

1 Q time we had many other portions of the law other
2 than the police department, which complicates
3 matters as well. The result was a search was
4 made and the following Saturday depositions were
5 taken, and I think you gentlemen are aware that
6 the NAACP is a party to a suit challenging the
7 Governor's authority for that declaration of an
8 emergency for the search for weapons.

9 Gentlemen, that's about it. That is as quick
10 as I can do it unless some of you have questions.

11 BISHOP TAYLOR: Any questions?

12 By Mr. MR. FORTUNATO: We have a number of wit-
13 nesses, as you know, and I think we are limiting
14 it to those points that you know first-hand.

15 THE WITNESS: I hope I covered everything.

16 MR. DRISCOLL: Thank you for coming.

17 (Witness excused.)

18 Q Are you in high school now?

19 Whereupon, yes.

20 Q What year? ROBERT NELSON

21 called as a witness, sworn, testified as follows:

22 MR. DRISCOLL: EXAMINATION looks like he might be a

23 By Mr. Fortunato:

24 Q Your age, Mr. Nelson?

25 A Sixteen.

1 Q Your address?

2 A 534 West Fifth, Plainfield.

3 Q Your occupation?

4 A Student.

5 Q And birthplace?

6 A Plainfield, New Jersey, Muhlenburg Hospital.

7 Q And you have lived all your life in Plainfield?

8 A Yes, I have.

9 BISHOP TAYLOR: Could you speak just a little
10 louder so that all of us could hear you?

11 A Well, THE WITNESS: Yes.

12 By Mr. Fortunato:

13 Q Can you tell us what area in Plainfield that you
14 reside in? Is it the so-called Negro ghetto area?

15 A In the Fourth Ward the so-called Negro ghetto
16 within a quarter of a block from Plainfield Avenue where
17 the riot broke out.

18 Q Are you in high school now?

19 A Yes.

20 Q What year?

21 A Sophomore.

22 MR. DRISCOLL: He looks like he might be a
23 happened, football player.

24 THE WITNESS: Yes. Several times friends

25 of mine have been arrested for stealing cars and everything

1 when. Q. What is it like for youth to live in Plainfield
2 now? Can you give us some insight on that? Go back to the
3 pre-disorder period.

4 thing. A. How far back?

5 into. Q. How far back would you like to go? They really
6 don't. A. Do you want within a couple of days before the
7 riot or what?

8 and. Q. No. Have you experienced problems as a Negro
9 youth living in Plainfield? What have your frustrations
10 been, if any? What things?

11 A. Well, there are several. A lot of my friends --
12 the main thing that really affects the youth of Plainfield,
13 particularly the Negro children of the Fourth Ward, is the
14 fact that whatever happens in Plainfield they are always
15 questioned for it. Any time anything happens or any stores
16 are broken in or any robberies they always come to him first
17 and they go right down to the Fourth Ward. was one of the
18 worst. I think an example of this is when the carbines were
19 stolen. Not one person saw a Negro there. The first thing
20 they said was that Negroes from the Fourth Ward stole these
21 automatic weapons. They come straight down there.

22 They. On several instances there would be something that
23 happened, and they would come down there and start
24 questioning the boys around there. Several times friends
25 of mine have been to court for stealing cars and everything

1 when they wasn't no where around the stolen car. They
2 didn't have anything to do with the stolen car, and they
3 might come back with probation and things like this for
4 things they didn't do.

5 Secondly, I tell people this, but some of them really
6 don't believe it: that Plainfield is divided up into four
7 wards and things that happen in the First and the Second
8 and Third Wards won't happen in the Fourth Ward, which is
9 the Negro ghetto.

10 Q Like what things?

11 A The fact that people think the police are here to
12 protect them, and sometimes I ask, "To protect them from
13 what?" Most of the time it is the people of the Fourth
14 Ward. This is the way most of the cops feel because like
15 when we were small, when most of the kids are small and
16 they were playing with the cops and the cops being good
17 guys -- I went to Washington School, which was one of the
18 worst schools in the ghetto, and even as far back as
19 kindergarten I can remember policemen throwing kinder-
20 garten kids in the car for fighting and taking them down
21 to police headquarters. This is five and six year old kids.
22 They would throw them into the car and talk to their
23 mother like a dog. These hostilities grew up in these kids.
24 There never was a strong bond between the Plainfield police
25 and the people of this community for the simple reason they

1 never treated them like people.

2 I once saw the Tale of Two Cities, and I believed the
3 Fourth Ward or the Negro ghetto is treated totally dif-
4 ferent from other parts of this city. Like the police come
5 into the Fourth Ward and do what they will and say what they
6 will. I have been cussed out by officers several times. I
7 even had to go to court one time because an officer poked
8 me in the stomach with a nightstick, and I objected to it
9 and I asked him what justified these actions. He told me
10 he didn't have to justify himself to me. I told him he did.
11 I had to go to court for this for just asking him why did
12 he want to poke me in my stomach.

13 It is not only he poked me, but he poked several
14 people in the stomach and if we would be at a party and they
15 would grab nightsticks and throw them in somebody's back and
16 push them along the street. They don't care if it is a
17 girl, boy, baby; they push you off the streets and come by
18 on the corner and they say, "Get off this damn corner."
19 You can make reports from now until doom's day, and they
20 say, "I didn't say that."

21 Like really the problem can't be fixed until they
22 really acknowledge they are doing something wrong, but two
23 weeks before the riot I went down to the police station and
24 asked the chief of police, "will you meet with the people of
25 this community?", meaning the teen-agers because I am one of

1 the teen-age leaders of Plainfield, meet about police
2 relations, and he told me no, he thinks police relations
3 with the community are fine, and he refused to meet with
4 me.

5 Three weeks later there was a riot. The main thing
6 was police brutality and this lack of communication between
7 the ghetto and the police department.

8 Now, if you tell him he really don't think there is
9 any problem. He says that the problem, the only problem
10 the police department has with the community is that the
11 people that the police department comes in contact with is
12 the criminal element. This is the only problem them have.
13 Anybody that don't have a police record don't feel anything
14 against the Plainfield police department, which is wrong
15 because most people I saw in the riot I never saw before.
16 I never saw them out on Plainfield Avenue. These are
17 mostly the conservative people. It wasn't only the tack
18 heads, the people that hang on the block all the time.
19 MR. DRISCOLL: Hang on what?

