

The Impact of the Civil Rights Movement
Student Worksheet 1-4
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Clip 1-1: John Hope Franklin, Early Experiences with Segregation.

Franklin: When I was seven years-old and living in a village in Oklahoma, my mother and my sister and I took the train from that village to a town six miles away—Checotah—where we did our shopping. We flagged the train. It stopped. We got on, and we sat down, and then the train began to pull off, and by the time it got a mile or so down the road, the conductor came through and said we couldn't sit there, and my mother said, "Why?" He said, "This is a seat for white people. This is a coach for white people." She says, "Well, I can't move my children while the train is moving. If the train were not moving, I'd be glad to move."

He said, "I'll stop the train." And he did. And he put us off, instead of letting us go to a so-called Black coach, he put us off. And when we got off and started trudging our way back to the village where we lived, I began to cry, and my mother said, "Why are you crying?" I said, "That man put us off the train." She said, "You shouldn't ever let that bother you."

She said, "That's a mere law that says that you can't ride with white people. But you're as good as any of the white people on that train, or anywhere else, and I don't want you to spend your energy and your time worrying and fretting about that. Just forget them. Understand that they are the sick people, and that you are well, and that you just proceed with your life. Don't ever let me see you fretting or crying about your mistreatment by white people."

That was my first experience, at seven years old. Another experience was when I was about ten or eleven, and we had moved, by that time moved to the big city of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and I was walking downtown one day and a man threw two quarters down in front of me and said, "Start dancing." Well, I didn't know that he thought that young boys who are Black should dance for white men for the price of 25 cents, or whatever it was. And so I kept walking. And he shouted at me once or twice. But that was the extent of his harassment of me and I went on about my business.

Within another two years, still in Tulsa, I had the experience of being a Boy Scout, and being a Boy Scout, I wanted to do my good deed every day, and I was walking downtown and I saw a white woman who was trying to navigate herself off the sidewalk, onto the street, and cross the street.

And I saw immediately that she was having problems, and that she probably was blind. And so I ran across the way and said, "Lady, can I help you across the street?" My one good deed for the day. And she said, "Oh, yes; by all means." And we started across the street, chatting, merrily, and she all of a sudden asked me if I were white or Black. And when I told her I was Black, she said, "Take your filthy hands off me and let me alone."

And in the middle of the streets, the only thing I could do was to take my hands off her and let her struggle all the way across the street through that traffic without my guidance.

I said that if she preferred to run the risk of being injured, to having my arm assist her across the street, that was a strange kind of reaction for anyone, human being to have, and so my notion of race was further shaped.

Clip 1-2: Oliver Hill, Cases that led to *Brown v. Board*.

MR. HILL: When the Supreme Court decided *Sweatt v. Painter*, that was the Texas law school case, see. Sweatt had filed suit because he had applied for admission to law school. Well, they wouldn't let him in the regular Texas law school, but they put, opened up one store-front law school. It had one teacher, a few books, and they called that a law school. And so we filed, I mean, the NAACP filed a suit, and the case went to the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court ruled--we had worked on a brief setting out all of the things that would constitute a first-class law school that was available at the Texas University Law School.

And Judge Benson went right down the line of our brief. So we figured now we've got Benson on our side. He understands what the problem is. Now, it's time for us to go ahead and file suit, challenging first segregation per se, and that's what we did.

So what the first case was--*Briggs v. Elliott*, down in South Carolina, Clarendon County, South Carolina. And that case went up and we filed suit. Thurgood [Marshall] filed a suit, and we were all fighting it out, counseling in the case. And they brought it forward and a guy name Bullock, down in Columbia, South Carolina--

So when we filed the suit, [the] Judge... recognized the fact that... it was testing the constitutionality of the state's law, and he convened a three-judge court.

Anyway, the three-judge court ruled 2-to-1 that no violation of law, and that case was appealed to the Supreme Court. It was the first case up there. When these kids went on strike, that was the only case that was going up to the Supreme Court.

DR. COSBY: These are the kids in the Prince Edward County Public School?

MR. HILL: Prince Edward County.

DR. COSBY: Yes.

MR. HILL: Barbara Johns... a very precocious little girl named Barbara Johns, who was the niece of a fiery Baptist Minister named Vernon Johns.

DR. COSBY: Oh, yes, another legend. Yes.

MR. HILL: And so when they went out on strike--but Martin and I were in our law library that evening--when the phone rang--preparing a motion for further relief in a case known as *Colburn v. Polaski*. It was a separate but equal case because they had all of the children up in that section of, up there around VTI, that section of Virginia... about 50 or 75 miles through Radford and Montgomery County in Christiansburg. There had formerly been a little private school over there, a man named Long, and he left there and went to Howard, a very fine, a very fine man.

Anyway, they had had a trial, and they had done what they're supposed to do. They tried a case in the 4th Circuit, and the 4th Circuit had ruled with us and so, we were filing a motion for further relief. And so the phone rang and I happened to be the nearest one to the phone. And I

picked it up, and I heard Barbara Johns tell me that they went out on the strike, what they did and all of that, and they wanted us to represent them.

I said, "Well, what you all ought to do, we have already filed one suit challenging the same agency, and we don't need but one to prove the point. You all go back to school now."

DR. COSBY: And this was in a rural area, too, wasn't it?

MR. HILL: Oh, yeah.

DR. COSBY: Yes.

MR. HILL: And so--but she pleaded so hard. So I said, "Listen, we were coming through Farmville on our way to Christiansburg on Wednesday. We'll leave a little early and meet you in Reverend Griffin's--" Because we were familiar with the situation because I had been down there several times to talk to the school board, and they were still claiming they were trying to get money to build another school.

See, that school, when it opened up in 1939, it was overcrowded the day it opened. So that was planned, of course.

DR. COSBY: Of course.

MR. HILL: And toilet shacks and pipes running from one school to another, and a big oil drum provided the heat, and then when it was raining or inclement weather the kids would go in--be in one building--and then they would or would not go into these other classes in these other buildings. It was a health hazard.

DR. COSBY: Yes.

MR. HILL: So, anyway, so that on our way up there, we still made up our minds that we were going to tell the kids to go on back to school. But when we got there, they were sitting up in the Sunday School room in Reverend Griffin's church... So I told them, I said, "If your parents will back you, we're not filing anymore separate but equal. If your parents will back you, we'll file the suit on your behalf."

"And now we're going up to Christiansburg today, and we're spending the night. We'll be coming back here, through here tomorrow night, and you just get with your parents." So that's what they did, and the parents were there, and the parents were willing to support the children, but somebody said, "Well, look, if this is a county affair, maybe we ought to take this up with the home county."

So this was Thursday night this week, and in one week they set a meeting for Friday night for the following week. And we got, Dwight and I got over there Friday night, and we had the meeting in the church proper, and the place was packed. People were standing around even at the odd hour and everything.

DR. COSBY: So you knew they were serious.

MR. HILL: Yeah.

DR. COSBY: Yes.

MR. HILL: So there was very little opposition. The main opposition was the principal of Cumberland County asked where we lived in Prince Edward County. And we understood his problem. We'd meant for it to--fight him in Cumberland County. But anyway, the county voted to back the suit, and so we filed a petition, and that was denied, and saying--they talked about they had, they were going to get the money in two years for us from the state and all of that other crap.

Anyway, we went on and filed the suit. And in the meantime, the day that the trial down in South Carolina, something had happened and I couldn't go, but Spot went down. And as I say, we appealed to the Supreme Court. All right--

DR. COSBY: You're talking about Spotswood Robinson?

MR. HILL: Spotswood Robinson, yeah.

And they, but some, I've forgotten now what the technicality was, some technicality, and they sent the case back to South Carolina for something to clarify.

And in the meantime, all of the rest, cases, our case, the Delaware case, Kansas case, all went up to the Supreme, and the District of Columbia cases all got to the Supreme Court. By that time, the South Carolina case got back, all five of the cases, I mean, the other four cases went back.

And either--I suspect that [the] problem was whoever consolidated them, didn't realize that "I" came before "O," and they had Brown rather than Briggs. That's what it should have been.

DR. COSBY: Yes.

MR. HILL: And on top of that, just like we--we should of had our case, which was named Davis, because we put the kids in alphabetical order, and we should have, the case should have been styled Barbara Johns.

DR. COSBY: Yes.

MR. HILL: Because she was the motivating force there. Anyway--

DR. COSBY: So all of those cases were consolidated.

MR. HILL: All of them consolidated and titled *Brown*. Now, there were three cases, a Kansas case, and the *Bertini* case, and a Stanton County, South Carolina, case were all similar. There were three cases the plaintiffs were applying, asking that the *Plessy v. Ferguson* be overruled, and the Delaware case--and the judge had overruled *Plessy*. And the school board was appealing. So it was a reverse situation in the Delaware case. But Greenberg and Redding were the attorneys.

And in the District of Columbia case, the District of Columbia was not a state, so the Fourteenth Amendment didn't apply to the District of Columbia. They filed under due process.

Clip 1-3: Robert Lee Carter, *Brown v. Board of Education* and the philosophies of various individuals working on the case.

MS. POUSSAINT: Help us to understand that Board versus Board of Education was not one case. By the time it got to the Supreme Court it was a combination of cases.

JUDGE CARTER: Well what happened in these cases is that the court would bring them together because one theme ran through them and so they would handle the cases as one and so the earliest case, would get the name, the rubric, Brown versus Board of Education because it was the earliest one on file and so that's why it became Brown. There were Briggs; there was a Virginia case involved, too but they were all decided under the rubric Brown versus Board.

MS. POUSSAINT: And your aim and Thurgood's aim was to dismantle segregation in education; not simply to alter it, but to absolutely dismantle the entire thing.

JUDGE CARTER: Well, when it came to the argument that you know, Brown – let's talk about Brown – my thesis was we could win the case on the facilities issue but if they got the facilities equalized, it would only be for a short period of time. So what I wanted to win was – my thesis that I – thought that segregation in education was injurious to the development of black kids... So that seemed to me that would give the victory, if we had one, permanence.

MS. POUSSAINT: Did you find that there were people connected with the NAACP or others around them who felt that that was too ambitious a strategy?

JUDGE CARTER: Oh, yes. Yes. I didn't have too much problem within the NAACP because Thurgood sort of protected me and... While he was there, he took the brunt of it, you know, I was free to do all this, you know, all these theories and so forth because he took the – he took the brunt of it so fortunately they all came out good. So he got the credit. But if they'd come out bad (laughing), he would have... I mean that's what – at one point that's what I, I... For a long time I worked and worked and it didn't matter to me or it didn't surface that I wanted public recognition for what I'd done. But then it did emerge and I really wanted it (laughing). So, Thurgood and I had a little... that's where we had a problem.

