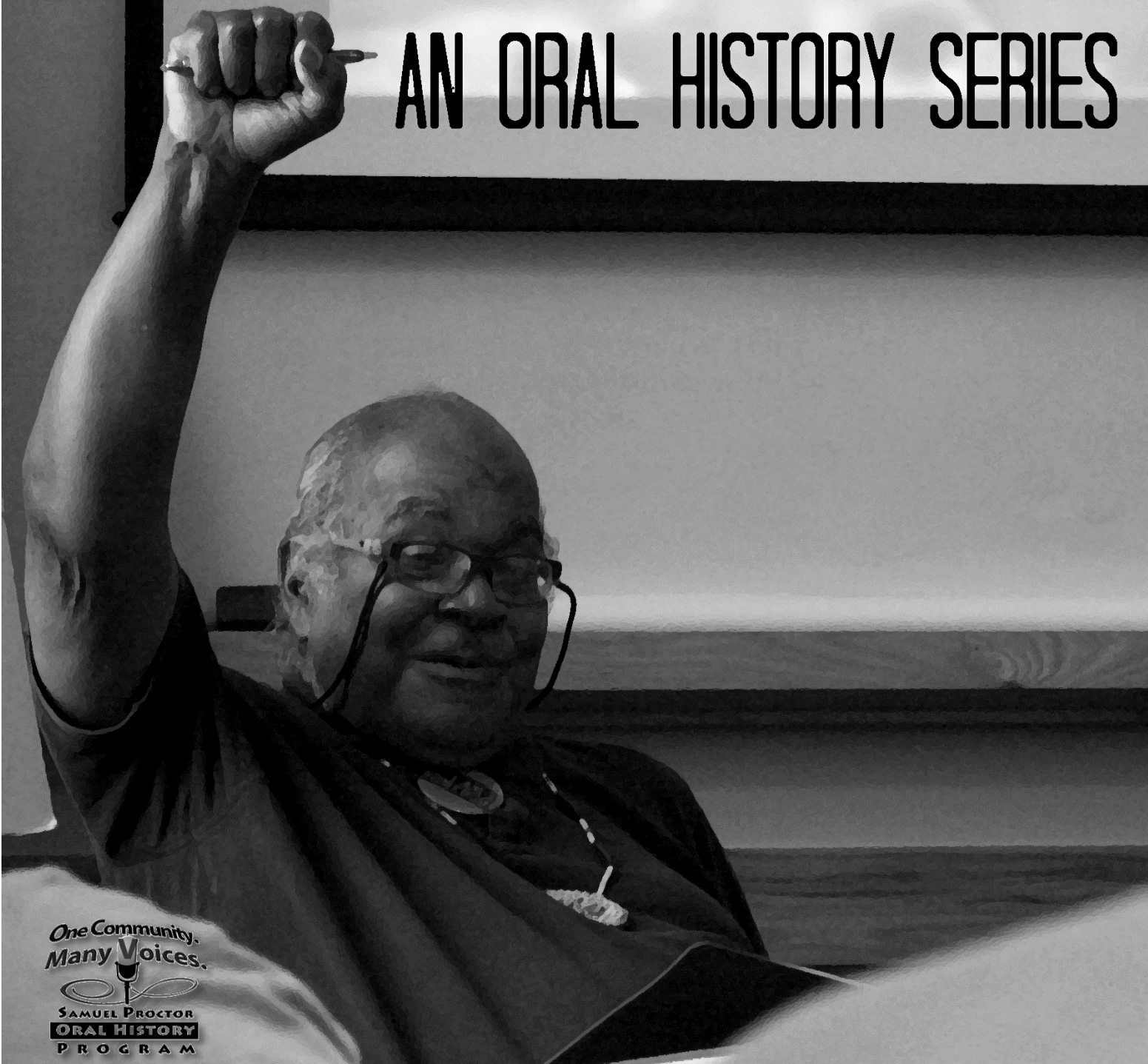


CIVIL RIGHTS ATTORNEY JOHN DUE

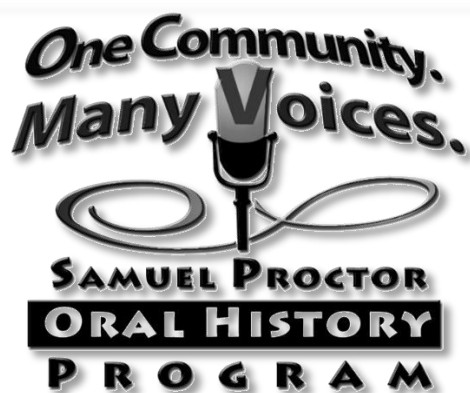
AN ORAL HISTORY SERIES



*One Community.
Many Voices.*

**SAMUEL PROCTOR
ORAL HISTORY
PROGRAM**

CIVIL RIGHTS ATTORNEY
JOHN DUE
AN ORAL HISTORY SERIES



This volume was compiled by the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program to commemorate the life and work of Attorney John Dorsey Due and his family, in celebration of his eightieth birthday.

OCTOBER 25, 2014

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To learn more about these interviews, visit www.oral.history.ufl.edu



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The **Samuel Proctor Oral History Program** (SPOHP) is the official oral history program of the University of Florida, featuring over 6,500 interviews and more than 150,000 pages of transcribed material in the SPOHP archives and UF Digital Collections. SPOHP’s primary mission is to gather, preserve, and promote living histories of individuals from all walks of life. SPOHP’s major projects include the African American History Project, The Latino Diaspora in the Americas Project, The Mississippi Freedom Project, the Native American History Project, and the Veterans History Project.

The **African American History Project** (AAHP) is an archive of 300+ oral history interviews conducted with African Americans around Alachua County and the American South. The collection centers on integration, education, and life in the Jim Crow South, and is the largest public African American history collection in the state of Florida.

The **Mississippi Freedom Project** (MFP) is an archive of 100+ oral history interviews conducted with veterans of the Civil Rights Movement and notable residents of the Mississippi Delta. The collection centers on activism and organizing in partnership with the Sunflower County Civil Rights Organization in Sunflower, Mississippi.

Women, Activists, Feminists (WAF) is a collection of 23 interviews with equal rights activists throughout North Central Florida. The interviews were recorded during a public program celebrating the life of Judith Brown and the work of Gainesville Women’s Liberation



John Due and Patricia Stephens Due speaking at "An Evening with the Dues: Pioneers in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement," at the University of Florida in 2011.

INTRODUCTION

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE SAMUEL PROCTOR ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

“O my body, make of me always a man who questions!”
—Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

Attorney John Due is a troublemaker. He is an agitator in the traditions of Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Thomas Paine, César Chávez, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Henry Garnet. Throughout U.S. history, whenever we thought it was safe to celebrate how much progress we had made in a particular venue of American life, there would be someone like a John Due or a Patricia Stephens Due to tell us that: “No, we haven’t come as far as we’ve claimed. And yes, there is so much more work to be done. The struggle never ends.”

When I think of John Due I think especially of Henry Highland Garnet, a man who was absolutely incapable of “staying on script” and speaking words of comfort to those in the status quo. Just think of it: it is 1865 and former anti-slavery abolitionists throughout the United States are celebrating the end of centuries of chattel slavery and the freeing of millions of oppressed people. It is a time for celebration, is it not? Not for Reverend Garnet. He used the platform of the General Emancipation to argue that the battle against human bondage had just begun and that anti-slavery organizations had no business disbanding and closing up shop. Unfortunately, too many people of good conscience ignored Garnet. A few years later, when the horrors of Spanish slavery in Cuba were being revealed, Garnet lectured, “If the veteran abolitionists of the United States had not mustered themselves out of service, I believe that there would not now have been a single slave in the Island of Cuba.” “We sympathize with the patriot of Cuba,” Garnet continued, “not simply because they are Republicans, but because their triumph will be the destruction of slavery in that land. All Europe now frowns upon Spain, because of her attitude toward human bondage. We must take our place on the broad platform of universal human rights, and plead for the brotherhood of the entire human race.”

John Due has carried on the trouble-making spirit of our ancestors in struggle and he has taught it to students, community organizers, and fellow travelers across the nation. While some have used the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act to celebrate another milestone of American history, John Due states in this booklet that, “We got to change the system so that it will serve humanity...Otherwise the world’s gonna be destroyed by self-destruction.” His is a vision where history is used to empower people to think and act to change the world for the better.

John’s life is also a wonderful example of how we can connect the personal with the political. In an interview session with him featured in this booklet, I asked him what had first brought him into the Civil Rights Movement in the South. His response was that, “I had to accept responsibility. And what brought me to McComb [Mississippi], was Rosa Parks, because when I

left the Army, I got involved in civil rights, and then I saw that the students in the South doing sit ins and I saw a young lady by the name of Patricia Stephens in *Jet* magazine. I said, I want to come to Florida and Florida A&M!”

I first had the opportunity to sit down and talk with John Due in person when he and Dr. Patricia Stephens Due traveled to the University of Florida to take part in a special evening public history program titled, “An Evening with the Dues: Pioneers in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement” in 2011. This was an unforgettable experience for the audience of nearly four hundred individuals. We saw two elders and soul mates, weave a discussion of civil rights history past and present together with a consideration of the struggle for human rights in the future. This wasn’t merely a night to talk about what had happened in the 1960s; in Patricia’s and John’s skillful hands, it was an evening to reprise Dr. Martin Luther King’s question, “Where Do We Go From Here?” and apply it to the world we live in today.

Since that memorable evening, Attorney John Due has spent many hours with our students in Gainesville and he has traveled with us on our oral history fieldwork trips to McComb, Mississippi as well as to the Delta. John has become a trusted guide, mentor, and friend. John has shared with us his experiences in taking voting rights depositions in Natchez, Mississippi in 1963, his impressions of Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, and the grassroots work that went into the framing of the precious (and now embattled) Voting Rights Act. Our students at the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program at the University of Florida love John Due. His interviews, organizing workshops and general rap-sessions with high school and college students—which you can access at www.oral.history.ufl.edu—have inspired young people to become public interest lawyers, labor organizers, Dream Defenders, and troublemakers at large.

We hope that you gain enjoyment and intellectual inspiration from these interviews. Above all, I hope that John Due’s voice inspires all of us to continue to be non-violent soldiers on behalf of social justice and equality for all.

Paul Ortiz,
Gainesville, Florida
October 22, 2014

THE OFFICIAL BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN DORSEY DUE

AS TOLD TO THE SAMUEL PROCTOR ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Attorney John Dorsey Due, Jr., has been a civil rights advocate for over fifty years, beginning as a member of the Terre Haute, Indiana Youth Council of the NAACP at the age of 14. As a civil rights lawyer and as an activist, he helped litigate, or was otherwise involved in *Due v. Tallahassee Theaters* (Leon County, 1963); *Florida v. Hayling* (St. Johns County, 1963); *Mississippi v. Due* (Liberty County, 1964); *Schwerner v. City of Meridian Mississippi* (1964); *Andrew Young v. Farris Bryant* (1964); *Waller v. State of Florida*, (Pinellas County, 1966); and is the last litigator of the 1969 Miami-Dade County school desegregation case *Pate v. Dade County Public Schools*. This case began as a NAACP LDF sponsored case in 1958, *Gibson et al v Dade County Public Schools*.

For his wide-ranging activities and public service, Due has received the Chancey Eskridge Distinguished Barrister Award from the 2004 Annual Convention of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the 2004 Martin Luther King "Keepers Of The Dream Award" from the City of Miami and Miami-Dade County; the "Foot Soldiers Award" from the 2003 national convention of the NAACP; and a special "Lifetime of Fighting for Social Justice Award—a Living Legacy of the Civil Rights Movement" from the 2003 national convention of Jobs with Justice. The words of Monica Russo, President of Local 1199 of the Florida Services Employees International Union, and Co-Chair and Co-Founder of South Florida Jobs with Justice, best summarize Due's involvement and commitment:

"John Due epitomizes a grass-roots activism—his mission is the empowerment of disenfranchised communities—not credit or glory for the work he does. He has dedicated his life to fighting against racism and fighting for our children to have quality education, for workers to have the right to a decent way of life, basically for equality. He really is a visionary who has planted so many seeds that some of us have had the honor and privilege of being able to cultivate and grow. One of those seeds was the formation of South Florida Jobs with Justice where John's vision was to bring together rank and file union members and grassroots activists in a condition that would fight for economic justice and workers' rights."

Due was born in Terre Haute, Indiana, in 1934. His father, John Dorsey Due, Sr., who only had a third-grade education, owned successful shoe repair shops in Greencastle and Bloomington, Indiana. His mother, Lucille Stewart Graham Due, was a descendant of formerly

enslaved people from North Carolina, who were manumitted in the 1840s and moved by wagon train with other formerly enslaved people from North Carolina to southern Indiana to the Stewart farm in Princeton, Indiana, bought for them by their former slave master.

Due's race and class consciousness began to develop when he was raised in a white and Black working class neighborhood by his maternal grandparents in Terre Haute, Indiana where he had white and Black playmates. Due's grandmother was Lydia Stewart Graham, and his grandfather was James Graham. She was the primary source of his values. Due's grandfather was the nephew of Reverend D.A. Graham, the former pastor of Bethel AME church of Indianapolis, who was the father of Shirley Graham, his cousin, who became the wife of W.E.B. DuBois, one of the founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). He was brought up in the family church, Spruce Street African Methodist Episcopal Church.



John and Patricia in 1963.

Due's grandmother, during her life, would teach Due tidbits of the Stewart family history. For example, she taught him that Stewart, the white slave master in North Carolina who fathered her tri-ethnic Anglo-American, Cherokee and African grandparents on his mother's side, (they were called "Colored" instead of "Negro" because of their light skin) bought land for his formerly enslaved in Indiana before he freed them because free Blacks were not permitted to stay in North Carolina and Blacks then could not legally own land in Indiana. His grandmother also told him how her grandparents and other Blacks successfully fought white farmer neighbors with shot guns and axes who attacked them after they had settled on the Stewart land in Indiana. The school in Due's neighborhood was for whites only. Therefore, he had to walk or ride his bicycle four miles to Lincoln, the elementary school for Blacks, because there were no school buses. All staff, including principals and teachers were Black. The principal, Mr. Lewis, also taught math, and he used math to teach his students about "Black" voting power. (This was years before the term "Black" had been

adopted. The word "colored", during the 40's, was the term of choice). Before Due graduated from Lincoln elementary school, Mr. Lewis retired. Even at this early age, Due always felt that Mr. Lewis was forced to retire because of what he taught students about the pride of being Black.

