

Mr. Richardson Jr.

Mr. Richardson Jr. is a one-act play regarding: Indianapolis and the Indianapolis Public Schools; segregation, integration, and the Ku Klux Klan; and, the religion, money, and politics of "Main Street."

Henry J. Richardson, Jr., (1902-1982) attorney, statesman and civil rights advocate, is from Huntsville, AL. In his teens he was sent to Indianapolis to attend Shortridge High School where he was graduated in 1921.

Mr. Richardson Jr. was graduated from the Indiana Law School in 1928. As a member of the Indiana State Legislature during the 1930's and 1940's, he continuously fought the Ku Klux Klan's control of Indiana government. Among the bills he sponsored were those prohibiting discrimination on state public works jobs, and a constitutional amendment to open the state militia to all races. Both bills passed to become state law. Among his many accomplishments in the struggle for human rights were: led the successful fight to repeal the Horse Thief Detective Act which prevented the Klan from parading with hoods; constructed, promoted, and financed the 1949 Indiana School and Teacher Desegregation/Public School Integration Law; and he drafted the first Fair Employment Practice Law in America. He played major roles reviving the Indianapolis Chapter of the NAACP in the 1940's and forming the Indianapolis Urban League in 1965.

The play comes from an interview done by John Harris Loflin which took place during the fall of 1979 in the law office of Mr. Richardson Jr. which was located in the Ober Building, 38 North Pennsylvania Street, room 417.

The stage version of the office has a desk which Mr. Richardson, Jr. sits behind and a chair in front of the desk where Mr. Loflin sits. On a wall behind Mr. Richardson is a row of six picture frames filled with his degrees, letters of commendation, and award certificates.

Mr. Richardson Jr.'s secretary comes in with John and introduces him. The men shake hands. Mr. Richardson Jr. thanks his secretary as she leaves. Mr. Richardson Jr. is wearing a suit and tie. John carries a briefcase and a coat. He has on a white shirt and tie. He pulls a tape recorder out of his briefcase and sits it on the desk. Mr. Richardson, Jr. was 78 years old. John was 36.

John: As I said on the phone to your secretary, I wanted to do an interview. May I get the tape recorder going?

Mr. Richardson Jr.: Yes. Please sit down.

John: Mr. Richardson, my name is John Loflin. I am currently a teacher at Day Adult at the old Harry E. Wood High School. There's a small IPS alternative school there called Indy Prep. It is a part of the Tech-300 program that works with dropouts and delinquents. There is a student in the Day Adult part of the school named Mr. Bill Hicks and he advised me to talk to you. You see I grew up at the Fountain Square and went to Wood High myself...and anyway, Mr. Hicks said he was a friend of yours and you could tell me the history of the Indianapolis Public School and the city. He said you knew the history of the KKK here.

Mr. Richardson Jr.: That's interesting because as far as history goes, there were 3 Klan cells in Indianapolis. There was one out in Brightwood. Then number two was down at Fountain Square. Number three was over here on Riverside Drive in that area of west Indianapolis. A sub-headquarters was out in west Indianapolis area--far west Indianapolis; and, those were the Klan cells here. The main Klan headquarters for all the units of the Klan met down on (100 block) East Maryland Street in a building that was formerly Stuarts (or Stewarts) where the parking lot is next to the Railroadmen's Savings and Loan--the building that faced Maryland on the north side of the street, that was the headquarters of the Klan for all of the units. The building has been torn down. But they had a hall up there. They had their regalia. They had the Klan dragon for this that and the other and so forth. I saw the whole set-up after we got rid of the Klan...ran them underground. But one of the main active ones was the one down in the Fountain Square.

John: Where was it located in the Fountain Square, the Fountain Square building?

Mr. Richardson Jr.: I'm not sure it was there. You see the Fountain Square building was built by the same contractor that built the Walker Building. They are very much alike if you have noticed. Well, the Klan had a headquarters down at Fountain Square and it was in one of those older buildings and not in the Fountain Square building *per se* because that was a new building. Now I mentioned this because you said you were from the Fountain Square.

John: Yes, and that's why I went to Wood High School. What can you tell me about the history of IPS and the creation of Wood in 1953?

Mr. Richardson Jr.: Let me start with myself. I finished Shortridge High School in 1921 when Shortridge was at the northeast corner of Pennsylvania and Michigan. There was integration--there was no segregation of schools. Manual was on the south side and Tech on the eastside and Broad Ripple had a little school up north. So what happened was in 1922 the public school board had a meeting with the purpose of setting up segregated schools under the permissive act of the 1867. You see the school system was organized on a township basis originally and you might go into that. It would be interesting. Your townships under the law controlled the schools system and the policies of the schools. And you had a section of the law that provided for the permissive integration depending on the township board. This was before we had first-class city school boards. You see Indianapolis is a

first-class city and it comes under a special law and then you had a right to have a board of school commissioners which were elected. What this board did... Are you Jewish?

John: No, I'm not.

Mr. Richardson Jr.: Well, I might as well tell you this. The prejudice here as a matter of basic social differential of races was more acute as far as the Catholics and the Jews as it was anything else.

John: Even color?

Mr. Richardson Jr.: Oh yes. And none of the Jews of any note lived north of Washington Street. They all lived on the south side--south Meridian Street and all that area in there was Jewish and of course the Jews went to Manual High School. Some of the Jews went to Shortridge.

I used to sit with one of the Josephs and so forth. Well the acuteness as a manner of prejudice against the Jews and Catholics at that time was outstanding! So when the school board passed a resolution to form a special committee in 1922 to see about redistricting your high schools so that they would be able to get the Jews and the poor white people out of Shortridge and get the Negroes out. So they passed a resolution and they toyed with it, manipulated and maneuvered and they made an overall deal: that if we are going to build a new Shortridge we might as well do a good job while we're at it: get the poor white people from the south side and the Jews out of Shortridge, create Washington High School, move Shortridge High School, and build Attucks High School. That was all one deal. Manual High School would take care of the Jews and the poor white folks from Kinghan's Hill in west Indianapolis. Now you listen to me. So the deal was made to put Manual up for the Jews and poor white people from the south side, to take them out of Shortridge. So then the leading Negroes here, who were made up of Senator Brokenburr, a lawyer and some other citizens--they were all Republicans--and the school board were Republicans too... The Negroes went to the school board and protested this resolution.