MS. POUSSAINT: Yes, because Thurgood really was kind of a larger than life figure and every person that I met who worked with him in any capacity, he was kind of like the 800-pound gorilla in the room, I mean, everybody focused on Thurgood.

JUDGE CARTER: Well, he was out doing this and that; I was (laughing) doing the thinking about the stuff that he was getting credit for. After awhile I said, you know, that's ridiculous; I need some credit for myself.

MS. POUSSAINT: Um-hm. Now, when the verdict came down on Board versus Board of Education and you knew that you had won, was there a sense of tremendous victory or what was your feeling at that point?

JUDGE CARTER: Well, most of the people – most of our group felt that [clapping] this is it. And I really can't tell you honestly what I felt 'cause I don't remember, but it was soon evident that this wasn't it (laughing). That's all I know and I don't know whether, you know, I momentarily felt that this was it; what are we going to do next and Bill Hastie, you know, the civil rights fight was over. A lot of lawyers felt that. And I – I don't know whether I felt that way or not.

MS. POUSSAINT: Really? A lot of lawyers felt that...

JUDGE CARTER: Oh, sure.

MS. POUSSAINT: That this decision...

JUDGE CARTER: Lawyers felt – I mean... And prominent lawyers. Bill Hastie, Thurgood I thought – I think. Finally.

MS. POUSSAINT: They thought this is it; from now on segregation is on its way out?

JUDGE CARTER: Well the feeling was that segregation was the evil and if you eliminated segregation we would all be one happy black, white, brown family. But when you eliminate segregation, and you're separate, white (laughing) family. White family's over here and the blacks are here.

But it was felt that segregation was evil and what was not recognized was that what this country is – the great evil in this country is white supremacy, it – it's adherence to white supremacy.

MS. POUSSAINT: And so that was not taken into account, you're saying?

JUDGE CARTER: Well, you know, see, you have to see things gradually. They're open to you. Nobody could – nobody could see that until segregation was declared unconstitutional under the legal stuff and then you look around and you see not a doggone thing has changed. (Laughing) Things haven't changed. And then you say, well there must be something else. And then you find it.

MS. POUSSAINT: And the something else was white supremacy?

JUDGE CARTER: Yes. The country – this country's dedicated to white domination and black and brown subordination. It is clinging to it (laughing) with all its strength.

Clip 1-4: Constance Baker Motley, The strategy shift from "separate but equal" to desegregation in the *Brown v. Board* case.

MS. POUSSAINT: You were still relatively new to the team when *Brown v. Board of Education* happened, right?

HON. MOTLEY: Yeah.

MS. POUSSAINT: Did you have--did you and the others on the team have any real sense of how extraordinarily impactful this was going to be?

HON. MOTLEY: Oh, certainly. Certainly. Our greatest fear was that, you know, we could lose it and then where would we be. In fact, there were blacks who argued that we shouldn't go ahead and push this issue of segregation per se. We had dropped separate but equal. We weren't asking for an equal facility for blacks as had been the strategy before. And since there was no black facility a black had to go into the only one like Ayla Lois Sypule [ph.], the black woman in Oklahoma and Lynn we mentioned earlier. So--

MS. POUSSAINT: So there were, there were those who said you're taking, you're taking on too much?

HON. MOTLEY: Yes. That we could lose that and then where would we be, you know. Segregation with separate but equal would be even more the law of the land, because the Supreme Court never specifically ruled on the issue, remember. The case they ruled on had to do with transportation, segregation on streetcars in Louisiana. It had nothing to do with schools. So we would be bringing on that doctrine in law as to schools for the first time if we lost. And so naturally there were people who were counseling against having that happen. They thought that in time it might happen, but it was too soon. But it turned out, it was not too soon for the Supreme Court.

MS. POUSSAINT: And was the driving force, in terms of making a decision, no, it is not too soon, we're going ahead, it was Thurgood?

HON. MOTLEY: No. It was the board of the NAACP that had to make the decision.

MS. POUSSAINT: Mm-hum.

HON. MOTLEY: And he was their employee, so to speak. And the board had to decide that it was going forward with this attack on segregation, per se, as we called it. And so that was a policy determination made by the organization. There were blacks who counseled against it. Why push it, you know, kind of thing, then it becomes law. Because I think West Virginia was the first state to do it voluntarily, the first and only state to voluntarily take in--because there were very few blacks in West Virginia. That was the other thing.

MS. POUSSAINT: When did you get your first inkling that you, that you were going to win this?

HON. MOTLEY: Oh, we didn't. We thought the best we'd get would be 5 to 4 maybe, maybe 6 to 3. We never thought it would be unanimous. That was our only surprise. And that was the result of Warren, Earl Warren's determination that it be unanimous. Because he was right. If it were divided, the south would continue to fight because they had hope. This way they had no

hope and so they resorted to massive resistance anyway, you know, firing black teachers who said anything about integration and that kind of thing, or black leaders lost their jobs locally. There are a lot of unsung heroes in this struggle. People you never heard of who lost their jobs because everybody knew they were the local leader of the NAACP or something like that. Harry T. Moore was killed in Florida because of his NAACP activity. Most people today never heard of him. So there were a lot of people like that who really suffered personally as a result of the struggle.

HON. MOTLEY: We, as the lawyers, never encountered any real personal violence.

Clip 1-5: Benjamin hooks, former head of the NAACP, talks about the importance of the *brown v. Board of education* decision.

MR. HOOKS: You know, when we're talking about Brown v. Board of Education, which went back a long way, and finally, when the Supreme Court said you gotta let 'em in, in Oklahoma, they turned around and called themselves building a law school for black people, put--went up in the capital, the courthouse on the third floor, took some unused rooms, put a few books in and said, This is your law school.

You had to go back, and they decided that's not a law school. Then they said okay, we'll let you in but you can't come in the classroom. Open the door wide and let the Negro students--this actually happened--sit in the hall. They can't ask questions, the professors can't call on them, they cannot interface but they can hear the lecture and participate, but in the hallway. In Oklahoma.

I mean, we had to go through case after case, up and down, and finally came Briggs, in North and South Carolina, Clarendon County, when a black veteran said, Look, on rainy days our kids stand out there walking to a bus line--I mean walking to school. The white kids in bus--buses. Fumes from the exhaust, mud on our kids.

So he went to the Board of Education, not for equality of schools but for bus service for black students, and the school board in Clarendon County said buses are for whites, not for Negroes.

So then they went to the NAACP and NAACP had made that fateful--fateful, f-a-t-e-f-u-l, decision, that no longer would we work on hand and arm. We're going to work on the main artery. We're going to work to destroy. We want to go for the jugular vein. We want to go for equality in education, separate, not equal and separate, but together.

So the Briggs case became the case with the NAACP, through its legal defense fund, decided to go all the way. It was consolidated.

The Brown case was contemporaneous. That was where a young black woman in Topeka, Kansas, had to walk by white schools to get to the black school. The cases were consolidated and tried under the name, Brown v. Board.

Now the black veteran who brought the suite in South Carolina, this story is not told nationally, but he never--he finally had to leave the state. They would not give him a job. He could not get the, you know, credit for his far--farming.

He made a tremendous sacrifice. The bones, the bleaching bones of black folk all over this nation are there for young blacks to see, if they would, and Emmett Till, of Georgia, people who gave their lives.

So when the case came to the Supreme Court, we decided to go for the jugular vein. Either it's wrong or it's not. We're not going to longer fight to get into these law schools and let you keep us seven years. The kids who want to go are too old to get a benefit by the time you decided.

And you know the story of Brown v. Board but for the benefit of those who didn't hear it, the chief justice was Fred Vincent, a Kentuckian, who was not in favor of integration. It looked like we were in for another loss, and change of national office came. Eisenhower appointed Warren and the story is told--I suppose it's true--that Warren went to Virginia with his black chauffeur,

looking at all the greatness there in Virginia, and came out the next morning, and saw his chauffeur sitting there, sleeping behind the wheel, and said, What in the world are you doing out here? Why don't you get a hotel room?

He said, you know, Mr. Warren, you know I can't get a hotel room here. And it hit Warren all over again. That here was this chauffeur whom he admired and liked, had to spend the night in the car because there's no room for him in the inn. No room in the inn. No room in the inn.

And so he recommitted himself to the principle of equality, and on that Supreme Court a series of things happened, death and removal, and finally he got nine white men in black robes to agree that segregation in education was illegal and unconstitutional.

A mammoth victory. It broke the back of *Brown versus--of Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1897. It reversed the whole--that was the seminal case. Name anything else you want, any march, any speech, any drama, any death. It was *Brown v. Board of Education* and those companion cases that broke the back of segregation in America.

I'm a practicing lawyer. It took me a week to see it.

Clip 1-6: Rev. Joseph Lowery, The beginnings of the SCLC.

JOSEPH LOWERY: I wish I could say we knew that there would be a student in, in Peking would throw himself in front of a tank because of what we're doing in Alabama and the south. But we had no such visions then. We were too occupied with the present age. And danger was everywhere. When we first met over here to organize ourselves, see, in the fall and the winter, the late fall, Ralph's house was bombed.

Dismissed the meeting, and go back and [meet] in February in New Orleans. That's where we did organize in '57. But we really--and we argued a long time about the name. The first name was the Southern Conference for Transportation and Voter Registration. We had all kinds of names, and we finally came up with the SCLC--after several debates--and we came up with SCLC.

RENEE POUSSAINT: While we were talking about initial impressions, you talked about meeting Martin Luther King, Jr. Tell me about meeting Fred Shuttlesworth.

JOSEPH LOWERY: Well, Fred was in Birmingham. I met Fred before I knew Martin, because Fred was in Birmingham. We were both in Alabama before Martin came to Montgomery. So I knew Fred. Fred was a tough cookie. He was the toughest of all, you know, Fred was--he was made for Bull Connor. I hate to think what might have happened if I had been there with Bull Connor, Martin or anybody else. I think Fred was--the Lord intended for Fred and Bull.

Fred was a bear who met the bull, you know, and they--it was a good match. Because Fred was totally fearless. And I don't know if Fred was all that thoroughly, philosophically and morally committed to nonviolence, but he practiced it. Whether he did or not, he practiced. And he made a terrific contribution in Birmingham. Birmingham was probably the Johannesburg of the south.

