

Felix Armfield: Okay, you were just saying?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Yeah, all these guys were Alphas. That would be in the states all over the place. And all of them were not Alphas, but most of them were. You had them in Kentucky and Oklahoma, and even Louisiana, you begin to have these cases in higher education. Changes were coming, and you had the restrictive covenant cases and a whole bunch of others. You had a series of cases decided by the Supreme Court, which were chipping away at the Plessy v. Ferguson, all that separate but equal doctrine. But they had not had a case in which the court would specifically declare the segregation illegal. And even the Elmer Henderson case, about the dining car behind the curtains, that Alpha Phi Alpha prosecuted and paid for, even that was helping, but it was—

Felix Armfield: Which case was that?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Elmer Henderson, E-L-M-E-R, Elmer Henderson. Henderson. Belford Lawson argued that case for Alpha Phi Alpha before the US Supreme Court, and they removed the curtain.

Felix Armfield: Oh, really?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Then another case that Alpha had, and in the Maryland, Don Gaines Murray, who was not an Alpha, by the way, but Alpha paid for all of the expense paid, paid for the case, paid the lawyers, took care of all the defense and law school, opened up the law school at the University of Maryland to Blacks.

Felix Armfield: Interesting. This is valuable information.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Yeah. And so you had all that. You had a series of cases. Now it was very difficult to get, during this period, the Congress to do very much, because of the filibuster of the Southern senators. They held these powerful positions, they wouldn't call hearings.

Felix Armfield: And now, we're still talking about the '30s and '40s right now?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Yeah, the '30s and and '40s, but the filibuster went on '30s and '40s, yeah.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Okay.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Yeah. Then you had the lynchings that went on during that period, to strike fear in Blacks. And you had the Ku Klux Klan and the Knights of the White Camelia and other White supremacy groups, which would want to strike fear in the hearts of Blacks who wanted to demand full citizenship

rights. You had all of those things happening, but meanwhile, the NAACP and others were chipping away at these various things and having, as much as possible, cases to attack the various forms of legal segregation. And of course, in 1954, the Board of Education of Kansas—

Felix Armfield: The Brown versus Board of Education?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Brown versus Board of Education, Kansas, you had that case, which that was a definite pronouncement that segregation was a violation of the US Constitution. And that of course, when they had this all deliberate speed thing that meant that it's going to take forever to get this implemented.

Felix Armfield: I don't think [indistinct 00:04:20]—

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Then you add all of the resistance to it, in various places all over the South. Here, in New Orleans, to see the people on TV shouting at two little girls in elementary school, all these people out there shouting, "Two, four, six, eight, we don't want to integrate! Go home Blacks!" And all that sort of thing, trying to frighten the kids, and the kids being taken into the schools by the US Marshals. And how they would pull their kids out when the Blacks came in there. On the one hand, seeing that, and on the other hand, an attempt to integrate the lunch counters, they would come in and Blacks would sit at the lunch counters and the Whites would come just pour anything on them, spit on them, and they couldn't— The whole thing was not to fight back, not to strike back. They had this situation that they endured all these indignities in order to get the right to eat at a lunch counter. And the Freedom Rides, all that, in terms of—

Felix Armfield: All these were activities [indistinct 00:05:45]—

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: When they were beaten in various towns, they were just beaten by the sheriff, come on the bus and beat them. They had to endure all of that. The Whites and Blacks suffered. The Whites who were on the Freedom Ride, the Whites who did the sit-ins and so forth. Now, it's interesting to note that way before the situation in North Carolina, at a city in North Carolina, that at the University of Illinois, in 1946, we were having sit-ins there. Because at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana, they would not serve Blacks at places there, until we had the sit-ins and broke them down. And they could not go to certain cafeterias, couldn't sit on the first floor of the theaters until we broke that down. Couldn't go to the Crystal Lake Park in Urbana, Illinois, until we broke that down. It was just as bad there as it was in the South.

