EDMUND MEEKS, Shoshone
October 29, 1975
Salt Lake City, Utah
LISTENING TO INDIANS

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Sam Myers:

I'm talking with Edmund Meeks, a man from the Wind River country of Wyoming. That's a mountain range over there, isn't it, Ed?

Edmund Meeks:

Yes it is.

SM: Were you born over in that country, Ed?

EM: Yes, I was born at the old hospital at Fort Washakie.

SM: That's named after a chief, isn't it?

EM: Yes, Chief Washakie, the leader of the Wind River Shoshon band.

SM: You say Shoshon, some people say Shoshone. Is it either way?

EM: Yeah, interchangeable. Some call themselves Shoshones, and basically when they speak of the tribe itself it is the Shoshone Tribe, and others just say, "We're Shoshons."

SM: Sacajawea was Shoshone. Did I pronounce her name right?

EM: Sac-a-jaw-wea.

SM: You use the J sound instead of the hard G. I've heard it both ways, but now here I get right back to the source, the authority, from the people.

EM: The pronunciation some of the older Indians have . . . a little different pronunciation which I can't pronounce.

SM: Do you speak Shoshone?
EM: No I don't. I was raised mainly away from the reservation. I was sent away from my family when I was rather small. I was sent away to live with my aunt the first time, in California. But I returned.

SM: How old were you when you came back?

EM: Fifteen, I think.

SM: So then, from what, two or three years old?

EM: No, I was about nine, I think, when I was sent to live with her.

SM: Well then, you still remember growing up back in Wyoming, don't you?

EM: Yes.

SM: And then you remember California as a child?

EM: From there I went to boarding school at Haskell in Lawrence, Kansas.

SM: It's still there, still going along fine.

EM: I understand they made it into a junior college. I was there when it was a high school, with the old dorms.

SM: They still have the dorms.

EM: I thought they built some new dorms.

SM: Yes, they have those too. Well, you went back to Haskell then when it was a high school. Did you graduate there?

EM: No. Well, to be blunt, I ran off and went to Kansas City after a year there.
SM: You ran away?

EM: Yeah, I was always runnin' away from somethin' for one reason or the other. Being a breed, I had an identity crisis, you know, of my own.

SM: By "being a breed" you mean you're partly white and partly Indian?

EM: Yes, and Spanish.

SM: Actually people don't use that term so much any more, do they?

EM: Well, only in a rather derogatory term. I find a lot of prejudice, even among Indians, for breeds, and among the Anglo populace the same.

SM: You're caught between them?

EM: Right. It's kind of a tight world, I guess, to really get around in, when you're trying' to really make a place, and your parents are interferring also.

SM: Well there are just literally thousands and thousands of people that are partly of Indian blood. In fact, I would imagine there are more who are not full bloods than there are full bloods.

EM: Well, yes, I think so.

SM: Or blends too.

EM: But a lot of them are dark enough, or specifically light enough, and will go one way or the other, and I was kinda just searching for an identity, I guess.

SM: You were conscious of being Indian?
EM: Yes. I guess, in the social context, I was somewhat precocious as a youth. I felt a lot of things, rather than had actual verbal communication on things. I feel a lot of different prejudices that in other times were verbalized and confirmed, so I know I wasn't wrong, you know, and I came from a rather large family.

SM: Were some of them darker than others?

EM: Yes. And the ones that stayed on the reservation were, you know, more accepted than myself. I was sent away. My dad, mainly, wanted me to become anything other than, you know, Indian as was on the reservation.

SM: He wanted you to have the advantages of being a white person too?

EM: Yeah, right. And I still have a little bit of problems with these, you know, because I still run into prejudice, so everything I do now is mainly on an individualistic type basis.

SM: We hear about this kind of problem, but you are one of the few people who have actually spoken of it and thought of himself as having this problem. We have lots of Indians who claim to be full bloods, when chances are they don't even know for sure, but they think of themselves that way, and that's a comforting thought, I suppose.

