programs in higher education and their enormous impact, this is much more than a study of sports. Perhaps the most critical contribution of this manuscript is to place the development of organized sports where it belongs in the mainstream of American cultural history.—added during narrator's review]
- [end tape 16, side b; begin tape 17, side a]
- Lage: Patrick Miller's at Northeastern.
- Litwack: Right. Richard Boyden wrote on San Francisco machinists from the Depression to the cold war, also labor history. Richard Boyden works at the National Archives in Washington DC.
- David Karnes' wonderful dissertation, "Modern Metropolis; Mass Culture in the Transformation of Los Angeles, 1890-1950." That is a book I think that should have been published; it has not been published. The dissertation was finished in 1991. David Karnes is another one who decided to go to law school, and he's a lawyer in Los Angeles. I'm not sure he's doing anything with the dissertation.

Nina Silber wrote a very important dissertation, turned into a book. [phone interruption] Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900*. That was published in 1993 and has been a very successful book. She, again, is one of those who is really establishing herself as a major person in the profession [at Boston University].

Mimi Henriksen is at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu. This was certainly a very different kind of dissertation for me to supervise, but I loved every moment of it. The book would be called *Dr. Strangelove's America: Society and Culture in the Atomic Age*. It was essentially a book on how we learned to live with the bomb.

Lage: Oh my, that's very different from your research interests.

Litwack: Yes, but it was a wonderful dissertation, a two-volume dissertation. Large book as well, published by the University of California Press in 1997. What she looks at, in terms of how we learned to live with the bomb, she looks at literature, mostly fiction. She looks at movies, television, radio. All popular culture. Remember a film that came out called *The Atomic Cafe*?

Lage: Yes. I don't know that I saw it.

Litwack: It's almost a full-length study—if you wanted to run a film with the book, that's the film you'd run. Yes, it's very good.

Paul Harvey, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. This is a wonderful example of a student who—what would you do if you looked at an application, and he's a person who has all the right credentials in the sense that he has a good GRE score, good letters, and he's a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist College, Oklahoma City. I know people who would say, "Well, no matter what his GPA is, it's just not a reputable institution, or not one that would necessarily produce the kind of person we would want in our program." Well, as I've always said, "Whoever was on that admissions committee that year—I wasn't—showed great insight."

Lage: Not to divert you, but is there an admissions committee within the history department that reviews applications?

Litwack: Yes, that's right. I've served on probably at least five of them over the years. It changes every year. Or you might be on it for two years in a row and then you'll be off of it for five or six years.

Anyway, he proved to be an outstanding student, wrote a dissertation that would be published as *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities Among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925*. In other words, it's a study of the Baptist Church, whites, and blacks. But, so much of religious history is

institutional history, and his is not. His is really about people, about Baptists, and what happens in the Baptist churches, relationships.

Lage: Between white and black?

Litwack: Oh yes, and that as well, yes. Kind of a social and cultural history of the church.

Lage: What sources does he use?

Litwack: Religious newspapers, autobiography, memoirs, manuscripts, letters out of collections. He showed great resourcefulness and spent many, many months in archives. The major archives of black baptism are in, I think, Nashville. There's a large collection, a huge collection in Nashville, and some in, I think, Oklahoma. Paul Harvey has been a very productive scholar and is among the leading historians of American religious life.

Cita Cook [Florence Elliott Cook], who teaches at West Georgia College, is a native southerner, wrote her dissertation on "*Growing Up White, Genteel, and Female in a Changing South, 1865-1915.*"

Lage: Is she white?

Litwack: Yes, she's white. And that one's under consideration now by University of North Carolina Press.

Ron Yanosky is another one that's hard to understand. He wrote a fabulous dissertation, "Seeing the Cat: Henry George and the Single Tax in Enthusiastic Reform in America, 1879-1900," in other words on the Henry George movement. That's a brilliant dissertation. He got a job at Harvard as a—what do you call it? It's one of those five-year appointments, essentially.

Lage: Non-tenure track.

Litwack: Non-tenure track. I have heard nothing from him. I don't know if he's done anything but the dissertation. He had come back from the computer world, come back to school, and I think he's gone back to the computer world.

Lage: Maybe he'll be back.

Litwack: Marcy Sacks, at Albion College. [She examined the origins and early development of black New York. She sought to help fill an enormous gap in our knowledge of blacks in Manhattan on the eve of the migration uptown to Harlem. Among the fascinating subjects she studied were the clashes between the largely Irish police force and black citizens, the racial tensions and economic competition between blacks and European immigrants and intraracial tensions between Caribbean and American blacks and between new

arrivals from the South and the “old” and established black population. The book was published in 2006 by the University of Pennsylvania Press as *Before Harlem: The Black Experience in New York City before World War I*.—added during narrator’s review.]

The group that I have now are as good as any group I have ever had. Robyn Iset Anuakan has just finished her dissertation, and it is on black style. She started off wanting to do a dissertation on the famous woman in black cosmetics, Madam Walker, C.J. Walker. But C.J. Walker’s granddaughter was doing a biography, and she had obviously access to the best papers. Anuakan decided to expand her dissertation to just deal with questions of beauty, hair, style, among African American women. I thought she’d be starting in the nineteenth century; instead she started somewhere back in the twelfth century. It’s a great dissertation. She’s on the job market right now.

[Patrick Rael teaches at Bowdoin College. His dissertation was published by the University of North Carolina Press in 2002, *Black Identity & Black Protest in the Antebellum North*. It is an extraordinarily important, innovative, resourceful, and path-breaking book. In my book *North of Slavery: the Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860*, published in 1961, I had hoped to open up for closer examination a much neglected but critical area of research in American and African American history. My study examined blacks as an anomaly in the free North, focusing on white attitudes toward and treatment of blacks, along with black responses. But Rael examined in depth the political culture and thought of African Americans, with a particular focus on black identity and the origins and articulation of black protest thought in the antebellum North. This helped to fill an important gap in the literature.

Charles Postel teaches at San Francisco State University. He is among the top five graduate students I have taught at Berkeley. With his dissertation on Populism he will rewrite the history of Populism & the late nineteenth century.

Lage: Really?

Litwack: Yes. He’s looked at Richard Hofstadter and Lawrence Goodwyn on Populism. He’s come up with a strikingly different interpretation, which in some ways borrows from both of them, but also shows tremendous independence of mind. It has already altered the way we think about Populism (*The Populist Vision* was published by Oxford University Press in 2007 and won the Bancroft Prize for the best book in American history.) It transformed the scholarship on Populism, social movements, and American society in the late nineteenth century. In his assessment of populist ideology and action—the ways, for example, in which Populists learned from and sought to apply appropriate business principles to the problems they confronted—in his grasp of the diversity of the Populist movement and their version of reality, in his

inclusion of urban and labor Populism, and in his treatment of Populists and race relations, Postel broke new ground.

Paul Alkebulan has returned to college. He had been out of college for some time. In the 1960s he was a Black Panther, and that movement was the subject of his dissertation and first book—the decline and fall of the Black Panther Party. He brings to his work a meticulous respect for the complexity and integrity of the past that successfully avoids the dangers of sentimentality, romanticization, and condescension. He has avoided discarding old distortions for new myths. The result is a fascinating account, based on scholarship and personal experience. He was a professor at Virginia State University until his recent retirement.—added during narrator’s review.]

Lage: That sounds fascinating.

Litwack: Heather McCarty is working on race relations in prisons, with a focus on California. She has, in fact, for the last two years taught American history at San Quentin. It’s such a good subject, that I can’t imagine why someone else hasn’t done it already. It’s such a natural subject, race relations in the prisons. She’s had access to prison newspapers, some oral history. There’s a lot of good source material available. [Her dissertation was completed in 2004: “From Con-Boss to Gang Lord: The Transformation of Social Relations in California Prisons, 1943-1983.—added during narrator’s review]

Rachel Reinhard is looking at the Pacific Freedom Democratic Party and essentially the Mississippi Summer of ‘64. [Her dissertation was completed in 2005: “Politics of Change: The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and the Emergence of a Black Political Voice in Mississippi.” She is now employed in the Teach for America program.—added during narrator’s review.]

Sara Jackson, who I knew would be a good student as soon as I read her—I was on the admissions committee that year—when I read her sample. We ask for a writing sample, and she’d written something on Las Vegas and Los Angeles which was outstanding, both the prose and the argument. She is writing a dissertation on—what would you call it? She has a good title for it—bad women. That is, bad women and music, from Bessie Smith to Janis Joplin, using them to look at women in the musical culture, but in a certain kind of musical culture. She’s the kind of person you know what she’s going to do with it will be exciting.

[The narrator added the next four pages during the editing process, several years after the taped interview was completed.]

That she was enrolled simultaneously in a research seminar in history and a poetry workshop given by an outstanding American poet, and at the same time sang in a local rock band underscored the diversity of her skills and achievements. In my more than forty years of teaching, this was the first time

a student had a literary agent and a publication contract (with Norton Press) before completing the dissertation. She quickly published the dissertation, and the book was a delight to read, *A Bad Woman Feeling Good: A Legacy of American Women Singers, from Bessie Smith to Janis Joplin* (2007).

David Johnson, another African American student, wrote on Reconstruction in the North, examining blacks in the northern states in that critical period after the Civil War. We had gone back and forth on topics. Apropos of what we just discussed, in this case I was probably more instrumental in helping to frame the subject. David has taught at Berkeley City College and is now a dean at one of the Bay Area's community colleges.

For his dissertation and first book, Christopher Strain focused on the role of (and the debate over) violence, nonviolence, and self-defense in the civil rights movement, examining not only Martin Luther King, Jr. but neglected figures and organizations such as Robert Williams, the Deacons for Defense and Justice, the original Black Panther Party in Lowndes County, Alabama and the Black Panther Party it inspired in Oakland. Strain teaches at Florida Atlantic University and has published several books on the civil rights movement.

The more I read on blacks and the Vietnam War I find it surprising that there is no focused scholarly study. One of my last graduate students, Daniel Lucks, has filled that void with the revision of his dissertation, and the University of Kentucky Press will publish it. An older student (he left his law practice to enter graduate school), he has faced a tough search for a tenure track teaching position.

In my study several years ago of black southerners in the age of Jim Crow, I came to realize the dearth of published material on health care, and hence I very much welcomed Andrea Patterson's decision to pursue the subject. In her dissertation, she succeeded in capturing the multiple dimensions of the problems confronting southern black men and women in their often doomed efforts to protect their health. The relationship between health care and racism is clearly established, as is the degree to which whites finally moved to improve the health conditions of blacks, not out of a sudden compassion for black lives but out of a sudden concern for their own lives and good health--that is, the grim realization that germs know no color line.

Jason Sokol is among the most promising in a new generation of American historians. I came away from reading his dissertation (which won the best dissertation award in 2006) with profound admiration for his ability to communicate important historical material, weaving narrative and analysis into an eminently readable book. Based on his previous work, I expected no less. His book, *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights, 1945-1975* was published in September 2006. It is a stunning achievement—a tour de force of original research and meticulous scholarship,

thoroughly engaging in its conceptual inventiveness. Sokol is teaching at the University of New Hampshire.

How to best describe Ben Urwand is a formidable but enjoyable task. He defies summation. A native of Australia, he came to Berkeley to study film and history. He is an imaginative and creative scholar. He also writes the vocals and is a founding member and the lead singer of a classic rock band in the Bay Area, “The Attachments.” And his dissertation is a compelling and unique examination of an extraordinary chapter in the history of cinema in a totalitarian society, including Hitler’s well-thought-out film theory, how decisions were made on what Hollywood films the German people would be permitted to see, and how Nazi leaders fully understood film as a critical technological advance for imparting propaganda to the masses. The study also grapples with many ironies and contradictions, none of them as disturbing as the cultural interaction between Hollywood studios and Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1940, when some 250 American films were shown in Germany. The Hollywood studios took pains to protect their lucrative German market and refrained from criticizing the Nazis. Only when the United States entered the war did the Nazis become the stereotypical enemy in Hollywood films. Urwand found this “startling” in view of the fact that Jews owned and ran most of the Hollywood studios in this period. For eight years, Hollywood and the Nazis compromised fundamental principles to do business with each other—an “unlikely relationship.” In the Fall of 2011 Urwand was appointed to a three-year term in the Society of Fellows at Harvard University. Harvard University published the dissertation in 2013 as *The Collaboration: Hollywood’s Pact with Hitler*. Predictably, even before its publication the book provoked considerable attention in the media. I am confident that Ben Urwand will leave his mark—as a historian, he will be difficult to categorize, impossible to ignore.

Felicia Viator completed her dissertation in 2013 and will be my last Ph.D. I do not leave with a whimper but with a loud bang—hip hop. Felicia defines broadly and imaginatively historical documentation and historical consciousness, bringing to life the historically voiceless. Her dissertation, “Gangsta Boogie: Los Angeles in the Post-Civil Rights Era and the Rise of West Coast Rap,” is a breakthrough book, exploring race relations in the post-civil rights era through the music it provoked and the profound feelings it unleashed. The beat, the sounds, even the names the artists adopted gave voice to new moods and realities. Hip Hop raised the stakes. For many young blacks it was simultaneously a way to transcend their condition and (as Ice Tea characterized it) “a scream from the bottom.” Although I did not supervise her dissertation, I could not conclude this discussion of the students who worked with me without mentioning Amy Lippert, a young scholar and teacher of extraordinary originality and accomplishment. I have known her since she enrolled in my undergraduate courses; in her senior year she wrote an honors thesis under my direction. Of the more than 30,000 undergraduate students I taught at Berkeley over some forty years, she easily stands in the top one per

cent. I read the papers she submitted in three different courses, and each attested to her exceptional qualities: “Americans and the Final Solution,” in which she examined how the Holocaust transformed the memory of World War II in the postwar world; “The M.C. Parker Lynching,” in which she studied the role of vigilante justice in the movement for federal anti-lynching legislation; and “The Grapes of Wrath: Images of Women in the Great Depression and The Role of Ma Joad in the Film and Novel.” The senior thesis (for which she received highest honors) was distinguished by its original research, meticulous scholarship, and bold conceptualization. A difficult and neglected topic, “Rationalization of Righteousness: African Americans and the Holocaust” examined the often tension-ridden relations between black Americans and Jews and how these affected the ways in which blacks viewed the Holocaust.