Apartheid was at its severest level in Birmingham and Fred was the man for the hour. So we knew each other, prior to knowing Martin. And we were all involved in--we used to, as I said, we used to meet in Montgomery monthly to talk about our common problems and goals and I would leave Mobile at 6:00, get to Montgomery at 10:00, four hours. Fred would leave Birmingham at 8:00, get to Montgomery at 10:00. Reverend Martin would leave town at 10:00, and get there at 11:00.

We always got there before they did. Took them longer to come cross town than it did for us to come from Mobile and Montgomery. But we'd meet them, we had a fella named C.Z. Chameleon, who met with us--from Tuskegee--for a while. He was a very distinguished professor. But he couldn't put up with our preacher exaggerations. Because every time we met on a Monday and so we always had to rehash the Sunday service. And our sermons. And that was always, you know, three or four sermons we had to go over.

And brother Chameleon quit coming, stopped coming. It was our loss, because he was a great asset and a great mind, great spirit. I think he passed away recently. He was in Washington before he died. But that was the genesis of SCLC. And frankly, we did not know that it would rock the world and one day Martin would get the Nobel Peace Prize or that Jimmy Carter would get it in 2002 because of the Movement that we started.

Clip 1-7: Rev. Wyatt t. Walker, His experience as an SCLC leader.

MS. POUSSAINT: Tell me, when you first came in to SCLC what you were faced with organizing an organization that really didn't have much of a focus and it had very few employees. I think, what five?

REV. WALKER: Two.

MS. POUSSAINT: Two?

REV. WALKER: With my coming and two people I brought with me it made five.

MS. POUSSAINT: And virtually no budget.

REV. WALKER: \$57,000 the first year that I was there, which I doubled.

MS. POUSSAINT: And yet the goals and the mission of the organization were huge.

REV. WALKER: Oh, tremendous. You know, when I look back across the years and look at the forces of segregation and the resources that we had to fight it, it's a miracle that the Movement could go forward at all.

Everything was a raid against us and we had most of the money in the early days came from Black churches and pastors who would raise... I remember getting on the phone on some weekends. We would--Dr. King, Reverend Shuttlesworth, Ralph Abernathy--we would have a list of pastors that we would call and we would ask them to take up an offer on Sunday so we could make payroll the next week. And to go from that in four years of my tenure, we had over a million-dollar budget to go from that kind of raising money. It's just a miracle in itself.

MS. POUSSAINT: And there were any number of traditional Black preachers who did not approve of what you were doing.

REV. WALKER: Oh, plenty of them. The ministerial alliance in Birmingham voted that they didn't want Dr. King in Birmingham before we came. We came anyway.

MS. POUSSAINT: Why didn't they want him there?

REV. WALKER: Well, upsetting their status quo. One of the ministers who prompted the "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" [written by Martin Luther King, Jr.] was a Black pastor of the AME Zion Church... Black people had got adjusted to segregation. I know people in my own congregation in Petersburg, [Virginia], which is now far from here, used to say to me, "Why don't I leave White folks alone?" I mean that was in other words, I was the antennae to cause a problem rather than the situation of segregation across the board. I mean, Petersburg was so segregated when I first came there, the Interfaith Ministry of Alliance was segregated and the first campaign was to desegregate the Interfaith Ministry of Alliance. Sam Gandy, Bob Williams and myself were the first African American clergy, but all of us were well trained. They had no reason not to accept us, other than the color of our skin.

MS. POUSSAINT: But you were in fact, for some Black ministers, some of the traditional Black ministers, you were threatening what they had...

REV. WALKER: Yes. It was mixing politics with religion. That's the way they described it.

MS. POUSSAINT: And what was your response when they would accuse you of that?

REV. WALKER: Well, I don't think we ever responded other than by just going ahead with the next level of the Movement. 'Cause you know, like Birmingham, the ministers there voted that we shouldn't come and we came anyway. We joined the battle against segregation, which was very successful. Led to the 1965 Public Accommodations Act. In fact, when we served the jail terms that I had spoken to you earlier about, it was 1967. I mean, Birmingham hadn't been segregated then and we were serving time for a charge of marching without a permit in a city that had already been desegregated. But that was the Supreme Court that we had then. We lost that case five to four. It was called *Walker v. the City of Birmingham* and the AFL-CIO filed an ambiguous brief along with other organizations on our right to public assembly and those are some of the anachronisms of American history.

Clip 1-8: Matthew Kennedy, Impact of the Nashville Student Sit-ins.

KENNEDY: Well, we knew there were great things going on. We could see the strength of the movement and how dedicated the students were. And when we could offer any kind of encouragement, many of us did.

One of the churches in the city, First Baptist Church, Capital Hill, the church which we later joined, was very active in supporting the students. The minister there at the time was Kelly Miller Smith. And the students met there and used the basement for their training in nonviolence. Of course, Congressman Lewis was a student at the time.

NVLP Student Fellow VICTORIA HAMILTON: That would be John Lewis?

KENNEDY: Yes, and Diane Nash was a student and a very articulate and a very fine person. It was she who put the Mayor on the spot, having the Mayor admit that treating Blacks as second class citizens was the wrong thing and an immoral thing to do.

So considering, I think we could say that great gains were made with minimum violence because the students had this training in nonviolence. Unfortunate for some of them, they just had to sit through quite a number of indignities, but the prize was won, and Nashville became such a different place.

Clip 1-9: James Forman, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

JAMES FORMAN: I felt you needed an organization and I still feel that way... You needed an organization that was committed to solving these problems using tactics of nonviolent direct action and 'cause we had you know, we had the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, but you needed an organization where people would work full time you know, where--that they would devote their lives to it and that's what we did--was sixteen of us. You know, we just--and we knew we might be killed you know. But yet we felt that segregation was so horrible that people had to work full time on it. You know, it's not a question of after work, you know... and I'm not critical of any organization. The three organizations or four organizations--we worked with them all. But our organization was different and we took a vow to each other that we were going to try to donate our lives to helping to end segregation in the United States of America.

MS. POUSSAINT: Sixteen people?

JAMES FORMAN: Right.

MS. POUSSAINT: And it kept growing and growing.

JAMES FORMAN: And we kept organizing and organizing.

MS. POUSSAINT: Do you think that the role of SNCC has been properly written about, documented? Or is it still--its significance--misunderstood?

JAMES FORMAN: Well I think that hopefully this interview will be very helpful. I don't think that the answer to the question is no because, well, we're trying to do that. That's one of the reasons why I was very eager to appear on the program to try to do what I could to help straighten out whatever is possible--you know, the historical records--and to try to encourage other people to donate their lives and not to get caught up in a lot of things that a lot of the youth are caught up in today. So the answer to your question is no, but we're trying to do what we can in terms of trying to correct some of that. We are trying to leave the historical record which is again one of the reasons why I'm very grateful to be interviewed and to try to share with you and other people, my experiences.

MS. POUSSAINT: In terms of the way SNCC has been portrayed or not portrayed--usually it's students, radicals, a lot of in-fighting, but tremendous energy and a willingness to do things that the more traditional organizations wouldn't even consider. How much of that is true and not true?

JAMES FORMAN: Well it's very true. I mean, I was at--during the summer project of 1964, there was a meeting in Senator Javits'--a senator from New York--in his home, you know, in his apartment in New York City. Roy Wilkins was there. He's a good friend of mine. He's written some telegram in terms of when I was awarded the Roosevelt Key Award from Roosevelt University. He was there. It was during the course of the summer project. He objected to the civil project. He objected to a coalition of forces going into Mississippi, and he objected because he kept saying, "Well you have to work on Mississippi from the outside." And I said, "Well look, change is not just gonna come just from the outside struggle. You know, we have to go inside." He kept... it's not a real question of ridiculing but he kept [objecting] to what we were doing inside the state of Mississippi because he felt that you had to work on Mississippi from the outside. This raises a theoretical question which is very important: how does change occur? I mean can you always change something from working from the outside of it or do you have to

go inside? And our position was that you had to work inside of Mississippi as well as to have propaganda forums on the outside. So that's an example of someone objecting, you know, a lot of the other leaders didn't quite understand, you know, what it is that we were doing but our actions inside of Mississippi and other southern states led to the 1964--helped to lead to the 1964 Civil Rights Act. And where President Lyndon Johnson signed that Act, I was in the White House when he signed the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

MS. POUSSAINT: Did that give you a feeling of victory or was it sort of anticlimactic?

JAMES FORMAN: No, definitely was a feeling of victory. There's no question about it because you know, some of our people had been killed. There was a lot of horror, a lot of beatings, but there's an aspect to this whole process... of the House on American Activities Committee because I didn't know that when I was at the University of Southern California that the House on American Activities Committee was holding hearings downtown in Los Angeles and did this for eleven months, you know, where they were interrogating people, bringing up people who were communists, this, that and the other. Also the--I didn't know that a friend of mine, when I was trying to examine my life at the University of Southern California, was telling me that the government had placed informers in various classrooms at the University of Southern California and that they--and then I recall myself in one of my classes standing up saying to the instructor or to the class itself, I said, "What's wrong?" I said, "When I left this country back in '47 there was an atmosphere of camaraderie, of togetherness and so forth. And it seems as if people have been--I don't understand it. They won't speak out and so forth." So the instructor said, "Well there is something that has happened... But you should not let that bother you. That if you have something that you want to say that you should say it," you know. And that, you know, 'cause I couldn't understand the reticent of my classmates at the University of Southern California. And of course what has--one of the things that had happened was this whole question at the House on American Activities Committee, the whole McCarthy period, you know, which frightened people, silenced people and intimidated people. These are kinds of things that we were up against and we're still up against some of them, you know.

Clip 1-10: Bob Moses, Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) Freedom Rides.

Moses: The Freedom Rides hit in the spring and early summer of 1961, and remember Cora started those Freedom Rides and John Lewis was on them from the start out of DC. When the bus hit Anniston, Alabama, they blew it up or firebombed it, and that's when I was talking about Diane Nash, because she and the group in Nashville really recruited the people to continue Freedom Rides. This was the big deal because the president was asking them to stop and CORE flew their people to New Orleans, saying we're not going to continue riding through the Deep South, but it was the young people who said no way and got back on the bus going into Birmingham and then into Montgomery. And Lewis was severely beaten during those times.

Well, they penetrated Mississippi. It was their entry into Mississippi which was the penetration of the sit-in movement into Mississippi.

