

BEN: What year were you born?

Doug: 1950.

BEN: Where were you born?

Doug: Tacoma.

BEN: What about you Rodney?

Rodney: My name is Rodney Rhymes and I was born January 24, 1960 in Chicago Illinois.

BEN: Your parents, what were their occupations? this is for you Doug.

Doug: My mom was a Nurse's Aid and my father was in the military. My dad's occupation was a Longshoreman, he's a foreman. And my mother's occupation, was I guess she was like in health services, that was my birth mother. My stepmother, she's a Nurse's Aid.

BEN: So Doug, basically, you pretty much didn't have to struggle for anything when you were young did you?

Doug: Yes, brother, I was struggling all my life. I was struggling for my education, I was struggling. Since I had an attitude problem, I had to fight constantly.

BEN: OK. What about you there Rodney?

Rodney: I don't know what you mean by struggling. I think my parents provided me with a good, I would say financial background, due to the fact that my father was a hard working man. And so was my mother. Being from the South as most blacks were, we migrated North and were hard workers. And the reason why I say that is because my dad was a member of the Union. They had a strike in the 70's and my dad went out and rented a dump truck and went out tearing down buildings. He was still pulling in about \$300.00 a week. We still maintained the same lifestyle as before. He had a lot of guys at the Portland waterfront that thought very highly of him as a man who was a hard worker. So my dad gave to me many of those things that he never had as a kid.

BEN: Doug, why did your family move out here?

Doug: Military brought us out this way.

BEN: What about you Rodney?

Rodney: My parents first had moved from Arkansas to St. Louis. That's where my parents met. Then they went to Chicago. What brought them out here? I guess they wanted to go further North, I guess during that time of the migration. Blacks wanted to go North. My mom had a sister that lived in Portland and she told them about the great Northwest. They thought it would be better if they went a little bit further.

BEN: Doug what was it like growing up in this part of the country, and are there any specific memories that you have or incidents that are of particular interest?

Doug: Yes there are particular incidents. Like I remember when I was in the seventh grade I was in Ramon Hall. They said it was because of my attitude, having problems. But the real thing was that I had this white girl named Jennie and one of the teachers didn't care for me. Mr. Davidson. He didn't like it and so I got hallowed to the principals office. I was detained in Ramond Hall for one week. On my return back to school I found out that Jennie was sent to her father's school, which he was the principal at Dupont in Fort Lewis. I was put out of school and promoted to high school. I graduated out of high school.

BEN: Rodney do I need to repeat that question?

Rodney: Yes, could you please.

BEN: From growing up do you have any memories, I'm saying that really stick out in your mind, incidents?

Rodney: I wouldn't say really the incidences. I would say, probably when I was in the 7th grade, I was bussed out. This is during the 60's when busing started becoming a big thing. I was bused out to the southeast side of Portland, Oregon. We had a brother, black guy, Carl Jenkins and this white boy. He thought he was real bad, his brother was in jail and told him now he should hate blacks. Carl was in the 8th grade and the white boy was

in the 6th grade. He thought he could whoop Carl. So Carl punched him, knocked him down. The white boy's brother had just gotten out of jail. We had to get police escorts all the way on the bus. I'll never forget that because I felt that I was so far away from home I couldn't go home for lunch. I could not call my mom and dad. I could not run. You know, when you're playing on the playground, you didn't see black neighbors walking around the schools. So we had a police escort. We were called niggers and things like that. They had to escort us all the way over to town, where we came from. But the sad thing was that there were also white people on the bus that were bussed. So it was racism and it was ignorance. I forgot my first test of ignorance blended with racism.

BEN: Doug what job do you think, was the most gratifying for you, as far as money and being able to build a purpose. What job sticks in your mind, that you had. I'm saying that you were most happy with?

Doug: The job I was most happy with, well I had two. One was a strattle driver and a house man. The reason why they were so good, because I was working for a black man up here before. That was Ike Morrow. Ike gave me the same privileges that the white guys got. I got paid and time off, if needed.

BEN: Rodney same question.