It was a written protest over there and a matter of record. They were against building Attucks and segregating the schools districts as far as high schools go on the basis of race. These were leading Negroes, the leaders in the community at that time...along with some Jews and one or two white folks, who didn't have a lot of influence because they were poor, from west Indianapolis... Because you see, Manual was geared and leaned toward the people who lived in near west Indianapolis and the south side so as to keep them from coming north of Washington Street. Negroes lived out east and a few up on West Street and Camp Street and etc., etc. and McPhearson Street and the streets between Meridian and Illinois and etc, etc. And then a few lived on Indianapolis' west side, but not far west side. When we're talking far west side, we're talking west of Pershing. Now the line was the Boulevard (White River Parkway) where they're going to put in the park now. Most of those were white, but a few Negroes lived there on Sheffield and--that's west Indianapolis--then in far west Indianapolis was some foreigners, and ordinary white citizens, good citizens, but they didn't have much influence. You had the Klan influence of control. Out there Catholics had little cells of objections, but they didn't have much power.

So when this deal was put through as a package deal to put up (expand) Manual, to build an Attucks to take the pressure off (Shortridge), to segregate Manual--to get rid of Manual *per se* and to transfer

students from Shortridge--all the Negroes. And then the people had a district: the west Indianapolis, the south side and the Negroes who went to Manual and the rest of the Negroes from up in the district that runs up to 30th Street...and the few Negroes who lived on 30th street.

In 1926 (March 15) the city council here in Indianapolis and the Klan proposed a city ordinance, which they fought about and then they passed, that no Negroes should be able to live north of 30th Street. So that kept the Negroes back in the near west side--Paris Avenue, Northwestern, back down to West Street, Camp Street, Parker Street and then near west side. And then the white people were there in the west side and the Jews and the other poor white people were from Kinghan's Hill--Kinghan's Hill was over here by West Street...and that was where the Kinghan's meat packing house was. Both Negroes, and poor white people and foreigners worked there and killed those hogs and cattle. It was terrible work, but it was the best job they could get and they made more money than anybody else except postmen and school teachers--school teachers got \$50.00 a month.

And, so they set up these districts--you see we had no high school districts until this came into being for the specific purpose of setting up a pattern and a line of segregation. The city council in keeping with the move of the school board passed this law to keep Negroes from buying property and owning it north of 30th Street.

Bob Bailey, R.L. Bailey, a very outstanding black lawyer who graduated *cum laude*--one of the finest I've ever known--was the first Negro deputy attorney general of Indiana who helped train me in the law--took the case to the supreme court involving the city ordinance as unfair and unconstitutional that Negroes couldn't live north of 30th street. So when that move was made and the law was found to be unconstitutional, then of course the Jews had a chance to spread too. Of course the law didn't say a word about Jews, but it was an understood fact--I MEAN AN UNWRITTEN LAW. (*Mr. Richardson gets emphatic*)

So when they got a deal together, I think it was in 1927. Washington High School was built the same time as Attucks.

Manual was in front of Miller, Mooney and Ward. The old Manual was built in 1895. That's where the head of Merchants National Bank, Lon Lyddis, and a many outstanding Negroes went to school. The new addition to Manual (in the back--to the east--and along Madison Avenue) was built by the same contractor that built Attucks and same time too. The deal to build Manual's addition was a one contract deal to put Attucks in the pattern when they set up the new districts for the high schools. It was part of the 1922 deal, and I told you what was behind it.

They put Attucks over here and made it all Negro and they set up a school district that was like a crazy quilt to include a high school district that ran from the eastside, around, across to cover Camp Street on up to Pershing where a few Negroes lived and cut across to include the Negroes who lived south of 30th Street, 25th Street, Paris Avenue, Shriver, across again and ran out east for Negroes that lived in the Fletcher district out there. And so they made this school district for Attucks--just like a crazy quilt to include all the neighborhoods that had Negroes.

I ran for the legislature in 1930. Then I was judge here in 1930 in the Superior Court No. 3. Then I ran for the legislature on the Democratic ticket.

So they opened up Attucks. No. No, remember before that they passed a resolution in 1923. Then the move wasn't made to pass the resolution until 1926. The Negroes who objected to it, they made a deal with them: We are going to put up a high school over here... All this was part of a pattern of segregation--districts, schools, housing were all part of the pattern of the Klan. The committee who opposed a segregated resolution of a segregated high school, they made a deal. We'll put up a separate high school and it will be to your advantage since it will give your children a place to teach. And that's what they did. They recapitulated. That was the same damn committee.

You see I've been in this thing ever since it started. I objected to Attucks and I had no influence then. I was nothing but a kid in high school. They recapitulated and they got this Negro high school going. And there's been nothing but a mess about it since.

Then the white folks wanted to carry out the other part of the program and get the poor white people out of Shortridge and then wanted to expand Manual to absorb the Jews and absorb them others (*Shouting loudly*) from the district. See, you set up districts for the south side and the west side for Manual that Manual used to serve.

And then the pattern followed straight on through the years and flowed until I went over there in the late 1940's. All the schools were about to close because they didn't have any money and we sent scripts to the teachers to pay them and we passed a gross income tax law here and part of the tax was to go into a fund to pay the teachers and so we didn't have to close the schools. So then a lawyer and a friend of mine that was on the school board and I, we issued a declaration to them that if they didn't nullify the 1922 resolution for segregated high school districts that I was going to put up \$10,000 and take it by myself to federal court. The paper came out with a big headline, "Henry Richardson gives ultimatum to school board." Then hell broke loose. This was around 1946-47.

Then I maneuvered and got enough political power through my connections--because you see I had been in the state legislature since 1933, 1935 and '36. So in 1949 was when the hell broke loose. Come over here and read this. You need to read the '49 bill because I carefully drew it on a process of the whole state of Indian involving teachers, and students. (*Mr. Richardson takes John and shows him the copy of the bill. They then return to their chairs.*) They passed the '49 law, then they tried to circumscribe it, and redistrict the schools to take in grade schools and then they tried to set up a token integration and if you read the '49 law the way I drew it, it was to integrate one class each year and to phase it out so that at the end of the high school the whole school would be integrated and every class would be integrated. It would be smooth and wouldn't start violent reactions. But they didn't follow the law.

