

- Underground world of anti-segregation forces in the South. Programming and human relations involved creating illegal meetings of black and white students to engage in intellectual programs deconstructing race and racial myths and to share from the heart, forging bonds that transcended racial barriers. Our project was designed specifically to create small, integrated race relations workshops for students across the Southeast. I was called a campus traveler. I flew around in little one prop puddle jumpers to black and white campuses, often in remote locations. On white campuses, the student Christian association or a wise staff person would secretly organize a small meeting of students. On black campuses, I was often asked to speak publicly to the student body and publicly welcomed as a white visitor, a very embarrassing deference. In both instances, I recruited students to our integrated workshops. SNCC's work overlapped with these workshops as many local campus leaders who attended were also local movement leaders. Human relations projects continued parallel to the movement or as an integral part of it, depending on your perspective, right on through. This work was undermining and defeating segregation on the personal level, as bringing down the legal barriers would defeat it politically. I remember Ella beginning our meetings when I got back from a trip by saying, "Let's see now, what are we doing here?" She really meant it. In all the areas in which I saw Ella operate, she always said just what she meant. It was as though she'd thought of everything. And she'd show her thoughts polished and smooth from all her years of mulling them over. She never pulled punches and after accurately nailing someone's foibles, she'd chuckle. Although capable of righteous indignation, Ella usually found humanity humorous and her approach to people was always fresh. She was interested in everyone and she always asked where they were from and about their family. She was deeply and consciously rooted in her family. Ella was politically above all, pragmatic. She seemed to know that however much we think and talk, and however important that is, it is action that makes social change happen. She was always directed toward action, thoughtful action. Her notion of the need to raise up new leaders to rotate leaders, for example, was pragmatic. Based on years of experience of seeing folks join the leaders club when they became leaders, leaving their constituents behind. Her broad vision saved SNCC from numerous potential splits. Her, both and replacing the tendency toward either or. Personally, Ella was perhaps the most secure, rooted and self-knowledgeable woman I've known. She was an elegant woman, elegant and homey and warm. Her diction was elegant and her mind. I never saw her flustered or without complete aplomb and self-possession. I think of Ella now when I comb my hair high above my face as she did hers, a flattering style for an older woman. This is when it gets hard to talk loud. I think of her when I hold my chin high. She's in me this way, a role model for the age I have achieved. Until I reached this age, I didn't know how deeply I had incorporated her into my self. When things were rough for me later, after the movement it was Ella to whom I turned with late night phone calls. And she was always right there for me. I really loved her. It was a great privilege to have worked with her so closely. Ella's presence defined SNCC in many ways. One was the value assigned to women in SNCC. She was a woman and invaluable in many ways. So that sense of the value of women translated into latitude for all of us. Another was the value given to hard work at all levels. Ella was a behind the scenes, supportive person and she was invaluable, so even though I was white and chose to work in supportive capacities, I considered race appropriate, I was valued for my hard work. And third, Ella's views on leadership and the need for mass organizing empowered us all. As well as those we organized by shining a light on ordinary people both in communities and in the ranks of

the organization. This enabled us to give our best. Martha Norman asked me, in asking me to speak here, acknowledged all this about Ella's role and suggested I talk about what I was able to do in SNCC as exemplary of these points. So I'll do that briefly in closing. I worked in SNCC in many areas at many levels, always doing both the head work, and the hands on work in cooperation with others. I was able to see what was needed and initiate and move on, training others to take over what I started. That was what I could do, that was what I had to offer. And by doing that, doing what I could do best, both I and the organization profited. SNCC was smart that way. I came to SNCC as an activist at the University of Texas, a participant in sit-ins, picketing, theater stand-ins there in the spring of 1960. I worked as a campus affiliate over that year, before moving to Atlanta in 1961 to work for Ella. While in Atlanta, I went on the Albany Freedom ride and took minutes at SNCC staff meetings as well as speaking about SNCC's work nationally. I was a northern contact and fundraiser and publicist for part of the next year and then came on staff in early '63 in Atlanta, as the first Northern coordinator, working for Jim Foreman who led the way. I set up that program, concentrating on campuses and on establishing networks of information and support. In the fall of '63, I went to Mississippi to help establish a literacy project and became part of the Freedom votes and the building of the MFDP. I was part of the organizing for Freedom Summer, specifically charged with researching, training, and coordinating statewide of the challenge of the seating of the Mississippi Lily Whites at the '64 Democratic National Convention. After the summer, I was part of the paper, of the writing of a paper in SNCC. I was part of SNCC's discussions about structure and future direction and initiated a photo project designed to train young, black Mississippians to be photographers. That should be writing a paper in SNCC about women. In the winter of '64, '65, I began to shift back toward white organizing, moving to Chicago in the Spring, still as SNCC staff, now on loan to SDS to organize white Appalachian welfare mothers. A memorandum I wrote, largely out of that experience in Chicago, and mailed with Mary King to young women on the left formed the basis for much of the early organizing of the women's movement in the broader white world. So in this way, the women's movement traces back to Ella Baker. She is behind it, as she was always behind the scenes. Ella provided us with that example. She was always back there, willing to give with no expectation of reward or praise. That willingness, in the SNCC as I knew it, was the primary quality we shared, our very core. I have always loved us for that. (applause)

- Okay, good morning.