Rodney: When? you mean jobs presently that I do now, or before?

BEN: You can really generalize.

Rodney: I would say the job I had before. When I was taking on the responsibility that my dad shared. Once again I was in a position to make it possible to purchase my first automobile. And we had moved and my parents had bought a new house out in the suburbs and things, and he needed transportation to get to school. I had a job as a bus boy at the Western Benson Hotel, and I was making good tips. I could make \$25-30 dollars a night in tips and I was a happy young black man. I thought "that's what it's all about". I was making my payments on my own car at 16 years old. So I was very proud and I had a lot of dignity. Much less compared to what now as a grown man when I go to

work because now I'm going to work to put food on the table for two children who did not ask to come into this world. Because I wanted them to come into this world, it's my responsibility to feed them. I felt as far as that job I had as a medium bus boy, I had a lot more respect. My dignity and my manhood was a lot more in tack as what it is today here now.

BEN: Rodney, how did you come about getting the job that you have now and what are the conditions like?

Rodney: Well the job I have now was again, hiring on the water front. It's good through nepotism. I put in my application in 1978. At the time I was in college at Portland State University. I had a 3.0 grade average. I studied to be a business administrator, CPA. I put in this application here. I never thought of coming down here and working 'cause I saw what it did to my dad. It broke his toes, cut off his fingers, he got hit in the head with bins. Coming home at night breathing heavy from working the week. Thought they were trying to kill my dad. But I figured, he said it was good pay. My dad most of the time would always be right and he never steered me wrong. I put in my application. I was lucky and I was saved maybe it was nepotism. Maybe it was because of my father's work ethic. I was one of the few that was chosen, at the time there was 100 people that was hired, 15 to 20 blacks hired out of those. I was the youngest one. I was 20 years old.

BEN: What year was that Rodney?

Rodney: 1980

BEN: Now Doug, what are conditions like with you?

Doug: Yeah, I made my way down there in 1975. My parents both died in 1975. Both my parents passed away in 1975. Once again Ike Morrow, he took me under his wing and made me like a son. He guided me to the Longshore hall and he used his influence ability to get me down there. In 1980 I was registered as a B-person and once again this is due to Ike Morrow. I wanna also say Ike Morrow is the one that built the

intermodal yard in Tacoma that Local 23 and other ports are so envy about you know.

Yeah, that's about it.

BEN: You were hired Rodney, in 1980. Doug, you about?

Doug: I was registered in 1980.

BEN: 1980 also? Rodney this for you personally. Do you think I'm saying cause your father was lonesome?

Rodney: Yes I would say that but also at the time they hadn't done any more hiring except for in 1978 there were a few people hired. Most of the other people were people that come on what we called hardships. If their father would die they were allowed to replace them. Plus the last time the Local 8 in Portland had ever hired any blacks was back when my dad was hired in 1964. So we're talking about 16 years later. The fact was you had to be born at a certain period in time in order to get down there. Some people were not old enough. But the conditions were when I came down there a lot of younger white guys that I was working with, were guys that were used to working with blacks. My wife went to school with a few guys. We didn't really know each other but we could relate. I think during that time when young black kids and white kids were kinda getting together back in the eighties, you know, racism was still there. But the conditions that came was, we were all new. We were green. We didn't know nothing. They didn't know more than me. I didn't know more than them. Basically, the way you always proved yourself on the waterfront was to work and that's all I did. My dad taught me to work. As they say in the south, it just carried on. Ever since then it's been good. The conditions were good, very good then, compared to the conditions today. Back in my days, when I was coming through in '75 most of the older blacks, they always told you, "son if you wanna make it keep your mouth shut and do your job". Back in '75 the racism was really bad. They would call you a nigger. They would laugh, they would poke at you. Just out right make nigger jokes, say nigger jokes in front of you, and you had better not say nothing. This is the way it was. And I can remember some of the older guys, they always

told me, "Doug just keep your mouth shut and do your work. You're a good worker. When you get your A-book you can tell them what you wanna". I got my book and I told that guy he was a racist motherfucker and all the black guys scattered like fleas.

