

Earl Graves Oral History Interview- RFK #6, 5/7/1970
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Graves, Earl; administrative Assistant to Senator Robert F. Kennedy [RFK], New York (1965 - 1968). Graves discusses the Bedford-Stuyvesant project, his and RFK's involvement, project management issues, and the roles played by men such as Tom Johnston, Ed Logue, and John Doar, among other issues.

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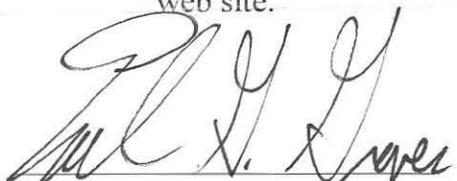
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of **EARL G. GRAVES**

Interviewed by: Roberta Greene

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Earl Graves- RFK #6

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Sixth Oral History Interview

with

EARL GRAVES

New York, City New York

May 7, 1970

by

Roberta Greene

For the Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Program
of the Kennedy Library

GREENE: Why don't you begin by explaining ^{how} your own involvement in the Bedford-Stuyvesant project got going?

GRAVES: Well, to really identify my own involvement in the Bedford-Stuyvesant project, I think it's necessary that you must understand, I really got involved in the Bedford-Stuyvesant project before the Bedford-Stuyvesant project became a reality as such, before I started working full-time for Senator [Robert F.] Kennedy. The first visit that Senator Kennedy made to Bedford-Stuyvesant, where he was officially taking a look at Bedford-Stuyvesant in consideration of doing something, as far as assisting the area was

was concerned, ^{He made a visit to} on February 6, 1966, ~~it may have been~~ in Bedford-Stuyvesant. ⁹¹ I organized the persons who were going to be out there with him that day, the regional head of the FHA [Federal Housing Authority] and the regional head of HUD [Housing and Urban Development], and I'm not sure, come to think of it, ~~I think~~ ^{that} the legislation for HUD to become an entity had, in fact, taken place, ~~or not.~~ It seems to me that there was a representative from HUD, ~~just because its now HUD~~ so it must have become a cabinet level office by that time. ~~But~~ there were various city representatives and various heads of housing agencies and so forth. Now, I should say that [Thomas M.] Tom Johnston really compiled that list of getting those people, ~~of getting them all~~ ^{orchestrating them} there; ~~all straight;~~ getting them all to the right cars, ~~and~~ the protocol of who was to ride with the Senator for a short while, ~~and~~ who was to get out of the car, ~~and~~ who else could get in, ~~and~~ that type of, I was responsible for, including focus ^{ing} on the community leaders who were there, ~~sort of~~ ^{So that} the Senator ^{would spend} spent time with them and was with them to the greatest amount of time during that day, being assured that

Judge [Thomas R.] Jones, who was going to be there, and the other elected officials who were there, had an opportunity to express their views in terms of Bedford-Stuyvesant. Again, I was doing this, at that point, as an associate in the office, not really a person who was working full-time on the staff. I didn't start on the staff till September 19, 1966, but it was pretty much after the fact, in terms of whether or not I was going to be on the staff, by April or May of that year, we knew I was going to start full-time.

The first meeting, or the Senator's first visit through Bedford-Stuyvesant, I don't think it had any particular impact on him other than the fact that it appeared to be an area where there was blight. But it didn't look any more blighted probably, than, I guess, a Washington, D.C., ghetto would, or any ghetto, to use the phrase that some of our old friends use, "Once you've seen one ghetto, you've seen them all," and I think that he had the feeling that, in terms of the blighted areas, that it was bad and something should be done. I think the thing that impressed him most was, as it did

I.M. Pei when he was finally able to get I.M. Pei to come on board, was the fact that the blighted areas were very, very bad, but the areas that were good showed a real sense of being able to be turned around. It was obvious that there were blocks and many, many streets where the housing was in excellent condition; at least on the surface they were in excellent condition.

GREENE: The facade.

GRAVES: The facade. The interior of the houses in many cases had not, obviously, been touched, which in some ways is an advantage because today some of those same houses over on the East Sixties cost 175, 200 ~~hundred~~ thousand dollars, to have these same amenities that are in those houses, they call it charm, ⁱⁿ on the East Sixties, and in Bedford-Stuyvesant, they call it an old-fashioned house or a house that needs remodeling. We went on a tour that took approximately three hours, four hours, and then we came back to our original starting point, which was the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] on Bedford Avenue, and that's when I would guess you'd say

that the Senator had his feet put in the fire somewhat, because the various community leaders were there and proceeded to go through the what I call the oneupsmanship and start off with, I think, Elsie Richardson and the Central ^{Brooklyn} ~~Brooklyn~~ Coordinating Council, who turned out ultimately not to be one of our real friends in terms of her attitudes toward the Senator and towards our office. ~~But she~~ started off by saying that, which is true and I can sympathize with that to a certain extent, that she didn't want to be studied anymore, that if, in fact, the Senator had come out to take a look at the area and to study the area, that was not satisfactory. That dialogue was picked up and carried on for the next hour and forty-five minutes by the various persons who stood up. Sooner or later I guess they got to Judge Jones, and Judge Jones made a most emotional plea, because Judge Jones, at that time, said he had not been considered for being on any board or being in charge of anything or serving with us in terms of trying to turn the community around. Judge Jones is known for making his passionate statements, but he outdid