Audience: Good morning.

- Hello, thank you. Okay, let me ask you something, how many people had ever heard, now this doesn't go for the scholars and the adults and all that stuff, how many young people here had every heard of SNCC or Ms. Baker before this conference happened? Aha, this is a knowledgeable group. You're a Falewell, you don't count.

Woman: He's a scholar!

- He's a scholar, no besides the scholars. Okay, first of all, for those who have not seen, this is Ms. Baker, right the way we remember her. But there's another Ms. Baker, who was a little younger than this, which is this Ms. Baker, okay. Now this is the way a lot of us remembered her mostly. Now what's interesting is that

Ms. Baker at that point was the age that I am now and she really seemed rather old, okay. But what's important about Ms. Baker, let me start from the beginning. First of all, I'm just gonna do a quick intro, which is that I came down to work for SNCC in 1963. And then when I left SNCC, I worked for a number of African-American organizations, a bookstore that was started by a lot of old SNCC people in Washington, D.C. that became the largest black bookstore in the country. Worked for the United Church of Christ Commission for racial justice. All of these by the way, because of the skills that I had learned in SNCC. Then I went up to Boston and worked on the 14 hour series called Eyes on the Prize which was an Academy Award nominated, we didn't get it. And lots of awards and historic, 14 hour documentary PBS system series. Okay, but when I come into SNCC, I should say that SNCC formed me. It changed the way I saw myself. It changed the way I saw my world. It changed my entire worldview and it changed the direction of my life. And the way that Casey and Connie and Brenda Will and Muriel Will, are you gonna talk?

Woman: I don't know.

- No you got to talk see, this woman was the project director in Greenville, Mississippi, one of three project directors, women project directors in, four, cause Selma, four in SNCC. But in any event, hopefully she will talk. But when I come in, it changes the whole way I see everything, so who I am at that point is coming out of Tarrytown, New York which is only 25 miles north of the city, I should take my watch, 25 miles north of New York City, however, New Yorkers consider us Upstate because for New Yorkers, anything north of the Bronx is upstate, right? But we're only 25 miles north, had a wonderful childhood, it was Washington Irving, the author Washington Irving's territory. So I went to Washington Irving Junior High School, I went to Sleepy Hollow High School. The football team was the headless horsemen, go horsemen, go. Okay, but where I grew up, happy childhood that it was, there were no black people I saw with any economic or political power. And that is very important in terms of what draws me to SNCC. So I'm not coming out of communities like Brenda where she sees African-American leadership. I'm not seeing that in Tarrytown. So I go to Swarthmore college, esteemed Quaker College in Pennsylvania, right, full scholarship, one of eight students one of eight African-American students in that freshman class. There had been one black senior, one female, one black sophomore, female, and then eight of us coming in, the big push into Swarthmore. Four boys and four girls, so that we would not have to date outside the community, so while I'm there, though, there's an SDS chapter on campus and they're doing forays into Cambridge, Maryland on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and this is the first time I'm away from home, I figure who's gonna know. I'll get on the bus and see what's up. I get there and I get, I find first of all that it is a local organization run by, among the community people, the main leader is a woman named Gloria Richardson who was a strong, I mean I always remember Gloria, with she always had jeans and a work shirt. And could just, it was ramrod straight. Just an amazing woman. I had never seen anybody like that in my life before. Pop Herb, who was the funeral director and her uncle. He was really supportive of the movement. The local SNCC person in that, though was Reggie Robinson and so this is my first real connection with SNCC at that point. And what I come into when I see SNCC is a primarily African-American organization with white staff members who have the politics that allows them to want to contribute to an organization that is black-led basically. I see young people who are the age of many of you here who at that point in their lives decided that they would lead what a friend of mine calls a purposeful life. They made that decision and it was a decision. Now what I come into, though, is not just a political organization, I come into a culture. And others have talked about