After graduating from Lincoln elementary school, Due then went on to Woodrow Wilson Junior High School and Wiley Senior High School, schools desegregated with white and Black students, but only had white teachers. Due witnessed how his former Lincoln school classmates who were smart did not protest when put into vocational classes instead of college bound classes and tried to hide in the classroom. Due also saw how they were afraid to relate to white students and white teachers. Due realized that his Black peers whom he had looked up to and interacted with at Lincoln elementary school had become invisible. Due chose to challenge this pattern by fighting to stand out. He insisted on being placed in a college-bound class against the wishes of the school counselor because he knew that his grandmother wanted him to go to college to become a teacher. He always chose to sit in front of the class and constantly raised his hand to volunteer to answer questions. Because of his apparent enthusiasm, his white teachers concluded that he was "different" and he received special attention, attention that was usually reserved for light-skinned children. He would be the only one from his last Lincoln school classmates who would attend and graduate from college.

Due graduated from high school in 1952 and enrolled in Indiana State Teachers College in Terre Haute, Indiana. He was greatly influenced by Dr. Dewey Annakin, a professor of social

ethics who taught the duty of personal responsibility for social wrongs and labor class consciousness. He used as an example Eugene V. Debs, the 19th century labor leader who also was born in Terre Haute. Debs was a labor leader and five-time candidate for president of the United States under the U.S. Socialist Party.

Due transferred to Indiana University in 1953 with the intent to prepare to become a labor union lawyer. He was aware of the cold war between Russia and United States, which caused American anxiety about communist spies and sympathizers epitomized by the McCarthy hearings supported by Indiana Senator Jenner. He was also aware of the Republican Party's move toward conservatism with the election of Dwight Eisenhower as President. He knew that his grandparents' Republican Party was losing its traditional support from Black people as the party of Abraham Lincoln.

But at Indiana University, away from Terre Haute, he began seek to escape the inner voice of disciplined self-development and ignored the call for personal responsibility for society. Due began to be caught up in a life style of beatnik escapism and the world of progressive jazz. He joined a Black fraternity whose members were known to be ladies' men. Due also had a car, which was still rare for Black students. Thus, Due felt he had left his introverted "Johnny" image in Terre Haute and had become the *cool* Due. Therefore he was completely indifferent to meaning of the May 17, 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision about school desegregation, as were many other Black students on campus.

But somehow Due woke up and he realized that he was not coping with the real world and needed to mature. So he volunteered for the army draft in order to finish college with the aid of the GI Bill. He was drafted in the army in December 1954. For most of his short military career, Due was stationed at Ft. Bragg, in segregated North Carolina near the city Fayetteville. He was impressed by the self-confident Black Entrepreneur class he saw in Durham, North Carolina, fifty miles away from Ft. Bragg, that he never saw in Terre Haute. He was still in the U.S. Army sworn to protect America against her enemies when he became enraged by the indifference of American society to the murder of Emmet Till. But when Rosa Parks, later, refused to move from her seat on a bus, her defiance against segregation awakened Due from his moral sleep and he heard the calling which crystallized for him a life time commitment.

After the Rosa Parks incident, while assigned to the post library and during his free time, Due buried himself in books regarding Black history, civil rights and psychology so that when he returned to Indiana University, he could begin his mission. Upon his release from active duty, Due returned to Indiana University and joined the college chapter of the NAACP. There he met John Preston Ward, college chapter faculty advisor. John Preston Ward became a life-long friend, role model and mentor who would show Due his path. John Ward, an attorney, was the first Black college instructor at Indiana University. With Ward as an adviser, Due organized and implemented a testing campaign of the segregated off-campus housing, restaurants and barbershops at Indiana University (this was in 1957, three years before the Southern student sit-in movement). One result of the campaign was the brutal assault by a white barber of a Nigerian college student who was not part of the testing campaign but was simply seeking a haircut. This led to the emergence of Thomas Atkins, the first Black student government president at Indiana University. Atkins drew state and national attention to the incident (twenty-five years later, after serving as the NAACP Boston branch president and the lawyer for the Boston school desegregation case, Atkins would



Media coverage of direct action campaigns in Tallahassee, FL.

become the NAACP General Counsel).

Upon graduation from Indiana University in 1958, John Due moved to Indianapolis, Indiana. There he joined the Indianapolis Branch of the NAACP to continue his life-long friendship with Attorney Ward who also had come to Indianapolis to serve as the director of the Indiana Civil Liberties Union and as the executive secretary of the Indianapolis Branch of the NAACP. Due assisted Attorney Ward in his civil liberties and civil rights cases, and participated in direct action activities. As chairman of the branch's political action committee, Due also drafted two proposed laws—the Indiana Public Accommodations Law and Indiana Commission on Human Relations Law with local Black attorney Willard Ransom. The proposed laws were introduced by then State Senator Nelson Grills and then State Representative Andrew Jacobs.

Because Willard Ransom had also been a Progressive Party candidate for Congress in 1948, he was on a FBI watch list through the U.S. Attorney General's List of "Suspect Subversives and communist sympathizers." Because of these associations with attorneys Ward and Ransom, Due, being in the army on an inactive reserve status, was also put on the suspect subversive watch list by the FBI (recently, through Freedom of Information Act, Due obtained a copy of the FBI report of its watch of him, that before it was ended in 1973 had accumulated 400 pages).



John and Patricia with one of their daughters.

Also In 1958, Due took a day time job in the post office and also enrolled in the Indianapolis night law school center of Indiana University to prepare to become a lawyer. But he made a bad decision to make his law studies subordinate to his volunteer activities. He didn't realize but should have realized that his out-side activism would be under "strict scrutiny" by a conservative law school that saw no interest in his being a member of the Indiana Bar as a "suspect subversive." His recklessness resulted in his grades dropping and as a result he was not permitted to re-enroll by the dean of the law school.

By 1960, Due's role as an activist in Indiana was stopped. New leadership led by a conservative group of Black ministers took over control of the Indianapolis Branch of the NAACP and Due was not re-elected to the executive committee. This new

leadership of the NAACP adult branch refused to follow

the orders of the NAACP's national office to all NAACP units to picket northern branches of southern stores targeted by the southern Black student sit-in movement, which erupted in 1960. Due, while participating with the Youth Council of the Indianapolis branch of the NAACP (led by William Raspberry, former columnist with the *Washington Post* newspaper) in picketing at the Indianapolis Circle during his free time on a Saturday in support of the southern Black student sit-ins, someone (probably the FBI) informed his employer, the Indiana State Farm Correctional Institution. Due was terminated from his state job as a counselor.

But with the help of John Ward, who used his friendship with historical black college, Florida A&M University faculty member George King, arranged that the Dean of the FAMU law school, Thomas Miller Jenkins, was made aware of John Due's commitment and background. Dean Jenkins invited Due to enroll in the FAMU law school, provided he would control his activism until after he became a lawyer. In September, 1960, Due moved to Tallahassee, and enrolled in FAMU's law school.

Due chose FAMU law school in Florida in order to be a part of a New South based upon the Black spirit which he saw in Durham, North Carolina, when he was in the army and because particularly he was inspired from reading in *Jet* magazine about five Black FAMU students who

chose to spend 60 days in jail rather than paying a fine for sitting at a Woolworth lunch counter. He soon met Patricia Stephens, the leader of this student movement. She would later become his wife. During the time he was in law school, he participated as a Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) Freedom Ride tester of Greyhound facilities from Tallahassee to Dothan Alabama, testing the President's Executive Order prohibiting discrimination in public inter-state transportation facilities (but mindful of his promise to Dean Jenkins, Due took with him on the bus ride his *Prosser* text book on torts and briefed cases for class).

While working for the Department of Labor in Washington, D.C., during the summers of 1961 and 1962, Due participated in joint direct action projects of Non-violent Action Group (NAG), the D.C. affiliate of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Washington, D.C., CORE chapter. John Due and Patricia Stephens married on January 5, 1963, and shortly thereafter, Due became a co-defendant in the landmark U.S. Supreme Court constitutional free speech case by his wife in *Due v. Tallahassee Theaters*, in which the U.S. Supreme Court ordered that the State of Florida and other states could not interfere with non-violent peaceful protesters exercising their Freedom of Speech.



The Due family visiting the White House during the first inauguration of President Barack Obama.

In 1963, ACLU lawyer Tobias Simon, with support by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, sued to close FAMU Law School, claiming inferiority because, compared to University of Florida law school graduates, only 50% of FAMU law graduates had passed the Florida Bar. Still a student, Due opposed the law suit by a letter to the editor, published in the *St. Petersburg Times*, arguing that FAMU Law School should be commended that 50% of its graduates have passed the Florida Bar, given that none of these lawyers would have been admitted to University of Florida based upon their LSAT scores. The law suit was dismissed.

Due graduated from law school and after taking the Florida Bar, and waiting for the results, rode the Freedom Train from Miami with his wife to the 1963 March on Washington. Due also served as legal assistant to Jacksonville attorney Earl Johnson, who was the Jacksonville NAACP branch attorney and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund local counsel. Due became friends with local St. Augustine NAACP leader Dr. Robert Hayling. After becoming a member of the Florida Bar, Due defended on November 22, 1963, the same day President Kennedy was assassinated, Dr. Hayling and his friends in the case of *Florida v. Hayling* which stemmed from an incident where Hayling and his friends were almost burned alive at a Ku Klux Klan rally. Then, in late 1963, he accepted the invitation by civil liberties attorneys Herbert Heiken and Edward Marger of Miami Beach to become part of the first integrated law firm in the State of Florida.

Beginning in January 1964, Due served as a human relations intern for the late Wiley Branton and the Voter Education Project of the Southern Regional Council in Atlanta, Georgia. He worked in danger in Mississippi documenting violence against SNCC and CORE workers and their supporters assisting Black citizens seeking the right to vote and was arrested in Liberty

County, in the case, *Mississippi v. Due*, described in detail in the book *Climbing Jacobs Ladder* by Pat Waters and Reese Cleghorne.



John Due, his son-in-law Steven Barnes, and his grandson Jason join researchers at the site of the Dozier School for Boys in Marianna, FL.

By being a lawyer, Due was able to help the Southern Regional Council and its Voter Education Project to help CORE to respond to mass arrests of civil rights demonstrators seeking the right to vote or use public accommodations in Mississippi by use of the petition of removal process. The mass arrests were designed by the state of Mississippi to bankrupt CORE with prohibitive legal costs. Due made creative use of federal petitions by removing these cases to federal court which defeated the state's purpose.

These removal cases included *Mississippi v. C.O. Chin* and *Mississippi v. Schwerner and Chaney*.

Due also worked with NAACP Legal Defense Fund attorneys in the SCLC injunction law suit against the mass arrests of demonstrators in St. Augustine, Florida, *Young v. Bryant*. U.S. District Court judge Bryan Simpson removed "Hoss" Menucy as a St. Johns County deputy sheriff and open member of the Ku Klux Klan as the offending leader and ordered Florida Governor Bryant to protect the St Augustine, Fla. civil rights marchers.

In 1966-1968, Due, having completed his internship with the Southern Regional Council, started a private law practice in Tallahassee, Florida, and was retained as Florida counsel for CORE. In this role, after wife Patricia Stephens Due retired as director of the Tallahassee-North Florida Voter Education Project, a project that spanned over 12 counties and was funded by the Southern Regional Council, he served as Acting Director. Due also served as executive secretary of the Tallahassee SCLC affiliate Inter-Civic Council under the leadership of Rev. C. K. Steele. Due helped District 65 organize low income laundry workers. Due also organized community action programs in the war on poverty in many North Florida counties. *Waller v. State of Florida* was an important case where Due represented Joseph Waller, a Black Power civil rights activist and one of Due's Voter Education Project workers who was accused of taking a mural depicting Blacks in Black face and stereotype roles from the wall of the City of St. Petersburg. By 1968, working for the American Federation of State, County, Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Due had organized the state hospital workers in Chattahoochee, Florida, and sanitation workers in Tampa and St. Petersburg, Florida.

Then, in late 1968, Due closed his Tallahassee Office and his Quincy, Florida home and accepted an appointment as Group Attorney for the federally funded anti-poverty Legal Services Program of Greater Miami, Florida, and he and his family moved to Miami. He made a lasting contribution to the legal services program by organizing the welfare rights movement with Gladys Taylor and the tenant rights movement with Eufaula Frazier which led to welfare reform, the reform of landlord and tenant relations, and the rights of residents in public housing.

In 1973, John Due accepted appointment as a program officer with the Miami-Dade Community Relations Board which led to a distinguished career in the county government which spanned over 30 years, including an eight-year tenure as the director of the Office of Black Affairs and as a special Assistant with the Miami-Dade Community Action Agency, an anti-poverty agency, for the last five years preceding his retirement on June 30, 2003. He has left a legacy of

public service with the county including helping the City of Miami to implement an affirmative action program for Black police officers, developing an independent review system for citizen complaints against county employees, and organizing with then Congresswoman Carrie Meek the release of more than 500 Haitian refugee children from Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to America, and the development of community partnerships between the Community Action Agency, the school district and the NAACP for parent involvement in education.

But it was in 1993 that John Due “gave back” to FAMU law school, unfunded and closed since 1968. Due and his wife were part of a FAMU Alumni group which spent a week to lobby the legislature in support of a bill sponsored by then State Representative Al Lawson and the Florida Black State Legislators to re-open FAMU Law School “on the FAMU hill.” This effort did not result in the re-opening of FAMU law school “on the hill”, but it did lead to a State of Florida scholarship program to increase access of minorities to legal education and the re-opening of FAMU law school, finally, in Orlando, Florida.

Regarding his recent volunteer activity, Due has been a member of the Organized Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU), and a delegate to the South Florida AFL-CIO. In roles of representing both Labor and the NAACP, he was a community coordinator of the successful Human Services Coalition campaign which resulted in Miami-Dade County adopting a comprehensive living wage ordinance. Also, representing the NAACP, Due co-founded with Monica Russo of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) the Florida affiliate of Jobs With Justice in order to engage the community to support the right to organize and to obtain just wages for workers. Jobs with Justice was the primary group which helped coordinate for then State Senator Kendrick Meek and State Representative Tony Hill the mobilization of 50,000 participants in the Affirmative Action March on Tallahassee in 2001.

Although his primary case, *Pate v. Dade County Public Schools* has been dismissed on June 30, 2002, because the court had found good faith on the part of the school district in practicably achieving unitary status under the relevant Supreme Court standards, Due is now working on new theories of law for quality education of Black Americans. He is the general counsel of education for the Miami-Dade Branch of the NAACP for advocacy of the *NAACP National Call for Equity in Education*, and is the organizer of a statewide *Florida Parents for a Fair FCAT*. He is writing a law book-biography under Critical Race Theory, to be entitled “*Freedom Is Not Free*” in response to the question, “Where do we go from here?”

Due has three daughters and four grandsons. Tananarive is a seven-time Afro-Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics national winner and an acclaimed author. Johnita is a media lawyer working for CNN in Atlanta, Georgia, who worked for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund as an intern in law school and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights. Lydia is an attorney in Dallas, Texas, who most recently worked for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services prosecuting fraudulent nursing homes. In 2003, Patricia Stephens Due and Tananarive Due collaborated to co-author *Freedom in the Family: A Mother Daughter Memoir of the Fight for Civil Rights,* which tells the story of the Due family and their multi-generational legacy of activism.



John celebrating his 79th birthday last year.



