

YELLOWWITZ: Okay. We will come back to that.

YUSEF: But I ... I would say .. I would say that in terms of--you know--serving the Union and trying to--you know--carry the flag of the PSC, he definitely did that. I mean, I have no problem with that. But I would say that this question of, like, the personal ambition or the personal ... Sometimes when you have a personal side to you that, say, detracts from your talents and your ... your work. You know? So that's how I think we .. I think we should be very careful about that and I think the future generations should really be very careful about that; that we have to--you know--kind of monitor the behavior of officers as well as the behavior of staff in terms of not just the question of--you know--in their working hours, but also beyond their working hours.

YELLOWWITZ: We resume now after a break, and I'd like to move to the vents of the 1990's, particularly the political events of... within the Union, of that period. And this was the decade in which the New Caucus Challenged the City University Union Caucus, of which you and I were members, and which had elected the leadership since the very beginning of the Union, and they made their first significant gains in the senior colleges and also at LaGuardia community College, before they challenged, in 1977, in a general election. Why do you think the New Caucus was able to make such substantial gains at the individual campuses during the 1990's?

YUSEF: Yeah. And just let me give you a little bit historical correction, a minimum--a minimal one--that I believe they had also some nominations for '94 elections. I think it was some officers from the community college group that they were running against us in '94. But to... So they had started... Now, basically it was that two things took place. One is that we had our leadership, local leadership, retire or... or--you know--or resign for whatever reason, and... in the case ... in most it was retirement: Helene Sloan, Martin Kaplan later on in Queens.

YELLOWITZ: Helene was at Brooklyn.

YUSEF: Oh, Helene was in Brooklyn, correct. Yeah. And... and I think the same thing also somebody at Hunter, later on, that also took place, and then also the retirement of our good friend Al Bachman at City. You know? We... so these are all retirements. Now, what happened is that we had failed to build a ... the second line of leadership and we had failed also to know that all politics are local, especially Union politics, and ... and I think that these lessons I learned, actually, at a distance, from none other than Al Shanker. You may be surprised to hear that, but Al Shanker ... I was very much impressed with him when he dealt with us in two ways: how careful he was to ... not to alienate a base, even though it was a small base. We're... we're talking about, actually about Irwin's being elevated to Vice-President. And so he was careful. And then number two, he also taught me a lesson that--and let me say this to you,--also during the period of the late '70s, early '80s I had the opportunity of having lunch with him. He would... he had gone to Egypt a few times and he wanted to share his experience about Egypt. And

he had met some of my friends who were with me here, who had become ministers in Egypt, so, in any case, so I had a few lunches with him. And so one important issue I learned from Al Shanker is that a good Union leaders will use the minimum of his power, not the maximum, the bare minimum, not--you know? Even if he could just use whatever he wants, he'll take the minimum and leave the rest. And he was trying to tell us that's what happened, say, when he did not press for Irwin to be the vice-President in the AFT. You know? He felt that--you know--he did not want to do that. And at the same time, he was very careful not to lose us as a base, may appear to be insignificant compared to the whole family of NYSUT but still he was smart enough to teach us that. He was a good teacher to tell us that. So... so he showed us that we were very important to him. Now ... so what happened is that I think there was a lack of appreciation for the important role of the local organization in the Chapt--in .. in the Union central leadership, save for the fact that they went along with the Chapter Chair meetings, which I thought was a good beginning, but it was coupled by two negative things. One: the most negative thing, is that our Caucus became very, very inefficient and became very much... almost nonexistent. And a few times I urged Irwin Polishook to look at it, and I said that I have absolutely no ill feeling toward the leadership of the caus--they were all good friends of mine; I have high regard for them,--but perhaps they was too busy and let us have another look at that. And he said to me: Mohammed, just leave it alone,--you know?--and he wouldn't even listen to me finishing my sentence about that. So we had a very poor structure in terms of... in place, a political structure, not the leadership now, and-- leadership, I mean, of the Union affairs, and then we... so Helene retired at Brooklyn and we attended--I think you were with me, Irwin,--a huge, huge party for her... for her

farewell. By the way, it was attended by several people from the New Caucus or what turned out to be New Caucus, and. . and lo and behold, the election after that we lose Becky, immediately after. Why? Because we did not have a bone fide local leader to really carry the--you know-if you will, the flag for us. The same thing when Martin Kaplan retired. I am .. the one that was running, I think, in his place, a dear, dear friend of mine Sidney, I think he was in Israel. You know? I mean, it doesn't matter. He could have been in Egypt for that matter. I mean, it doesn't matter where he was, but Irwin , I'm just saying there was no seriousness about--you know--that these .. these void that we're going to create was not going to come back to us that easily. You know? and once we have it, that's the end of it. that' why when, in '99, when we had the final set of loses, which was bad,--I mean, we lost, I think, at what point, we already Lose Brooklyn and we lost ?? Baruch and I think we lost City College, I think for the first time again, and so forth,--I wrote a little manifesto and I ?? and I distributed it. It was a very simple one, and I said, Well, now, at that point, that we have to do something very serous about the general election coming up because we're already at a very, very compromised situation. Now, I .. What happened is that in .. there was lack of, I think, appreciation in the .... as we chatted, Irwin ,--you know---and me before .. You know, when you lose an election, when you have a .. an incumbent group and assuming they are a decent group and hard working as we were, that it's not that easy to just topple them. It .. Only you do that in one step if it happens to be, God Forbid, a disaster of some kind--you know?--People retiring en masse or dying en masse, but or a big scandal--you know--of some kind: somebody stealing funds or whatever. But other than that usually do it by one brick at a time that you remove from the wall. And the New Caucus-I must say that for them,--I

don't know who it was, but they had a very wonderful brain of organizers and they had the patience to organize so they waited. and they waited till the opportune time in every single step. so they did not, for example, attack Martin Kaplan at queens. they left him. But knowing that Martin was going to retire, they knew that eventually he was going to retire,--they were waiting in the wings. Okay? In the case of Brooklyn they didn't have to worry about that because when they ad .. when they had their election, we had a very weak slate. Now,--you know?-whose fault was it? Was it the incumbent Chairs that did not really build a strong second line? well, I could say this to you, I mean, without boasting. I mean, I always had a second line in Staten Island, that in case--you know-I- you know--I would ... and the only thing that it .maybe it did not manifest itself is that really frankly, it was kind of hopeless by 2001 in the sense of, like, people know that once you have the central leadership in the other direction you're effectiveness is very much diminished if you're not with them. So . so people realized that, well, we might as well go along with the new leadership and that .. that was it. But .. .. so, but that's after the fact, of course. But before the fact, so we had this. and also, don't forget, we had quite a bit of tremors with the adjuncts that we did not pay enough attention to. As a mater of fact, we left it very much to Arnold Kantor, who's staff, not really an officer, to handle that, in . in my ... as far as I know, and I don't think it was handled with that seriousness. And an additional point is that we had very little change in our Executive Council but the few changes that we had we did them with such apparently .. that .. in such a way that it made it .. it made it that the ones that were left that they were kicked out, not really appreciated; not saying well, thank you very much for retiring. we'll give you a party. We'll give you an acknowledgement or whatever, and the result with that

was the famous or the infamous patriot-you know-a ..write ups that happened from our former colleague, Serod Kilkennis, who really had a huge, huge effect, in my opinion, on our standing in the last couple of years before 2000, so ... and including 20000. So .. and so I would say that's where I would say that we .. we failed. and now, you asked about my role because that's what really we're talking about. At every single .. at every step I was talking to Irwin , I was talking to .. I was talking to Howey Jones, and Howey was telling me--which was more forthcoming,--and he was saying to me very much that he was more or les limited by what Irwin would allow him to do, or allow him to go as ... as far as ?? You know? So in .. For example, one of the stories that Howard mentioned--shared with me was that Irwin asked him to speak to John Hyland, I think, about the election of '94, I think. And he said that--you know--He told John what Irwin wanted him or asked him to convey; that-you know--that--you know--you have to ... that you have to play ball, so to speak, and that if you don't play ball--you know--not going to--you know--don't expect any favors. You know? And John said: I understand. Okay? but now, given that kind of message, what do you thin John would do? John, of course, is going to go for ... looking for allies some place else and that's where he found--you know--Brooklyn, Queens, Man--I mean, City.

YELLOWITZ: John Hyland was from LaGuardia.