this culture. It is very much a family. And so I didn't realize until reading Joanne's book on Ms. Baker, called *Ella Baker Freedom Bound* how much that culture was influenced by Ms. Baker. Now let me just say, Ms. Baker would not have known me from Eve, truly. First of all, I was scared to death. Everybody I met in SNCC knew more than I did. They were coming from local communities where there had been some historic continuity of resistance. They're coming from Northern communities, Stokely's talking about Cottenhagle. There were people who had come out of New York organizations where they had worked with Bayard Rustin. There was a political consciousness North and South that I knew nothin' about. I did not say a word in SNCC staff meetings the entire four years I was there, okay. Now, however what was wonderful about SNCC was that with Ms. Baker, with Foreman you got sense that they somehow knew the kind of things that you would contribute to. So when I come down, supposedly, I'm with Reggie and we were coming back from, for SNCC people. It was marriage of Bill Hanson and Ruthie. Now, I didn't know either of these people, okay, but I get to Cincinnati where they're being married and for some reason her bridesmaid didn't show up and I get poured into this skin tight little dress and I become her bridesmaid. I had never seen her before in my life, okay. (audience laughing) On the way back, however, we come through Atlanta, and Foreman finds out that A I can type 90 words a minute and B I knew shorthand. I never made it back to Cambridge, I become his secretary in the Atlanta office. Now, I'm gonna do something, because what's interesting is that when the way I came out of SNCC is so different from the way I went in. Again, I was little mousey lady, never spoke I grew and became more than I ever imagined I could be because of the culture of SNCC. And it was a culture which continues, so that all of us, whatever we're doing we bring that culture into whatever the work environment is and you all know this. People say, "oh, isn't that interesting that you--", well, it's the SNCC way of doing that. And Ms. Baker absolutely influenced that environment. Now, when Joanne Grant who did *Freedom Bound*, was starting the book she found in the King archives which is where a lot of the SNCC papers are, she found some notes that I had done of SNCC committee meetings. Now they're in shorthand and, so, what she did was ask me if I would decipher the shorthand. And what's amazing to me is I had not realized how involved Ms. Baker could become, if she realized that there were some problems occurring. Otherwise, absolutely, she would sit on the sidelines, she would wait for you to get an answer, but if she thought that there was a problem, like what happened in 1960 at the founding between are we gonna be direct action or are we gonna do voter registration she would insert herself. So I'm looking at these, I just xeroxed these minute, and I'm looking at what is a staff meeting. And I see she said something about, first of all, there's some problem with a local leader and Ms. Baker says, "what machinery was set up last summer to help so-and-so to prepare, knowing," she says, "that some people just don't have leadership ability." Ruby Doris Robinson, who was larger than life! I mean, when I went into SNCC Ruby Doris who had done 30 days jail, no bail in a South Carolina prison. When South Carolina was not the best place to be at that point. And so she did 30 days jail, no bail which is one of the reasons people say that she died so young and she got the cancer that she got. But when I first thought about coming into SNCC Penny Patch as a matter of fact, who was at Swathmore then, said, "look if you want to get into SNCC "you got to go by Ruby Doris," and so I had to prepare an application stuff. Okay, so Ruby says in response to Ms. Baker's query about what kind of machinery was setup to prepare this guy. Ruby says, "no attempt to develop him and, in fact, "we antagonized him instead. "We threw lots of college graduates into this project "and made decisions with him," she says. And then later on, they're talking about, we're talking about some action within this local project and Ms. Baker says sometimes, because she's asking what kind of preparation have you done to prepare for what you're about to do? And she says, "sometimes we must," I'm

going through the brief forms in shorthand, " we must delay action one day in order to plan for it "unless we have organization we're simply "going to dissipate the anarchy with little result. "Comparative to the time and the trouble involved." She says, "we also have to consider that working "in this particular community is different from working "in the rural South." Now what's interesting is that, of course, for those who know, Ms. Baker is 1940s, she is the field secretary for the NAACP. A lone woman traveling Mississippi, rural Mississippi, Alabama, southwest Georgia, Louisiana at a time organizing chapters in the 1940s, at a time when you could be killed for having a NAACP card on you. So a lot of folks would hide it in their shoes in the back of their closets. This is a woman who in 1957 is the organizer, helps the black ministers along with Dr. King, to organize SCLC, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, in 1957 and becomes its first temporary executive secretary. Temporary, why? Because A she's a woman and B she's not a minister and they don't play that. So and then it's in the capacity though that in 1960 when this sit-ins jumped off she realizes that there's all these energy going on. That the kind of stuff that she had thought would happen maybe in the NAACP, maybe in the SCLC, but didn't because they were a little too rigid and they were adults, maybe it would work with these young people SNCC. So she calls all these folks together here to Shaw University in 1960 April 1st, right? So when Connie talks about this organizing meeting it was full of energy it was all these people coming out as local leaders. Julian Bond, says he gets into a VW and with four other people in this little VW bug, travels up from Atlanta from the Atlanta student movement. How many folks were at-- 'cause I know Marshall is here too and Matthew. How many folks were at that original 1960 staff meeting? Okay, Debbie, Connie-- oh! Tell me your name.

Woman: Hank. That's Hank Thomas.

- Oh my god! Yes, hello (laughs). Okay, and back there.

Woman: Virginia Thorn.

- Virginia Thorn. Okay, so these folks were at that meeting. I'm missing somebody? Oh, no okay. And so there's all this energy going on, so what she says to these young people is, "don't associate with these adults." Not "don't associate", "don't link yourself, "do not become a wing of these adult organizations." 'Cause she sees this hope this new burgeoning hope. Okay, this is the woman who is helping to guide us as we're going through. So when she's talking about this she knows where of she speaks and what was amazing to me, now being the age that she was then, is that she didn't talk more often. 'Cause I get tired, you know you get impatient when you get this age. It's just like listen to me I know what I am talking about. She never did that. She says, another point in the same meeting, she said, "we must break through the pseudo-sophistication "of college students." Hello! (audience laughing) Yes, indeedy. "And we can't do it with overalls", she says. Okay, now. Okay, I won't go through that. At one point, she's also talking about the mailings because it's the manushya, that's what amazed me going through these minutes. That there was a level at which Ms. Baker, and this comes out in the book too, she is paying attention to the teeniest, tiniest little details. So one point somebody says something about we're having a problem in the print shop in Atlanta. We're not getting covering full time. She says, "well, is there any records of the mailings "that you've done?" And then she says, "no", "well, why not?" And then she says, "okay we need a shipping clerk." And somebody else says, "well, there's certain people " who want to do the menial work, but we don't also,