Clip 1-11: Walter Fauntroy, Freedom Rides.

POUSSAINT: Tell me about the Freedom Rides. Tell me what that was like.

FAUNTROY: My role in the Freedom Rides was my first assignment. He said you need to go up to the Interstate Commerce Commission and begin petitioning them to protect these people who are going to make this Freedom Ride. I'll never forget. And I saw them off and I just had no idea because my view was that, you know, if you're right, God will fight your battles and you'll overcome. Brother, when they got down to Anniston and I saw those pictures it was a very painful and frightening moment for me. And, I guess all of the Movement people will tell you whether it's Hosea Williams or Andy [Young] and the others, you just have to trust God. And I don't remember--I remember only one moment of great fear, but I took a look back now and I was crazy to be goin' there and leavin' my wife and my children and then going down there and exposing myself to all that could have happened. I've been very lucky. Very lucky. And those of us who survived it are to thank God and do our best to continue the struggle until we are called home.

Clip 1-12: Rev. C.T. Vivian, Freedom Rides.

MS. POUSSAINT: Tell me about your participation in the Freedom Rides.

REV. VIVIAN: In the freedom rides. Yeah. Well I can take you through each one of these. I mean we had Freedom Rides and we had wade-ins and we had you name 'em. We had all kinds of "ins," right. But the Freedom Rides, right quick, and I shouldn't do this right quick, but I know you've read it, right. The Freedom Rides, they really started by CORE North. Came down, they had written a letter to John Lewis, you know, one of the guys who met him somewhere or whatever. So John then joins the group. Then the buses are burned in Anniston, he's contact us about it and we're ready to go. So we all go into Montgomery to get ready to go into Mississippi.

MS. POUSSAINT: When you say we--

REV. VIVIAN: Meaning the--largely students, but students and ministers. We were the first group of ministers and the students to ever move in the United States in the nonviolent action.

MS. POUSSAINT: Now was there any hesitation on your part?

REV. VIVIAN: No. In fact the only hesitation I had--I had to tell my wife--it was at a meeting at night where we decided to go and I had to go tell my wife. You know, I mean that was the hesitation for me. But there were--hey, those ten students, ten students took off that night. Took off that night.

MS. POUSSAINT: What was your wife's reaction?

REV. VIVIAN: Well, my wife's reaction is, you know, you have to go, you're going. Right.

MS. POUSSAINT: Even though you might get beaten, you might get killed--

REV. VIVIAN: That's exactly right. 'Cause Mississippi's quite different. In fact everybody had to give that a new thought when they talked about going to Mississippi. Is that you could be murdered anytime. You could be murdered before you even got there. In fact they were picked up before they got to Montgomery. They were picked up, 'cause that's where we were going. And brought back to the Tennessee border. And they found their way back into the state ducking in people's houses and so forth. And then a telephone call to Nashville and one of the cars came down and picked them up from the different places that they described and took 'em on into Montgomery, right. And some--

MS. POUSSAINT: You talk about this, you're almost casual about it. You know, it's kind of like "Well yes, we were risking our lives and yes we could have been killed and yes, you know, I was beaten, and this and that." Surely it could not have been that kind of--

REV. VIVIAN: Yeah. Well you see, the point is that's what training does. I mean you know what you're getting into before--it's just like with Sheriff Clark and all the rest of it. You knew what you're getting into. If you're not ready for that, you shouldn't be there.

MS. POUSSAINT: It's one thing to intellectually be ready for it. It's another thing to be standing in front of somebody with a gun who wants to shoot you.

REV. VIVIAN: But you didn't see any--you didn't see any change in me in either case, all right. Because that's it. I mean, you know what you're there for. You know what you're doing. You know the cost on both sides. You know the cost if you don't, if somebody doesn't. You know that all your life you've been waiting to get rid of racism, right. And you know until you can break it in the South, it's not going to be broken. And so let's get it on. And you got your best chance. You got a great leader. You got a method that as far as I'm concerned I'd already tried. I knew it would work. I had a God that sent me there.

MS. POUSSAINT: But you also had a wife and children.

REV. VIVIAN: Oh, but wait a minute. But they also knew. My wife also knew. And remember we did this together and that's so important to see. Is that our wives knew and we did it together. Remember my wife left Dayton and came to Peoria, right. She understood that this was more than just something that happened, right. And that--and she understood that the same God that sent her from Dayton to Nashville is the same God that could take care of her whether I was there or not. Hm? And we were very clear on that. You see, my family ring, which I should have told you about before, right, that's where it is. In the middle of it is a cross. That's what it's all about. Is that that's what under girds all the rest of it. That's what under girds it... Why you know, I don't hang heavy crosses around my neck and all that sort of thing. Because, you know, I don't need that. Point being is that it's internal, not external. Is that if you're going to talk about a cross, don't act like you're afraid of suffering.

Clip 1-13: Bob Moses, Black Voter Registration.

Mr. Moses: C.C. Bryant, who was head of the NAACP in McComb, reads in *Jet Magazine* that Amzie is planning his voter registration project with SNCC and writes a letter to ask for voter registration workers to come to McComb. So I'm the voter registration workers, so Amzie travels me down on a bus down to McComb. We actually start the voter registration in Southwest Mississippi, not in the Delta. This is now the summer of '61, July.

Ms. Poussaint: You lived with C.C. Bryant?

Mr. Moses: Well, when I came in, C.C. takes me in and I'm living in his house. He has two children. His oldest daughter is away at college and his youngest son is a high school student, but I have the daughter's bedroom and I'm taken into the family. We start out by--Owens, we called him Supercool Daddy, but I'm trying to think of his first name--but Owens comes by every morning. He's the treasurer of the NAACP group, a retired railroad worker. He has a fish eye--one eyelid that he has to prop up, so he wears special glasses. He carries his cane and has a very intense look, but people trust him with the money because obviously you can't have a bank account for this money.

And so every morning he comes in a local taxi and drives me around and we talk, he and I, with individuals who are small businesses in the Black community. They're doing tailoring work, running a little restaurant, they're carpenters, running the gas station. We're explaining to them that we want to set up this voter registration project and bring two SNCC workers for a month, and we want to raise money to house and feed them for a month. When we raise that money, we'll bring them in. We're collecting \$5 and \$10 bills and Owen is keeping the account.

It takes us two weeks to get this money together. On Sundays we'd go and talk to churches and so forth. So we get the money together and open up the drive. Two people come down--Reggie Robinson comes and works in McComb and John Hardy comes and works in Walthall County, the adjacent county. We start this work and we're taking people down in Pike County where McComb is first and it begins to get local press. So two sisters, and they're actually still living--Mrs. (Scolby) and her younger sister and younger brother, who has actually passed--come from Amite County and say they want to go down to Liberty to register in Amite County. They live close to the Pike County line but they live in Amite County. So, they naturally come over to Pike County for NAACP stuff. So we agree. So now, when I take them down, I'm not getting any physical opposition in Pike County, but when we take them down into Amite County, the highway patrol parks outside the courthouse.

It takes them--each one--a couple of hours to go through the form and everything, so there are three of them and we're there pretty much all day. Then he follows us out of town. I'm sitting in the backseat and the brother is driving. He stops us when we cross the county line back into Pike County. I get out and ask him what's wrong, so I end up getting arrested. This is my first time and when I get to the jailhouse, I asked to make a collect call because I've been told by SNCC that if they arrest you for this voter registration, you call John Dorr at the Justice Department and you can call him collect. So I did. I called him collect. (laughter) He actually was there and picked up the phone.

So I explained to him what happened and he asked to speak to the person. He talks to this person and when they hang up they say, "Well, we're dropping the charges but you have to pay cost of court." I said, "No, for what? Why do I have to pay anything?" I didn't, so they put me in jail overnight and then the NAACP came down a couple of days later and got me out. The first

line of defense, I think, was the highway patrol. Arrest these people and put them in jail. What that turned up was some level of federal protection or federal interference, however you want to look at it, so that isn't going to work.

So after that, I went out—C.C. took me out and introduced me to Steptoe and I stayed at Steptoe's farmhouse and we began working out there to get some people to go down to register at Liberty. The next two people--it was a few weeks later before a couple of people who were willing to go. At that point we meet with actual physical violence. It's like the patrol people disappear and the local young people--the rough-'em-up group comes--and so I'm attacked walking in the street towards the courthouse with these two people.

Ms. Poussaint: What do you mean attacked?

Mr. Moses: There were three young white men, white guys who come up and start to beat on me. One of them really is beating on me. I go into a crouch. At some point he stops, and I get up and keep on walking. I think what happens is one of the people with me talks to him, and he stops. I am not aware of what's going on while the action is happening, I just know he stopped. When he stopped, I get up and go on walking. It's kind of surreal because there's a funeral procession happening in the town, so while all this is happening, there's this funeral procession driving down the main street of this one-street town. At the bottom, before the street where the courthouse is, and the courthouse sits a little on the left, there is a highway patrol person directing traffic. When we approach him, I turn around and tell him that there's some people back there who attacked us. He doesn't say anything and we go on to the courthouse. I got a bloody shirt, so the registrar comes to the front door, looks at us, closes it and locks it. So we leave.

I call the Justice Department people, but before--actually what happens is, we leave and go back to Steptoe's. Steptoe has a young son, Charlie, maybe 12 or 13. He's poking around in my head and uncovers these gashes, so we go back. Dr. Anderson, who's living in Jackson now and who was a young doctor who had just gotten out of medical school and taken the job in McComb, sews me up. He takes eight stitches in a couple of places in my head.

Ms. Poussaint: You hadn't realized how seriously you had been injured up to that point?

Mr. Moses: Right.

Ms. Poussaint: I mean, with the blood soaking and--

Mr. Moses: And it's interesting, because I didn't feel--when I got back up I didn't feel nauseous or whatever. It's like, you know, it's like the object is the courthouse. It's the courthouse which is the perimeter which has to be defended against, from the point of view of the white authorities. What I came to see and think later is, well, the first line of defense is the police action. Then the next line is some kind of physical violence. Then the third line turned out to be murder. They actually murdered one of the local farmers who was working with us.

Ms. Poussaint: Herbert Lee.

Mr. Moses: Herbert Lee, right.

Ms. Poussaint: You had been working with him--

Mr. Moses: Right. Herbert Lee was part of the network, the Steptoe's NAACP network. You were asking about violence, I think the violence comes in degrees and is targeted, and part of it is political violence, it's legal violence. You're going to act on a legal front in a way which is violating the law, really, and if that doesn't work then you move through your different stages.