They built Northwest (1962) over here and they built Arlington High School (1961) over there--Howe stayed in a little groove out there. Then they got something set up for the rich white people who were perfidious and...

John: Do you think this had any thing to do with Manual moving in 1953?

Mr. Richardson Jr.: Oh sure, because you see to satisfy the '49 law they started making shifts and they attempted to make several shifts to circumscribe the law.

So they dilly-dallied there and they built North Central High School outside-inside in 1956. You got a school district out there in that time...Washington Township. They put it up just outside the IPS boundary, yet the school could pull families from inside the boundary. Prior to this, students from the township attended Broad Ripple and Shortridge High Schools in Indianapolis. Pike Township was not a member of the main stream of the Indianapolis school district then. So they thought they had it made that all the white school children could go to school out there. And the first day they opened North Central, three Negroes (the Thompson family) showed up. They lived on a very wealthy farm way out there near 100th and some street and they had to admit them.

Then it went from bad to worse and they built North Central outside and we'll get just a little further...almost to Noblesville, because Noblesville was controlling. Noblesville was the main cell for Indianapolis for the Klan. And, still is. You see the Silver Shirts, the Columbians and all of them came in after the Klan and took over. And I had to fight them. And then after we got the '54 school integration law and through the NAACP and Howard Ennis and the whole set up with Thurgood Marshall, who was chief counsel for the legal department of the NAACP. So we got that through--the famous Brown case in '54. Then the thing poked along and Indianapolis tried to find a way of avoidance...

John: Was the creation of Wood High School in '53 a way of avoiding that?

Mr. Richardson Jr.: Oh, that was a part of it. Then about that time, they built (expanded) Pike Township outside the IPS district. Then they built Arlington to take care of the whites on the east side.

John: Arlington opened in 1961.

Mr. Richardson Jr.: Oh yes, that was all part of the pattern. They moved to ship the variant to develop Wood to absorb the kick-offs of the south side, the west side and the Negroes that had to be integrated. Under the move of the '49 act we had--you see, we had the state act before the '54 law went through...

John: But up until 1951 all the (high) schools were white except Attucks and then low and behold Manual moved in 1953, and I wonder why? Do you think some of the prominent graduates of Manual and the Manual PTA and the city fathers helped? It couldn't have been the building. Now they claimed they moved because of over enrollment.

Mr. Richardson Jr.: There was over enrolment, but that was part of the move. That wasn't a bad building. It was a matter of shifting over here, pushing the air down here and the bubble comes up over here and then pressing it here and it come up over there. It was a matter of avoidance and circumvention of Indiana's '49 law and Brown v. Board.

John: Probably a lot of land developers said, "I'm glad Manual's moving" and intended to use that land and develop it. That was probably behind the Madison Avenue Land Scandal.

Mr. Richardson Jr.: That was part of it. It was all part of an unholy deal and combination. And of course, the well-to-do white folks joined in with the poor white people who were mollified, nullified, mesmerized, and confused. The Negro was in the middle. He didn't know what the hell he was doing because he had done sold out. Then (Freeman B.) Ransom, leader, head of the Madame Walker

Company, put in his daughter, his niece over there at Attucks. He's retired. Then the other big shots put their children as teachers at Attucks. Then I kept pressing for the '49 school act and spent thousands of dollars. Then when the '54 act came in we had a big investigation down here by the NAACP. Then 11 years ago (1968) the NAACP started a case before Judge S. Hugh Dillin, which I helped finance...which Ward and John Moss are handling now--which is now before the 1st Circuit Court of Appeals. Dillin made his finding and it was never reversed, but they tried to nullify it based on the fact you didn't find segregation in Perry Township, nor in Pike Township and up in Lawrence--there were no Negroes up in Lawrence Township.

John: Who was on the school board in '52 to make this decision that Manual would move?

Mr. Richardson Jr.: You'll have to look up the records. That was a trade off.

John: You think it was a trade off?

Mr. Richardson Jr.: I know it was a trade off. I'm not even guessing. Because you see, I had two key people on the school board who were buddies of mine. One I got on the Circuit Court of Appeals and another was a consultant for the state—he was in the legislature with me, Albert Ward. Ward and I stayed up all night and they were on the school board and they laid the ground work for me to get a resolution through the school board to get rid of the 1922 policy. We called it The Klan School Board Policy, and the Republicans controlled it. So then they put up an independent school slate and then it was still a political trade-off--the dye being cast as a matter of the pattern, social pattern--absolute segregation. They didn't intend to get rid of it and they don't intend to get rid of it now. It's been trade-offs here and trade offs there.

So we got in federal court and Dillin, being the type of guy he is who was a good buddy of mine--a courageous fellow and has principles...and so the NAACP filed it's first suit, and the pressure was put on them...so I helped finance the lawyers, Moss and John Ward. John Ward was a student of mine when I was lecturing in graduate school down at Indian University. He is *phi beta kappa* and so forth and Moss's protégé' and a smart boy. So they have been running the suit for 10-11 years. The argument just ended up last week at the Circuit Court of appeals. But it is a big fight on this angle and that angle and all the big law firms--Harry Ice office and all the rest--the Chamber of Commerce are major factors of approving these shady trade-offs to satisfy the power structure. Money folks...

John: That's what I thought

Mr. Richardson Jr.: That's what happened and of course Bill Book was the head of the Chamber of Commerce and he of course did the will of the power structure because the power structure gave the money to run the Chamber of Commerce.

John: Did you know Mr. Emery, the first principal of Wood High? Did he fall for all of this?

Mr. Richardson Jr.: No. He did the best he could.

John: Did he know or was he aware of all the trade offs?

Mr. Richardson Jr.: A lot of them knew, but you know one thing...a lot of us know and have convictions and I'm a fool who has been fighting it. I've spent a quarter of a million dollars for over 50

years fighting this damn thing and of course I've become *persona non grata* and I don't give a damn and I've taken the position that right is right and right will prevail eventually and when the evil forces disintegrate and decay because eventually right will prevail.