BEN: Doug, comment on the A-book. What exactly were you talking about?

Doug: The A-book is when you are so called fully a part of the union, you are registered, your a class A. It almost takes an act of congress to get your book taken away from you. But these white folks in the Northwest they tend to stick together so they can move that little crooker as if they really don't need you or don't want you around.

BEN: OK go ahead Rodney.

Rodney: I don't want you to feel that the condition was super great. My dad being sown there before me, a lot of older black guys that were down there were just partners and friends. A lot of them I knew and that knew me as a kid, they were my baseball coaches they were my neighbors and lived in my neighborhood. But a lot of them were always also telling me and actually point out that white guy there he'll call you a nigger, that white guy there, that white guy there that's the white guy that stood up in the union meeting saying we don't want no niggers in here. They were very up front.

BEN: What year was this?

Rodney: 1980, and they knew there was young blacks coming down there and when we were in Portland. The blacks that I was growing up around, they were men. When people talk about role models today, back then these guys were role models. These guys were workers. A lot of these brothers were 6'4", 6'5". They were putting their kids through school and their kids were becoming doctors, lawyers, professional athletes. These brothers were hard workers but none of them bowed down, laid down looked down or turned when the heat was on. They stood there and stood their ground. If they had to fight for their rights they fought for them. They would make sure that you knew who this guy was, who that guy was and don't be afraid and stand up.

BEN: So some of the most memorable occasions on your job, do you think most of them will be good or bad?

Rodney: Bad, racist remarks were bad.

BEN: O.K. Doug is it a labor type work or is it like any other job?

Doug: The work is not hard but the conditions you work on [are] . Under the foremans the white individuals sometimes they tended to make the job difficult for certain people. I could remember when I took my gang over. I could remember going onto the ship and trying to train the crane driver on the ship. Certain foremans told me no no you can't go up on cranes. They told the other black guys don't let him climb up. And they were not going up because they were scared for their jobs. But I told them folks that dammit, I will have my gang and when I get my gang you're not going to tell me how to drive. I don't care if I tear off everything on the ship to get a load up there, I am going to get it there and you're not going to say anything. And it happened. I got my gang, my brother-in-law in my gang and they wouldn't mess with me because I have swung some loads over peoples heads!

BEN: Doug what's a gang?

Doug: A gang is where you got an ax tender, a west driver, and four hole men and two PD's. That's a group of guys that work together to fill a job while on a ship. A ship carried 2-3 gangs just a manning. Rodney was my driver, I took my little boy under my wing here and he was my west driver and they wouldn't mess with me because they knew my attitude and what I was capable of doing and didn't care. So they picked my brother Lawnell, he's too slow, he's too young, he's not holding the gilt right and this and that. At summer time I came down there. I say Rodney and I talked to the people that was in the hall. And they said well he's slow. I said slow?, I said okay, I said is he safe. They said yeah, I said O.K. I said so I'm going to tell him to speed up and forget about being safe. They said Oh no! Oh no! I said then what do you want then. I mean this is my way of

getting them off Rodney cause he is a very good driver, cause he came up here from a long way.

BEN: To piggy back on what Doug was saying, as far as you're concerned as far as medical concern, do you think I'm sitting here with pleasant ones maybe I should not have asked that after what I've heard, so I'll let you go ahead and tell it.

Rodney: It's a good question. I would think I have a lot of memorable experiences in Portland because I originally got on the water in Portland and I worked in Portland 1980-1986. When Mt. St. Helen's blew up, it caused the Columbia River to get real slow and a lot of work down there and everything got real slow. And I transferred to Tacoma. But it was memorable, fun and great when I was in Portland. When I was in Portland I got a chance to do what my dad did for a living and how he actually brought home the bacon, in so many words you know, in how he provided for us. Putting clothes on my back and a roof over my head and I could not have been a better provider. You know there's not many opportunities that black men get to work side by side with their dad. He couldn't give me the family business, doctor business, the automotive shop, you know, the lawyers practice and things like that. But what he did give me was his courage, his heart and his work ethics. I had an opportunity. Even when I was young I learned how to throw sacks. We came in on the tail end and throw a lot of sacks. I remember him being old. He would drive the left and got off and saying let me show you how to do it. Dad was throwing sacks and working the young guys to the bone, that's how he made his living. But when I came to Tacoma, it was like someone threw a hex on me, it was that different. We were treated so different. I came up here with a contract book as a B man. But Longshoreman in Tacoma did not want to honor it. So when I arrived it was a culture shock. Not just the blacks were treated unfairly, but all people were treated rough. I remember one time I brought my wife down while I was going down to check on a job. She asked why those men were standing out in the rain. They were casuals, they had no right, so to speak. Dictatorship - 1986, 87, 88. In 1989 I was living on Southside an I got