20 THE WITNESS: The corner.

21 By Mr. Fortunato: of Plainfield? Do you think
22 anything? Did you indicate you were a Negro youth leader?
23 A: Right.

24 Q: How did you become a Negro youth leader?
25 A: There is a couple of organizations in Plainfield.

1 One is the Plainfield NAACP Youth Council. I joined it. I
2 joined it for two years, and I was elected president of it.
3 From this now I hold a couple of offices in Plainfield.

4 Q What other groups are there in Plainfield?

5 A For teen-agers there is the Teen Caps, part of
6 the Community Action in Plainfield trying to get the teen-
7 agers involved in the community.

8 Q What is Community Action, Plainfield?

9 A Part of the war on poverty funded by the OEO. I
10 am the president of the Teen Caps.

11 Q What other groups are you affiliated with?

12 A There is the teen-age paper we are trying to get
13 out, the Black Star Press, Inc., and I am the editor of the
14 Black Star Press, and the Neighborhood House. I worked at
15 the Neighborhood House a lot, and they have a paper there.
16 I have an article in the paper called "Search For Knowledge."
17 This is where I go around the street asking people questions
18 and feeling the pulse of the people, and we put that in the
19 paper. because his aunt was beaten up by a Plainfield

20 policeman. What kind of questions?

21 A. "What do you think of Plainfield?" "Do you think
22 anything will change after the riot?" "Do you think the
23 people really want to do something to prevent this from
24 happening again or are they just talking?" See what the
25 reply will be.

1 Q I will come back to that, but now I will go
2 directly to the riot time. Where were you during the riot
3 and what did you see and again primarily from youth point
4 of view? Did you talk to people who said they had seen
5 those A pictures? From the beginning of the riot all the way through
6 I think I spent more time on it than anybody because the
7 night that the hostilities really was high, a Friday night,
8 we all was at the White Star. This is where all the people
9 congregated the first night.

10 Q This is the White Star and Friday is July 14th?

11 A I don't remember dates.

12 Q The Newark riot we had was the incident of the
13 12th. The 13th was on the Newark riot start. Does that
14 help you orient yourself?

15 A It should have been about the 14th. A lot of the
16 kids was talking about well, I am tired of Plainfield.
17 Plainfield is as bad as Newark, and they are not doing
18 anything in Plainfield. One boy really had a legitimate
19 gripe because his aunt was beaten up by a Plainfield
20 policeman. She was beat, handcuffed and threw down the
21 stairs. hollering and he hit her over the head with a

22 Q What was her name? n't witness info. This is what

23 A Mary. he are saying.

24 Q Brown? MR. FORTUNATOY: Off the record.

25 A Right. (Discussion off the record.)

1 Q Tell me about this. Did you see pictures of the
2 alleged beating of Mary Brown?

3 A No. I heard the story.
4 Did you talk to people who said they had seen
5 those pictures?
6 A I Right. They said she had bruises all over her
7 body.

8 MR. DRISCOLL: But you didn't see the
9 beating; you just heard about it?

10 THE WITNESS: Right. This is one thing this
11 boy was saying, "Why did this cop have to beat my
12 aunt like this?"
13 Another thing that really made it bad, this
14 was the second Negro woman that this cop beat
15 because one time he beat another woman at the
16 White Star Diner because she worked part-time at
17 this hamburger joint on Front Street. During the
18 fight out there he went out there and broke up the
19 fight and allegedly kicked a lady in the stomach
20 and threw her in the police car and she started
21 hollering and he hit her over the head with a

22 nightstick. I didn't witness this. This is what

23 people are saying.

24 MR. FORTUNATO: Off the record.

25 (Discussion off the record.)

1 the youth By Mr. Fortunato: who was friend of this boy who

2 Q So you were at the White Star Friday night. down

3 A A lot of kids were saying "Well, let's go down
4 to Plainfield because I am tired of this man doing this to
5 me. I am tired of them abusing women," and things like
6 this. I was out trying to talk to them, "Don't tear up
7 Plainfield. You can beat them another way. Don't go down
8 there and tear up Plainfield. Beat him at his own game."

9 was One boy made a Molotov cocktail and threw it on a car.

10 right you talk MR. DRISCOLL: Did you see him make it? went

11 out this home. THE WITNESS: Yes. don't go home was walking

12 you. down MR. DRISCOLL: How long does it take to make
13 a Molotov cocktail to the best of your knowledge?

14 walks THE WITNESS: It didn't take him any more
15 than five minutes. There is a bakery right next
16 to the White Star. They have a gas pump for their
17 trucks. He just took a bottle and filled the
18 bottle up and put a rag in and turned it upside
19 down and turned it back up and then threw it. It
20 landed on this white boy's car. This white boy

21 Q was with another Negro, and the Negro didn't
22 Hatfield, particularly like him throwing this bomb on his

23 A friend's car. So he came back over and asked him
24 Prescott. why did he do it. He said because he was a white

25 Q boy, and so on and so on. the point of view of

1 the youths? The other boy who was friend of this boy who

2 A got his car hit hit the boy and knocked him down
3 the same and cut him. I grabbed him. Then his girl came
4 even want and took him away. asked him questions, and he

5 wasn't really All these people were saying, "Let's go riot."

6 rely on we They don't do anything when the rioters were being

7 at the Te assaulted by another Negro. They don't do

8 was built anything when the rioters were being assaulted by

9 was the or another Negro. They stood back. I started

10 eight year talking, bla, bla, bla. Most of the people went

11 but this whome. The ones that didn't go home was walking

12 you." down Front Street, and they walked down Front

13 Street and turned around and walked back and

14 walked into the housing project. This is where

15 Everett Lattimore, myself and Spurgeon Cameron

16 and a lot of us was out there talking to them and

17 asking them what did they want, why did they want

18 to riot and what was their main gripe, and things

19 like this. the teen-agers and the secretary was

20 By Mr. Fortunato:

21 Q Were you at the Saturday meeting with Mayor
22 Hetfield, the 15th?

23 A Right. It was held at the Teen Center at South
24 Prescott. who were attempting, along with the other

25 Q Can you describe that from the point of view of

1 the youths? people, and convince people they should not engage

2 A Hetfield wasn't saying anything. He was saying
3 the same old thing they heard before. Most of them didn't
4 even want to hear it. They asked him questions, and he
5 wasn't really answering them. The only thing he had to
6 rely on was, "Look at the center I gave you." It was held
7 at the Teen Center. It was a new Teen Center. The building
8 was built in 1917. It was in horrible condition, but this
9 was the only thing that the city put in the Fourth Ward in
10 eight years. Most of the equipment in it was second-hand,
11 but this was the only thing he could really say, "I gave
12 you."