YUSEF: From LaGuardia Community College,--you know,--and one . one of the earliest losses we had. You know? And initially I as not personally around by then because John was one of us, some .to some extent, back in '75 and It thought we could

talk to him and could work with him. You know? But in any case, that's ..that's dead. But so I ..I would say that the second thing that I mentioned to you about .. about lack of appreciation is that .. also the question, .. or the weakness of the Caucus, the second part of that: the chapter Chairs' meetings really became very much like social get together and it was not that serious so it did not really address issues, when we were all in the same .. the same Caucus,-you know,-to say, well, hey, guys, what are we doing about your retiring? Are we .. do you have a second line? Do I have this .. what can we do for you? what we do there, and so forth and so on. Nobody said that so we started--what?-losing one brick at a time, one brick at a time, including, by the way, not limited to the adjuncts as we mentioned that we did not handle them, I think, in my opinion, in .. in the correct way.

YELLOWITZ: On the adjuncts, I'd like to ask you further

YUSEF: Yes?

YELLOWITZ: whether they were a significant factor in defeating us at several of these colleges, because the votes were very close. We lost at city College by nine votes. We lost at Brooklyn the first time by perhaps twenty votes in a total vote of four hundred so ... and in those votes the adjuncts

YUSEF: Played a role.

YELLOWWITZ: voted and generally voted against us.

YUSEF: Well, as a matter of fact, in 2001 when I .. when I felt it was time to sunset my slate, if you will, and e had, like, just pro formable but, I mean, it was actually, like, half the spots were empty or were .. were .. was .. was not even filled, what happened is the adjuncts definitely played a .. a major role in ... in that .. in that regard. There's no question about it, even though I tried to include them and I tried ... but the overall atmosphere was not inclusive for them,-you know?-so, I mean, whatever I tried to do locally, I couldn't do it--you know,--I couldn't do ... do .... resist the whole global direction that we had. when the New Caucus, in 1999, I think, came to the Delegate Assembly proposing that they become a fee payer--I mean, the fee-the agency fee establishment for agency for the adjuncts and they pointed out that it's been available to us for many years and we have declined to use it, we kind of appeared to be very kind of really, I mean, weak when we ... we .. we defeated that because-you know-that it showed us further and father moving the adjuncts away, or don't want to touch with .. with the adjuncts. And it got, I think, the adjuncts .. Remember, here's something about headhunts that maybe we should really detail for the history. You have two groups of adjuncts that we have. One is .. is what we call a.. a genuine daunts,--you know?-a practicing attorney who comes to do a course in college; a practicing engineer who comes to do a course in college; a practicing businessman who comes to do a course in college, or whatever,--you know?--an English teacher who comes to do an adjunct--you know---an adjunct or a math teacher who comes to do an adjunct. Now, that's one group. Then what I call the career adjuncts who have no other income, no other interests, nothing except their adjunct



teaching act--you know? That group was about may a thousand; maybe even less than a thousand, including ??, maybe thousand. I don't know how many they are,--whatever,== a thousand. Now, with the .. with the lack of full time jobs they may have increased. I mean, they were initially very small numbers. So that's a group that really lost, and that's a group that's been fighting against us or was fighting against us, and that's a group that voted in those elections and who made the twenty vote difference and five vote difference and nine vote difference. That was the group, what I call career adjuncts, that they just don't care, for example,--you know-some of them-I know that through another issue which you will come to later on,--the Welfare Fund, they would come and complain about the health benefits; that they don't have it for their families and so forth--whatever;- -it was costly to them, and sometimes we would suggest to them from the Fund that there's just a tremendous request and tremendous need now for teachers, full time teachers, in the public school system. Maybe they should get it and they will get benefits and everything with it. You know? And say--you know: we don't want that. You know? They were very happy ?? I call them career adjuncts. I'm not attacking them. I'm just saying .. I'm just defining them; that that's their way, so ... And that's where, I think, we ...

YELLOWITZ: do you believe it was possible to hold the adjuncts within our Caucus?

YUSEF: I think with... with a major effort we would have, yeah; with serious effort we would have; with sincere effort we would have, but I think the attitude was from Arnold Kantor, and I think very much, like, either supported by or just and their not just being aware of--he had so much on his hands--by Irwin Polishook, it just was,--you know--was

not really to ... and especially our vote. It showed us, at least on the surface, that we were really against them. We don't want them to be with us. You know what I mean? So that's what--you know-- because, remember what happened, the New Caucus did was to reduce their dues so much--alright?--to make it almost nominal dues so the adjuncts would not feel the pinch of it. In our case, we had some--somewhat serious dues; that even if we had left ... made them... So if we had done it maybe at that time, I don't think they would have had the big inflow necessarily of adjunct membership.

But the thing also that it... it's... it's just a--you know ... I think no. I think there's always .. If we had one it early enough and... and we paid attention to it from the beginning ... Because--you know--remember when CUNY at one time asked for a division of the units, we were the ones who fought for the adjuncts to remain with us. We could have gone along with CUNY and it was our own Caucus that fought very hard to keep us together, for example. You know? The same thing that we kept the librarians with us, and so forth. And as you know, SUNY is different than us in that regard. You know? So anyway....

YELLOWITZ: But in 1995 when Howey Jones retired, Richard Borus was chosen as First Vice-President with the intention on everybody's mind that he would ultimately replace Irwin Polishook. You were one of the other people who was considered for that choice as First Vice-President with the same intention: that the first Vice-President would run in the future for President. Why do you believe Richard Borus received this choice and you didn't?

YUSEF: Well, I would say, first of all, I never really had a claim to be chosen for that. I mean, I did not think I was, like, the heir apparent or anything of that nature that I was thinking along the line. All I know is that Irwin Polishook had met with me and David Allen in the presence of Howey Jones, and he was saying to us that he thought that we would have... he would have, or he hopes to have a major role for both of us, both in the Welfare Fund side as well as the Union side. That was early 1990's and in that... I had just assumed the role of the Executive Officer Of Management for the Welfare Fund, becoming a colleague of David was his Executive Officer for member Relations and Planning. So I heard... I heard it from several people about that Irwin was grooming me for this. I heard it from Phyllis. I heard it from ...

YELLOWITZ: Phyllis ....

YUSEF: Gluck,---you know--from Brooklyn, and--you know--and Irwin asked me to Chair a panel discussion with some AFT function and there was so much rumors about that that he's doing this for that--whatever it is, but actually, personally, I did not... I did not ... I did not assume any--anything on that ... on that front. What happened is that my name started to surface, I think, in a concrete way when they discovered, people discovered the very shaky background of Richard Borus to become the leader. Shaky background, I don't meant it in terms of any--you know--bad moral anything or a personal thing but the fact that, for example, he was a fee payer up to a few months before, a few years before. He was not a member of the Union. He was not really involved with ?? the Union for many, many years and so he had no standing to really

become the First Vice-President. Howey Jones had a very interesting take on that. He came to me and he said:--you know,-Muhamad, I wanted you to know that Irwin settled on Richar Borus and... but of course, if Richard's smart enough he'll definitely remember to have you as his vice-President to help him--you know--kind of make up for the lack of background that he doesn't have that you have. And I said to him, I said : thank you for telling me that--you know--I'm not going to be as--you know--assuming anything that's... We'll just... we'll accept--you know--whatever the people want. There was some discussion at the Executive Council about that, which was very unusual, and questioning the choice of Richard. And it was Phyllis Gluck again, as well as Arnold Kantor, who kind of like took exception to any comment against Richard. It was ....

What happened is that ... that big message really... it really came about. Now, let me just tell you something of a personal nature is that at that time, when that happened, my wife Alba, had a major operation. You know? It was not--you know--her late illness but it was a major operation and Irwin was nice enough to send me a bouquet of flowers in the PSC and all that to her. But he actually called me while I was next to her almost in her sick bed in the hospital bed and saying to me: Mohammed, I guess as you know,--you know--I haven't mentioned it to you, but we're ... we're settling on Richard Borus. And how's Alba? I said okay. You know? She's okay. And thanks for telling me. That's all. So out of respect for Irwin and out of the fact that I personally liked Richard, I mean, I had no .. nothing against him and he had come on the scene a couple of years before and he was very much involved in that battle with the President at York. And he was taking quite a bit of time, perhaps,--you know--perhaps too much time, but in any case, he was us about the battle and so forth, that he did, and so forth and so on. Now, I was told certain things

about from--you know--trust worthy people that--you know--that it was Arnold Kantor that felt that he wanted to push Richard because he wanted to make sure it wasn't... it won't be Mohammed. You know? I mean, that's what I was told. I never heard that myself. But in any case, the important message that we got and we missed again, was that the vote in the DA. I don't know if you were there, Irwin, or not. You were, I think, there, I'm sure. We had a huge percent...a huge... a plurality or a huge majority at that time and the vote, more or less, was thirty-to-twenty for John Hyland. At the time the New Caucus did not have twenty votes. It was our own people ...

YELLOWITZ: Thirty to twenty for ...

YUSEF: For Richard Borus.