a phone call, the dispatcher told me that someone called earlier saying that your carport was on fire. When I get there I realize that someone had set my car on fire. My wife had called the dispatch and he told her "lady don't call here, call the Fire Dept." The next day I went to the hall and approached the dispatch telling him if he ever hang up on my wife like that again "I will beat your ___" because this job doesn't mean more to me than my family. He responded, "I didn't know." I told him that's not the way you treat people.

BEN: Doug how long have you been working as a Longshoreman?

Doug: 20 years.

BEN: Rodney?

Rodney: 15.

BEN: Have you met some of your goals and are you on schedule?

Doug: Yes, I have met some of my goals. As far as being on schedule I've had passed the clerk exam since 1992 - but I was passed over. They took 15 people known were black. We filed complaints so they took a 62 year old Black.

BEN: Rodney, the same question.

Rodney: No, I'm not on schedule compared to my white counterparts. One of my goals was to become a gang leader. Also to live comfortable, that means I need promotions. But these positions are closely maintained. Wench driver, I accomplished that goal thanks to Ike. Also I drive a stradd today, this have allowed me to get ahead somewhat. But Ike paved the way. But I still don't get very great jobs today because of those doing the dispatching.

BEN: How long did it take you to get from a casual to B?

Doug: 5 years, B to an A position - 5 years.

BEN: Rodney the same question.

Rodney: I started out in Portland as a B.

BEN: Why is that?

Rodney: At the time I was the second of Blacks to come through the Portland decks, we could not get on as casuals.

BEN: So Rodney, you really didn't have to start from the bottom. Do you think that your supervisors have been fair in their hiring and promoting practices?

Rodney: No, they haven't been fair to Black workers. Anybody that speaks out they don't like.

Doug: No not at all. We had 15 Blacks ready to be registered out of here but they only selected 7 out of 100 in 1992.

BEN: What would you like to change and how would it benefit the rest of the Black Longshoremen?

Doug: That's a hard question. It would probably be to let some of these guys work in San Francisco, Oakland, see how they are running their union. The local is majority black, 50/50, in San Francisco.

Rodney: And why ask them to visit San Francisco?, so they can see how it feels to be the minority or the only white person in the hall or the dock. Hard for them to realize that they are privileged. All their rights are in writing, all they need to do is concentrate on their job or the task at hand. What we need is to have hired about 100 Blacks so that when one of these "Honky's" call one of us "niggers" then we could smack the shit out of one of them. See the attitude now is that I can go around and call you nigger because the role is 100 to 25 in favor doing the name calling. I think if the roles were reversed they really would understand what this is all about. The system is set up to work for whites. I spoke with Bruce Donaldson, the Longshoreman that worked for 42 years. He had a different approach. He chose second shift to get away from all the politics. He stated that when he was at work it was strictly work and even though Blacks didn't like the whites and vice versa, they did their job together and if there was any fighting, they would do it after work.

BEN: So the question is, what is your relationship like with your co-workers?

Doug: Strictly a business approach. I don't have any buddies on my job except Rodney. The very thing that the white man says to us Blacks is, "we don't understand what the gripe is about". Ignoring that problems exist. The officials do not intervene on racial slurs unless Blacks lash out, example. Doug, a 20 year man, cursed a white man, was fined \$300.00. A white man stated that these jobs are for you niggers - "oh that's just his language". A white man in 1992 stated during a union meeting that if you Blacks don't like what's going on, you all can go back and pick cotton. And no actions were taken. In 1990's one of the brothers had a note on his car stating "why don't you niggers learn how to park".