13 MR. LOFTON: At this meeting with the Mayor
14 was spokesman for the teen-agers there or was it
15 a general round robin set of questions being put
16 to the Mayor, or how was that conducted?

17 THE WITNESS: Well, mostly round robin coming
18 from the floor, but they did have a secretary in
19 there for the teen-agers and the secretary was
20 Howard Brandon.

21 MR. LOFTON: what I am really trying to
22 determine is, I understand your role in the
23 Plainfield situation. You were among the people
24 who were attempting, along with the other
25 gentlemen, Mr. Cameron and others, to dissuade

1 people and convince people they should not engage
2 in these hostilities, right?

3 THE WITNESS: Right.

4 MR. LOFTON: Was there another group trying
5 to tell the people they should engage in these
6 hostilities?

7 THE WITNESS: Not another group. Just a
8 group that was trying to convince. It was just
9 them.

10 MR. LOFTON: What I am trying to get at, you
11 were one of the leaders of the Negro community
12 who was attempting to tell the people they
13 shouldn't do certain things. What I am trying to
14 understand is whether or not there was an emerging
15 leader of the teen-age group that was saying,
16 "Let's go out and throw the Molotov cocktails."

17 THE WITNESS: It was a general idea sparked
18 by Newark because they said that the brothers in
19 Newark are taking care of business and they are
20 tired of the white man oppressing them and "we
21 are tired, too, so why don't we do the same thing
22 and get him off our back?"

23 MR. LOFTON: You indicated the Mayor in
24 Plainfield sort of gave the people -- he didn't
25 fully answer their questions, and he told them,

1 "Look what I have given you in terms of this
2 Teen Center." Could you just give us not the
3 whole detail of what they asked for, but some of
4 the specific things that the teen-agers said they
5 were dissatisfied with that they wanted the Mayor
6 to attempt to rectify?

7 By Mr. Fortunato: They have another pool table and

8 Q For example, the pool table and the jukebox with

9 A This started off, they asked why don't Plainfield
10 have a pool because the Recreation Department in Plainfield
11 is shot.

12 MR. DRISCOLL: Is what?

13 THE WITNESS: It is pitiful. From ages five
14 to thirteen you can enjoy the recreation benefits
15 of Plainfield because they have a little
16 playground that you can go ride on the swings and
17 play horseshoes and things like this. Once you
18 become over thirteen there is really nothing for
19 you until this summer when they gave the Teen
20 Center.

21 An example of how much Plainfield really did
22 for the Teen Center, it was leased through Rona
23 Plastics and Rona Plastics took it back over and
24 now it is called Rona Community Project because
25 the city wasn't even doing a full job, working it

1 up to its full potential. They didn't have any
2 sort of program; they had a big building with a
3 pool table, a TV and two ping pongs and a jukebox.
4 This is all, no program, nothing. Rona took over
5 and tried to set up a program. Now they have
6 boxing and several other things they are trying
7 to get started. They have another pool table and
8 a couple of ping pong tables and the jukebox with
9 six mikes from this jukebox that you can hear all
10 over the place and a slot car racing track down
11 stairs.

12 Now the center is working up to its potential
13 of this building because it is a large building
14 and you can do many things with it, but the city
15 wasn't doing anything with it.

16 MR. LOFTON: This was one of the main
17 grievances of the teen-agers there?
18 THE WITNESS: Yes, because of the fact they
19 were idle most of the time. They didn't have
20 anything to do.
21 Secondly, the police behavior and the way
22 the police treat them like, "I don't work for you."
23 This man puts on this uniform and he is superior
24 over you and he wants you to know it. He forces
25 his superiority on you. When he goes by, "Get

1 off this corner and when I come back you better
2 not be on this corner." Just the fact if you are
3 loitering out in front of a party or something,
4 they will come along and ask you to move. If you
5 don't move fast enough to satisfy them, you find
6 a nightstick in your stomach or in your back
7 pushing you along the street. Don't reply to them
8 in any way and then you are interfering with an
9 officer or they have some other charge for you.
10 They turn around if you ask them anything and you
11 are being disrespectful to an officer.
12 The main thing that came out even more than
13 the recreation was that behavior of the police
14 department and that people were tired of being
15 beaten and pushed around by this police department.
16 I have seen a man who was disorderly and he should
17 have been taken to jail, but the cop goes up and
18 hits him and two more cops come and hit him and
19 beat him and throw him in the car. Then the man
20 is charged with assault and battery on a police
21 officer.
22 MR. LOFTON: You saw this yourself?
23 THE WITNESS: Yes. The officer hit the man
24 first. The man is charged with assault and
25 battery on a police officer. I think he did the

1 something like two months in the county jail and
2 came back out.

3 By Mr. Fortunato: to the officers by saying, "I've

4 Q When was this? Draft cards or whatever, most of

5 A This happened about a year ago. I can't give a
6 specific date.

7 BISHOP TAYLOR: Do you feel had the Mayor
8 given satisfactory answers to the youth group who
9 met him that you would not have had a riot?

10 THE WITNESS: I don't think so. As a matter
11 of fact, they went one step further in trying to
12 prevent this riot because it was Sunday. The
13 night after the meeting with the Mayor was Sunday.
14 It was a mixed crowd. It was adults and youths.
15 Adults are involved, too. The adults went down
16 to the park with us and we sat down in the park.
17 People started talking. So we were really talking
18 about David Sullivan, head of Human Relations. At
19 this time he was only an assistant of Human
20 Relations in Plainfield. So he was being the
21 liaison between City Hall and the black people of
22 Plainfield. He was down to the park. This is
23 about People started talking about what they really
24 wanted, and the meeting didn't even get started
25 too good before the park police drove up into the

1 park and said, "Boys, you have got to get out of
2 the park." Most of the men down in the park
3 called attention to the officers by saying, "We
4 are not boys." Draft cards or whatever, most of
5 them were over twenty-one.
6 Then he stated again, "Boys, would you get
7 out of the park?" Then Mr. Sullivan showed his
8 credentials to him. "I am David Sullivan." Bla,
9 bla, bla. was trying to do something instead of
10 BISHOP TAYLOR: Who was Mr. Sullivan?
11 THE WITNESS: Director of Human Relations in
12 Plainfield. He asked could we stay down here for
13 ten more minutes and then the meeting would
14 probably be over. The officer said again, "No.
15 Boys, get out of the park." He was a plainclothes
16 man that was doing the talking. He had two other
17 ones that were in uniform standing on the other
18 side of him with guns.
19 Most of the people got up and said as they
20 were walking out -- they made several remarks
21 like, "Plainfield will burn tonight" and "We'll
22 fix you, white man," things like this. This is
23 about three o'clock, That's when the riot really
24 broke out, from three o'clock on.
25 MR. GIBBONS: These policemen in the park,

1 were they Union County Park Police?