So we are still fighting it. And in 1976 all the big shots including the Supreme Court chief justice, the governor, and the president of Indiana University gave a big testimonial dinner for me. And Dillin spoke at it. It was the biggest thing that had been put on here. There were a thousand people there. Dillin told them that if you'd have followed Richardson's law he wouldn't have all this mess in his court about this integration of these schools. He told that publically. The power structure was there: the millionaires, all of them who were supposed to be friends of mine that I have known 50 years. But you see the whole point is, I'd of been down, dead, out of this office and disbarred and so on...but you see I knew good and well that you can't fight unless you keep your nose half way clean and keep your britches up and I wouldn't fall for their gimmicks and I had all kind of gimmicks--jobs---and I wouldn't take any of them and I just stuck to the practice of law and through the grace of God I've survived.

And I'm still in there battling. I had a conference with Ward and Moss this week about the hearing in Chicago. And Dillin, his position is generally known. I used to have lunch with him at the Athletic Club and also up at the Hilton Hotel. But we don't go to lunch now because he's on the spot and everyone knows where I stand on this. And if people see us sit down at a table together it compromises him and he don't want to be in that position. We're good friends. He's a man of great courage and has a commitment for justice and what's right. And he came from a little town where they didn't have enough Negroes and Jews to whip a cat...but he's just dedicated.

John: Well that's what made me get into this: in Dillin's decision where it says where Wood was created in 1953, he said it helped perpetuate the segregation of Attucks.

Mr. Richardson Jr.: It was a trade off. Just like when they renovated and built all that fine front for Manual and built Attucks in the '20's.

John: Oh I see what you mean.

Mr. Richardson Jr.: It was all one deal. It had been blueprinted back in the '20's when the first resolution to segregate the schools. Let me tell you what happened. We didn't have any high school districts until you started segregation. Then they carved the districts--and it was like that crazy quilt and districted to include all the Negroes wherever they lived and they bused the rest of them over to Attucks. Then they expanded it to include the grade schools. Now Perry Township had a school board down there--which had some Germans that I represented some--the Stumpf Brothers on South Meridian Street. I represented the Wagners, the Stumpf Brothers, the Ranimann's, the Zooks...and I made thousands of dollars for them. They were straight. They were German, ordinary Germans who worked like hell and had money. I went to trial for them in 1936 in a case involving the AAA--the Agricultural Adjustment Act where in that all processes of grain, meat and farm stuffs had a super tax on them which was unconstitutional. The Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional and the money was refunded. Meanwhile Perry Township set up its own district from the old law of the township board running the schools. And your schools on the south side, when the pattern had changed as a matter of your grade schools, the south side schools were never segregated. Interesting thing...

Mr. Richardson Jr.

John: I know. I went to IPS numbers 28 and 8.

Mr. Richardson Jr.: I'm telling you it was an interesting thing during all this period...and then before I got thru the '49 act schools in Huntington, Grant County where Marion is and many of your other places in the state were not segregated.

Now they had a lot of race prejudice and some Klan cells because in 1930 in front of the court house in Marion, they lynched a Negro. And, I went down there in 1932 with Governor McNutt and made a speech on the courthouse steps with him. Then I made a speech in New Albany, which was a hot bed controlled by the Klan element from Evansville...and then I went over to Versailles and then I went down to where the oldest school in Indiana is--which was started in Vincennes which was a German community. You see the Germans were a great influence and factor through out the state. All the banks in Evansville were German owned. And you see there were two classes of Germans--you had Germans *per se* and you had the Dutch Germans. And the ordinary Dutch Germans came down the national highway which is 421 from Pennsylvania and the Quaker areas up in Pennsylvania and some stopped here and some went down to the Ohio river. I know this because I went through some of the titles on the land.

But you see the reason we are fighting this is that there is an ingrown state of race hatred and a differential where in the Negro has never been able to fade into the main stream by virtue of color and that color is what sets up the differential. Now we had patterns involving jurors, courts, lawyers, residence, communities to follow the Klan pattern right straight across—from Richmond, Indiana which is a Quaker town and Earlham...right straight across the state. Now, I spoke back during that period in many of the towns. I was in the legislature. I was an oddity. I was the first Negro elected in some 35 to 40 years to the Indiana legislature. The last Negro took some money and he was a Republican and they swore they would never elect another one. So I outsmarted them and got with an Irishman here and a Catholic who owned Moon, Miller and Ward and a circuit court judge by the name of Earl Cox who became circuit court judge in 1932, Marion county--good friend of mine--who was not a liberal, but who had a lot of respect for Negro ability because of a Negro in his class. In his class were two Negroes. One became a multi-millionaire for the banana holding company down in Central America--he runs it now. And the other Negro was Bob Bailey, who was *magna cum laude* of his law class. Earl Cox liked me because he thought I was a very smart young man.

And so when I ran for the legislature, he helped me finance my campaign. And when he put up a big placard for him, he'd put up a big one for me. And that's the way I won. I lost in 1930 then I won in '32. Then I ran again and I was fourth on the whole ticket in the county in '35. Then I got to fighting the Klan and one of the first things I did in the legislature was to outlaw the Klan so they couldn't march in the street with hoods on. They were marching from down on the south side--your Klan from your neighborhood would come on down and march down Illinois Street. There was Gray Gribben and Gray Jewelers at about 140 North Illinois Street. And when the Klan would march down to Indiana Avenue to scare all the niggers to death, they knocked out all the Catholic and Jews windows they could find. I'm not telling you what somebody told me, I'm telling you what I saw.

Back then you didn't get elected...even judges didn't get elected unless you were a card carrying member of the Klan. So the social pattern, the housing pattern...

Mr. Richardson Jr.

John: Religion?

Mr. Richardson Jr.: Religion...all dovetailed to sustain the copious pattern of segregation in every facet. Then of course they had the red lining, and the red line. You see I live at 4150 North Illinois. I've got an estate on top of that hill--2 acres. I bought it 25 years ago. I couldn't borrow a nickel on it because they wouldn't let a Negro borrow any money. I paid cash for it. I knew there was going to be hell, but I maneuvered it. It was never on the market. They never put those estates on the market, so when I bought then they found out I owned it. I had it several months before they found out because I had the deed in my safe. I'd paid cash for it and I controlled all the bidding on it. One was from Richmond Indiana, a white fellow and good friend of mine--a lawyer--and two guys here. And when the bidding went up I would control it here over the telephone. And I'm doing all the damn bidding. So the last person had bidding it in...I gave him the cash, bought it, signed the deed in my office with his wife...he transferred it to me...he was a Jew...had to leave town.