Clip 1-14: Rev. Joseph Lowery, March on Washington.

JOSEPH LOWERY: Chaos. Fright. Would anybody be there? You know, would these folks really come from across the country? Are we gonna look like fools up there with a few hundred people? Who was gonna make the speech? Who was gonna speak for us, who was gonna be second? John, you gotta tone down your speech.

RENEE POUSSAINT: John Lewis.

JOSEPH LOWERY: Yes. Martin's gonna speak, now why should Martin speak last? There's leaders older than Martin. Are we gonna have--the police gonna beat us? Were we--are we--are we really jeopardizing people's well being? How well will the President know about what we talking about? Will they hear us? Will they leave town? Will we get the people out of there without any calamities and catastrophe? You know, just worlds and tons of questions that we didn't know the answer to.

Because we had never really done that before. We had done a little pilgrimage, but we didn't--talking about a massive march on Washington, sponsored by Black folks. And inviting White folks, and some being a little concerned that there might be more White than Black. The reports we were getting from the East and around, these White folks are coming, what about the Black? And oh, they're coming, they're coming.

And we had coordinators around. So it was--but it was exciting. And when we got there, it was so rewarding. And still frightening, 'cause we didn't believe, we all held our breath, talking about waiting to exhale. We didn't exhale 'til every last person was out of Washington and back, you know, on the road, at least out of Washington. If something happened on the road, we hope it doesn't. But for God's sake, let them get out of Washington. So--but it was, it was very rewarding.

Now, the speech, Martin had made the speech before. He made the speech in Detroit a few months before that, at about 25, well, there's a dispute over how many people were in Detroit. But I had a march in Detroit, some years later, Aretha came. And we got to sit and argue about how many people were there when Martin made the "I Have a Dream" speech. He had made the speech before, which was nothing unusual.

You know, as much as we speak, if you think you're gonna get a different, totally different speech every time, you're out of your cotton picking mind. But of course, he couldn't make it anymore, because the media took that speech and it--from every mountain and from every village, from every ghetto, from every suburban, urban, rural area in the world, you hear "I Have a Dream" over and over. So you won't be, couldn't make it anymore. But it was a great speech.

RENEE POUSSAINT: Did he have any sense of how extraordinary the response was gonna be?

JOSEPH LOWERY: No, no, no. Had no idea that on every television screen in the world, it would be played so often. Over and over and over and over and over and over.

RENEE POUSSAINT: Why do you think it was? Why do you think it got that kind of--

JOSEPH LOWERY: Well, I think it was a massive turnout. We had, according to the--and we never can tell how many people are at a march or gathering--the press finally agreed on

250,000. We think there were 400,000. What we used to do is, if we had a march, I had a strategy. If we had 1,000 people, I would say we had 3,000. And the media and the police would say we had 500. And somewhere in between, the media would come out with 1,000, 1,500, 1,200, somewhere near what you had. 'Cause if you say you had 1,000, 300--

Because White folks cannot count Black folks. They cannot count Black folks, they cannot count them, there's no question about it. But at any rate, they finally agreed on 250,000 people. It was a massive turnout. For the, you know, the preachers down south talking about bringing folks to the national's capitol to talk about voting and jobs and all that kind of thing. It was massive. And we really, really, really were grateful to God.

And we prayed before. And I mean, we really prayed. But we prayed thank you prayers afterwards, because it was a great relief that it was done. And it was--the speech was magnificent. It set forth all the rudiments, the basics of the struggle and the Movement. It spoke to the conscience of a nation. He did not berate. He did challenge. But he left it to the conscience. And all the impact of the Movement has been greatest in those instances, where we touch the conscience.

See, the sit-ins touched the conscience of the nations. People sitting at a counter, being beaten and not resisting. Talking about--I had a lady in Nashville once to say, you know, it never occurred to me that it was wrong that you could buy safety pins at discount, but you had to go to a special counter to buy a hamburger. It never occurred to me how wrong it was 'til I saw them snatch a young person up from the lunch counter. And it cut my stomach.

And it's when you reach the conscience, it was "Bloody Sunday." When the efforts to vote, when voting, the desire to vote was so, so overwhelming, so sacred, that we were willing to be beaten for it. And I thought we were going to get beat that Sunday. That we went back that Tuesday, that we went back after that Sunday again. But we wanted to do that. And the whole world looked at it and saw the ugliness of segregation. And the evil in racial oppression. And it touched the conscience.

And that's why Lyndon Johnson, Southerner himself, could get on television and say, "We shall overcome." And signed the Voting Rights Act. It was the conscience. And that speech was the first time that the Movement, and Martin as its spokesperson, had touched the conscience of the nation and the world. And that's why it became eternal. It will always live. I just, sometimes, I wish they would find some other thing. Because we just pushing him in that, on some rotunda of sentimental irrelevancy.

And it kept him dreaming all the time. And I want him, I want him crying out in the wilderness for meaningful change. I want a reordering of priorities. I want a beating of our swords into ploughshares. I wanna beat these missiles into meat, you know, and these bombs into bread. That's what I want him to do. And, but they won't play that. They won't play that. But we have to keep singing it. That's why I'm writing "Sing your Lord's Song in a Strange Land."

Clip 1-15: Lerone Bennett, Jr., March on Washington.

MR. BENNETT: I did that thing on the March on Washington called "The Day They Marched." Some people say it's pretty good but at least it was an indication of that totality feeling and I remember I ended the essay which ran in Ebony by saying that for one moment in time that the hustler from Harlem, the intellectual from Harlem, the moneymen from Chicago, for one moment in time--they met for one moment in time--they were one and they would remember and they would perhaps have to come back and do it again. But that was an attempt to capture that, what I--the joy of a great--of a great triumph. Selma was another great triumph. Oh, I've been so lucky in this period to live through so many of those great moments.

Another moment--Mandela's inauguration in South Africa. Huh. You know, again the people, you know, South Africans, the people and all of 'em. And to go back to the March on Washington, something we've forgotten about the March on Washington and I tell White people this, you know, they say "Ah, we're gonna read about what the poor Black people did. They marched and King made a speech." There were large numbers of White people there that day. Labor people, religious people, people from various denominations. Where did those people go? I mean--and that day, unlike this when, you know, people say "Oh, nobody invited me." Nobody invites you to come out for your freedom. White women who won their freedom in the move... nobody invites you. They were there on that day and it was a total day for them, too.

Another point and I'm through in Montgomery and in Chicago. This thing about the hood and about some people don't want Black people to speak good English. Ridiculous notions. Montgomery, professors from Alabama State, doctors, teachers, laborers, all of 'em together. Same thing in Chicago. I mean it would -- we saw it happen, you know, that the society people--the people who finished this college. Everybody was one for Harold. And that's our history, but we don't always see our history that way. Such a great joy in it. We have so many--so many--much suffering, but there's such a great joy in it, too.

Clip 1-16: Bob Moses, Freedom Summer, Part 1

MR. MOSES: So it's different, a very different mode of action from the direct action in the Freedom Rides, because the Freedom Rides were like "I'm in your face and I'm here and I'm going to push this." With the vote -- and you can't vote anyway, you have to get other people to vote -- so the issue is also how you...it's guerilla in the sense that you're not trying to tip off where you are. I think we were successful enough that we caught the country by surprise with the '64 summer project.

MS. POUSSAINT: Describe the summer project?

MR. MOSES: We're in 1961 in Amite County and Southwest Mississippi. A year later, when we're talking about that bus coming from Ruleville down to Indianola in the Delta, in 1962. Between that time Amzie has called us back and said we're ready to roll. We drop people off in different Delta counties. So we have a striking force which has built up around the work in McComb, around the work of the Freedom Rides, and around the general sit-in movement of about 25 young people from Mississippi who are dropped in different Delta counties and begin this voter registration work in earnest.

One way of thinking about it now, in terms of a word that has a lot of runtime now, it's a kind of insurgency. It's what I think of as an earned insurgency. Earned in different ways, because you had to earn the right for the black population in Mississippi to decide that they were going to actually work with you. 'Cause why should they risk everything to work with you if you are somebody or a collection of people who were just not serious?

So you had to earn the right for them to decide that they were going to actually stand up and face this oppression by working with you. We earned that right over this period of time, and so it was the beatings, the jailings, the shootings and everything. Every time you were knocked down, by standing back up you earned that right. You had to earn the right of the Justice Department to actually come in and intervene when you were arrested. I think of it as an era of constitutional permissiveness. You had the Civil Rights Act of 1957 which said that you could not interfere with people who are trying to vote or helping people to try to vote. It didn't require that the Justice Department do A, B and C, it just said that they could if they wanted to.

So, you had an era where SNCC was permitted to go in and do this voter registration work. Terrorists were permitted to beat them up and shoot them down. Mississippi was permitted to lock them up and the Justice Department was permitted to get them out of jail. You had to earn the right from them for them to agree to do that. They had to know that they were dealing with people who were on the money, both in terms of their own personal integrity about this issue so they weren't going to get caught up in something that could blow up in their faces in the media.

Clip 1-16: Bob Moses, Freedom Summer, Part 2

MS. POUSSAINT: We were talking about the Freedom Summer Project. One of things that seemed to be a mark of that summer, which I think — I was talking to C.C. Bryant the other day, and he was saying one of the things that was new and a little -- made some local blacks in the area nervous -- was the fact that young people, high school kids, were getting involved in the demonstrations. And there was the protest at the local high school and that they weren't quite ready for that kind of activism.

MR. MOSES: I mean, C.C. wasn't ready for it. (laughter) C.C. wasn't ready. What happened in McComb, [Mississippi] so we were doing these voter registrations and getting beaten up and everything. Of course some of the young people were impatient with the slow pace. There's a difference between organizing and direct action, because in direct action you yourself go out. In organizing, you've got to step back and talk to other people and get them to decide they want to do something. So, it started slow — a couple of young people going to sit-in, trying to go to the library and that, and then they arrested Brenda, who I think was 16, and put her into this juvenile detention place south of Jackson, north of McComb.

What happened then was the young people organized when school opened that they were going to — because Brenda wasn't allowed back in school — march and protest. And so of course, that broke up the whole thing in McComb, the city and everybody. It was more than C.C. had signed on for, because he had signed on for voter registration, not direct action by young people. But it was also more than SNCC had signed on for. Because this was their first and only mass demonstration in Mississippi with young people.