2 By Mr THE WITNESS: Yes.

3 Q Has MR. GIBBONS: Not Plainfield?

4 on his promise? THE WITNESS: No.

5 A He pr BISHOP TAYLOR: what kind of answers do you
6 promised you feel that the Mayor could have given that
7 ested in would have satisfied you?

8 something for THE WITNESS: The people really believe that

9 Teen Cent the Mayor was trying to do something instead of

10 Q trying to pacify them again as he did in trying

11 A to give them this Teen Center, which was pitiful.

12 said, "We This was the only pacification. That is what he

13 tax burden tried to fall back on. If the Mayor came up with

14 will come some concrete evidence that he was trying to do

15 can't have something for Plainfield, it would have been

16 Mrs. Ricker different. But the people just couldn't believe

17 was going the Mayor. Ever since he has been in office he

18 happened to was doing a lot of talking, but nothing concrete

19 just won't came out of anything he said.

20 a pool in Plain BISHOP TAYLOR: Are you saying it was the

21 Cedarbrook Park mood he created that made the young people dis-

22 white neighborly trustful?

23 thing? what THE WITNESS: They no longer had faith in

24 or do you the Mayor because they didn't think -- they thought

25 he was talking, and that is all. They couldn't

1 in a meeting believe anything he said. They said they couldn't
2 afford it. By Mr. Fortunato:

3 Q Has he promised things before and not come through
4 on his promise?

5 A He promised like Plainfield was to do this. He
6 promised when he was running for office that he was inter-
7 ested in the youth of Plainfield and was going to try to do
8 something for them. He did. He gave them this pitiful
9 Teen Center, and that's all.

10 Q Have you asked the Mayor for pools before?

11 A Many times. We had several meetings. The Mayor
12 said, "We can't afford it. We have too many things. The
13 tax burden would be too heavy to pay for a pool now." He
14 will come up with all kinds of flimsy excuses like, "We
15 can't have a pool." The Fourth Ward councilwoman,
16 Mrs. Rickey, tried to get it through Union County, and she
17 was going to get it put in Plainfield. I don't know what
18 happened to this idea, but I know the City of Plainfield
19 just won't take and put a pool there. He said, "If we put
20 a pool in Plainfield, the most likely site would be in
21 Cedarbrook Park." This is on the other side of town in the
22 white neighborhood. only two policemen to my knowledge that I
23 think Q's what about portable pools, did you ask the Mayor,
24 or do you know of any attempts that were made to get those?
25 A It CAP at one time was thinking about portable pools

1 in a meeting. That is all. I think they said they couldn't
2 afford it or it was too flimsy.

3 usually walks. MR. DRISCOLL: A portable pool wouldn't have
4 Bobby; you served the teen-agers who were past a certain age?

5 There isn't no THE WITNESS: Right.

6 MR. DRISCOLL: In other words, if you dove
7 they will into a portable pool, you would not only hit your
8 behind your head but splash all the water out, a person of
9 the time your size. In other words, the people that you
10 "Come and represented were" too old for portable pools?

11 and he will re THE WITNESS: Something that could be theirs.

12 him. Really after the meeting on Saturday I think the

13 Mayor did bring up the fact that he was trying to
14 questions get a pool in Plainfield, but it was to be in
15 atmosphere Cedarbrook Park.

16 By Mr. Fortunato: drop Q out Which was in a good section?

17 pres Ares Not in Greenbrook Park near the Fourth Ward.

18 at h Q fr Are there some policemen who are respected?

19 or h A su The majority of the Plainfield police force is
20 mediocre. In other words, there is nothing so big about
21 them, but there is only two policemen to my knowledge that I
22 think is outstanding and really good. Those are Dominick
23 Cicero and Carmine LaRosa. These are the only two. They
24 are two Italian cops, but most of the colored kids like them.
25

1 They will talk to you. Most of the time if you do
2 something they send Dominick down to arrest you. Dominick
3 usually walks into your house and says, "Well, come on,
4 Bobby, you did such and such," and there is no argument.
5 There isn't no fight or tussle. You go along with Dominick.
6 the Carmine is the same way. Both cops come up to you and
7 they will give you the big story and they throw your arms
8 behind you, handcuff you and throw you into the car. Half
9 the time Dominick won't even put handcuffs on you and say,
10 "Come and get in the car." He will treat you like a man,
11 and he will respect you. That is why most people respect
12 him.

13 THE WITNESS: Plainfield High School, I am
14 Q What kind of answers are you getting to those
15 questions you are posing in the newspaper about the
16 atmosphere and whether anything can be done?

17 A Really most people feel similar to a student that
18 drops out of school. He drops out of school because
19 pressures are too great on him and the pressures are coming
20 at him from different angles. He doesn't like his teacher
21 or his subjects, so he will drop out. So you can get him
22 to come around. He will come back to school, but what
23 happens? He will go back to school and the same problems
24 are still there, the same teachers, the same subjects and
25 the same rules that put him out of school before are still
existing and are still there. That is how people feel about

1 the riot and what is going to happen afterward, nothing.
2 People are still going to be the same. As a matter of fact,
3 instead of going forward they are going backward. Instead
4 of coming closer together, they are withdrawing more on both
5 sides in the black community and the white. This is why
6 the sooner they went back to school and found the problem
7 they could drop out of school again most likely. This is
8 what could happen in Plainfield -- I mean in all communities,
9 if nothing is done.