So, I owned it and they couldn't do a thing about it. I didn't owe nobody. I didn't owe nobody a nickel ...because I couldn't get a mortgage. So they sent the government in on me. The internal revenue investigated me for 6 months. I told them, "Hell, I have been working for 40 years and where I made my money was before the tax came into being." I used to work for the attorney for the federal government on HULC, titles on real estate at \$100.00 per day. That was in 1933-34. And that was a lot of money then. Teachers made \$50.00 per month and postman a little bit more.

John: Things are a lot different now.

Mr. Richardson Jr.: No, across the board it's the same pattern. The only thing now it is more sophisticated and tokenized now. That's the only difference.

There is no fundamental, profound change. I don't give a damn what anybody says. I've known all the superintendents of schools. Had lunch with them, talk with them...

John: What happened when you said all hell broke loose in 1949?

Mr. Richardson Jr.: Yes, all hell broke loose in '49 when I got the act through. Then they started, forming committees and groups to desegregate the local high school so they would become integrated. And one of the biggest moves they made was the grade school that was over on--they had a big fight about it--on 30th street over here. (George W. Sloan School No. 41 at 1001 West 30th Street) They wanted to make that school--I stopped them--they wanted to make that school integrated and then they said they had a right to draw the boundary line. But they made it integrated...but they swept most of the Negroes over to school 43 on Capitol Avenue. Well that was the district. Well you see my son, you see that boy who was just in here a minute ago went to 43. He finished Shortridge under the new system...the new Shortridge. Mrs. Richardson was the head of a department at the new Shortridge for several years. She plotted for me, when I was fighting the school system, a map of all the school districts. We had a chart of what schools were white what were mixed and what schools were black. In addition to that, she got a letter from the school board...I lived at 4150 North Illinois, no I lived at 4057 Rookwood then and the superintendent of school sent a letter to my oldest son, he was then in a school district that was in transition. And the letter said my son had to go past three other schools to go to school IPS number 87 that was south of 25th Street.

Mr. Richardson Jr.

And that was the ground work that led up to me writing the '49 act. You see they wanted to do something before, but it wasn't time and I had to get all these ducks in a row because the senate was Republican and the house was Democrat.

And I got Governor Henry Schricker elected his second term in 1949. He was in the legislature with me in '33. He was elected governor and the way I got him elected governor was I filed a suit against the Klan and the Dixiecrats and got an injunction to keep them off the ticket and Schricker was elected. And Schricker came into my office and asked me what he could do...because I always fought for the Civil Rights Act to amend it and put some teeth into it. That's the one where Marion County Prosecutor Stephen Goldsmith is fining the Stoplight Disco. And I told Schricker I wasn't interested. And he said, "Are you giving up on it?" and I said, "Hell no." And he said, "What do you want Henry? I wouldn't be governor if you hadn't brought that injunction against the Dixiecrats who would have split the ticket." So I told him what I wanted to do was to amend school law and to get rid of the permissive school desegregation law and set up an absolute prohibition as a matter of segregation in the public schools. "Alright," he said, "You got the house" and the house went along with me. The senate was Republican and I had to do a hell of a lot of maneuvering and they beat it. Because at the same time I was in the United States Supreme court on appeal for a writ of habeas corpus for a fellow by the name of (Robert) Watts who was charged for killing 4 or 5 white women here. He didn't kill any of them. And they were going to put him in the electric chair and I got a writ of *habeas corpus*...I didn't even know him...never met him. And the day I got the writ from the Supreme Court was the day the bill was coming to the legislature. So the Klan and all the opposition to the school bill put a copy of the *Indianapolis Times* on the desk of every legislator. And, so it killed the bill. But, let me tell you how I resurrected it. I knew the procedure because I had been in the legislature. So I got the bill put back on second reading and so I got it passed through the Senate after I satisfied the Catholics that Protestants wouldn't be teaching Catholic children. That was a big opposition there and so the bill passed on Friday and they had a session of the legislature on Saturday morning and the opposition to the bill moved that it should be reconsidered by the legislature. So, I had to make a fast move and so forth and I kept it from getting back on second reading and the house didn't change the move of the senate that passed it on Friday...except when the bill went from engrossing to the governor's office they changed two lines of the '49 act. Boy, you'd be surprised who set this pattern. This is vicious.

John: I have been trying to use the issue of Wood High School to get into that.

Mr. Richardson Jr.: Well the first thing is that if you've lived it or have been through it, you wouldn't know how vicious it was. I used to go to the legislature with a pistol in my pocket. I had to.

John: Had some heat on you, huh?

Mr. Richardson Jr.: Oh, hell yea. The whole point about this school business is that it has been vicious, violent, volatile, and the whole system has been controlled by the power structure. The same thing happens now when you teachers didn't get a break as far as the strike goes because they hired the Harry Ice firm to go over and get an injunction against my boy Frank Hughes over in circuit court. I'm just telling you how this stuff operates. You'd be surprised. The point is that you've got to know when you're treading on a land mine and when you're treading on the sidewalk. You got to be able to stay on those rocks and keep moving. Hell, you got to have eyes on the back of your head and the front

too. Because, you see part of the trade offs to perpetuate the segregation of the schools are the things you keep brining up there.

John: Yes, I see now it was trade-offs.

Mr. Richardson Jr.: That's what the moves were.

John: Do you think that even in it's closing, when Wood was closed in '78 was a trade off?

Mr. Richardson Jr.: Oh yeah. You see...look...this whole thing is a vicious circle. Now, by virtue of the fact that your Citizens School Committee over here...you see they got some good people over there. They got some well meaning people over there, but they're not experts in the matter of the sophisticated way the power structure operates and perpetuates this segregated pattern. And, the superintendent of schools gets over \$50,000 per year is a hatchet man for the power structure. And the move is on now, by virtue of the school board half way doing what it is supposed regarding desegregation, to do to get the Chamber of Commerce to take over the school board and appoint them under the old Klan policy to take it away from the citizens commission (committee). That's the move now.

Now, I ain't guessing about what I'm telling you, I just happen to know it. Now the way I know so much about the teacher situation is that the secretary I used to have 20 years ago went down to Indiana University and got a Masters degree, Billy Breaux, is president of the teachers union. I taught her in this office what it was all about. She learned.