EM: Yeah. I don't know, many times I'm wonderin' if it isn't just a . . . innate component of man himself, to have to, you know, have someone less than himself, because I've found it in blacks, in Chicanos and Indians and whites. They've always had to have somebody to look down on for some reason, whether it makes them feel better or what.

SM: You've observed this as you've gone along through your life so far?
EM: Yes. I've always observed people very closely, and prejudice is a very specific thing, you know, and I think it's in everybody. People deny it, but I'm light enough that I can move around in the Anglo world.

SM: The son of a Chippewa father and an Irish mother doesn't look like an Indian at all. He's lived in the Anglo world all his life, and he has had to prove himself with his own Indian relatives because they were not quite sure of him. So he's gone through this too, and he envied his brother who looked "Indian."

EM: I don't really envy anybody for anything, I guess, because ... I did before, because I had this emotional conflict constantly, because I knew what I was comfortable with.

SM: How does that make you feel, this conflict?

EM: Well, it's an uneasy thing, I guess. I wasn't conscious, really conscious of it, I guess, until I first left the reservation, and that was about seven or eight years old when I first left. And then I didn't know about prejudice. Everything to that time had been, I thought, in fun. They kidded me, you know. I didn't know about Indian problems, and I think that's the problem with Indians. When they are on the reservation they don't hear about the problems until they get off, and then they come to find out they have all these problems. Well, they know there's prejudice and everything, but there's a lot of things that you find out--you're less intelligent, because of the tests that they administer, which are not even directed toward minority people. They really don't carry anything relative to the intelligence of the native American, so, of course, you do worse.

SM: This makes you wonder a little bit sometimes about yourself?

EM: Yeah. I didn't really feel or know I had all these problems until
people started tellin' me about 'em, when I started getting to the public schools and reading in books. Then I started wonderin', "What happened here?" Having all these problems, you know. There's somethin' I missed somewhere all along the way. One of the other areas that was apparent, very quickly apparent to me, after getting a little older, was the subtleties of the Anglo world, you know, as opposed to Indian culture. Now I'm speakin' just an individual's reflection, I don't speak for Indians. I don't profess to say Indians do this nor Indians do that, because there are urban Indians, there are Indians who know nothing of their own culture, and there are Indians that have been away, some even have been in foreign countries.

SM: You just speak for yourself?

EM: Right, that is all I can do. It's a reflection, because I know as many people with different opinions on a single subject as there are people. I can't say, well, Indians believe this way or Indians believe that way. I don't follow people that stand up and speak for Indians, because there are so many different Indians, you know, and they're all individuals within their own tribe. I speak for myself and my feelings and as I see a thing. I was talking about the subtleties of the Anglo world, and I think this causes a lot of heartache to Indians, to some of the Indians from the reservation that I know that have expressed this to me getting out into the Anglo world. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, they promoted programs and everything to get Indians off the reservation, get them into an urban society, and Americanize them, and they don't express really the true subtleties of the system. And Indians are more open, they can express a dislike for you, and you know it. You know your friends, you know who you can work with, who you can't. In the Anglo world, you don't know. And you're not oriented to all the little subtleties that you encounter.
SM: Can you think of a specific instance?

EM: O.K. Well, say you come off and many of the Indians are given jobs. Say relocation. They're taken care of to get a trade, all their needs are taken care of—they're in good shape, and then they're cut loose, and then they find out that when they get the job, the job may not pay that way, 'cause they aren't just quite qualified, and it's usually a low status position, and they find out that out of that pay comes your rent, and then there's medical, there's insurances, there's taxes, there's immeasurable withdrawals, you know, and deductions out of that check for things that was free to them. And they're away from people they're comfortable with, they're away from the surroundings they're familiar with, the specific lifestyle they're familiar with, and then when they're cut loose they're at a loss at all this. They say, "Why didn't they tell me all this other stuff?" Everything was rose gardens when they left.

SM: When they started with this relocation program?

EM: Right. They were going to be put in a nice neighborhood, and they find that it's usually the outskirts, or it's central city, or it's down with other minorities from the city, with their housing area. An Indian can be just as prejudiced against a black guy or a Chicano as he can a white person.