himself that day in terms of talking about or in terms of focusing on "white people in-quotes coming into Bedford-Stuyvesant, looking at us, ^{studying us}, and going away, ^{and} ^{that} don't do with us anymore. I would say the Senator was in good spirits, if one can be in good spirits while he's having his feet roasted like this, ^{but} he handled the day as well as he could, considering the circumstances. I left early that day. I was there, but after about the first hour and a half, I knew that I wasn't going to hear anything new, ^{so} ^{that} it was obviously Tom Johnston, who had arrived by that time, ^{and} could certainly stay on top of anything that was going to happen that day, ^{and} when I say "happen," I mean there was nothing that was going to be new, ^{or} there was going to be no outpouring of emotions that would become negative in terms of the Senator not being able to deal with it. I went on back to my office at that time. In leaving, I mentioned to the Senator I was leaving, he said that it was his intention to do something and he hoped that I would work along with his office, recognizing at that point that I was still an asso-

mean-
ciate in the office, ~~was~~ a volunteer, really. He asked would I be in touch with him and try to work along. I don't remember the exact time ~~table~~, but it would seem to me that, knowing Tom Johnston and how aggressive he was, it wasn't much more than probably two or three days, ~~after~~ if it was that long, after we had our tour out there that he asked me would I meet and help him in putting together a group of people who should probably start and have some discussion about what could be done. The Senator did want to do something; ~~that~~ we should start focusing on where we could go and what we could do in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

GREENE: At this point, was it definitely decided that Bedford-Stuyvesant would be the area and it wouldn't be extended, let's say, in ~~terms of~~ ^{Hill} Oceanville ^{or} Brownsville or anything like that?

GRAVES: Oh no, at this point, you should understand that the initial meetings that we had. . . I mean, we started off, in terms of what could be done, by ~~starting off~~ by having discussions of maybe trying to get twenty thousand dollars as initial seed

money, just to kind of look around, and maybe having a little office and start^{ing} to focus on doing something. I mean, Bedford-Stuyvesant in itself ^{had} is not even. . . . I mean, one of the ultimate things that ~~he~~^{we were going to do} ~~did~~ was just to define, in fact, what we were going to consider Bedford-Stuyvesant geographically. ⁹ There wasn't then, and there still is not now, a geographic consideration that is, in fact, identified as Bedford-Stuyvesant. The Department of Hospitals in New York has one thing that they call Bedford-Stuyvesant, ^{the} Welfare Department ^{or} the Social Services Department, excuse me, ^{of} our city now has another thing that they consider Bedford-Stuyvesant, ^{the} Central ^{Brooklyn} Model Cities have something else which they consider Bedford-Stuyvesant, ^{and} ^{the} Bedford-Stuyvesant ^{restoration} program, which is the program we're talking about, which then was not identified, had something they considered Bedford-Stuyvesant, and Youth in Action which is the CAP ^(Community Action Program) for the area, ^{has} ~~they have~~ something which they consider Bedford-Stuyvesant. So, I mean, right there you have five or six agencies

alone that cannot agree on what, in fact, is Bedford-Stuyvesant. ^Q So, when we started defining it in the very beginning, I would think that we were just talking about an area that maybe was bounded on the South by Eastern Parkway, on the North by Broadway and Flushing Avenue, and West by Washington Avenue, and on the East, as I said, by what would be Flushing running into Broadway, in fact, that much area. But when there's this much talk about that much area, you're still talking about three to four hundred thousand people, and you're talking about, physically, I guess, about three or four thousand acres or six hundred and twenty-six square blocks, just within that framework of that particular area which ultimately did end up being the area geographically for our project, that ended up being the area we all agreed on, and it was also the area that ultimately, when we did finally get way, way down the path in terms of who was involved in the project in the various planning agencies and so forth, that we agreed upon, I mean, we came together with the City Planning

Commission. We came together with the various housing authorities in New York and the various planners who worked with us, and we did agree on that being an area. ^{SA} But in terms of it ever extending over into Brownsville and so forth, we should understand that the initial group that came together to meet with the Senator, first at the YMCA that day, ^{then,} and/secondly, at subsequent meetings after that, had their own thing. They really envisaged this being a thing where they were talking about Bedford-Stuyvesant, and almost Bedford-Stuyvesant to the point of my blocking what are you going to do for the sidewalk out in front of my house. I mean, it certainly did not extent ^d over into a Brownsville or a Bushwick, all of which are areas which are contiguous with Bedford-Stuyvesant and all of which have similar problems.

GREENE: Of course, I meant not so much the community's interests, which is sort of obvious, ^{they} they wanted ^{it} for themselves, ~~but~~ I meant, was the Senator definitely decided at this point on Bedford-Stuyvesant?

GRAVES: ^{No.} Well, we recognized that if any area probably stood a chance of doing something, it was probably Bedford-

Stuyvesant, as opposed to a Brownsville, because Brownsville was much more blighted. The political realities of what he was trying to do did indicate that if he was going to attempt to go into a ghetto area, an area ~~in parentheses~~ that was identified as ghetto, ~~that~~ probably, looking at the cohesiveness, if in fact there is any, of the community leaders, ~~and~~ looking at the demographics of the area in terms of the economics and the income of the area and the like, ~~and then again~~ looking at the educational structure, and looking at where you had a real identity thing, of people saying, "I'm ^{from} ~~for~~ Bedford-Stuyvesant; I've lived there all my life," and Bedford-Stuyvesant offered the chance of being able to make it. ^A It's the same thing ~~and~~ ^{part} that I'm sure that ~~privately~~ we'll never be able to justify ~~and that is~~ the thing of restoring middle-class blocks. I mean the exterior renovation program which is part of the Bedford-Stuyvesant project right now; What they are in fact doing is restoring houses of middle-class families. They are restoring the houses of persons who maybe have good jobs in the Post Office

