

MISS WHEELER: It was an indirect telling on himself.

MR. BLAIR: An indirect telling on himself.

MISS WHEELER: That doesn't make it true.

MR. WARREN: I'm afraid that this was not what Mr. Evers was talking about . . . . .

END OF  
TAPE #2

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TAPE #3

This is a conversation with Miss Thornton, Miss Wheeler and Mr. Blair, continued.

MR. WARREN: You were saying, weren't you, Miss Thornton, that America at least offered some theoretical background for the improvement of society, is that right?

MISS THORNTON: Yes, that's quite true, and I was also saying that if the American or the black man does in fact achieve his goals, he is actually<sup>--</sup>strengthens the theories of the nation's founded-- also it might strengthen what people, when they are talking in terms of a lost theology or lost ideals, lost goals, in fact it might even help to reiterate what we have always claimed to be true or what we've said is the nation's basis for existence. It might help, in fact, to bring America into the greatness which . . . . . in our modern times, as far as world leadership is concerned, as far as the realization of-- as far as self-realization is concerned, on an international level.

MR. WARREN: You mean the civil rights movement has a possibility of provoking some moral regeneration in American

society in general?

MISS THORNTON: Yes.

MR. WARREN: Paraphrase that?

MISS THORNTON: This I believe very, very strongly.

MR. WARREN: Miss Wheeler, you had something to say a moment ago.

MISS WHEELER: I'm especially concerned about, as a matter of fact it was a good while ago, of the idea that there were . . . . . by people in the South who were courageous or not courageous Negroes and so on. The whole idea of conceptualizing people and leaving it at that and what I want to say is that both sides, because it-- I'm calling it a conflict between black and white people, both sides of the conflict use this idea of the mysterious unwillingness to change on the part of the other one to such an extent that often it obscures, I think, their own end and it hurts.

MR. WARREN: Would you be specific on that point, please?  
An illustration?

MISS WHEELER: Yes. I think that for me to say that the white southern man has such a deep hatred for me that it will never change. Look, he would rather move out of town than live in a segregated town and let his child go to a-- I'm sorry-- live in a desegregated town ~~an~~ and let his child go to an integrated school. I think when I do that I am giving him-- making him so mysterious that I don't even approach-- that the possibility of me approaching him has been lessened by the mystery that I surround him with.



MR. WARREN: You're giving him a stereotype, too.

MISS WHEELER: And I think similarly, that we are stereotyped, you know, I think everyone--

MR. WARREN: Indeed you are, yes.

MISS WHEELER: -- a general stereotype. Now what I'm trying to say is that on both sides the stereotype has to go because it blinds us to avenues of action that is, as long as I sit in the corner and wonder why he hates me, I'm going to say well, whether he hates me or not, he does want to keep his business open. Whether he hates me or not he does want his child to get educated in some school. Now I think that when we start recognizing that we are being too mysterious about the whole thing (this is an idea which . . . . . puts forth in The American Scholar a couple of months ago), fully recognize that we're being so mysterious that the whole thing that we are losing track of what we're doing and get onto a track of making the white man choose what's most important to him, and I imagine it would go the other way 'round except I'm more sympathetic . . . . . in moderation.

MR. WARREN: You're stuck with it . . . . .

MISS WHEELER: Then I think we'll have-- we'll have put ourselves into a better bargaining position, and when we do get to that glorious time when we have a problem of how we relate to white people themselves, and I think that will be a long, long way away, then we won't have that mysterious quotes hanging around him. (Howard . . . . . call it the southern mystique), they won't even allow us to approach him.

MR. WARREN: Let me refer to an article written some years ago in about '55 or '6 by Carl <sup>Ann</sup>Ryland, and in conversation at the same time, same period, he said the same thing: that all the trouble in the South might be a dress rehearsal of the big show in the North. How do you look at that?

SEVERAL VOICES : . . . . .

MR. WARREN: He said that the big trouble of integration would come in the North, and that the southern situation was with a dress rehearsal . . . . . an immediate dress rehearsal <sup>of</sup> for the big problem when the real trouble starts.

MISS THORNTON: In other words--

MR. WARREN: This is ten years ago.