Felix Armfield: Isn't it interesting though, that— I'm just wondering how much influence would television have on what happens in 1960 in Greensboro, as opposed to what you're just explaining about [indistinct 00:07:02] in 1946.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Yeah, well, I think the difference is, is that wasn't publicized. That wasn't publicized in Champaign-Urbana. I think the other thing the point ought to be made was that the Blacks in outside of the South didn't test these places. In the northern areas, they didn't go to those big cafeterias. They went to the greasy spoons and places like that. They didn't go down in the better hotels. For the most part, there wasn't that overt segregation, but there was covert segregation. And they were just sitting there, taking it,

talking about, "Down South," where it's overt and they had laws. They didn't have laws, so they just assumed they could. An innocent thing, in that respect, my cousin told me that— She was talking about segregation in Chicago.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: I said, "Well, how many Whites are in the school?" They said, "None." I said, "Well, that's segregation, isn't it?" In other words, they were in there because of residential segregation. Most of the schools in Chicago were segregated, were all Black, all White. Now, they had many of them that had Whites and Blacks going to the same school, but for most of them, that wasn't the case. But they didn't see that as segregation. They didn't understand that the residential segregation contributed to the educational school segregation.

Felix Armfield: That's an interesting point. Interesting point. I wonder how often did people really think about that kind of business class, status.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Most of them didn't think about it. They just accepted it without thinking of it too much. And then when they thought about it, they had to see that they were being segregated.

Felix Armfield: Yeah, yeah, interesting. As it—

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Do you want a Coke or something?

Felix Armfield: Actually, I could take a Coke, if you want one.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Mm-hmm, it is— All right.

Felix Armfield: Let me put this on pause for a minute.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: — this sort of thing.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Dr. Bashful, when did you finally make your way to New Orleans?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Well, as I told you, I was at Florida A&M from 1948 to 1958, and I was called before the Florida Legislative Committee, on whatever they called it. They jokingly called it the Florida Legislative Committee for Un-American Activities, but it's just to get rid of Black folk. They tried to make it uncomfortable for me. I was called before them, I think, in '56 or '57, and in '58 I left Florida A&M, and went to Southern University of Baton Rouge as a professor of political science. Meanwhile, the legislature of Louisiana had voted, in 1956, to put a campus of Louisiana State University in New Orleans, and of course, as always, they would also vote to put a campus of Southern University in New Orleans, 'cause they wanted to maintain the segregation.

Felix Armfield: Okay. As late as the 1950s?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: 1956. They just did it. Well, this was in the wake of the 1954 Brown decision, so you'd expect them to do something like that. But then they opened the campus of LSU in 1958, and just before they opened it, A.P. Tureaud, another big Alpha man who was a big lawyer here, civil rights lawyer in New Orleans, went in the court—

Felix Armfield: Tureaud?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Tureaud, T-U-R-E-A-U-D. Tureaud, A.P. And he filed suit to open the campus here at LSU to Blacks. Of course, he won the cases, as you think he would.

Felix Armfield: When was this?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: To open the campus at LSU, Louisiana State University of New Orleans, they called it?

Felix Armfield: No, when was this?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: 1958, before they opened. And when they opened, they had to admit Blacks. Then the Louisiana State Board of Education, which see you had the Louisiana State Board of Education over all the colleges except the LSU campuses. You had the LSU Board to supervise over at the LSU campus. Then, the pressure was put on the State Board of Education to open this campus. Dr. Felton Clark, the president of Southern, of course, didn't want to open, and nobody at Southern wanted to open a campus of Southern down here at that time. Anyway, they put the pressure on them, and Dr. Felton Clark went to the board meeting and presented my name. He hadn't even talked to me about it, to open this as dean, [indistinct 00:12:50] as dean of this campus. That same day, he had a man that called me to tell me he was presenting my name. I didn't even know it until I was called and told me he presented my name to be the dean of the campus here.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: I'd only been at Southern Baton Rouge one year and I'd just got through teaching summer school up there. I was a political science teacher there. The board approved it and then I had finally came down here in 1959, in August, to see what the hell this is all about. I'll later on, show you the pictures of the campus and give you some general idea about things. But anyway, when I came, the building was under construction. Wasn't wasn't ready for occupancy. In August now, and they wanted to open school in September. They arranged Dr. G. Leon Netterville, who was the vice president of Southern—