NOVEMBER 5, 2011

Narrator: John Dorsey Due
Interviewer: Jessica Charlton
Women, Activists, Feminists 20
Date: November 5, 2011

- C: Hello, this is Jessica Charlton on November 5, 2011. We are at the Gainesville Pride Center at the Judith Brown Memorial Event. I'm here with John Due, who is giving an interview for the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program.
- D: Right.
- C: How are you today?
- D: I'm just great.
- C: So we just listened to Carol [Thomas] speak, and I would love to hear any memories that you are thinking of today with Judith Brown. So you can start.
- D: Okay. Well, I will replicate some of the things I've said already. We must understand that the period of time we're talking about in the [19]60s was like the Civil War that was taking place in America, particularly in the South. I'm not saying it didn't take place in the North, but it was in the South. It seems as if that what was thought to be determined in the Civil War in the nineteenth century wasn't finished. It was not complete, so after the federal troops left the South in 1877 with the Compromise, the South reinstated slavery in the form of Jim Crow. It was not until the [19]60s we began to remove Jim Crow, but it was a way of life here in the South. As I was saying in my remarks about Judy, Judy was like Patricia, my wife. If you see this picture, this is the book that Patricia and my daughter Tananarive wrote about the Freedom Movement, and that is Patricia.
- C: Aww.
- D: You can see how determined her look is—
- C: It's on her face.
- D: As she's leading these other young ladies in that struggle. I was thinking about that: when I look at my wife today in the last stages of cancer, trying to understand why she did all this, because she was a student at Florida A&M University, the first of her family to go to college, and it was rough for black folks to send their children to college. Now, it's rough now [laughter].

C: Yeah. It is.

D: My children, with scholarships and grants and everything like that, when they graduated, they owed a hundred thousand dollars each, or a hundred and fifty, and this is after grants and scholarships.

C: Yeah.

D: So, if it was bad for my children who were finishing in the late [19]80s and early [19]90s, think about what it's gonna be right now [laughter].

C: No, I'm in it right now. Yeah.

D: So, this was the kind of problem, the conditions, back in the [19]60s when black people's standard of life, living was very low. Like I said, her father, who was a principal at South Florida in Palm Beach County, a black principal—

C: I'm from Palm Beach County.

D: So you know what was going on with migrant labor and all that. So here she is, leading the Civil Rights Movement as a student from Florida A&M University, and getting me arrested and suspended from school and all that. What motivated her to do all these things? And this is where I looked at the letter that she wrote to her father where she said, we cannot be contented with the condition here in the South any longer. So that was the same spirit that Judy had. Judy didn't personally know any black folks. She was not religiously inclined. She didn't feel motivated as a Protestant to be a missionary to save souls or save black folks. When she came to North Florida to be involved in the Freedom Movement—and I use the word Freedom Movement because I'm a lawyer, and I don't like to use the word Civil Rights in relation to Judy or Patricia because what they were about was beyond the law. Because the law, basically, is part of the power structure. After our names, my name is, for example, as a lawyer is John Due, Esquire, and that word esquire is an old English—Latin—word which means to carry the shield of the knight. And the knights were ordained to protect the lords, because in those days— under medieval days—the king was deputized by the Lord and all that, by God. As an attorney, I'm sworn to uphold the laws of the state of Florida. So you see that I'm bound as an attorney. But Patricia and Judy, when they were involved, they said the law must be subordinate to human rights, humanity. And if it's not abiding to humanity, we have to resist. We have to change it. And that's what my wife was about, and that's what Judy

was about. And just not as a missionary to save themselves. They were trying to save humanity, although they didn't say it that way. You know, a lot of times when I talk to Judith, Judy you're a humanist! See, that's another political term, you know? It was more personal with her [laughter] as to what she was about. To understand a little bit more what Judy was when when I got to work continuously in the Movement, I had a chance to talk with her several times. You heard the story about Judy's situations with the blacks in North Florida being arrested, shot at in the Freedom House and all that. Those accounts are very much alive, which showed you the kind of danger of blacks and whites were—who tried to do voter registration in North Florida. And what was so shocking—just thinking about it right now—how they were able to motivate local people to do extraordinary things. That's the word my wife likes to use. Extraordinary people doing extraordinary things. Like black teachers, knowing full well that they could be fired from the school board, would do door-to-door voter registration and be chased by dogs that belong to the tobacco owners. That kind of thing. A black principal—these are the people, this is why this book had to be written because of these local heroes that were involved in the Movement. It was not just Dr. King who spoke at the March on Washington in 1963, "I Have a Dream," and then all of a sudden the sky opens up [laughter] and freedom came. No, no, no. It was small, ordinary people who got involved and made changes. Dr. King's speeches were inspiring to the world, but it was people like Judy and Patricia who worked on the local level who were able to face the hostility on a daily basis, and I hope you can imagine how that could be. That every day it's like being in a war: the kind of trauma, the post-traumatic stress and all that that happens because of this continued confrontation with the system. So, I like for you to ask more questions so I can—

C: I was wondering when did you, what year did you meet Judith?

D: Okay, I was just talking to Carol about that because Judy and Dan and Jim Harmeling came to Tallahassee in the fall of 1963 during the Tallahassee Theater demonstrations. I was still in Jacksonville working under Earl Johnson, a civil rights attorney, in relation to what was going on in St. Augustine. Patricia had been arrested in the theater demonstrations that spring of [19]63, and the proceedings of the court had not been adjudicated until the fall of [19]63 when she was kicked out of school and so was Judy. She lost her scholarship. So I didn't know her in the fall of [19]63. I did not meet Judy until the Voter Education Project was organized December of [19]63. And [19]64, that's

when I met Judy 'cause she came up to Tallahassee to work with Patricia as her assistant director, so that they went through the period of time that I got to begin to know Judy in the early part of [19]64.

C: I recently read a book called *When Everything Changed: A Woman's History in America from 1960 to Present*. It's by Gail Collins. She's a *New York Times* writer.

D: Okay, that name's familiar.

C: Yeah, and she had—I remember, this is just making me think of something that was in that chapter about—sort of, I was wondering how Judith was sort of perceived in the African American community, people who were fighting. Was she readily accepted? In the book, it seemed that sometimes that there could be conflicts like, oh, a white woman entering that scene and feeling like, what are you doing here? But you said she wasn't a missionary, so—

D: No. That's an interesting point because if you read some histories of the Civil Rights Movement in other places of the South, there probably was that kind of hostility. But in North Florida, it didn't happen.

C: Oh, interesting.

D: And what was so interesting that Patricia was over projects that had about fifteen staff people and half of them would be white. The project was in Gadsden County—which is Quincy, Florida east of Tallahassee—Leon County, Jackson County, which is Marianna. Then going east again, Jefferson County, then Madison County, Suwannee. Then going south, Alachua County, which is Gainesville. We had project staff people in all those counties, and like I said, some were white. Now, I've been reflecting on your question for quite a while because when you read some histories of the Civil Rights Movement, you see two profiles. One is that whites worked as willing servants of the blacks who were in charge. And there's a book I read, *Willing Servants*. I don't know if that's—but you understanding what I'm saying.

C: Yeah, I do.

D: Then, you also read the story of the sexual power games that were going on in the South and the resentment by the black females towards the white females because of the competition for the male.

C: That's what I read about.

D: Yeah, that kind of thing. In fact, some of the black women would be criticizing the black workers saying, they fight for civil rights during the day, but sleep white at night. That kind of thing. But we didn't see that taking place for some reason, and I've been trying—I think the reason is, is that Judy's personality had an impact upon other whites that came to join the Movement. And they have the same kind of attitude where race really became insignificant. In fact, I used to write up little cards: be an honorary black person. Give you a card, you're black now [laughter]. Right, because they—somehow no longer became a matter of significance.

C: Did Judy get a card?

D: No, no, no, no. Judy'd kick my ass. She was a tough broad.

C: I've heard, yeah.

D: And really I think Carol was satisfied in my commentary about Judy 'cause what I said confirmed what she said. Judy was that kind of person. She didn't tolerate Black Power too much. In the latter part of the Movement, on a national level, the Movement began to change. Many of the whites had evolved into the peace movement, and of course, the traditional leaders of the Civil Rights Movement was very much opposed to that. Dr. King wrote a, made a speech at Riverside Church in 1967, which elevated King from the white power liberal structure, L.B. Johnson. And from that speech on, things began to happen with King. Most of us believe that the assassination of King was an execution by white power structure, but that's our—I can't prove anything like that. Then they have poverty movement. Many in the traditional Civil Rights Movement didn't like to see King and others to move into the labor movement, some of the issues that are talked about today and that kind of thing. So it began to fragment a little bit. So, Judy, she was supportive to the poverty movement, the labor movement, but she saw that the sexism in culture was not acceptable to her. Could not, should no longer be tolerated. Maybe two thousand years ago when power was based upon physical force, [laughter] but no longer. It's mine now. If you go today in the law library, guess who's there? Women.

C: Yeah. It's true.

D: It's about eighty percent women. I just happened to be there a few months ago. I looked around, I said, where are the men [laughter]? So women are moving into positions of

power today. But that's not good enough to Judy because the same thing that was happening has happened in the black movement. Blacks are moving into power. We might have a black Republican president, you know that? We might have a black governor of Mississippi. We already have a black president, but that's not—they're becoming part of the one percent!

C: It's true. Yeah.

D: I mean, I saw Andrew Young with Mayor Reed from Atlanta. See, Andrew Young was part of Walmart Board of Directors. You see these things happening where people are moving into management and power, but there's something else that has to be done. I talked to a good friend of mine who's Jewish. I don't know if you know—you're not Jewish are you?

C: No, I'm not really anything [laughter].

D: We talked about, I asked him, what's the mission of the Jew? And he said, to serve humanity. I was shocked to hear that.

C: Yeah, me too.

D: I thought all Jews were concerned about getting their homeland in Palestine and all that. That they were the chosen people, but that makes good sense. I think those who have been oppressed, or still being oppressed, need to save people who are the oppressor. They're the ones that are sick.

C: Yes. Yeah.

D: Not us. It's the male chauvinist pig that's sick.

C: Yeah, I totally agree.

D: So we gotta save his butt, and I think that's what Judy was about. We got to change the system so that it will serve humanity, just like my Jewish friend says. Otherwise, the world's gonna be destroyed by self-destruction. I think, getting back to Judy . . . I was just telling that young man on my way in, I said, Judy had a message for we men. Carol talking about the after pill. Did she say something about an after pill? Did you hear her say, talk about the after pill?

C: Um...

D: For after sex?

C: Oh, the morning after pill. Yes.

D: Morning after pill. Well, Judy had another message.

C: Would you like to share?

D: Yes, I will.

C: Okay.

D: One day Judy asked me, do you love Patricia? Yeah, I love Patricia. Okay. Patricia's been pregnant five times. She had three children, the other two pregnancies failed. She almost died from them. Are you ready? What do you mean? Do you love Patricia? Yeah. Are you ready? You know what she meant?

C: I think so, yes.

D: Take the operation. I wanted to say that in there, but it moved too fast after Carol finished, so I couldn't bring that up. But men had to answer that question. And of course, I said, yeah, I—I—I love, I love Patricia, but suppose Patricia gets run over by one of those trucks she's laying in front. I might need to get married again [laughter]. But this is the kind of thing that Judy was about. She always raised questions about things that we just assumed to be true. Why is God a man? Now, whoever said God is a man was a man.

C: Yeah, that's true. I'm sure.

D: How come all the prophets are male? All that kind of thing. Our cultural conditioning is acculturated to a form of oppression, and we need to challenge this mystification. That with our power now over technology that can destroy the world, we no longer need to be following the mystification of three thousand years ago. That's Judy. That's why I always felt that Judy was the kind of person who was not content with assumptions, that we need to challenge those assumptions. I hope the Liberation Movement understands that. And the interests of the Liberation Movement is not to get a female president, but change humanity, because a woman president can be just as terrible.

C: Yeah, that's true.

- D: We learned about what happened in England. What was that lady that became prime minister? She became more mannish [laughter]. I can't think of her name right now, but you know who I'm talking about.
- C: Yes, I do.
- D: And you have a lady who's a president of Germany.
- C: Margaret Thatcher.
- D: Yeah, Margaret Thatcher and then this lady who's president of Germany, so that's not the end game to get in the positions of power and then act like a fool. And so I think my Jewish friend had this saying, the role of a Jew is to serve humanity, can also be the role for the blacks, the Freedom Struggle, and the Women's Liberation Movement. That's the way I look at it.
- C: Well, I think I have one more question and then you can wrap up if you would like. During Carol's speech she spoke a lot about the Occupy Movement and Judith. Do you think Judith would be supportive of the Occupy Movement?
- D: She'd be right in the middle of it.
- C: That's how I feel, too, that she would be. Yeah.
- D: She probably would be working with Lawyer Brooks to make sure that people had proper representation. I always had that problem myself. Whether or not I wanted to be a participant, or do I just stand by and be a lawyer? People see me in two lights. A lot of times I kind of—resented it. No, I'm a lawyer, [laughter] but, see, I know that's the head game. I know what it's just me, Esquire. Some secret thing to be esquire. But I think Judy'd be right there in the middle of it.
- C: I think she would be, too, so thank you so much for your taking time to talk to me today. This was really amazing.
- D: Okay, well, thank you.
- C: Thank you.
- [End of Interview]



SEPTEMBER 20, 2012

Narrator: John Dorsey Due
Interviewer: Michael Brandon
Mississippi Freedom Project 109
Date: September 20, 2012

B: Just for the record, can I get you to say your name?

D: My name is John D. Due Jr.

B: Okay, thank you. Mr. Due, I wonder if you could tell us about why you got involved in the Movement.

D: Well, the reason I got involved is because of what was occurring to my life when I was at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. I had no idea of getting involved when I volunteered for the draft, so that I could finish college. I had no consciousness of civil rights as such, although I had been a member of the youth council, the NAACP in Terra Haute, Indiana, at the age of fourteen, but didn't see any personal responsibility of making a change until I was in the army, at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. What was significant about that is that after my basic training I was assigned to psychological warfare battalion of Special Forces. And although I was just a private, I'm a reader and in the library of the battalion I began to read about what psychological warfare was really about. And psychological warfare is to use nonviolent means, is to use deception, to use seduction to get the enemy to go along with what you want to have done. And I began to realize this is what was occurring in American society. While I was in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, the Rosa Parks became a significant experience to see play out. I was already alienated from the killing of Emmett Till, a young man from Chicago who was fourteen years old, came to visit somebody in Mississippi, but because he was from the hood he was whistling at this white girl. As a consequence his body was mutilated. So I was already angry when Rosa Parks became a personality that just shocked me. Because Rosa Parks was part of the NAACP, she's part of the middle class, her husband was a Republican, he was a black Republican. Black Republicans were useful on the national level to vote the right way and as a consequence he was a manager of a post office in Montgomery in the black neighborhood as a political reward. Yet she violated the NAACP rules by getting herself arrested. And we have the consequence of jeopardizing her whole life as being as part in the middle class. And that's when I decided I had to be, I had to do the same thing. I had to realize that life doesn't mean a thing unless I do something in the order of Rosa Parks.