SM: Even between each other?

EM: Right. And so, why put him down there? Maybe he has feelings against other minorities. Yet they think for some reason that he would be happy living among Chicanos and blacks, in not a nice house, in mid-class America. And there are, like I say, there are exceptions to this too, because there are people that are comfortable with that, who can function. They get a job and they can make it, and they go on
to live in mid-class America, but then there's always that stigma of being different. And until, one way or the other, that people have found out that I'm part Indian, I have been treated as just another person, and then I suddenly become different. And I'm not really comfortable with a lot of attention, being different.

SM: The attention bothers you. It kind of bothered you to think about doing what we're doing here, at first, didn't it?

EM: Yes.

SM: You didn't like that, but now you're relaxed and we're going along fine.

EM: Well, you know, you get into something that's close to you, it's a little easier.

SM: It's just you and me sitting here, after all.

EM: Right. I'm not reflecting anybody's views but my own. Well, to me, being an Indian isn't ... I get a very sad feeling about watching Indians get up and do Indian things for audiences or for pay. It makes me sad, because these are things, so much of it are sacred things. I guess I'm a quiet, inside, internalized Indian, I'd call it.

SM: Have you learned some of the ceremonies and the old ways?

EM: No. Well, some of the old ways that they talk of, I understand and everything. I've gone to the ceremonies and been there. I've never gotten into it, because, like in our area--and I know a lot of Indians disagree with me from my area about it--a lot of their meanings, as I've grown up and watched it, have seemed lost. And
I guess the meaning of Indian, to me, is different than to a lot of others, too. They're Indian and they were there, so it don't really matter how they live their lifestyle. I see many conflicts, as many with Indians as with the Anglo world.

SM: Do you mean between the Indian groups?

EM: Yes. I don't see a total unity of Indians.

SM: They've always had much individualism in their points of view.

EM: Yes, and there's as much internal strife, I think, among Indians, when they're together, as there are other nationalities. I think they get in the habit of usin' the white man's yardstick for measurin' others. I mean, to the white man, an Indian is an Indian. But there are very definite differences to Indians, yet many times you'll hear Indians turn around, and a white man explains everything to them also, you see. You know, he's not Polish, he's not Czechoslovakian, he's not Irish, and you tend to do these things, I think, or copy something that makes you feel good. It's like, say somebody swears at you, you swear back. It makes you feel better, even though you don't know if it's right or not, it doesn't matter.

SM: Have you any other recollections of things that happened back there in the Wind River country? What town was it by the way?

EM: Fort Washakie.

SM: Oh, the town has the same name as the hospital?

EM: Right.

SM: Any recollections of incidents that occurred that would illustrate what we're talking about?
EM: I was living right off the reservation in a little town, and I went to play with some kids one time, and I guess the mother thought I was still outside. The boy let me in, and they asked him, "Why do you play with them dirty Indian kids?"

SM: Did you hear that?

EM: Yes. You know, our clothes were clean; they weren't brand new or nothing all the time, we had a big family. And the same way--two years ago when I was goin' to college there, Central Wyoming College, and I went down and I was havin' coffee one morning. I came in real early, I had to drive from Lander, it's about 38 miles from my home. And some of the businessmen, you know, they deal with Indians, were sittin' there, and, of course, I blended right in, no one noticed me, and I listened to them, you know, the fathers of the town there, Chamber of Commerce people and the upstanding citizens. I listened to their conversations, their little jokes about the Indians, you know, and I guess because I identify with Indians, you know, it gets to me. It bothers me.

SM: It hurts?

EM: Yes. Yet I would see these same people, you know, the Indians bring their money in, and buy from them and everything, and they call them "brother" and everything else nice, and it's just ... hypocrites. And then they enjoy their little jokes about them, how they put it over on them, and how ignorant they are, and these things bother me, you know, because the prejudice is there. The same ones I've heard say, "Oh, some of my best friends are Indians," and it doesn't do much good to confront them with it. They lie, they're gonna lie anyway.