What you got is an ingrown cell of racial hatred and differential on the basis of class difference, religious, racial difference all tied in one. And they playing the poor white folks against the Negroes, the Negroes against the Jews...and the Jews are lined up with the power structure because they want to be on "Main Street." That's what all the uneasiness is about right now.

John: Main Street?

Mr. Richardson Jr.: Oh yeah. Main Street is the power structure. Main Street is what operates the social patterns, the economic patterns, the school patterns. Main Street is the main road of activity that controls this community. Now did you read in the paper where I got on Andy Jacobs about what he did? Oh hell man it was a big mess.

John: What was it about?

Mr. Richardson Jr.: He sold out the Negroes on that vote down in congress to amend the constitution so that you couldn't bus any children. He voted for it. I ate him up. I knew him when he was getting started. I knew his father He was trying to prevent busing and I was for it. We would have settled this if it wasn't for Unigov. Unigov was a definite pattern that set up to expand the school districts without any prohibitive political power and to set up gerrymandered political districts that coincided with the outside districts that Unigov didn't take in and that was the pattern of Richard Lugar and the head of the Chamber of Commerce now and Mayor Hudnut, who was then running for congress and the guy who's president of the city council. Oh, shoot... you know one thing... How old are you?

Mr. Richardson Jr.

Mr. Richardson Jr.: (*To his secretary*) Bring me my letter to Dr. Adams. Now I'll show you some of the things I'm talking about. Now Hudnut is supposed to be a good friend of mine. I got hit by an automobile across the street from the court house. It was in all the news, etc, etc. on the basis that I founded the Urban League and also I founded the NAACP here. And I'm supposed to be a prominent lawyer, etc., etc. And since that I've been inactive to a limited extent. And in my business I'm so far behind I'm in the middle. But, I've still been carrying on some of my fights by some of these sharp letters I write...and I can write them. You see I got a doctorate degree the year before last ... a Doctorate of Laws from Indiana Central University. Richard Lugar is on the board down there and he insisted on having the honor of robing and capping me. You see I was on Lugar's board which was the Indianapolis Progress Committee for ten years--which I help to found--before Lugar got to be mayor. You see Mayor Lugar is vicious... Oh, we're supposed to be friends but he don't fool me worth a damn...and he knows it. Oh so dangerous. And the point of it is the insincerity of it...the duplicity.

John: I have read the Southern Leadership Conference booklet call *Poverty in Indianapolis* and the Indianapolis power structure...and that gave me a little idea...Indiana National Bank, the Chamber of Commerce and who runs Indianapolis.

Mr. Richardson Jr.: You see you got a committee of 100 here. That is really the power structure. You see, to talk to you about what this town is about...there is a move by the power structure now to put back the old appointed school board that is controlled by the power structure that used to be controlled by the Klan in '25 and before that by the Chamber and the Citizens School Committee.

John: You mean they are not going to be elected any more?

Mr. Richardson Jr.: That's the move you see because of all the (teacher) strike mess and you see we got three classifications...the power structure, the middle class and the white folks who live here and the white folks down on the south side which is just above the poverty level as far as the white man goes and the Catholic group over here and the Jewish group over there and the Jews trying to get on Main Street with the power structure and the Negroes over here confused and frustrated and that's the kind of set up that's going on and it goes on all the time and of course a lot of tokenism going on over her and tokenism going on over there and very little sincerity and committed courage because everybody is scared they're going to loose something.

Hell, they ain't got a damn thing to loose. I'll tell when I was elected to the legislature on my platform against the Ku Klux Klan in 1932 one of the most outstanding Negroes (Freeman B. Ransom) who was the head of the Walker Company and who went to the city council later came to me about it later. He was a member of the Chamber of Commerce...and because I was so arbitrary and dogmatic about my positions about what was right and what justice was and about Main Street and "Second Street" and the opposition of Negroes and poor white people and he told me we had had a pattern of peace before I started uprooting things. I told him, "Hell, you got nine children and I don't have child, chicken or cat. I wasn't even married. I said, "Hell I'm trying to fix it so your child can go downtown at Hook's Drugstore a grab a Coca Cola cause you can't get one now."

We had a pattern here that followed right straight through to hotels, restaurants, everything. And so I broke that up. I'm not even telling you. Ask Mrs. Richardson. Hell, I went through...I spent thousands!...took them to court...

Mr. Richardson Jr.: (*To secretary*) Give me a copy of Ms. R's letter.

John: It seemed like it took one person to do this then.

Mr. Richardson Jr.: Oh man no. You know one thing, I'm almost 78 and I've been battling this thing for 55 years. And the point is that through the grace of God I've survived. I had an interview from New York for a national broadcast and they asked me what I saw in the future and I told them what I told this graduate sociology class at Indiana University in 1955. When they passed the Brown vs. Board of Education '54 act, they asked me how long I thought it would be before it was implemented? I told them after they compromise it, attempt to avoid it, circumscribe it, try to circumvent it, appeal it and then set up additional appeals as a matter of districts... I said it won't be implemented for 100 years and a little white girl from South Carolina started crying. I never will forget it.

You can pass all the laws you want. You can talk about all the religion you want. I used to be Vice-president of the Church Federation and it didn't make a damn bit of difference. The guys that run the Church Federation are the people that run the power structure. And the moral turpitude of these folks don't mean a damn thing because there's no sincerity.

I got one or two judges here I half-way trust and I tell them, "I only trust you 50% because your white," and I said, "...notwithstanding you'd love me and you'd like to do what is right, but if you did what was right they'd put you off your seat in a minute and off of all your boards." Tom Binford, head of the Indiana National Bank is a good friend of mine, close friend--wrote me a note the other day to go and have lunch--he wanted to talk to me. I sat on the National Board of the Urban League in New York with Whitney Young, Rockefeller, the Lobes, you name it. I was on the board of the National Negro College Fund in New York. I took Tom, who was vice-president of the Urban League here--I founded it 12 years' ago with the power structure, then maneuvered and got it in as a United Agency. Sam Jones, the head of it, I brought in from Minneapolis. I was president. Tom was my vice-president. Vice-president of Indiana National Bank John Walls was my treasurer. The manager of RCA was on my board and chairman of my finance committee. We raised \$100,000 in ten days without even a campaign to start the Urban League. We had a national meeting of all the power structure of America in New Orleans and I took Tom down as my guest. Tom Binford... You see, I knew Tom before he married Jan. Tom is a *phi beta kappa* from Princeton.