So when I came out of the army, I got active in the ACLU, I got active in the NAACP, and my life began to change accordingly. When I graduated from Indiana University, I got active in Indianapolis, Indiana. I didn't know the FBI was following me all of this time. I learned that when I got my FBI record, you know twenty- about thirty, forty years later. But however, I got active with some activist people in Indianapolis. That's how I got involved.

B: So you were in the army after the Korean War or during the Korean War?

D: Yeah, after- the only- I would- the shooting had stopped [laughter]. I went in the army in 1954, and came out in [19]56.

B: So we were supposed to have an integrated military. Was that the experience that you had at that time? Especially at Fort Bragg?

D: Uh, Fort Bragg, it was um, because I was in this specialty of college educated people, there was in Special Forces, uh, it was integrated and it was- a funny thing about that, uh... Some of my white soldiers had this common thing to say, no you Negro people from the north are better than the ones down here [laughter]. Yeah, that kind of thing. But what impressed me, I don't know where he got his information from because being stationed at North Carolina, I had access of going to Durham and Raleigh and I saw Black people owning businesses, insurance companies, banks, lawyers. I didn't see that in Terra Haute, Indiana. Black people were just doing stuff.

B: I'm actually from North Carolina-

D: So you know what I'm talking about-

B: I'm from Raleigh and C. C. Spaulding is another character in my dissertation.

D: Yeah! So I'm right on time with you ain't I?

B: Yeah.

D: I saw all this activity by so-called backward southern black folks because northern black folks had a terrible superiority complex about southern black folks. And here I see all these southern black folks owning businesses and working at the hospital. Yeah, black people didn't work in the hospital in Terra Haute.

B: Yeah.

- D: You know, so that's where I got acclimated that I might wanna come south.
- B: So when you're seeing these businesses, were you aware of the Negro Business League? Tuskegee's organization?
- D: No, no. I just knew about, you know, *Up From Slavery*.
- B: Okay, yeah.
- D: And I didn't know, I didn't have enough sense to know about the business league, at that time. Back in the fifties. It took a while to get acclimated to the southern mentality.
- B: I can imagine.
- D: Yeah.
- B: How did that make you feel? Getting acclimated?
- D: Great! And also disappointed that I'd been brainwashed, in the north, by my own parents. Well you know, about how backward, you know, black people are in the south. You know, I felt- that's how all this started, you know. So when things went down in the [19]60s, that's when I decided I needed to come to Florida A & M, come south.
- B: Okay, so what was one of your first organizational affiliations, then? When you began your activist work?
- D: In the south?
- B: Uh huh.
- D: It was CORE.
- B: Okay.
- D: Well see, I need to explain that a little bit. If you have a chance to get a copy of the book written by my wife, *Freedom in the Family*, she's read it. I know you read *Freedom in the Family*.
- Unidentified female: Yes. Can you pause there for one minute?
- D: Cause when I was talking about young group a while ago, I couldn't think of his name that was in the car with Randolph Blackwell.
- Unidentified female: So you going with this group?

Margaret Block: With Randolph Blackwell? Yeah.

D: He was from the Voter Education Project.

MB : Oh.

D: And he was in the car.

[Background noise with hammering, banging, papers being shuffled, door shutting.]

Unidentified female 2: Hello.

Unidentified female: Hey, how are you? [Lots of chatter in background]

D: And I need you to stay in touch with me, make sure that we are really doing all we can about Fannie Lou Hamer.

MB: That's where I'm getting ready to take him over to the Fannie Lou Hamer Memorial.

D: Yeah because I need to tell them- I want it verified what I have said about the Johnson administration and the Nixon administration really trying to destroy her.

MB: Yeah, they did it. Cause we had a farm over there. That's just –

D: Yeah, now see they were kissy kissy with Aaron Henry.

MB: Oh yeah [laughter].

D: I know Aaron Henry, but they put her down!

MB: Yeah! They sure did. We were really good friends because we first started together in [19]62 at Amzie Moore's house.

D: Um hum.

MB: We going 'round to Amzie's now.

D: Okay, all right.

MB: Okay.

D: That's why I was trying to explain to this kid, this was a terrible, this is a world man. This the way it is [laughter]. Cause if they want to put you down, they'll do it. Okay, I'm sorry.

- B: Yeah, no, it's fine. Um, I think we were talking about your experiences with CORE, in Atlanta?
- D: Yeah, let me explain CORE. You heard me talk about how my wife organized CORE in North Florida, and the reason why she was effective was because of her personal activity and that kind of thing and how she was able to just mobilize the students and members of the community into CORE activities in North Florida. Now how I got involved, I need to add a little bit to that. I didn't know Patricia by name. I just saw her in *Jet* magazine and that helped activate my compulsion to come south. When I saw her and her sister in *Jet* magazine for being arrested in Dillon. But we really didn't become close as friends until a few months later, although we worked together in CORE. See when I came to go to law school, Dean Jenkins wanted me to come. He knew what I was about. His own philosophy about personalism, he understood exactly what I was going to do. But he just wanted me to wait 'til I could take the Bar [laughter] and become a lawyer, and don't get involved, you know. And I kind of manipulated that a little bit because I did take a Freedom Ride to Dothan, Alabama and I was just lucky, you know. I took my books with me, I rationalized that I was still getting my work done, you know. But nothing happened to me, so I came on back in [19]62 and was able to graduate in [19]63.
- B: So you were on the [19]61 Freedom Rides?
- D: I was in the [19]62 Freedom Rides.
- B: Okay. The [19]62 Freedom Rides were basically to see whether or not there was implementation of the executive order to desegregate interstate commerce. You know, not the direct Freedom Rides in [19]61 that took place in Albany and Birmingham and Montgomery. So there were about two violations of the too much [laughter] of the understanding, you know. Don't get too much involved. So that's how I, like I said, I took my Freedom Ride to Dothan.
- B: Okay. So you said earlier that anti-communism had a lot to do with your decision to join the SRC in the aftermath of Florida.
- D: It was their anti-
- B: Their anti-communism-

- D: Their anti-communism because [laughter]it was so funny. There was such a pathology that the Civil Rights Movement was communist inspired. Now I told you I was in the army.
- B: Yeah.
- D: I went in 1954. I got out in 1956 and I was put in inactive reserve, because the obligation was six years. So I was in the inactive reserve from [19]56 until [19]62. Yeah, that's six years. Yeah okay, anyway. In 1962 I was working at the United States Department of Labor because of connections that Patricia had with Adam Clayton Powell, you know.
- B: Yeah.
- D: I was working in the Department of Labor and I received a phone call from Fort Harrison, a fort somewhere, I forget the name of the fort, to come and report for an interview. So I went and the United States Army interviewed me, United States Army Intelligence. First they said, you know, they read me my rights and I had no problem, you know, giving them anything they want to know. Then they began to ask me a series of questions. They asked from the time I went from active duty to inactive duty in 1956, at that point in 1956, they began to ask questions about, do you know da, da, da? Is he a member of the Communist Party? Does he believe in the violent overthrow of the government? They asked questions about these particular personalities who I had been working with soon as I got out the army. At Indiana University, [19]58 when I graduated, became active with the ACLU and the NAACP, they asked questions about all my contacts and relationships, the same question. Finally they asked me the question. Are you a communist? Do you believe in the violent overthrow of the government? And it just so happens that I just saw a movie that summer called *Judgment at Nuremberg*.
- B: I've seen it.
- D: With Burt Lancaster.
- B: Yeah, I've seen it.
- D: Did you see that movie?
- B: Yeah, Montgomery Clift's last movie, I think.
- D: Okay, well I think Clift played the prosecutor, didn't he?

B: I think he was one of the defendants.

D: Burt Lancaster-

B: But he was the-

D: But anyway, as I understood the story, let's say Burt Lancaster but it might have been Montgomery Clift. As I understood the story, this guy was a renowned liberal judge on the world basis. He had written books and all that kind of stuff about law and all that. But the reason he was being prosecuted is that he signed a ministerial order. If you in law school, you know there are different kinds of orders that the judges sign. A ministerial order is just a proforma to see what is not in order, any activities done by a subsidiary office, you know, whether all the i's dotted and all that. This order was to entrain a group of Jews to a work camp. And according to the prosecutors, he should have known the work camp was a death camp, right?

B: Yeah.

D: And that he had a duty not to sign that order. So I told the investigators as far as violent overthrow of the government, if the government ever become a totalitarian form of government, I would have a duty to overthrow it, you know. Well, that was my answer, you know. But do you believe it is a totalitarian government at the present time? Not yet [laughter].

B: How did they respond to that?

D: Well, I learned that people like me were not given an honorable discharge. They were given a general discharge, or something like that, it's less than honorable.

B: Yeah.

D: But I got an honorable discharge for some reason. So that's basically has been my answer and I was also influenced by something else. You know it's funny how all these things conflate together. During that same summer, I was on a picket line sponsored by CORE Washington D. C. chapter, and NAG, the National Action Group which was a SNCC affiliate. And we were picketing a park, a public park that was segregated. And with me, walking besides me was a German theological student, you know, an exchange student? And he told me that he was upset that America and the world hasn't understood the work

of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German theologian student just like he was, back in the thirties. And he worked out of Adam Clayton Powell, Sr.'s church.

B: Okay.

D: And while he was in the theological seminary, he was sponsored by many liberal theologians. Reinhold, Reinhold Niebuhr, I might pronounce it wrong. But Bonhoeffer, in the late thirties, decided he had to go back to Germany, to serve the German people and kill Hitler. And this young theologian student told me the whole story that he joined an order of the white robes, which was a conspiracy to kill Hitler. It was comprised of some of the generals of Hitler's army, but who had their own interests. You know, they were hoping to try to negotiate with Britain, you know, all that kind of stuff. But his mission was to be part of the conspiracy to kill Hitler and he did save some Jews and he was arrested for that. And just before the camp was liberated, he was hung. And so, that also influenced me, in my answer. And since then, I have been reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer and how he was against violence. The Sermon on the Mount and all that. Love your enemy, but I guess as Gandhi says, sometimes you have to do what is necessary [laughter].

B: Absolutely.

D: So that kind of, that also influenced my answer, you know. So uh, like I said I went on, I came on back to A&M law school and you know that fall and Patricia, she got disgusted with my not making a commitment and she was going to leave A&M, so I said honey, let's get married, and so we got married in January of 1963. You got to read the book for the rest of the story.

B: Yeah, yeah [laughter]. So I guess you were with SRC by [19]63 then-

D: No, [19]64-

B: [19]64, okay. Yeah, tell me about getting involved with the SRC then.

D: I didn't know anything about the Southern Regional Council when I came to Miami in the fall of [19]63 after taking the bar. And you heard my story about my idea of developing activism, you know.

B: Yeah.

D: In Miami, which I now find that they did not want that kind of activism. The Chamber of Commerce did not want that kind, because Miami depends upon tourism and all that. But the threat I think, helped convince the county to adopt the first anti-discrimination ordinance in the country because they wanted to avoid Birmingham and St. Augustine. So National Council of Christians and Jews, they're the ones that contacted me. I don't know, I didn't contact them. They contacted me. And then I learned that the attorney from, who was a Jewish guy too, must have been in dialogue with them too. You know, the Joint Council for the Congress for Racial Equality? It was all agreed between the two that we, they gonna get the Southern Regional Council to offer me a position with the Voter Education Project. Now the Southern Regional Council, you need to study, because um, the Jewish community has had its own problems with the racism, you know, in Georgia, on the national level. And there's a simple justice, there's a book called *Simple Justice* who describes the most significant judge on the United States Supreme Court was who?

B: Warren?

D: No.

B: Who then?

D: Felix Frankfurter.

B: Okay.

D: This is all hush hush. It just so happens that Felix Frankfurter as a young man, was part of a negotiation of the Balfour Treaty. You know about that, don't you?

B: Uh uh, I don't.

D: Okay, the Balfour Treaty was- and I don't know who the treaty is between, tell the truth, but this is where the Jewish community and the British community agreed that Palestine-

B: Oh! Oh yeah-

D: Become the homeland-

B: I do know about that, yeah. There's the British white papers in all this, yeah. Okay.

D: So, this has been, this all connected to the Civil Rights Movement. The Jewish community involvement with the black community is for their self-interest. Uh, Felix

Frankfurter came to Harvard University and became the master of developing civil rights law at Harvard University. And this is where, this is why all this stuff has to be written down.

B: Yeah, the New Dealers all studied under him.

D: Oh yeah and um, this black guy before... uh, uh, you see... you have to help me man. Who were the two black attorneys with the NAACP on the national basis?

B: Hamilton, Hamilton Houston, Charles Hamilton-

D: Yeah, Houston-

B: Houston.

D: He went to Harvard University. So the NAACP was a program to control black protests. And the Southern Regional Council became a sane instrument of how to accommodate the involvement of blacks becoming assimilated into the

American culture, in order to avoid, first, Communism and anti-Judaism. It's all connected. So when I got to the Southern Regional Council, I saw that it was an umbrella group of very significant personalities of that class. And I was talking to the young people about. You know I call it the upper-middle class or the older class, on how to move assimilation without violence. Without destruction, without hurting the business and economic interests of America. And this is what I told them. Children, you know, young people, the historical black colleges have that same purpose to find the ways to assimilate black people into the American culture, you know and that kind of thing.

B: It's like a pressure release valve for the oppression-

D: Yeah, exactly, exactly. So he was very anti-communist, because they have the, they were part of the pathological fear, you know, of communism and they felt that SNCC was, you know, was being inspired by certain communists, such as Ann Braden and Karl Braden of the SCE, Southern Conference Education. Now I'm not saying that they weren't, you know, I'm just saying what the fear was. You know, I don't like- so all these things were in play when I came to the Southern Regional Council. And uh—

B: Yeah, can we talk more about the funding for SRC? You mentioned the Tectonic Foundation earlier.

D: Tectonic-

B: Foundation.

D: Field. Those are two main ones, the Tectonic and Field. Uh, if you can do research with *Ramparts* magazine, you might find some more information that validates the CIA involvement, with the Voter Education Project, working through those foundations. Now how did I come across this? I- somehow, I was in New York and had read *Ramparts* magazine, I guess it was like 1967 or [19]67, [19]66, [19]65. It was [19]65 I think, [19]65. Now I don't know whether or not you can find *Ramparts* magazine but that's how it really it woke me up to what was going on [laughter].

B: Yeah

D: The CIA was also involved with the American Federation of State County Municipal Employees Union. And a lot of this has to do with the government's relationship with organized labor that goes back way into the [19]30s. And how you know, the Mafia helped the federal government in Sicily invasion. You know, that kind of stuff.

B: The Luciano-

D: Yeah, all that kind of stuff-

B: They got intel from him.