SM: Well, if you and I and all the rest of us will start out with the admission that we do have prejudices--and I think most all of us do,
I don't know anybody who doesn't—and then try to work from there toward improvement, maybe we have a chance. Do you think so?

EM: Oh yeah.

SM: Of course, some of those people that made remarks that have hurt you badly, I don't think you give them much hope for improvement, do you?

EM: No, because now they're wonderin' why the children are that way. But it works both ways. Like I say, I take people for being people, individuals, and yet I don't say I don't have no prejudices—I have my prejudices. I have black friends, and some Chicano friends, but many I dislike of both races. I think a lot of Indians that I talk to don't realize that there's many white people fightin' the same system that they're fightin', the bureaucracies, and I think that most things, as I see it, that Indians have to do has to be on an individual basis.

SM: 'Course it's nice to have the comfort or the help of others who feel and think the same as you do, it's nice if you can have that.

EM: Yes, well, there's many things they can do together.

SM: One of the things that really gets to you is that you feel like you're sort of in the middle?

EM: Well, not so much any more. Like I said, the conflicts were with me for a long, long time, but I guess I'm kinda maturing to the point I realize I'm me, and by severin' any portion of myself, I'm not gonna lose who I am.

SM: Do you find yourself moving more toward your Indian part or towards your non-Indian part, or are you staying as an individual strictly?
EM: I lean more, I think, to the Indian-ness in me. I have to strongly maintain my individuality.

SM: Instead of leaning toward the white side, you're leaning toward the Indian side, but you are practical enough to realize you've got to be yourself?

EM: Oh yeah, I can't sever everything from the Anglo world.

SM: 'Cause you're part of it.

EM: Right. Though it's a subtle, mental type of war now. I find personally by the more I learn the easier it is for me to function in the system. The more I learn, like, I forget which person it was long ago said, the more you learn of your enemy the easier it is to defeat him.

SM: That's one of the arguments you'd have for learning history. Because even if you want to fight the system, you'd better learn about it first.

EM: Yeah, then you can make changes. I don't say some of the things, the acts and stuff, weren't good for the Indian people. They had their good and their bad points. Say, like, speakin' of the American Indian Movement as good.

SM: By the way, are you part of that?

EM: No. The component that is on our reservation, I don't agree with them, the individuals there.

SM: The people that lead it?
EM: There, with Russ and Dennis. And I don't know much about them, I've never met them. I've seen them speak. Their philosophy is a little different, it's more intellectual to meet the needs, more specifically of Indians. It's like Wounded Knee. They had some very constructive things, although a lot of people said "no," I think it brought about some monies that helped programs and programs themselves.

SM: Who helped them? Where did they get the money?

EM: Well, actually it was like, as I see it, it was the federal government that came out with monies, the Bureau, for programs that may have otherwise been delayed a lot longer than they were.

SM: Do you know where AIM got the funds it got to operate with, to organize with?

EM: As I understand it, many donations from people.

SM: Any other groups or sources?

EM: I'm not really familiar with their financial.

SM: In this situation at Wounded Knee back there, was there more to that than came out in the press?

EM: Well, I wasn't up there. I think there was a lot of misrepresentation from the people that I personally know that was there. One thing I noted or noticed. Many of the younger Indians that were there really didn't know what they were there for, although it served the same purpose. I'd ask them what were they doing there, what was happening, and what was behind it and everything. They didn't really know, or understood the purpose of it. They went there maybe just for the fun of it, or the excitement. Like I said, I looked to see what the more
constructive things that were derived from it—the occupation there.

SM: Now they got a lot of publicity. Do you think that that helped, in the essence did that help or did it harm the cause of Indians and their improvement?

EM: I think it helped in ways, in awareness, in greater awareness it came out. It probably increased the prejudice in many people, which such things do.

SM: Was it a popular thing with most of the Indian people that you knew of or talked to?

EM: No. The older ones on our reservation that I talked to, they weren't for it at all.

SM: They were against it?

EM: Yeah. But our tribe was never really at war, I guess, as I understand, with the white man. They helped him more than anything.