As my research assistant over several years, Amy Lippert was incredible—that is, the most productive, the most discerning, and the most knowledgeable of the many I have had the good fortune to supervise at Berkeley. Not only was she diligent and resourceful in providing the materials I requested but she had that amazing capacity to locate more than I had imagined might be available on a particular subject by following her own instincts and drawing on her knowledge of research methods and skills. She is, to put it briefly, the kind of research assistant who is impossible to replace. In acknowledging her assistance for my nearly completed book on the black South during World War II, I will be at a loss to express adequately my indebtedness to her. As my teaching assistant in the survey course, she was invaluable in every respect—for the section she taught and for her collaborative advice and counsel. She is an assistant professor at the University of Chicago.

As of 2012, I have had thirty-nine graduate students who have completed their dissertations under my guidance and one who is completing her dissertation and will have her degree in 2013. *[End of material added during narrator’s review.]*

- Lage: It’s really quite an amazing group. A lot more women recently than earlier on, it seems.
- Litwack: Yes.
- Lage: Do they write a different kind of history or have different interests?
- Litwack: No. I think if you look back at the statistics, you would find that the percentage of women as graduate students has probably also increased over those years. Do they write a different kind of—no, no, I don’t think so.
- Lage: They don’t ask different questions or bring a different perspective?

Litwack: I think there's probably a greater sensitivity—I don't know—I don't want to say that, because I must say male students now have a great sensitivity to gender. I was about to say something that seemed like an easy thing to say, but I'm not even sure it's correct. I don't see that they write any differently or ask different kinds of questions.

Lage: What role do you have in shaping their topics?

Litwack: Most of all, as I tell them, I want them to pick a topic. But I say this to students who are writing 101 papers as well, the undergraduate research seminar, choose a topic about which they are thoroughly excited. In the first place, this is not a dissertation; this is your first book. You must think about it as your first book. This is not an exercise in research and writing; you're writing a book. Therefore, the subject has to be important and also has to thoroughly excite you, because there's nothing worse than having to [chuckles] work on a paper or dissertation that bores you. Those are the first considerations.

Then you work with them in terms of where the sources are, how to frame the paper. One of the first things I want them to do is present me with an outline in description, which we call a prospectus. That will essentially tell me what this dissertation looks like to them at this particular moment. As I keep telling them, "You're going to keep rewriting this outline for certain, but I need to have right now an idea of where you're going with it."

Lage: Then do you have a discussion about that that may mold them?

Litwack: Yes, sure.

Lage: Do you ever say, "No, this won't work?"

Litwack: Yes. I will say no—[pause] I will say no this way: I will say, "No, I'm not sure the sources are available for this kind of study." Particularly those who want to do something very recent. On the other hand, let's take, for example, Nick Salvatore. He started working on the Socialist Party in Oklahoma in the World War I and Progressive Era, because it was one of the strongest socialist parties in America, one of the strongest in American history. He had already gone to Oklahoma to do some research, but he kind of lost interest, or he suddenly decided—he came to my office, I remember so vividly, "I want to do a dissertation on Eugene Debs." I smiled. I said, "Well, Nick, what can you tell us about Eugene Debs that Ray Ginger hasn't already told us?" *The Bending Cross*, by Ray Ginger, to me was a classic. I loved that book.

About fifty minutes into his answer, I stopped Nick, and I said, "Okay, I'm persuaded, I'm persuaded." And indeed, it was a very, very different book, and a much superior book. So yes, they can persuade me too, because my first instinct was to say, "We don't need it. We already have it."

- Lage: What about the student that was going to rewrite the history of Populism?
- Litwack: Oh no, I liked that one immediately. Yes, oh, absolutely. I don't accept Goodwin, and I'm quite critical of Goodwin's interpretation. I would lean probably far more towards Hofstadter, so I welcomed it. And Charles is probably as bright a student as I've ever had, certainly up in the top three or four.
- Lage: Wow. It sounds like you have very good students.
- Litwack: Yes, yes. I really do.
- Lage: Does a particular kind of student come to you versus one who might pick another American historian?
- Litwack: Well, Waldo and I essentially share students in African American history. We let them make their own decisions as to with whom they want to work. We are on very warm terms; we always have been. I don't think either of us have marked out a certain territory for ourselves. We share the course, but anytime Waldo wants to do the second half of the course that's fine with me.
- Lage: But then you have a lot of other students that aren't in African American history, it looks like.
- Litwack: That's right, that's right, and they could go elsewhere, and they know that. So they've come to me for some reason. I'm not going to explore too deeply the reasons they might have come to me rather than somebody else, as long as I feel comfortable in supervising their dissertation. If someone came to me and said they wanted to work on the economics of the stock market during the 1920s, I would say, "You know, I think you're a terrific person. I don't think I can bring very much to that dissertation, and I would advise you to go to Professor Abrams."
- Lage: I can see that. It must be fun too, to have all of these different dissertations that you're involved with.
- Litwack: It's work; it's hard work.
- Lage: Yes, hard work. You have twenty-five PhDs completed and what sounds like about seven—
- Litwack: Twenty-five finished and actually now [counts] eight.
- Lage: Eight in progress. Is that more than most people have, or does it vary a great deal?

- Litwack: I'm not even sure. I know Larry Levine had a lot of students, a large number. I think right now that's a large—I don't know if I've ever had eight working at the same time, if you think about it, because a total of twenty-five over thirty-five, thirty-six years, and to suddenly have eight.
- Lage: How long do they usually work with you before they finish? Do you push them along?
- Litwack: I try to push them along, because actually I got out of here very fast, so I assume everyone can. [laughter]
- Lage: Because the humanities students do have the reputation for lingering.
- Litwack: We have a reputation. We have students who've been around for ten years. I hope to God to have them get out in four years.
- Lage: That's your goal?
- Litwack: That would be my goal, sure.
- Lage: And do you help to place your students?
- Litwack: Yes, I do help, yes, sure.
- Lage: That could be called "the old-boys network."
- Litwack: Well, I write letters for them, and if I know somebody at the institution I will call them, or sometimes they'll call me and ask me to talk about—
- Lage: So there's still this underground way of finding people, as well as the more formal route?
- Litwack: [hesitantly] Yes. But generally speaking, if someone calls me and says, "Do you have anyone for a job?" it's still a job that's being advertised. I could say, "Yes." The person I say "yes" about simply goes into competition with others, so it's not an old-boy network to the extent that you can—if someone calls and say, "Do you have somebody?" And I'll say, "Yes," and they'll say, "Well, we want him." It doesn't work that way.
- Lage: Okay, well that's good.
- Litwack: My policy on reading the dissertations is that I read them chapter by chapter. If I'm the second person on a committee, then I would wait and read the entire dissertation.
- Lage: How do you affect their writing style? It sounds as if you're happy, generally, with how your students write.

Litwack: No, not always. I work very meticulously on their prose. Sometimes the real test is whether a student can act on your first critique when the student resubmits the chapter. When the student submits the final manuscript, you can see the student has learned from what you've said. So if I read chapter one, and I really mark up chapter one, then chapter two comes along, I hope that it won't look like chapter one.

Lage: By the time they've gotten to that point, do most of them get through and get their dissertation finished ?

Litwack: Yes. I think that's increasingly true. I think in my own days as a graduate that was maybe less true. I know students who have floundered during their dissertation stage and never finished their dissertation. I can't think of any student I've had who did not go on—once the student got to the dissertation phase—who simply dropped out and didn't write it. I know some who, as you know, as I told you, dropped out after they had finished their dissertation.

Lage: After they put all that work in. Let's take a pause here for a minute. [tape interruption] We thought that we could continue to talk a little bit more about the governance of the history department. Do you have any more comments along those lines? Why have you never been chairman?

Litwack: First of all let me say that my experience in this department has been all in all a very happy one. I'm probably not the best citizen, as you might say, in terms of participation and departmental meetings. If I'm asked to serve on a committee, I serve on that committee, and I do the best I possibly can on that committee and work very hard on it.

Lage: Are they usually committees for personnel matters?

Litwack: Well, no. I've been placement officer, which means you help in placing graduate students, all graduate students, and jobs. You kind of coordinate the jobs that come in. I have served on the Admissions Committee, as I said, about five or six times. That's an important job, and I take that one certainly very seriously. I have served as the chair of, or a member of, search committees in American history. Also committees of the chair holders, who consider someone for a chair in the department.

Lage: Is that way chairs are chosen, by—?

Litwack: That's the way they used to be chosen. Now it's changed. Now all you do is review a recommendation from a committee that's made up of both chair and non-chair people, and that still goes to the whole department.

I've not been a chair of the department. I never wanted to be chair of the department. I don't like administration. I really don't like administration. It would prevent me from doing what I really want to do, which is teaching and

writing. Fortunately, we've had over the years, relatively speaking, a good series of chairs, terrific chairs. Some not so terrific. That happens.

- Lage: What makes a good chair, or what makes one that isn't good?
- Litwack: I think the best chairs are the people who don't want to be chairs. The ones you have to watch out for are the ones who want to be chairs. [laughter]
- Lage: They exercise too much power?
- Litwack: I think that's probably part of it. I think the ones who don't want to be chair—I shouldn't say don't want to be chair—who are willing to serve if asked to serve, but don't covet the position, they are just better chairs. They don't come in, I guess, with such a—perhaps they don't come in with an agenda. I've had very good experience with our chairs.
- I'm not chair material. Larry Levine and I used to always joke about this. We used to always say, "We're non-chair, non-chair types. Nobody would ever think of having us as a chair." I think that's right. The department, in all its wisdom, I accept that.
- Lage: Gratefully.
- Litwack: Gratefully, very gratefully.
- Lage: In all, it seems to be a department that doesn't have as many conflicts as some that I've heard about, like sociology and political science.
- Litwack: I think relative to some other departments—I guess I've heard about things that are going on in anthropology and sociology. Compared to some other departments, I think we're a very harmonious department. We've certainly had our conflicts, and some of them have caused some rifts within the departments.
- Lage: Are there any we haven't talked about? [pause] We've talked about loyalty oath, free speech.
- Litwack: There have been clashes over appointments. Some of those clashes over appointments have certainly split the department. I can't deny that.
- Lage: Would they be clashes based on ideology, or a view of what history should be?
- Litwack: In part, based on ideology. In part, they're based on whether a person, let's say, deserves the position for which he or she is being considered, whether it be a chair or a promotion. There have been some sharp divisions along those lines.

- Lage: More on the promotion angle than hiring a new person?
- Litwack: Both. In my total experience in the department I'd say both have sometimes provoked some very vigorous and often divisive discussions. But I don't think we're a department that's been torn apart by these as some other departments have been.
- Lage: Some have been torn apart, and sometimes they spill out into the students and get discussed and into *The Daily Cal*.
- Litwack: That's right. I don't recall any that got to that particular point, other than what we talked about earlier on, which was the impact of the division of the department back in the 1950s.
- Lage: I know you're not going to name names there, so I won't prod you. [laughter] I had asked you about the department's commitment to teaching. Have you been involved in evaluating teaching or curriculum revision?
- Litwack: No, I haven't been actively involved in that. I do read very carefully teaching evaluations that are submitted as part of the recommendation for a promotion or hiring. I think I put much more weight on teaching than perhaps some of my colleagues do, relative to the publications that are offered. I think, for many, the book, the manuscript, is what counts. I understand that, to some degree, because some of those same colleagues, and with good reason, would say, "These teaching evaluations are meaningless; they don't really tell us very much. It might simply tell us that he's a very popular person. That doesn't mean he's necessarily a good scholar." So I think there's always been some skepticism about teaching evaluations and how seriously we take them.
- I tend to take them quite seriously. I think students generally are very up front about why they like or dislike a particular professor, and sometimes you can learn a great deal from reading these evaluations. If someone is being considered for a promotion who our students have expressed overwhelmingly some real strong reservations about teaching, then I take that very seriously, and that could affect my vote.
- I consider teaching very, very important. That's why in the famous case now of Joseph Ellis, the professor in New England—What's the name of the college? The little college outside of Amherst, where he teaches? Mount Holyoke—who lied to his students about two things: one about being a Vietnam War veteran (in a course on the Vietnam War), which was a blatant lie; and also about having scored the winning touchdown for his high school football team when he hadn't even played on the team. [laughter]
- I took that very seriously. I raised this question; I raised it with colleagues too, and we talked about it: What if he had lied in his books; what if he had blatantly plagiarized in his books or lied in his books? Well, the immediate

response is, "Well, of course, we'd fire him." And I say, "Why don't you fire him for lying to his students, disrespecting his students in this way? I think that's just as important, maybe more important."

Lage: Was that a controversy in the profession, how that person should be dealt with?

Litwack: It remains a controversy in the profession, sure. People disagree. Everyone deplors it. Some will say, "Well, yes, it was terrible, but not grounds for firing him." Maybe people would agree that he should have psychiatric help; some might even agree with that. I'm more concerned with the double standard that's being implied here. If you're going to keep a person who has done what he has done, then okay, I'll accept that, but at the same time you have to apply the same rules to plagiarism, which I think would be unacceptable for the profession.

Lage: How do most people feel? What's the popular position?

Litwack: I don't know if there is one. I've heard a number of people say that they agreed with the decision to suspend him without pay for a year, strip him of his chair, and then let a faculty committee decide if he should return to the university. I think that's essentially what they decided at Mount Holyoke.

Lage: So it's still undecided, basically?

Litwack: It is, that's right.

Lage: But that's a pretty serious sanction.

Litwack: Yes it is, and that's all I think people are saying, that he's paid for it in more ways than one. I don't think it's made him anymore humble.

[end tape 17, side a; begin tape 17, side b]

Lage: I'm looking to see what points we wanted to talk about that we haven't. One was your chairmanship of the Academic Senate Committee on the Library. That was a very active role that you took, it seems to me. That was '95 to '97?

Litwack: Yes. Well, I come onto the library committee because I had requested to be assigned to it. I hadn't expected to be chair of the committee as suddenly as it happened because the chair just suddenly resigned. They asked if I would take over, and I said, "Well, if I'm needed, and I can do some good, I will certainly do so."

When I came on, the library was in some real difficulty in terms of funding. I think, in large part, the problem was that the library was everyone's second favorite, you see, in terms of priorities. I wanted to move it up, in terms of our

priorities. The library is, after all, so critical. It's so obvious. It's so critical to us as teachers; of course, it's so critical for students as well.