YELLOWITZ: Richard. Yes, yes.

YUSEF: Yeah. Richard Borus was ... was chosen. Yeah. So... And I was trying myself to get, actually, our people to vote for Richard. I was saying: no, let's not do that. That's a bad mistake. We're going to vote for John Hyland now and just.... But the fact that it came out that way, it did not have any bells ringing off in anybody's head, whether it's Irwin Polishook, whether it's Richard Borus, whether it's Arnold Kantor, or whoever. Arnold Kantor, remember, was also sunsetting himself and I think he was very much preoccupied with his dilly-dallying, if I may use the term, about his own pension, which was not--you know-- was not very much---you know---done in a kosher way to put it--

you know-ethically, if you will, and that kind of created a bankruptcy for our pension system with the PSC and it created a whole new headache that I know you were involved in as the Treasurer. But... but-you know,--be that as it may, Arnold Kantor, I'm saying that because he was already leaving so it didn't matter to him. But I'm just saying for the ones who remained behind, nobody even thought of actually even talking about what happened that we have--you know-maybe half the vote for John Hyland--maybe half, close to half, was our own people as a protest vote. You know? Something was seriously wrong there. I mean, people who were not... who always had a big trust in Irwin. And for them to question to that extent, Irwin should really have realized something is amiss over there. You know? Now, my role is that-and I want to tell you that and I want to have that for the record down,--I was not disappointed. As a matter of fact, at the time I was .... I was busy with Abla's situation and I was very happy with my role in the Welfare Fund and my Chapter and my Executive council, that I really would not ... it did not make that much difference to me. I wasn't sure that I would really want to be the President of the PSC. You know? As a matter of fact, we chatted, you and me,--I don't know if you remember that,--in my office in the Welfare Fund and I said to you not necessarily that I would ?? to be the President who could have somebody else who's the President because I really wasn't crazy about the idea of being the President myself. You know? So I-you know,--I remember I just had been given the blessing of a small child at that point, too,--you know--unexpectedly on my part, and so, I mean, I wasn't--you know--I knew that I'd have my hands full in my own personal--you know--agenda--you know-I mean, life so I did not want to ... I did not know, of course, about my wife's also forthcoming illness so,

but I had had a hunch not to get involved to that extent. So I was willing to help but not to take the helm man so I was never in that ... I think that covers that. You know?

YELLOWWITZ: ... that in 2000.

YUSEF: Yeah. Yeah.

YELLOWWITZ: We had two general elections during this period we've been discussing. One was in 1997 and Irwin Polishook ran against Steve London representing the New Caucus, and he won decisively with an astoundingly high margin. And then the next general election in 2000 when Richard Borus ran, now that Irwin had retired, and he lost by a margin of four percent. I wonder if you would tell us why you think Irwin won so big in 1997, despite the problems that you saw developing and then why Richard lost in 2000.

YUSEF: Okay. Again, let us go back to what we mentioned about the fact that when you lose, you usually lose one brick at a time, not just all ... the wall doesn't just collapse a little bit. That's like an engineering example I'm working with here. So what happened in the case of Irwin, even though we had lost the Chapters, he was careful to nurture his relationship with those faculties. If you remember, always Irwin would go and actually met with the faculties outside the hierarchical structure and he would come and complain in the Chapter chairpersons' meeting to the point... and Irwin's answer was that: See, nobody invited me. And I got him on the spot once, I said: Okay. Now, we're... what

we're going to do is that we're going to have an invitation schedule. You tell us when you want your... the President to be there and Irwin's going to take it down and Irwin's going to be there at your invitation. And it kind of... kind of they were like, left speechless because they didn't want to invite him. Remember that one? You know?

YELLOWWITZ: Yes.

YUSEF: And that was a big call on my part, I mean, in a small way but it's ver ... I said: Well, go ahead. Invite him! You know? And in that case I'll say to you I support you a hundred percent. He should not be there on campus without your invitation. But invite him, 'cause he has a roll to play. So in any case, I think that was well, greatly helpful to Irwin. People knew Irwin Polishook by name--you know--so they were voting for Irwin and his team. And the team on it that he had, he had was a decent team still--you know,-and he had a few... some few ... few new names-I think Joan .... Joan, rather, Juan?? was there and ...

YELLOWWITZ: John ??

YUSEF: and Richard Borus was also there---

YELLOWWITZ: ??



YUSEF: Yeah, yeah,-was there also and heading the ticket with Irwin, but people were very much concentrating on Irwin. And then additionally I would say Richard Bor--not Richard Borus,--I would say Steve London, I don't think he conducted a very effective campaign against Irwin. And if I'm not mistaken also we had settled a contract, I think, just before or something, and that ....

YELLOWITZ: Well, '95.

YUSEF: Yeah. So, I mean, I think there was ....

YELLOWITZ: Yes. No, it had been ... actually, it had been in '97. The contract was postdated back to '95.

YUSEF: Yeah, yeah. But I think... so I think we had just settled the contract and the faculty was at a, if you will, at a... a what Cole Kimbel always used to say that a... a... that ?? with peace-you know-with themselves. There was nothing... there was no... nothing to grudges to really to carry forward in terms of ... against the incumbent and... but now you asked me... let me... before I get to ninety, to 2000, I think that was one also of the ?? effect that we had a comfortable margin. That also kind of ... kind of allowed us to sleep; to think we were okay. We could lose the Chapters but when... so the end result is that between '97 and '99 we kept losing and now we started realizing how bad things are because whatever we tried to correct from the first cycle we just... was disastrous, not... nothing worked and we kept adding the losses. I mean, Baruch became another one and

so forth and so on. So in... in --you know? So I think that's how that would explain the difference, in terms of the structural difference.

Additionally I would say our Caucus was not the same Caucus in 2000 the way we were in '97. There were quite a bit of ill feelings in the ... in... in no small measure I would say, due to Richard's assuming that he is now the new Irwin Polishook; that--you know,-- not realizing that to get the, if you will, the trust and to get the respect and to get, if you will, yes--you know---the yes type of answer you have to serve your time. You have to serve your time. You cannot just do it by saying, well, now I'm the President, that's the end of it. Now I'm going to be similar to a President that had been in office for twenty some years. It doesn't work that way. And I say that too, because I advised Richard about that and I was... I was, in many case, if you recall, in '99 we had a Caucus meeting and every person to a man and woman in a the room wrote in a secret ballot what the solution would be and every one, except for one person, aside--yourself, of course, and Irwin Polishook--all the rank and file, so to speak, of the leadership said Richard must go. You were in that meeting. And that person that was ... that did not say that was Mohammed Yusef and I came to the defense of Richard at that time. I said: Let's... let's just ... let's think about it. Let's not go too far with this, if you recall. Yeah. That was, I think, in the spring. Now, Richard subsequently he called me up and he said: Well, Mohammed, I want to--I think he used a very nice word like, the honor or something, of you running with me as my running mate as the Vice-President. So I said to him: Richard, I thank you very much. However, you know what happened in my family now. Abba had started with her serious illness that year in January of '99, and I said: Really I'm not sure if I would

really be--you know--available in that capacity. So he said: Okay. Just think about it. And then Abla, to--you know--may she rest in peace now,--said to me, she said: You know--when I talked to her--she said: Listen. Just talk to him and see what he wants to do. Maybe if you can't even run you could help him--whatever--you know--he wants; he needs. So he was nice enough to invite me to a Lebanese restaurant and we had dinner and we chatted about ?? Now, the next thing that I saw was that a meeting in... organized by Phyllis Gluck and from City was the former Chair of the Senate, your friend...

YELLOWITZ: Bernie Somer.