Felix Armfield: Spell me Netterville.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: G-L-N-E-T-T-E-R-V-I-L-L-E, Netterville, who was a vice president of Southern University and a very prominent man in the Methodist Episcopal Church. I guess they call it United Methodist Church now. And so he arranged for us to have an office at Bethany Methodist Church here. He arranged the bishop and the pastor of the church. Anyway, we had the office there, and until we could get in the building, it was twenty-first of September in 1959 we got in the building and they had registration. 158

students registered, and they were only freshmen. We just had freshmen first year, and then added a year each year, and had our first commencement in 1963. That's how I got to New Orleans.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: But I told them to begin with, and I had everybody understand, that if I was going to have anything to do with it, they were going to have to have a top flight academic program here, which we finally were able to accomplish. After many, many fights and many, many disappointments, we were finally able to do it. And when I retired, sixty-eight percent of the faculty had earned a doctorate. The faculty was integrated, and the student body, obviously. We had the student body integrated, because we had a White lady that filed suit. We had her file an application, in which we denied it, and this was all set up. And then she was supposed to go to Mr. Tureaud and he'd file suit for her. That was done and we went down to federal court and the federal court ordered us to admit her. The first time a White person had sued to get into a Black school, here in the state. And that opened up—

Felix Armfield: Oh really? When was this?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Huh?

Felix Armfield: When was this?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: I'll get the— The exact is in the '60s, might maybe the early '70s. I'll get it for you though. This opened up Southern and Grambling, and that's what it meant, since they declared it. Anyway, then we had Whites, of course. And now about ten percent of the five thousand students at SUNO— Well, I'd say five to ten percent are White. In the graduating class in May, there were thirty Whites who graduated. Thirty. I don't mean Spanish, I don't mean Indians, I don't mean Orientals of any kind. I'm talking about these were thirty Whites who graduated. We counted them as they—

Felix Armfield: Out of a class of how many?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: 526.

Felix Armfield: Okay.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Ten percent would've been fifty-something, and so it was about thirty. Let's see, six percent. Roughly six percent, of the class. Well, now if you take non-Blacks, it probably would be ten percent, because you have all these other people that I didn't really count right here.

Felix Armfield: Yeah, exactly. I think that's interesting, that comment you just made, that how this case that you're talking about at SUNO, where the White girl would sue to get in to SUNO, how basically what that did just ricocheted off to places like Grambling.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Well see, because the jurisdiction. The court has jurisdiction of the whole state. Once they issued that decree, it covered everything in the state. In terms of Southern University of New

Orleans, obviously it had its problems with the state board. It was under the State Board of Education then. There wasn't a Southern University Board of Supervisors then. That was 1974 when they changed the constitution and set up the Southern system, the LSU System, and the Trustee System, and of course, the Board of Regents, which coordinates all of them.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: But the State Board of Education, which was an all White board. That was an innocent thing, but it made a big difference, 'cause they had too many things to do and they didn't have the kind of oversight, aggressive oversight I would say that, that you'd have at too many colleges. And then they were over the trade schools, they were over a bunch of other stuff too, and they were over the elementary schools as well.

Felix Armfield: What kind of problems did that beset for an infantile SUNO at the time?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Well, the first problem they had is with the Southern Baton Rouge. Obviously Southern Baton Rouge is located in a metropolitan area, they could overshadow us. They, stated or unstated, they had some fears. Secondly, because of the segregation thing, the Blacks here had certain— They were very antagonistic when we opened. When the segregation issue was not as prominent, when Whites began to come, and these same people who were antagonistic were playing for jobs out there. It began to take a prominent place in the community, and then when the graduates began to make their mark in the legislature. Most of the Blacks who were in the legislature, up until fairly recently, most of the Blacks were from SUNO.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: As a matter of fact, you had John Jackson, Avery Alexander, Morrell, this girl who is now on the Public Service Commission. I think we had four or five members of the legislature from SUNO, and Johnny Jackson, when he was in the legislature, and then he was on the city council. The dean, this fellow, Westerfield, you've been reading about him. He was Dean of North Carolina Central Law school. Then he was Dean of Loyola Law School. Now this summer, he's a judge. He's sitting as a judge up in Shreveport, a state judge, and he's becoming, at the end of the summer, Dean of the University of Mississippi Law School.

