ROBERT PENN WARREN - ANDY YOUNG Tape 2

Warren: Let me ask you this question. Do you see any parallel between the situation of the Negro, a member of what they call a sub-culture, vis-a-vis the great American machine, and the situation of the white Southerner who is a member of a sub-culture , a defeated nationalism, lived in a special box of attitudes and a special philosophy and special prejudices - him - vis-vis the big American machine. Do you see any parallel there?

Young: Yes, I guess it's probably very similar, and with the experience, I think, people's reactions to it are similar also - that you get Southerners who are now very cosmopolitan - white Southerners that want to completely reject the Southern experience, and you get the Negro middle-class that wants to completely reject his Negro experience from slavery.

Warren: As I understood you to say earlier, you are in favor of a kind of cultural pluralism, which is not competitive, but appreciative. Is that the idea?

Young: Yes, I think that's a very good way of expressing it, and I think that the Southerners, both white and Negro, probably have a lot more in common than they realize - that right now it's the structures of our society which segregated us on the basis of race - that really keep us from getting to know the fact that we probably are much closer to one another than anybody else in America, because of this.

Warren: A young lady, excuse me-- a young lady with whom I was talking at Howard some time back said to me that she had more optimism for the Southern settlement than for the Northern settlement between the races, on the account that there is a shared history - the same land, the people have lived through - lived on and the same as they have lived through, even though you might now find pistol-polite. Beyond that, the possibility of a human recognition - that she could not understand, she said, in Harlem, or Detroit, or Chicago - she being raised on a farm, a Southern farm.

Young: Yes, I think this would be the general experience of most Negroes who move North, and certainly mine. In days when I was in the North in school, most of my friends, since there were very few Negroes on the campus, turned out to be white Southerners; and we found that we had a great deal more in common than say, I did with many of the Northern students. I think this is true in the movement. We have watched Northern whites come down and try to work with us, but they almost never really get along as well as the Southern whites who are working with us - that you really - well, for instance, just in the matter of the religious ethos that we share in the South, - the old gospel hymns, out of which - and spirituals, out of which many of the freedom songs come - white Southerners can sing these a little better. They feel them a little more. They generally - it's much easier for

them once they become liberated intellectually, and socially, to become more deeply, personally involved in the movement.

Warren: Charles Evers was talking to me several weeks ago and I asked him why didn't he leave Mississippi. He said, we're going to win there, because he said, these Mississipians as the worst segregationists, is raising a some sort of a simple culture, which is - insists on respecting courage, blank courage, brute courage. He said the Negro shows this and stands up with it. This is a grudging respect - even with dislike may come out of it, but said respect is there, the basis for something to go on. Second, he said, this segregationist, once he crosses to deal with you, with the Negro, he's not going to lie because he's crossed the line already inside himself, and there's some basis for a reconciliation on those two lines. Does that make any sense to you?

Young: Yes, it makes a great deal of sense, though I hadn't thought of it that way. But, I think that our experience, even in the bitterest situations, we tend to put this trust in non-violence to overcome this barrier - that in Albany, Georgia for instance, in spite of the fact that we were at war, in terms of politics and the social structures, Chief Pritchard and I had a very close, personal friendship going on through this time.

Warren: How'd that work out, literally, specifically?

Young: Well, I almost became his counsellor and his pastor over the tremendous guilt that he had over being involved in perpetuating a police state. Every time that I'd go into jail he'd want to call me in and just talk some, and we found it quite possible to -

Warren: What'd he say, what'd he say?

Young: Oh, things like, for instance, when the seventy-five ministers went to jail, he talked a good deal about - "oh, I don't want to-I-I don't want to put men of God in jail". He said, "I'm no less sincere about what they're doing", he said, "and you all don't know how it makes me feel to have to do this". He even asked if we could get Dr. King to intercede to get him a job as a Federal Marshal, so that he could get out of this system.

Warren: Join the other sides.

Young: Yes, well, and it was now - I think that at the same time I had no illusions about his being very much a part of this system, and I think that this represented not a complete - well, it represented a genuine schizophrenia on his part. I would think that even Adolph Eichmann would be probably a rather personable individual, if you'd sit down with him - and I remember in Mississippi, going to get some of our staff members out of jail who had been beaten up, and when I went there I started a conversation with the sheriff and the chief of police,

and we were able to relate very warmly as persons, and we talked about our families and we joked about the weather, and normal conversational banter. And, I was convinced that these were real Christian gentlemen, and yet here was a Negro girl on our staff who is one of the most sensitive and delicate creatures I know, that they had beaten for an hour and a half with blackjacks.

Warren: Same persons?