Now you don't have the Justice Department to come in and get you out of jail, and so we're sitting in jail for 39 days. If we go to the 40th day, we're in jail for a couple of years, until they go through some appeal process. And who knows what that might be. So the money finally comes through on the 39th day to get us out of jail, but SNCC really then, after that, decides they're going to focus on voter registration in Mississippi. (laughter) So everybody reached their limit with that action.

Clip 1-16: Bob Moses, Freedom Summer, Part 3

MS. POUSSAINT: One of the things I understand was a kind of overall approach that you took as a leader was not to be a leader through a lot of this. Your philosophy was bottom up rather than top down, the traditional hierarchical structure of leadership.

MR. MOSES: So I was looking at what Ella was talking about on the one hand, which was the idea of -- the model that we saw was what she did for SNCC, which was -- or what she did for the sit-in movement. So you have this real grassroots movement, and what she is doing is allowing for the people in the movement to form an organizational space where they can grow themselves, right?

And come to command the direction and the strategies and see their movement to a completion of some sort in terms of its original goals. That they themselves should be agents for this, so that they don't become part of some other group's agency. So I become part of that, which is SNCC, and Ella sets this up.

In Mississippi, for the SNCC people, the target is the adult population, and in the Delta it is those three categories: day laborers, domestic workers, sharecroppers, primarily. What we managed to do is set up for a brief time the Freedom Democratic Party, which is doing in some sense for them, around the vote and political action, what Ella helped do for the sit-in movement around the public accommodations and access. So, setting up a group where they have agency, so you get someone like Fanny Lou Hamer who really emerges in her own right as a national spokesperson and she is able to actually grow herself from this being a sharecropper to becoming a force in the country.

The philosophy for doing that is I think this philosophy that Ella kind of exhibited. She actually modeled it in what she did with SNCC. From my ability to actually listen and learn and absorb, I instinctively took that into Mississippi with me when I came down to Mississippi. That's what was put in place.

Now, from Amzie and then we got strategy about surviving and moving and actually how to operationalize the strategy. I think the overall strategy -- I don't know any other place where I would have come across it. You see it in Dewey's writings, when he talks about people who want to work for the common good, often do things which end up being neither good nor common. And he says they're not good because they're done at the expense of the active growth of the people who you're trying to work with and not common because these people have no share really in the strategy and the actual planning of it.

So I'm not sure where Ella picked it up from, but certainly somewhere along the line she picked it up and it became part of how she lived to such an extent that it could be transmitted down to the next generation. That is, if you see something being acted out and you know how it looks and feels, not just how it sounds on paper, but how it looks in real life and you see it operating, then you have a chance of actually tuning into it. That's how I think about what happened.

MS. POUSSAINT: That summer, as I understand it, there was this progression from what Mississippi was considered to be, if not *the* most violent, certainly one of the most violent states. And the area you were functioning in -- was McComb called the bombing capitol?

MR. MOSES: After '64, yeah, they actually had a whole spree of bombings.

MS. POUSSAINT: C.C. Bryant's church was bombed, and I think something like 30 bombings and killings and just an extraordinarily violent period. It seems that summer of '64, when you were bringing in the different workers and the voter registration effort seemed to be spreading, you saw the common man. More and more of the people beginning to believe. In other words, you'd earned what was necessary for everyone around you to say, "Well, okay, we'll step to the plate with you."

MR. MOSES: Also, the group that worked in Mississippi from '61 up through '63, leading into '64, that SNCC group and a little cadre of CORE field secretaries, we all also had to earn the right to call the country in. In other words, there wasn't any way, once the call went out and the students responded to the call, and they responded to the call because of what we had done, how we had lived. But there also wasn't any way for the country to actually strike out, to come after us in a way that could stop it. So, part of that is what you earn, because if there was a way in which it could have been stopped, it would have been stopped.

MS. POUSSAINT: And the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, that whole effort, it had to have been in the end very frustrating for you. Because you did everything, you followed all the rules. You did what was necessary in terms of making a formal challenge and legal challenge to the Mississippi delegation at the Democratic Convention. Everything, logically, seemed to be on your side, and it seemed that the political structure basically sandbagged you. Humphrey did not come through for you, tried to stop the whole thing.

MR. MOSES: I think what was frustrating was also the revelation about the bankruptcy of the national political structures. And, in some sense, unpreparedness for that revelation. A lack of the depth of our own understanding about these structures and what could be expected of them. So, the expectation that they could actually, in a sense revolutionize themselves, because you're really talking about going all the way back to Reconstruction and what happened in the country with the Democratic Party after the Civil War and what happened in Mississippi with terrorizing the black people out of political engagement.

And we didn't have on our part a deep enough understanding of that history to know that in some sense that's what we were dealing with and that the country wasn't ready to deal with it. In a sense still isn't. I think that's what we're looking at on the education issue, because one of the results of this political process was that, instead of having politics which was going to educate the populace, you had politics which was going to do just the opposite. It was going to subjugate them. I think these issues go very deep into the country and its history, and so we didn't have a sense of that. Of the extent of the bankruptcy of the national politics. It certainly unveiled itself in Atlantic City. It's like the curtain was parted and you could see that there was no force here to actually push this forward, but also we didn't have a deep enough understanding of what the forces were that we were coming up against.

MS. POUSSAINT: Even after all that you had been through?

MR. MOSES: Well, because we didn't understand the history of how this...

I mean, on the second go-round, I'm really searching for a deeper understanding in terms of the history, to understand what the forces are that we are working with and against around this education issue, but it's the flip side of the voting issue. Because the reason for denying blacks in the first place, after the Civil War — the participation in the politics — is because you wanted to make sure they stayed in their proper place. As Conant [James Bryant Conant] has said — I don't know if you know that little book, *Slums in Suburbs*, but Conant was president of Harvard

from '33 to '53, and he set up the SAT and ETS. But in this little book, he's looking at what he called slum schools and suburban schools in the late '50s, and what he's saying is that the nation since the Civil War set up a caste system for its Negro citizens. North and South had to agree to do this, but what he didn't realize until just belatedly was that the main driver of the country's caste system was its educational system, and we run an educational system in this country to drive a caste system.

So, the understanding of that as the result of the overthrow of Reconstruction and that whole century, down to when we get there looking at the right to vote, we didn't have that.

Clip 1-17: Rev. Joseph Lowery, 1965 Voting Rights Act.

JOSEPH LOWERY: I guess I'm tempted to say that things that may have meant most to me personally were those things that happened when I was in charge. You know, when the whole burden was on me. But, I can't really say that, totally. The march, the Selma to Montgomery March, which gave us the Voting Rights Act, nothing in the history of the Movement had been more significant than the Voting Rights Act. At the close of that march, after Martin made his speech, how long? Not long.

He named a committee to meet with George Wallace to take the demands of the march to George Wallace. He made me Chair of that committee. And we got ready. So we checked with the general who was in charge of the National Guard. And said, you know, they had the capitol surrounded with troopers. And I said, "We wanna go to the capitol, to the door, to take the governor our demands. He said, "Okay." So he got on the phone right away, called the governor's office.

And he said, "Okay, go ahead." So, I took my little committee, about 12, 15 of us. We walked up the steps. And the troopers didn't move. The "blue sea." They had the blue uniforms. And I-- "Moses" faced the red sea--Joseph faced the blue sea. And I looked back at the general, as if to say, "I thought you told me they were gonna let us through?" And he barked out some commands to the National Guard, which had been federalized, you know. "Hup, hup, hup, hup." And then Martin--somebody--came over and stood in front of a trooper and show guns up, bayonets up on their shoulders.

And the Blue Sea parted. And we walked through on dry steps and carried the--and I know it's not as universal as Moses and the Red Sea, but to me, we were awfully glad to get through that Blue Sea. And went up to the door and Wallace sent his secretary to take the demands. I refused to give them to him. I said, "We're not marching 50 miles to give these to a secretary. I risked the Blue Sea out there. No, we'll give them to the Governor." So he shut the door in our face.

And we went away. We didn't get to meet with Wallace until almost a week later when the Methodist bishop--a White bishop named Kenneth Goodson--Wallace was a Methodist. And he persuaded Wallace to meet with us. I don't think anything in the Movement, even during my 21 years of presidency, and I was president the time Martin and Ralph were together. But nothing meant more to me than that. Because that event was so significant in the life of this country and the life of Black people.

We did finally meet with Wallace for 90 minutes. And all the while we were meeting, he was tearing up little pieces of paper on the desk. By the time we got--he had a mountain of little pieces of paper. You know, he had a discharge from the Army, it was some kind of emotional thing. But I'd said to him that "Governor, I speak to you today as a Methodist preacher to a Methodist layman. Not as a Civil Rights leader to a Governor. And I'm gonna tell you, the Lord's gonna hold you responsible for the kind of leadership you're giving. The hatred, the hostility, the violence that you inspire and you instigate."

I said, "You speak from the Governor's office, but the people on the street don't have your platform. So they take a gun and shoot on highway 80. Or they kill Jonathan Daniels in Selma." And he listened and bowed his head. Now, I guess I'd have to say that nothing was more meaningful than the whole thing of the Voting Rights Act. The subsequent meeting with

Wallace.

We met again later, when we had the march, the 20th anniversary of the March in '85. His wife was--he was governor again. Then in '95, he was no longer governor. He was in a wheelchair. I led the re-enaction. When we got almost to Montgomery, he sent word that he wanted to meet with us at St Jude. St Jude was this church and school where we met when we came into Montgomery. He wanted to meet us there. And so I called staff together and we talked and some didn't wanna let him come.

And I decided I would not stand in the doorway of his repentance--as he [had] stood in the doorway to stop the kids from getting an education. And so he came. And we sang, "We Shall Overcome" on the steps of St Jude and he apologized for what he had done in, in '65.

RENEE POUSSAINT: And did you believe that it was a sincere apology?

JOSEPH LOWERY: Yes. And the reason I do, because he had nothing to gain by lying. He had no political future. He was confined to a wheelchair. He could hardly talk above a whisper. So, political motivation would have been totally irrelevant for him. So I think he had repented. You know, before Wallace became a Segregationist, he was one of "Kissing Jim" Folson's boys, a governor of Alabama--big, six foot eight, nine, ten--governor, who was supposed to have been quote a moderate. Wallace was one of his boys.

And so, Wallace was never always the hard Segregationist. It was after he lost his first race to Patterson that he cried, "I'll never be nigger again. And he became what he was. So, his repentance, I think, was real.

Clip 1-18: Alvin Poussaint, Beginnings of "Black Power."