YUSEF: Bernie Bomer. Bernie Somer and couple of other people, ostensibly to decide about the running mate for Richard. So I was kind of surprised. I said--you know--Why ...why wouldn't... I mean, didn't Richard tell them or didn't they.... So apparently it turned out that they had gotten wind of ... of that...of that discussion and that meeting was organized to stop again Mohammed Yusef being on the ticket in that capacity. Now, all I said to Richard, by the way... Let me tell you what I said to him in the dinner to him. I said: Richard, I said, the only thing that I could think... I could help you with is that to rebuild the Chapters. We need to rebuild the Chapters because that's where not just the vote is, that's where your membership is. That's where you really do service so we have to rebuild the Chapters. And I said I could do it, and then it needs no less than the President's office, so either the President or the Vice-President. I cannot be any other--you know---because the Secretary has the record to take care of; the Treasurer has the budget and so forth to take care of. The Vice-President is really the one that's free

floating and that's... and it also adds the prestige of the office to ... that it's working out of the President's office to do the rebuilding of the chapters. And that's the only thing that I ... I would... if I agreed to run would before that purpose. So if you think that's where you need me, fine. We'll ... we'll talk about it. Just think about it and we left and we chatted a little bit about the rest of the slate and what's ... what's... what's what and that's it. Now, but--you know--i'll ... I'll keep that confidence. So we agreed to meet in two weeks or something after--or one week after--something like that; maybe ten days after. So we met again over dinner. That... this time it was, I think it was a Moroccan restaurant. You know? That happened to be the area of Richard Borus' house. He lives nearly by in ... in downtown Brooklyn. So in... in any case, I found a different tone from Richard. He said: You know, there's quite a bit of resistance to your nomination. Now, who had, by the way, forewarned me about that; never--you know---it's kind of unusual. I'm just remembering that now--was Sherod Carcanus. He called me up before and he said: You're going to have dinner with Richard. I said; yeah. How do you know that? He said: Well, I'm just ... let me tell you that, and he's going to now tell you that he is not sure about your running with him. I said: Sher--Sharod, I never really agreed in the first place to run so, I mean, we're just talking. Why would he... He said: just watch. Sure enough, almost Sherod was, like, in on every single sentence that Richard was saying to me so I... Now I was really thinking did Richard speak to Sherod, which I doubt very much. You know? Somebody told Sherod what was happening--you know--and that's how I said that that group that met Irwin --you know-- led by Phyllis and Bernie Somer were very much there to stop Mohammed Yusef from being in ... in that position. So we chatted for while and he said--you know--there was some discussion, and so forth and so on, and they are

not--they are not sure ... So I said: Well, Richard, you're the one who called me. And at--  
you know---at the worst thing we'll say, well, just that conversation never took place.  
Let's just ... let's leave it alone--you know--leave it alone. Let's not worry about it. That's  
it. You know? So he said: No, no. I'm not saying that. I just want to... I just want to get  
you to ... and--you know--I'm not... I'm not really, like, the final say, trying to hint  
strongly that it was Irwin Polishook was behind this--you know? That Irwin was pushing  
for somebody else. So I said: Well, whatever it is ?? I mean, I said--you know-I'm not... I  
never... we never ... you didn't give me any ... you didn't give me any promise-any  
promise or anything. And even if you feel that you did, I'm absolving you of all your  
promises. Don't worry about it. You know? He said: No. Don't say that. I said, Richard,  
just let us really not worry about that. So we had dinner and we finished dinner and we  
left. And then I called him at home after we left and I repeated the same message. I said,  
Irwin--I mean, Richard, I'm out so just go ahead and good luck to you. You know? I said:  
I'll ... I'll work with the slate and that's all. So he said: No. I didn't say anything to... I  
said: Just leave it alone. So in any case, a couple of weeks after the phone rang again and  
Richard was telling me, he said: I wanted you to know that Dr. Juan Gram accepted being  
Vice-President. Now, I had seen Juan before in a con--a conference---a Convention we  
had attended with the Welfare Fund. She was now... Remember, she was my counterpart  
in the Welfare Fund, after David so... and she was saying that--you know--she's leaving  
her options open and so forth. We had kind of like a friendly but tense Conven--like,  
personal relationship with Juan at that point for... on her part, not on my part, but I didn't  
know why. But in any case, as soon as we came back... no, I think... I don't know if it  
was after that or maybe it was before--something like that... I think ... No. I'm sorry. It

was before ... before the convention, so he said that she accepted being the Vice-President. Now, Juan was talking in the DA and supposedly trying to get, as she put it, the two boys together, and so forth, and--you know--and ... But then one person said to me,-you know-she said-you know--she said to me: I think Juan wants it for herself and she's just trying to make sure that--you know--it doesn't--you know-- to do it in a way that to get the maximum support, not .. I said: I don't know. I said: Juan was saying to me that she felt so green and she's not really ready for that and she doesn't want the role. I said that I don't know. But in any case, so Richard said that to me. So I said to him: thank you very much for... I think that's a good choice. Good luck to you. Okay? I really appreciate you telling me. Okay. Take care. He said: No, no, no! Wait! Wait! I said: What? He said: Now, I would like you to consider running for Treasurer. So I said: Richard, I said, why would that concern... I mean, what do you want me to say that I'm a major banker or something? I mean, what would I do the Treasurer for? You know? Find ... Just get yourself a... I'm not a hero. I told you why I would want to consider vice-President and that's--you know--so... As luck would have it I .I declined it and that remained with that. And then, I think, after the Caucus Nominating Committee, which you and I served on,---I think you were one of the chairs or maybe Rena was the chair I think in the absence of Al Bachman, yeah; Rena was the chair, Rena Aiamish, and you were on it and I, myself, was on it, and we had also two more members. Right? We had the nominee for Treasurer, the guy from... from... from the Bronx. He was active with the Hispanic delegations, that was nominee for the Treasurer.

YELLOWITZ: Oh, Carlos Hargrave.

YUSEF: Carlos Hargrave and also we had from the CIAT we had a Frank—no... I think it was Frank. Was it Frank? I forgot the name now. Anyway, so that was the five members, I mean. So... so after the final meetings and there was--and there developed a problem mostly that Richard did not want to have Shirley Vahasti on the ticket from New York City Technical ... and the Committee felt strongly that this would be a bad deduction because that she had standing in that college and she worked--you know--to get votes for the slate. So in any case, that day, after the meeting ended with that vote and Richard was very unhappy and left, I think, and Irwin suggested that I should consider the Secretary position to me, Mohammed Yusef. And I said: Irwin, I said, I'm not really a UT player here. I'm not what you--you know--and I said, I'm not ... He said: Well, I always felt that you should have been in the ...

YELLOWITZ: This is Irwin Polishook?

YUSEF: Yeah, Irwin Polishook, yeah. And he said you should feel... I always felt you should have had your chance as a principle officer, and so forth. I said: Well, I'd like to say that I'm very happy being a principled officer. I don't really care about being a principle officer. So I said: That's okay. That's good enough for me. And I--you know--I said to him: I think one of the things I said to him, I said: Well, Irwin, you may say that to me now but I think over the years you could have had that chance if you wanted to; if you really felt that that was important for me to be a principle officer or for... for the Union, not so much for me. But, I said: You know, let's leave it alone and we'll--you know--I'll

just stay as I am, as... as... I was, as you know, I was a University wide officer--you know?--a University At Large officer. That's all. So that's the history of ...

Now, so in 2000 I think Richard ran. We had also changed the new... the Caucus, if you remember, people... The New Cuke--whatever--whether that was--you know-a strange .. but the New Cuke very well. All of a sudden he found Unity Caucus and they actually found some people from my campus, which alarmingly, was asking me whether Rachel was running against Irwin. I said: Against Irwin? I said: No. He's in place of Irwin. You know? He's supported by Irwin. Say: Oh, no, no. We didn't understand that. So the thing was that there was a total--you know--like, disorientation; a total lack of knowledge about Richard. And then Richard campaigned and Richard the demeanor, to be honest with you, which I had mentioned to him during our advisory period, if you will. I said to him: Richard, the job of a President is two things. It has what I called a fluff side; that you're going to go to meetings; you're going to meet his big shot, the other big shot. You're going to rub shoulders-whatever you might call it. And there is... Then there is a part where you actually work. You sit at your desk by yourself--you know-and, so to speak, take off your jacket, roll up your sleeves, and work for hours by yourself and resolve ??

So I said: Well, Richard, I know you enough to say to you that I'm sure you enjoy the fluff part, which everybody would enjoy that. You know? But do you really care to have the second part? Believe it or not, Irwin, I said that exact word ?? and do you really care to do that? And I said to him, I said: Richard,--you know--I ... I say that to you because you're own life. You're a--you know--Associate Professor, ?? Professor. You have one grown up child. You have a nice home in Brooklyn. You have a nice home upstate. You have a beautiful life. Maybe you don't need all this--you know--I mean, headache?



What do you need that headache for? So I said: Just think about it. And I said: Please check with your wife--I think ... Deena was it or ...

YELLOWWITZ: Edna.

