



CLOVES CAMPBELL, SR.
1931-2004

Honored as a Historymaker 2005
Arizona State Legislator and
Newspaper Publisher



The following is an oral history interview with Cloves Campbell (CC) conducted by Bonnie Leverton (BL) for Arizona Historical Society Papago Park and videotaped in 2000 by KAET-TV/Channel 8 for documentary on Arizona Civil Rights movement.

*Transcripts for website edited by members of Historical League, Inc.
Original tapes are in the collection of the Arizona Historical Society Museum Library at Papago Park, Tempe, Arizona.*

BL: Let me ask you what it was like during the Civil Rights Movement here in Arizona because as you know we were one of the last states to pass a MLK Day. And there were fights over that. But in 1964, as a black person who's referred to in *The Arizona Republic* as "Cloves Campbell, a Negro," what was it like living in Arizona in this particular area at that time?

CC: Well, it wasn't necessarily bad because we had a lot of things that we enjoyed ourselves. There was segregation in the state, and we had to try and do something about that.

In the legislature where we started proposing the Civil Rights Bill, which eventually got passed, it was kind of useless; because the federal government had already passed a National Civil Rights Bill which did away with a lot of this segregation. But by and large, you still had the problem of jobs. That was probably one of the biggest problems that we had.

And, being in the legislature that was one of my basic number one hidden agendas: to try and put as many blacks into state, city and county jobs. We had something like fifteen thousand jobs at the state level, and the only blacks hired there were in elevator and janitor jobs.

I set out to change that picture the same way I did in the textbooks.

BL: Tell me about the textbooks.



CC: Well, in the textbooks, I found out that Dick and Jane needed some new friends. So I introduced legislation to change that. And if you look at the books today, history books I mean, you will see that they got some different friends now, with different color, different hair texture and different type size.

BL: What was the mind frame of people? I mean 35 years ago there was a different mind frame. And the people who had power weren't necessarily too pleased with giving access, or giving jobs or whatever. Giving power, I guess.

CC: Basically what you had to do, like I did myself, was to put myself in the position where they had to listen to me. When you're a member of the State House or particularly the State Senate, you can exercise some things that a lot of people cannot. Because all the money comes from the legislature. And, it's just a simple rule that still prevails today. Those who've got the gold rule. And that's the Golden Rule.

And so you exercise it. As I said, my hidden agenda in the legislature was to break down the job barrier which I set out to do. For instance, I got the first highway patrolman on. Broke that barrier. First black into the Fish and Game Commission. And, if I recall correctly, I think I negotiated, or worked out a deal to bring the first blacks hired as teachers at the university.

BL: Why weren't their jobs available to blacks then?

CC: They just wouldn't have you. They just wouldn't hire you. And so I had to find out a mechanism, a way to get to it. And the only way you could get to them was with the dollar bill. You go after the pocketbook, and it amazes how many things can move. (laughter)

BL: We're going to be showing pictures of this protest at the Capitol in 1964, in March. And I believe you said that was over the Accommodation Bill.

CC: Yes. Public Accommodations Bill.

BL: Tell me about that.

CC: Well, we had it pending in the House, and it wasn't moving. And so a fine gentleman at the time named Roy Cooksey who lives right now in Tucson, was the State President of the NAACP. And he led the protest down at the Capitol because the bill wasn't moving. And I welcomed the protest, because it did do some things. It did make some people sit up and listen. Listen. Even though it took a while to get it passed. We eventually got it passed out of the House, and it died over in the Senate.

Eventually it passed again and it passed the whole the legislature. I voted against it because at that time, it was too little, too late. The federal government had already passed a National Public Accommodations Bill and a Civil Rights Bill. So we didn't really need it.



BL: What were you fighting for? What was the bill asking for?

CC: Public accommodations.

BL: What was the problem?

CC: Hotels, restaurants.

BL: What was the problem at that time?

CC: Whether you were denied those rights to go into a public place, public accommodations. Enjoy restaurants. Enjoy hotels. Into a drugstore. Sit down and have a soda. Like everybody else. The same thing that they wanted us to go to the Army to fight and protect. Something that we couldn't use.

Now, can you imagine going into the Army fighting for something you can't use? What kind of attitudes you got. Didn't have a very good one.

BL: Do you actually remember seeing the protest at the Capitol that day?

CC: Oh, yes. I was right there looking at it.

BL: Tell me what that was like.

CC: Oh, it was interesting because you had a bunch of young people who were hellfire bent on making sure the message got across. We wanted the Public Accommodation Bill. Unfortunately, the police started to come down and wanted to arrest people because they saw us blocking off entrances to state buildings.

BL: What did you think, because there are pictures where you see people dragging, police dragging or pulling people away?

CC: Oh, yeah.

BL: Then did that march symbolize anything? Or did it crystallize the community?

CC: Well, it made the community more aware that we needed to do more. And naturally that's what happened. We got more people involved. One of the best friends we had at the time, during those days, was television. They showed people for what they were. And you show that to somebody, well, they're only fighting to be able to go into and enjoy the same public accommodations that I'm enjoying. Is that what you want them to go out and fight for in the military? So naturally, TV like it is....saw it. Or it showed the people for what they were.



BL: Good point. Never thought of that in that respect.

CC: The TV doesn't lie.

BL: Well, there's a saying about prejudice and racism. I forget how it goes. But let's talk about after that. Because obviously red lining in Phoenix had been going on for a long time. There were blacks and Hispanics to a certain extent, but I think blacks were treated more as second class citizens for a long time. What came after that? What were some of the other issues that we had to fight for in order to gain the equality that wasn't there before?