SM: Shoshones did, from way back there with Lewis and Clark, they were always there ready to help and so on. Do the Shoshones ever come into contact with the Washo people? That's farther west, isn't it? The Washo people over by the Sierras, Lake Tahoe?

EM: Well, our tribe travelled extensively. It's quite possible in the early days.

SM: But you don't know about it?

EM: No. Our tribe is extendin', portions of it, clear to California, and we had a very large territory that they travelled.
SM: In the old days before the confinement of the reservations?

EM: Yeah. One of the things that they got, I guess, for bein' non-warlike, was the choice of our reservation, where it is now.

SM: Do you mean you got your own choice of it?

EM: Yeah.

SM: Oftentimes it went the other way, didn't it?

EM: Right.

SM: So you chose the Wind River Mountains?

EM: 'Cause it was the main area where the Shoshone Indians were.

SM: Do your people think of themselves as mountain people or plains people?

EM: I can't really answer that, how they feel now.

SM: But they live in the mountains there, pretty much, don't they?

EM: Right at the foothills.

SM: It's a kind of an intriguing name, isn't it, Wind River Mountains?

EM: Yeah. It's a real pretty reservation.

SM: Is that just west of Lander?

EM: It's northwest. Sixteen miles.
SM: Is it a pretty big reservation?

EM: Yes. I forget how many acres it is.

SM: There aren't a lot of them in Wyoming, are there?

EM: No. Now it's not just a Shoshone Reservation, it's also Arapaho, northern Arapaho Tribe.

SM: The Arapahos are there too?

EM: Right. They have, I guess, approximately half of it now. They were supposed to only been there one winter, many years ago, and because they were a rather hated tribe, the President, in fact, asked to leave them there one winter while they readied their reservation.

SM: Do you know what President that was?

EM: I wouldn't even venture to say. I've been over it a number of times.

SM: It was in the last century though, anyway?

EM: Right. He asked anyway to leave them one winter, and they've been there ever since. It was one of the inequities. I don't know what they ever did with their reservation.

SM: That shrunk the size of yours.

EM: Right.

SM: Now do they hold about half the land themselves as a tribe?

EM: Yes.
SM: Do your people hold the land in the reservation communally as a tribe, in one unit, or do people own the individual pieces?

EM: There's tribal ground and there's a lot of it is heirship land which the tribe is trying to buy back now.

SM: Heirship. Will you explain that?

EM: It's held by, say, a family, and each generation becomes heir to the land. And so maybe you'll have a hundred heirs to a very small piece of ground.

SM: It's down into little packages.

EM: Right.

SM: So the tribe tries to acquire that?

EM: Recently they're tryin' to buy it back in unit, which I question. I question many things, though, because there's usually something attached, and the reasoning behind it.

SM: Does the tribe have a pretty good government there, tribal council management?

EM: Well, I haven't been deeply involved.

SM: You've been away a lot.

EM: From what I've seen of it, they work at it, I guess. There's a lot of family and factionalism on our reservation.

SM: But it's not like at Pine Ridge, is it?
EM: Well, that's more political factionism.

SM: Is yours more family-ism?

EM: Yes, it's more a relative type thing, I think.

SM: Ed, one person told me an Indian child inherits or acquires all the friends of the family, but also acquires all the enemies of the family, and has those friends and enemies, usually for, oh, dozens if not hundreds of years, without knowing why, but they're just at odds with each other. Is that true?

EM: Well, I could say, partially, it could be. In many instances, or in lots of instances, where it wouldn't even apply. I guess if you put it in a context say of a rigid reservation setting, where there is a lot of factionalism, it could be.

SM: For any specific reservation in a specific locality, it might hold, but generally speaking you can't say it does?

EM: No, not for everybody, not for every tribe. I think there can be instances where it could possibly be true. I mean, it's natural. Common sense tells you as a child you go with your friends and your own peers. If that constituted makin' enemies with others, then you did.

SM: That's one of those dangerous generalities which doesn't hold up when you narrow it down and pin it down and examine it. Isn't that true?