or have good jobs in the Police Department or Fire Department or restoring blocks of residents who have lived in that area a long time, have their houses paid for for the most part, and are not on Welfare. A person who owns a house, a brownstone in Bedford, Stuyvesant, ^{and} has lived there fifteen or twenty years is probably not on Welfare. ¶ The blocks that we went and did first were blocks ~~that~~ stood a chance of really being turned around and being blocks that you could visually look at and say, "look at what we did." Well, when you say, "look at what we did," you really do have to take a look at what we did, because what we did was we went out and picked blocks that were not that bad to begin with and restored those. And you have to understand the political realities of life ^{that} says you have to have some success, otherwise people are going to feel that you're not going forward. So, I'm not indicting what we did, I'm just saying that in even picking ^{once} ~~the ones that~~ we had picked, the area, then we had to start picking blocks and projects where we could do the most. ¶ It's the same thing that we decided that we would leave, rather than demolish, what is in fact going to be the corporate

headquarters for those two corporations out there.
Rather than demolishing the Sheffield ^{Farms} Barnes, ~~that~~
you leave Sheffield ^{Farms} Barnes up and refurbish it because
it gives a sense of change and of improvement
rather than just tearing down and building up new.
As it stands today, I'm sure that the building is
probably going to be well in excess of five million
dollars, ^{just} the physical development of it, forgetting
about furnishings and the like. It would have been
much cheaper to tear that thing ^{all} down and start
from scratch, rather than going in there and gutting
that thing. ~~I mean~~ there's a lot to be said for
the way they've done it because ~~it~~ they've been able
to train young construction workers in various
trades that they would never have had an opportunity,
they've been able to work out various agreements
with unions in letting us have those trainees there
who obviously are not members of the union, it was
a matter of our finding out by dealing with the
union leaders across ~~the seat, excuse me, across~~
the city, like Harry Van Arsdale and Peter Brennan,
that they really were not interested in doing refur-

bishing and work that had to do with old construction, rebuilding. ~~That~~ they were looking for the World Trade Centers of New York City to ~~rebuild~~^{be built} and United Nations Plazas to be built, and really could care less about something like redoing or refurbishing ~~or redoing~~ the facade of a building like the Sheffield Barnes^{Farms}. So, it was a real educational experience. ⁹ I think that my initial involvement in the Bedford-Stuyvesant project was important to the office for a twofold reason or threefold reason. First of all, I had lived in Bedford-Stuyvesant all my life, so, right off the bat, in terms of what was going to happen, you had a person who knew the various community leaders. What I say now may sound somewhat immodest, but these are just statements of fact, ~~that~~ I had lived there all my life, knew the people in that community in terms of how each person kind of fit^{ted} in to their particular ~~nitch~~^{niche} in the whole puzzle of what in fact was Bedford-Stuyvesant, politically and sociologically and otherwise. You had a person who has a wife who was teaching in Bedford-Stuyvesant; I knew something about the educational system in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

you had a person who had worked as a Federal narcotics agent in arresting people in Bedford-Stuyvesant, understanding the problem of narcotics in Bedford-Stuyvesant, you had a person who then was working in Bedford-Stuyvesant and had worked for ten years in Real Estate in Bedford-Stuyvesant, mortgage financing, refurbishing of their houses, selling houses to persons who were going to move into the area, and knowing the attitudes of the people who were moving in, ~~so that~~ I could ^{say} something to you intelligently regarding the demographics of what it was all about or the people who were interested in staying in Bedford-Stuyvesant. And then, in addition, you had a person who was living there right then at that time, himself, and who had a house that we could start off by meeting at. We needed a place to start off from; we wanted to pick a neutral place.

In terms of my initial involvement, it was a matter that Tom Johnston also, which is always very necessary in these kinds of projects, and the Senator needed to know there was someone who they could turn to and get an honest answer from in

terms of ¹¹ should we invite this person to the meetings ^l or should we invite the other person, ⁷ and ⁷ who should be chairman of the Board of the new corporation we're going to put together, ⁷ how should we form the new corporation, ⁷ how should it be done, ⁷ and, ⁷ and, ⁷ you know, ⁷ what problems do you envisage having, ⁷ and if there are going to be problems, how can we get around some of them, ⁷ and how can we move forward? ⁷ 11

The initial meetings we had included, for the most part, a very matriarch group. This was, I felt, somewhat of a disaster. You had Elsie Richardson, you had Louise [?] Bouling, and you had a group of women who really considered this project almost like their thing. I mean, they envisaged it as something that was going to belong to them. They were going to name who the executive director was going to be, if there was ever going to be an executive director, they were going to name what work was going to be done, they envisaged it as being a thing that was going to be their own. They really, at the time that we started up, did not conceive of it ever being ^{of} the magnitude that it is today. As ^I it look on it in terms of that project

surviving today and not having any of the blow ups that we did have that many other poverty programs have had across the country. . . .

[Interruption]

9 The point I was making is that you didn't have any problems with the corruption that has taken place in many of the poverty programs across the country in terms of people absconding with the funds, putting furniture in their own houses instead of the furniture going into offices. You did ultimately have a problem. I wasn't even aware of ^{which} and ~~and~~ I was very surprised that they lost probably a good fifty IBM [International Business Machines] electric typewriters which would go into thousands of dollars ^{now} which they ~~did not~~ have a thing where they bolted the typewriters down to the desk which I was not even aware of, which will happen anyplace. I mean, it's not just a matter of it happens to be a Black community, anyplace where people are poor and there is an opportunity to do better, they're going to take advantage of it, if in fact stealing is

doing better, as they might rationalize it is.

GREENE: As I understand it, when you started out in your association with the Senator's office ^{and} with the project, you were working with this fellow ~~(Steven)~~ ~~Fried~~ at the Central Brooklyn Coordinating Council, ^{[Steven J.] Friedman,} ~~Steve Fried, Freedman,~~ that that was your original contact? Is that so?