DR. POUSSAINT: Now I mention this because it's a prelude to a very important historical moment that changed the Movement. After that tear gassing and everybody was enraged, including me, everybody - I mean, just that they did that - the march was being covered by national television, all the networks, just like the summer march.

A reporter and a television crew went up to Stokely Carmichael the day afterward and Willie Ricks, who's a SNCC member, and kind of "What was your reaction to the tear gassing last night and the people getting hurt?"

And Stokely looked at them and Willie Ricks looked at them. They put up their fists, and what did they say? They said, "Black Power, Black Power, Black Power," and it went out on airways all around the country, which started the Black Power Movement.

MS. POUSSAINT: And that came - that reaction...

DR. POUSSAINT: June 1966, and that came two days or a day after we were tear-gassed in Canton, Mississippi. And Stokely was - everybody was furious because they were not ready to do the Black Power thing yet. They were still having debates within SNCC and CORE and the organizations around Black Power.

And one of the things I remember, Stokely was a compromised candidate. See, they put out - John Lewis was in, and they kind of - SNCC people thought John Lewis was too conservative and that movement was being pushed toward maybe Black Consciousness.

And there were some people to the left of Stokely, and Stokely was the compromised candidate who was going to somehow make some transition. So he was in the middle because he was joking on the march all the time. He would see me and he would joke with me, and he'd say, "Oh, there's Poussaint, the father of black nationalism." "What are you talking about, Stokely?" He's spinning around in his head where should - which way to go.

Well, after this tear-gassing, he got - and that's why, when the slogan went out, it came across to the country as rage, and everybody said, "What?" He said, "Black Power, Black Power."

And then they went running up to Roy Wilkins, the head of NAACP. "What's Black Power?" So Roy Wilkins said, "I don't know." Whitney Young said, "I don't know." King, "I don't know."

And it was the young people, SNCC and CORE people, who pulled that off. And of course, Bob Moses was on the side of Black Power and Black Consciousness and had been holding meetings throughout the South on Black Consciousness, including some of them in my apartment.

So the FBI knew it was coming. And he had such a following that you knew it was going to happen. If they knew - Bob Moses was like a saint or something. So if Bob Moses was coming to town and a meeting was going to be held someplace, all the local people and everybody would show up for Bob Moses. And he would sit there and explain to them how the movement had burned out, and the next step was to develop Black Consciousness so that black people would gain strength.

Now the thing that the media has never reported about this - you know, there's a very significant importance position paper, SNCC position paper, on the Black Consciousness Movement.

Some of the authors of that paper were white, who felt that the movement had to go the next step into Black Consciousness so that black people would come out of their state of mental and political oppression.

I mean, there's one beautiful paper. I remember she was a white woman, and she wrote a paper with the pros and cons of going to Black Consciousness, what were the pros and what were the cons. And she listed them all.

The cons would be, well, you would drive out white people, and you needed the financial support of white people. And she very systematically went through. Then she ended - she says, "But in terms of the future and where black people have to get, whom we fundamentally have to help, I go for the Black Consciousness Movement as the next round."

MS. POUSSAINT: And so, in a sense, she, as a white person, was more ready for Black Consciousness to come forward than some of the traditional civil rights leaders?

DR. POUSSAINT: Right, right. And these were usually white civil rights workers who were in the fields, and they knew what the situation was because they would come back with reports of awful dilemmas.

The black people were so oppressed and this went on so frequently which, if a white civil rights worker went to the local town, an area, a poor black section, and called a rally to be held so on and so on, so on, the black people would show up.

The black civil rights workers would go into town, call for the rally at the church and so on and so on and the black people wouldn't show up.

MS. POUSSAINT: Because?

DR. POUSSAINT: Because they felt - the white worker perspective and the black - that the black people were so used to seeing the white people as powerful and white people as being the ones you respect, white people have leadership, that it must be important for me to go to this meeting because they had the opposite image of black people and the black leadership. And they're not powerful, and so like they can't protect me. All the images that went with white and black would go in their head, and they wouldn't show up for the black workers.

Clip 1-19: James Forman, Black Panther Party

MS. POUSSAINT: It seems to be unfortunately a human condition. Tell me just a couple of other... the Black Panthers. You went from SNCC to the Black Panthers.

JAMES FORMAN: Well, I didn't go from SNCC to the Black Panthers. We participated with the Black Panthers as a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. It's not that I left SNCC and then went with the Black Panthers. We were attempting to help educate members of the Panther party and, you know, in terms of better forums and struggle I mean--I was recruited, you know, as a minister of foreign affairs for the Black Panther party, but I resigned from that position because I was informed later that inside--that anybody Black could join the Black Panther party and I didn't agree with [that] method of recruitment and I felt it was gonna provide a lotta--it would be the basis for a lotta danger. You know, if you're gonna say that anybody—because, you know, just because you're Black you can join the Black Panther party, I didn't agree with that.

MS. POUSSAINT: You wanted what kinds of--

JAMES FORMAN: Well, I mean there should be some kinda screening. Who's joining the party? I mean the Black Panther party, you know, all due respects, you know, to people in it and so forth and so on, you know. I represented, as the minister of foreign affairs, but when I was informed about that, I mean, I had to resign because I felt that there would be a lot of provocation, a lotta, you know, you could have a lotta police agents or people like that, you know, who might--who are negative. I mean I'm not saying every policeman-person is a negative person. That's not what I'm saying. But you could have a lot of provocation, a lot of people who are gonna find themselves in a lotta danger and this is one of those things that happened. Now I--what this--I was placed on the security index of the United States of America, you know, and that's the FBI's roster. And then they went after Black leadership, including Elijah Muhammad, you know. I mean it's been very difficult for Black people in the United States, for Black leaders, for Black youth to survive and to live, because of the efforts to destroy us as a people.

But keep in mind now, we're not yet two hundred years outta slavery. That's all I keep trying to urge all people to understand. You know, I mean there's some people who have been outta slavery eight hundred years, two thousand years. But we're not yet outta slavery two hundred years, so a lot of things that we are trying to learn and, you know, it takes time, you know.

MS. POUSSAINT: Things like what?

JAMES FORMAN: Well, things like even operating machinery, you know. Things like being cooperative, banding together, you know. To understand how people can take your property as they did in Germany, you know. And that--learning not to fight each other. Learning not to fight other people because their color may be different. 'Cause that's what the race war ideology does. And we have to combat that. I mean, we have to try to go through as much as possible to get as many Black people not to believe what was being printed in "Muhammad Speaks" about the most despicable thing is a Black man and a White woman and their child, because this affects the children. But first of all, it's incorrect, and that the--but people can get to believe that kinda stuff and it can be very, very bad.

MS. POUSSAINT: Why didn't the attempt to form an alliance between the Panthers and SNCC work?

JAMES FORMAN: Well, because I think the...[pause] Well when that was Ida Hughes birthday, you know, Eldridge made the statement that these two organizations had merged and I spoke right after and tried to point out there's been no merging between these two organizations. Now we're attempting to have a working alliance. We had--still had two separate organizations. The Black Panther party as well as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and that I represented both of those organizations even in Algeria and, you know, was able to get agreements with the Algerian government to open up an office for both of those organizations in Algeria. But the Panthers and the Cleaver [?] took up the offer, but you know, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee unfortunately was isolated from having any type of office in Algiers itself. But the main thing is that in terms of, you know, you have to keep in mind one: we're not two hundred years outta slavery. Two: every effort to destroy militant Black organizations or organizations for change you know, will be made. I mean like the--and that people have to be on guard and understand that and you know, try to have as much comradery with other groups as possible and you know, try to live as long as you can and try to secure yourself and your organization and the people that you're with -- that you're with. Now I have opened up, don't misunderstand me. At my 70th birthday party I mean I said very openly to everybody there that my position is that the time has come for us to -- to look at the other side. I mean we -- we -- we say the White races did this but what -- what has happened on the side of the Black people? You know, we need to examine that, you know. We need to examine are we being helpful to each other? Are we hurting people? You know, moral man, immoral society. I mean that is that -- I mean how can you represent an immoral society if you yourself are not gonna stress the morality question.

Clip 1-20: Rev. Joseph Lowery, Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

JOSEPH LOWERY: Well, that, that had to be, uh, the moment, beyond the four little girls. And that had to be the moment of moments, because, and, you know, it's interesting. I was pastoring in Birmingham. And I had planned to go to Memphis, but there was a meeting in Tennessee, Nashville, and a bishop called me. A bishop with whom I had worked, and asked me to come to that meeting. So I went, and I was going back to Birmingham and then preach, and then go to Memphis. So I went, I was going to drive. And I got downtown in my car, and decided to get on the train. Trains were running good, the Hummingbird, the Pan American. So I parked at the station lot, got on the train, went to Nashville. Had the meeting, got on, was going up on the Hummingbird or coming back, I don't remember which. Came back on the train. I didn't even tell them why I was on the train, but she called me in Nashville, and they told her I had gotten on a train going back to Birmingham. So, she met me at the station. Martin was shot while I was on the train between Nashville and Birmingham, so I didn't know it until I got to Birmingham.

And saw her and the children standing on the platform. And I knew something terrible had happened. I could see it in her eyes. Um, they had all been crying. And, and, uh, the kids and my wife, and I said, what is it? And she choked, and she said, Martin has been shot, and he's dead. And, well, we had another sobbing session at the railroad station. And she said, the radio and TV folks have been calling. They want you to try to say something to calm the city.

So I went and called Coretta, and I didn't get Coretta. They had taken her somewhere, I talked to Danny King. And then went on the radio and TV stations in Birmingham to try to keep calm. And I was . . .

RENEE POUSSAINT: How, well, how do you figure out what to say at a time like that?

JOSEPH LOWERY: Well, that's why it's important, you know, God moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform. He put leadership positions in preachers, pastors, who had all their lives comforted people who lost loved ones. And so, you, you pull on that experience. You pull on that faith in a God who is a God, lord of life and death. And so, you say to people that we thank God for Martin, and in his memory, don't desecrate his ministry. Don't do anything that he wouldn't want us to do. He was a non-violent leader.

Let us not resort to violence in the name of the non-violent prince of peace, and so forth. And that's what you try. You, you help some. You couldn't stop it all. There were people who didn't, who didn't care about the spirituality question. They wanted to strike out. And they did. But thank God, it wasn't as bad as it might have been.

RENEE POUSSAINT: Could you understand their anger?