BEN: What have allowed you to deal or cope with these examples for a combined 35 years?

Rodney: The way I was raised and God.

Where we come from, taken down south--you know, as a young kid visiting with my grandmother, to walk in the red clay in Arkansas, to see the school building where which my mother went to you know, how far to walk to school, to post office--to really understand and know about them, by them telling me who they are and where they come from, and don't to be ashamed of who you are--and knowing my mother didn't get a chance to go to college until the age of 42 sitting in class with my brother who was like 19, 20 at the time. Because when she was growing up she had to give up her junior year of high school in order to maintain the farm because her father had died. You know things like that. The struggles isn't about the struggles of parents and them telling you nothing in life comes easy. You have to work for it and no one is gonna give you anything. And so understanding the contributions of black people to America, the death of Martin Luther King, Malcom X, Marcus Garvey, George Washington Carver, Frederick Douglas, people like that--reading about them Langston Hughes, the procession that were not failures... these were people with a purpose, and we belong here.

BEN: So Rodney, are you telling me that you coping because your mind has been trained, that you don't have to go through struggles?

Rodney: Yeah, why wouldn't you have to go through the struggles?, It's part of life for black people and that's what we go through. We struggle, nothin' is given to us.

BEN: You've accepted that?

Rodney: I haven't accepted that, but I go in and out a struggle, I go into a struggle and I get out of it. When I say I get out of it right now, my struggle is at work because that's where I'm having a lot of problems. My struggle is not at home with my family life, I love my children and wife and I talk to them, relate to them, talk to them and tell them about history, tell them about black people and not to be ashamed of their skin. Not because their struggling and not because I'm struggling, but to reinforce and give them somethin' positive about themselves. Struggling is only when you feel you are losing, and you don't feel you can win. I was told one time, brother tells us all the time that power convinces the man. I believe now, we have the power to demand and they have begun to convince. In other words, as you said, you have to get with them. In order to get with them we had to pursue them, like hunt them. Instead of being the hunted we to turn around and hunt them. And when I say hunt them, take our contract book, read it start learning it.

BEN: So knowledge?

Rodney: Knowledge is power and it's amazing. And I think the others could attest to this, how we felt 3 or 4 years ago, what our goals were. Some of the things he'd told people and said it would not happen but as it has happened. It's the spirit that you get that rejuvenates you. Not that you want to say "hey I told you so" but it's the fact that is what gives you strength, knowing and standing up for what you believe in. If you don't stand for something you'll fall for anything. I think that's what Douglas and I have done. We said enough is enough, we are sick and tired of being sick and tired we are tired of being frustrated and we took a stand. We are standing for something we believe in together,

two black men that believe in the same thing. Instead of what society--shows black on black crime--you got two black men that are willing to work together from two different backgrounds, two different age groups, two different cities. But we are trying to work together because we see what is happening and it's been what we have been doing, sounding the alarm in Tacoma that blacks are not getting treated fairly. Blacks on the waterfront face a lot of racism no matter how you slice it. No matter how you put it racism is always going to be there, it is never going away, but you have to check it every now and then, you have to check it. It's like a disease that you can never cure.

BEN: You are basically saying you go to this job every day knowing you might face something different. Every day knowing a different situation might arise and you are going to cope with it the best you can without compromising what you believe in?

Rodney: Basically, my self respect, my dignity and my manhood are not for sale.

BEN: I would like for Doug to answer the same question. So what is it you could tell a teenager who has given up and even though you are going through all you are going through on your job, you have been going through it for 15 years, you choose to because you chose to make it. So what is it you can tell a teenager that is saying he does not want to go to McDonald's to work for \$4 an hour and he can make \$2,000 a day selling drugs and relate that to what you are doing now? It is somewhat the same thing when it comes to having to deal, having to cope, at whatever level it is. What can you tell a teenager?