Felix Armfield: Oh, is he?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Yeah, and he's been a full professor up there, both at Loyola and at Ole Miss. He left Ole Miss and went to the North Carolina Central.

Felix Armfield: Yeah, because he was the dean of the law school there, for a while.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Yeah, dean for about four years.

Felix Armfield: Yeah. Yeah, I remember. As a matter of fact, he was dean at the time that I was there as a student.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, he's a SUNO graduate and he came from the Algiers Fischer homes. The Algiers Fischer, across the river. Michael Bruno, the head of the Bruno and Tervalon, the big CPA, one of the largest CPA firms in the South, he's Black. He's got about thirty-some people at his firm. He's a SUNO grad. I could go on and on and on, and you got a whole bunch of them all over the place.

Felix Armfield: What kind of— You said little earlier that there was— Blacks here in New Orleans were giving the SUNO campus some flack in the [indistinct 00:22:52]—

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Oh, yes.

Felix Armfield: Were you talking about the Xavier and Dillard crowds?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Some of them was Xavier and Dillard, 'cause we had a lot of Xavier and Dillard supporters too. This wasn't a complete thing, either way. You had a lot of people supporting us, because every student didn't have the money to go to Dillard or Xavier. They didn't have the money. Of course they're private schools and—

Felix Armfield: Both were private? Interesting.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Yeah, yeah. And we have some people now who are not our friends. We understand that. But—

Felix Armfield: You can't win them all.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: No. The school has grown, in terms of influence, in terms of its— They bought all that land across the Leon Simon. You haven't seen that?

Felix Armfield: No, I didn't know.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Well, ask somebody to show you. They had two buildings on it, 38.5 acres of land with two buildings on it, over there.

Felix Armfield: The campus [indistinct 00:23:45]—

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: On the other side of side of Leon Simon.

Felix Armfield: — continuing to expand.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: And then they built this last building at that building, that new building.

Felix Armfield: Yeah, yeah, I've seen that.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: And that makes the eleventh building on that campus, plus those two over there. And then they going to have to come up with a real good situation for another building. 'Cause with that building, and then they going do a remodeling of three buildings now. Because since the people moved out of that, into that building.

Felix Armfield: Do you think it'll ever become a residential campus?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Oh yeah, I think so. But you see the problem with the Black folk, and I had to say this, they want you to have dormitories until you get them. Then they don't want them anymore, after you get in depth. We had that situation up in Baton Rouge. And of course, this is also true of Whites who were in certain dormitories. And because of the regulations in the dormitories, they wanted to move out.

Felix Armfield: I see exactly what you're saying.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: But you've gotten in debt. The legislation's not going to provide any money to the schools to build dormitories, because dormitories are income producing agencies and facilities, and so you have to borrow the money and get in debt to build a dormitory. And if it becomes residential, the students are going to have to stay in there to fill it up. Otherwise, when you borrow the money, you project a certain amount of income, based on the number of rooms you have with full occupancy. If you don't have that, you probably won't be able to amortize the debt that you have.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Now how—

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: It does become— Especially with that new land that have across there.

Felix Armfield: Yeah, it looks like the place going to have to do [indistinct 00:25:50]—

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Yeah, but if you have somebody to take you over there and show you, you'll see it.

Felix Armfield: Okay. I think I'll talk with either Cheryl or Arthur and see if they won't give me a tour of that place over there. Now, how long of a stint did you have at SUNO?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: I was there twenty-eight years.