D: So all that kind of stuff was, it's interesting how- now the reason AFSCME was important because of the all the international bases the Communist Party was trying to control labor. So the CIA and CORE got, you know, got engaged AFSCME to be involved with that on the international level, and also to support civil rights. AFSCME was one of the big supporters of CORE, you know, that kind of thing.

B: Yeah.

D: So all this world politics about the money [laughter] is really is trying to influence the Civil Rights Movement. Anyway.

B: So can you tell me about some of your contemporaries in the SRC and maybe their motives and how they were like yours or maybe different?

- D: Oh shit. The reason why I'm cussing is because I can't think of his name. Uh, the successor to Wally Branton is a black guy and I can't think of his name all of the sudden. But he's still a player-
- B: Oh, Vernon Jordan-
- D: Yeah. Okay, all right.
- B: Yeah. Clinton's guy.
- D: That's right, that's right. Even today he's a player. And he played himself on *The Good Wife* two years ago [laughter].
- B: Yeah.
- D: Isn't that weird?
- B: Yeah.
- D: You ever watch *The Good Wife*?
- B: Oh no, my mom loves it though.
- D: Yeah, but ask your mom about what the, you know, series is about.
- B: I will [laughter].
- D: Cause he played himself as a head of a Washington, D.C. firm that supposed to be trying to take over the Chicago law firm. You know. It's a reality, you know?
- B: Yeah.
- D: Um, Jordan. I knew Jordan when I was at Indiana.
- B: Oh really?
- D: Jordan is about six foot six, six foot five, very dark complected who graduated from DePauw University, which is a Methodist university in Greencastle, Indiana. It's where my father's from. Uh, I saw him in Indianapolis, you know, at different parties. Cause back in the [19]50s, you know I was into the jazz scene and all that kind of stuff. And he liked those high yellow girls, you know color was a big thing back then, you know, with dark skinned men. Even myself, [laughter] you know, that kind of thing. So he was a player, you know, with some of the so-called established young ladies in Indianapolis.

Then from there he started work as a regional or was it, he was either field secretary for the NAACP for the State of Georgia, or he was the regional secretary like Ella Baker. He probably was the field secretary. Yeah, he was the field secretary. And then from there, he went to the Voter Education Project, and from the Voter Education Project he went to the, he became director of the Urban League. You know, he was a mover man. He got shot for fooling around with a white woman. And then he became an attorney in one of those big law firms, you know, in Washington, D.C. So he succeeded Wally Branton. Wally Branton was my, he was my director at the Voter Education Project, at the Southern Regional Council. Leslie Dunbar was the director of the Southern Regional Council when I was in the mix. I need to tell you about Leslie Dunbar. He became director of the Field Foundation later after he left the Southern Regional Council. But I remember very much at my going away party, you know when I was leaving the Voter Education Project to come to Florida, the scotch took over his sensibilities a little bit, and he sure did chide me about myself and others calling ourselves African American. And I can remember to this day. He said, how in the hell you call yourself African American, you don't know a damn thing about Africa. And you have no culture, black people have no culture, like Italians have or the Greeks have or the Germans have. You don't have any African culture. So why in the hell are you calling yourselves African American? So, you know, it pissed me off but he made a lot of sense, you know [laughter]? But he was an assimilationist, with his head behind integration on the evolutionary basis. Did you hear me as to how I explained how the Southern Regional Council worked?

B: Yeah.

D: Not through just the Voter Education Project, they also worked through local councils of human relations.

B: Yeah, tell me more about this CIC basically that they kind of—cause the CIC kind of funneled into the SRC, but they still had their people from the old organization. Was that-

D: What does CIC stand for?

B: It was the Will Alexander's organization, that formed out of World War I, and it evolved. The Councils on Interracial Cooperation.

D: Oh oh, yeah yeah. Okay. See that's important, that's before my time brother [laughter].

B: It seems contemporary to me 'cause I spend all day with it all the time.

- D: I barely knew, you know, I know about what I read that kind of stuff. But when I was in Atlanta, I was in the field most of the time, and really didn't get indoctrinated to everything about what CRC and CIC, and all that. But you are right, there was, as you know, there was a lot of fear. You see you think the anti-communism came out of the [19]50s, you know, it was always down, I mean you sent marines to Russia, you know? Way back-
- B: Covert funds.
- D: Yeah. All the way back to the very beginning, and the Jews were targets. I was very pissed off about my grandparents not talking to me about the Ku Klux Klan. But really, in their time the Ku Klux Klan was more anti-Jewish and Catholic, you know, than black in Indiana. So the Jews always had that problem, you know, of being a group that- It's real funny how we're so lovey-dovey, you know, with Jews today when, you know, the history is not that way. So I'm not too much into the history before my relationship with Southern Regional Council because by that time when I got involved with Southern Regional Council, they were in a war with SNCC and Dombrowski in Louisiana, they were very upset with SNCC, particularly in Albany, Georgia, because a lot of funny people were in Albany [laughter]. That kind of thing. So Aaron Henry saves SNCC in Mississippi, being primary so, they couldn't work around that too much, in Mississippi because of Aaron Henry. Now let me explain how the NAACP works. The NAACP on a national level has a national office. But they also have a national board and the national office and the national board are sometimes in conflict with each other. And Aaron Henry had a connection with the power on the board level because of the southeast conference of NAACP where you have most of the members. Now the chairman of the southeast conference was Mr. Kelly from North Carolina. And you know what he did don't you? In relation to Monroe? When Mr. Williams—
- B: Oh! The Kissing Case.
- D: Yeah.
- B: Where he basically orchestrated getting Williams ousted.
- D: Exactly.
- B: And making it a public demonstration about ideology-

- D: Yeah, well see that was great politics on the national level with the federal administration. Because as far as the federal administration was, all those whites were communists. You know how that is. So-
- B: Can you tell me a little more about the response to the Robert F. Williams case? I know I've read the book as so many other people have but what were the reverberations of the incident?
- D: Well, one of the reverberations was that I was pissed off with the NAACP [laughter].
- B: Yeah, well, were a lot of people that way too? Or-
- D: People like me were because they influenced, that helped me to be more directed towards CORE than NAACP. Now when they did that, you know, in Monroe, North Carolina. And I was in Indianapolis. And another strange thing happened in Indianapolis. A group of ministers, mostly Baptist, organized in Indianapolis and they took over the NAACP, there in Indianapolis. Now the NAACP in Indianapolis was an integrated, direct action group. We had a lot of whites, we had people from the ACLU, see the ACLU was suspected as a communist organization. I don't know what inspired them to take over the NAACP, what they did; they gobbled up memberships and just took it over and kicked people like me out of it. See that was another motivation for me to come south, you know. Because I was kicked out of the, I was chairman of the Political Action Committee. And I was kicked out. I was also a member of the white Unitarian Church which was considered to be a communist front. So I was kicked out. You ever heard of William Raspberry?
- B: Uh uh.
- D: William Raspberry just died about two, four weeks ago. He was a columnist for the *Washington Post* newspaper. But, back then, he was just president of the Annapolis Youth Council of NAACP. Now, these ministers that took over the NAACP did not know that they supposed to control the youth council, you know—because how the hierarchy works. So, we did things through the Annapolis Youth Council. In 1960, when the sit-ins started, Roy Wilkins, who was the Executive Secretary, which is the same as Executive Director, of NAACP sent a telegram to all branches, college chapters, and youth councils to support the demonstrations in the South, the sit-ins, by picketing the stores, the Northern branches in the Northern communities. Well, the adult branch ignored it. That's

number one. Number two: the same group of ministers bought a page, a whole page, in the *Indianapolis Star* condemning the sit-ins.

B: I'm sorry—I'm sorry to have to cut you off for a second—

[Break in recording]

D: —was trained in Mississippi, was related to what Nixon was trying to do with black business. She was on the enemy list [laughter].

B: Yeah, and he wasn't. Yeah. Since we're talking about this, yeah. So, what do you think about somebody like McKissick's evolution? How, you know, he joins Carmichael in calling for Black Power, but also ends up in the office with Nixon, making plans for black business and a return to the Republican Party that they hoped for.

D: Yeah, exactly. Last time I saw CORE, it was at a function of the Republican Party.

B: Really?

D: Yeah.

B: Do you remember where that was?

D: In New York, about several years ago. CORE received, you know, donations from the Republican Party at that time. Roy Ennis—I was active with CORE when it began to evolve into the Black Power, you know, control. The Fellowship Reconciliation, which was primarily a white, pacifist organization, began to evolve—began to lose its power. There's going to be a conference for CORE, for this celebration. And it'll be interesting as to who will show up.

B: Yeah.

D: Anyway, let's get back to where we are—were—and then we can get back to the Black Power.

B: Yeah, you were talking about the Indiana Youth Council and NAACP and challenging the leadership.

D: Yeah, yeah, yeah. This is critical. Because in writing my book, writing the book that I want to write—oh, boy—can you still hear?

B: It should be okay. Maybe we should wait, though.

D: Now, what kind of recorder do you have?

B: We have the luxury of the oral history department. This is a new one, actually; we had older ones. It's so new and high-tech, we have—I don't know if you met Deborah, who's with us, but she's our technical expert, so she basically tells us, there's only three buttons we should ever touch [laughter]. Record, stop, and power. But it's digital, so, basically you can just plug in to the computer. There'll be a port that you can just plug it into your computer and it will upload it. There will be no tape at all, which makes it pretty efficient overall.

D: Okay, I'd like to get one of the old recorders.

B: Yeah.

D: How can I get one of those?

B: I'm not sure. If you talk to Deborah or e-mail Dr. Ortiz, I bet you he'll tell you exactly where to get them. He would know better than me.

D: Because I don't need a new one. Just get an old one.

B: Yeah. Best Buy, if you go to the store, Best Buy, they'd probably have them. Any kind of electronic shop probably has some kind of digital device that would work just fine. This is probably heavy duty because we do so many interviews and they want them to last long, but I'm sure they have a less sophisticated, much cheaper version that does the same thing, just as good.

D: Now, will this also transcribe it into—

B: That's the hard part, yeah. I'll have to listen to the interview over and over again and transcribe it.

D: Is there technology, Dragon—

B: Maybe. I've never thought about that.

D: You never thought about using Dragon to do your stuff?

B: Yeah, we usually do the transcribing ourselves.

D: Hmm, okay.

B: But that would certainly be a shortcut, I'm just not familiar with that technology.

- D: Okay. Here's what I think is critical: these group of ministers, the same ones that took over NAACP, paid for a full page ad in the *Indianapolis Star*. Now, I'm critical of that because, number one, I don't expect ministers to put out money hardly for anything [laughter]. You know? But a full page ad? That's a lot of money.
- B: Yeah.
- D: So, I always suspect that there was some kind of agreement between the conservative owners of the *Indianapolis Star* and these group of ministers. Now, why, I have no, I don't know—but it just so happens that the son of the *Indianapolis Star* was a vice president candidate for whoever was running against Clinton. You know, those days. But getting back to my relationship to this process, since the Indianapolis branch would not picket the stores, John Ward, who was my mentor and attorney friend, and myself—now, this was back in, like, [19]59 or 1960, before I came to Florida—we joined the picket line of the Youth Council, which was led by William Raspberry at the Monument Circle. Now, Monument Circle is in the middle of downtown Indianapolis, you know? All the exclusive stores facing, you know, a big statue.
- B: I think I've actually been there.
- D: Okay.
- B: Yeah, I played basketball, and we played IUPUI. So we spent some time downtown. I think I've actually been there.
- D: Okay, so you know there's a statue there.
- B: Yeah.
- D: Now, at the time, I was working as a correctional officer at the Indiana State Farm, which was a penal facility near Greencastle. When I got to work that following Monday, I was told by my supervisor that the superintendent wanted me to resign. Now, I was on probation, so I could be fired any time. I said, why? Well, you know why you need to resign. I said, no, I don't know why I'm supposed to resign [laughter]. So, I wouldn't resign. So, they gave me some termination papers, and they wrote down the reason. You know, when you're on probation, they don't have to give you a reason, but they wrote the reason: Mr. Due was making a spectacle of himself in a public place. I was just picketing, you know?

B: Yeah.

D: So, I went to my friend's office, who was also a director of the ACLU, and then I went home. I saw myself having a civil rights role or going through the different communities about my being fired for exercising my civil rights and all that, and here I get a phone call from my superintendent telling me to come on back to work. I came on back to work. This was right after the sit-ins, you know, in Florida. I decided to come on back to work, but I said, now, I need to get away from here, because they're going to again put me down. So, I accepted what some of my friends at Florida A&M asked me to do, and I came on down to Florida A&M Law School to go to law school. I didn't know I was going to hook up with Patricia, but I did. You know, that kind of thing. That's how I got involved in Florida: coming South. So, I was motivated to come South, but I was kicked out of Indiana anyway [laughter].

B: Okay. I guess another thing I'd want to ask is about the Voter Education Project. Clearly, there's a battle, a long, long battle for suffrage and that, in and of itself, as far as citizenship is concerned, is very important. But, did a lot of the activists on the project feel that this was about building a Democratic voting base for the party? Or, did they feel that it was much bigger than that?

D: It was much bigger than that. It was more connected to the vision of a free society, not a base of politics within the Democratic Party as such. No, it was part of a process of acculturating and changing the culture of black people who felt that they had to carry out a Jim Crow mentality and culture as an underclass. I think it was about becoming free. You know we always called it a Freedom Movement. Although I'm a lawyer, I don't like to use the word civil rights very much. Although people, I claim to be a civil rights lawyer, but I don't like the term civil rights because civil rights is so narrowly defined in the Constitution of the United States. We like to call it freedom, a need to carry out a positive sense of self, not just a negative freedom, you know, freedom from, but freedom to become who you are and what you can become. That's the way my wife always looked at it. To become all you can be. That was her, that's all we ever asked our children. We're not worry about you getting AIDS, we just want you to do the best you can to become the best you can be.

B: Absolutely.