Rodney: What I would tell him first "I have been to where you are going." I have been to hell and back and died twice on the way. So I have been to where he is going so I can tell him, man it's not a good place, but that is where they want you to go. Man, it's not a good place. Many brothers go there but that is where they want you to go. Because if you even get a job you might say "hey I got a job I got a little money in my pocket, I am somebody, hey I want to buy a house, maybe if I put five or ten dollars a week away without telling anyone I might be able to go ahead and buy this house". Okay - maybe I can use some of this hustling knowledge I have as for hanging on to that two or three

hundred dollars for a week, learning that same habit by getting paid every week and putting it into stocks and bonds and start doing the same thing I'm doing now but doing it legally through the white man's system. Which is putting it into mutual funds stocks and bonds and start doing the same thing I'm doing now. But if you stand out here on the corner where they can keep an eye on you, when they come by and freely try to shoot you and will then tell you, you ain't go nothin' going for you. There's a job out there waitin' for you, you just gotta go get it. It doesn't come to you. And the thing is, I think the brothers knew that the type of job I and Doug have are still around, and everybody quit telling them about working at McDonald's or Burger King. 'Cuz if you look you don't see too many black folks in franchise'. You see them working, you know the thing about it they working for little pay and the kids out there selling drugs I understand but they need an alternate, a lot of them need an opportunity. A success is failure turned inside out. So you need to talk to them about jobs, real jobs. You need to say hey, you need to be focused. Because the reason why there is more people that don't vote it's a lot easier. A lot of kids old enough to vote but don't, if they were voting they could change the ways of America. Killing another black man, all you doing is adding to our problems, you helping the white man.

BEN: Doug so, the 20 years that you been helping, I know it helped to build your character, who you are. And it seems like young people really don't want to have to struggle for anything. But basically on your job daily what you go through you choose to do it. What can you tell them about the struggle?

Doug: First of all, I'd like to tell blacks and teenagers, to find out where you came from and who you are. It's like my family, they're from Arkansas and Louisiana, I've spent a lot of time in Louisiana. I'm Creole, I speak French. The reason why I'm so strong because other people from Louisiana, like old man White, he's Longshoreman. He's from Louisiana. He's from Northern Louisiana, and time again he's a black man but he sits up here saying you guys speak that funny language. I look at him and said you

know my brother, you can't speak your own language. A whole language in Louisiana is Creole, French. As so many blacks caught up in this American titles, American white, that they forget who they are. I'm proud to say I speak my language and that makes it so nice. My dad took the time to teach me, he made sure I went home and to make me so strong. And I know people walk and get killed all the time. We used to fight on pipeline and the pipeline with alligators. You got in a fight on pipeline, you came home with no limbs or you just didn't get home. You know, growing up in the swamp lands where you get those leaches if you didn't go up there like a man you didn't come back, 'cuz they didn't play either. But what I'm getting to, is knowing yourself. I know me, I know I'm black, I know where I'm from. And for the teenagers, I can say this. Blacks were not raised on drugs, white men introduced the black man to drugs. If you get back to knowing who you are and where you come from and get back in the church, you won't be caught up into drugs. As far as me giving you good kind of leisure you've got to go back and get your education and then from there you can find out where the drugs are.

BEN: So this job has allowed you to know a little bit more about yourself and your strengths to be able to cope?

Doug: Yes, this job takes me back to when I was in Louisiana. The South is nothing like this. I had to learn this up here, that when a person say that you are a good person that means that he will stab you in your back. When a guy cues and rub your head he thinks you are his boy. I learned all this from being up here. I don't like white people, but when I say that I'm saying that when a person that is not black proof himself that lets me know that he's all right. But I think our black people need to get their heads together and find out who they are.

BEN: So both of you will agree that your up bringing has helped you in the ability to cope with those things that you face on your job? How do you manage to keep business aspects away from family life and at the same time not allow a lot of bitterness to settle in, based upon what you're going through on a daily basis?