Felix Armfield: Twenty-eight years?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: I was the head of the campus from 1959 to 1987. Twenty-eight years. Dr. Dolores Spikes came down. She's down one year, and then Dr. Jackson has been ever since. Dr. Jackson, he's entering his sixth year, this year. I will have been away from there for seven years, June thirtieth. Dr. Spikes was one year. She's president of the system now and he is the Chancellor of the New Orleans campus. This is his sixth year. And he has thirty-one years so he's probably going on to work about another two or three years. He's got certain things he wants to do and then he going to give it up.



Felix Armfield: Yeah, [indistinct 00:27:04].

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Yeah.

Felix Armfield: What's your greatest accomplishment, then or now, that you'd like to—

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: I think the fact that I was able to open this campus, in spite of the fact that it was set up by the Whites to avoid segregation. I was able to open the campus, improve it, and have a significant number of Whites to attend, and it has won respectability from most of the Blacks and most of the people in the country who know about it. The fact that we have some quality departments— I received a call this morning from people out of this city, who want to come to our school of social work.

Felix Armfield: I was just about to say, your social work program is phenomenal.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Yeah. And then we have a program in substance abuse, which is a top flight program. Then we have a program in criminal justice, which is top flight. And we have been approved to offer their masters in criminal justice. The Board of Regents had approved. It's just a question of getting the money to do it. The Board of Regents and everybody else, those people are very, very impressed with the way the school has developed. Now, I think that's one. The other thing is that when I was at Florida A&M, I trained all these people in constitutional law and they become judges and lawyers and other people all over the state—

Felix Armfield: Who are some of your most esteemed students?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Well, the Judge Joseph Hatchett of the US Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit. Now then, in terms of top flight lawyers, W. George Allen in Fort Lauderdale, Bowers, in Panama City, Dawson in Tampa. I could just go on and on.

Felix Armfield: Sounds like you could.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: As a matter of fact, I got something here, right here, 'cause I was cleaning out some things last night. I think I have this— Oh, I might not be able to put my hand on it, but it is from one of my students. One of those young men back in those days, it's right here. It must be under— Well, you might not be able to see it there. It's further down there then, because it's like an envelope, but it's down there someplace. Young man who is— Should be right there. Right there, right, that's it.

Felix Armfield: For a special teacher?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Yeah, you can open it up, yeah, yeah.

Felix Armfield: For a special teacher on Valentine's Day.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Yeah. And so now, this—

Felix Armfield: Because you're so special, this Valentine contains a heart full of wishes for lots of nice things. Happy Valentine's Day. And this is actually from a former student?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Yeah. Dr. Carey, who is here on the faculty here, and has been here since 1960, thirty-four years, is one of my students from Florida. Then Thomas Todd, I taught him at Southern Baton Rouge. He's a lawyer and was one time head of Operation PUSH. When Jackson left, he was the vice president for Jackson, Thomas Todd. And I could just go on and on. This young lady that I mentioned here, who had took her doctorate here, that I showed you who's at Atlanta University, and all those people. I'd say, by and large, the fine people that have come under my influence and have achieved would be the greatest thing, I'd say.

Felix Armfield: That must be wonderful, to have a former student send you back a Valentine's card to say thanks.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Yeah. And he writes— I'll write him back. He waits about a month or two and he writes me back. I'll do the same thing. I'm going to have to send him another letter there.

Felix Armfield: How neat. How neat, how neat.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Yeah. But I'd say in spite of the chilling effects of segregation and discrimination, even since legal segregation was abolished, these people still have a way of getting around Black influence. Although in New Orleans, we have the political power. Because we have the majority. It's a predominantly Black city. We have the political power. We do not control the businesses. We do not control the Chamber of Commerce. We don't control the banks.