GRAVES: No, he was a lawyer. No, no, no, no, no, no, that's not true. ~~The guy that we originally~~ let me just focus on his name ~~was~~ Ron Schiffman ^{originally} was the guy that we ^{originally} really had some contact with. Steve Friedman is a lawyer from Debevoise, ^[Lyons & Gates] Plimpton [^] who was a young lawyer, he was an associate interested in doing some work in the Senate office. And he was out there the first day with the Senator. His dealings really were to look at legally what would be involved in setting up a corporation, if in fact we were going to set one up. I don't even remember if he came to the first couple of community meetings because his role was really to focus on legally what we were all about and getting involved in that part. I don't mean to play down his role at all, it's just that once we got past the thing of

legally where we were going in the very beginning^g and the other consideration you should understand is that ultimately, once we put the business board together and we had gotten^e them together, it was rather a touch and go, and I thought it was rather unfortunate for him, but it was decided not to use his law firm, which is in itself a prestigious law firm, and^{In} the politics of the whole thing, he was dumped and his law firm was dumped in terms of that being the law firm that would represent ^[Distribution and Services] D & S, the law firm that was picked was Cravath, Swaine and Moore, and the reason it was picked is because someone had decided that Roswell Gilpatric should be on the Board, and if Roswell Gilpatric was going to be on the Board, then the businessmen who were there, mean^{ing} (William^{S.}) Paley and the rest of them, looked and said, "well, why don't we use his law firm?" Steve Friedman, who had done one hell of a fine job in terms of getting this thing off the ground, was literally just put^{out} to pasture. One day he was called in and told, "we're not going to use your law firm," and that was the end of it. And his law firm had really lent Steve Friedman to the

corporation free for a very long period of time. He had done, I thought, a magnificent job of handling the various problems that came up, he was, I thought, superb. It was most unfortunate.

GREENE: Had there been objections to this, was there anybody who didn't want to do it that way?

GRAVES: Yeah, Carter Burden was very vocal. I should say that I personally, not being a lawyer, number one, and not being that aware of ~~a~~ prestigious law firms, when you start talking about Cravath, Swaine & Moore as opposed to Debevoise, ~~Plimpton~~. I much more knew individuals in law firms who were considered outstanding individuals as lawyers in a city more so than law firms. But I remember Carter Burden taking up the gauntlet for Steve, ~~and~~ then appraising me of what was taking place, and the two of us going in and vocalizing to Tom Johnston that we thought it was outrageous, ~~and~~ Tom Johnston just said to us that that's the political realities of life, in terms of the fact that it was not going to be his law firm. ^{It} ~~didn't~~ ^{wasn't} even ^a matter that he was from some second-rate law firm; Debevoise, ~~Plimpton~~ is certainly a prestigious firm. It was

just a matter that Cravath, Swaine [&] and Moore was going to get the work. The other side of the coin was that it wasn't a matter that Cravath, Swaine & Moore was going to do volunteer work, that wasn't it at all. Cravath, Swaine & Moore was paid very handsomely out of the resources, the funds of Bedford-Stuyvesant, in order to put together the legal entity of the whole two corporations and to make it happen and to become a reality. So, I thought that Steve Friedman, who still is a good friend in terms of seeing him from time to time, kind of wasn't treated very fairly, or his firm.

GREENE: Did he disassociate himself from the project after that?

GRAVES: No, he didn't. As a matter of fact, he said that he was a sincere individual and that he was ^{not} there because his company said "go on out and do it," he was there because he wanted to be there, ~~because~~ they could have just assigned another lawyer. And he still ~~so~~ very much was willing to contribute his time, wanted to know what was going on, and ^{it} just spoke that much more highly ^{of him} in terms of ^.

the kind of individual he was, because he did not just say, "okay, fine, you're not going to use my law firm, I quit." He said, "whatever I can do to help...," and he spent time working with the lawyers who eventually took his place from Cravath, Swaine & Moore to be sure that the transition that took place was a smooth one.

GREENE: Did Robert Kennedy get involved in this at all?

GRAVES: Yes, there was definitely a discussion between Tom Johnston and the Senator and myself and Carter.

GREENE: And he went along with the ^{change} ?

GRAVES: Right. Well, you should understand that ⁱⁿ something like that, where it was important, Tom Johnston had enough influence with the Senator that if he figured out in his mind that this was the way it should be, and that's ^{the way} why it should be, that he would have built a strong enough case that when he presented it to the Senator, it was a fait accompli. That's the way it was going to go.

GREENE: Anyway, after this meeting, did you have any follow-up sessions, either with Tom Johnston or by yourself, with the community leaders?

GRAVES: Oh, that's what I'm saying, we got right into meetings right after that first meeting. ...

GREENE: Yeah, what kind of reaction did they have to him personally, for one thing?

GRAVES: To Tom Johnston?

GREENE: No, I mean to Robert Kennedy.

GRAVES: Oh, Kennedy came to very few meetings. As a matter of fact, once we decided to get going and really get the thing off the ground, the real meetings that were held, were not held with the community; They were held with trying to get businessmen who agreed to do it, ^{He would} ~~and his spending~~ three or four days coming up, in the course of the week going to a meeting with a Benno Schmidt one day and a Bill Paley the next day and getting [Edward J.] Ed Logue in a meeting with him and Ed Logue being taken around Bedford-Stuyvesant. One of the roles that I had ^{in this area} ~~an issue~~ was that, I used to call myself the tour leader, ~~was that~~ particularly with Ed Logue. I would spent two or three weeks with Ed Logue going around Bedford-Stuyvesant, geographically, seeing the area and physically walking