- D: Yeah, so that's the way it's always been and I think Mississippi sought and you know, it's real strange that—I hope you have a chance to interview Bob Moses because he sure is a unique person in the Movement. He's kinda existentialist thinking from the fifties. He understands the limitations of our personality, you know. That we can be the best that we can be and then we can also be the worst that we can be. That kinda dilemma of the human, you know, so that's what existentialism is about. Particularly Albert Camus. So, that's where he comes from and that's why he left Mississippi after Freedom Summer 'cause he didn't wanna become the enemy. He didn't wanna become the slave master, that's what happens too much when we get power. He didn't want that.
- B: Can you talk about that tension, though? So clearly there's a broader issue at hand, freedom in terms of voting rights. But there's also the tension coming from the top because of the SRC and the funding for the VEP that's really trying to funnel it towards a Kennedy or Johnson victory and a new base for the Democratic Party and the region so there's this tension. Can you talk about how different people, how you and different people dealt with that tension?
- D: Well here's what, God, how did I deal with it? How did I deal with it? The tension, see I wasn't never a director. Well, I shouldn't say that. I will say I just was never the director, that's not necessarily true. Uh, let's talk about the tension. There were several conduits. The Southern Regional Council was one conduit. Then the CORE developed its own conduit with the same sources. Scholarship, education and defense fund. In other words, a white, liberal many that also had connections with the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. SCLC was trying to develop its own separate wing through its citizenship education program. Now all of these programs had an impact of trying to control, you know, the Fannie Lou Hamers [laughter] and the community. You might want to read Stokely Carmichael's book, you know, *Ready for Revolution*? Because I think he deals with this to a certain extent and how this evolved into Black Power but before the black people came on the scene, I was beginning to talk about things that were beginning to happen in CORE as in this evolution towards Black Power. This is outside Southern Regional Council, I'm talking about CORE now.
- B: Yeah.
- D: Patricia came to Washington, D.C. She was kicked out you know, about 3 or 4 times from Florida A&M and she, or you know sit-ins and being arrested and being suspended

and all that. She went to Howard University for a while and let's see this was the summer of [19]61 when CORE began to change. CORE had a white chairman because it was basically a white pacifist organization that created CORE but because of the publicity of CORE from the sit-ins and the Freedom Rides, it began to attract liberal money. At that time, that's when they decided they needed a black face, you know in charge of CORE and James Foreman was recruited out of the NAACP, I think he was a program director for the NAACP and he was a good speaker and he became the chairman of CORE. Also, CORE began to develop a field staff. Also, it began to develop chapters of CORE in the North which was kind of unique because you know, SNCC didn't organize any real chapters in the North except to raise money for SNCC. But not to do any action activities.

B: Yeah.

D: When CORE began to organize chapters in the North, they didn't have the Southern style non-violent training that the Southern people had. So blackness became more and more an interest. The Nation of Islam, through what's his name?

B: Oh, Elijah Muhammad?

D: No!

B: Or Malcolm X?

D: Yeah, Malcolm X begin to have an impact. Also, nationalism, I saw this happen when I, after I graduated from law school that spring of [19]63. I didn't have a job, you know, I didn't have a job when I graduated. So I came north thinking I'd get a job with CORE. This was in the summer of, right after the freedom, you know, after the March on Washington and I lived with my sister-in-law, who had an apartment in New York and I start going to meetings of CORE groups in New York and they were much more Afrocentric than the ones down in the South. Our CORE chapters in the South were integrated but –

B: Not the ones in the North were-

D: and they didn't appreciate Dr. King very much. Call him Dr. Coon, you know, and SNCC had a same mentality from its northern influence. Remember I told you about NAG, National Action Group? It has a lot of Afrocentrics, that's where Stokely Carmichael came from, Charlie Cobb came from NAG. So all this stuff begins to infiltrate into the

innocent, otherwise innocent, you know, SNCC. And some SNCC people because of the hostility from the Northern SNCC people left SNCC and went to start working for SCLC. James Lawson and some others, James Bevel, all these people that were trained into the nonviolence of James Lawson, from Nashville, Tennessee. They kind of evolve into SCLC and became organizers for SCLC. Now CORE began the movement towards Black Power as SNCC was moving into Black Power. And a lot of it had to do with the issue of right of self-defense because in Louisiana a group called Deacons for Defense and Justice began to organize to protect CORE projects in Louisiana and James Foreman wasn't too much opposed to that. So there's all these kinds of dynamics. The whites were trying to insist on the philosophy and theology of nonviolence and CORE was thinking about survival, that kind of thing [laughter].

B: They tried to use the Robert F. Williams game plan again but they couldn't do it in that context.

D: Yeah, yeah. You're right. Well I think he had gone to China by that time.

B: Oh yeah. He was long gone [laughter]. Might have been Cuba by that—

D: He had left the scene. So now, like I said, I was with Southern Regional Council occupied in Mississippi and St. Augustine. Now Dr. Hayling was the adviser to the Youth Council of the NAACP but he used that position to go beyond what the NAACP wanted him to do. Because he had adults and young people and college people and all that kind of thing and after the shooting of those girls in St. Augustine, his people had armed themselves on shooting back. Now the NAACP on a national level told, I mean the government told NAACP to get rid of Dr. Hayling. So they dismissed Hayling as adviser but that didn't stop his power over the people. Now what Hayling did in the January and February of, was it [19]63? I think it was [19]64. He had gone to SCLC and asked for help. And it's real funny, I had talked to Bevel. I guess it was around March of [19]64 cause I was working for Southern Regional Council and when I talked to James Bevel at that time he had left SNCC and was with SCLC and his dream was to organize Alabama like Mississippi was organized. He had that great vision. But he did not know that Dr. King had made a commitment to come into St. Augustine and I always had a feeling that the government asked Dr. King to come into St. Augustine. That was part of the agreement. We'll take out Hayling and make him withdraw from the Movement. We'll approve SCLC to do its thing, because see, what was important was the convention

coming up. Already CORE stopped the convention from coming on to Florida, on Miami Beach. This is [19]64. So the concern then was whether or not all this stuff was going to kill Kennedy from being re-nominated or whatever. Course you know, Kennedy was assassinated in November of [19]63, you know that kinda thing. But before then, they were really concerned about how this was gonna play out at the convention that was gonna take place in Atlantic City. But getting back to my story about Southern Regional Council, what I noticed was this covert war between SCEF and Southern Regional Council because SCEF had a lot of influence over SNCC. Patricia and I was immovable in, when was it? December. Was it December of [19]63 or December of [19]62? I forget when it was. When we were at the Ann Braiden's house, Jack and Ann's house and while we were there one of the SNCC people had left Washington with a carload of medicine to take to the Delta because there was a crisis, some kind of crisis going on somewhere. Yeah, it was in Mississippi. Of course what happened, the young man was arrested for trafficking drugs and what he had was aspirin, so anyway, that's another story. But I'm saying all this is, the contact SCEF had with SNCC, SCEF had a printing machine, they were good at getting things printed up, documents so you could run up to go get some stuff printed and come back, that kind of thing. So there was that kind of war going on. Another thing that SRC was trying to do through the Voter Education Project was to suppress the activity of groups like the Albany Movement. They were claiming that their activism was a violation of a internal revenue code that says that if you're a charitable organization or receiving charitable funds, you cannot use it for political activities. And the argument of the Voter Education Project in Southern Regional Council was that the demonstrations and the picketing all of that was political activities, etcetera, etcetera. So this is one of the ways they were controlling, trying to control the protest movement in the South particularly in Albany, in Selma. Birmingham never did receive any money [laughter] you know, that kind of thing.

B: So, the tension basically was resolved with Black Power, was the resolution to the dilemma of the ties you would have to have to some of these white organizations and white money for voter registration.

D: Okay. Black Power was not enunciated as you know, specifically as a strategy until Mississippi, what June the sixth?

B: Yeah.

D: During the march when Stokely Carmichael declared Black Power. Now, remember I was with the Southern Regional Council until [19]65 and then I started working for the CORE scholarship education defense fund [19]65 and [19]66, [19]67 in North Florida so I had lost contact with SNCC in Alabama. When Bob Moses walked out on SNCC at the convention, I didn't know that SNCC had any continuing activities but Fannie Lou Hamer had kinda taken over and what's his name that's now sick, the chairman of the Democratic Party. What's his name?

B: McLauren?

D: Lawrence Guyot.

B: Okay.

D: I hope you have a chance to talk to him.

B: Me and Dr. Ortiz are gonna try to work that out, yeah.

D: Yeah because what he did after Freedom Summer is significant with Fannie Lou Hamer. Another person you need to talk to is Marian Wright Edelman. Now I didn't know her, I didn't meet her in Mississippi during the time I was there, during the spring and the summer of [19]64. Even in the fall of [19]64 I never saw her but she was around somewhere but it was only after Freedom Summer that she emerged with some programmatic activities that were follow up and I was trying to connect some of those activities yesterday. Now there's a book, I might have to send you the name of it that talked about all the kind of activities that happened in Mississippi right after Freedom Summer. I don't know if you've seen that. I didn't bring it because its 'bout that thick.

B: And this is all about after Freedom Summer?

D: Yeah it's after Freedom Summer.

B: Oh, that's great.

D: And its 'bout that thick. And you saw all the stuff I had already so I had to make a decision to leave some of this stuff behind cause I thought the speakers that was gonna speak was gonna talk about Fannie Lou Hamer. But they didn't, they talked about themselves like I did, I guess. I thought I was the only one that could talk about myself 'cause I saw her almost at that conjunction of moving from Freedom Summer into after

Freedom Summer. So in a way I have to send you or tell you how to get a copy of that book 'cause its very inclusive of all the kinda activities that happened after Freedom Summer. But getting back to Black Power, I thought that was a fancy term. See I didn't know about Stokley working in Selma after Freedom Summer. I didn't know about Ralph, the guy that took over SNCC after John Lewis in Selma. So I wasn't close to what the dynamics of Black Power as it emerged in Selma, Alabama and they organized their own party. They didn't call it Freedom Democratic Party but they organized a party that was similar to the –

B: In Lowndes County?

D: Yeah and they had this big black tiger and that idea was transferred to California, Oakland. And that's how the Black Panther Party for self-defense emerged. Albeit the roots of the party in Selma and it began to develop as a philosophy, which really didn't have much impact in Florida as far as I was concerned except for one personality by the name of Joseph Waller Yeshitela, Uhuru Movement in St. Petersburg, are you familiar?

B: No, I'm not.

D: Well that's only about 100 miles away from you. So you need to check out Uhuru Movement, Joe Waller and African People's Party. Now Joe and Stokely had a difference of philosophy which I could never identify so I always thought it was basically personalities, you know that kind of thing because Stokely organized organizations on campuses of universities. Did you know that?

B: Unh-uh.

D: Okay, well he did. And some of them still exist. One exists in University of South Florida. I need to send you that information. Now as you know Stokely was named to be the Defense Minister for the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense but because of internal conflict he had to leave the party, and you have to read his book, *Ready for Revolution* to understand the dynamics. But again this is not from my direct experience. In North Florida, knowing the dynamics of the White power, money that supported SCEF and my job [laughter] I didn't get into the blacks yet too much. I was just an observer as to what was going on and my own thoughts about Black Power is that blackness is a construct of white power so trying to develop it as an independent variable doesn't make much sense. What you need to do is deconstruct white power cause they're the ones that are sick.

That's my philosophy right now. But anyway I didn't get into the dynamics of Black Power, however many in my community that I was trying to work with got caught into the mood of Black Power and did develop organizations similar to the Black Panther Party in Tallahassee. So I did work with them and when Dr. King was assassinated they were very effective in going into Frenchtown, which was a black ghetto community to calm people down because the governor had called out his tanks [laughter]. Seriously, I'm serious. His tanks and they was ready to do some business. So that's the way I looked at the whole thing, that so called Black Power can be a means of self-destruction. I don't know if I answered your question but that's about the best I can do on that one.

B: Yeah, no it's one of those questions that doesn't really have an answer –

D: I don't know, exactly.

B: Things just happened.

D: Exactly.

B: People reacted to the events around them. I guess I wanna wrap up and kind of from the beginning and talk about growing up.

D: Okay.

B: How was it for you growing up? How were your parents and what did they do for a living?

D: Okay. I'm a product of a broken marriage. Divorced parents, four or five years old. My father was a dog. He had the luck of working at a shoe repair shop and when the owner died he willed everything to my father and he was only 13 years old.

B: Wow.

D: So you only had a third grade education but that was a means of having influence back in the '30s when there was a depression. So as he became a young man, he was very popular with the young ladies 'cause you know young ladies love to eat [laughter].

B: Some things never change [laughter].

D: And he had the Buick and in those days, you know a colored man having a Buick is like having a Cadillac so he was very popular on the campuses of Indiana University, which I learned from a land lady. And also Indiana State Teacher's College, where my mother

was a student and my mother being very light, she had the ordinary prejudices against darkness and all that but I guess she liked to eat too [laughter]. And she must have liked that backseat in the car [laughter]. And here I come popped. So they married but my father never did stop his conduct so they divorced when I was five years old and I was raised by my grandparents until I left Terre Haute, Indiana, and I was brought up in the AME Church, which stands for African Methodist Episcopal Church and I was taught what color was when the little girl next door to me at the age of five noticed that we had different colored hands and she went home and must have asked her mother what they meant and next thing I heard was that word, you know?

B: Yeah.

D: [Laughter] So we weren't friends anymore. So I guess I got upset about what nigger meant and of course, growing up in the AME church we had bibles that had pictures of God who was a white man with a big white beard so I didn't go for that too much [laughter]. And I learned of why the AME church came into existence. That black people weren't allowed to have communion with white people. They had to sit upstairs in church and all that and that's why black people walked out that church and formed their own African Methodist Episcopal Church. So that's how I got to know about race. My grandparents were working class people. We had a house in a poor working class neighborhood with poor and white neighbors and there was no problem with that cause I grew up with white children in that poor neighborhood and my grandmother, you know, accepted everybody. So when we moved into a middle class neighborhood, which was all black, I didn't have any feelings of inferiority to white people, you know that kind of thing. So when I went to middle school, I noticed that all my black friends from Lincoln sat in the back. So like I told the young people here, I decided to sit in the front, which was unusual. Most black children sat in the back. I sat in front and kept my hand in the face of the teacher and so I began to be recognized and able to achieve and I was the only one from Lincoln School at that grade, from that year that I went over there and went on to high school. I was the only one that graduated from college, you know that kinda thing, 'cause everybody else wanted to go to Detroit and work [laughter] in the motor industry. So that's how I grew up. In the AME Church I did learn about the NAACP in Terre Haute. I remember being a member and going to meetings but we didn't do any action activities, you know most of the time we just sent money to a national office, you know that's what the NAACP was for. So I really didn't see any personal responsibility

until I told you when I was in the army and then realized I had to take a responsibility for myself and others.

B: What did you think of the black leadership class in Terre Haute?

D: Well, I thought it was kinda prejudiced. You know, snobbish? We had teachers, undertakers, those who work in white folks houses, had a snobbish attitude. That they were better than other black people. Now the people I'm talking about in Terre Haute, they were in that neighborhood where part of the so-called colored over class – Remember when I was talking—

B: Yeah.

D: We had that colored over class in Terre Haute. And I began to realize there's some historical reasons for that, is that Indiana was settled by so called colored, free people, who were freed by slave masters before the Civil War and since they couldn't stay in the South because of slave revolts, they had to move north. So the fore parents of my fore parents are from that colored class, who probably were the children of the slave master and who therefore brought with them that superior attitude. And in my research, I'm trying to connect them to the Methodist Church. The AMEs even today, if you look at AMEs, they're light colored compared to the Baptists cause they are the children of the slave masters, they were Methodists. And I believe my fore parents' fore parents had help from other Methodists who were white and getting to Indiana and buying land to settle as farmers and after the farming thing went down they migrated to Terre Haute to work in the plants and stuff like that. So that's my background and that's how I said my parents, my mother had that superior attitude and when I came South I saw how ridiculous that was [laughter]. There's nothing to be superior about, you don't own shit in Terre Haute [laughter]. So that's how I was brought up, that's how I came, that's how I evolved. Now I was more of a class radical than a race radical at first because I was very interested in the labor movement and I had intentions of being a labor lawyer at one time because Terre Haute is a historical town that's for its development of the IWW and the railroad union and Eugene V. Debs and people like that who were socialists. So I was more of a class radical at first before I became a race person.