"we're not clear about who could do what and what--." Ms. Baker says, "well, perhaps a high school student could "be the shipping clerk. "A part time job, but there must be an orderly "fashion for planning mailing orders." It is always about how do you organize administratively and so she's operating at all these different levels. At one point she says, "pamphlets can be written at home. "We don't plan enough," she says "before acting, we must "plan the pamphlets according to emphasis and the line "that we're taking." And then she says, "busy-ness doesn't necessarily mean productivity."

(audience chatters) Now, yes, there's another part where she's, and then I'm gonna move on, she saying, this another meeting. Oh, this is dark, how am I gonna read this? Oh because the office was not being opened as quickly as it should be in the national office at that point and she said in relationship to a rally that was being held, she said, "someone needs to answer "general information questions. "We can no longer function on a free wheeling basis", she says. And then another point, she says, "give detailed thought to even the smallest things." Now, let me just say, I didn't know that I was learning from her. I did not know that I was watching her. I don't remember these meetings even though I took the notes from them, but what happened was that it was almost like osmosis that there was the kind of leadership training that she always emphasized throughout her entire career. And what it meant was that I'm sitting at one point--. I'm sitting at an Eyes on the Prize production meeting, right? And I'm saying stuff that I didn't even know I knew about how we operated. So one point I said well you know, she would never direct us, she would always ask us questions and she would say, "okay, if you do this action now "what's gonna happen in that community six months from now? "What's gonna happen a year from now?" Because it was always about the sense that we were just the organizers we were not the leaders. The reason we were in those communities is to build local leadership that would survive even our deaths and that was important. So we weren't just coming in, doing rallies, and moving back out again. We were building organizers and leadership and what's interesting is that we were the age that some of you are now, so to get somebody, 17, 18, 19 to think not just about next week. Yes, but next year, three years from now was an amazing feat and part of it was because she always reminded us of our responsibility to the local community. You know that in a lot of ways they were at a greater risk than we were all that can happen to us is that we can die, which at a young age you don't think will ever happen to you anyway, that what they were putting on their lines, on the lives with the lives and the lives and the livelihoods of not just themselves, but their entire community. So she was always talking about that and-- I think I'm going to stop now because I've gone into long, but the main point is that she made us--.

Woman: You're okay.

- Oh, okay, okay. Oh if I'm okay do I have one more thing?

Woman: You have about another three or four--.

- Oh, if I have another three minutes I want to say one more story and then I'm gonna end. Okay.
(audience laughing)

Audience Member: Take your time!

- Take your time, thank you! (laughs) Hello sir! Okay, so and this has to do with the environment that existed within SNCC which made you feel that you could do just about most anything which is very heady for somebody who's 17, 18 years-old at the point, at that time. Now there was a lot of people in the Atlanta SNCC office at that point and so I was form and secretary. Okay, so I got this bird's eye view of the organization when I first came in. So I knew LC--. Lawyers Constitutional--. What was the LCDC? Lawyers Constitutional Defense

Audience Member: Committee.

- Defense committee, thank you. Which was this group of progressive lawyers out of New York Rabinowitz & Whodean, Mike Standard. So I would have these conversations with them and then I would know the folks in the field. So MacArthur is over here, everybody's over there, all these people are over here. Okay, so I got the sense of what was going on in the support groups I got a sense of the southern community organizers, but I wanted to go to the field 'cause, romantically, that's where the action is, right? So I kept saying, "Foreman, I want to go to the field, " I want to go to the field!" And he said, of course you know he needed somebody who was going to type the 90 words a minute. Okay, so he never let me do this, well at one point he comes back from a fund raising trip and I and other people in the office, Mary King, Nancy Sterling, I remember. Anyway, he comes in from this trip, probably rather tired, and we are sitting in front of his office with placers saying, "no more minutes, we shall not be moved!" (audience laughing) And we're sitting down in front of his office, you know. Now what was interesting about that is that even within, you know I mean, certainly there was sexism within the organization it was you know-- hello it was 1962, '63. I mean 1999, 2000, has anything changed? But still at that point within SNCC because we were the cutting edge you can, as we say, call the question. So when we said we're not gonna do minutes anymore, we didn't do the minutes anymore. The men started taking the minutes. There were a lot of places like that where you could make folks realize the dissonance between what we said and what was supposed to really happen and they would do the right thing and I never, I have got to say that I was as nurtured by the men, as much by the men as I was by the women. And the unfortunate part of that was that when I get out into the world I expect that same kind of nurturing and don't always find it, but that gave me the sense that it could happen. So thank you very much, okay. (audience clapping)

- Oh, wow Judy is going to be a tough act to follow. (audience and speaker laughing) But she has all the history behind her with her notes and stuff and I have to rely on my memory. And, you know, once you reach a certain age (laughs)

Woman: Come on!