YUSEF: Edna--Edna, before you answer me. Take a week to answer me, I said, but please promise me you'll think about it and he said: I promise you I'll do that. I said fine. A week passed by and nothing happened so ...so a couple of days after I said to him: Richard... I buttonholed him and I said: Richard, remember, you were supposed to answer me, I said. About what ... what? He said. You know? So I said: Well, you said to me .. I said to you such and such and--you know--I .. He said: Oh, yeah, yeah. yeah. All systems go. All systems go in a very, very dismissive way: all systems Go! All systems go! Like,-you know--get away from me. You know? I said okay. You know? Now, how did Richard actually appear, and people maybe forget these things. While... before he was even a Vice-President he was bringing with him a friend of his to the meetings and publicly acknowledging or telling, if you want to say even more than acknowledging, that she is his-know--personal friend or private friend and I think in that case he was emulating Arnold Kantor. He saw that example with Arnold and he said why not? And everybody knew that--you know--situation but he didn't realize that actually the leadership of the PSC happen to be very conservative and maybe will accept it grudgingly from an older man who's been there forever, and so forth and so on. But for somebody new to come in and kind of show off that kind of situation were not very happy with it. So I'm just saying what happened is that he missed many points--you

know?---and missed many points that he should have... And I think basically in my opin-- in my humble opinion, he really did not like that part about sitting down to do the work. He just... He was for the fluff part. So you see in the office he will, every so often, say, well, I'm taking a walk. I'm going to have a smoke outside. He wouldn't be able to stay more than half an hour in the office and then you'll say where is Richard? Richard's gone. I knew that ... Remember, I was in the other side in the Welfare Fund. I would be... I was in touch quite a bit with the Union side so, I mean, I could say that as a witness that he was--he wasn't there. As a matter of fact, once that bothered me and I said to you something to you, Irwin, when you were also involved with the Welfare Fund and I said to you... I was getting more and more involved in the Welfare Fund after David left; that I said: maybe I should get a full release time--you know--because I real-I'm not able to get to the campus and come back, and so on. And you said: Well, if that's what it is then you have to be in the office five days a week. I said to you why? Why five days, I said. I'll be in the office as necessary. You know? You said to me: No. Richar Borus is... is .. and now he's in the office five days a week. And I said to myself either Irwin is like-you know--is kidding-is telling me his own sense of humor or thinks I'm so dumb that I didn't realize, I mean, about Richard's hours in the office. You know? [laughs] You know? In any case, it ... what happened is that he gave the impression, the same impression when he came to the campus. I campaigned for him, by the way, hard. I brought him to the campus. I campaigned with him with Irwin Blatt, with Karen, our other ... our officer and Joel Berger, we campaigned with him on the campus. And people would say to me afterwards: What's this? I speak to him and he's looking at his watch. I speak to him and he takes--you know--he's speaking on the phone. You know? It's just... What is he? I

mean, does he really want the job or he doesn't want it. You know? I mean, so that's, I think, where people realized that. And as you said, and as a credit to the leadership--the leadership now and our history--still we came close to winning because we had a good name. We had built a good reputation, which we deserved, to still warrant that, get the trust of the faculty. But as you ... as you correctly pointed out I think this was more so in that case, the adjunct vote definitely swayed it the other way and if you count the votes you would see that that's very ... even beyond, I mean, I mean, it would... they were losing definitely without the adjunct vote and not to mention, by the way, also the very negative campaign that Cherod mounted against Richard. And it really was not against Richard, it was against Arnold and Irwin who really did him the harm. And he couldn't get his two... his two cents out of them so he got it out... his two, I guess, two ounces of flesh--whatever it's called,--he got it out of Richard, unfortunately.

YELLOWITZ: All right, Mohammed, I want to move on to the last area which is the Welfare fund where you were a major officer for a very long time and a participant for an even longer time. But is there anything that you want to say further about the union before we move on to the Welfare Fund area?

YUSEF: Yeah. One thing that I'd really also like to leave it for posterity, if you will, is that the one position I genuinely enjoyed and I would have been very happy to remain with it in the Union hierarchy was the Chapter Chair. I really did not in any comparable way enjoy--even though I did enjoy and I hope I did contribute--but I really enjoyed my being with the youth, with the people and people calling me up and calling me Sunday

mornings and calling me this and calling me that. I just enjoyed being, like, in... in the front line of helping and working with people on this. And I think in a way that's what attracted me to the... working in the Welfare Fund. But I just wanted to mention that to you because I don't want anybody in the future to say that Mohammed was disappointed or did not feel fulfilled in what he did in the Union because I had achieved much more than my wildest dreams, to be honest with you. When you go back and check on my very humble beginning in the Union and being a very junior Professor, hardly known or very much unknown, and winning from two very major faculty members on my campus. You know, I ... I remember I said: That's only in America that this can happen. You know? I mean, really. I mean, genuinely. You know? And it... it--you know--it just ... So I just want to mention that.

The other things I want to mention to you is that to kind of prove that point, that when Irwin made that commitment or that promise to me and David Alen, which was clearly saying that--this was like '93, '92,--that about us--me assuming the hierarchy in the union, and I heard it from his own very much confidential people--you know--saying that to me, Irwin's confidential people, saying that--you know---you'll be it and-you know--he's... that's the way he's... he's planning it, and so on and so forth, I never said to him: Irwin, you promised me--you know? Like, let us have--you know? Let's shake on it. Let's do this. Let's do that. I totally did not make it a question about promises or something, let's say. That's why some people might say that you promised something to Richard ?? It's not a question of promises. I never wanted it in... in that fashion. You know? I felt that it should have been a consensus of the group, not just Irwin deciding it, because--you

know--one thing that I learned, Irwin, and I want to say this too ... it's kind of like you said, a commentary, but it is true--you know-I went through a couple of major events in my life about people leaving us--you know?--meaning leaving this world altogether,--you know?--whether it's Abla my dear wife, or before that, my mother. And to my mind I didn't realize what it means when somebody leaves completely. And ... and then I realized it the hard way that that's it. The person is no longer there and it's not the same game any more. It's not the same anything any more as far as that person is concerned. So I say that because in the sense that it's not really sufficient to say, well, Irwin wanted this, and so forth and so on. For Irwin to do something it meant that eventually he's going to be the ex-something so he's not the one in--involved. It's the people remaining behind who are really involved. You know? So I can't just pin the blame on--you know? I learned, I said, the lesson that when somebody's not there, he's not there. It's totally different. It's not that the person minus... I mean, something minus the person. The person's not there. It's nothing called minus the person and that's it. That's something. That's it. So what happened is that I ... I really think that there was also a ... a feeling--also a failure that we did not exercise the collective leadership that we should have. In other words, we yielded and we respected or, let's say,--no, more... more than respected,--yielded too much to the head of the party,--you know?--which is, by the way, typical in the Middle East or something but he didn't think--I wouldn't think that it would be typical in America that we'd yield that much to the head--you know?-and not say to him: No. I think we will... we think you're wrong. You do this. You do that. You know? We'd usually say: Well, that's how Irwin wants it and that's... we'll just leave it at that way. And I think that would have been a very major plus for us if we had done that. And I--

you know,--I know that I won't be as guilty to it as others, but I would only feel guilty that I didn't go to the next stage. In other words, when I'd talk to Irwin and give him my genuine--and he insisted on my genuine advice, when he refused it or rejected it I should have gone to the leadership, the rest of the leadership: Well, I mentioned that and I think we should do something about it. And I knew... knew it and so I didn't do it, so I'm saying I plead guilty but not to the same extent, 'cause I know many of us did not actually go and face Irwin and say: Well, you know, Irwin, you do this; you do that. You shouldn't do that. But ....

And one thing that I want to say to you also, politically I'm disappointed about is that--for all of us--that ... that as the year 2000 came about and with our Professorship ... Professoriate top line is still less than a hundred thousand. You know? And just to share with you an article about the fact that the old hundred thousand now was really two hundred thousand in terms of the respected profession, as we call it, and I would submit that teaching in higher education is very much a respected profession. You know? So anyway, so that's about it.

YELLOWWITZ: Okay. Well, lets move on now to the Welfare Fund ?? You became involved in 1981.

YUSEF: Um-hum.

YELLOWWITZ: And why did you become involved initially and why did you remain as a leader in the Fund up until 2004?

YUSEF: '4, yeah. In... It's... it's very interesting. That's... that's one thing that I must tell you, that I was totally ignorant about, I was totally unaware of and in a sense of, like, a participant doing--you know--getting benefits out of,--you know,--in a minimum way. But I just was not really involved and didn't think about it. We had, by the way, the system of the, if you remember, the old Trustees, and our Trustee from Staten Island was Nick Weiner. Of course he was everything at that point in terms of the service. So he would come and give us some quick...quick report here--spoke very, very fast, and I would get half of what he says about was talking about the fund. And half I wouldn't even get. Now, till it happened that we had the election to the Executive Council was, I think, would be--if we go back twenty-one years from... from the year 2000--would be the year ... would be... I guess would be the year '79--'79. And...and I think what happened ... There was '79 and .. I'm sorry. There was also '81 for they... '82--'82--very good--'82. Now I remember. I got a call from Claude Campbelle some time in '81 and he said that: you're going to get a call from Irwin Polishook and don't say no to him. So I said: Well, it depends what he's going to ask me, Claude. You know? He said: No. I'm just telling you. I'm telling you, young man,--you know--that sometimes he would speak to me that way---“Young man, I'm telling you, just say yes. Don't say no, or at least say I will think about it.” You know? I said Okay. What is it? He said: Well, I want you to ... He's going to offer you to be the PSC designee to the Steering Committee of the Welfare Fund. I said: What? I said. The PSC. I said: What ... what Welfare fund? ?? You

know? What are you talking about, Claude? So he said: Well, the Welfare Fund. So I said: Listen! I have no idea about the Welfare fund. How could I be the PSC designee. I mean, this is a big--you know ... So he said to me: Listen. Don't say that to me. You're a quick study, ?? a very dismissive way. You could study. Don't say that to me! That's it. And when he calls you, you say ... So--you know--I was wondering ... I said ... I said: why are you saying that, Claude. I don't understand what is it. You know? So it turned out that there was a second nomination for the Executive council that time from the same College. I don't remember which College it was now. I think... I don't know. Was Al Bachman was with you all the time on the Executive Council always?