MISS THORNTON: In other words, a more subtle problem which you have in the North, really, what happens onstage down South, in a sense.

MR. WARREN: I think he was referring to actual violence - that it's more potential in the North than in the South.

MISS THORNTON: More so than--

MR. WARREN: I think that's what he meant . . . . .

MR. BLAIR: I think I would agree with that - what's going on in the South may-- is actually a preview of what might happen in the North, and as a result there are more Negroes now living in the North and western areas of the United States than in the South. I think only about, well, in the last ten years or since 1941, about 51% of the Negroes live outside of the South nowadays, and most of them



live in the North. Most of them who come from the South are not educated, they don't have a college degree, they've gone to the North with the idea of the glorious North or the Canaan land whert ~~are~~ the opportunities are bright, and going there they find out that this is only just the reverse. In many instances it's worse than what's in the South, and they're having to face up to realities now. And even with Negroes having a right to public accommodations and so forth in the North, they still have to face the problem of getting equal job employment on the basis of their ability to do a job, and also of living in a-- getting decent housing which is in de-facto actual in reality there is still segregated housing. And so then many of them can't face up to this problem. Many of them can't meet the educational standards which are needed to get decent jobs. And so you can't expect in cities like Chicago, Washington, New York or Philadelphia or Los Angeles and in many other cities . . . . . nature or whether it's in years, . . . . . populace is still growing of the ~~pop~~ population of Negro citizens, and as a result of this you can expect there to be more racial . . . . . there to be more racial imbalance and more racial conflict than there is in the South. I may be wrong in what I'm saying but I'd be willing to bet my top dollar on this, and I can say you can expect violence, at least more violence, in the North than you can in the South.

MISS WHEELER: I think that it's right that the Negro in the North is not in any kind of Paradise. I think the Nwgro has a

bad time in the North because he's a Negro, but I think that you have to admit basic differences between the North and the South, and they tend to get obscured when people start talking about how when they lived in the North they lived in a ghetto and so on. I think that the fact that a judge in Chicago could give a girl eighteen months in jail and twelve months of hard labor for whatever it was-- trespassing or parading without permit-- I can't remember the charge-- I don't think he'd get away with it in Chicago.

MR. WARREN: That's a real distinction, isn't it?

MISS WHEELER: I think it's a very big distinction; I think it's a distinction between a person being a person when he comes into court and a person being of black-- of skin when he comes into court. When a Negro's arrested in the South a Negro's going to pay a fine or go to jail. You know that.

MR. WARREN: Alas, it's not true, in the North either. Sometimes it is, but take the Reed case in Connecticut-- you--

MISS WHEELER: I don't know . . . .

MR. WARREN: You'd . . . find . . . . .

MISS WHEELER: Well, I agree, it happened, but I think it couldn't have-- I couldn't have been raised with the idea that I was just as good as the man next (well he lived a block away), I couldn't have been raised with the idea that there was no difference between me and him, If I had been raised in the North, I don't think. It never occurred to me that I was a Negro-- that being a Negro meant anything, until I came to



Washington and got-- you know, when people started talking about it. I'm not trying to say the North is wonderful; I'm just saying that there's a big difference between the North and the South, and what I want to say further is that the conflict that you're talking about, the violent conflict and so on, if it comes it's going to be a nation conflict, not just North. The things that people in the South are trying to do is get up-- you might say that the Negroes in the South would like to get up at least to the level that the people-- the Negroes in the North are at, and then we could all fight it out. But I don't believe it's going to be peculiar to the North.

MR. BLAIR: But realizing that Negroes in the last decade or so ~~a~~ or since the WORLD WAR II have drifted toward the city, and that the Negroes have sought the city as a refuge from suburban life in which they don't have too much chance as farmers, and so forth. I realize that a definite problem will be created. Instead of problem being ameliorated or the problem lessened, there's going to be more of a problem for Negroes who live in the cities, especially in the large city areas, and this is where most of us are going into: Washington, like in Detroit, New York--

MISS WHEELER: How about mechanization in rural areas in the South, in the farms?