- Your memory has a tendency to fail you. As a matter of fact, I'm at that age where sometimes in the middle of saying something I say "ah." (audience and Brenda laugh) Got you. Anyway, my name is Brenda Travis and I was going to try and remember-- "ah". (audience and Brenda laugh) Yeah, no, I was going to try and remember the character in Freedom Songs, the 16 year-old girl, what was her name?

Woman: I can't remember her name.

- See.

Woman: They may not know Freedom Song either.

- Oh, yeah the movie, Freedom Songs, did anybody watch that?

Woman: They may not know it.

- Okay, so this won't go off too successfully (laughs). (audience laughs) Huh? Oh, okay. Anyway, first I would like to really thank and show my appreciation to Ella Baker for being the founder of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee from whence I got my start. I was born in Mississippi, in Mccomb, Mississippi and I became involved in the Civil Rights Movement at the age of 16. I was arrested for testing the interstate commerce law in Mississippi and I spent a month in jail and then later, I spent six and a half months in reformatory school as a result of my civil rights activities and there was guy from Talladega College who came along and he liberated me from the reformatory school, but that union didn't work out and that was when I met, Ella Baker. She became my legal guardian and having never ventured from my hometown of Mccomb I didn't know how well, during that time, I belong to the brown paper bag era. You know, where you didn't have a enough clothes to own a luggage, so you put your clothes in a brown paper bag. But after Ella became my legal guardian she bought me a few things and she decided that I should go to Palmer Memorial Institute here in North Carolina. Sedalia, North Carolina just out of Greensboro, I don't know if you're familiar with that, but I attended there for one semester and I called Ella and told her, you know, I said this is so difficult for me I said because it's almost like being incarcerated again. And, so, it was at the time we decided-- I had other friends that I had met and she said, "well, what do you want to do?" I said, well, I don't know, I have no idea what I want to do, I have no idea what I'm going to do, but I know that I can't stay here (laughs). So there were friends that decided or agreed to have me live with them in Illinois, but I did keep in contact with her over the years and then finally we lost contact. And I was so hurt when I didn't realize she was dead until a year or two after her death, but--. It's just difficult to express what I felt and how I felt because I felt that she actually taught me things that a young woman should know and things that I had not been taught even with my own parents. And it was kind of cute because, as I said after, her purchasing me clothes and a suitcase, she told me, she said, "well, the way you get "a lot of things into suitcase is you fold "them like this and then you take you roll it "real tight" (laughs). You take and you roll it real tight and that way you can get a lot of things into the suitcase, but after conferring with her after leaving Palmer, you know, she always had words of wisdom. She would always encourage me to stay strong and she told me the road to freedom was a long, tough, tedious, and hard road and she always told me to stay focused. And those are the things that I never forgot and, you know, I just wanted to say that I appreciate her and I appreciate this university and this state, I guess, for recognizing such a great lady and that's-- okay.

Woman: Thank you. (audience clapping)

- We're at the Q and A section, if anybody wants to--.

Woman: You got to say something!

- I've gotta say something?

Woman: Yes! You do your piece 'cause you were gonna say something before. Yes! (audience chatter) Well this is really extemporaneous. Okay, well I met Ms. Baker in one of those interminable meetings. I remember meeting her in Waveland and somewhere along the line saying to my friend Cynthia Washington, "I'm gonna go out and get some crawfish and beer, "I'll be back." And six hours later, I came back and they were still talking (laughs).

(audience laughing) And Ms. Baker and William Porter, I have this picture that's why I'm remembering this and several other people, and I sort of walked away and we had our own huddle outside in that first Waveland meeting so we can develop a position. Because we always talked about the profound things. I mean really saw ourselves as moving the earth. You know, and that we were the catalytic agents for that and if it cost our lives we, and I don't say this lightly, we were prepared to put it out there. You know and that regard, people made decisions about how they were going to go and some of us went unexpectedly. We paid a very high price, a very high price, for our work. I can't say that I met her on the road when I was doing PD work, Project Director work. I was pretty tough and I ran a very tight ship, had to, didn't lose any people. That's how you counted your successes and we were able to deal with, I mean, because Greenville was the liberal area of Mississippi although I ran two counties that were not too liberal, so that when we had to do the mock election campaign, etcetera, to show that if Blacks could vote they would vote. Greenville had to carry the weight for other parts of the state where even participating in the mock election would get you killed. Even when we were there in 1960, I can tell you that in the fall was the NAACP recruitment drive for their membership and that was a very dangerous time, it also happen to be at the same time hunting season. And so on the back of all the pickup trucks you saw the rifles and, of course, there were lots of accidents during that period. So you can imagine what Ms. Baker's life must have been like in 1940 traveling the back roads of the South as a field secretary had they known that in this woman dressed in a suit with her hat on. The epitome of lady hood carried the baggage of the movement. I mean it was really quite, what is it? Ingenuous. I don't know if any of you have seen the movie The Battle of Algiers, but that's a movie you should try to see in your lifetime and one of the scenes I'll never forget in that movie is the usage of women and children actually to carry the message of the movement. When the French were looking for men and as you know the French battled for Algiers vociferously, I mean, they lost, they took no prisoners. And I might say the South took no prisoners as well. I had the experience, and maybe at some point during the conference I will tell you where I ran the statewide COFO office and as part of my work. I had the responsibility of doing a statewide call twice a day in the state of Mississippi we used what was called the wide area telephone system which allowed us to rather cheaply call our various projects and sometimes we had as many as 15, 16, excuse me, as few as 15 or 16, sometimes we had as many as 50, depending on the proliferation of projects from a center. We used, annexed on part of Core, Southern Core, which was a little different and a little bit more radical than Northern Core function with us and we actually, the Core people fed us. When we were in the COFO office we had no money. None. We ate when somebody came by to feed us. Somebody came by, the guy from the Southern Core office promise to come by at least once a week. So we can eat once a week, we worked 18 hours a day and at some point I closed the office because I said we