YELLOWWITZ: Always.

YUSEF: Always. Another College. Maybe it was BMCC ... was it BMCC? Did BMCC have two at one time?

YELLOWWITZ: I don't recall.

YUSEF: I think so. I think what happened, that there was a... I think, the late, my Egyptian co-part

YELLOWWITZ: ??

YUSEF: Mayer Rasabi.



YELLOWWITZ: Mayer Rasabi.

YUSEF: Mayer Rasabi had gotten the nod to go on that. Yes, that's right. Mayer Rasabi, and now Howey George was from BMCC. Claude Campbell had mentioned to me, without me ever mentioning it,--or I think some people mentioned it to him from the Chapter based on my own history: how come Mohammad was not offered a position on the Executive Council, and Claude Campbell said: Well, usually we don't have two positions from the same campus. You know? And he said--you know--a number of times that I'm not planning to be here much longer. Then Mohammed could be--you know--could take the place. But we usually have not. So what happened that they wanted to have Mayer Rasabi on the Executive Council for whatever reason. So Claude was sensitive about my situation. He felt that--you know-- and I was actually... I think I was on the Nominating Committee at that time and I didn't even ... it didn't even bother me,-- it didn't even cross my mind that there were two from the same campus. But that's what it was. So he said: Well, that's the case, then Mohammed gets the PSC designee on the Welfare Fund. Okay. Irwin wasn't that crazy about it-- I want you to know that,--so Irwin offered it to me, sure enough, and dutifully I said okay. Then I went there and it was quite a different group. I mean--you know--like, really I was, like, a really baby. I mean, I was like an Omar to them--you know? And--you know--Naftan Levy, a Ledley--Fred Ledley, Martain May, all of them were very, very old. I mean, a very youngster actually was ?? compared the rest of them,---you know?--and Sam was my uncle. You know? So in any case, I had... So in cred--in--in credit to Claude, Claude gave me a whole file, Irwin, that

he had written--a confidential file--about the Welfare Fund: operation, this, philosophy-- whatever it might be,--personnel, personalities, and he said to me: Mohammed, you keep this confidential. You use it,--you know--or share it as you see fit. But--you know--just use your judgment. So I... I really appreciated that for him that he trusted me with that. So he gave me quite a bit of start up--you know--to learn. So we were meeting every Friday morning, that group, and that was ... that was a founding group that was very zealous about keeping themselves independent. The Union, I think, the year before, maybe in '78 or something, they came up ... they changed the name to PSC CUNY Welfare Fund, I think '78 or something like that, not the Faculty Welfare Fund, and they also added the PSC designee to be a member to the Steering Committee. You know? I don't remember whether it was by vote ... would vote or not---I'm... that I don't remember,--but I think it was by vote, with vote. I never ... they never questioned my participation. So I got there and everybody was happy with me 'cause I think they had dealt with Claude and they were a little bit .... You remember Claude. I mean, he .. he was kind... he could be, like, a little bit scary when he wanted to be and he was not very happy with the way things were done so he would not hesitate to mention it. So they said: here is a green kid coming. We'll--you know--we'll have to ... we'll learn how to handle him. So the... the setup was very, very strange. I must say that for it. There was no Director. There was no Manager of the Fund. They called Norma the Assistant to the group. Norma wouldn't even attend the meetings.

YELLOWITZ: Norma Frye.

YUSEF: Yes, Norma Frye who's the Administrator of the Fund, that--you know--she was just an Assistant and she would not even attend the meetings. She has to knock on the door to come in the meetings. And they would go into great detail--you know--about every ... every little detail. I mean, it was almost like a .. a--you know--like a ... like, not really a Board Of Trustees... I mean, a Steering committee of the Trustees. You know? So in any case, I ..I ?? with them and we had some .... At that time we had----you know--like our financial picture was in bad initially, and...but we had strange things. For example, we had a .... and at that time I understand we had very, very close relationship with TIAA as our advisor and our provider which ones. So we had major medical. The TIAA would handle that and TIAA itself would come and say to us--you know--that nobody's doing it nation wide now. Even the big companies like IBM and Microsoft were--I don't think Microsoft was big yet--you know--whoever. I mean, and doing the GM, they have two fifty; they have five hundred. This is major medical,--you know?--not a hundred dollars. Because what happened that many people, even in plans like HIP, which was a... you just paid ... you had to pay the hundred dollars and go to the hospital and do this and do that at ... at the expense of the Fund. You know? So we were kind of like ... we were, like, very, like, ... the group was almost like... like a very kind hearted. I mean, too kind hearted. You know? And so ... and... and then there was, of course, I think, general unhappiness from the Union about that direction, but the Union, I think led by Irwin Polishook, in this case, wanted to do it like, naturally---you know?--that's called attrition,--you know?--not ... you know, so they wanted for Ralph Ledley to retire. I think Martin May retired. And I think there were the last two survivors, Naftan and Levey and ... and DR. on the Welfare Fund. Yeah.

YELLOWWITZ: We were interrupted, Mohammad, so I had to stop you for a moment.

YUSEF: Yeah.

YELLOWWITZ: But you were saying that there was.... attrition was taking place and there were only two left at the end.

YUSEF: Yes, it was. So the ... the last two, I think, they decided and I think I remember the Treasurer's name,--what's her name?

YELLOWWITZ: Janet Messing.

YUSEF: Janet Messing--Dr. Messing, yeah-Janet Messing There was a revolt in the ranks and they toppled both of them in election and that's how the good name of David Allen became very paramount in the Fund because he was elected as the chair, the new Chair of the fund. You know?

YELLOWWITZ: And what year was this, approximately?

YUSEF: It was in 19--like--'83, '84, '84--something like that so.... and apparently, some people said that it was with the blessings of the leadership and some people said, no, it

was independent--whatever it was. And then there was also ... he was elected as well as Steve...

YELLOWWITZ: Cole.

YUSEF: Steve Cole--Steve Cole also was elected the Treasurer. You know? So in ... So at that point in time... but fortunately Levy retired, of course. He had a wonderful sense of humor, by the way, Professor Levy and he always enjoyed my... my sharing with him the kosher food as well as the jokes. You know? But I was the only one that would go with him to the kosher restaurants and eat--you know--in that ... in ... in the jewelry area--you know-- on 47th Street. You know? We'd walk and then eat--you know--and then eat kosher food together. You know? So in any case, was... was a very nice man. And sometimes I would give him rides to his home on my way home to Albany--you know?--in the end of the... on a Friday at the end of Friday. So and that's one thing, by the way, I also contributed to the Union in terms of serving on Committees for NYSET as well as AFT,--you know?--standing committees for those groups. So in... And so what happened is that there was that revolt and they were toppled, and I think in ... by '86 there was a problem in terms of the financial picture. And it might have even been '85--I'm not sure about really the date now--that the election took place. And ... and so in '65 there was that agreement between the Fund and the University and the PSC to have that--they called it a Tripartite Agreement--to have a new Board Of Trustees appointed by the President of the union and very much made up of members of the Union, except for one Management representative. And then we found, shortly thereafter, that when the