Felix Armfield: You don't have any economic power.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Yeah. The economic power, by and large, resides in the White community and that is a problem and that is affecting the public school system too. Because it is hard to get a millage through to deal with public schools, because if the Whites vote against it. And then you're going to always have some Blacks who are against it for some selfish reason. Any millage on the only people who— I shouldn't put it that way, because property owners, as well as non-property owners can vote in elections. They aren't always passed, because most of the Blacks don't own property. They ought to go and sack the property owners, but they don't want to do it.

Felix Armfield: New Orleans is certainly peculiar, from all that I've seen, where this educational structure is concerned. It seems to me that you've had the private sector that has still dealt with segregation, and for the most part, the Catholic Church led the way in derailing integration in New Orleans, if I could say that.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Well, maybe back then, but since the assault by Blacks, the Catholic Church came around. During the period of integration, when it was taking place, the Catholic Church was not a barrier to segregation at that point. Now, before that, if a Black went into a Catholic Church, they had to sit in the back. You couldn't go in and sit anywhere you wanted to in a Catholic Church. I couldn't have been a Catholic under those circumstances.

Felix Armfield: Basically, we're talking about the '30s and '40s?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Here? Oh yeah, they could go ahead and sit in the back.

Felix Armfield: And the interesting thing what I've discovered, is that many persons who, in fact, were Black Catholics, do not recall, until just recent years, there being a Black priest to head up these congregations or the parishes—

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Well, now that isn't altogether true.

Felix Armfield: — here in New Orleans.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Now how long, when you say recent time, what do you mean by recent time?

Felix Armfield: Over the last fifteen, twenty years?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Oh no, indeed. No, no, no, no, no, no, no.

Felix Armfield: It was far more?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Oh, yeah. I'll admit that you don't have a lot of Black priests now, 'cause you don't have— Nowhere in United States do you have a lot of Black priests. As a matter of fact, you have more, I'd say, in Mississippi and Louisiana, where you have Black bishops. The Bishop of Gulfport [indistinct 00:36:08] is Black. Bishop Howard. And the Bishop here, the bishop way back here, and he from Lake Charles. And Norman Francis brother, Bishop Francis, is the bishop of somewhere in New Jersey there. At one time, of the ten or twelve Black bishops, about seven of them were from either Louisiana or Mississippi.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Well, I guess the question is that when you found Black parishes here in New Orleans, how typical was it [indistinct 00:36:42]—

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Well now, keep in mind that you have more Black parishes in Louisiana, than you have probably any other place.

Felix Armfield: Exactly.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Therefore, you would not have— Even if you had twelve Black priests, that wouldn't

begin to deal with the parishes that are available. You can just move that out the way. Just leave it at— Well, I can find a place on that. But you have quite a number of priests. And then you had Bishop Perry became a bishop. I could look that up, I don't know, but he became a bishop in— Boy, it must have been— Because I had him over at SUNO, right after he became a bishop. I had him speak over there. I invited him to come over. Yeah, that must have been, I would say, 1970, but it might have been a little before then. And now, he wasn't the first. They had a Black priest, and he had been a priest for a long time, but became Bishop. There's an auxiliary bishop here now who's Black. I don't know him. Bishop Perry died, by the way, after. Now there's another bishop, the bishop of Galveston, in that area. He's from here. He was made a bishop over in Galveston.

Felix Armfield: Just before we obviously get ready to wrap up this interview, which I think has been an excellent one, knowing what we know about segregation/Jim Crow, what can we take from that era to continue to build into the present, that we know we don't need to tread again where Jim Crow was concerned.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Well, the first thing—

Felix Armfield: I guess, ultimately is Jim Crow dead?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: No, I don't think it's dead. I think that the Supreme Court sat on a case in Oklahoma, that the Constitution and the Fifteenth Amendment nullifies sophisticated, as well as simple-minded molds of discrimination. I would say that right now, we are facing a period of sophisticated resegregation. The question is, will Blacks be able to circumvent or to blunt the attack of sophisticated resegregation? The other thing is, to what extent will a Black be able to seize the initiative, in terms of the economic sector, because as the economic sector grows, so will the political and the others. And maybe you win political office, but who is controlling? Who's giving the signals to the persons who win politically? Now, [indistinct 00:40:45] is a terrific youngster. I asked him— By the way, he's an Alpha too. He's a member of our chapter here. And he—

Felix Armfield: Is he a SUNO graduate?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: No, no, he graduated from Georgetown. But he graduated from Georgetown and the University of Pennsylvania School of Law. And yeah, I've been knowing him, ever since he was a little fella. Dutch used to bring him to all the Alpha conventions. He'd bring all five of his children, as a matter of fact, to the Alpha conventions.