can't run this, just can't run it. We had the FBI, we had the State Sovereignty Commission, a very difficult time. This is a real sign that you're getting old because I use to be able to tell this story without tears. (audience and speaker laughing) Ms. Baker, rejoined my life when I got married and had my first child, in fact, she's the godmother of my daughter Bio and I have to tell you we had this African naming ceremony and Babo Latunji came and beat the drums and called on the ancestors and Ms. Baker was there and you know she still had the suit and hat (laughing). (audience laughing) She was real cute. I don't know what's going on, but it's okay (laughing). (audience laughing) And from that point on, we remained very close friends, and in fact, we became confidants and I spent most of her last years we spent together sitting on the couch sharing a beer, eating boiled egg and talking about the movement and she was a wonderful, wonderful, woman. So with having said all that extemporaneously I'll go into questions or comments anybody might like to. Yes, go right ahead.

- I'd just want to say that I think a lot of you all haven't seen Freedom Song the movie that was made for television and it's gonna be shown here at the conference and I really wanna recommend it and I want you all to look at that and know that that, who you recognize immediately that that 16 year-old is Brenda Travis. And I wanted to say that I remember back in Atlanta, Ella saying to me, do you know they put that child in reform school? And I'm just really glad because I don't know if we've ever met, but I'm just glad that Brenda Travis is here because I remember feeling the pain for that 16 year-old in reform school for sitting-in and I want you to see her in that movie. (audience clapping)

- Any questions, any comments, any thoughts, any ramblings? (audience laughing)
Yes. (audience member drowned out by distance) Okay.
(audience laughing)

- Which one of you can speak for (mumbles) 40 years later to give an assessment of what we have accomplished on the state on the African American community today, 40 years later? Don't be shy.

- I never was shy, so I'll try to at least start the ball going and then maybe somebody else can pick up. I have to say in the context of what we tried to do SNCC became, SNCC was a very small organization, but it had dedicated membership and when you have a dedicated membership you can move all kinds of mountains. What we didn't realize was that when you crawl across one mountain there's another mountain and it's even bigger, you know, and nor did we think that all of the forces would finally gather to our detriment and in many ways, we did-- let's talk about what we did do. And then we can talk about the roll back in many ways. SNCC brought denims to the fashion world. (audience and speaker laughing) Before SNCC only farmers wore denim, okay. We opened up Mississippi, I mean Mississippi was like a big prison as far as I'm concerned. It was a state that had even in slavery had said if you can't deal with your slaves up there where you are send them to Mississippi we know how to take care of 'em. So we showed that Mississippi was not an insurmountable, but I will tell you from those calls around. My calls to the SNCC offices daily became from that COFO office came a death count. That was what I was getting. I was getting the names of young, particularly, young black men who had disappeared, who had been found. You may remember that when Chaney, Schwerner and Goodman were located finally, when the government finally decided that \$10,000 was not gonna buy information, but they had to go at least \$100,000 to pull that kind of information and

they started dredging the rivers, the state of Mississippi they found so many headless people, they stopped dredging. It was even phenomenal for them and the Army Corps. Of Engineers does not move easily. We were able to raise the issue as Casey mentioned the beginnings of the feminist movement actually had very clearly their tentacles in SNCC. We worked very hard, in fact, I remember sending two organizers to work with Caesar Chavez in California. At the time, I don't remember if you know there still is a strike against grapes and that that was an effort at that point Chicanos were laying down before the trucks coming out of, off a little town I can't think of it, it begins with a "B", but it will come to mind. Bakersfield! Bah, Bakersfield, right! And they were losing their lives Chicanos don't count so we don't report that information. In any case, we send two field workers to work on that behalf, so we began to forge alliances which was one of the interesting things about SNCC. We were not territorial, we were quite prepared to help anybody going down the same road we were going. We developed local leadership. Unfortunately, what happens in this country is when we got to the development of leadership we had both the democratic or the republican party to look at and neither one of them was look at us. So we were, in many ways, back to what do you do with a national and an implacable local leadership that just won't yield any of the real substantive gains? What else do you think we did before we start talking about what they did to us?

Woman: We changed us.

- We changed us. Yes, we certainly did. All of us are quite different from just everybody else I know. Oh, yes, go ahead. Calling on you, yes sister, go ahead. (distance drowns out the speaker) Yes.