the area, to look at housing and discuss mortgage financing, one of the phenomena^{ons} which the Real Estate men today in Bedford-Stuyvesant still don't even realize, how it ended up that you can get FHA (~~Federal Housing Authority~~) mortgages in Bedford-Stuyvesant was that Ed Logue and I had a discussion one day about FHA financing and I told him there was none in Bedford-Stuyvesant. He said, well, that was impossible, and there was never FHA financing in Bedford-Stuyvesant because in Bedford-Stuyvesant, most of the houses are brownstone or frame type buildings which are adjoined on both sides by other houses, which means that in the interior center part of the house, there is a room that is not going to have windows. The FHA had a law on the books at that time, it was a national law that said, if you had a house that had interior rooms, rooms without windows, you could not get FHA financing. So, here was a community with four hundred thousand people sitting there in the middle of Brooklyn, not able to get FHA financing and yet being very, very poor. Ed Logue and I focused on the thing, we went and raised

it with the Senator and he and Senator (Jacob K.) Javits got that law changed. Today there's as much corruption going on in FHA financing as there was corruption going on in the second mortgage financing that took place in Bedford-Stuyvesant, but today, at least, people can get FHA financing in Bedford-Stuyvesant. So, my involvement was to meet with people like Logue, my involvement was going around, spending a heck of a lot of time with I.M. Pei's office, which is a very exciting thing for me. They're terribly bright people at that firm, and they're guys who don't have any fuz^z between the ears in terms of Black-White, they're not interested in that kind of thing; that's not their concern. They're very liberal. I was just impressed with the whole I.M. Pei operation. He was certainly the tiffany of the people who were involved in the project, in terms of when you had a meeting and I.M. Pei and his staff came to the meeting, and ^{When} you had other planners, you always had the feeling that maybe the other guys were looking to make a quick buck and run, But I.M. Pei was in this because he

was committed to it. I always thought the asso-
ciation of his being involved in the ^{thing} lent great
credibility to where we were going in this entire
project.

GREENE: ~~When did it~~ just to get back to Ed Logue before
I forget about it ~~when~~ when did it become clear to
you that he was not working out ^{that} and something should
be done to get rid of him ^{and} who did you discuss
it with?

GRAVES: I don't remember the exact time ^{table}. Let's see,
if we started in 1966. ^{1.1.1.} well, somewhere between
the period of the first meeting in February, 1966,
~~and December, 1966~~ and the early part of 1967,
because Ed Logue ran for mayor of Boston in a
primary in the early part of the spring of 1967.
So, that would mean that Ed Logue had been asked
to find something else to do by the Senator, or ^{by}
I should say, by Tom Johnston for the Senator
because Tom Johnston was the one that put it on
the line to him. ⁹ We had the announcement of the
project in December of 1966 at a very well publicized
and well put together meeting where you had someone

from [Nelson A.] Rockefeller's office, both Senators, and the mayor, and the people in the community said when they looked at it, ~~they said~~ I remember it being a joke in the community, that whenever you get that many white people agreeing on the same thing, on the same platform, that somebody's going to steal from the Black people, which was kind of a humorous statement, but at the time it was no small thing to put all those people on the same platform, agreeing on the same thing. That means that between ~~December and April~~, December of 1966 and April of 1967, Ed Logue made himself rather undesirable in many ways, in terms of his commitment to what he was about. It was always a matter that Ed Logue was so busy in terms of his involvement and commitment to this project. By that time, Tom Johnston, who I must say and give full credit to, was really the catalyst in the thing. Tom Johnston had limitless energies when it comes to doing things. I don't always agree with the way he does it, and in many cases I thought he could have been much fairer to both myself and Carter in terms of the way he would arrange things and his own in-

volvement in terms of how he came out in the project as opposed to how we came out in terms of who got the credit for doing the work. But if ~~nothing else~~ nothing else, you can say, he had limitless energies in terms of really wanting to see the thing go, and focusing on this thing, and recognizing that it could be a good thing for the Senator. I think it was his energies and his drive that really caught us up in the thing, that really wanted to make it go. I think, ~~it~~ ^{it} also caused ~~because~~ the project became such an overpowering thing within the Senate office, ~~because~~ ^{it} started off as a project and ended up becoming a monster in terms of the Kennedy office, because Adam Walinsky was not involved in the project at all in the beginning. Then, and all of a sudden, it became apparent to Adam, and [B. Edelman] to Peter, too, that this Bedford-Stuyvesant project was, ^{something} that we better get involved in, otherwise we're going to get left out, because Tom Johnston was taking all the credit for ^{it}. We looked up and Adam was coming into town and he'd want to get involved in it, and Peter would come into town and he'd want to get involved in it, and ^{it} it was a thing that became

a monster in the Kennedy office. I mean/^{the}Bedford-_y Stuyvesant project literally became, you know, ^{and} and then you had the charisma of the Kennedy name being involved in a project that had to do with a ghetto area, ^{and} and after it was announced in December, there was just no end to the reporters coming in and out, ^{and} and then Tom Johnston set a rule that he would be the only one to deal with reporters, which did not make either myself or Carter, ^{who} we were both involved very much in the project, particularly happy at that point.

GREENE: What was the reasoning behind that? ^{That} That it was too confusing to have more than one person?