10 BISHOP TAYLOR: The school you attend now,
11 what is the per centage of Negroes and whites?

12 THE WITNESS: Plainfield High School, I am
13 not sure, but it is pretty close fo fifty per
14 cent if not more.

15 MR. DRISCOLL: How many white people do you
16 have on your football team or the squad?

17 THE WITNESS: The starting squad there must
18 be about five, four or five. That is on offense.

19 MR. DRISCOLL: And you have got a good team,
20 so apparently the Negroes and the white boys on
21 the team get along.

22 THE WITNESS: They get along pretty good.

23 BISHOP TAYLOR: What about your teachers,

24 what per centage are whites and what per centage

25 are Negroes?

1 cops I named, THE WITNESS: In the Plainfield school
2 Cicero and system there is something like 479 teachers and
3 names like about 49 or 59 of them are Negro.

4 not the color MR. LOFTON: Does Plainfield have very many
5 Negro police officers?

6 THE WITNESS: I can count them on one hand.
7 There is about four of them. There is a new one.
8 I can name them. There is Holly, Vecti, Washington,
9 Ray Evans and Tucker.

10 MR. LOFTON: What do you think of them in
11 terms of relationship with the people in the com-
12 munity? They got a group of kids that call

13 them. THE WITNESS: Ray Evans, he is the blackest
14 bigot I ever saw. Holly, Vecti and Washington
15 mediocre, and I rate them just with the average
16 white cops, just mediocre. Tucker, he is a new
17 cop. He is okay, but I have known the boy all my
18 life. As far as I know he will make a good
19 officer. Most of the kids like him, but he was
20 only on a week when the riot broke out. You
21 really don't know how good he can be.

22 By Mr. Fortunato:

23 Q Do the Negro youths mind so much that the policeman
24 is white or colored or how he acts towards them?

25 A It is how he acts toward them. Just by the two

1 cops I named, most of the Negro youth they like, Dominick
2 Cicero and Carmine LaRosa. They can't be Negroes with
3 names like that. It is just the way they treat the people,
4 not the color of your skin. do other things, do better things,

5 and MR. GOLDMAN: Has the Anti-Poverty program
6 in Plainfield in your view accomplished anything
7 worth-while and, if so, what? ve a stranger

8 THE WITNESS: I think they are trying. Just
9 the fact they got a group of teen-agers together,
10 the Teen Caps, which is hard, especially keeping
11 them together. They did something really fan-
12 tastic. They got a group of kids that call
13 themselves the Cap Kids. They are something like
14 six to eleven. They got these kids, these little
15 kids together, and they do little projects. They
16 have Project Head Start where the priest goes for
17 the kids, and they have OJT, On the Job Training.
18 of One thing they do indirectly, but I think is
19 good, we have a neighborhood youth corps in
20 Plainfield and most of the kids that went through
21 there, some of them were sent to the CAP office,
22 to the OJT office, and the kids get to be around
23 a lot of bright people. They get to see a lot of
24 intelligent Negroes. This is what is really good.
25 They don't see intelligent Negroes at home. Most

1 of the teachers are white, and they get to see
2 some of their people who are intelligent, and
3 they can make it. These people motivate these
4 kids to go on to do other things, do better things,
5 and pull up their grades. This motivation is
6 great.

7 MR. GOLDMAN: Do they have a stronger
8 program of neighborhood youth corps during the
9 summer where they enroll extra kids?

10 THE WITNESS: Not that I know of.

11 MR. GIBBONS: What are your college plans?

12 THE WITNESS: I plan to go to Morehouse. I
13 want to be a social worker.

14 MR. GIBBONS: Of the Negro boys on the
15 football squad, how many of them have college
16 plans?

17 THE WITNESS: Most of them know if they go
18 undef THE WITNESS: The majority of them. A lot
19 of them are hoping that we go undefeated, and
20 most likely we will. We beat everybody and we
21 have two games to go, Union and Westfield, and we
22 don't even rate them. They know if they go all
23 the way most colleges will be looking for them.
24 A lot of colleges will pick them up and give them
25 scholarships.

MR. GIBBONS: Of the ones you know of on the

1 squad who don't have college plans, what is the
2 reason? Most of them are pretty bright boys.

3 THE WITNESS: They are pessimistic and they
4 are saying that I don't really play football that
5 good. "I am only a defensive lineman and I don't
6 like it in college," or they are saying, "I don't
7 have the money to make it in college. The only
8 thing I can make it to college with is if I get
9 a full four-year scholarship.

10 The main thing is a money problem or just
11 being pessimistic and saying, "I don't think I am
12 bright enough to make it." Lack of motivation on
13 their part.

14 MR. DRISCOLL: They do talk in terms of the
15 scholarship then?

16 THE WITNESS: Most of them know if they go
17 undefeated a lot of schools will be looking for
18 them.

19 MR. DRISCOLL: To rephrase my question, I
20 wasn't talking in terms of scholarships to
21 college; I was talking in terms of grades. Are
22 they placing emphasis on obtaining good grades so
23 that will help them get into college?

24 THE WITNESS: Strangely enough most of the
25 Plainfield football team happens to be some of the

1 brightest boys in school. It is not like the big
2 brute. Most of them are pretty bright boys.

3 They are putting emphasis on grades.

4 you to BISHOP TAYLOR: You said earlier that one of

5 the problems is that the boys who drop out, if

6 they go back, they go back to the same old groove

7 and the same teachers. What would you say are

8 the rules and the types of teachers that are

9 objectionable that keep these young people from

10 going on to further education?

11 go to THE WITNESS: Really very seldom will a

12 teacher in Plainfield take interest in any Negro

13 child. It is just that most of the Negroes -- we

14 have a track system in Plainfield. Most of the

15 Negroes are in the bottom of the track system.

16 this BISHOP TAYLOR: What? I have a view of this

17 park THE WITNESS: Track system - above average,

18 average, and there are eight. It just so happens

19 most of the Negroes are in the below average

20 category. Once the superintendent of schools was

21 asked why all these Negroes are in this group and

22 he said, "It is God's problem, not mine," meaning

23 most Negroes were born stupid, and I was offended,

24 really?

25 Well, most of the Negroes that go to school --

1 I know a couple of them that have two study periods
2 when you do nothing but just sit around in the
3 cafeteria allegedly studying, but most of the time
4 you talk to the girls.