Woman: Can you stand up, Gwen? (distance drowns out the speaker) (audience laughing)

- Gave rise, I think Mississippi gave rise to a very strong and viable and fiercely independent Alabama movement.

Audience Member: Okay.

Audience Member: Yeah.

- I think we did something about culture in our hair and who we are as a people and that sense of equality what we see through the legal system, but within ourselves and when our interactions will be with people.

- On the business about African awareness SNCC-- oh, Forman, sorry, go ahead Forman.

- I just want to reinforce something that you said about opening up Mississippi a lot, we did a lot of other things because I was at a meeting with civil project in 1964 at Senator Javits' house if anyone has permission to quote me on this and Roy Wilkins was there and we were discussing the civil project in Mississippi and as you recall and he was NAACP with one of the correspondence. (static drowns out the speaker) So Roy and I were discussing Mississippi and he said it would be foolish to be in Mississippi. Now this is the director of NAACP, national director, not just the local chapter. So because, I said, well he felt that we were wasting our time because Mississippi should be changed from the outside and my discussion, I

said, well while we're working there that the change doesn't necessarily come from the outside. We had a long discussion and I said, well look after-- your organization is a part of one of the four organizations sponsoring Mississippi's civil project and I said well, how is it that you take this position and yet you still want to squash it. Well, so that's the way it is. I just think the change comes from the outside you shouldn't be inside of Mississippi and I said that I'm not gonna withdraw from the sponsorship of civil project and that may help you to reinforce it because we did do that and opening up Mississippi helped to open up the end of segregation in the United States. And another little point, but I want to make later on is Julie and I had some disagreements about the city of-- (laughing drowns out speaker)

- And that was typical. Yes?

- Yeah, another point since you're on this point about the political parties. One of the things that started sharpening the politics, but also breaking down the movement in Alabama was in the summer of '65 SCLC got a grant, I think from the Ford Foundation to do organizing in Alabama and they were, the whole training staff was trained to go down and register black people into the Alabama democratic party. Which had a slogan, said "white supremacy for the right" and SNCC was trying in five or six counties, Wilcox, Green, Lowndes, Sumter, yes, several to freedom organizations some of them survived, some of them didn't last county, but came a national symbol because it's such a wonderful success. That summer I was trying to build some consciousness within this scope group, summer community organizing political education project. And I couldn't get any hearing, actually one of the few people in the SCLC who would listen and talk about this was Martin Luther King himself and I got stranded by their people leading a recruiting project up north and head to walk my way back down to Washington and Walter Fontroy called Martin and Martin told me to meet him at the airport gave me \$25 and a plan ticket to Atlanta said give 'em hell Arkansas go back there and try to deal with it and I tried to reopen communications with SNCC and to kind of shake up some of this scope thing to be aware and supportive of SNCC's independent work, but I couldn't communicate with SNCC 'cause things were breaking down and then I got thrown in jail for the rest of the year and when I came back in the beginning of '66 almost everything was totally.

Woman: Chaotic.

- It was a different world in '66 then it was in '65 and it was hard to, it was hard to start over again, but the Lowndes county which I guess people will be speaking about this week was an absolute symbol of what it was all about. It was like COFO in spades, but concentrated in one area where the people really developed and it's still survives, I mean, the name of the organization changed, but the same people still run the county now that began the organization back in '65.

Woman: Okay, thank you. (audience member drowned out by distance) I just want--. Okay, yes, go ahead.

- It's important thing that SNCC did. We broke down HUAC--.

Man: What was that?

Both: HUAC.

Woman: House Un-American Activities Committee.

Woman: And what was HUAC?

- House Un-American Activities.

Woman: But what was it?

- It was a McCarthy type committee that called everybody communist if you did anything that was for the good of the world, for the good of the order if you will. For, you know--. And we just refused, I mean I can see Forman right now and we're 18 years-old, Judy, right? We're young and this is a carry over from McCarthy if you know about the 50s and the Cold War and all of that and we had consciousness. I mean I can never ever finish talking about what SNCC did for us and for this nation as young people. And so we're grappling and understanding profoundly what anti-communism is and how people being wet-baited and we had some understanding of those who were blacklisted, who went to prison in the 50s and so forth. We made alliances with those kinds of folks. In other words, we probably as young people the first of the anti-communist, foreign, to go and fight this. And so that was tremendous, HUAC. The anti-Vietnam movement.

Woman: Yeah, SNCC had the first demonstration against the war in Vietnam. A busload of people from Mississippi came to the justice department and put it on the map that there was this war going on and we didn't like it and didn't want any parts of it.

Woman: Hell no we won't go Freedom Singers and I'm gonna sit down. I'm going to sit down in a minute, Marvin. (audience laughing)

Woman: It's like a SNCC meeting.

- Use your ears for two seconds, on Vietnam what got (coughing drowns out speaker).

Woman: No, sit up, Mike all seven feet of you.

- Just a minute. It was the FDP office in McComb that got upset because of a young local guy who had been working.

Woman: Got drafted.

- Had got sent to Vietnam.

Woman: Right.

- Got killed there when he came back and they tried to bury him in the official cemetery, the white cemetery if you will, the people of color wouldn't allow him to be buried and at that point people got provoked and said to hell with this war in Vietnam.