Doug: Let me explain something brother, when you are walking through the hall you learn that you are in a different world, your attitude changes automatically. One of the biggest things I would do is crafts. I'd do a lot of leather. I'd play music and if the pressure gets too hard on me, that I can't take it, I go to church. And for the last five Sundays this has been taking a lot of relief off of me, it's the church. So I know where to go, that's where I find my relief back in the church, brother, that's where it's at.

Rodney: Keeping work away from the home is difficult because of the job itself. The letters that have be written. I feel like sometimes I'm cheating my family. But I manage to 16spend time with my family. My objective is to make a living for my family.

BEN: Doug, what is the future for the Longshoreman, and has being a Longshoreman been worth it?

Doug: Yes my job is worth it. The future is bleak as far as many things changing at the hall. The change is slow but right is prevailing because of one's stance. Anytime that a black man propose a plan and changes we about, the white man get the credits. If not all of it he gets some of it. That's a fact of life at the hall. I proposed a change concerning dispatching. Three months prior to the actual change, they abandoned my plan and later on another plan was proposed by a white man and it was accepted. Changes are coming about. I would not say sorry to anything that I've done because it's been done out of outright defense to my stance on fairness.

Rodney: The future is great for a Longshoreman especially since the Blair Bridge is going to be built. This will increase employment as well as opportunities for Blacks. There will be a lot of federal dollars. But I hope this union will regroup and become a strong and fair union.

BEN: I have questions about the local that you all quite frequently mentioned, which is the Union. Every two years an executive board is elected. How are the locals appointed and who can be a member of the locals?

Rodney: When you talk about the locals you have a bunch of different locals. This local is local 23 and they are elected and what is sad is that you have people that are elected that don't even understand our position in regard to expression.

BEN: Who are these officials elected by?

Rodney: They are elected by the locals. Therefore they cannot represent me. Because the vote is not equal or balanced. My feeling is that, the last 3 or 4 years some blacks have been appointed to the executive board, but the governing body makes representation and decisions and work rules which are unfair. For example, when Doug went in for his fine. And what's so sad is that we don't have enough blacks in the union so when the blacks run for election he can't get elected. But what they will tell you is like Ike's son Tim Morrow. He decides not to run this time because he's tired. If he's elected white, will vote for him. Tim is no sale by any means, but they respect the name Morrow. They know that they have to deal with Ike. Ike could be a dog eat dog man but it's the spirit of black people that choose not to stoop down to that level. But Ike gave me the same opportunity as he gave his son, so when Tim chose not to run, we then named no representation.

BEN: Why did he not run?

Doug: He's tired of it because there are 35 members on the executive board and they only appointed one black and one black have no voice. You can get in there and say what you want to say but then everyone else will join together and shut you down. Or it don't work anyway, it's a waste of time.

BEN: Yes but isn't that what the system is suppose to do, to cause you to give up?

Rodney: It's not democratic, therefore you cannot draw in people that represent the community, which we all come from. If I'm running for office we only go through 25 black A men. Say it takes 56 votes to get on the executive board. If I vote for myself and other brothers vote the that's 25. Now I've got a few white friends that may vote for me and they don't forget to vote for their good buddies. Again I do generate some votes, I've

gotten into run offs before, but the thing is that we don't have enough. Tim was involved one time when the "nigger" words came from an employee. He wanted to question the guy by asking what's a "nigger" job. But the rest of the board just said no! no! we don't want to deal with that. They can't face the truth. Now I think if it happened again I think they would do something. I think that we are now able to ask a question and get the right answer because we know the right avenue to take. And I think we can turn the heat up to the point it would not be slid under the rug. But we are in a bad situation, the guys are saying that the body rules the majority. The minority voice is suppose to be heard which includes women and Hispanics, as well as blacks. What it is the good ole boys, the white boys came into union and they believe that we should be afraid of them.

BEN: Can the community be a part of this executive process?