JOSEPH LOWERY: Oh, of course. I, I wanted to do the same thing. I wanted to strike out. Uh, flash of anger hit me when she told me, at the same time the sadness. And you're torn between your emotion, and you feel like you're being torn apart. You want to stand on the rooftop and say, this is what we told you when you, when you are hateful, and when you are oppressive. And this is where violence leads. You destroyed a non-violent man. And on the other hand, you wanna say, uh, we have to honor his leadership, and take the high road.

And know that an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, leaves us all blind and gumming our food. So it, it's a, it's a terrible challenge. But that's the price of, of leadership. It's not a, it's not an

easy road. It's not a, a task that you get bouquets every weekend for. You probably get more brickbats than bouquets. But it's a tough job. I think that's what Martin would have wanted us to do.

To say, be calm, and don't get, don't get mad, get smart. Let's register to vote. Let's keep the movement alive. Let's keep pushing and fighting for what we know to be right. That's the way you remember Martin. That's what disturbs me now, sometimes on the birthday celebration, is that we get so wrapped up in sentimentality that we forget movement. Martin was about movement. You folks with these powerful cameras and, and tubes, you like the show him always saying, I have a dream.

But he wasn't just a dreamer, he was a doer. He was a crusader, he was a non-violent radical revolutionary. And sometimes, you ought to show him saying, uh, uh, he who lives by the sword will perish by the sword. Sometimes we ought to see him saying, uh, uh, the wages of sin is death. Or that saying is crushing of the human beings, or stealing, uh, bread from the mouths of the poor by a system or by a gun, is the wages of sin is death. Show him saying that neither Capitalism nor Communism holds the answer, ultimately, for man's well being.

Capitalism is wrong because it, uh, uh, makes people servants of the dollar. And Communism is wrong 'cause it makes the people servants of the state. When both the state and the dollar should be servants of the people. So that, you know, you, that, that's your challenge.

RENEE POUSSAINT: Why do you think it is that, that we, as a nation, want to sentimentalize him, and, and sort of, um, mellow out what were really revolutionary ideas and, and sayings. He got into a lot of hot water.

JOSEPH LOWERY: Cost him his life. Wasn't just a bus in Montgomery. It wasn't just who rolled, who owned it. You know, it was the system. And when he started to people's campaigns to talk about reordering priorities, you were beginning to challenge the powers that be. The powers that want to control oil. In, in the Middle East. The powers that want to, um, uh, uh, to, uh, give tax cuts to the wealthy, and, uh, pitty-pat to the poor. Uh, when you challenge those powers, you, you're on dangerous ground.

And we don't, we don't, we don't show him in that light, but we don't want to deal with that message. We don't, we don't wanna deal with that, with that part of the, of, of social, economic change. We want the sentiment. But sometimes, sentiment can become an impediment to movement. And we have to, we, we, we, we, we, we, we wanna resurrect the messenger and keep the message buried. And that's what I think is wrong with our posture toward Martin and his birthday. You can't, you can't, uh, uh, celebrate the missionary and ignore the mission.

RENEE POUSSAINT: You, you joined, uh, Mrs King and, uh, the rest of the King family in, uh, uh, encouraging the court to give a new trial to James Earl Ray, King's convicted killer. Why?

JOSEPH LOWERY: Yes. Uh, because everybody who's, uh, one iota above the imbecilic level knows that James Earl Ray didn't have the sense enough, money enough, brains enough, courage enough, anything enough, to plan and scheme and conspire to kill Martin by himself. Now, he may not even have pulled the trigger. I don't really care. It isn't important to me. I, I have some differences with Dexter over this issue. I think he was involved. I don't think he knew anybody else.

I think they kept their identities secret. But he followed orders, and he knew he was involved,

'cause he, he shattered, he, he stalked Martin. Uh, when Martin came by my house in, in, uh, March at Birmingham, when I was in, uh, we found out later, James Earl Ray was in town. And, and, and we were getting ready to go to Memphis. So he stalked him. So, I think he know, but, but that he was the mastermind? That's the biggest joke. I mean, Red Skelton couldn't come up with a joke like that.

Uh, so that I think, what I really urged him to do was, there was a fella who owned a restaurant, uh, over the rooming house, next to the rooming house, who died recently. He, he was willing to confess his role and name names, but they wouldn't give him, uh, what do you call it? Immunity. They wouldn't give him immunity. Uh, because the City of Memphis was afraid to give it to him. 'Cause the city, the hands of the City of Memphis are not clean on this issue.

Because we heard radio broadcasts sending the little white Mustang out of the city by east, out by the west, out by the north. All at the same time. All kind of we had firemen shifted from station to station, and police all that. The City of Memphis does not have clean hands in this.

RENEE POUSSAINT: So let me, uh, what do you think happened? How, how did Martin Luther King come to be shot?

JOSEPH LOWERY: Well, I think first of all, when he challenged the economic system of this country, when he put on the agenda the fact that there was a systemic inequity, he sealed his fate. They had to kill him. He was becoming too powerful. Becoming too organized. Now, they used stuff like, they're gonna have riots in the streets, because he's pulling the people together. They feared the threat of a non-violent, massive movement that was gaining ground among Whites as well as Blacks and Hispanics and others.

And so, they conspired to kill him. I believe someone high in government was involved.

RENEE POUSSAINT: Federal government?

JOSEPH LOWERY: Yes, yes. I don't think, uh, uh, the FBI published, and the media published, they had the room number at the Lorraine. And I know the FBI gave it to them. They wouldn't have it by any spy. But the FBI knew his every move. And, and, and, and James Earl Ray couldn't have stalked. I don't put it past Hoover, Hoover hated him. Hoover called him the biggest liar in the world. And Hoover tried all kinds, Hoover sent a, his people sent a tape to Coretta, which Andy says in his book was taped the night before the march on Washington.

He was wrong. It was taped the night before our trial on a libel case. In, in, in Washington. Uh, in which, and they sent it back, in which they had people imitating voices, creating a orgy. And I was there, and I know there was no orgy. And, and, but that was part of, and, and they said Martin a note saying, if you don't kill yourself, in a certain few days, we're gonna reveal this. And we sent the word back, reveal it. Reveal it. And Martin called me in Birmingham.

He said, Joe, uh, Coretta got a tape, I think you ought to hear it. Said, I heard somebody call your name on the tape. And, uh, and, and, uh, my voice is on the tape. And, uh, uh, and so forth and so on. And I got on over here and so forth and so on. But, but that was the kind of viciousness that the FBI under J Edgar Hoover perpetrated. So, I don't put past that they weren't a part of some conspiracy to, now, I don't think Lyndon Johnson knew anything about it. I don't think that. But I think somebody high in government did.

And I think some people in Memphis and in Tennessee were involved. I think some people in

the underworld were involved. Some people in corporate world were involved. I wish I knew the details. I don't. We may never.

RENEE POUSSAINT: And so you felt that with a new trial for James Earl Ray, that, that this would come out.

JOSEPH LOWERY: Everything that could come, people out, who we knew, uh, learned since Ray's confession, had been involved. Could have subpoenaed them. Had them under oath in the trial. They wouldn't even, and if it , they wouldn't give this man immunity. Is that what you call it, immunity? Yeah.

RENEE POUSSAINT: Mm hmm, right.

JOSEPH LOWERY: If they had given him immunity, he was willing to talk. He's dead now. So I don't know if we'll ever know. But nobody--it would take God almighty himself--I'm not sure he could just send Jesus. He may have to come himself, and tell me James Earl Ray did that all by himself, before I'd believe it. And then I'd say, "Lord, let me--let Jesus come and reveal the whole--I'll be like Thomas. Earl James, Earl Ray couldn't do it by himself. There had to be some kind of conspiracy.

Clip 1-21: Rev. Andrew Young, Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

REV. YOUNG: It's one of the reasons why I stick with those kids as they raise questions about their father's assassination, because even as little kids, three to ten, they had no bitterness, no resentment. In fact, it was Dexter who said, "Daddy wouldn't want us to hate whoever did this." In fact, he said, "That man, whoever did it couldn't have known my father, because he wouldn't have known that my father was just trying to help people."

For kids to have that much sensitivity so young, it meant that they were very fragile and that they would need support at critical times in their lives. I don't think I was there enough, but whenever I could be there and whatever I could do for them or with them and with Coretta--I mean, it would have--it was easy because I would have done it for anybody. And for Martin Luther King's children, see, it was just like Walter Young's children.

MS. POUSSAINT: In terms of a sense of responsibility or connection or whatever, was there anything in terms of, there but for the Grace of God go I? As I understand it, you were moments away from being right next to Dr. King when he was shot.

REV. YOUNG: Yeah, but we always thought--in fact, we always used to joke that people were going to be shooting at him and get me and then he'd preach my funeral, and sort of clown about it.

So, there was never--there was really never much fear of death. And at that time, I would have been tickled to death if it had been me. I was much more afraid of living in these United States without him than I was of dying.

MS. POUSSAINT: You would have been tickled to death to have it be you rather than him?

REV. YOUNG: Sure. I mean, I always did see death as a reward, as a blessing, as something that comes at the end of whenever you're through with your time on this earth.

Clip 1-22: Coretta Scott King, Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

MRS. KING: There are so many requests and demands. And they're about things that I am interested in, that I care about. And when you've lived as long as I have, you've made a lot of friends and a lot of connections. And sometimes the appearances maybe have to do with someone that invited you, that you care about. Or it may be an anniversary. Or it may be a birthday, there're a public things, where there's funds being raised, such as the birthday for Dr. Height.

MRS. KING: I was there. And I know you were there. It was just something you didn't want to miss. But I also have quite a few speaking engagements that I do over the course of the year. And they're just many other kinds of things that you're invited to do. And, causes that you support.

MS. POUSSAINT: But, but when do you get to say I'm gonna put my feet up and do what I feel like doing.

MRS. KING: I don't know when that will happen. I don't really think that it will happen until I get to that point where I, you know, find it almost impossible to get around. And, you know, it's like, again like my good friend and sister Dorothy Height, there's so many things that she still wants to do and there are things that I still want to do.

I have not been able to get around to a lot of the things I really want to do personally. Because there's still so many demands and the struggle. And I'm called upon constantly here at The King Center. So there's been no real retirement. I mean, it's just the fact that I'm not here on a day to day basis, and I'm not really making the decisions and have the total responsibility.

MRS. KING: But I carry the responsibilities, despite the fact that I am not here on a day to day basis. Because, you know, since I founded it and my kids tease me and say that's my fifth child, so, how can you detach yourself from your child?