At the meeting, Tom said to me, "You remind me of my father, I hear you talk and I don't know anyone I admire or respect more than I do you." And I said, "You know I appreciate it and I know you're sincere, but I can't accept it. Because if I attempted to return it in kind and you attempted to respond, I said you wouldn't be on the boards your on 6 days from now." He said, "Henry, I guess your right." He said, "It's a damn putrid set up"...and it is.

You see, I could tell you white men in this city who took positions and were run out of town--top white people who bucked the *status quo*...religiously, financially... The power structure broke the

Indianapolis Times here--the biggest Script-Howard paper when Script-Howards was bigger than Pulliam newspapers will ever be--ran them out of town. They got the merchants together here through the Chamber of Commerce because Boyd Gurley got the Pulitzer Prize for writing editorials against the Klan. You see the *Times* backed all my movements against the Klan.

John: Really...

Mr. Richardson Jr.: Oh Lord yes. So they ran them out of town. So the merchants got together and the Pulliam papers--the ultra-conservative bunch of rascals--got together and told the merchants you can't advertise in my paper if you advertise in the *Times*. That's the way it is done. These were all white folks. That's the way this system operates.

John: I know. Well its human nature in a lot of ways.

Mr. Richardson Jr.: No it's viciousness. No, it ain't human nature. (*He gets emphatic*)

John: Well it happens a lot...

Mr. Richardson Jr.: No, it's matter of man's inhumanity to man...man's hatred of man and jealousy of man...man's malignment of man...man's discreditation of the good deeds and wholesome motives of his fellow man.

Because, I don't agree with you...because it's not a part of the normal social pattern and the *status quo*. So the whole point is, I disagree with you because I'm over here with the boys who are going to make some money and get some contracts...and I'm on this board and I'm in this fraternity or on this board and so on and so forth and I'm going to run this and run that. That's the way this thing operates.

And you see this Negro, he's out on this margin and hell the Jew, he's done brushed the Negro aside. That's the reason all this fuss over Zionism. Jesse Jackson's move and my friend Andrew Young...You'd be surprised what this is all about. It's a vicious circle. And it's not just local. Local is a swing off of national. You see I've dealt with Jews for years...they've had an advantage because of tokenism because they've been a minority and they've been fighting and clawing to get on Main Street. And a few Negroes have learned to cross Main Street without getting run over, hell, they haven't arrived...they're still on Second Street and that includes me...though I... See the United States Supreme Court picture up there? (*He points to a picture on the wall*) Hell, I'm a member of United States Supreme Court bar. That's the highest you can get. These other letters came from three different governors--Republicans and Democrats. All these honors...

I was secretary of the Indiana Law School board here for 8 years. There I am right there. See us setting around that board table? The president was Steckler of the federal court. The vice-president was the head of Eli Lilly--Eugene Beesley. So don't tell me, I know them. I've sat down with them...seen them get drunk...heard them talk when they were sober, when they were drunk. I fought with them. I got off... I got tired fighting and told them when I was secretary of the board. No money in it, just honor--prestige as a matter of your a respected successful lawyer. Told them...

I got tired. I said, "You ain't going to change until God changes you."

Mr. Richardson Jr.

And they're not. Because, you see let me tell you this: tomorrow if teacher's rights and Negro rights were put up to America like the ERA of a differential of disparity between opportunities between male and female America wouldn't vote for it. If the 13th or 14th Amendment or the school desegregation law passed by the Supreme Court in '54 was put up to popular vote in America it would be voted down tomorrow. You watch... I know what I'm talking about.

John: I will... I will watch.

Mr. Richardson Jr.: And you see the point is you take little white boys like you who's climbing, who's scratching, trying to get a toe hold, trying to get a dollar, trying to get ahead, trying to get some influence...trying to climb the wall of the *status quo* to get on Main Street and as soon as you get on Main Street you forget the things that I've told you because you'd better not bring them up because if you do they will put you off Main Street. That's what happens.

I got a millionaire lawyer in town who used to sit with me in law school and we used to worry about when we were going to get our next meal. He and I are friends....from a distance. He doesn't have to worry about a meal and I don't have to worry about mine. He's never taken an active challenge against the *status quo*. So, he operates with the *status quo*. "Hi Henry." Hi, so and so... If I have a case with his firm, I get it straightened out just like that.

You see you sell your soul to become part of the *status quo* and Main Street. You sell it all. You compromise your morals and your ideals and my idea is that it is hard for a young fellow like my son. He can't understand it and he's got all the PDQ's. He's got degrees and a doctor of law down at Indiana University in Bloomington and he finished Heidelberg and he's mad as hell at the system.

I know how to get along. Because the first thing is I got hit by a car... I just got thru cussing a judge out He said, "Henry, your mad" and I said, "I'm mad as hell and I been mad for 50 years." He said, "Go on home and rest yourself." And, I said, "That won't change me." And, he's a white fellow I helped to feed when he was hungry...he's one of the judges. He used to work in that office up there and when he needed money I'd give him something to do--pay him \$50 to a \$100 so he could feed his family. Don't tell me about it. Now I go along...I'm a nice fellow but what is right is right. High places, low places, I'm gonna tell it like it is, and that ain't wholesome and it ain't kosher...

John: I want to do that in regard to what I'm trying to do with this history. I want to tell it like it is.

Mr. Richardson Jr.: No, you'd better not sign your name to it, better be persona non grata. (*Mr. Richardson laughs. They exchange "Good byes" and as John leaves...*) Let me read it after you get it together.

Information in parentheses intends to help readers understand the historical context of the interview.