B: In the South?

D: Yeah –

B: Had a big influence –

D: See I learned that labor is just as racist as any other white institution. So that's where I evolve into the racial struggle 'cause labor was racist.

B: And those feelings that you have on labor, they evolved as you worked in the Movement or did you come to that conclusion before –

D: Oh, I had that conclusion before but it was confirmed as I continued to work in race relations. I knew how labor controlled the NAACP, you know that kind of thing. Labor controlled the Democratic Party to the Liberal Democratic Party and even today it hasn't reformed too much. I do recognize differences between Unions. SEIU that Portis talks about is much more progressive than your standard unions in – If you studied the history of the labor movement, you would see that labor has had its own contention and conflict with alleged radical involvement in labor. You know, the so called communist influence and all that. So it has its own story. I've tried to weed out communists of the Labor Movement of who they perceive as communists and all that kinda stuff. So that's another story by itself.

B: Yeah. I guess to close I need to ask if based on your experiences, what do you think the keys to progressive change are in the 21st century. 'Cause we live in a world now where voting is outright prejudice, we don't have Jim Crow laws anymore, even though some are coming back, what do you think the key towards progressive change are?

D: Well, I've been trying to think about this with almost 20 years, where do we go from here? Dr. King wrote a book with that title. There's one book that has influenced my thinking about this, *Future Shock* by Alvin Toffler, who predicted that the way we do business and our economics is evolving from mass production to specialty production and he predicted that instead of mass movement, he called it symbiosis, where minorities is good business instead of Leslie Dunbar's idea of a mass society that's assimilated. It's not good business to have specialties and he spent a lot of time talking about people learning to be prosumers, instead of being a dependent consumer that's programmed on what to buy and how to buy, we should develop in becoming prosumers in order to produce our own goods and services. A lot of this is playing out when we talked about the social, what did we call it? The social publicity? What do you call it?

B: Oh, social network.

D: Yeah, social network. Where people are producing their own media instead of being controlled by CNN. So I think we need to develop the skills of being our own producers of our own conception and also he talks about how we need to be participating and making real decisions on our goals, on our visions, our goals, and purposes and objectives to be carried out in a way that Fannie Lou Hamer was doing in Mississippi instead of waiting for a professional to come in here and determining what should be done because a professional is only interested in their check, basically [laughter]. So I think we had to find a way to structure what that means that can engage the motivation of our young people to do this and that's why I think Fannie Lou Hamer was so dangerous because she was beginning to find ways to motivate people to do these things. So I'm not answering your questions –

B: Oh, I think yeah you are.

D: But this one I'm trying to influence people to go beyond the protest demonstration outdoors because the system doesn't know what they supposed to be doing anyway. So just protesting is not doing anything [laughter]. You had to be about developing your own activity and program to serve your needs. So that's what I was hoping to talk to the Dream Defenders about, how to connect with people in Palestine and Egypt and what have you for their same age and begin to relate as to what kind of society they want for their children.

B: So the way I gather what you're saying is you kinda want the world to move into a postmodern place where mass society, mass communications, our relationship to agriculture and the economy is all – its more rooted in community and family and our relationship to the outside world isn't based on imperialism –

D: Yeah.

B: It's based on brotherhood.

D: Exactly. Use the word fellowship, I'm trying to get away from sexist words like brotherhood, manhood and stuff like that. It'll go, we have a disclaimer, when we say manhood we mean the universal human being, we really don't mean no sexist na na na.

B: Uh-huh.

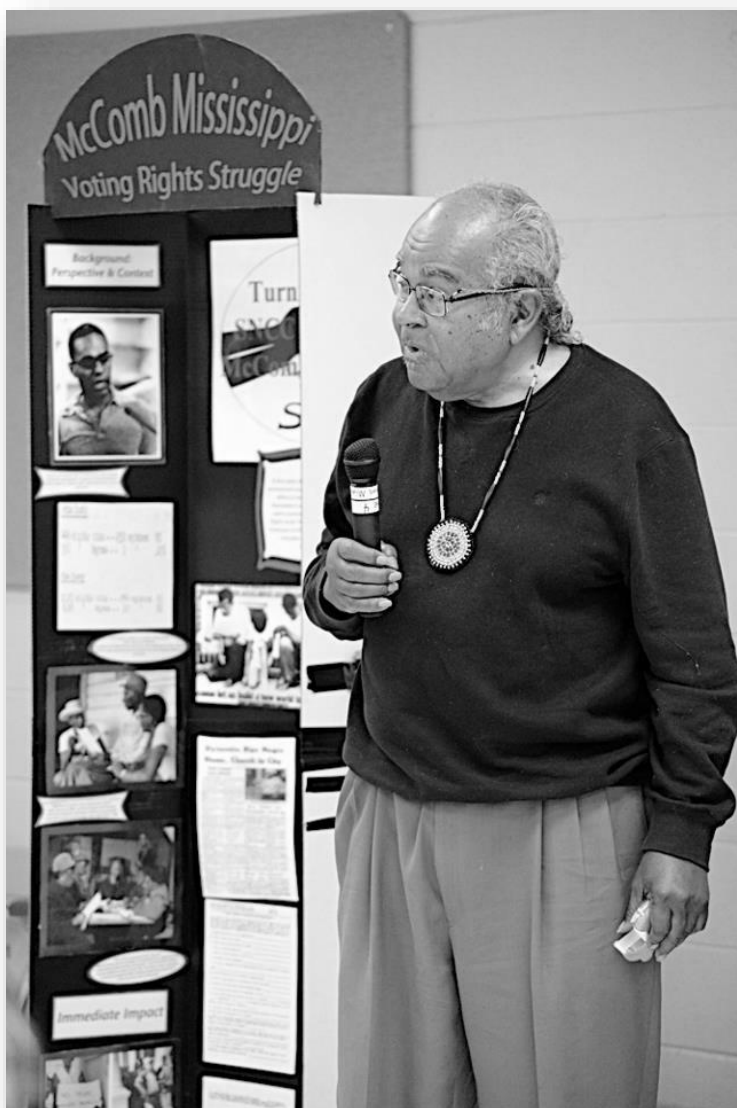
D: Bottom line is it always ends up that way [laughter].

B: This is true. Yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah okay. Well, I forgot to do what we were supposed to do at the beginning. Do you know what the date is today?

D: No.

B: [Laughter] I don't know either. Let me find out. It's the, let's see. This is Michael Brandon for the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program with Mr. John Due and it is September 20th.

End of Interview



FEBRUARY 22, 2013

Narrator: John Dorsey Due and Robert Talbert

Interviewer: Paul Ortiz

Mississippi Freedom Project 113

Date: February 22, 2013

O: Mr. Due, what we're going to do today is, I'm going to start by asking you about ten minutes' worth of questions.

D: Okay.

O: Then, these bright, talented students are going to be thinking of their own questions to ask. Then, after about ten minutes, I'm going to turn the floor over to them, and they're going to start asking questions. How's that sound?

D: That sounds great.

O: Okay. So, let's get started. Mr. Due, I wonder if you could tell me . . . how, take us back before the Movement. And what I would like to get a sense of is, when you were a young boy growing up, did your parents—what kinds of values did your parents try to instill in you?

D: Well, when I was growing up in Terre Haute, Indiana, the kind of values that my grandparents—my grandmother, particularly—put into me was to be self-competent as to who I am, and that I must accept responsibility as to what I should become. Now, in Indiana, growing up, I was not really sensitive to any awareness of being black versus being white, except it seemed kind of interesting to me that, on January 21—that used to be Abraham Lincoln's birthday—only black children were given a free day because, being Abraham Lincoln, he liberated, emancipated black people, whereas white children still had to go to school. We lived right next door to some white families, and I kind of missed my white playmates when I was a child. Then, I was just also interested that, in going to school, I noticed that we were in an all-black school. None of my playmates from the white community in that school. And there was a lot of emphasis on Benjamin Franklin's *Almanac* and also George Washington Carver—

O: This is when you were in school.

D: In school.

O: Okay.

D: And Booker T. Washington, and I was just talking to one of my people at the panel table, is that the minister at our church—the A.M.E. church—he explained why the church was all black. It was called the African Methodist Episcopal Church is that because, in Philadelphia, white members of the Methodist church wouldn't permit black people to participate in communion. We had a separate communion during the church service, and black people had to sit upstairs. Therefore, Richard Allen, who was a member of that church, led a walk out and was able to get—now, this is taught to us as a child, even before high school—walked out of the church and formed what they would get together, a charter from the British Methodists to organize an African Methodist Episcopal church. Yet, after all of that, there was a plague that hit Philadelphia that seemed to particularly affect white people in Philadelphia. We were taught how that church in Philadelphia, the black church, the A.M.E. church, opened its door and nursed the whites there in Philadelphia. So, it was interesting. There were two things: instead of teaching hatred, it was teaching that we care for these white folks, although they're not necessarily very nice to us. Also, I began to notice a code language as a kid, because . . . we spent a lot of time in the Old Testament. Talked about the Jews being enslaved by the Egyptians, and that was a code word that the Egyptians was the white folks and the Jews were the black folks, and that we—what happened after Moses and God liberated the Jews . . . he taught that the Jews killed Jesus. And therefore, now, we are the chosen people. They taught that in A.M.E. church. I don't think they do now, but that's the way we were taught there in Terre Haute, Indiana.

O: Okay. And Mr. Due, when you were growing up, when you were about maybe the age of these students here, maybe fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, did you start hearing stories about the Civil Rights Movement? The Montgomery Bus Boycott? Anything, was that . . . ?

D: There was no—see, I grew up in the late [19]40s. The only experience we had was about how so proud we were of Joe Lewis, champion of—my grandfather and I would listen to the radio about Joe Lewis. You know? We began to groove about Joe Lewis. Then, when we transferred for the beginning of desegregation and we left Lincoln School to go to the junior high school, I noticed that the administrators, in advising us what curriculum to take, told most of the black kids to take shop training and stuff like that.

O: Vocational type—

- D: Yeah, vocational training. And I knew my grandmother wanted me to go to college, so I took the academic course. And, when I start going to these classes, I didn't see any of my black friends. You know? From Lincoln. I was practically the only one in these classes.
- O: Very interesting.
- D: The ones that I did see, they sat in the back of the class. I didn't understand that because, back in Lincoln, they were smart. So I said, shoot. I'm going to sit in front, and that's always been my career in going to school, through college, is to sit near the front of the school and to raise my hand if I have questions and always to be called upon. That helped me to make it through college, but let me—
- O: Mr. Due, excuse me. Now, we're going to accelerate this process, because we're also going to interview Mr. Talbert. I'm going to ask Mr. Due one more question, and then I want you all—you've been working on questions—I'm going to turn the floor over to you, so get ready to ask him questions. We're going to transition into McComb. And, Mr. Due, I wonder if you could tell me: now, you became active in the Civil Rights Movement. What brought you to McComb? You're not from Mississippi, am I correct?
- D: No, no, no. What brought me . . . to McComb was Rosa Parks and Emmett Till. In 1955, when Emmett Till was pulled apart in the state of Mississippi, then I began to realize there was something between white and black. And also, when Rosa Parks, who represented the middle class—colored middle class, we would call it back in those days—who refused to accept going to the back of the bus, that's when I begin to say, I had to accept responsibility. And what brought me to McComb, as I said, was Rosa Parks, because when I left the army, I got involved in civil rights, and then I saw that the students in the South doing sit ins, and I saw a young lady by the name of Patricia Stephens in *Jet* magazine. I said, I want to come to Florida and Florida A&M. After I came to Florida, got active in CORE, I graduated from FAMU, became a lawyer and became active in CORE, and CORE had a relationship with the Southern Regional Council, and they were trying to work with Bob Moses to document racism and oppression in McComb, Mississippi and Amite County. That's how I got here.
- O: Very cool. Mr. Due, thank you. Now, I'm going to ask some of our students who have questions. I'm going to give the floor to them and we're going to have ten minutes to

continue asking Mr. Due questions. So, what is the first question we want to ask Mr. Due?

Student 1: What are some of the things you wish you would have did differently back in the day, when you was involved in the Movement?

D: You know, it's funny you ask that question, because I've been trying to answer that question all my life. What are some of the things that I should have done but didn't do? And I haven't quite answered that question yet. I feel that I've done about all that I could have done in the Movement. I just can't answer that question, because maybe I don't want to answer that question, you know [laughter]? I can't think of anything that I'm sorry for. I did, I think, all I could.

Student 1: Were you scared of the consequences that you were going to take on, getting into the Movement?

D: Yes, I was, concerned, because my grandparents were concerned. My parents were concerned. They were very afraid of my coming south to Florida, because most northern black people at that time had such an attitude that the South was an inferior place. But, somehow, I felt I had to come. Like there was some spirit. Of course, when I met Patricia and the other students in the South doing what they did, that fear disappeared.

Student 2: Was, at times, due to your parents just made what you were that you just felt like, oh, I wanted to stop?

D: I don't think I ever wanted to stop or even today, as old as I am, you know? Forty-seven [laughter]. I still don't want to stop, you know? I want to continue to do what I'm doing till I just pass on.

O: Next question for Mr. Due. Young man, you had a question?

Student 3: Did you have any negative altercations while during the Civil Rights Movement?

D: No. Isn't that interesting? All the stuff that I was involved in, I had never had a physical relationship, even with Sheriff Donald Jones, whose father was head of the Ku Klux Klan for southwest Mississippi and I was under his care. We still had a relationship with each other, person to person. He thought I was a communist and all that, but nevertheless, I never had—nobody really wanted to assault me. And no one really wanted to—oh, I shouldn't say that. That policeman did throw tear gas in my wife's eyes, didn't he?

O: Yes.

D: But, most generally, even she had the respect of the enemy. And that was very interesting, this hot and cold relationship that was in the struggle. At one point, they hated you; at the other point, they might want to relate to you as a human person.

O: These are really good questions, and we have—

D: These are deep, aren't they?

O: They're deep. So, we have five more minutes of questions to ask. I notice that you young ladies were writing questions. Do you have a question for Mr. Due?

Student 4: What is one thing you remember from 1961?

D: What do the most thing I remember . . .?

Student 4: One important memory.

D: What appointment per person?

Student 4: Important memory.

Student 5: Important thing.