So that was one thing, but it was not just the funding; it was all this talk about digitalization. That really got to me, because it just seemed so—impersonal is not the right term. You see, I have an idea of a library, which I guess is simply outmoded. I didn't want to think it was outmoded, and I still don't want to think it's outmoded. I've always loved the library. After all, I worked in the library for so many years, going back to junior high and high school and almost four years in college working in the UC library. I love libraries like I love bookstores. I love to disappear in the stacks of the library and find the things that I want to find. I loved the old stacks in the UC Library.

Lage: Oh, they were wonderful.

Litwack: They were. Stuff was piled up, oh fine, that's all right. But you could go there, you could just sort of sit on the floor, bring a bench in and sit there, go through a whole section. I would tell my students, I said, "Sure, go to the card catalogue"—I used to love the card catalogue too—"go to the card catalogue with the subject you have and get some call numbers, and then go into the stacks for those call numbers, and just sit and look at the entire section. Because you're going to find books, great books, that you would have passed up if you had just gone with the title in the card catalogue. So don't just depend on those books; go into the stacks, lose yourself in the stacks, get your hands dirty, for God sakes." That's the way to do research, and that's fun. It's not just a way to do research; it's just a lot of fun.

Well, that was the past. So they redid the library: a beautiful, modern, library with a lot of space.

Lage: Expanded the space.

Litwack: A lot of space. They say they even expanded the book space, and yet, can you go and lose yourself in those stacks? You certainly cannot. You've got these—what do they call them? The revolving stacks, the moveable stacks.

Lage: Moveable stacks, I guess.

Litwack: You're crushed if you're spending too much time in one section and someone comes along. Half of the books are in storage in Richmond. You cannot do the quality research that you could have done some years ago. I don't see where digitalization is going to be any kind of a substitute.

Lage: And did you see the money going into digitizing?

Litwack: Oh yes, absolutely, absolutely, going into that rather than going into buying more books. It just made no sense to me that, for example, if you're going to

have these moveable stacks, well, you should have chosen the books that would go into them, that they would be the books that are the least used, instead of doing as they did, which is simply to say, "We're going to go from A to Z. Where you happen to fall, as history, you may end up in moveable or not moveable. That's the way it works."

I don't know how we can recover the feeling of the old library. I would go to the stacks and I would see shelves half filled, and wonder why do we have half the books over in Richmond when the stacks are just half filled in history, and I would be told, "Well, that's to allow for the new books." Then I would say, "Why two years later when I go to the same stacks do I still see the same spaces? Why don't you bring some of those books back from storage? Why can't we have the storage somewhere close to or on the campus, so at least students could go from one place to the other place if they don't have the books they want to find?" I want students to have access to books without having to simply use the computer, because the computer is just one tool among many. It is no substitute for just getting—

Lage: Getting your hands dirty.

Litwack: Getting your hands dirty. That's what I want them to do. That's why I just don't allow my students to write papers from the computer. I'll give them a couple of computer websites that I'll permit them to use and otherwise I say, "I don't want you to use any others. I don't want to see any other websites in your paper, and I do want footnotes. And I know what newspapers we have and don't have, so don't try to place those over on me either."

So I put out a plea for funding. We had a terrific response.

Lage: Through what means?

Litwack: Well, I called my article in *The Cal Monthly*, which probably had the greatest impact, "Has the Library Lost Its Soul?" [laughs] I liked that title. It had to do with funding, but also had a lot to say about buying the books that we need to have, and of course, that's related to the funding.

Lage: It's hard to ask for funding while you're being critical of how the money might be spent.

Litwack: That's right. We want the funding—no, we made it clear, we want the funding for the purchase of books, and we're falling behind in the books that we purchased. Now the digitalizers have come up with the bright idea of we can have one book to serve all the campuses.

Lage: That's what [Governor] Reagan's idea was.

- Litwack: That's right. I find that just horrendous. The point they keep making is that if you order a book, let's say it's in the other library, or it's digitalized, the library will get it to you in twenty-four hours. That's not the point. The point is have those books where people can see them and feel them.
- Lage: Because sometimes you just want to browse through, "Do I want this book?"
- Litwack: That's right. So yes, I thought the library had and has lost its soul.
- Lage: We've had so many changes in administration. Have you been in on any of the selection of new library administrators?
- Litwack: No, I have not been, but I'm certainly very excited over the selection of Tom Leonard at the library. He's a historian. He already gives me some confidence. He was on the library committee when I was on the library committee.
- Lage: Were you surprised that he went on to be head librarian?
- Litwack: Not entirely. I was delighted when he came on to the library committee because he was immediately an ally. Then I had heard, after I left the committee, he became chair of the library committee. I said I was delighted by that development. So it didn't altogether surprise me when the librarian resigned that Tom was made the acting librarian, somewhat of a surprise, but still, okay, he's still on the library committee; he's acting. When they made him the permanent librarian I was delightfully surprised; yes. I thought that was terrific.
- Lage: That's unusual to have an academic come on as librarian.
- Litwack: That's good to have an historian, even better.
- Lage: Henry May's student, I understand.
- Litwack: That's right. He has some of the same feelings, I think, that I do about the library, but I'm sure in the position that he now occupies he also has to probably be a pragmatist. So I don't know the way out on this. I'm told that what I want is impossible.
- Lage: The idea of having more books on site and getting rid of the moveable stacks?
- Litwack: Yes, that's right. I want to get rid of the moveable stacks. I want more books brought over from Richmond, more books available to our students so they can browse. I think that's now a fantasy.
- Lage: That's too bad. Now, patrons can't browse in the Bancroft Library, but you've been a big user of The Bancroft.

- Litwack: I haven't been a big user of the Bancroft.
- Lage: Well, your students are.
- Litwack: My students have been, absolutely. I love for them just to be able to feel the source books. I haven't used the Bancroft that much because when I was doing research, the Bancroft was—I'm still doing research—but the Bancroft is largely still western America. It has a very good black collection, but nothing that I don't have. [laughter]
- Lage: That's too bad.
- Litwack: I have books that they don't have.
- Lage: Yes, I bet you do.
- Litwack: But a number of the books are not in the Bancroft or in the other library.
- Lage: Or in the main library.
- Litwack: That's right. That's why I have this fantasy. I've mentioned it to you, a real fantasy, which is that if the Bancroft could find room for me, have a Litwack Room, that I would leave my library for that room, like the Stone Room. But it would be non-circulating, used only in that room, which, unfortunately, means you'd have to have someone there to monitor it.
- Lage: You'd need the room and a staff position.
- Litwack: That's right. Here you have a basic library in African American history where the student would know that the books are there. My students come back and say they went in the stacks with ten book titles, and they come back with two books, maybe. That the books would be there and they could use them there in the room. The Stone Room is nice, but there are no books except for Irving Stone's books. [laughs]
- Lage: That's a wonderful fantasy. I'd love to see some way of making that a reality.
- Litwack: That's my fantasy. I've mentioned that to our friend Joan Gruen, and she said, "Well, since you have 35,000 students out there, we could go after them."
- Lage: Gary Pomerantz, your former student, is contacting your other former students in order to write a book about your impact on them.
- Litwack: Yes.
- Lage: Maybe that should be a consideration.

- Litwack: That's right, hit them up.
- Lage: You'll be getting a database.
- Litwack: The other thing, I suppose, to consider—and I haven't really talked with the Bancroft people about it, I suppose I should—is whether some other section of the Bancroft Library, where the library could be set aside in that section and serve the same purpose. In other words, they would—
- Lage: In the main reference area.
- Litwack: In other words, they would get the books through the reference desk, but they would know the books were there.
- Lage: That would certainly work.
- Litwack: Or the Morrison Room is a possibility.
- Lage: The Bancroft is remodeling.
- Litwack: That's right, I know. I think what I want is not so unreasonable.
- Lage: We'll work on that. Now, what else did we say we were going to talk about?
- Litwack: Family.
- Lage: Your family. You've talked about Rhoda and your children, in passing.
- Litwack: I have a son, John.
- Lage: What was his birth date?
- Litwack: October 19, 1957. Ann was, oh my goodness, 1961. I keep thinking June 6. I think so. [laughs]
- Lage: It's not a test. I was trying to place them in relation to being raised in Berkeley. But they were after all the time of turmoil.
- Litwack: John was a student at Cragmont School during much of the turmoil, but Rhoda and I vividly remember the day he came home and said, "I don't understand why there's a war in Vietnam when everyone's against it." [laughter]
- Lage: Everyone.
- Litwack: That's what you call the Berkeley perspective. I remember him playing a game with some of his friends called "the Savio game." One would get up on a platform and the other one, they would pull him off, the way Savio was removed from the stage at the Greek Theatre. So one time we had Mario

Savio over for dinner, and John was very impressed. I forget how old he must have been then, maybe twelve or something. Very impressed at meeting him. He was into autographs and asked for Mario's autograph. Mario was wonderful. He doesn't give autographs, but he explained to him why he doesn't give autographs, because you know Mario always did not want to be—even in the Free Speech Movement—he hated the cult of personality, so it was very consistent that he would do that. But he was very nice in how he explained it. So yes, John was politicized, certainly, quite early on, being in Berkeley, being a Berkeley student.

The interesting thing about John is—or among many of the things about him—is he went to Berkeley High, did not do well. We always thought he was a bright student, I mean, a bright person, but his thoughts were elsewhere. We met his teachers, and we knew it had nothing to do with his teachers; they were first rate. John thought they were, too. He was just busy doing other things. We didn't know if he was going to graduate high school or not.

Lage: Not in trouble?

Litwack: No, not in trouble. No, never in trouble. He'd stop going to class and forget to tell them that he wasn't coming to class anymore. They would, of course, fail him in the class. But he did graduate high school.

For a graduation present he wanted a Greyhound bus pass, so we put him on a Greyhound bus somewhere in June, and he could go anywhere he wanted to go in the country with this pass. In fact, when he came into New York at three in the morning, that was not a good time to come into New York, so he just went on the bus going back to Boston, came back again, a few hours later and slept on the bus.

The only agreement was that we'd meet in Nashville, Tennessee, in the middle of August as I was on my way to teaching at the University of South Carolina in 1975. While he was there with us in South Carolina he learned to play guitar, and I guess began to think about college. He hadn't really thought much about it. He finally decided, when he came back to Berkeley, maybe he would like to go to college, after all. Of course, he didn't have the grades for the state colleges, or a UC for that matter. He went to Diablo Valley Community College.

How can I describe it? It just happened. He suddenly became absorbed in his work. We just looked on in astonishment. He was absorbing everything and then loving it. Before we knew it he certainly had the grades to transfer to UC Berkeley. While we were in China, a letter was forwarded to us, addressed to John, informing him that he had been elected to Phi Beta Kappa. We looked at each other and said, "Could this really be?"

Lage: "Can this be our son?" [laughter] That's wonderful.

Litwack: He went on with his Russian, had that year in Russia as well, and went on to get his PhD in economics at the University of Pennsylvania. His dissertation won most of the awards, and to give an indication of his standing, he fairly quickly had—well, at least two offers from which he had to choose: one was at Princeton and one was at Stanford. Those were the two top economics departments in the country. It was a very hard choice for him to make, but he chose to come to Stanford, where he was teaching Soviet economics and comparative economic systems. Unlike me, he has this great mathematical mind; he can deal with economic theory. I don't know where he got that from but not from me.

When the Soviet Union fell in 1990, and he was concerned that his own field had been essentially undermined, rather than wait for Stanford to make a decision, he accepted the invitation to head up the Russian desk at the OECD, The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris. That's where he is.

Lage: So he's working not in a scholarly world.

Litwack: It's scholarly, yes. He publishes scholarly publications, but they're reports.

Lage: I see.

Litwack: Yes, but they're footnoted, fully footnoted.

Lage: Are they aimed at helping with economic development?

Litwack: Yes. The discussion of economic development in Russia. He goes back and forth. He's in Russia almost every month at some point. He went out to Moscow, to St. Petersburg, to Uzbekistan, to other parts of Russia as well. He's also written reports on Bulgaria.

Nadia, who we talked about, is his wife. They have two children. Evan just started George Washington University in Washington DC [now graduated]. And Reva [some years later, graduated from UC Davis.]

Ann, our daughter, became interested in Jewish education. Unlike the rest of us, she became more religious.

Lage: What age was she when she became more religious?

Litwack: Well, she was already in her early twenties, so she was bat mitzvahed, but late. She teaches in a Jewish school in Lafayette.

Lage: And what do you attribute her interest to?

- Litwack: I think she was influenced by my brother-in-law, sister-in-law, and their family, who are not overly religious, but they do all the things, you know, the bar mitzvahs and what not. I think Ann began to take an interest in that, and that's fine. I had no problem with her—when she said she wanted to do that, I said, "That's fine. All the more power to you."
- Lage: Did she go to college here?
- Litwack: Oh yes, she went to St. Mary's College. She wanted to stay in this area. She didn't want to go to a big place like Berkeley. St. Mary's looked attractive to her.
- Lage: So she went to the Catholic college.
- Litwack: That's right.
- Lage: Maybe that's where she developed her interest.
- Litwack: No, no. She already had that interest before she went. It was nice. It was a good place. Then she went and got her master's in education.
- Lage: Hadn't you described that your parents were also not very observant Jews?
- Litwack: No, they were not observant Jews. When you have a bar or bat mitzvah, the father is supposed to say something. So I gave my little talk, and I said to Ann—it's a talk that you aim at your daughter. I said, "Your grandfather would be very proud of you today. Your grandfather was certainly the most religious person I've ever known, though he never stepped inside of a shul in his life." But there are many different roads to Jerusalem, and for my father, as I mentioned in the earlier part of our interview, God was in the mountains, in nature. But he'd be very respectful of the decision she's made because he also had a great appreciation of Jewish culture and Jewish literature.
- Lage: Is she married?
- Litwack: No, no she's not.
- Lage: That's a nice family.
- Litwack: It is.
- Lage: And tell me more about Rhoda.
- Litwack: Rhoda went into early childhood education. She went back to school and got her degree in early childhood education. She had graduated Berkeley in social welfare. Early childhood education is just terrific. That was actually not a surprise, because when I was in the army, for example, she worked at the

recreation center in Monterey with children, so she had always been terrific with children. Early childhood education is just perfect, and the age group is just perfect for her as well.