MR. BLAIR: Well, Negroes to a certain extent aren't attracted to the farms anymore. I think they're going toward the cities. . . . . // in the cities, then in the cities

MR. BLAIR: In the cities, then in the cities he's become a common problem, both in the South and the North. He's a common problem in the South and the North. But in the North more so to an extreme than in the South because Negroes are just beginning to move to the cities. And . . . . . in the South Negroes have a chance to own something. They have a chance to have something that they own, they have a chance to spread out, to at least own some property and so forth, whereas in the North they're still cramped up into . . . . . houses, I'd say in a building. Maybe I have a warped idea of the North, but for me here in Washington, D.C. has an advantage.

MISS WHEELER: I have grass around my house but I haven't got any money.

MR. BLAIR: I know, but living in Washington, D.C. I've seen the situation. I cannot view with much optimism as being the best place for Negroes to live, but of course home is home. And I would take a chance, I would rather live in the South than to live in the North, considering all the situations, and I know Negroes who get less payment in the South, but like I said before, I feel that there is a relationship between Negroes and whites when met at the tide or its ebb, that the Negroes and what's in the South will eventually work out their problems than those in the North. I feel we're thirty years behind what's going on in the North, and eventually when we reach where the North is now, where the Negroes and



the whites are in the North now, that we will have a definite problem to meet but I think that our problem will work out better, because we know where we stand and that the New South will build up, will be a South-- I believe the South will rise again, incidentally. But this time it will be the Negroes and whites on an equal basis on solving a problem rather than just one ethnic or racial group or being in the forefront.

MISS WHEELER: I want to make a criticism.

MISS THORNTON: Go on, Jean-- no, because when I talk it will be a long time.

MISS WHEELER: Well, what I say is we've fallen into a trap in the same way that nationalism, I think, is a trap for countries trying to achieve world peace, a trap of maintaining the glory of the South or of the productivity in progress, it's North, where we've got to you-know, Negroes might end up in. I think it's significant that you know you can have a bad time in the North and a bad time in the South. What I'm trying to suggest is that it's just-- it's the country, you know, and that after you get-- I don't want to make it that general, but the problem of automation is not the North's problem; it's the country's problem, and with industry coming into the South, which may (I understand now the pattern is to come to one town, take advantage of the tax exemption and so on and leave-- and go into another town), people still are still jobless here. Our people are going to be jobless. The

problem is going to be common to the North and the South. Now maybe the civil rights movement can speed up the pace at which the South has to face these problems, but I think that they can be faced on a nationwide scale, and I believe that any kind of fighting that's going to be done can be done on a nationwide scale. And, incidentally, I'm not against fighting.

MR. BLAIR: Awwwww, you know violence is beginning now.

Now this may not be in the interview, but several people have felt moving from a nonviolent to a violent scale, and I want to ask you all this question: Do you feel that the present Negro leadership can hold off the Negroes any longer from achieving the violence-- I mean like now under the law that the man who is attacked has a right to attack, himself, if he is in fear of bodily harm. Now this is a serious situation, no joke, should Negroes as a whole continue to take a nonviolent step or should we be like any other ordinary citizen, white and under the law, if he is in fear of bodily harm and if he retreats, to walk and can go no further, should he defend himself? Do you feel that this should happen? Do you feel that we should take maybe . . . . . in the courts against the restaurant owners of restaurants who use other persons to do us harm physically and maybe injure us, to assault us or cause damage or battery to us? I think-- Lucy or Jean, how do you feel about it?

MISS THORNTON: Well, the only trouble is I'm going to really



go astray, so Jean, if you want to answer to that immediate problem, I can say this, that--

MISS WHEELER: I've got an answer to that.

MISS THORNTON: -- to the most immediate problem, O.K., good. Then I'll talk about both when I--

MISS WHEELER: I've been reading about revolution and I've sort of been disappointed, because they're not mass things, you know. The mind of the people doesn't come together, and try to right a wrong. Now I think any ordinary violence is going to be led and we're going to be one of the leaders. I think there will be a conscious decision to change the tactic. It might not be all the great leaders sitting in one room, but I believe that any change in the approach to the problem that has a wide effect is going to be a conscious decision on parts of the people who take leadership roles, the agitators and so on. Now that's us and that's Martin Luther King, and that's Abernathy and Wilkins and so on. So I don't think that we have to worry so much about controlling violence; I think in one town to another there might be outbreaks that are to the disadvantage of the movement because you know then everybody has trouble in court and so on, but I think that any large-scale Negro violent movement is going to be organized, it's going to be somebody's fault. So I don't think we have to worry about controlling, except for our individual problems with maintaining the organization and the civil rights movement in you-know, Greensboro had.