Management wanted to present an idea they didn't have even a second to just put it on the ...on the floor so we agreed that we should give them a second vote. We had... they had a second non-voting *ex officio* member, so they had the... so it was ... it came like, I think, eight members Union and two as Management members with Norma Frye serving as our Administrator, as an *ex officio* without vote. So... and then also the... it was also decided that, as part of the union side with that... the Treasurer for the Union would become also, like, the President or the chair in waiting. In case the Chair is not available then he will assume the chair or she will assume the chair. And I think my good friend Irwin Yellowitz was the one that was involved in that vote. You know? So... at one time I think they proposed also a Secretary be involved, a Treasurer and Secretary, but that part was not really ever implemented and it was dropped. So one reason that we took it over was the fact that ... that was, I would say, that was, there was a financial problem with the Fund, namely, was that the fund was spending more than what's giving, getting it. And to me it was not really the fault of the Fund as such. It was a question of the... the package of benefits that was a decent benefit package. However, we could not afford it. So my argument at that time was that-when I went to the Chapter, including my own Chapter to let people know about what's happening,--I said to them, for example, at the time, I think it was about-roughly it was about fourteen million, I think, or twelve million or something like that, that was the total a cost, I said : I think that package is a decent package. Now, the way I would promise it, not to change the package; reduce it and create a non--you know--like, really a worse package or a non-desirable package. But my idea is that I would keep it but I'd change the funding. So now we can only have, let's say, if it was twelve million and we had only ten million in the Fund, then you will have to

bear two million, the membership. I would rather have that rather than cut the two million. And there was some protest about that at the time, but I think that many people saw the wisdom of that and actually that's what was implemented. There was some changes in the co-pays and the deductibles and things like that and that's how we managed the institution. We shifted the cost. And by the way, that's general approach that I prefer and even I argued with the present leadership--you know--and the...and the New Caucus leadership about the fact that we should keep it even if it means that we have... we have to ask the membership to bear some of the cost. In... in... in that case, if you remember, that's what happens in the dental plan. They kind of gut---you know---guttled the plan and then they said: well, membership could go in now and buy the insurance. Now, from the beginning we could have done that and not gutted the plan, so to speak. But... and so... so of course, I was invited to be a member of that Board Of Trustees with Irwin Polishook and we had a ... we had relatively a good working relationship with... with ... wit the Vice-Chancellor at the time from ...

YELLOWITZ: Ira Bloom.

YUSEF: Ire... Ira Bloom, yeah,--Ira Bloom but he... however, his tenure was not that long because the Presi--the Chancellor asked him to resign, I think, if I'm not mistaken. We tried to help and we couldn't. Now, out of the structure were two executive positions and the only reason I think there were two is that because of the Presence of the head of the Steering committee--Pres--Chair of the Steering Committee--that's ?? price, and the Chair of the Fund, David Allen. There was no other reason for it. So they had to come

up with two heads because there were two heads. And they made a point when they sat at the table one sit at one end, and the other at the other end. Nobody--you know?--like ... Every---both are Chairs, I mean. It was, like, interesting things--you know---in that avenue. You've been a witness to that yourself. So... but maybe you were not there first and--you know--witness to that.

YELLOWWITZ: No.

YUSEF: So in any case, one thing that really got me interested in... in really continuing with the Fund .... I really had taken it just as I initially also the... Sumarian Prince used to be the PSC designee. Now he was over to be the Chair. Irwin Polishook, for whatever reason, continued to still deal with Sam to the point that I think it was... It was Howey Jones, I think, that mentioned to me, he said---and Claude Campbell ---said: Hey, isn't Mohammed our man there now and why do you deal still with Sam? You know? So anyway, so Irwin started including me in the--you know---whatever deliberations or discussions or ?? in this case. So that was a minor point. It was not... it didn't bother me 'cause Sam was told come and talk to me about it. But in any case, what... what... what transpired was that ... and one thing that really got me to like the Fund was that when I realized the so-called Rule Of Eighty, and I said: What's that? I have no idea. You know? and he said: Well, that's really our... I had a little bit of idea. You know? But he said: Well, if you serve in a University plus your... so plus your years of service, plus your... add your retirement, sixty-five, and say fifteen, then you could have been fits after that time at the expense of the University. I said: That's wonderful! You know? So really



that--you know--family concept--you know--the family of the PSC---you know--the family of the Welfare Fund. That concept was way before, I would submit, before---you know--the Family Of New York by--you know--Cuomo--you know---Mayor... Governor Cuomo--you know--Mario Cuomo and others: I mean, family of this, family of that, but we were really, I think, trail blazers in this. And I liked very much the idea that we're, like, taking care of ourselves. I also liked the idea that it was all inclusive so ... because the truth is that, whether you're a Chancellor or a little instructor or a CLT, you still have one heart; you still have two--you know--two ... two eyes, and so forth, so as human beings we're all equal. So that to equate the benefits, that was very good. And that's why, at one time, when they wanted to change the benefits for the Management in terms of the retirement and so forth, after ?? I was really very, very much strongly opposed to it. And I spoke so because I said: That's not the spirit of the ... this Fund, I mean. So... and also when it came to the question of cutting down in benefits, even though there was a slight change for the retirees, but I still would have preferred the model of ... that we would say: Well, we have a package that's a decent package and we need three million dollars short, we'll go to the membership for that rather than--you know--doing this or that.

Now, one thing the Welfare Fund did--and, of course, again, we did it out of our sense of responsibility to our adjunct staff is that we tried to cover them with somewhat a fairly reasonable--you know--health insurance for the individual, for the member only, actually, not for his family or her family, but their members. Their numbers started increasing, the so-called--you know--career adjuncts---you know--that I mentioned before so... because

it was clearly stated that if you have any other means you don't get coverage. Now--you know--slowly but surely with the increase in medical costs, and so on ....

YELLOWWITZ: You mean if you had any other coverage....

YUSEF: Yeah, you cannot.... you will not get that. So I think that part people either...the colleges stopped kind of--you know--observing ... or monitoring it carefully, if you will, or it just more and more decided to say if the .... Because the general--you know---culture had become that people will pay for their own insurance, so the thing that a spouse who could get from her company will opt not to do it and such ... the member who's an adjunct--you know--say well, I have no other coverage and as such we have to, if you will, pay for his coverage. You know? And ... so in any case, we had quite a bit of mushrooming of that part of the budget and we kind of warned about it repeatedly. We tried to get the University to do something about it. We just ... and then I think it was still manageable till the year almost 2000, and when the new leadership took over. By the way, let me tell you about the two heads that I mentioned before. Initially, it was, of course, Sam Aaron Price and David Allen, two Executive officers, and Sam continued till his mandatory retirement, which was age seventy--you know- that was an old system. So in '91... Now, let me backtrack a little. About... before '9--'91, about... maybe 1990 or something, 1990, '89, I had invited David Alen to come and talk to us about the Welfare Fund at the campus. Okay? He actually spent a year with us at Staten Island,--you know?--that exchange Professorship. So I said--you know-David, come over and talk to us about--you know---in one of... instead of just sitting in a meeting. So he did that. And

then he took me to the side and he said to me: Mohammad, I want you to know there is a major crisis in the Fund and I think that--you know--that everyone's been talking about you to... to assume the Executive--you know--Officer. You know? Before that what... one system we did, Irwin, was that we had counselors for the Faculty to help on the faculty, to which I did that. I enjoyed that for a couple of years. Then I stopped doing that. You know? And so I said to him--you know--I said that--you know--I kind of, I was surprised because I said: Well,--you know--I thought that--you know--that my service in that capacity ended,--you know?--like being an officer. He said: No, no, no, no, no. There's a problem, and he mentioned to me about some misunderstanding that took place between David and Mayer Asabi, and so forth and so, and officers got involved and staff got involved and they said that--you know---I think that they were thinking of me for that. So I said: Well, we'll see about what happens. You know? So anyway, so when it came '91, Irwin, for sure--you know--appointed me to that and we started working very closely. I mean, there was no problem 'cause Sam had to retire anyway, and so there was no problem about--you know---where is... who's who, anyway. So... and so I worked with him and ...

YELLOWWITZ: With David Allen?

YUSEF: With David Allen, yeah, and with Irwin, and also ... and we ... we had established--you know--a good rapport with David. And then there was some questions of structure that I wanted to do and David was resistant to some of it, but in general we really had a good working relationship. And I think you were witness to it because you...

we had the so-called ad hoc Committee that you chaired and both of us were very much active members of that... of that group so we were working very well together till David's retirement. You know? So what happened is that when the new leadership took over they were asking about what they need for the Welfare Fund and so I was showing them the numbers for each category--you know?--retirees, eighty and eighty-two, and so forth and so on. And of course, the big groups were the retirees with eighty-two... eighty-two retirees or so called eighty-two retirees as well as the adjuncts. You know? And so I was telling them about what ... what the needs are, of course implying that ... that if we don't get that then we're going to be in trouble. You know? I mean, somehow that kind of, by ?? they didn't ..they refused to see that. You know? So... and I think to some extent, I had some blame put at my feet that... for not warning them about that problem coming up. I said: what more could I say? I mean, how many memos do I have to write you and how many tables I have developed and numbers to give you. And so I put it positively. I said: for us not to be in trouble, I need five hundred. So if I have two hundred, of course I'm going to be in trouble. You know? I mean, so... I didn't sway to you that, well,--you know--as long as I have my two hundred I'm going to be in trouble. I said to you I need five hundred not to, because that was your question to me: What do I need for negotiations to be on, to be in safe harbor, so to speak? So anyway, in ... I think the new leadership appreciated, of course, the fact that I have the institutional memory, if you will. I also have the know-how. So I think they kept me, I would say, and they cooperated with me. I must tell you that, as long as they need me, but not beyond. I think...I have the feeling, as long ... as soon as they found that they know their way around that was the end of my executive role, if you will. You know? And I continued

after that for the Board Of Trustees for the balance of my term. The Board Of Trustees was always three year terms so ... And so what ... what ... Yeah. Go ahead. You want to say something?