Woman: Okay.

- And concentrate on what's going on in Mississippi. That's all that happened.

- I just wanted to say that in terms of some of the other things that SNCC did, we began to make forays internationally which may have been one of the things that put us on the map on Washington, D.C. on a very long desk by people with lots of uniforms who made some decisions about, "oh no you won't!" But SNCC had a trip that, remember the name Oginga Odinga? Okay, African revolutionary went into various anti-colonial, had a visitation on the continent basically hosted by anti-colonial personages. In 1963, several of us got invited to other overseas operations, obviously dealing with student movements. I got invited through a mechanism that shall go nameless to Southeast Asia where anti-colonial activities were occurring and you know that anti-colonialism activities were equated with communism and you do realize that that's how they, you know, so anyway. So I had an interesting debriefing at the state department and we shall talk about that at another time. And there were people who went to Japan, so we began to make those kinds of correspondences, just give you this aside though in terms of impact, I was driving down the street in a chauffeured car in the middle of Manila, Philippines with this man whom I did not like and we were driving, his driver was driving I should say, and we were in the back and he, we had been together several times and I had seen his house which was quite some house and he rolled the window up between the chauffeur and us and he turned around, and me rather, and he turned and he said something that was really very peculiar, but it always stuck with me. He says, "we are watching you" he says, "I represent a group of people who are trying "to get the Taino language"-- no excuse me, "the Tagalog language back into our usage." In the Philippines, Filipinos are not allowed to use their own native language, they had to speak Spanish and that was one of the steps towards self-awareness, self-determination, he says, "we have been watching "the student movement and you are a part of the student "movement in the United States," he says, "I'm really proud to have met you "and I want you to know that you are part of our combustion." And I really felt really good about that because, boy, did the state department want to know about that later. (audience laughing) Okay, anybody else? Any other comments, in other-- Yes, go ahead. Go 'head. (distance drowns out the speaker)

- Can you talk up? We didn't go to the movies, we had no desire to go to a movie or to do any of those entrainment type things. Now our social outlet, thanks to people like Forman, (static and distance drowns out the speaker) We studied, we read a lot, we entered new concepts in our vocabulary called consciousness. (static and distance drowns out the speaker) It was just a whole different transition in our thinking. I can still hear Forman talking about control, conflict, and change and how we got enjoyment out of reading these kinds of books (static and distance drowns out the speaker) Instead of these-- (static and distance drowns out the speaker) So, I don't want to belabor the point, but the concept I'm saying in terms of what we saw as entertaining we transformed what was the real meaning of education. You know H. Rap Brown has a wonderful speech on that that you should hear training or education what are we, so making it

relevant these are choice words that SNCC introduced into the vocabulary and I will sit down and close that even in the women's movement the whole concept of choice came from the black SNCC women because it was really about the pill. I think the slogan was the pill and a lot of us in SNCC were kind of toying with the whole concept of abortion so we came up with that to tell people to take the pill was imperialistic, autocratic, something that we had been taught in SNCC to fight against and that the word choice, I think I have minutes of the notes of that and that people ought to have the right to choose. That was the whole concept that came from blasted women particularly women like Fran Mill and some other women that I can name. So, if I can put it in nutshell and add all of the others what's most important is that SNCC is what all of that risk, black and white, transform the whole thought process as far as I am concerned of this country and of the alliances that we have made with others we have transformed Dr. King around Vietnam, we transformed NAACP in terms of what its agenda ought to be. So SNCC to me was truly the revolutionaries of this modern period and I mean on the same par as 1776 revolution, "give me liberty or give me death."
(audience applause)

- I would just like to build on the educational aspect that has just arisen because basically our whole environment is educational and it was not just the reading of books. I remember many, many sessions in our apartment. Sitting on the floor with all the staff that was in Atlanta and we parsed and analyzed every political, social, and personal event.

Woman: Of the day.

- For as long as we could stay awake and these discussions went on into the night and one little vignette in this fabulous, famous apartment that we shared was we were all gathered there and we heard the rap on the door and it was the police and here we had this integrated group. And I remember Stokely and a couple of old men, I think, went for the window. Went out the window.

Woman: Ivanhoe.

- I we were (laughs) five o'clock in the morning I remember the hour, but it was one of those evenings where we were talking about, I think that particular evening, we were talking about colonialism and religion in Jamaica.

Woman: Yes, Judy.

- Let me just mention to, we also actually had a research department.

Woman: Yes, we did.

- Headed by this old, crusty, I think, former communist part person named, Jack Minnis. And what would happen was that Jack Minnis, first of all, you walk in his room it would be totally smokeville, but he would have all of these census figures, I mean, there's a whole thing around the way you got things factually correct, the way you interpreted the pieces so when student voice for example and Donnie and Julian will-

Julian Bond is now the chair of NAACP, but who was then our communications director. They will have a session and you might want to go to that, I think it's on Friday where they talk about how they were the media arm of that, but the main thing was that we never over sold, we never, in other words you would say in a student voice report or WATTS line report three people beaten, church burned, so-and-so. It was never the so-and-so and the lumping proletariat and the so-and-so.