MISS THORNTON: My comments are probably more in keeping with what we talked about for the last twenty minutes or the last half hour, but anyway, I think I'll probably encompass much of what we've been saying, at least what you've said, Izell, and what you said, Jean, but I'd like to go all the way back to your comments as to what I said to you in November.

MR. WARREN: Try to reconstruct them.

MISS THORNTON: Yes. Back to that-- my statements of course were very well rephrased by you. What I had in mind, then, is a time which is not now, unfortunately; it's time when we in the South will have reached a point of mediation. When Negroes and whites can in fact sit down and say this is how the South will be or this is--

MR. WARREN: . . . . . not now.

MISS THORNTON: Clearly not now, <sup>right</sup> not/~~now~~. And I do think that we have some very strong things in our background which in fact could help us to win a kind of victory which Izell has spoken of as being much different from what, say, when we do come up to the level of where northerners are now, it might be a far better victory than northerners now in fact have, because the kind of subtle segregation or the kinds of subtle leaving the Negro out of society, would not pervade as they do in fact now. Getting on, though, that we do as Jean has alluded to, have problems with the new Negro in a sense because there's a large amount of impatience now throughout the northern and southern Negro, because of course I guess



it's part of the times, really, when a man has fought a couple of wars side by side and he still doesn't have-- when he comes home and there's no peace of mind and he wants to know what in the devil did I fight for, you've got more and more larger numbers of angry black men, as-- This is the kind of thing which is not conducive to nonviolence is not conducive to the kind of sitting down at a table and working with the basic things which we have in fact have, so that this growing impatience, unless things are worked out and worked out quickly, we've got-- set gradualism aside and try to utilize what <sup>we</sup> in fact do have, and if communication does not-- I could say again open up, or does not reach a better level in the South, we might not ever be able to, without the advent of violence, get to the point where Negroes and whites could sit and in fact mediate-- come up with solutions coming from a common bond which they in fact do have or which they might feel towards them because now more and more you can't blame a man for abandoning something which has never meant anything to him in that sense that it's always been a curse upon him, or you realize more and more that the Southern way everything that has ever been taught, everything that has ever felt that the South believes has come from something that has cursed me, and I just want to get away from it as quickly as I can. Some people might still feel I'll stay here and fight, I'll try to change it, but basically the times are ripe for a man standing up and realizing that even though there might be some

things that I feel, or there might be a certain amount of understanding in me for what happens or what doesn't happen here, analyze now I've got to live now and I'm impatient and I can't wait for this kind of thing, and the more things happen the further away the kind of victory that I'd like to see, further away this kind of thing becomes, so that the impatience and feeling that if it takes violence, O.K., so we'll go to bat, but these are also the kinds of things which tend to annihilate really those-- the groups and-- so that if you don't have in the South, if you don't have some very, very quick communication between the two sides, that the realization . . . . on one side which might be right in now thinking, well if they adjust a little more gradually, and if they wouldn't raise so much Cain, you know, we're going to give them something, or it's coming in due time. Instead of that if there were a clear appraisal of what the situation is in the South and really what the situation is in the nation and less of the attitude of oh we're going to fight this tooth and nail, I think that we might really get much further along not only in our civil rights and in our present race struggle, but as far as the whole nation's growth and welfare is concerned, you know--

**MR. BLAIR:** I would say that I agree with what you say, Lucy, but . . . . I think one of the main stumbling blocks that we have is the moderate in the civil rights struggle, it has reached a point now--



MR. WARREN: Excuse me, the main what?