Doug: They can be a part of it, those that are willing to get involved. I think Tacoma is very laxed. They have allowed high prestigious jobs to go by the way side and not even get them. They have talked all this stuff in churches and basically why it is. And they have not supported and a lot of them don't see what is the financial gain that is going on on the waterfront. It's a big gain. The thing is the more black people that you keep poor, the more control that they [whites] have. Only 25 blacks, but the most of them are making \$50,-60,000 a year. And this is one of the things that causes a threat. Some blacks they really like and talk about they only work 2-3 days. I think that's very strange for whites. Society has portrayed the black man as a murderer, robber and lazy. I don't think that they really realize that all blacks are not like that. The thing that they tried to say about me when I sighted a dispatcher it was a miscommunication involved. And you would be surprised at some of the things that they said about me. I heard he shuffled both of his feet. We have to defend ourselves even when not in fault, it's like in Mississippi. If the black man got killed by the white man and they caught the white man that did it, then whose on trial? Of course the dead black man. And that's what happens. If we bring up a complaint then we go on trial. The issue never comes about, they never look at

the issue. They say, "You are making a black/white issue". No I'm a black man whose making a complaint. Look at the issue. It's black and white all right, when on paper. Black ink and white paper that's the only black/white thing. Looking at the issue and having the opportunity to address it, a lot of times they turn and look the other way. Now we can't address the issue, that would be giving one of them "niggers" a victory.

Doug: Let me tell you one more thing about it. I'm thinking about this. It's not only the white man. It's 25 of us at the hall but it's only two of us fighting. Everybody else is, doesn't care, complacent. They don't care. It's the black man's fault for not standing up.

BEN: Do you think it's because they are making good money and don't want to risk that?

Doug: Yes. They just don't care or they will wait to the last minute. It's our fault. Again we have allowed the white man to guide us figures and we deliver. Or why is it that blacks will always accept two or three. Why not half? You tell a black let's shoot for 1/2, that's too many you know, they will only give us two or three.

BEN: You think that some people have given up on the total unity and do you think they feel like it's not going to do any good?

Doug: Yes but a lot of them don't know any better. Another thing is blacks don't want to be labeled. I kind of like it. My brother Michael makes \$100,000 a year, but they will call him a nigger to his face. Call him a boy to his face.

Doug: That's because that's the way Mike came in shuffling his feet.

BEN: In 1995 you mean they will call a black man a "nigger" to his face?

Doug: That's right, to his face and they will rub his head. I know this, that if they call us a nigger they will make sure that we don't know who said it. Because that's the way we carry ourselves. They know that we aren't taking any stuff.

Rodney: We are good at working under pressure. That's what makes us good because we work well under pressure. Example, they will spread rumors on the job if something happens. Saying things about when I started driving crane. Wardell Canada, a black guy,

allowed me to get as much time as I could in driving. He was really good about being considerate. That was my first job. He's always had confidence in brothers. I called in that night asking if there was any work. They gave me a crane job, I was very excited that was my start. But as you know someone always has to find some kind of fault. On my first night the supervisors compared my driving, to that of a white counterpart who had 5,000 driving hours under his belt. But I wasn't discouraged because I saw right through it.

BEN: What caused you to keep your motivation?

Rodney: Because they thought I couldn't do it. They don't think that we are competent people. They were shocked when Doug passed the clerk exams for supervisory. That's what keeps me going--people that have withstood in the night of storms and still are holding on strongly. Because we are faced with so much especially with them (white men) looking for us to fail that's why it's essential for us to be twice as sharp. It's sort of like the Ophra Show. They are trying to play mind games with Black workers to see if we are going to give in to the mental abuse that they try and dish out on a regular basis--the "psychic" treatment. They are trying to psyche us into thinking that we aren't capable people.

BEN: The final question unless someone has something to add. What are the most important factors that you've learned from your job?

Doug: Spiritual relationship with God is my key, also my roots. My parents said that if all else fails go to church. That has helped me tremendously.

Rodney: Keep your head up. Stay with God, he the only one that can help you to deal with what we have discussed in this interview. My life as a whole has been enhanced due to learning from other's ignorance. Also Ike has been a very key figure in our being able to stand for a combined 35 years as a Longshoreman. I have read that struggling makes you very strong, mentally and physically. I thank God for my struggles.