She and her friend established at the Lutheran Church, right down at the end of Cragmont, an early childhood center. I forgot what they called it. She worked on that for a while, eight or ten years, before she retired.

Lage: Very nice. Well, we'll finish for today.

[end tape 17, side b; end interview 8]

Interview 9: January 15, 2002

[Begin Tape 18, Side A]

Lage: Today is January 15, 2002, our first interview of this year and our ninth session. We are going to talk about *Trouble in Mind*, published in 1998 but apparently very long in the works. Tell us about that.

Litwack: It had always been my desire to have an aftermath of *Been in the Storm So Long*. It occurred to me that what I wanted to do was not look at the experience of Reconstruction itself; in fact, Eric Foner has done a very fine job of writing the history of Reconstruction. I wanted to look at the sons and grandsons, and the daughters and granddaughters of the freed slaves, because that group of people came of age, it so happens, during the 1890s and the early part of the twentieth century; in other words, came of age during the most violent and repressive period in the history of race relations in this country.

I suspected that that was not coincidental, that much of what happened to black Americans in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, was the direct result of white perceptions of a new generation of blacks who had not experienced slavery, who had not experienced the discipline of slavery, who did not know their place, and who seemed, to whites at least, to be seizing every opportunity to get out of their place and to challenge what had long been custom.

Segregation had existed for some time in the South but had been a matter of custom, not requiring laws. Now it occurred to white southerners that laws might be necessary, along with a great deal of vigilance and violence, to keep black people in their place socially and at the same time economically.

It's an interesting situation. That is, you have white perceptions of blacks as being uppity, rebellious, restless, impatient, and to a degree those fears were not groundless: Yes, this was a new generation that was flexing its muscles and expressing itself in ways that a previous generation had in part, at least, not done because of fearing the consequences. So you have this new generation, and what some called the New Negro. Whites called them a New Negro out of fear; blacks called them a New Negro out of pride, because they sensed that this generation dared to challenge what had long been accepted as a part of the southern way of life.

I wanted to look at this generation, and I wanted to look at their childhood. I wanted to look at their racial initiation—or as Richard Wright called it, their “racial baptism.” There's that wonderful scene in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, the very first scene in *Invisible Man*, in which a group of black youths go through their racial initiation. It's impressed upon their minds what their place is in the society, and how confined they will be, and how limited their aspirations ought to be.

Lage: Isn't that the way you start the book, with that theme?

Litwack: Yes, that's right. It's in the introduction. Then in the first chapter I look at what I call coming of age in the Jim Crow South, how they first learned what it means to be black in this repressive white society and how they respond to their situation.

Then, of course, I wanted to look at what happens in the schools. This had been such a promising institution in the Reconstruction period. Just to have schools to begin with, that was progress. But even as blacks struggled to maintain their schools, whites either undermined those schools through neglect and indifference or through downright violence, often aimed at students or faculty who seemed to be out of place. What emerged was a system of separate and unequal education, with white teachers not only paid three or four times as much as black teachers, but with classes half the size of classes in the black schools. The amount of money spent on every black student—I don't have a good head for statistics, but you can believe that the amount of money spent on every black student was ridiculously low compared to what was spent on each white student. We were dealing with the South, where expenditures for education were less than elsewhere in the country. So this was really what W.E.B. Dubois rightfully called "enforced ignorance," or "enforced illiteracy." That left a legacy, obviously.

Economically, blacks still found themselves constrained by how much independence and ambition whites would permit. Yes, blacks did establish a growing middle class in this period, partly in reaction to a segregated society. That is, once you segregate a society it means that the black community that emerges will have its own separate institutions, segregated institutions, so, ironically, black businessmen will have a certain stake in segregation. That middle class established its own way of life. It was an important part of the community; it helped to sustain the churches, which, of course, remain the center of any black community. But a large mass of black southerners found little way out of their situation. They tried to express themselves; they tried to survive the best that they could. They tried to express themselves in every way that was permissible, in some ways that were not permissible.

In the book I wanted to spend a good deal of time with blues, because probably nowhere in this period do blacks express themselves as eloquently as in the music they create. They created the blues in the late 1890s and the early twentieth century. You could hear it certainly in the Mississippi Delta, but also in Arkansas, Georgia, and Alabama, in cities like New Orleans, St. Louis, and Memphis. It was a way for black people to talk about their problems, but also, and importantly, it was a way for them to rise above their problems. It was both escape from reality, and reality.

When the blues singers relate their escape from a disaster, or when they talk about the absent partner who they loved, or when they sing about the train that

would take them to a freer life, when they mock the judicial system or the bossman, the bluesmen and blueswomen are singing to themselves, but they're also aware that others whom they did not necessarily know—but who may be in the audience—shared those blues with them. “Ain't it hard to stumble when you've got no place to fall? In this whole wide world, I ain't got no place at all.” That's so simple—and yet so eloquent.

The best of the bluesmen and blueswomen had a kind of liberating effect on their audiences, if only because they expressed so eloquently their listeners' concerns and gave them, really, the resolve to withstand the pain of living. “It seems like old bad luck follows me each and everywhere. It seems like old bad luck follows me each and everywhere. Now I'm at the place I don't much care.”

To a remarkable degree, I argue, the blues enables a whole new generation of black southerners to express themselves with a kind of openness and directness that whites rarely had tolerated in their presence. I like to cite a few examples that I have always used—the chilling fantasy described by Furry Lewis, born in 1900 and raised in the Delta at Greenwood. “I believe I'll buy me a graveyard of my own. I believe I'll buy me a graveyard of my own. I'm gonna kill everybody that have done me wrong.” Eloquent. I keep using that term, “eloquence.” It's just right. Listen as well to the despair of this Memphis bluesman: “Whatcha gonna do, mama, when your troubles get like mine? Take a mouth full of sugar and drink a bottle of turpentine. I can't stand it. I can't stand it. Drop down mama, sweet as the showers of rain.”

But my favorite, perhaps, is Robert Johnson, who more than any single bluesman expressed eloquently the anguish of his generation, the feeling that no matter what you do, you can't win: “I gotta keep moving. I gotta keep moving. Blues fallin' down like hail. Blues fallin' down like hail. Oh, blues fallin' down like hail. Blues fallin' down like hail. And the days keeps on worryin' me. There's a hellhound on my trail, a hellhound on my trail, a hellhound on my trail.” Of course, it sounds a lot better when Robert Johnson sings it. His voice—there's something about his voice—it has this haunting quality.

And then, finally, few could really match the emotional depth plumbed, for example, by Bertha Chippie Hill in her plaintive, chilling lament: “I'm gonna lay my head on a lonesome railroad line and let the 219 pacify my mind.”

Lage: They are powerful.

Litwack: They're very powerful.

Lage: When are these songs from?

Litwack: Well, that's a difficulty that historians—whether you're a historian of music or a historian of the black experience—that's a problem, because they're not recorded until the 1920s, and even then they're not really discovered, in some cases, until the late twenties and 1930s. In a certain sense, the technology gets in the way of dating these songs. We know that some of them were around in the nineteen-teens. They only came into public view through records in the 1920s and 1930s.

Lage: Do you think they were sung just to a black audience?

Litwack: Mostly to black audiences in the early days. But on the other hand, blues bands, black blues bands, might be hired to play for a wider audience, to amuse them. When they appeared before white audiences, for the most part, they knew what not to talk about. They wore a veil. In the presence of white people, they often played the role that white people expected of them. They often knew what the white man wanted to hear when the white man asked them a question. And for many of them, accommodation was not surrender, it was a way of survival. It gave them, in some cases, a space to surmount day-to-day tribulations.

But also humor was used by blacks quite effectively. Larry Levine has written a great deal about this. His book, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* was a pathbreaking book in that respect. I think my favorite story—I don't think I've mentioned it earlier. I actually don't tell this story in *Trouble in Mind*, but the spirit of the story prevails there. Few speeches, sermons, or editorials could make the point more tellingly than this story that's passed on from generation to generation. What it dramatizes is again that feeling that no matter what you do, the white man controls the situation. Very often, as I demonstrate, white people fear black competence more than they fear black incompetence, because black competence is seen as far more threatening.

This is a story about the Lord creating the earth. When the Lord creates the earth, he creates the white man, the Mexican, and the Negro. One day he tells them, "Go out and get some rocks." The white man, being industrious, goes out and gets a great big rock. The Mexican gets a somewhat smaller sized rock. The Negro, being lazy, comes back with a pebble. The Lord says, "I'm going to make bread out of these rocks." Well, the white man has all the bread he can possibly eat. The Mexican has a small amount. The Negro, being lazy, gets crumbs.

The Lord again tells them to go out and bring him some rocks. The white man again picks up a great big rock, the Mexicans a smaller one. But the black man comes back with a whole half of a mountain. The Lord says, "Upon this rock, I will build my church." The black man says, "You're a mother fuckin' liar, you're going to make me some bread." [laughter]

Lage: That's great. Is that a tale from—

Litwack: It's a story that's passed down from generation to generation in different versions. That's the version that I found, and I figured I'd use it just the way I found it. It suggests a perception of white America as really unbeatable, where the laws and the rules are made and enforced and broken by the same man. It's such a familiar theme in the entire black experience, that is, to succeed is to fail; there's no way to win. You start playing by the white man's rules in order to make it, and the white man's going to change the rules. That was a graphic example of it.

In some ways, *Trouble in Mind* is a troubling book.

Lage: It's depressing.

Litwack: It can be depressing. It's not so much a book about black leaders or black preachers and editors, the leaders of the black community. During this period, they're thrashing around with their programs and their sermons and manifestos. Most blacks felt they had been done in. No matter how you might measure progress, if you look at the home's income, prospects of southern blacks in this period—they lived in what I called in the book "a grim, unpromising world." Again, I think of Willie Brown, a black bluesman born in 1900, who sums it up better than any speech could possibly do it: "I can't tell my future. I can't tell my past. Oh Lord, it seems like every minute's sure to be my last. Well, minutes seems like hours, hours seems like days. Yes, minutes seems like hours, hours seems like days."

Trouble in Mind was not an easy book to write. Of course, I had to deal with the whole phenomenon of lynching, as I would do in the essay that appears in the lynching book that caused such a—well, it attracted a lot of attention [*Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*, James Allen et al (Santa Fe, N.M.: Twin Palms, 2000)], more attention than *Trouble in Mind*. [Un?]fortunately I think it's a—

Lage: That book came out in 2000?

Litwack: Yes. That book is so difficult to look at. Therefore, it was going to cause much of the pain and receive much of the publicity that it did receive, starting with that exhibit in New York, in a small gallery.

Lage: Tell me about that. We want to go back and do more on *Trouble in Mind* too, but as long as you're on this, how did that book come about?

Litwack: What happened is that a collector—he called himself a rag picker. Jimmy Allen is a guy who goes out in the countryside, he's from Atlanta, goes out in the countryside, and he goes to the sales, the farmhouses, wherever, junk stores, junkyards, and picks up these items, and buys these items, in some cases. Some years back he picked up for the first time a photograph of a

lynching. That attracted his attention. He began to find more such photographs, began to pay a good deal of money for some of them.

Lage: Did they date way back?

Litwack: Oh yes. Sure, they date back into the early twentieth century, certainly. I think there were some from the 1890s, as well. Those events were often photographed. We knew that. Photographers were there. They knew there was going to be a lynching, and they were on the spot. They certainly weren't there to record a lynching for police authorities; they were there to record lynchings as a public event. In the case of a number of lynchings, the photographer sold the photographs as souvenirs, depicting what these people had just witnessed.

Lage: Was there a ready market among the white witnesses?

Litwack: Oh yes. They came back with souvenirs of the event. Sometimes they were photographs, sometimes they were body parts. The lurid details of these lynchings can numb the mind and deaden the senses.

What I thought was—it did not come as a surprise at all, but there had been for so many years the allegation, or the myth, of the lyncher as a poor white, who in no way represented, reflected the large majority of southern whites. Well, that just is not true, just is not true at all. The important thing to remember is that this was not the outburst of crazed fiends. The rituals were often festive, community occasions, family affairs, parents hoisting their children on their shoulders, so they would miss none of the spectacle. You could see that in the photographs. What's most interesting and most alarming perhaps about the photographs is not so much even the mutilated body of the black victim, but the faces in the crowd, the faces of the children brought to the affair, the faces of their parents, the faces of the white South.

To me, what was most disturbing was the capacity of ordinary, often educated, trained people—not really so different from ourselves—to kill as they did and to justify their actions, or reinterpret those actions, so they would not be perceived as evil people, but rather dispensers of justice and guardians of communal value. These atrocities were routinely excused in the name of Christianity, in the name of white womanhood, in the name of white supremacy. They were carried out in some of the most churchified communities by some of the most dignified members of those communities.

When Jimmy Allen came to me with the idea of a book in which I would write an essay, as would John Lewis, the congressman from Georgia, and a black columnist—Hilton Als, a regular contributor to *The New Yorker* magazine. I would do the historical essay. I told him, “Well, I've just finished writing such an essay for *Trouble in Mind*, and perhaps I can take that as a nucleus, at least, and bring it up to date, since my book ended in World War I.” So I did that.

We had no idea what to expect from the public. A limited number of copies were published by Twin Palms Press in Santa Fe, which had a long reputation of publishing sometimes sensational but very effective photography books but never with a large audience in mind. Their books generally would, I would imagine, sell maybe two thousand, three thousand copies. In fact, there was a financial part of this that was kind of amusing. It's terrible to think that there's something amusing in the context of a book on lynching. The initial contract gave me a choice: I could simply be given a fee for my article, or I could ask to receive a small royalty. The question was, which would be the most? You didn't know, you didn't know how the book was going to do. I decided to go with the royalty.

Lage: Has that been the right choice?

Litwack: Oh, yes. What happened was beyond any of our expectations, in part because an art dealer in New York agreed to open a show—when the book came out—featuring some of the original photos in his gallery in New York. Jimmy Allen agreed. It was a very small gallery, very small.

The word got around somehow, and within days there were long lines, people waiting outside—in the middle of a very harsh winter—waiting outside to get a chance to come into this room and see these photographs. Then the *New York Times* picked it up and published several articles about it, that brought still more people. That was one part of the surprise for me. The larger surprise was the large number of black people. In fact, in some cases, more blacks than whites in the crowd. Because we had no idea, again, how blacks would react to this book. Might they not see this as just another piece of black victimization? Might they be embarrassed, or humiliated even, by these photographs?