5 both MR. DRISCOLL: That has been going on for
6 years. THE WITNESS: My father died when I was

7 four THE WITNESS: A shop class, which is seventy-
8 five per cent Negro and twenty-five per cent for

9 Italian, you will be doing something like sixth
10 grade work or seventh grade work. It is just you
11 go to school. There is no emphasis. If you don't

12 come to school, you just don't come. Plainfield
13 High School is located directly in front of a

14 small park. A lot of Negro kids, when they don't
15 feel like going to school, sit out in front of

16 this park where the principal has a view of this
17 park and he can see every last one of their faces.

18 They sit out there for eight periods and smoke and
19 ride around the school in their cars. There is

20 nothing about, "Come on inside" or "Why are you
21 out here?" You are just out there and they are
22 not trying to get you back. They don't care.

23 MR. GIBBONS: Do you have any brothers and
24 sisters?

25 THE WITNESS: Yes.

1 but they teach MR. GIBBONS: How many? and the ones that
 2 are THE WITNESS: I am the youngest of eight of
 3 children. not really. I wish if you are interested
 4 in some MR. GIBBONS: Are your mother and father
 5 both alive? get along pretty good because we are
 6 Negro THE WITNESS: My father died when I was
 7 four years old. will get all kinds of books and
 8 show MR. GIBBONS: What does your mother do for
 9 a living? only Negro students that she has been
 10 known THE WITNESS: My mother is a domestic worker.
 11 MR. GIBBONS: How many children are at home?
 12 THE WITNESS: Two. she is.
 13 By Mr. MR. GIBBONS: The others are gone?
 14 Q Do you THE WITNESS: Yes, that you say idolize --
 15 that is probably MR. GIBBONS: How many of your brothers and
 16 someone you aspire to be like? sisters went beyond high school?
 17 A Me? THE WITNESS: None.
 18 Q You are MR. GIBBONS: Are all of them around
 19 A Plainfield? that hurts me the most, most of the
 20 people that the THE WITNESS: No. One lives in New Smyrna
 21 like the gBeach, Florida. the corners and write numbers
 22 and come down the BISHOP TAYLOR: Do you find any difference
 23 car. They in the interest of the Negro teachers in the
 24 big, flash Negro student more than that of the white?
 25 idolize, not the THE WITNESS: There are not that many Negro

1 but they teachers in the school system, and the ones that

2 Q are at Plainfield High take an interest in some of

3 A them but not really. I mean if you are interested

4 Campbell. in something -- there is a librarian there, and

5 me and her get along pretty good because we are

6 Negro poetry fanatics and we always write Negro

7 poetry, and she will get all kinds of books and

8 show us these books and try to motivate us more.

9 We are the only Negro students that she has been

10 known to associate with and do something for.

11 MR. DRISCOLL: Is she a Negro?

12 THE WITNESS: Yes, she is.

13 By Mr. Fortunato: The Negro church, no.

14 Q Do you have any people that you say idolize --

15 that is probably a bad choice of words -- but is there --

16 someone you aspire to be like?

17 A Me? BISHOP TAYLOR: Go ahead.

18 Q You and the youths that you talk to.

19 A The thing that hurts me the most, most of the
20 people that the youths idolize are people they shouldn't
21 like the guys that hang on the corners and write numbers
22 and come down there in a clean, pretty suit and a brand new
23 car. They see them when they are walking to school with a
24 big, flashy car. These are the people that the people
25 idolize, not the doctor that lives three blocks from them,

1 but they idolize this other man that made it fast.

2 Q What about someone like Milt Campbell?

3 A Half of the kids my age don't even know Milt
4 Campbell.

5 BISHOP TAYLOR: Are you a member of any
6 church organizations?

7 THE WITNESS: Well, I attend occasionally
8 the Congregational Church, but my church is the
9 Refuge Church of Christ in Scotch Plains.

10 BISHOP TAYLOR: Do you feel the church is
11 making any particular contribution toward helping
12 young people?

13 THE WITNESS: The Negro church, no.

14 BISHOP TAYLOR: Why?

15 THE WITNESS: Because the Negro church -- I
16 hate to talk about my people, but they are sorry.

17 BISHOP TAYLOR: Go ahead.

18 THE WITNESS: The first church I named, the
19 Congregational Church, is a white church. I go
20 there because I can express myself better. When
21 we have Fellowship I can talk to the kids and we
22 can discuss things. If I ever was talking about
23 the Immaculate Conception in the Negro church and
24 I said I truly believe that Mary wasn't a virgin,
25 that this is just a word they use, I would be

1 thrown out. In the white church we get into a
2 long conversation on this. They are more liberal.
3 I found more freedom in a white church. I know
4 in most Negro churches if you ever thought about
5 dancing there, heaven forbid, "Don't dance in the
6 church." Most of the white churches we can go
7 after Fellowship and have a snack and have a little
8 dance and socialize for awhile.

9 MR. LOFTON: You indicated during the time
10 when the hostilities in Plainfield were about to
11 break out that you were going around in the com-
12 munity, you and other Negroes, to calm the situ-
13 ation. Were there any ministers or any persons of
14 the clergy out there participating in these
15 efforts?

16 THE WITNESS: Reverend Everett Lattimore.

17 MR. LOFTON: Is he Negro or white?

18 THE WITNESS: Negro.

19 MR. LOFTON: What is the feeling of the Negro
20 teenagers? Is he well known in the community?

21 THE WITNESS: Yes, he is. He is a councilman
22 of Plainfield. He ran, but he lost for the
23 Democratic councilman at large. Most of the kids
24 there you know him because he teaches at the Junior High
25 School, and he is also the track coach and he is

1 to get respect as an ex-All American in football. Most of the kids
2 longer as look up to him for his coaching ability, and they
3 to the respect the man.

4 Q What MR. LOFTON: So would you say they respect
5 there any him for this athletic ability that he has or
6 get A would you say they respect him because he is a
7 Plainfield minister? the community and let it be one community

8 and not two, no THE WITNESS: They respect him because he is
9 with the palman and he treats them not as his peer but with
10 people's respect. They can talk to this man and they can
11 do. When feel confident if he can help them he will. Not
12 different, so much as a minister but just as an interested
13 this, if you man. Besides that there wasn't any ministers
14 if you spoke there. Afterwards many ministers were getting
15 first and together asking, "What can we do? I want to do
16 if you spoke something." They formed a ministers association.
17 rat. I think Those organizations were black, the ministers were
18 Plainfield asking what they could do to help. We set up a
19 just treat program where we try to help Negroes, not only
20 citizen of Negroes, but try to train people for better jobs,
21 Plainfield like computer programming and key punch operators
22 Plainfield and technicians. They are footing most of the
23 where none bill, the ministers, but this is after the riot
24 there you asking, "What can we do?" This is one of the
25 Besides things they started doing. This is the majority

1 to get rid of the white ministers with the exception of one
2 longer as Negro.

