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**February 20, 2005**

**Rep. Mel Watt**

**Democratic Representative from North Carolina**

BRIAN LAMB, C-SPAN HOST, Q&A:

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LAMB: You tell us about the moving – at the University of North Carolina – moving in with three white roommates. But before you got there, you talked about driving past three white high schools. Was it an all-black school you went to in high school?

WATT: Yes.

LAMB: What was the name of it?

WATT: Well, I went first to a school called Plato Price School, which was grades one through twelve. And I stayed at that school for 10 years, and then they broke that school up and sent half the students to one side – a black school – on one side of town, half to a black school on the other side of town. And I ended up at York Road High School for the last two years of high school, and that’s where I graduated from. It was an all-black school.

LAMB: And that’s in what community?

WATT: On the south side of Charlotte. And probably 15 miles from where I lived, or more.

LAMB: And you were bused there every day.

WATT: Yes. Bused there. Actually, students drove the buses at that time. I was a bus driver – I drove the bus to school. Yes.

LAMB: And did you consciously know that you were passing these white schools? Was that something that made an impression on you at the time?

WATT: Well, I mean, you knew. You knew, yes, that you were passing those schools. But you knew what the code of the community was at that time, also. And it wasn’t so much that I was focused on going to an integrated school. I’m not sure I even really focused on that. One of the things I did focus on was that the schools that we attended were inferior to the other schools. We didn’t have a gymnasium at Plato Price School, for example.

We had to go all the way across town to practice basketball. We didn’t – we got the second-hand buses handed down to us, that after they had been used by the white schools. They were busing, too, you know. This whole idea that some people have, that busing was for the purpose of integration is just wrong. We were busing in Charlotte-Mecklenburg for the purpose of segregation for years and years before we were busing for the purpose of integration.

So, and I led in my junior or senior year, I led what was threatened to be a boycott of black school bus drivers, because we knew that some new buses were coming into the system, and we wanted one of the new buses. So, we basically threatened not to drive. We would just strike, basically. And finally, they gave us one of those brand-new buses. And, of course, they punished me. They said, you know, we’re not going to let you drive it. I said, fine. You know, this is not about me driving it. They gave it to somebody else to drive, but that was fine.