Lage: Another spectacle.

Litwack: Even though there were some whites who were lynched as well and who are portrayed here, but it's mostly, of course, black victims because they were the primary victims of lynchings. So we had no idea how they would react. Apparently, they reacted as they did because they saw this as a terrible part of their heritage, but one that they should know about and their children should know about, in the same way that Jews would go to the Holocaust museum. Jews don't avoid the Holocaust museum because they see themselves as victims, or they think it will humiliate them; they feel it's a necessary part of their history, and that they need to be constantly aware of that history and never forget that history. I think black people felt the same way.

There were some cases in which a black man would come one day, see the exhibit—I was told this by Jimmy Allen who was always there, just wanting to talk to the people—and then the next day he would return, but he would return with his family and his children.

Lage: So he would check it out first.

Litwack: That's right; he wanted them to see it.

There's another interesting story, and it's the day a very popular blind black singer, Stevie Wonder, visited the exhibit. Jimmy Allen and one other person escorted him through the gallery. He would stand before each of the photographs, and the photograph would be described for him. Incredible, absolutely incredible. But he said he felt he had to be there; he had to know what people were saying. That's just one of many incredible stories about that exhibit. You only had to look through the book—the reaction book that was part of the gallery and part of the exhibit at the New-York Historical Society, where people could sit down and write whatever they wanted to write.

We also had a conference at the New-York Historical Society. I spoke on one afternoon to an audience that was, I would say, about 50 percent black. Schools came with their classes to the Historical Society. Of course, that was one of the things we were talking about in the conference and even before that: how do you teach this to high school/junior high school students, before bringing them to see it? The same kind of discussions we had here at Berkeley when I was an advisor to the *Ethnic Notions* exhibit at the Berkeley Art Center, which also became a part of a small book. These were racist artifacts. Again, schools brought their kids there. It was perfectly possible for kids to come there and laugh at these caricatures, so you have to talk to them about it. I had to talk to my own students about what these caricatures meant.

[end tape 18, side a; begin tape 18, side b]

Litwack: The caricatures were, in a certain sense, still another act of violence against black people, and it was important to show them.

The exhibit and the reaction was far beyond anything we could have possibly expected. Within the first couple of weeks the first edition was sold out—the first printing, I should say. It went through a second and larger printing, then a third and larger printing, then a fourth printing. I'm not sure where it is now. I think it's somewhere in the fifth printing. [Ten by 2012] It sold certainly at least twice as many copies as *Trouble in Mind*. That's okay. One can understand.

Lage: Has the exhibit moved to any place else out of New York?

Litwack: The exhibit has gone to the Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, but finally negotiations have been completed, after some delay, so that the exhibit will open—I think it's next fall, or the following spring, in Atlanta. That will be the first southern showing.

Lage: That will be interesting.

Litwack: That took some time. The photographs have been put in safekeeping, temporarily at least, with Emory University, so they're housed at Emory University. Emory seemed, to many, to be the logical place to have this exhibit, but there was some unease both at Emory and at the Atlanta Historical Society. I'm not sure they wanted to invite the difficulties that might result from having this exhibit. After all, someone has even created a website by which they have been able to identify most of the people who are in the crowd that lynched Leo Frank in Georgia. Apparently some of those people are not only recognizable, but their names are included in the website. Some of those last names are very familiar in terms of their—possibly sons or daughters—I guess mostly sons, who are now prominent individuals in the Atlanta community, who no doubt, have no toleration for this kind of violence, or I don't think so at least, but who do not want to be embarrassed. Some of those people, I understand, had certain connections to some of the trustees at Emory University. So there's some feeling there might be some embarrassment here and some resistance.

So it's not going to open at Atlanta Historical Society; they just turned it down. It's not going to open at Emory University, but Emory University is going to underwrite it. But it will open at the King Center, Martin Luther King Center, in black Atlanta. From there it will go to New Orleans, certainly, and they have invitations from all over the country, so it will continue to travel. I think what we were all waiting to see is what happens when it opens in the South. [The collection is now housed at the Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta, Georgia—2012.]

Lage: It does seem—the counterpart you mention of Jews and the Holocaust seems very apt, not just the Jews and the Holocaust but the Germans and the Holocaust.

Litwack: That's absolutely right. That's absolutely right, yes.

Lage: Maybe this is bringing it to southern whites in a way that they haven't seen it.

Litwack: I think it does. Of course, it does. Lynching itself had been not a well-kept secret; people knew about lynchings. On the other hand, when I spoke at the University of Mississippi to my class—I mentioned this earlier—they were unaware of what a lynching meant. People weren't ready for the dismemberment of bodies and for passing out as souvenirs parts of a man's body. They weren't prepared for that. They weren't prepared for the fact that lynchings were not simply—when you think about a lynching you think of a man or a woman who was hanged, right?

Lage: Yes.

- Litwack: You put a rope around his neck, you hang him. You don't think about people who are being burned to death. Many of the lynching victims were burned. The book is right there. You probably have looked at it.
- Lage: Actually, I haven't. I tried to get it in the Berkeley library, but wasn't successful.
- Litwack: All right, look at this. [shows photograph] They really talk about pictures having a thousand words.
- Lage: Oh my goodness! A sweet little white girl looking on.
- Litwack: Yes, yes.
- Lage: And what that did to children!
- Litwack: Yes. Just looking at the faces of the white spectators tells you, I think, a great deal. Again, you certainly can see that this was accepted, and people could look at them in this way because they had already been indoctrinated with the notion that black people were less than people.
- Lage: But you wouldn't do that to a dog.
- Litwack: That's right.
- Lage: So it has to be more than just being less.
- Litwack: They were not only not accepted as part of the human race but were perceived as also a threat to the survival of the human race, in some ways. Yes, one black man said—you were talking about they wouldn't treat dogs that way—one black man said that, "One thing about us, we were always in season. Hunting season is for various animals, but we were always in season."

The problem that emerged with *Trouble in Mind* is that I think some people—both conservative, liberal, and progressive—were not quite ready for a book of this kind that seemed to perpetuate, in their minds, the idea of victimization. Some of the reviews reflected that. Some of the reviewers and historians wanted more of what they call "agency," that term that's come to be so popular these days. That is, "Don't just show us how black people are being brutalized, but show us how black people are fighting back, how black people are forming their communities, how they are meeting in their churches, how they're trying to educate the kids." Well, I tried to do that as well, but to them, I guess, it's overwhelmed by the repression and the violence. But this was—they have forgotten—this was the most repressive and violent period in the history of race relations, so it can't be a very pretty story. I knew that from the very beginning.

Some historians would argue that I haven't said enough about how Populism sought to provide an alternative in race relations to the white South. Well, I don't think it did at all. White Populists were just as racist as some of their opponents.

Lage: That's what I remember from my History 17.

Litwack: Indeed, the Populists often tried to—if you pardon the expression—often tried to out-nigger the anti-Populists. But they keep looking—historians like to find, and that's fine—they like to find examples of interracial unity. They like to find examples of people who are willing to organize by class lines and not by racial lines. I'd like to find that too; I have no problem with that. But you can't take—

Lage: But you didn't find it enough to write much about it.

Litwack: You can't take the—some wonderful portraits have been etched recently of middle class black communities in this period. They're fine, and they indeed had their own social world and intellectual world. Absolutely right, I'm glad someone has written those books. I wanted to deal with the great mass of working black men and women, try to deal with the kinds of odds that they faced, odds that no immigrant group has ever faced in this country, and how they tried to survive—how they tried to survive by, as I said, by accommodating.

I still like what Ralph Ellison said when he argued that any people who could endure so much brutalization and keep together and endure is obviously more than a sum of its brutalization. I agree with that, and I feel as though I have talked about resistance but in different ways. To me, blues was a very important form of enduring and even overcoming.

But I try to make the point that neither black accommodation nor resignation translated necessarily into contentment or into respect for whites, that there's a fundamental difference between accommodation and submission. Most blacks accommodated; most blacks did not submit. That's what, of course, kept the hopes alive for the next generation.

I use as an example Ned Cobb. Ned Cobb—that was his real name. The historian who recorded his oral history, *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw* [compiled by Theodore Rosengarten. New York, Knopf; distributed by Random House, 1974], called him Nate Shaw. His real name was Ned Cobb, but he felt since Ned Cobb was still alive when the book was published, he didn't want to in any way endanger him. Ned Cobb said about his life in Alabama, "It stamped in me in my mind the way I've been, the way I've seen other colored people treated, couldn't ever go by what you think or say. You had to come up to the white man's orders. Though that's disrecognizing—" I love that expression. He uses that expression throughout the book.

- Lage: What is it?
- Litwack: Disrecognizing. “Just disrecognized, discounted in every walk of life. That’s the way they worked it, and there’s Niggers in this country believe they should. I’ve studied and studied these white men. I’ve studied them close.”
- He accommodates; he doesn’t submit. To get along, to obtain what he wants from white people, he acquires, as many black people did in this period, the necessary demeanor, employed the necessary verbal skills. He learned—he said that, “humbled down and play shut-mouth.” He knew, he said, when to play dumb. He learned to fall back, to take every kind of insult. But, and this is a big but, Ned Cobb always maintained that there were limits, and those would assume an increasing importance in his life; that is, he refused to demean himself, to become what he called “one of them white men’s niggers.” So he said, “In my years past I’d accommodate anybody, but I didn’t believe in this way of bowing to my knees and doing what any white man said do. I just ain’t gonna go nobody’s way against my own self. First thing of all, I care about myself and respect myself.” That would ultimately cost Ned Cobb twelve years in an Alabama penitentiary. So there are the Ned Cobbs, the bluesmen, the blueswomen.
- Lage: They learned a lot about white society, for one thing.
- Litwack: Oh yes. They knew whites better than whites knew themselves sometimes.
- Lage: I have a note here that when *Trouble in Mind* came out there was a symposium based on it with three speakers and your response.
- Litwack: Yes, that was at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of African American History and Culture, which is almost entirely now a black organization. They met in Miami.
- Lage: Is that a common thing when a major book comes out like this?
- Litwack: Sometimes, sure.
- Lage: Or is it a controversial thing?
- Litwack: It can be both. You can have a symposium around a controversial book like William Styron’s *Confessions of Nat Turner* or you can have a symposium around a book that’s considered to be an important or pathbreaking work in a field. I felt very honored that they selected my book. Very often these symposiums take place maybe ten years after the book had been published, as a kind of retrospective.
- Lage: Were these kinds of issues mentioned?

Litwack: Yes, and I addressed them in my opening remarks. One of the nice things about a symposium of this kind, it gives you an opportunity to respond to your critics as well.

Lage: So were your remarks an opening or a response?

Litwack: Mine was part of a response, yes. I could respond to what the three speakers were saying but also say other things that I wanted to say, and I, of course, had the opportunity to do that. The first speaker included in her remarks some of the points I've just made in terms of the criticism: the lack of agency. The other two speakers were much more supportive of the book, even enthusiastic. They all had their certain reservations, which was fine, that's what these—to me, they shouldn't be love feasts. I don't want people to say, "This is the greatest book I've ever read." I want people to say, "This book was disturbing. This book forced me to think about certain things. I learned something from this book." But most importantly, I want a reviewer to try to understand what it is I was trying to do in the book. If they understand what I was trying to do in the book, then they can say anything they want to say. Those are the best reviews. I wouldn't say the worst reviews, because sometimes they're beautiful reviews—the people who sort of sum up the book and say it's a fabulous book. But I don't learn anything from the review. But I might smile. [laughs] I'll be content, contented.

Lage: It was a book that was a long time in coming. Did you run into dilemmas in writing it?

Litwack: Just time. It needed the time.

Lage: To think about what you were going to say or to do the research?

Litwack: No, to do the research I went all over the South. I visited almost every state archive. That takes a lot of time, a lot of time.

Lage: What other kinds of sources? You were trying to get at different kinds of sources.

Litwack: I wanted to get—I wanted—in this book, as in *Been in the Storm So Long*, as in the next book, what I'm after is the black voice. To me, the black voice does not mean editorials in black newspapers. The black voice is hard to find. The black voice is music, it's folklore, it's humor—

Lage: What did you find in the archives?

Litwack: [pause] I'll give you one example. I was using the archives in Jackson, Mississippi. I might have told this story in a different context. I was using the archives in Jackson, Mississippi, state archives. I came across the WPA [Works Progress Administration]—a number of folders in the WPA. The WPA

folders are always ones I've eagerly looked forward to, because the people working with the WPA were out to track down the black voice; that's what they were doing. They did a marvelous job in that respect, a marvelous job. I'm so grateful for what they did.

In this case, not Alan Lomax, but another person who had come down with a recording machine to the South. He traveled around; he came to Parchman Prison. Parchman Prison is one of the real hell holes of the South, I mean one of the most violent prisons anywhere in the world, probably, in that period of time. The book that David Oshinsky just wrote about the prison—let's see now, he calls it *Worse than Slavery: Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice* [New York: Free Press, 1996].

Well, I'm looking through the archives at Parchman Prison, and I find this guy who came to the prison and had a session with black women prisoners in which they shared with him some of their songs. The lyrics were there. Wow. See, that, to me—

Lage: Transcribed, not a record.

Litwack: It's transcribed. That, to me, is what is really exciting to get. Those kinds of lyrics. These lyrics, like most of these lyrics, in their songs, they're not going to condemn Jim Crow or even the—. Well, they will go after the judicial system. They go after the judges who didn't really understand them or who distorted the true facts of the case. There's also a lot of in-prison humor and reflection, and, of course, reflection about what does the future hold for them, about their families. It touches on everything.

Along the lines of the pages of transcribed songs there are references to tape numbers, so, of course, I asked the obvious question, "Do you really have the tapes?" He said, "No, we don't know what happened to the tapes. They're not here anymore. But if you ever find them, we'd love to put it out as a record which we would sponsor." I said, "Well, I think I have an idea at least of where I'm going to look."

The next time I come to Washington DC, I go to the Archive of Folk Music. They have a wonderful institution there. I tell them the story; I show them the materials. It took them about a half an hour and they came out with the tapes. What had happened is that the WPA—the tapes had gone back to the WPA in Washington, but not the transcriptions.