3 to the bla By Mr. Fortunato:

4 to Q: so what would you like to see done in Plainfield? Is
5 there any one, two, three things?

6 A: That is hard, but I think I would like to see
7 Plainfield act as one community and let it be one community
8 and not two, not the black and the white community and not
9 with the police officers in the white community checking
10 people's doors when they go on vacation. This is all they
11 do. When he comes to the black community he is totally
12 different, not even the same man. I think an example of

13 this, if you ever heard of the remarks made about Gleeson,

14 if you spoke to one of the white people that live in the
15 First and Second Ward, they tell you he is a wonderful guy.

16 If you spoke to some of the Negroes, they tell you he was a
17 rat. I think this could be stopped. If you live in

18 Plainfield and you are a citizen of the United States and he
19 just treats you as a citizen, not that you are a black

20 citizen of the United States, a poor black citizen of
21 Plainfield, not like you are a rich black citizen of

22 Plainfield living in the First Ward up in Sleepy Hollow

23 where none of the houses cost under \$80,000, if you live up
24 there you have got some who do treat you pretty good.

25 Besides that I would like to see respect shown -- the Negroes

1 to get respect that he deserves. The police authorities no
2 longer as soon as something happens just jump straight down
3 to the black neighborhood and say they did it. I would like
4 to see something done about the Plainfield school system
5 because it is sorry, really. Every day at least five Negroes
6 get kicked out of school for something. If you are five
7 minutes late, "This is the third time you are late. Go
8 home." Let's say, a turtle neck sweater or a turtle

9 Most of our people have a funny habit and they will go
10 and buy a forty dollar knit or a fifty dollar knit and wear
11 it to school. After you paid fifty dollars for a knit you
12 don't want nobody to tell you to tuck it in your pants
13 because a knit was made to be worn on the outside. It looks
14 very neat. This man tells him, "You tuck that knit in your
15 pants or I am going to throw you out of school." You have
16 an alternative of not wearing a knit which you want to show
17 off, or tuck it in your pants, which will ruin the beauty
18 because most of them have long pockets. Half of the kids
19 don't wear their knits or tuck them in their pants. You
20 can't wear a velour because any shirt you wear has to have
21 a collar. If you don't have a collar, they kick you out.

22 class BISHOP TAYLOR: Do they require that of all
23 students? word in the encyclopedia every day."

24 One THE WITNESS: All students must have a
25 collar. Negroes mostly wear velours and knits.

1 White boys can wear wranglers and levis, which a
2 knit looks far more neater than a pair of
3 wranglers or levis with a madras shirt. But they
4 wear this, but they can't wear a knit. They have
5 been known to come to school in flower pants,
6 pants with a flower print, and they will get
7 away with it. But if a Negro attempted to wear,
8 let's say, a turtle neck sweater or a turtle
9 neck knit, he would be thrown out.

10 BISHOP TAYLOR: Who throws them out, the
11 teacher or the principal?

12 THE WITNESS: The principal, very seldom you
13 see the principal. They have three class
14 advisors, the Junior, Senior and Sophomore
15 advisors, and your class advisor is the one you
16 talk to, and he is the one that throws you out.

17 MR. DRISCOLL: Would you tell me, if you
18 please, how long you have been using the
19 expression "Negro ghetto"?

20 THE WITNESS: I started about in the fifth
21 grade when a teacher asked me -- she told the
22 class, "If you want to build your vocabulary, you
23 look up a word in the encyclopedia every day."
24 One of the words I saw was "ghetto." I read it
25 and it told how it was basically a Jewish word,

1 but it means any people of one race of background
2 who reside in the same area. So I knew that
3 where I live was a Black ghetto because the
4 majority of the people there were black. The
5 richest part of the town, Sleepy Hollow, was also
6 a ghetto, but it was a white ghetto.

7 MR. DRISCOLL: I think you referred to the
8 White Star as a hangout. Is this a hangout for
9 Negroes or for Negroes and whites?

10 THE WITNESS: It is basically a Negro
11 hangout. It is owned by a white and white people
12 go there, but from ten o'clock to three o'clock
13 there must be at least a thousand Negroes that
14 used to pass through that place at night,
15 especially on the weekends.

16 MR. DRISCOLL: You referred also to the fact
17 that some people in your presence referred to the
18 riots in Newark. Do you believe that if there
19 had not been the publicity with respect to the
20 Newark riots that the riot in Plainfield might
21 have been avoided?

22 THE WITNESS: No, I don't for the simple
23 reason that there was a small riot in Plainfield
24 last summer. It was just bottle throwing and a
25 couple of windows were broke, and this is all.

1 The next day the Mayor called me down and asked to
2 have some people there so he can meet with them
3 and see what is the pulse of the people and what
4 do they want to do. It was the same old story.
5 We got there, and they told him several things
6 and all he did was talk. It was said several times
7 if something was not done in Plainfield there
8 would be a riot. Everybody knew tensions were
9 there. If anything, the Newark riot and the pub-
10 licity from the Newark riot must have speeded up
11 this pulse maybe. I doubt it, but it was there.
12 The city government knew it was coming because
13 they were warned constantly. The first time I
14 heard there was going to be a riot in Plainfield
15 was from Mr. John Harvard, director of CAP. He
16 had just came out of this white bar directly
17 across the street from the Police Department.
18 Someone said, yes, that cop said there was going
19 to be a riot tonight. "Let's get that nigger.
20 He is one of them." Mr. Harvard asked me if there
21 was going to be a riot tonight. I said I have
22 been hearing things like this, but you know, it
23 has never really phased me. I never paid any
24 attention to it. I said, "Not that I know. I
25 will check on it and talk to some of the people."

1 A That was the night of the incident of the bottle
2 the white throwing at the White Star.
3 could just about MR. DRISCOLL: Nonetheless there was
4 comfortable. reference made prior to the riot to the fact there
5 comfortable was a riot in Newark?