EM: Really.

SM: Can you clarify a few other points that might help us?
EM: Well, from my own view of travelling around and meetin' others, and one reason I guess I don't foresee any unity among Indians on, say, just an individual basis, as a brotherly thing, is that right here in Salt Lake I see the workings here very fragmented I guess. The individual personality difference and everything plus family involvement also. Most everywhere I've gone and met people, you know, Indians, there is a lot of the same thing. You was talking to Fred Harden, and he may have expressed one of his sayings that he often comes up with--really there's not much anybody can do to an Indian that he hasn't done or isn't doing to himself. I think, as he said, lot of the reasoning behind that is it's hard, you either be an Indian or totally get away. It's kinda hard playin' two roles, because you're an apple or you're Indian, you know. And then, even if you're an apple to one bunch, or an Indian to one, it may reverse, you know. So, it's very, very individualistic, I think, even among Indians. But the one trend I'd like to see is a lot of the reversal. I got in the habit of always seein' the Indian myself, for in school, even feelin' a little down, the Indian was always the bad guy, you know. He was always raidin' and burnin' the poor settlers. Yet now, I'm thinkin' back, if somebody come and squatted, say, in your back yard, you know, I mean, you're gonna bump him too. You're gonna get him out. And actually it was the back yard of the Indian. It was big, you know.

SM: And remarkably enough, they usually helped the settlers at first, until they began to feel pushed and threatened. Then they would fight.

EM: Yeah. They started fencin' it and everything else, and tellin' the Indian where he could and couldn't go. Whose land is what. And actually it was trespassin'. I'd like to see books rewritten along that.
SM: There's quite a bit more on this now than there used to be.

EM: Well, the context, then and now--writing now, you're projecting. You know, it's just like trying to recall something way back. You know, in your mind, really, that the trespasser wasn't really the Indian, yet you can't blame these really . . . well, unless it's a documented thing, really specific instances, to write about. You can say it really wasn't that way. But what do you write, say, in a child's textbook that reestablishes the image of an Indian as only a person fightin' for his rights, not as some savage that come out of the hills, and bothered good, decent people. How do you change that image?

SM: I think it is changing, though. What do you think?

EM: I think there's more material on it, put it that way. They're getting more material out with that slant to it.

SM: Well, take for example, Custer. You know, everybody knows about Custer, and 50 years ago he was considered a hero by the whites. Today he's considered a heel by white and Indian alike.

EM: Well, maybe they realized he was more of a typical politician. His motives and aims were a little clearer now.

SM: Yes, it looks like he was aiming for a political position, maybe president.

EM: I think now people understanding politicians a little better, they can understand him a little better too. Well, the realization of many things, or inadequacies, I guess takes time.

SM: Yes, we've gone through all these years and years, hundreds of years of struggle. One young Indian said if only the Indians had stuck
together they would have won, but they never did and they still aren't.

EM: Yeah, well, not only that. They were usin' Indian against Indian.

SM: Yes, and the Indians never did, like he said, stick together and fight as a common cause.

EM: Right. There was always that tribal rivalry.

SM: They would always fight on one or the other side, and you are an offspring, a descendant of both cultures, and you've had your troubles and your problems with it, but you've got that in hand now, haven't you?

EM: I think so.

SM: And feeling pretty comfortable with yourself now, because you've made up your mind how you're going to look at it.

EM: Yeah.

SM: And your experiences in that struggle could help a lot of other young people.

EM: Yeah, it's the identity thing, you know. It's exactly, I mean, what you feel you want, not what others tell you you should be.

SM: You don't have to worry what others tell you you should be so much?

EM: Right. Because I'm the one that has to live with it, you know.

SM: Even if they're right, you still have to live with it, or if they're wrong, you still have to.
EM: Right, so it's your decision.

SM: How can a young person who is really torn this way, and suffering, get help? How do they go about it?

EM: Well, here there's an Indian center here at Salt Lake, and there is actually a place in our social work department.

SM: They can go there. Will they really listen to them?