So, we now had the tapes. We did make a record called *Jailhouse Blues*, so those are my first liner notes. It came out in LP and cassette. Unfortunately, it never came out as a CD. That was such a revelation. I have the LP, and I have the cassette as well. What was interesting about the tapes is that in some cases—it was all a cappella, of course—in some cases you would have a group of ten or twelve women singing. In some cases you would have two or

three singing. Sometimes you'd have one person singing. Very often, in fact, you'd have one person, two or three people singing. As I said, it was much of this in-prison humor. If you listen carefully you can hear the reactions from the other women who were sitting there in the sewing room in the prison. It just adds something to it.

This is all unique. There were many recordings at that time, and to this day there are many recordings of black male prisoners. Alan Lomax, for example, went from prison to prison. I guess it just never occurred to Lomax to listen to black women sing in the prisons.

That's an example of the kind of evidence that I looked for. Some of the other materials that I found are autobiographies.

Lage: Ones that aren't so well known?

Litwack: Oral histories. The WPA interviews which I had used so extensively for *Been in the Storm So Long* were of much less use. For some reason, they did not talk very much about the Jim Crow era or hanging.

Lage: It might have been scarier to talk about.

Litwack: It probably was. That's probably absolutely right. I think you can learn more about the 1930s and the Great Depression than you can about the whole era of Jim Crow.

There were some other collections that were not a part of the major WPA collections that I was able to use. Those were very helpful. I certainly looked at black newspapers. I looked at the South Carolina State Archives and found the appeals for clemency and pardons to the governor, in which they would often go into great detail about the cases, which were also very revealing for the reason why a governor would grant a pardon. They were freer in granting pardons to blacks whose offense had been against other blacks, which is understandable.

So the materials are illusive, but they're there.

Lage: It takes time to dig them out.

Litwack: It takes time to dig them out, but that's part of the challenge, that's part of the excitement, finding those gems. The same thing is true of the book I'm now working on.

Lage: Let's talk about that then.

Litwack: I guess I'd call it almost a trilogy. This book will close it out. It will look at still another generation of black southerners, the generation coming of age in

the 1930s and World War II. This book will focus on the experience of World War II: how does that experience transform the South, or does it transform the South? What impact does it have on race relations in the South?

Lage: So it's on the South, not just on the black experience?

Litwack: On the South, the black experience in the South. What's the impact of World War II on race relations in the South. It's been called by some the forgotten years of the black revolution. It's been called by some, the turning point in the black revolution.

Something happens in World War II, which is absolutely fundamental. It really is a terribly important period to examine. Race relations, as such, did not change. That is, if anything, whites enforced Jim Crow with greater ferocity during World War II and the aftermath of World War II than before, because they did not want the war to give black people the idea that anything had changed, but things had changed and things are changing. During World War II, many black southerners, increasing numbers of black southerners, were coming to the conclusion that the way it used to be did not have to be.

Lage: And is this from their experience of being in the service? The experience of fighting Hitler?

Litwack: It's the experience of being in the service, the experience of seeing America wage a war for freedom against a racist power, such as Germany, and yet that same country could maintain a system of racial repression at home. They sensed that contradiction. Black soldiers overseas sensed the contradiction in more ways than one: not only did they find themselves more tolerated in places outside the United States, but many of them saw firsthand the—what would you call it? Racism carried to its logical extreme in places like Auschwitz and Buchenwald. Many of those soldiers were there. They weren't necessarily the liberators of those camps, but they came in soon after, because many of them were given the detail of burying the dead. They saw it for themselves. Here were people who had been selected for extermination on the basis of their ethnicity or race or religion—whatever. They were gassed and burned because they were Jews. It made no difference if they were middle-class Jews or working-class Jews, illiterate Jews, or very smart Jews; they all were subjected to the same penalty. That made an impression.

Lage: What records are you using for this? Where do you see this story?

Litwack: Well, many of these veterans were interviewed, some interviewed for a movie that came out some years ago that didn't get the attention it should have had because the producers of the movie made some errors, and they called these people—the black soldiers—the liberators, alleging that they had liberated, themselves liberated, the camps. Apparently there are discrepancies here. I don't think these were major discrepancies, but enough to discredit,

unfortunately, discredit the film. Their testimony, however, is certainly not discredited. The testimony is quite vivid as to their recollections of what they had seen.

During World War II, some of the questions that emerged in the black community are: How can white Americans express outrage over the plight of Jews while remaining indifferent to the lynchings and to the brutalization of black Americans? How can a Jim Crow army fight for a free world? How can black people fight for broad and defensive freedoms that are denied to them at home? These were obvious contradictions and these were growing contradictions, so the black communities began to act on those contradictions and began to take the offensive in a way that whites, of course, dreaded and feared. They could see that things were changing.

There were literally thousands of Rosa Parks during World War II. Everywhere I look I see—

Lage: During the war?

Litwack: During the war. But they were spontaneous, unorganized, individual often, or sometimes groups of young people would get on busses and sit where they were not supposed to sit, wait to be thrown off or would move after they were challenged but would still make the point. They would go into the movie theaters and would sit not in the “Nigger galleries,” as it was called, but downstairs. They were challenging segregation all over the South. We hadn’t known that story. That’s an important story.

So often we think that civil rights—you skip in your teaching, or skip in your reading, you skip from—almost from, in some cases, from Booker T. Washington, to the Harlem Renaissance, you see, and then you skip to the civil rights movement, as though nothing happened in between. Well, a lot happened in between. You’ve got to look at the thirties, too. I’d also have to look at World War II, because that was when the seeds were planted for what became the civil rights revolution. It didn’t come from, you know, out of the clear blue sky. People were preparing for it for some years.

Lage: Is this a trend in studying the civil rights movement?

Litwack: They’re beginning to look back; they’re beginning to look back. What has been of great value to me—there is a new oral history project launched at Duke University. What they did—and, in fact, I was a part of the beginning of that project.

[end tape 18, side b; begin tape 19, side A]

Litwack: It was a conference that was held at a black college in Durham, the opening of the conference on the age of Jim Crow. John Hope Franklin and I were on the stage, and we carried on what would be called a conversation between ourselves and then invited the audience to join us. That was fun. That was wonderful.

That launched the oral history project by which graduate students, for the most part, many of them black, were sent all over the South with these nice hand recorders, and recorded people—some older people, middle aged, young people—about their lives. So the interviews essentially center on—some on the 1920s, but mostly on the thirties, forties, fifties, and sometimes coming into the sixties.

Lage: Are they directed at looking at roots of the civil rights movement? Or are they just on your life experiences?

Litwack: They were directed at everything, everything, including the civil rights movement, sure. But their lives, they're just trying to capture these people's lives in every respect. So not only do you have a project very much like the project undertaken by the WPA, that I used for *Been in the Storm So Long*, but, of course, these people are asking very different questions and getting very different answers in a sense that nobody's holding back, or feeling the need to hold back, because the questioners are themselves obviously very much committed to the cause and ask very good questions. So what the result of all this is for me: one, two—

Lage: These are boxes of disks.

Litwack: Thirty-six, something like thirty-six disks.

Lage: These are transcriptions?

Litwack: These are transcriptions.

Lage: This is a funded project?

Litwack: Oh yes, well-funded project.

Lage: Do you know who funded it?

Litwack: I think it's a consortium with—it's centered at Duke University. These are my notes.

Lage: Oh my goodness!

Litwack: These are my notes just from these transcriptions. So you can take—just take one. See how they're organized—the interviewer, the interviewed.

- Lage: And coded at the top.
- Litwack: Those are my codes at the top, yes.
- Lage: So this is a file drawer full, basically.
- Litwack: I've been through all of them now.
- Lage: Is this the Duke Center for Documentary Studies?
- Litwack: Yes, that's it. I sometimes forget the name, but that's what it is.
- Lage: What should we be doing here, in our oral history office, if we want to get this kind of oral history, which has not been our strength?
- Litwack: Oh, I think you should be doing the same thing. In this case, I think again we should be looking at black Californians, and, of course, the Chicanos and Asians.
- Lage: The same kind of life history?
- Litwack: Absolutely, look and see what they've done at the Duke Center [Behind the Veil: Documenting African American Life in the Jim Crow South]. You can always borrow these anytime you want, if you want to just have some examples. It's a tremendous depth. I mean they—[sighs] I got to the point where I feared how many pages the next interview was going to be, because I was getting tired, very tired. Some of the interviews go on for, double-spaced 110, 120 pages.
- Lage: Those are substantial.
- Litwack: That's a lot. This, to me, represented the best of what I've found.
- Lage: Do you have a research assistant who helps read through the interviews?
- Litwack: No. Something like this I feel I have to do myself. What am I going to tell the research assistant? Research assistants are very—they're a luxury of course, but they represent a challenge as well, because you send two people—it doesn't have to be a research assistant and myself—send two historians of equal stature or status, whatever, to the same sources, they're going to come back having found different things, different notes. So this is my book, and I have to do the basic work in those sources that are so vital, as these interviews are. The research assistant might overlook something in this that I would think really fundamental.

Black newspapers, however, I don't mind entrusting that to research assistants, because in the first place I would never have the time. [phone rings, tape interruption] What were we talking about now?

Lage: The Duke program. Trusting research assistants to do the black newspapers.

Litwack: Right, black newspapers—or white newspapers, for that matter—that's something I can entrust to research assistants, or going through a long line of periodicals, for example, because I'm not going to be looking through all of that myself. So anything they find is a kind of bonus. That's the way I use research assistants. I've had some wonderful research assistants. It works the other way: they can go to a source and come away with some things that had passed me by.

Lage: But it's your book, as you say.

Litwack: That's right, it's my book, so I have to look at the—for example, in *Been in the Storm So Long* I had some research assistants, but I went through the WPA interviews all by myself.

Lage: So the words of the individuals themselves, you want to read, more than the newspapers.

Litwack: That's right. That's exactly right, yes. I could also send research assistants to travel accounts and just simply say, "When you find the black voice, as you often do in travel accounts, that's what I want to hear."

The Duke collection has been fundamental. Also, I don't know if I'll get to them, but I'd like to, there's a wonderful jazz archive in—Rutgers? Somewhere in New Jersey—of jazz people, and I wouldn't mind getting to those as well, because I've had some wonderful material from jazz people. What I had done with blues—of course, blues continue, and they persist through World War II. I've got some wonderful blues songs from World War II and the aftermath. Jazz also becomes very important, and then in the aftermath the rhythm and blues will become important.

Lage: What period are you going up to?

Litwack: Well, I'm going to go—tonight I could write the last paragraph of this book, and it would have a certain woman getting on a certain bus in Montgomery in 1955, and that would be the last paragraph. But you would hopefully know by that time that the ground had been prepared for Rosa Parks. Not to in anyway minimize or diminish her heroism.

Lage: I think she's always said the same thing, hasn't she?

Litwack: I think so, that's right. I think that's probably right. Now this will appear—the first time I talk about these things will be—well, not the first time. The first time was a lecture I gave at New Orleans at a conference on World War II—a conference, actually, to honor black veterans from World War II. Hundreds of them were there. I was a little nervous, because my lecture on World War II is very critical of our attitudes toward black soldiers and our actions towards black soldiers. Now, would the black soldiers themselves accept what I was saying, or would they think I was looking for the dirt and somehow or other I should be concentrating on their valor? So I didn't quite know what to expect, because I had some pretty—well, some damning material, because that's the way it is; that's what's hitting me.

I will never forget the first person who came up to me, a black veteran wearing his veteran's cap and some of his medals. He came up to me right after the lecture, and he said—I'm quoting him almost verbatim—“Thank you, thank you, thank you for telling the truth.” I was very deeply moved by that.

The next day I was walking in the streets of the Quarter and a young black man stopped me, and he said, “You spoke yesterday, didn't you?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “I just wanted to tell you my father came home and he talked about nothing more than someone finally telling the story as it should be told.”

Where does this material come from? Well, here's another source that you would never imagine. You see these stacks right here? These are materials from the National Archives, just released in about 1995, 1996, for the first time. These are mostly from military intelligence. They put out this information—I'll give you some examples here. [going through stacks of papers] (Of course, they wouldn't be on top, would they? They would be below everything.) “Army Service Forces, Office of the Commanding General.” And you have in various regions. Most of the stack here, all of these materials, is on the state of race relations in the army.

Lage: Produced by the army itself?

Litwack: Yes. This is only for commanding officers and military officers. They are concerned about black morale. They're concerned about—some of the letters—the communications that are passed around by military intelligence, the first part is on the state of the Negro, the state of race relations. Another one is on Communists. Another one's on saboteurs. Sometimes there's one on strikes. These are the threats to the war effort. Interesting, Communists? After all, aren't they our allies? No, no, they're not. They're being scrutinized; so are blacks being scrutinized. So, everything that blacks are saying, everything that they're doing—particularly in the South—are all being reported.

I mean, military intelligence handing—well, they're just being reported as factual information. The only time you get their editorial policy is when they

talk about a black newspaper, the equivalent of a black newspaper. No matter what the black newspaper is—let's say a more conservative paper like *The Pittsburgh Courier*, they'll say, "the inflammatory *Chicago Defender*" or "the inflammatory *Pittsburgh Courier*."

This is one of the finest sources for—go back to that word again, for black "agency" during World War II, and black activity. Every single one of those reports will have just rows and rows of episodes throughout the South of mostly challenges to Jim Crow on railroads, buses, streetcars, restaurants. That's why I can tell you that there are thousands of Rosa Parkses.

Lage: I see; that's fascinating. Is it written up as if these are black soldiers acting up?

Litwack: It's not just black soldiers. It covered black civilians as well. It's not just limited to black soldiers. And, of course, they would report on—. I remember when I first read this it seemed pretty wild. I'll give you the original, because I've seen now so many more examples of this that it [flipping through papers]: This is Lloyd Brown and his fellow black soldiers. This is actually in Salina, Kansas, but there was the same episode described by B. B. King in his autobiography, in the South: "As we entered a lunch room in the main street the owner hurried out front to tell us with urgent delightness, 'You boys know we don't serve colored here.' Of course, we knew it; they didn't serve colored anywhere in town. The best movie house did not admit Negroes; there was no room at the inn for any black visitors; and there was no place in town where he could get a cup of coffee. 'You know, we don't serve colored here,' the man repeated. We ignored him and just stood there inside the doors staring at what we had come to see: the German prisoners of war who were having lunch at the counter. There were about ten of them. No guard was with them. We continued to stare. This was really happening, it was no jive talk; it was the gospel truth. The people of Salina would serve these enemy soldiers and turn away black American GI's. If we were *untermenschen* in Nazi Germany, they would break our bones. As colored men in Salina, they only break our hearts."