MR. BLAIR: I think one of the main obstacles that we have is the moderate in the civil rights struggle. He's the one who's known for violence, you know; he's the one who always wants the community to return to normalcy, but at the same time he doesn't want justice to prevail in the community. I mean he is the one-- well there was a time when the moderator was a good fellow . . . . I think we moderates-- but I think at the same time we need a moderate in the community who's going to say, well, it's about time we come right, you-know, to justice. We keep giving the Negroes tokenism and tokenism, and really even though we have desegregation tomorrow and freedom now, this is all we ever really get is tokenism each time, after each movement; we get a little bit each time. And I feel this is what the movement is working on: tokenism, but I think unless something is done very seriously, that tokenism won't work, and I think the whole idea of the negotiations and everything to break down racial discrimination in the community on a wide level or what we call across the board level, is really going to break down, and when this does I think we can expect the worst. Now the people say I'm a pessimist, I always expect the worst. . . . . I would ask, and even asked what is across-the-border segregation, that we're going to get tokenism each time.

MR. WARREN: Let me ask you a question, Mr. Blair. If we come to violence, what's the consequence of violence?

What is the expectation or hope or prediction for violence?

MR. BLAIR: Well, the way . . . . . now, I-- the law is definitely against the Negro, in the South. Violence would not work for us, even though in many instances it may be the effort to amend the anxieties that Negroes have, amend the frustrations which we have, to really maybe vent our emotions against the whites for the many years--

MR. WARREN: It would be an emotional expression.

MR. BLAIR: It would be an emotion--

MR. WARREN: But what comes after that expression?

MR. BLAIR If we have violence, it would definitely be, I think it would be against the movement, unless there was some outside aid for many countries abroad to the desegregation movement. And I don't think we'll get this from Panama, from Cuba, from Russia or anybody else. When it comes down to it, Negroes are pretty . . . . . within their own country, and it's really going to be a fight where we have to stand alone. Violence would not work, I don't think. It might work to a limited degree; we might get a limited answer or solution to our problems, but if we use violence, if we'll attack, which we don't have the weapons and everything to do, it will be like a-- it's going to massacre, it would be-- we're outnumbered numberwise; we're outnumbered with guns, we're outnumbered so far as the law is concerned, because in most communities, in reality, and disregarding the . . . . . concerning the law, the police, which supposedly is to secure



the community peace, is really used in many instances to uphold segregation. . . . . in Princess Anne *County*. . . is a good-- for example, in Birmingham.

MISS WHEELER: I know that in violence, very well, we would be outnumbered in massacres and so on, and I agree with it and would plan, in terms of our inability to really put up a good fight, but I say as soon as you start saying we're beat before we started, then the whole-- the depth of what you're doing, has been lessened because you're not willing to take it all the way. I personally am willing to take it all the way. If I've got to get shot, then ~~xxx~~ I've got to get shot. And I think as long as you say, well, my back is up against the ~~wax~~ wall, even though I can't win I'm going to fight anyway; as long as you let whoever's pushing you up against the wall know that, you have a much better chance of the in-between negotiations winning and maybe of bringing you up against the wall and you start kicking back; maybe that'll win too, but I think there's a point at which Negroes start thinking, well, we can't win anyway . . . . .

MR. BLAIR: I'm not saying we can't win, Jeannie, I say--

MISS WHEELER: I say don't let it color-- I mean let it color but let the main working base be I'm in it all the way.

MR. BLAIR: I'm in it all the way, <sup>too,</sup> true, but if violence came and I had no other resort but to protect my home and my family, I would have to do this. I'm not-- I don't read it the same way as Martin Luther King reads it. I read in the

whole civil rights movement more from the political standpoint of view. I am not a minister and I don't take the same view that many ministers take, a nonviolent attitude. I think there comes a time when a man has to stand up, and in America, as it was brought out, people respect a man who is brave, who is brave and who will stand up for a cause. Now if these-- this leads to violence, I say let it come. As <sup>Fred</sup> Senator Douglass said, those people who run away from violence, who want a social change, might as well be asking for it to rain without thunder and lightning; it's impossible for crops to grow without rain. It's impossible. You can't have the crops to grow without rain, you see. Or you can't have the sea without its mighty roar; these things are impossible. And so I say if violence comes, let it come. I'm here. I'm not going to stay away from it, but I don't advocate the situation.

END OF TAPE #3