EM: The Indians will, but Indians have a hard time resolving themselves to go to, say a white person, so actually, though, a counseling type situation, they go to another Indian in most instances. The services specifically for them are, I think, very inadequate. Especially if you get out away from Indians.

SM: There aren't enough Indian counselors for other Indian people?

EM: I don't think so, no.

SM: You ought to be a good one.

EM: Well, that's the direction I'm heading.

SM: Is that what your major is going to be in college?

EM: Right, in social work. I'm still in my undergraduate area, but I hope to get into educational counseling.

SM: In high school or college?

EM: Right. Especially in a high school, because lot of times this is the area where they're first getting away from the reservation and stuff, in a lot of areas even in public school they have to.
SM: Well, you went through this yourself.

EM: Right. I know a lot of my feelings. I can probably relate to others in similar situations.

SM: Do you think because you don't look extremely Indian, you're not very dark, you know, that you will have to sort of convince them that you are?

EM: Oh yes, right.

SM: You'll work at that a little first?

EM: Right.

SM: They'll accept you as an Indian person and then you will be able to help them more. Then you have a handicap even there, don't you?

EM: Right, really it is. Like I say, there's prejudice on both sides.

SM: Well they might assume that you're non-Indian.

EM: Right.

SM: They could, you know.

EM: Among most people I know, even for a dark Indian, you know, a new person, there's a testing period.

SM: Indian people are a little bit more reticent, a little bit less willing to talk than the average Anglo person, aren't they? 'Course there are plenty of Anglo people who are reticent and hesitant to talk too, but I imagine the Indians as a group, if you dare risk a generality, would be more so.
EM: Right. Even to some people they know, if they don't know them real well, the ones I know again, they won't really come out. I've been trying myself to resolve the thought of, you know, how come many people say, "Well, there's jobs, why don't they just go and get them?" You know, nobody likes to leave a familiar setting, move, be it Indian or otherwise, and have to make new friends, especially if you're not going to an area you're at all familiar with. Maybe that's why Argentina is made up of basically Argentinians. If Americans felt comfortable, they'd go right there, you know, jobs or whatever.

SM: And I think this is probably more true among young Indian people because they have this strong cultural background plus being such a greatly outnumbered minority that they feel it's nice to have someone around you know.

EM: Right. Plus, I was sayin' about the subtleties. Young Indians now, the ones I know, many have indicated that they are realizing through education that there are these inadequacies for Indians to go out from the reservation that they're gonna be faced with. And rather than go out and struggle with it, they'd just as soon be looked down on, but be comfortable.

SM: It's heartening to discover, then, that you are majoring in the area of the very kind of problem that you encountered yourself growing up, and so you're going to work in that same area. A lot of Indian people are doing this, in law, medicine, counseling, teaching. They're anxious to get through school so they can help their own people to overcome the problems that they experienced, and that's good. Fine, young, idealistic people, who are trying to help, and that's a good thing.

EM: Even then, it's hard. I know that lot of them express the thing
that going away and gettin' an education, it has been real hard for 'em to come back and work among their own people, because somehow they're perceived as being different now.

SM: Yes, they're changed or have been changed.

EM: Yeah, so there's a lot of conflicts, a lot of problems, but they're individuals. I'd like to see people treat 'em, look at 'em as such.

SM: Do you think they're getting any better in the general sense?

EM: Yeah, really. I think it's gettin' a little better. Like I say, as long as that prejudice and bias is there, it's gonna be hard. But then, you know, it's an entirely catastrophic-type problem. You can't change everybody.

SM: These culture changes do come slowly.

EM: Yeah, by the improvements--specifically I speak of my reservation--that I see, better homes, sanitation, transportation, jobs, and programs comin' about, I think things are gettin' better, though slowly, and I would like to see it better faster.

SM: Ed, do you have any other comments you'd like to make before we come to the end of our tape?

EM: No.

SM: Well, every time I get near the Wind River Range again I'll think of you. I'm grateful for your time this afternoon, and I think we've helped add another dimension to this understanding. Thank you.

EM: I hope some of it will be useful.