YELLOWWITZ: I just wanted ...

YUSEF: Yeah. Go ahead now.

YELLOWWITZ: ...just wanted to ask you about the reorganization of the benefits that was proposed recently.

YUSEF: Yeah.

YELLOWWITZ: I think it was 2002?

YUSEF: Yeah, about that.

YELLOWWITZ: Would you tell us something about that?

YUSEF: Well, before that there was quite a bit of ground work to prepare for that and the idea was that Steve, as leader ... the new leader of the fund, if you will....

YELLOWWITZ: Steve London ...

YUSEF: London, yeah,--said that we were going to do it through, like, a task force for working groups in different areas because each area should really support itself. And sure enough, to follow through on that, he had a group for retirees, a group for actives, full time, as well as a group for adjuncts. So each group came up with findings and there was a certain amount, of course,, a deficit for each group. When it came to the deficit in adjuncts which was a huge, so they said: Well, if we're going to say that the member has to pay to make it up that the member would come up something like about fifteen hundred or some... some kind of large number. I remember-you know-and they said: of course, that's not reasonable. So we dropped any question of pay--you know--as ... or live within your means, if you will, for the group of the adjuncts. So when it came to their groups, the decision was not that way. The decision was that let's live within your own means. You know? And of course there was ... even the consultant--their consultant now, not the consultant that we had, Bob, from Seeger, the new consultant, Barbara ...

YELLOWITZ: Barbara Carrass.

YUSEF: Barbara Carrass, yeah, she said... she said if we had ... at the time ... At one time I think we had like, whatever--projected eleven million dollar deficit,--she said: nine million's out because of the ... because of the adjuncts. She said that to me--you know--- because of the adjuncts. You know? And so, I mean, everybody knew about it but nobody was willing to do anything about it. So and what --you know--what transpired that case with that--and I think also the mistake that also we were guilty of, I think,--you

know--I must say---you know--as for history,--that we had a very able and capable Treasurer--you know---in our CPA--you know--that's Professor from...

YELLOWITZ: Altman, Edward ...

YUSEF: Ed ... Ed Altman, yeah, Ed Altman--Ed Altman, so he had something about ?? Fund balance. I remember that ...--it was a ?? summary--so they say full-time actives, twenty-two million dollars plus, then retirees, minus five million dollars; adjuncts, minus fifteen million dollars or eighteen--whatever--or twelve million dollars. Now... and then he'll say: Well, now, what happened that these were all fictitious numbers in the sense that there was no twenty-two million dollars for the actives. That was a theoretical number that was never really there because that assumes--the twenty-two assumes that the retirees are going to give us their five million and the adjuncts are going to give us their nine million for us to have the twenty-two million. But it's not... they're not going to give us that. You know? So the thing ?? we continued with that, always saying that the actives, the full time actives, are okay, in good shape. They aren't. They weren't because ... and then I had proposed that...we said: Well, let's do it year to year. Let's forget about--whatever--you know?--the question of the reserves or so--just to ... and sure enough, every category was really in a deficit. You know? So the thing of that ... I think there was some kind of fictitious that as--you know--for ... in fairness, of course, to my very good friend Ed Altman, that as an accountant, there is something about entry, and so on, but ... because that's usually the case, Irwin, you know, I mean, that you have--you know--say: Well, here is a deficit. Then I expect it to come in, and so... but where is it going to come

from, I mean, so we had no twenty-two million. Where is the twenty-two million? You know? At the time...at that time, then if you would figure it out, we had actually twenty-two minus five, minus nine, so we had eight million and that's it. But in... so the thing of that... he might have had also the eight million in funds ?? in the sheet but the thing of it that everybody's looking at the active saying we're .. Oh, twenty-two million. There's ... there's no twenty-two million. You know? I mean, so the thing of... I think... I don't think that point was clear to people on the Board, that we don't have that... those numbers. You know? We had ?? the number, we just had the small net number. So... and I think what ...what's needed now is that either, as I said, a infusion of funds--I hope you can have an infusion of funds. There may be some type of federal plan to... to kind of get, again, universal health care or something that will help with the situation. I mean, I know there's some--you know--plans in New York now, I think, to give the children, I think, health care or something, through the State, some program. But in any case, I'm just saying it's not... it's not going to be solved that... with the way we understand it. I don't think it will. But... and in terms of the Welfare fund, I'll say to you in general... also, I had involvement, of course, in that City-wide MLC Committee--you know--On Health Care that I enjoyed very much. I had quite a number of good relationships out of that. I learned quite a bit from it and...

YELLOWITZ: The MLC is the Mun--

YUSEF: Municipal Labor



YELLOWITZ: Committee.

YUSEF: Committee, yeah, but ours was that subgroup of that--

YELLOWITZ: ??

YUSEF: ...subgroup on health. So that was also one of the involvements I was in, and--you know--in fairness to the new leadership also they kept me till they found--and they could have a repla ... You know?--the rub, which was actually Debbie, the Executive Director. Yeah. That's all.

YELLOWITZ: Okay, Mohammed, this has been a very long and very interesting interview. I'll just conclude by asking you if there's any final thoughts that you have in your long career as a Union officer and as a Welfare Fund officer.

YUSEF: Now, actually--you know--it's been a very, very fruitful period and it also it involved--you know--a few of the very difficult years of my life, as you know. I know that we didn't talk about my ... my second--you know--wife or second family, if you will. We mentioned Mona and Laura before. But as you know, in my... one of my visits to Egypt, my birth place, to visit with my mother, I met a very nice young lady and--I'm sure you know her and remember her, Abla,--

YELLOWITZ: I do.

YUSEF: Yeah,--and then we... so anyway, we were--you know--we got married in '84 and God was--you know--kind enough to give us two wonderful children, Lena, in '85, and then a surprise in '92, Omar, in that year. We just saw recently now ... and it was ... was also a wonderful period of my life, and I know that she enjoyed knowing all the brothers and sisters in the Union. And I know that many of them... she enjoyed their friendship and--including Sheila Polishook and others. And then, as fate would have it, she had a serious illness that started with January, '99, and she continued her struggle till September of 2003, and she left us. And I just want to also, along that line, really pay tribute to you, Irwin, about your help in letting people know about that loss that I suffered, and the response was very much overwhelming and the peoples' sympathy and letters and cards and gifts and calls, it was just really, it kind of made--you know--my... all my years of service came into... not that I had hoped for it to be the way to express their thanks to me or their friendship and brotherhood and sisterhood to me, but it was definitely very appreciated and very heart-felt and it kind of helped carry us through a very difficult period. But... and the happy side, of course,--you know--I have those two wonderful children that you met and you're familiar with, and I know with Lena, you're familiar all the way back when she came as a baby to one of the conventions the AF--AF of L/CIO Convention of New York State in the Catskills and she was in the little high chair. So I know she was playing with you and Michelle and with... I think... I don't know if Ir- .. Irwin had also his son with him?

YELLOWITZ: Yes. Yes.

YUSEF: Yeah, he had Louis with him? He had Louis with him, yeah. Right. Louis was also there, Louis and Michelle. And we used to play the ping pong, I remember, and so it's just was all--you know--so it's, well, it's a ... a life I hope... You know? I feel that I've been very fortunate and very--you know--like, really luckier, more than I deserved to have gotten what I got and to enjoy the friendship and the brotherhood of so many, many people, both in the Union, NYSET and AFT and the UFT--whatever. And it is ... Israel--my dear friend Israel Cougler said--you know--your brother in humanity, so I mean, that's really--that's what it is: that the Union keeps you .... In the final analysis, we're all brothers and sisters in humanity. So thank you very much. And appreciate your visit and was honored with your presence. Thank you.

YELLOWITZ: ... say thank you. Thanks very much, Mohammed, for taking the time to do this very long interview with me. I know you, of course, from the very beginning and in you retelling some of your life you've retold some of my life and I've enjoyed very much going back with you and recalling all these events. Thanks a lot.

YUSEF: Okay. You're welcome. Thank you.