Notes

- Riverside Drive runs north and south at 1600 west p. 1
- IPS is the Indianapolis Public Schools p. 2
- Harry E. Wood H. S. opened in 1953 in the old Manual building. It was the first high school closed (1978) due to IPS enrollment losses. IPS moved Day Adult into the old Wood from 1978-1980 (In the taped interview, Mr. Richardson Jr. confuses the old Manual and Wood) p. 2
- Mr. Bill Hicks, a Day Adult student, was a retiree and former student at Manual p. 2
- Emmerich Manual Training H. S. opened in 1895 at 501 South Meridian Street and re-opened in 1953 at Madison Avenue and Pleasant Run Parkway at 2400 south p. 2
- Maryland Street runs east and west at 100 south p. 2
- Shortridge H. S. opened in 1864. Located at Michigan and Delaware, it moved and opened at 3401 North Meridian in 1928 p.2
- Arsenal Technical H.S. opened in 1912 at 1500 East Michigan Street at 500 north p. 2
- Broad Ripple H. S., 1115 Broad Ripple Avenue was established in 1886 and joined IPS in 1923 p. 2
- Camp Street runs north and south at 700 west; West Street runs north and south at 500 west; Pershing runs north and south at 2230 west; Sheffield runs north and south at 2200 west p. 3
- Crispus Attucks H. S. opened in 1927 at 1140 Northwestern Avenue, 500 west, a road known today as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Street p. 3
- The Kinghan's Meat Packing Company was located at 55 South Blackford Street, which runs north and south at 700 west at about West Washington Street and the White River p. 3
- White River Boulevard (Parkway) runs north and south at 1400 west p. 3
- George Washington H. S. opened in 1927 at 2215 West Washington Street p. 4
- Paris Avenue runs north and south at 450 west; Shriver runs north and south at 400 west p. 4
- Fletcher district is located near downtown on the south east side. Fletcher Avenue starts at East Street (500 east) and runs east at 500 south p. 4
- Northwest High School opened in 1962 at 5525 West 34th Street p. 5
- Arlington High School opened in 1961 at 4600 North Arlington Avenue or 6000 east p. 5
- North Central H. S. opened in 1956 at 8401 Westfield Boulevard. In 1963, it moved to 1801 East 86th Street p. 6. As mentioned on p. 2 and 8, unless a school district was located in a first class city, the township trustee ran the schools. But, in 1955 Washington Township residents caused the 1955 General Assembly to allow a change in the form of school governance from the trustee to a school board if mandated by a majority of voters. (*School Board Journal*, Nov., 1957. p. 38)
- The Madison Avenue land scandal (1955-1956) occurred during the building of the Madison Avenue Expressway. Knowing when and where the expressway was to be built, Virgil Smith (former chair of the State Highway Commission) and Robert Peak bought property along Madison Avenue, selling it later for big profits. In 1957, both were convicted of embezzlement. p. 6
- Judge S. Hugh Dillin's 1973 decision ordered IPS to bus students between schools within the district to achieve racial desegregation. In 1981, he expanded that order requiring IPS to bus almost 6,000 Black students a year to 6 suburban Marion County districts. Money came with the bused students--eventually used to build what looks like college campuses at Warren Central H. S., Ben Davis H. S., and Decatur Central H. S., along with new schools in Lawrence and Perry townships. As the suburban districts built state-of-the-art facilities, 9th grade centers, college-like football fields and weight rooms, and new add-ons to buildings, IPS was closing schools, laying off

teachers, and seeing a decline in enrollment while giving the appearance of being a failure.

(From: “Stand up and fight” by Leroy Robinson, April 29, 2010, *Indianapolis Recorder*.) p. 7

- Dr. Karl Kalp was IPS superintendent in 1979. Kalp served IPS in the 1970s and early 1980s and saw the district through the federal desegregation lawsuit.
- Bill (William H.) Book was executive vice-president of the Chamber of Commerce from 1936-1963. Although viewed by the *status quo* as “Mr. Indianapolis,” the local African-American community viewed him as a “power broker” and an obstacle to progress in local civil rights, fair housing, and integration of our public schools p. 7
- Thomas Carr Howe H. S. opened in 1938 4900 Julian Avenue which is one block south of Washington Street as Emerson Avenue at 5100 east p. 5
- Silver Shirts (Silver Legion of America) was an underground American fascist organization founded by William D. Pelley and announced publicly on January 30, 1933. p. 6
- Columbians (Columbians Inc.) was an Atlanta, GA-based nonprofit advocating the elimination, even the extermination, of blacks and Jews from the city, state, and nation in late 1940s. p. 6
- The Stoplight Disco was located in the business plaza in the south west corner of 38th and Lafayette Road. The club got sued because for asking black male customers for an extra ordinary amount of ID to get in. See April 7, 1979 *Recorder*. p. 11
- The Citizens School Committee (CSC) formed in October, just before the November 1921 school board election. CSC won the 1921 election, but lost to the Klan slate in November of 1925. CSC reorganized and won the 1929 election. From the 1930’s through to the 1960s, the CSC was run by Judge John Niblack. The CSC lost power in the late 60’s with the election of African-American Robert D. DeFrantz to the IPS board 1968. DeFranz stayed on the board until 1980 p. 12
- The head of the Chamber of Commerce in 1979 was Carl Dortch p. 12
- Richard Lugar was an IPS board member from 1964-1967. He was mayor of Indianapolis from 1968-1976. He became US Senator from 1976-2012 p. 12
- Dr. Buert SerVaas was president of the City County Council in 1979. Unigov gave control of the county to Republicans enabling SerVaas to be council president from 1970-1997 p. 12
- Bill Hudnut III was mayor of Indianapolis in 1979 serving from 1976-1992 p. 12
- Dr. James Adams was superintendent of IPS from 1982 to 1990 p. 13
- The Indianapolis Chapter of the NAACP was founded in 1912 by Mary Cable. As legal council, Mr. Richardson Jr. helped revive the chapter in the 1940s p. 13
- The Pulliam papers (*The Star* and *News*) were owned by Eugene Pulliam p. 14

John Harris Loflin is a graduate of IPS schools 75, 28 and 8, and Wood High in 1961. With a BA in education from Purdue (1967) and a MS in Alternative Education from IU (1982), John has taught at the middle school, high school, adult, and university levels. He is published locally, nationally and globally on learning alternatives and democratic education, and has presented at conferences on 6 continents. Currently, he is Director of Education and Youth Issues for the Black & Latino Policy Institute, and is involved in matters around urban education, critical pedagogy, and parent, teacher and student voice. Regarding the play, *Mr. Richardson Jr.*, John started collecting oral histories concerning education in Marion County after this interview with the intent of using what he had learned from Mr. Richardson Jr. to shine a light on the politics of local education, especially the role of Indianapolis power brokers and business elites in maintaining the *status quo* through controlling public education. View more about his ideas at his website: www.vorcreatex.com.