GRAVES: No, I just think. . . well, if you want to be really candid about it, Carter and I were convinced that it was probably Tom's desire to appear to be the spokesman for this project. The way to be the spokesman for the project was to be the only one talking to anyone about it and then you become the expert on it. I was annoyed about it, to a certain extent, because, with the experience of my having been in Real Estate and all the other things that I described before, in terms of input

that I could have made to the project, that I looked up and more and more it was not that I wasn't called; it was a matter that they were going out and trying to find white experts to decide what was going to happen in Bedford-Stuyvesant. For instance, (Richard ^{W.} Dick ^{Boone} Bloom; he and his Citizens' Crusade Against Poverty was called in. He focused on this thing because it was a thing that Kennedy was going to be involved in, and they brought him in. I saw him being a bit of a disaster, and finally it was turned around and Dick ^{Boone} Bloom was eliminated from the project, But for a while there, Dick ^{Boone} Bloom was the instant expert in terms of all that could happen in the Black community, and he was just an ex-Police Captain who had come out of Chicago, as far as I was concerned, and didn't have any great knowledge of the Bedford-Stuyvesant. It used to annoy me that every time some instant expert like this came into the office who was going to be able to radically help move the project forward, I would have to sit down and spend two hours briefing him and having him pick my brain of all

I knew about Bedford-Stuyvesant and then having him ask me about things which I thought were he was literally utterly ridiculous, /naming persons who might have been involved in projects who were dead! That's how little knowledge they had of what was going on in the community, and yet they were being called on to be the white experts. ¶ The whole theory, which is really another discussion we're going to have to have, is the thing of how you ended up with two boards in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Under any other given circumstances, ^{...} were it not for Bobby Kennedy, this thing would have been viewed as being a racist, plantation system, / of that white board being the overseers and the / Black board being the slaves. It literally is the thing of it being, ^z because it was Robert Kennedy and because ultimately of the unfortunate, disastrous thing of the Senator's ^{ass} assassination, / that there has never been any flack. ¶ But today to be able to justify having two executive directors of one program out in Bedford-Stuyvesant is a very, very difficult thing. ¶ The other thing is that there is no question in my mind, / having dealt with John Doar as a consultant to that corporation

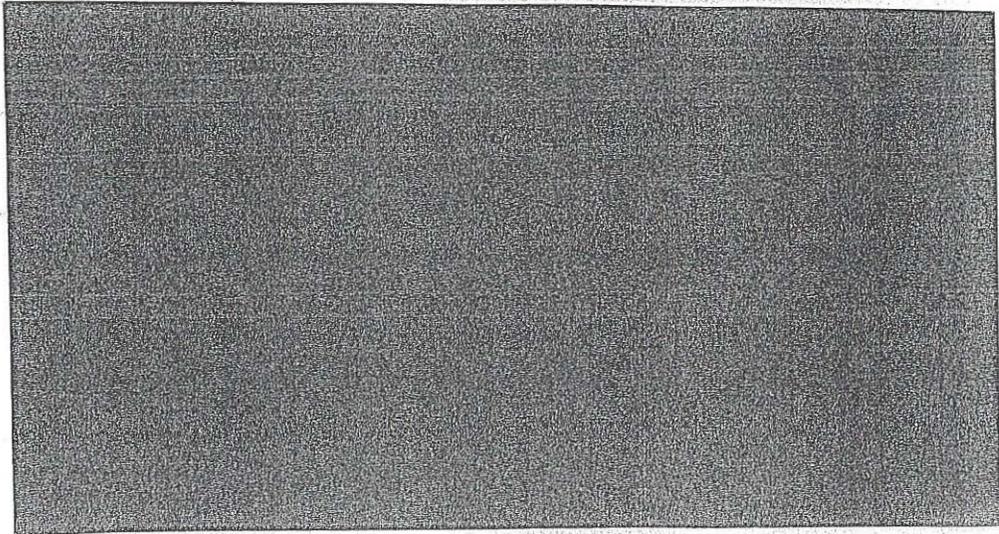
today, that it is a most frustrating thing for John Doar, that he knows that he only can do certain things and work in certain areas and not be his own guy, because ^[Franklin A.] Frank Thomas is certainly ^{assert} a strong enough personality to ~~be~~ himself as a person who really is going to run what happens in Bedford-Stuyvesant. ^{It} I ultimately think that that project has got to become a thing of having one corporation out there. I just don't see how it's going to be workable, ^{and} I do think that when John Doar eventually--and I'm sure he will--~~eventually~~ ^{decides} decides to do something else where he can be his own boss, ~~that~~ that project will revert to being a thing of having one executive director. ~~Certainly~~ John Doar has been in now for a couple of years and he and Frank have kind of worked along together. There ^{could} ~~can~~ never be another white person who could come in and have the equal ^{status} status of John Doar, for whatever it's worth, enjoys now as the co-director.

GREENE: ^{they came on at about} Is that simply because/ well, they didn't really come at the same time.

GRAVES: They didn't come at the same time. John Doar came on after, but it's because John Doar came with the . . . Just the fact that you could be able to justify that Kennedy had gone and found a white person, just the theory or the politics involved in trying to be able to rationalize to the press and to the community that you were going to have a white guy sitting out there with Frank Thomas and both of them are going to be executive directors of what's ^{ostensibly} ~~supposed to be~~ the same project, was in itself a real coup, in terms of how you handled that press-wise.