Young: The same persons. And, it shocked me when I came out and saw her all - when she came out of jail and her face was all bruised and her eyes swollen and scars and blood still in her hair. And I asked her who beat her and she said, "Those two standing - that you were talking to"right there." Now, this is the problem we really are fighting - that the Southerner who is a very warm and personable human being, when caught in this system, responds almost to a kind of a mob psychosis, and we have had some experiences where, you know, they almost don't face us. It's almost like - like a man disassociates himself from his conscience when he goes to war. In their dealings with Negroes, they are perpetuating a sacred way of life, so anything they have to do to perpetuate this sacred way of life is O. K. Now, if we can ever get the white Southerner and the Negro Southerner to be free of this sytem which makes them respond this way, I think that certainly we will have much more rapport and much better climate in the South than we have in the North.

Warren: Baldwin has written somewhere, I think it is in his last book, that the Southern mob - the people actually on the street, beating up Negroes, or perhaps thepolice in their jail cells, do not represent the will of the Southern white majority. Now, this question evokes all sorts of - this statement evokes all sorts of different responses, as you can well imagine. How do you respond to it?

Young: Well, it's - I can say that that's true, but at the same time I can say that it's not quite true - that the problem of the white majority in the South is that it has no guts and integrity left, I think.

Warren: No leadership.

Young: Yes. That Alabama responds to George Wallace, and this means thatt Alabama who elects George Wallace has to bear the responsibility for his inflammatory speeches, which get children killed and which create a climate where - that will create a police state. Now, cornering these people individually, you get something completely different, but in terms of their fear of integration, whether this is a kind of paranoia, or - I don't know - that I keep - when you were saying this - I thought of, well, of several things that have been written, you know, that show this kind of ambiguity. The pleasant, personable, humorous Southerner, who is also capable of great sadism - yes, and I don't know what the source of this sickness is.

Warren: It's true.

Young: Now, many people have analyzed it - I mean have described it, but I don't know whether I've really come up with somebody that has been able to really diagnose it - the nature of this social illness.

Warren: Let me try -

Young: Baldwin and Sartre have developed a sexual angle.

Warren: Well, they're outsiders, they don't know anything about the South, neither one of them. Not a thing.

Young: That's true. Well, Tennessee Williams too, you know, pulls this in a great deal and -

Warren: It's an element, clearly, but not that's not -

Young: Yes.

Warren: Let me ask you - try this and see how you respond to it. I don't know how much money to put on this card, but I'll try - that the Southerner is in a way like the Negro - he is a person who is outside of a dominant culture, and is defending, in a different perspective, his identity - and the Negro has been trying to find his identity in his culture, and has felt none in the American, the major American culture - trying to find an identity or role in a very crucial way, and this is, of course, written about in great length - is the Negro search for identify. But, the white Southerner who thought he had one once, you see, or looking toward his grandfather, did.

Now, he sees himself, his very identity threatened - not just ways of life, but identity - his whole role, his whole social function, his existence threatened. In a mistaken way, he has elected to stake his identity on a pattern of life which involves segregation. These are symptoms of life - not the core of a life. We've made - he's made those symbols and symptoms the essence. They stand for the essence - he hasn't even defined the problem for himself, and so he - so some - it's it's the very identity, is the very existence he's dependent upon enforcing this - among several other symbols. Does that make any sense, or part sense?

Young: Yes, I can think so, and when you couple with it, I think the real political threat that this white Southerner feels in hard-core areas, I mean, well, in areas of Negro majority, such as the Mississippi delta; people tell me who talk with white people about - around Selma, Alabama, that there was a real fear of - and recollection of Reconstruction, even, that still pervaded the mind of the average white person around Selma.

Warren: This isplayed up - it's not a folk membry - it's a deliberately cultivated piece of propaganda, I feel.

Young: Yes, and they couple withthis, well, you know - the myths really. The myth - the sex myth, the Communist myth, and all of these things tend to feed on, or to feed this neurosis a great deal, and so you really get a kind of defensiveness that

is very hard to cope with, and I think both the church and the government tend to make a mistake in trying to cope with it. when they cope with it through judgment. Now, I certainly believe in law and in Federal enforcement of law, and in the use of troops, but - for instance, the way in which Eisenhower used the troops was almost, in Little Rock, was a defense of his ego and the fact that he was insulted. The issue of law - Federal law enforcement was never really communicated to the South and nobody really attempted to do this. I think almost the same thing happened to Kennedy. That they felt betrayed by Ross Barnett, and they responded with a show of power. Now, at this time, Kennedy himself, had never - or Eisenhower - had ever made any attempt to communicate to the South the meaning of a republic. Nobody has ever attempted to do any education in the South, except the white citizens' Council and the Klan. And, I think many of these people are - well, I'd almost say that the little experience I've had in reading about these people, is that they are genuinely sick and they play on the social sickness for leadership. So, that you find the South, with nobody really trying to tellthem what the moral and cultural issues are today.