Then I read in B.B. King's autobiography his account of encountering the favoritism given to German prisoners of war over black soldiers, and B.B. King said, "That was my awakening. That was my racial awakening."

Lena Horne, for the USO, comes to a camp to sing—a USO tour. She notices that the front rows in the camp are German POWs, and the black guards and other blacks that worked at the prison are sitting in the back. She's informed of the situation; she knows what it is. She's appalled by it. She comes down off the stage. She walks up the aisle with her back turned to the German POWs. She sings to her own people, then she tells them, "Get me off this tour. I can't tolerate this."

Lage: It's just incredible.

Litwack: Well, it pointed up the ultimate contradiction, sure. German POWs would be given the kinder treatment than their own black soldiers, and black civilians for that matter.

So the materials are, again, terribly rich, sometimes very depressing, but on the other hand less depressing in the sense that you can really feel it as you go through all these materials, through all those interviews in the Duke center, you can feel it. As Sam Cooke said, “It’s a long time coming. A change is gonna come.” That was what he sang, “A change is gonna come.” You can feel a change is gonna come. But just as you feel a change is gonna come, you can also feel the intensity of the resistance and that change can only go so far.

In the lectures I’ll be giving at Harvard next December, the Nathan Huggins Lectures, which I’m not sure I mentioned before—Nathan Huggins was one of my closest friends as an undergraduate here at Berkeley.

Lage: Yes, you did.

Litwack: Then he went on to Harvard later on and tragically died of pancreatic cancer, I guess in the late eighties, nineties. So they started a series of lectures, Nathan Huggins Lectures, and I’ll be giving those lectures in December. The first lecture, as I look at it now—I may change my mind before the lectures themselves—as I look at it now, the first lecture will be not a resumé of *Trouble in Mind*, but I’ll be looking, or relooking, at that same period, the age of Jim Crow. The second lecture will probably be called, what I called the lecture in New Orleans, “Pearl Harbor Blues,” which would be about World War II. The third lecture will be much more impressionistic, and it will be about what happens to the civil rights movement.

If there’s anything that ties it all together—well, the first lecture—look at the title, “Been in the Storm So Long.” Of course, I used black music in the first book. Those are mostly black spirituals, some black work songs. In the second book I used blues. In the third book I’ll use also blues but also some jazz and some rhythm and blues. But in the Huggins’ lectures, since I’m going to take them all the way to the present, the blues that I’ll be using in the third lecture will be rap, because I see rap as the blues of the nineties and the blues of the early twenty-first century. In many ways exposing the disillusionment in post-industrial America, post-industrial African-America, and pointing at the quote I’ve used so often to close my lectures, I quote this Mississippi preacher, who when he was asked to assess the impact of the civil rights revolution, he replied, “Everything has changed, and nothing has changed.” I think that sums it up rather well.

Lage: That’s a pretty strong condemnation of our society.

Litwack: You just look around. You go to the South, or you go to the North, for that matter. Part of the third lecture, of course, will deal with the nationalization of

the so-called—there’s always been a national problem, of course, but it becomes even more focused in that way after World War II and after the civil rights revolution. When you go around Mississippi, okay, all the signs are gone. All those Jim Crow signs that had been an integral part of the countryside and the cities, they’re all gone. Blacks can go—you can go into restaurants, blacks and whites were eating there. They’re sitting on buses, trains, and whatever. But the economics had not changed very much. That’s true in large parts of the North as well. Oh yes, you have a much larger black middle class. If anyone benefitted from the civil rights revolution it was that black middle class, and many were getting the opportunity to become a part of that black middle class, no question about it.

Lage: The Great Society reforms.

Litwack: When it comes down again to those unfortunate social tabulations, and just what the eye can see, it’s again everything’s changed, and nothing’s changed. The economics are dreadful.

Lage: When do you expect this next book to appear?

Litwack: That’s a good question. The second lecture will obviously be the nucleus of the book. I think I’ve made that decision. I could go either way even now. That is, I don’t have to go with the trilogy. I could make the Huggins lectures focus on World War II and make that the book. But I kind of like the idea of the trilogy. Maybe that’s because I was so impressed with John Dos Passos [laughter] What can I say? Going back to my childhood readings.

But I do want to have the opportunity, because I’ll be doing this in lectures, and I want to have the opportunity to use rap. I’m not going to do that in that third volume because that’s going to really be on World War II. But I’d like to have an opportunity to use that, and to talk about some recent impressions of what’s been happening in America. Since I do that in some of my public lectures, I’d like to do it now in the Huggins lecture. I’ve talked to some audiences and they are—some of the younger audiences—I don’t know if I’ve mentioned this earlier, how they react to this lecture.

Lage: I don’t think so. Using rap, you mean?

Litwack: Well, did I mention going to Missouri Southern? I like going to the small colleges.

Lage: Tell me again.

Litwack: Well, I went to Missouri Southern College in Joplin, Missouri, and I gave my lecture. Again, one of the lectures where I use rap. I came back to Berkeley, and the professor who had invited wrote to me and she said, “Oh, your lecture had a wonderful reception. I had my students write on your lecture, a one-

page impression,” and she enclosed some of those impressions. They were very flattering. My favorite one was this student—she said, “He’s a C student, but he’s much brighter than that; he just doesn’t want to work.” He wrote, “Any guy who’s nearing seventy, wears a black leather jacket, says ‘mother-fucker,’ and raps, is cool.” [laughter]

I thought that was one of the greatest compliments. I thought it was wonderful. I’ve used rap in my classes as well, and invariably students are going to come up to me—this is what really gets me. They’ll come up to me and say, “Who does the research for you on rap?” I say, “What do you mean? I like rap. I listen to rap.” I’m not supposed to. They look at me in some shock—I’m not supposed to be—I’m too old to be listening to rap or certainly too old to like rap.

When I was down in Stanford addressing Junior Statesmen of America—I remember being a member of Junior Statesmen when I was in Santa Barbara High School. I remember quite vividly. At the Stanford conference there were quite a number of black kids and others—a nice mix, actually, maybe about four hundred students. I started using rap, and they just went wild there. They asked me who my favorite rap artist was and I said, “Well, Black Star.” Oh, they just thought that was wonderful. Then I turned the table on them, and I said, “Okay, you obviously know Black Star,” and, of course, they did. “And you’re so enthusiastic about Black Star, but let me ask you a question: Where does the name come from?” There was total silence, total silence. Then I see one hand go up, a young black girl in high school. She says, “Marcus Garvey?” I said, “Very good, yes, Marcus Garvey.” Deliberately chosen, because it represented Marcus Garvey, the fleet that was supposed to take black people ultimately back to Africa. His fleet was called the *Black Star Line*. That became a kind of symbol of the Marcus Garvey movement, which is often—well, not often, but sometimes, Marcus Garvey is mentioned in rap songs.

Lage: He is sometimes mentioned?

Litwack: Oh yes, sometimes, along with King and Malcolm and a pantheon of popular—

Lage: I have to admit, I don’t listen to rap—

Litwack: Most people don’t.

Lage: —and my impression is violence and hatred of women.

Litwack: Well, yes, there’s violence in it, and there are some lines that degrade black women. Where else in black music do you find that? Think about that for a moment. [pause] Blues. Blues.

Lage: Not quite as—

Litwack: Oh, blues is violent. Blues is often degrading when it comes to women. When I used blues in my African American history course I had three black female students come up to me, and say, “We really object to these blues lyrics that we’re being exposed to.” That’s because they were actually a part of their assignment, to listen to these blues lyrics. I assign records as well as books in my courses. I said, “Yes, it’s part of the reality. I don’t like some of the lyrics either, but that’s one of the reasons why you’re listening to them, because they’re lyrics that sometimes offend people, but they’re there for a reason, and we have to understand what that might be.”

So anytime people focus—as they easily can—on the problems with rap, that is, its misogyny and its violence, I can only say, “Yes, that’s there. It’s no doubt there for some reason other than to just sell records.” Although in some cases they’re there to sell records. Like all artists, there are some rappers who have—we use the expression “sold out” commercially. So there’s a whole genre now in rap which is called underground rap. Now, underground rap doesn’t mean that they don’t produce records. They do produce records. But they are groups that are perceived as not having gone commercial, not having sold out. They are invariably by far the most interesting groups.

Lage: You wouldn’t have had the same problem with the blues. Or you could have avoided that problem. Selling out, sensationalizing.

Litwack: Oh, that’s right. Blues people didn’t sell out because they were never given the opportunity to sell out. [laughs]

Lage: Right, right. But that, I would think, would make them better sources.

Litwack: Blues artists, they were poor. When did blues artists start making money? Well, we know when they started making money; it was rock ‘n’ roll. It was rock ‘n’ roll that gave them the opportunity. It was when Muddy Waters went on one tour. Muddy Waters goes on one tour with the Rolling Stones and makes more money than he had made in his entire life. Then he’s discovered. Then Muddy Waters becomes the toast of folk festivals and whatnot, and his records are being bought up by white kids so zealously. B.B. King. B.B. King is made by rock ‘n’ roll, by the opportunity, again, to travel with white groups.

At the same time, these white groups are—what are they? They’re drawing their songs from blues. Two of the best songs sung by the Rolling Stones are songs by Robert Johnson. Robert Johnson never made a penny, never made a penny off of most of them. He made a few pennies, but not very much off of those songs, but two of them became Rolling Stones’ classics.

Eric Clapton borrowed heavily from—not borrowed, he covered, did covers of Robert Johnson’s “Crossroads Blues,” for example, a song for which he’s

quite famous. So here you have white artists who are borrowing from the old black bluesmen, and black bluesmen who finally—for most of them it's too late, but finally some of them, at least, are benefitting from being discovered. It was quite a phenomenon when you think about it.

So I think that's the answer; they never had the chance to sell out. Fortunately, when Muddy Waters and B.B. King had that opportunity, I'm glad they made the money, but I don't think it affected the integrity of their music and what they were saying and how they were saying it.

Lage: Let's see, we want to wind up today. Do you think we should turn to your thoughts on the future of history? I was thinking of history as a discipline, and when I brought it up to you, you were thinking of where the world is today and your thoughts about the war and the—

Litwack: The future of history. Well, without any question, history and historians have been profoundly changed and affected, as I said earlier in our interviews, by the civil rights revolution, and by what happened in the 1960s. That still very much affects how we write today and what we write today.

My primary concern remains what it has always been, that we write for people outside of our own privileged group. Not all historians can do that. No doubt, there will always be, and we need to have, of course, historians who are going to look at very specific kinds of subjects that will only be of interest to academics. Okay, that's inevitable.

[end tape 19, side a; begin tape 19, side b]

Litwack: We also need historians who will write clearly and for a mass audience. My test—that I tell my students in the writing seminars—my test of a good paper or a good book is: One, does it grab the reader at the very outset; and secondly, does it hold the reader, which means will the reader turn the page? That's the test you always want to apply. I already expressed earlier my views of what goes on sometimes under the name of postmodernism, but the ways in which American studies, as an example, has been, I think, seriously affected by—what would I call it? A kind of malaise, represented by just poor writing.

The field of American studies is pretty much overwhelmed by postmodernism, so much so that about ten years ago I withdrew from the American Studies Association. I didn't withdraw; I did not resume my subscription and membership because I didn't really find the publications—many of the pieces were sort of incomprehensible, and I didn't want to give my endorsement to this move within the profession. I was hoping that it wouldn't catch up with history. Well, it has to some degree. But there are still very good people out there, good writers, and we need them.

I still like the idea of history as telling a story. I still believe you can tell a story and be interpretative, be true to your materials, be true to your objectives. Telling a story is not distorting history, it's not avoiding the responsibilities of a historian. To me, telling a story is just a way of saying something that's clear and important. Some of our great historians have been wonderful writers, and I think—I didn't always agree with these historians, but they were magnificent writers, going all the way back to Francis Parkman, Charles Beard, whose *Rise of the American Civilization* was one of the earliest influences on me. Richard Hofstadter always wrote with not only great insight but with great clarity and wonderful style. My own mentor, Kenneth Stamp, again, there's a marvelous example of someone who writes clearly, tells a good story, but there's all the interpretation you want. I still go back to, out of all people, what Eugene Genovese told me when I asked him—after he read *Been in the Storm So Long*, and thinking about what some other readers had said—“Is there enough analysis?” He said, “Leon,” he said, “for those people who want analysis there's plenty of analysis here.” And that's right. It's hopefully in the prose itself.

In terms of the future of the profession, I'd like to see, as I said, I'd like to see historians—there's a public out there, a large American public, that's very much interested in their history. As I think I have said in the past, we have permitted so-called popular historians to dominate that field, and then we condemn the popular historians for their distortions, having defaulted the field.

Lage: Where does Stephen Ambrose, whose name has been in the news in this past week, fit in?

Litwack: Stephen Ambrose is a—I almost—I cringe a little bit when I started saying that history is telling a story, because that phrase has been given a good deal of publicity in the last week with Stephen Ambrose, who defends himself by saying he's just trying to tell a good story. Well, there's nothing wrong with that, actually. Obviously, you don't try to tell a good story by borrowing from other people. That's a problem. I've known Stephen Ambrose since he was a graduate student at Wisconsin, because he was in the office right across from mine.

Lage: He was there while you were there.

Litwack: Yes, he was a graduate student. We came to know each other through the years, and he's been a good friend. I haven't seen much of him in the last six or seven years, in sort of what I call his super-patriot phase. I saw him at the Pearl Harbor conference in New Orleans, just within a year, and we certainly embraced as old friends, as we are.

I very much admired his book *Rise to Globalism*. That was a wonderful critical interpretative survey of American foreign policy after World War II. I

didn't agree with everything he did in the Eisenhower and Nixon biographies, but they were solid works. I have not read the Lewis and Clark book, but I know people who have, and they have great respect for what he did in that book and for the way in which he conducted his research for that book, that is by himself and his family going down and following the whole route of Lewis and Clark.

I think the trouble began when he got into this military phase, starting with *D-Day*, and then followed in rapid, rapid succession with a series of military books. Some of them have been hurried, certainly have that hurried quality to them. I'm sorry to see what's happening now.

Lage: It may be research assistants.

Litwack: I don't know if you saw the article in *The New York Times* today about historians reacting to Ambrose and some historians who decided to drop his books.