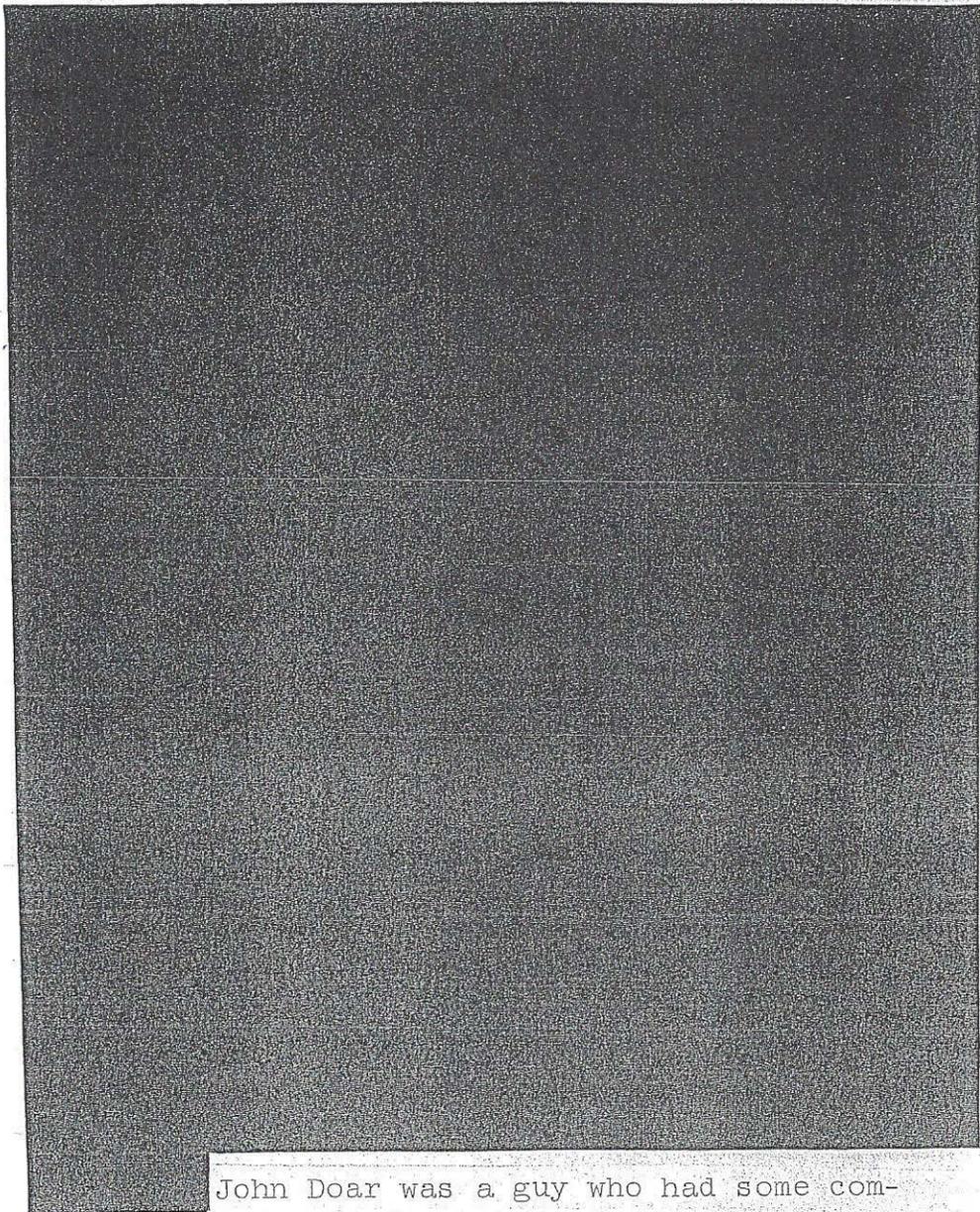
GREENE: But are you saying that it's something special about Doar, or because he was Robert Kennedy's man?

GRAVES:

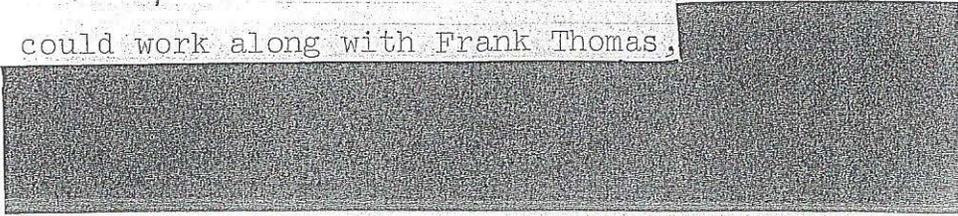


GREENE:

GRAVES:



John Doar was a guy who had some com-
passions and understanding, he was a guy who
could work along with Frank Thomas,



[REDACTED]

There's so much more that you could talk about. But you ended up with an all-Black staff sitting in the Granada Hotel in Bedford-Stuyvesant, and I went out and sought out the site and made all the arrangements for renting the hotel and getting all the furniture. and I went out and bought fifteen thousand dollars worth of furniture in one night for the project, or two nights, whatever it took, to have an all-Black staff sitting in the center of Bedford-Stuyvesant and to have an all-white staff sitting on Madison Avenue and both of them focusing on the same project is absolutely unbelievable and incomprehensible to me.

GREENE: Was this something that was raised frequently by the local people, or did they accept it?

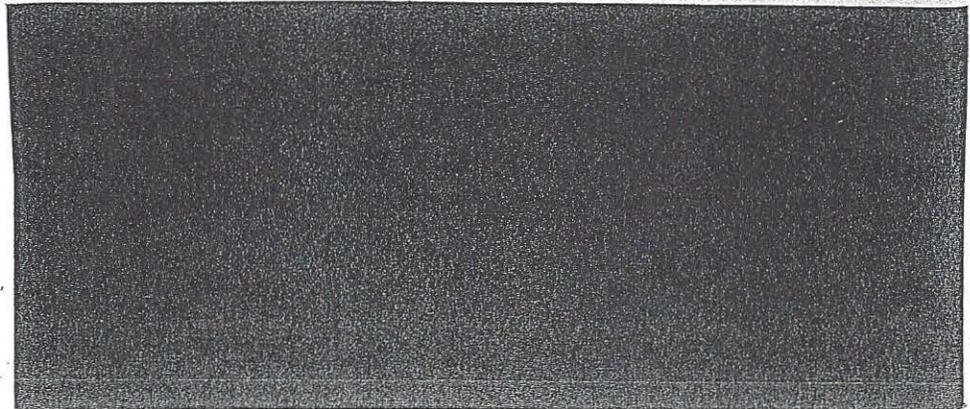
GRAVES: Oh, listen, I mean, first of all, it was raised by the staff, and then it was raised by the local people, and then

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

He was just a totally a disaster for the project. The first thing that John Doar did when he came in was to say, "First of all we've got to integrate our staff, and second, we've got to get out there to Bedford-Stuyvesant. What are we doing sitting here on Madison Avenue?" They were sitting on Madison Avenue, trying to make the decisions citizens work for the slaves down in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

[REDACTED]



GREENE: Let me just ask you one more thing, before we stop, about the two corporations. The way I've always understood it, the functions of the two were separate and it was never really supposed to be a question of greater and less^er authority or one being the slave and the other the master. Was this just a myth?