Warren: Let's switch this a little bit now - that is so true, you know, and the real pathology in some of these people that I have met face to face. Let's take something else. Let's

take a man, almost at random, you know, opposite number, maybe. I don't know the man, know anything about him yet. I'm taking a quote row from Galamison a few weeks ago. "I would rather see the public school system destroyed than not conform to the time table of integration." May be the school system - has already run its course anyway. What does that remark convey to you - innovation?

Young: Well, I think he's speaking out of a great passion and he's really - it's more heat than light, I'd say, but I know what he's trying to say. Now, the way I would interpret that same feeling when I have it, is that well, one of my little talks about education is - Dr. Conant in his books has continually lambasted American education. Now, nobody really takes this seriously. They take it intellectually. But the Negro is really experiencing daily everything that Dr. Conant is talking about, times ten, you know, multiplied. Now, when Galamison says something like this, he's saying that the experience of public education for Negroes is so - is such a wasted enterprise that it just as well not exist for the good that it's going to the masses of Negroes. Now, the truth - when the truth - I think his narrowness is that he's only seeing this happening to Negroes. But, the same thing is almost happening to the average white person too, in public education.

Warren: It certainly is.

Young: Now, I think that he makes a mistake when he doesn't point this out - that he makes enemies of the white community and they count him then as irresponsible and hot-headed, and in a sense he is, you know, when he says this kind of thing, without putting it in its total educational perspective. But, I guess - I don't know if this was said in a press statement.

Warren: A T. V. interview.

Young: A T. V. interview. These kinds of things, you know, you can get caught sometimes and - into -

Warren: Sure.

Young: But I would say that Galamison is a Presbyterian minister - an educated man himself, would have a great deal of respect for education and the thing he says is that the education that we are getting now - that it, and I agree, that it would be much better for us to just say that - well, and this is what is going to happen in the school situation -

Warren: In New York, or in general?

Young: In New York and in general. That nobody would deal with Conant's theories. I mean you wouldn't get the kind of rash readjustment of curriculum and everything else that is needed just on the basis of a book - but when a book and a social movement co-incide, what's going to happen is when Galamison begins to get a little time to do some thinking and reading about this - see - Martin Luther King really didn't have - he responded to the

passion and need of the situation. It wasn't until several months later, when he began to mellow and reflect on it, that he put it in the ideological context of non-violence and began to draw on this tradition and develop an ideology to go with his movement. Now, I would think that Galamison is going to going to begin to - in fact, Dr. King and I were talking about this yesterday, and he was saying some of these things, and we were encouraging him -

Warren: Dr. King?

Young: Yes, to talk to Galamison and try to find a meeting where we can sit down with some of these school board leaders and rent strike leaders and see if we can't - well, it sounds rather paternalistic, and we don't mean it in that sense - but help them to mature a little faster as revolutionaries. They've got something genuine, they've got a folk movement which is going to be with us for a long time, and that we really should be sharing with one another what we have learned.

Warren: Here's an energy - a dynamism of charge - which is wasting itself on bussing - the problem of bussing - is that your idea?

Young: Yes. That's it - and this isn't the problem at all. In fact, I dare say that integration - see, the problem - these integration becomes a problem, Negro schools become a problem mainly because of the small percentage of money in America

that's spent on any kind of education.

Warren: Start with that - the money is trivial, compared with what it should be. What about a city like Washington, D. C.? How do you integrate the schools in Washington, you know, the schools in New York fifteen years from now, when there won't be any white people around to integrate?

Young: Yes, well, that's what I'm saying - that we've got to get, especially in schools, beyond the question of integration. The Negro in the South, see, I think has -

Warren: It's beyond the question of integration - that is a transitional problem, is that right?

Young: Yes. I think so. Now, I think that the Negro in the South has felt that the problem was - and within a good measure he was correct, you see - in Mississippi he would see the statistics that two hundred and six dollars a year was spent on Negro education - on white education, a white student - in Lafior county, thirty-five dollars spent on a Negro kid. So, that he realizes that there's no need - it's almost impossible, it's too long to get this Negro's education up to two hundred dollars, see? The rate of gradualism would just kill us - so he's got to integrate this two hundred school system. Now, what the Northern Negro has done is taken the Southern problem, I mean the Southern analysis, as integration being the answer to everything, and tried to slap it on a situation where the problem isn't

so much segregation as it is urbanization.

Warren: Now, just last week, I was sitting with Dr. Anne Hedgeman, you know, who is a most wonderful woman and who has been a great help to me, and we were talking about the bussing business - and she said when the bussing is solved - that the bussing is done all the time, and we haven't come to grips with this - this is just in passing - she said - and I said, "What about Washington?" And, she said, "Oh, we bring them over from Virginia." I can't see the logic of this myself, of sending the busses to Virginia. How can you get political implementation with that? To bring white children in from Virginia to put them into Washington D. C. schools.