CC: Well, the employment thing was at the top of the scale. Education-wise, we were not having too much problem, except maybe some of the schools probably didn't have what the other schools had. But, there were a number of schools as I recall, in Phoenix particularly, where believe it or not, it offered a lot of the better employment for blacks. It was in the school system. It wasn't until we started in 1964 that the job system started opening up.

Matter of fact, right up until 1962 I had a college education. I got out of college at the age of 58, and I was a janitor at APS. And it wasn't until a couple of years later that I was able to get a job as a meter reader.

Now mind you, they had same guys on the same football team with me, white guys, who went right from the college to APS and got a good job in different departments.

It wasn't until I got elected to public office, was I promoted into Public Affairs. And they were saying at the time that Cloves Campbell was the only black in town that had an executive job. As they said. Because there were no blacks in the banks. And not in the bigger businesses. And so, that's one of the things that we were really fighting for. Open up the jobs. Fair housing. And education.

BL: Now, it's 35 years later almost, and they'll be marching for the 35th anniversary of all this. How are we doing today?

CC: Job-wise, I think we're doing a heck of a lot better than we did before. There are serious shortcomings in education; but that's improving. Yeah. They're mostly in a lot of the different school districts. And so, in that sense, the education has greatly improved. As I said, jobs improved. Public accommodations, that's no problem anymore. Even though you might find some of it somewhere lying around in private clubs. But by and large, there has been tremendous improvement from 35 years ago. In all of those areas.

BL: One issue that stands out in the black community, and tell me if I'm wrong, is the need as in other communities, and it's not just the black, I should say South Phoenix. Other communities have had economic improvement due to investment by either the city or the private sector. Yet that same commitment hasn't been made by the powers that be to South Phoenix. Is that a fair assessment?



CC: Well, I think it is. I think the improvements have not been as great in South Phoenix as it has been in other parts of town. But, there is a lot of improvement there. As anyone willing to go and look around.

For instance, you have people who are now moving into South Phoenix, and it is making a difference. One of them is the University's own president, Dr. Lattie Coor. He's moved to South Phoenix.

Homes are going up all over the place. There are businesses moving in. Small businesses. And there is good leadership in the area from the black community's standpoint.

I think I mentioned to you before that we have twelve black elected officials. Thirteen schools named after black folks. Seventy-five black owned and operated businesses. Thirteen black principals. One black superintendent. And just a whole bunch of other things.

Eighty churches. And you name it. They're putting in one of those golf courses. So, you see what happened is the district basically in South Phoenix, is doing like the Jeffersons. They're moving on up.

BL: Any issues right now you think that need to be addressed? Now that we're in a new century?

CC: Oh, there are always going to be some issues that need to be addressed.

Right now we're having some problems at the Roosevelt District Board. And that school district...we're having problems there with the Board and administration. And as some of them have pointed out, we need to improve our teaching methods and develop better educational tools for our school kids there. That the scores, the test scores, are not what we would like for them to be. And we want to make sure that we improve in that area. That's one of the big areas that we need to address, and very rightly; and I think there are those who are doing it.

BL: Anything else we haven't talked about the fight or struggle for Civil Rights in the 60s? Or about that time frame?

CC: Well, as I said before, there has been made some good strides. Particularly in the area of education and employment. Public accommodation. Even in the area of housing.

Because at one time I would say 90-percent of the blacks lived just basically in South Phoenix. Well, I just checked the statistics for the City of Glendale, which has 100,000 or 110,000 people, and 8,000 of those are blacks that live in Glendale. Back 30 years ago there were not blacks living in Glendale.

Now we have a number of blacks living in Scottsdale. I can tell that by the subscription list of my newspaper that we send to Scottsdale.



There were at one time no blacks were living in Tempe. I can tell by my subscription list that has greatly improved. So things have actually changed for the better. Whereas you always see, there's always room for improvement. And I think there are those who are trying to work toward that.

Our problem right now which with some things now, is in community poor police relationships. Some of that hasn't changed from the 1960s.

For instance, you hear the word "profiling." Well, they were profiling back in 1950 and 60s. Particularly in the 60s when I was in the legislature. There was a bill tried, that they tried to pass out of the legislature that said policemen (sic) can stop anybody that looks suspicious.

Well, to white policemen (sic), all black people look suspicious. Now they're calling the word profiling, to stop people who look suspicious.

Well, I've been trying to pass the word on to the black policemen, in the city of Phoenix, and in Tempe and Mesa, that profiling is a two way street. And that you should view white people as looking suspicious, and that would give you a reason to stop them. And, as soon as you start doing that, guess what stops, period? Profiling.

It's the same way about this gun control. As you see what's happening now, all the killing and shooting is being done at schools where there are whites. And people are hollering and hollering, saying stop gun control. We don't want to have gun control. And there are those saying, no, let us continue to have gun control.

Well, if you notice what just happened about six or seven days ago, in Florida, there was a shooting downtown that killed four or five people. This time the person who did the shooting was black. Now you just let a few more black people start shooting up some whites, and guess what you're going to get? Gun control.

BL: Sad. But I can't necessarily disagree. Anything else you want to say we haven't talked about?

CC: Oh, can't think of anything, other than these are the best of times, and people have to make the best of their time enjoying it. And improving including the quality of life. But there are things going on. There will be changes. And because of Technology, that's going to mean bigger changes.