GRAVES: That was definitely a myth. To this day, I can remember riding on the East Side Drive going to 849 United Nations Plaza with Senator Kennedy and his driver in the car, and sitting in the back and discussing the Bedford-Stuyvesant project and my saying to him, "You know, I ultimately think that this thing about putting together these two corporations is not going to be a workable thing." This is when we were talking of John Doar coming on. And I remember the

the Senator turning to me and saying, "We have got to have a white executive director because the white businessmen are never going to deal with a ~~Black~~ man running the show out there and him being in charge of all that money." And that was no myth.

GREENE: Do you think this was a reflection of his personal feelings or just of the realities of the situation?

GRAVES: When he expounded that, that was Robert Kennedy speaking in terms of what he believed, which happens to be a statement of fact. You know, I'm dealing with white businessmen today in terms of saying to them, "I want you to advertise," and I know the questions they ask me as Presidents of corporations, "Do all ~~Black~~ people hate white people?" When these are the heads of major corporations ask^{me} questions like that in 1970, then I know ~~that~~ what Robert Kennedy saw, and then you must understand that Robert Kennedy came with the scars of having been the Attorney General and ^{seeing} ~~seen~~ the racism which prevails in

this country.

GREENE: But he wasn't really expressing ^{his} personal feelings; he was expressing observations of the way other people would feel. He himself would, you think, have accepted a Black director, if he thought it would have been workable, of a single corporation?

GRAVES: Yes, I think so, yes. I think he would have, right.

GREENE: But once it got started, did you find that the two corporations worked fairly well? Let's speak about after John Doar came on, or were there problems even after that?

GRAVES: No, no, nope. One of the stumbling blocks of this whole project right now, and, you know, no one wants to say it, is that these people are at loggerheads with each other half of the time each day. It is definitely unproductive having two corporations out there. I know for a fact, when I talk to the Black guys who are out there and I talk to the white guys who are out there, you know, they come to me, I don't have to solicit their coming in to sit down and talk. And it's a disaster.

GREENE: Now that you have John Doar and he apparently is

someone that is respected and his sentiments aren't in question, do they still feel a sense of inferiority by the two corporation structure?

GRAVES: Who? I'm not sure, who is "they"?

GREENE: The people within the Black community in Bedford-Stuyvesant, ^{see} do they still/this as a plantation system, as you put it?

GRAVES: You know, the Bedford-Stuyvesant^a project, you should understand, for better or for worse, however it goes, the radio programs and all that, with all that it has done and with all that it is doing, ~~it~~ still is not as readily identifiable as the YIA [Youth in Action] which is the CAP (Community ~~Action Program~~) program at Bedford-Stuyvesant ^{when you} ~~we~~ say ^{"the} to people." Because the only people who really know what's going on, as far as the Bedford-Stuyvesant project is concerned, are either people who work within the corporation, that means the very poor, unemployed, underemployed trainee, or the middle-class who ^{have had} ~~wanted to have~~ their houses fixed up, or the people who want to stay up till twelve o'clock at night to watch^{ch} the radio program of "Inside Bedford-Stuyvesant." Other than that,

the masses of the people don't really recognize much of a difference between YIA, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Model Cities; it's all the same. All they know is that they look around, they see houses falling down, some being put back up, other^s being torn down, and there's no real identification that that's a restoration thing. ~~And~~ that's the one failing that I think restoration has had, ~~is~~ that, at this point, restoration should be recognized as being the corner stone, they key stone of what's going on in Bedford-Stuyvesant. And I think, if there's any one contribution that I would want to see someone go ^{out} and make right now, ^{is} to make Bedford-Stuyvesant, that Bedford-Stuyvesant project, be in fact what is representative of that community. ~~And then~~ the other thing that you have is that ~~you have~~ ^{the} ~~that~~ Bedford-Stuyvesant project has a very middle-class board. That's another thing. If you ever have to justify that to some one, I mean it's just that because it was Robert Kennedy and he's dead and no one really wants to undo a lot of

what's been done, that they find that acceptable.

But if they had to go and deal with that thing today, you would have a very unwholesome situation.

Because ^{of} the board, you've got three judges on that board, for instance; you've got ninety per cent of the people on there are professionals making well in excess of twenty thousand dollars.

And that is not representative of what Bedford-Stuyvesant is all about. They happen to be people who live in Bedford-Stuyvesant for the most part, but in terms of being the average person out of Bedford-Stuyvesant, they're not.

The thing is, although they're opinion-makers, they're not--because you have the white board who can influence getting the money in--they're ~~not~~ persons who you absolutely have to have because they have such large constituencies.

I haven't seen them, when they've had demonstrations marching on Restoration ^[Corporation] because the trainees were unhappy about something; it was not the members of that board who turned it around, but Frank Thomas and John Doar going out and dealing with those kids and saying what they wanted to

hear, that straightened out the problems.
We're going to have to do this again.

GREENE: Yeah.