Young: No. Um, hum, but what you do, in coping with the - you see, in coping with the education problem, you don't really - this is why we say the problem has to be taken in its totality. That you get education dependent - being de facto because of housing. You get housing segregated partially because of jobs. You get jobs segregated mainly because Negroes are not represented in the political structure. Now the thing - this is the reason we are centering more and more now our fight on political representation - that if Negroes represent thirty-four per cent of the population in Alabama, somehow they ought to have thirty-four per cent of the representation in State legislatures. Now, and that when you re-apportion to exclude Negroes

from representation, you are really being unconstitutional. Now, when Negroes are equally represented, or proportionally represented, in government, then it doesn't become - see, Washington is a problem because white people from the South, the District of Columbia committee, is mainly dominated by Southerners, so that Negroes blame it on the South and they blame it then on segregation. In New York the same thing is true. It's white people who are taking the blame for Negro education. I think that when you get some of these same Negroes, and if I were mayor of New York, I'd have put Galamison on his committee a long time ago, and give him the responsibility of drawing up the school plan with somebody and when he begins to become representative and have the responsibility of actually solving the problem, he will begin to see the problem in its depth. And, you have, you know, a means of solution, then. But, until you actually get representative government, or until Negroes are represented in the administration, and in the government bureaucracy, so that they take the responsibility for dealing with some of these problems where they have racial overtones, you are going to get segregation as themmain focussing point. Now, I don't know whether we have enough time to do this -

Warren: That's the problem right there - how do you contain the problems, even with the best will in the world, to accomplish this.

Young: Yes, and I don't know that I have any solutions. I think right now, if could once get people to see the problem, to see racism as a symptom - or, in a sense, racism as mainly the - I don't know what to call it - the - it's not the problem itself, but it provides such a great frame of reference for so many problems that we're not really facing any of the problems of a modern democracy because we've got a fight over racism. Congress can't face urban transit, or urban renewal mainly because of the Southern power block, and if you could once get democracy really functioning on an equal basis for all of its citizens, you might be able to cope with these problems.

Warren: Do you feel - excuse me - I thought I heard your voice coming to the period - my question is this. Every movement, every person tends to become a prisoner of his own rhetoric - of his own slogans, you know, and sticks about himself to himself; to what extent has this happened in the quote - "Negro movement" - and you were giving what might be an example a moment ago, when you said integration had become for the New York school system, or even bussing, a slogan, which may conceal the realities of the problem - the fundamental realities of the problem. This is not an argument, by the way, again, against integration. I've said this, when we were talking, but is a question of self-deception that can occur around the words,

as examples of rhetoric, as a trap.

Young: Yes, well this thing is a trap that all leaders of mass movements fall into. You've got to constantly - you've got to have slogans, you've got to have rallying points to keep the little people informed, and yet, way down deep you know that the problem is not quite so simple. I think there are two things that can save you from this. One is, I guess real creativity and continually feeding your movement new ideas. We, in the South, have been able to, well, just moving from bus boycotts to freedom riders to sit-ins to voter registration to massive, direct action, has kept us from having any pat answers to anything. And, so the movement has continued to evolve and grow and I think the Northern movement will do this too. The other thing is enough humility to admit that you are wrong, and I think Dr. King certainly exemplifies this, and -

Warren: In what specific way are you? -

Young: Well, when you - when you follow a slogan and it gets you into trouble -

Warren: Which slogan are you talking about now?

Young: Oh, let me think. Well, I think of one case was when Dr. King and - was really pulled into this - with the Birmingham people demanding that twenty-five policemen be hired, by a certain date, and really this came out of a press conference which had not

really been cleared, and I think -

Warren: how - I mean, the press comes with Dr. King with the Birmingham leaders? -

Young: Well, with a group of Birmingham leaders.

Warren: It hadn't been cleared with whom?

Young: I mean it hadn't really be thoroughly discussed and analyzed. It was a slogan, you see, to - for public relations value, for massive - something had to be done to give the people of Birmingham some hope that large scale bombings and mass murders were not going to follow this church bombing, because this really threatened. So, the feeling in Birmingham is that policemen have been related to, and in fact, involved with the bombings, so that one of our answers - the slogan was Negro policemen would guarantee us some law enforcement, so we asked for - we demand then, to put a stop to these bombings twenty-five Negro policemen. Now, there were problems connected to this, but Dr. King was - when he saw the problems, in some sense admitted that, you know, this was not possible and that we wouldn't maybe stage demonstrations on the basis of this demand for twenty-five policemen.

Warren: End of Tape 2, conversation with Mr. Andy Young. See Tape 3.