6 comfortable in THE WITNESS: Yes. I don't think the Newark
7 drawn further riot did too much to the Plainfield riot because
8 it was coming and they knew it. The white com-
9 munity knew it was coming because that Friday they
10 had to close down part of Greystone Mills because
11 so many people had been buying ammunition and
12 parts for their guns and getting them back in
13 working order. E. J. Korvette refused to close
14 down.

15 How JUDGE WACHENFELD: Is there another one
16 coming? THE WITNESS: If I took it on the scale from

17 one THE WITNESS: Like I said, with the student
18 in school, with the drop-out from school and with
19 conditions pressing and they are too hard for you
20 and you go back to school and the conditions are
21 still there and everything is still the same,
22 most likely you will drop out again.

23 By Mr. Fortunato:

24 Q Do you find the conditions worse rather than being
25 just the same?

1 A Yes, for the simple reason that there was a time
2 the white person was accepted in the Negro community and he
3 could just about go into the Negro community and feel com-
4 fortable. The Negro couldn't go in his community and feel
5 comfortable, but that was okay. But now neither one feels
6 comfortable in either community, and this is how they have
7 drawn further apart.

8 MR. LOFTON: Can you give us any rough
9 estimate from your knowledge of the teen-agers in
10 Plainfield, particularly in the Fourth Ward area,
11 as being the so-called Negro ghetto, what per-
12 centage of the Negro teen-agers participated?
13 Was it the greater portion of the Negro teen-
14 agers in Plainfield or was it the lesser portion?
15 How would you characterize it?

16 THE WITNESS: If I took it on the scale from
17 one to ten, I would have to say one or two.

18 MR. LOFTON: You think it was a small per-
19 centage?

20 THE WITNESS: It was very small, but the
21 thing about the Plainfield riot wasn't the teen-
22 agers. The teen-agers talked the riot and they
23 got the people excited and they got the feeling
24 of riding high and most people started looking at
25 themselves, most of the adults. They realized

1 what the teen-agers are getting upset about people
2 have been doing to them for forty years, they
3 thought it was just about time. The majority of
4 the people I saw rioting was adults and not teen-
5 agers.

6 MR. LOFTON: After the hostilities have
7 taken place and the physical situation has sub-
8 sided but tensions remain, what would you say is
9 the attitude of the Negro teen-agers who may have
10 participated in some of the hostilities? Is it a
11 feeling that they feel ashamed of what they did,
12 or do they have some pride in what they did?
13 What is the attitude?

14 THE WITNESS: It is not shame in what they
15 did. More pride, because they feel what they
16 tried to do, they tried to help the people. They
17 tried to get rid of this white oppressor.

18 MR. LOFTON: Tried to get rid of what?

19 THE WITNESS: The white oppressor. They
20 really think they helped. They say, "Robert,
21 you work through the NAACP," and bla, bla, bla,
22 "and you try it your way." "They just talk your
23 way. I am tired of talking, so let's try it our
24 way." thing like four C's. That is the white party
25 report. They feel like just the Civil Rights marchers

1 three years ago. This is the general feeling they
2 have. They don't feel they did anything wrong
3 they should be ashamed of. They think they
4 should be ashamed of it if they didn't parti-
5 cipate. too, but I wasn't active in a lot of

6 organ BISHOP TAYLOR: You said earlier that it was
7 your hope to attend Morehouse College when you
8 graduate from high school. Are you going to have
9 any problem financing your way through college?

10 THE WITNESS: A big problem. The only way I
11 can attend if I work -- I doubt if I can get an
12 academic scholarship because I am bright but not
13 that bright. I don't think I can pull an
14 academic scholarship. I am going to try to get
15 along, but mostly I will have to work my way
16 through and rely on my brothers to help me and
17 perhaps I might make it.

18 BISHOP TAYLOR: When you say bright but not
19 that bright, what does that mean? Are you a C
20 average? A, B average?

21 THE WITNESS: The last time I really worked
22 in school I brought home fourteen A's and
23 something like twenty B's on all my grades,
24 something like four C's. That is the whole year's
25 report card. That is the last time I really got

1 down to business and really worked. That was in
2 the ninth grade. Since then I slacked off and
3 haven't been really knuckling down and hitting the
4 books. I was playing football, wrestling and
5 track, too, but I wasn't active in a lot of
6 organizations then. I went to the doctor and I
7 ended up having high blood pressure, and there was
8 a lot of things I had to cut down. I didn't
9 really apply myself so hard.

10 MR. GIBBONS: Have you taken your college
11 boards yet?

12 THE WITNESS: No, I haven't.

13 MR. GIBBONS: When do they start giving those
14 tests in Plainfield?

15 THE WITNESS: Mostly in the Senior year,
16 Senior or Junior year.

17 MR. GIBBONS: That is true throughout the
18 whereupon, school?

19 THE WITNESS: Throughout the school.

20 MR. GIBBONS: Off the record.

21 (Discussion off the record.)

22 MR. LOFTON: Are you in a college preparatory
23 course or commercial course?

24 THE WITNESS: College prep.

25 BISHOP TAYLOR: Are you saying that your

1 A record is good except your last record in the
 2 signa Q tenth grade you haven't done so well?
 3 mission. Chem THE WITNESS: Report cards haven't come out
 4 yet, but I know it won't be anything like it was
 5 before or like it can be because I am not really
 6 applying myself.

7 commi Q where BISHOP TAYLOR: Any special reason?
 8 diff A and sell THE WITNESS: Several. Football, the organ-
 9 Q izations I named, school, and I try to squeeze a
 10 A social life in there with girls somewhere.

11 Q where MR. DRISCOLL: I think you are a bright young
 12 A man, and I think we all ought to thank you and do
 13 thank you for coming here before us. I think you
 14 handled yourself very well. Plainfield December 15

15 1924. I grew up JUDGE WACHENFELD: It was very helpful also.
 16 and still do. I went through the Plain (Witness excused.)

17 system, the Plainfield High School class of 1941 served
 18 Whereupon, the States Army in world war two in the Air Force

19 and following that went CHARLES E. MILLER work which I
 20 called as a witness, sworn, testified as follows: employed

21 at American Cyanamid in Bow EXAMINATION a time and then

22 later in By Mr. Fortunato: where I still work for the last
 23 sixte Q Your address?

24 A 418 Darrow Avenue, Plainfield. I to us. Can you

25 give Qs wh Your age? you are affiliated with?