Lage: From their classes?

Litwack: From their classes. I'm meeting with my GSIs this Friday about History 7B this term. I'm teaching the same texts as I taught last year and the year before, with one exception, because I want my students to understand that—because of September 11th, I want them to understand more clearly America's role in the world community after World War II. There will only be one new book this semester, and it will be Stephen Ambrose's *Rise to Globalism*.

I'm conflicted about what I need to do. I don't want to just go with the flow, which means I probably would drop the book. I still think the book is a good book. Frankly, I think it's a good book—I don't think he's distorted anything, so at the very worst he might have taken a few sentences—and I don't think he did, but he might have taken a few sentences from somewhere else, but he's not—it's not as though he's distorting the evidence. No one is accusing him of distorting the evidence. He did not, like Joseph Ellis, tell us that he was a veteran of the Vietnam War when he was not even in the armed forces. To me, that's a far more egregious crime, and sin, and that is lying to your own students.

Lage: It might be an opportunity to explain to students exactly what plagiarism is.

Litwack: It is a good way of doing it, that's right.

Lage: Can you see how it would happen, if it was completely innocent, could it happen with this system of notes that you have, say, of a carelessly—

Litwack: Oh, of course it can. Oh sure. Not only can, but it does. Sure it happens, absolutely.

Lage: Or using research assistants.

Litwack: Yes. You assiduously try to have footnotes for everything you say and do.

Lage: He apparently had the footnotes, but not the quotes. He would footnote where the material came from, but not note that this was actually word for word.

Litwack: That's right. What I often do, and what students often do, is they use part of the quote, and part of the sentence is in their own words. Sometimes you do it if only because the tense is something you need to change. That presents some real difficulties.

So what I hear from *The New York Times* article today is that since we hold our students to account if they plagiarize in any way, how can I assign a book to these students by someone who has admitted to plagiarism? I'm not sure if that's not going a bit too far. He's certainly been very forthright in his response. I think, again, he has sinned in a way that others have no doubt sinned in the past, including perhaps myself. Allan Nevins was often accused of this. Allan Nevins claimed he simply had a—what do you call it?

Lage: A photographic mind?

Litwack: A photographic mind. And he probably did. I think he did. I met Allan Nevins on a few occasions because we were at the Huntington Library together actually for a whole year. I could believe that. Actually, I could believe that. He also had an army of research assistants, and when you depend on research assistants and their quotes, who knows what may happen?

So I'm a little more forgiving of Ambrose than I am of Ellis, if those two cases can be compared in any way. I can see where someone can commit the error that Ambrose committed; it's less easy for me to understand a very successful historian with a Pulitzer Prize who feels he has to lie to his students in such an egregious manner about the very event he's teaching.

Lage: It wasn't an oversight, after all. [laughs]

Litwack: No. I mean, there's a difference between what Ellis did with what our—remember, we had on this campus a—what department was it, chemistry? When he lectured on Charles Darwin, he would come in as Charles Darwin, and he would use the language of Charles Darwin. It was wonderful, creative.

Lage: Zoology, I think.

Litwack: That's okay. There was no pretense there. [laughter]

But I, again, I just simply hope that we keep our focus on the entire American experience, including the experiences of people who have long been excluded

from that experience. I hope the events of September 11 will bring home to Americans, through a reading of their own experience, that terrorism is not new to this country. Native Americans, African Americans, have felt terrorism for several centuries, have been the objects and the subjects, victims, of terrorism for several centuries. That terrorism has sometimes come in the form of violence, sometimes has come in the form of intimidation, humiliation, and repression. In a certain sense, terrorism came home to us on September 11 because it came home to white America. I feel badly, terribly, as most people do, for the victims of September 11, but they joined tens of thousands of other victims of terrorism in this country.

Lage: In a more dramatic instant, perhaps.

Litwack: Just as ethnic cleansing, the term that came into prominence with the events in the Balkans and the American intervention in Yugoslavia is hardly a new phenomenon. We didn't write the book on ethnic cleansing, but we certainly wrote some of its most important chapters. Think about the fate of American Indians; if that wasn't ethnic cleansing, I don't know what ethnic cleansing is.

Lage: So what stance does that knowledge require towards acts like September 11?

Litwack: De Tocqueville talked about this way back in the 1830s, that Americans are a very future-oriented people, and that we have a terrible case of historical amnesia. Historians, of course, are the ones who have to meet that challenge at every level, at high schools and colleges, in our teaching, in our writing. And again, in our writing, we have to, reach people. We have to reach people with a story, just as we have to reach people with our teaching. That's one of our primary responsibilities.

Lage: You haven't had a chance to teach since September 11.

Litwack: That's right; this will be the first time.

Lage: Will you make a point like this?

Litwack: Yes, absolutely.

Lage: When you come to current affairs?

Litwack: Yes, starting with a new lecture this semester that's timely in that respect, a lecture I've not given before on American Indians. There I'll certainly get into the whole idea of ethnic cleansing. And when I talk about black Americans I'll talk about uses of terrorism in earlier centuries. Toward the end of the course, when I talk about the grief that—I don't know if I'll be that personal about it—but the grief that we all feel for the victims of September 11, that one needs also to think about the tens of thousands of victims of American policies in Latin America, in Vietnam. Those are difficult to accept as well. I

feel grief for all those people. I think Americans—the reason for assigning the Ambrose book, again, is I want them to come to grips with America’s role in the world, and what are the consequences.

Lage: Does Ambrose deal with the consequences?

Litwack: Yes, yes. He’s got some good material particularly on Latin America and Vietnam, the course of events at the end of Vietnam. It has a very good critical assessment of the cold war as well, that I think our students need to know.

At least I’m going to raise these questions. I don’t expect my students to agree with everything that they read in my course, everything I’m saying in my course, but I sure want them to think about it. I hope we can talk about these matters without someone saying—and there’s been a tendency to do that—without someone saying, “You’re trying to justify what happened on September 11.” Of course no one’s trying to justify what happened on September 11, but there’s all the more reason why we have to understand what happened, and that’s our responsibility.

Dick Cheney and Ashcroft have their blacklist [chuckles]. I sure hope I’m able to make it this semester. I was going to say in my opening lecture—I don’t think I will—I was going to say in my opening lecture that I don’t permit commercial note takers in my class, that is I don’t permit my lectures to be taped. If Ashcroft or Cheney have a representative here, a note-taker, they’re welcome, because they sure are in need of a good course in American history. [laughter]

Lage: That’s good.

Litwack: I won’t do that, because I don’t like to—what do you call it? Tip the—what’s the expression?

Lage: Tip your hat?

Litwack: Tip your hat, that early on. No, I think it’s important not to. I think it’s important in teaching that we—at least in my style of teaching, I prefer not to be presentist. I don’t feel that every time there’s an important historical lesson to be learned from the past that I have to tell my students now, “Think of what this means in terms of the present.” I want them to understand that.

Lage: Have you used the word “terrorism” when you’ve talked about the black experience?

Litwack: Yes, yes. I used “terrorism” when I talked about lynching. Yes, I have used that term. I talked about terrorism—I called the Ku Klux Klan, I’ve always called them a terrorist organization, so that is not new at all.

When I talk about Indians—in a lecture on Native Americans, I will talk about ethnic cleansing, I'll not necessarily even mention Serbia or Yugoslavia or American actions there. I'll use the term, because I think the term is apt. But terrorism, oh yes, I've used that. I use it carefully, just as I use the term racism carefully. I don't want to abuse those terms; they should mean something. Where I've used terrorism, it's an absolutely accurate description of what occurred.

Lage: Do you consider yourself a historian of American history who specializes in African American history? Or a historian of African American history?

Litwack: I consider myself an American historian.

Lage: Does that mean the same as an historian of American history? You don't mean a historian who is American.

Litwack: No, no—oh, I see what you're saying. I teach the history of Americans, the history of the American people. I've always tried to call my course that. I'm not sure what it's called in the catalogue now, but I think I've always—when I've named the course I always say, "The History of the American People, from the Civil War to the Present." That means all people. I would always say I am an American historian, first and foremost, meaning—incidentally, it's the same with John Hope Franklin. He does not want to be described as an African American historian, and he's not only just an African American historian; he is an historian of the American experience, and that's how I think of myself, that way too, sure.

Lage: What were your immediate reactions to September 11?

Litwack: My immediate reaction was that I had been saying for some time, for many years, that some day we're going to pay a terrible price for what we're doing, whether Vietnam, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Chile—.

Lage: But what about the Middle East?

Litwack: Middle East. The Middle East, absolutely. That was my first reaction. That was a terrible price. I felt that way as deeply as anyone. So that's all the more reason why I felt the need to think about why it happened and the implications of what's happened there, and how to respond to what has happened.

I'm still not persuaded that killing as many Afghans as died in the Twin Towers is the proper response. It was a predictable response. Do I believe that this gang of criminals should be brought to justice? Of course I do. I think they should be brought to an international tribunal, an international court of justice, which we have refused to join. They should be hunted down and brought to justice; that's clear.

After all, Miami, for example, over the years, has harbored some terrorists. They have launched actions against Cuba. We wouldn't condone the bombing of Miami until they were turned over. That would be an extreme comparison, but—. [sighs] You know, the problem is that one person's terrorist—in many parts of the world one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter, and who's to make the judgement? After all, Ronald Reagan called the Contras in Nicaragua freedom fighters; I called them terrorists. And I think history will prove that I was right. Tens of thousands of Nicaraguan peasants died at the hands of the Contras, not at the hands of the government, recognized government power.

The same thing's true of the Middle East. It's known that I've long been a critic of Israel and its refusal to come to a real peace, a genuine peace with the Palestinians, that will recognize the integrity of the Palestinian state territorially and politically. You know, people have said to me, "How can you say that, you're Jewish?" and I reply, "Yes, and that's why I do say it, because I am Jewish, because I feel it's a contradiction of everything that the Jewish people should stand for, and that we should have learned as Jews some lessons from our own experience, which I don't think we have in this case."

Lage: It's a tough one.

Litwack: Yes it is.

Lage: The one thing we didn't touch on was the civil liberties issues that have come up.

Litwack: Those are really frightening. It's the fifties revisited, in more ways than one. To begin with, you have numbers of liberals, who call themselves liberals, at least, who have themselves essentially said, "Yes, we have to give up some of our civil liberties." I don't believe we have to give up any of our civil liberties. It's all the more reason why we have to protect our civil liberties. What are we supposedly fighting for, after all, but a society in which civil liberties are respected. Well, you could say the same thing in the fifties, and we know what happened in the fifties. Again, we don't seem to learn anything from the past except that we learn nothing from the past.

Lage: Even some of the language is getting to be similar.

Litwack: The language is the same, the methods are the same.

Lage: The thought that after we fight Afghans we'll be looking elsewhere for these dangerous people.

Litwack: That's right, where does it end? I spoke with my brother-in-law, and he's a very liberal person, a very good person politically. He said, "Well," he said, "You know, I'm willing to give up some of my liberties in order to fight

terrorism.” I said, “No. You start going down that road, and you just don’t know where it’s going to end.” Which is why I’ve always been, for example, a firm believer in the first amendment, even when it comes to racist speech, even when it comes to pornography; once you start drawing lines there’s really no end to it, and I think you have to maintain a firm commitment to an open society. So I have always opposed the speech codes of any kind, any infringement on the right of expression. That’s no longer even that popular in progressive circles or liberal circles.

I’m a first amendment fanatic, I suppose. I’m a proud member of the American Civil Liberties Union, a proud card-carrying member of the ACLU. They’re doing their best. They’re doing a very good job, doing their very best. Students sometimes come up to me and say, “What can I do? What can I do?” I say, “You have to decide what you can do, but for starters you can join the ACLU.” [laughter]

Lage: I wonder if there will be changes in the student body this semester.

Litwack: Good question. I’ll be interested in feeling the pulse of the students this semester. I’m very curious. I’m very curious. You know what happened up at Sacramento State? I was surprised in many ways. This was a well-respected member of the community, the editor of the *Sacramento Bee*, is that right?

Lage: Editor/publisher, I think.

Litwack: Editor/publisher of the *Sacramento Bee* who’s not even permitted to finish her speech. That also brought back memories, because I remember times when there were right-wing speakers who would come to Berkeley, for example, and be shouted down in such a way that they could not continue speaking. I would always say, “That’s going to come back and haunt you some day.” I think you have to allow them to speak. Challenge them, yes, but allow them to speak. Once you start restricting anyone’s right to express himself or herself you’ve created a terrible precedent, and it can certainly be used against you.

I remember going to the University of Florida in the 1980s to give some lectures not too long after the incident at Berkeley in which the Secretary of State Jeanne Kirkpatrick was shouted down by hecklers during her invited lecture. They gave a luncheon for me there, and they were asking me, “You come from Berkeley, the citadel of free speech. How could something like this happen?” I said, “I don’t know. I think it was unfortunate.” I think they were wrong in arranging it the way they did knowing how volatile the situation was. I think they should have allowed for some response to her talk that was built into the presentation, but, okay, they didn’t do that. I think that was a mistake. But still enough, she had the right to start and finish her talk.

Then I turned to them. I said, “Well, wait a minute. What would happen if someone from Cuba came to give a lecture at the University of Florida?” He

looked at me and said, "Well, that wouldn't happen." I said, "Why?" "Well, we couldn't ensure that person his or her security." I said, "What are we talking about then?"

Lage: [laughter] They never would have been invited.

Litwack: "What are we talking about then?"

Lage: Well, I think we've come to the end of our topic list here, unless there are things that you want to add.

Litwack: I'm sure I'll think about all kinds of things after you've left.

Lage: When you get the transcript there may be things you want to add, you can write them in, or if you feel it's worthy of recording again we'll do that.

Litwack: Well, I'll miss seeing you.

Lage: I'll miss seeing you.

[End of interview]

ANN LAGE

Ann Lage retired in 2011 as a research interviewer for the Regional Oral History Office in the fields of natural resources, land use, and the environment; California political and social history; and the history of the University of California. She directed projects on the disability rights movement, the Department of History at Berkeley, the UC Office of the President, the Sierra Club, and the Point Reyes National Seashore. She is a member of the editorial board of the *Chronicle of the University of California*, a journal of university history, and the former chair of the national Sierra Club History Committee. She holds a B.A. and M.A. in history from Berkeley.