Felix Armfield: I've heard that they are.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: And I would say the other thing we've got to do, we don't have enough kids going to college. We got to get more of them in college. We got to get more of them in trade schools. We got to get more of them in school, period, just finishing elementary and high school. But those who finish college, we got to get more and more of them in subject matter areas not in education. I mean in advanced degrees in

education. When I say education, I mean education as a discipline. They need to go into mathematics and chemistry and this sort of thing. People would come to me to get a job and they'd say, "Well, I have my PhD."

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: I'd say, "What is your PhD in? What field?" Well, "I got it in higher education." I said, "We don't need nobody in higher education." Said, "Well, but I can teach." I said, "No, you can't teach anything with but what your graduate major or minor is." And you talking about, "I can teach English, I can teach— And five or six things." I said, "No, this is not any elementary school that you talking about now. We talking about a college. If you don't have a graduate major in it, we don't want you teaching our kids."

Felix Armfield: Yeah, you need to be grounded in a discipline.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Some of them got mad, and I tell them, "Hell, I don't want to hire you." They say, "Well, I have a degree in English." I say, "What, a bachelor's degree? We don't want you, with a bachelor's degree in English, teaching a bunch of people who might have been smarter than you were. No, we don't want you doing that."

Felix Armfield: You certainly won't get an argument out of me. It's been my contentions all along. We all need to be grounded in somebody's discipline, and not just dibbling and dabbling in all of them.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Well, education is all right if you want to teach education. But if you want to teach mathematics, you don't go into education. If you want to teach English, you don't want to go into education.

Felix Armfield: And certainly not the discipline I do, which is history.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Yeah, yeah. Well, you don't want a person in education coming in and teaching history.

Felix Armfield: No. Not grounded enough in the discourse and all the other methodologies that go along with the discipline.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Now, it goes without saying that we got to deal with this matter of teenage pregnancy and crime and all those type of things in our community, because it's something that's creating all kind of problems for us. Those people, what had happened is many Whites would look at crime, although it might be one half of one percent or one fourth of one percent of the youngsters doing it, and they'll bringing all the youngsters, the other ninety-nine or some percent, with the sins that are being perpetrated by this small group. That's a problem.

Felix Armfield: I see. I see. If there's nothing else that you'd like to say in particular, we can bring the interview to a close. Is there anything else that you'd like to add in closing?

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Not really, other than the fact that somehow, some way, we got to find a way to preserve our Black colleges. They existed 100-and-some years and we aim to just close them, that they have a tradition and they have a following. And as a US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia said, they are a National Treasure and they should not be— We shouldn't take the view that we need to close everything Black, 'cause we can get into a White institution or get in— You're not going to close a Black bank, because you can get into the White bank.

Felix Armfield: And not all Black students get into White colleges.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: That's right. And when we get in there, we still have problems.

Felix Armfield: Oh, yeah.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: This sophisticated kind of resegregation or discrimination. The sophisticated kind, not the overt kind of thing.

Felix Armfield: And then I've heard many of my own colleagues, from my generation. We were the offspring of the Civil Rights Generation, and we were the ones who were to have gone on and had these opportunities to go to these White institutions. But I've heard a great number of my own peers, who have attended these White colleges, talk about the identity crisis that many Black students have encountered.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Okay, well if you want to stop it right now, you can. I don't want to—

Felix Armfield: Okay. I'm all finished with you.

Emmett Wilfort Bashful: Yeah, yeah.

Felix Armfield: Thank you so much.