D: There were two important memories. One is in Canton, Mississippi. Know where Canton is, right? And I was at a Freedom Day program. Freedom Day is where people gather in a church and get all fired up. Then, they march down to the courthouse to register to vote. In those days, I was agnostic. You know what agnostic means? It's a person—not that they don't believe in God; they think that's an irrelevant question. You don't know whether there's a God or not. That's different from an atheist, who claims there is no God. Well, I was agnostic. And seeing these people coming out of this church and there'd be a whole line of deputies with long sticks, called nigger sticks. And these people coming out of this church, and the sheriff, you must disperse, otherwise you shall be arrested for disorderly conduct, disturbance of the peace, and these people still coming out the church, singing these songs. And walked up to this line of these deputies with these nigger sticks, and they would lay out these people with the sticks, then load up these people in the truck, in a truck bed like they were some cattle, and take them to the courthouse. I would be standing there, watching this, as an attorney, and next to me would be two people from the FBI who were doing the same thing I'm doing: observing.

They ain't doing nothing to intervene. You could tell the FBI, 'cause they had this grey, pinstriped suits and driving a grey Valiant car. Remember those days?

[Inaudible response]

D: They're just standing, you know what? They were standing next to me. They knew who I was. And we didn't say nothing to each other, and they didn't do anything, because what I was supposed to do is, after they get all down to the courthouse—I mean, to the jailhouse—I go down and get their names, so I can write on a petition so that they can be removed from the local jurisdiction of the local courts. And Judge Harold Cox would sign my order. So, that was the most significant thing that occurred to me. The other thing was in Amite County, when the widow of Herbert Lee, she would not talk to me. She told me that she's on her way out of the state of Mississippi 'cause Sheriff Jones told her to leave. Herbert Lee, as you know, was killed by, we think, by Sheriff Jones.

[Inaudible response]

D: Yeah. So, I will remember all that. And another, a grandmother, whose grandson had the same thing. He had to leave. He had to leave his grandmother to go to Florida, because he was told he had to leave or else. Those are three things that I feel, to even today.

O: Okay. Well, Mr. Due, we're going to—could we have one more question?

Student 6: What do you think would have happened if people didn't stand up and begin the Civil Rights Movement?

D: See if I can rephrase that—what do I believe what young people need to do today? Did you just say that, did you? How did you—reframe your question, and say it over again, clearly.

Student 6: What do you think would have happened if people didn't stand up and begin Civil Rights Movement?

D: Okay, say it slowly. What do I think—

Student 6: What do you think would have happened if people didn't stand up and begin the Civil Rights Movement?

D: You understand what she's saying?

O: Yes. What do you think would have happened if people had not stood up . . .

- D: Oh, boy. If—this is so critically important, that question, because if your grandparents did not stand up against racism and segregation in Mississippi, we'd still be back in that situation where black people would not be registered to vote in the state of Mississippi, because that was the whole purpose of that constitutional convention, is to keep black people from registering to vote. And, if that was the case, we'd still be in Jim Crow situation that you don't even understand because it doesn't even seem real. But, at one time, because people did not have the right to vote, we had a Jim Crow society, just like in Germany.
- O: Well, Mr. Due, thank you so much. We're going to switch over now. Mr. Talbert, if you want to join us at the table. Mr. Due, if you would be willing to stay with us, or if you'd like to—
- D: Okay, I'll stay with you. I'll stay with you, Brother Talbert.
- T: Where do you want me?
- O: Mr. Talbert, if you wouldn't mind sitting right here, sir? Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed today. We're going to follow the same format that we did with Mr. Due. I'll begin by asking you about ten minutes' worth of questions and, as you're responding with the questions, the students are going to be responsible for creating their own questions. Then, after about ten minutes, they're going to begin asking the questions. Does that sound like a good format?
- T: That's good.
- O: All right. Mr. Talbert, I wonder if you could talk about—Mr. Due ended up on a point where he was responding to a question. What would have happened if black people would not have stood up and began organizing for civil rights? I wonder if you could tell us, what was Mississippi like before the Civil Rights Movement for black people?
- T: Let's see. It was a place called separation: you're on this side of the track, I live on this side of the track. The track, Illinois Central? Y'all know where the train go up and everything? See, black folks couldn't live on this side. They lived on that side. And they didn't live in East McComb. If you was caught in East McComb after dark, you were dead. All over Pearl River Avenue, all in that area, all the way from Magnolia Street all the way back to—almost to where the park at over there . . . on, you go up, what's that street there? Local Street? That's Local? Local Street, all in there? Black folks didn't live

in there. They moved in there later, after the [19]60s. But you'll be dead if you go in there ever, come through that area after dark. We used to work over there. We used to mow yards and stuff like that, you know? For people. They have to take you home after you get through, because you can't be caught walking through that area. Also, every public place, like City Hall, okay? City Hall had four restrooms in City Hall.

D: That's right.

T: Black male—it was colored then; you know, everybody was colored. It was colored men, colored women, white man, white women. They had four restrooms. They had two water fountains: colored and, on the white, they had white only on the water fountain. So, you couldn't drink out of that water fountain. You had to drink out of the colored water fountains. And wasn't no McDonalds, you know? Burger King or nothing like that. You wouldn't be allowed to go in any places like that, because you was black. And the train station in McComb had two waiting rooms: one black, one colored. And the bus station had two waiting rooms. But, when you said one black and one colored, I mean, one black and one white, guess what? The white would have all the luxury, you know, and everything. All the pretty stuff. The silver, you know, the glass and all that kind of—it was beautiful. But the blacks would have one little old entrance there with some stools, and half of them was tore up, and the bathroom don't work. I mean, restroom don't work. That's the kind of stuff, you know. Then, you always get kicked around; saying you can't do this, you can't do that. Then, they had two policemen in McComb. Both wearing about three-eighty. They used to walk Summit Street, side by side. They was about this big around. Anyway, take up the whole sidewalk. When they went—if you meet them, you about to move over to the other side, you know? Because, if you do, they're going to beat you with their billy clubs. You know them clubs they have, them sticks they got?

D: The nigger sticks.

T: That's right. Now, it was something. I mean, but the only place you could go and eat was on Summit Street, and that was the only place that you could eat. You couldn't go McDonald's and all them places, no. That was for white people.

O: Hmm. Mr. Talbert, I'm going to ask you one more question and then, after that, the students are going to start asking questions. So, students, be thinking of questions you're

going to pose to Mr. Talbert. Mr. Talbert, could you tell me when and why you first began getting involved in the Movement?

T: Well, when I was about eight, seven or eight years old—was I? Mr. C.C. Bryant—

D: Oh, Lord.

T: He used to come down there and pick up our dues, you know? NAACP dues.

O: Okay.

T: And I'd been a member of the NAACP ever since I was about seven, I think, seven or eight. Somewhere in there, because I had sisters under me, you know, that was also members. Then, when I finished high school, I went to . . . you ever heard of Tennessee State? That's where I got really involved. You know, I was going, I was attending school there and majoring in—I was going to be something, you know. Man, I was a political science major. You all know political science is, right? That's right. And then, that's where all the students, mostly from Tennessee State, went to Washington D.C. and North Carolina and all that. We got hooked up with these, with SNCC, and after SNCC, that's when the Freedom Rides start rolling, you know? With CORE. Then I was on the Freedom Ride. But we went through all the training of nonviolence, where you fall on somebody and block them; you know, block the licks and all that stuff. I did that, and I been doing it ever since.

O: All right, Mr. Talbert. Now we're going to ask the students to start posing some questions. Yes—?

Student 7: Okay. Was there anything—did you have any limitations on how far you would go? Was there anything you said to yourself, oh, this was too much for me to do? As far as saying, oh, well, that's just taking it too far, or were you just fearless?

T: Too far like what now?

Student 7: Like there was just some things you were afraid to do, like, no, I'm not going to do that, or were you just fearless?

T: No, huh-uh. I had a couple of partners of mine, a couple of girls I knew—she live in D.C. now. She come down for the—we have our annual . . . veteran thing. Y'all know anything about the veteran thing? Mississippi Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement. We have

that every year in March. We're going to have it at Tougaloo this year. But, just like—I'm going to take you back to Selma to Montgomery. How many of y'all saw that movie, *Selma to Montgomery*? Have y'all heard about it or anything? Y'all know what happened on that Selma to Montgomery? Do y'all know what happened?

D: We got to take you to the bridge.

T: It was—it was Pettus, Pettus Bridge. You had to cross over that bridge to get there, okay? And it was about a hundred and something state troopers with they billy clubs, and I saw Hosea Williams—Hosea, what was Hosea's last name? Hosea — Hosea Williams, he ran . . . the over direction.

D: That's not in the book [laughter].

T: I mean, I'm serious, y'all. And, see, they was putting it on us. That's when I got this arm broke. I got my right arm broke and my left leg broke. You still want to talk about that? That's what—and I stayed in jail three days with a broke arm and a broke leg before the Justice Department came down there to get us out, I mean, get medical treatment. See, that's one thing.

D: Just trying to march over the bridge.

T: But on the Freedom Ride, it was a different story, you know. When we got there—see, they burnt the bus up that went to Anderson, but I went to Montgomery. They put us in jail after that.

O: All right. Next question?

Student 8: What can you tell me about Mrs. Bertha Travis?

D: Brenda?

Student 8: Brenda.

T: Okay. When I came home, you know, we started the Movement in McComb. Brenda and I—been knowing Brenda ever since she was a baby, okay? Me and her sister that's older, we always in school together. So, Brenda was—and Ike Lewis and myself—we was the ones. It was five of us total, five. They call us the . . . McComb Five, okay? We were the five that went to jail. Brenda and I and Ike Lewis—he lived over there on Magnolia Street—we went to the train station first. And they didn't say anything. We sit on the side,

you know, where the white people be, and they didn't say anything. And so, we stayed there about ten or fifteen minutes; didn't nobody say nothing, so we got up and left and came to Woolworth's. They had a Woolworth's on Main Street. We was about halfway centered, Main Street. Somewhere in there, where that Legal Defense office is there? That's where Woolworth's used to be, right in that area. And so, we was coming to Woolworth's. All of a sudden, we walked in the door and all the waitresses and all the white folk run over there and jumped in the seats, you know, at the counter. They just sit down to get food or a drink or coffee or whatever. So, that didn't work. We stood there for a few minutes and they were standing there. Some of them sitting there on the stools. So, left and went to the bus station. Greyhound Bus Station, which is on Canal Street. There's a glass company there on Canal Street named McComb Glass, I think. Across the street from there, that's where the bus station used to be. And when we went in there, nobody was at the door to block us, so we went in and sit down. I asked for some food, and the lady left. She didn't—she says, I can't take your order. So, then the police came in and arrested us. The chief of police was named George Scott. He was one of the . . . Citizen Council, he's on the Citizen Council, and he was part of the KKK. See, when you got to Citizen's—the state, the chief of police in the Citizen's Council and the KKK, how can you win? You see what we're talking about now? That's when—that was about Brenda, then. Then, after that, they put us in jail down on Magnolia. It was Hollis and Curtis paid. They had been down there, three days before we got there. Then, we spent time there. Then they came and got us out. Then they had to walk out after that, because they wouldn't let Brenda back into school. And then, we went back to jail, and that's when we stayed thirty-nine days. They sent Brenda to Oakley, Oakley Training—that's right, Oakley Training School, and she was there. She was about fifteen then, I think. About fifteen. And then, they just, you know . . . and so, that's when the children say, we are not going to . . . you know, go back to school if Brenda can't go. And then, they all had to sign papers saying that they're not going to be in any more sit ins or walk ins, anything. And so, those wouldn't sign the papers. So, that was the ones that had to go to Campbell College. And Brenda was a good friend, good buddy. Y'all know Mr. James Cate? Saint Mary number two. But anyway . . . he did, you know, she did a lot to open the eyes up of the people. Then, oh, when you went to see Brenda, Mr. Fred Bates—y'all heard of Mr. Fred Bates? Come on, now, he used to live up on Summit Street. And he had a garage where they change the oil and all that stuff, you know. The black people had

to have their own thing, you know. He changed oil in cars and he had a rack, you know, you walk—and he had people—mechanics—that work on cars. And he took, he drove school bus. He had his own bus because, at that time, you couldn't have—there wasn't any busses for kids to get to school, y'all understand what I'm saying? And, see, anybody in Beartown and Summit, they went to school in Magnolia. And only people that could go to school here was the people that lived in the city limits. And see, Beartown wasn't in the city limits. And Summit is not in the city limits today, but they still come into McComb, but they're supposed to be going to North Pike.

O: Next question for Mr. Talbert?

Student 9: Did you have any particular fears at that time?

T: Fears?

Student 9: Fears.

T: No. I didn't know what fear was, that's one thing.

D: Mm-hm.

T: And I didn't see fear in none of the . . . because it was just . . . do what you got to do. And, see, our organization, see, wasn't like . . . you get the work done. See? You do things at the spirit of the moment. You know? We did it at the spirit of the moment.

D: Isn't that something? That's what it was.

T: And see, you know, I could tell y'all some stories, you know, of different things, but we don't have time for that today.

D: But you better see him later. Tell your children.

T: See, I could tell you about—see, I was Medgar Evers's State Youth Field Secretary. Y'all heard of Medgar Evers? Who—what about you?

Student 10: He stayed in Jackson.

T: Huh?

Student 10: He stayed in Jackson.

T: Yeah. I was his State Youth Field Secretary. And the night he got killed, I's supposed to be going home with him to pick up a car. He's going to take me, pick up a car. He was

going to take me to his house, he was going to leave, and then he was going to take me to pick up this car, that I was supposed to take the car back to Greenwood, Mississippi. I'm going to tell y'all—y'all listen up, now. Head Start, I helped organize the first Head Start in the United States. I'm going to tell you where the first Head Start was: Edwards, Mississippi. That's where we was working at. Edwards is between Jackson and Vicksburg. We was working there. Stokely Carmichael and all them guys used to leave and go north and raise money, and we had everything, all the papers and everything ready for the Head Start. And President Kennedy got killed in Texas, and when President Kennedy got killed, they put . . . Johnson in for the, he was the vice president, and he signed the paper for Head Start to start. And we had the papers on the thing. Y'all heard of Sixteenth Street Church? In Birmingham, where them four little girls got killed?

Student 11: No sir, I don't know.

T: They bombed the church. They killed four girls in Birmingham, Alabama. They don't call it Birmingham anymore; they called in Bombingham. You get it? Bombingham and Birmingham? But, anyway. Y'all remember Consantina Rice, the girl that used to be the, what was she—

D: Secretary of State, and . . .

Student 12: Condoleezza.

Student 13: Condoleezza.

T: Mm-hm. It was her—one of them was her cousin. We was going inside, see. The day they bombed the church, we was coming around and going in the door of the church and the bomb went off, and glass—you know, back then, they had them wooden . . . they didn't have them cross-wires, you know, the aluminum windows and all that. They had wooden frames; everything was wooden, made out of wood. The glass, you know, with the wooden frame. And that fell on our head, over the door. And that's when all that happened. I told y'all about Selma to Montgomery March, right? We was in the Delta, Mississippi, going from Greenwood to Greenville one night, and this car passed by us and shot in our car sixteen times. Okay? Sixteen times. And Jimmy Travis—I was sitting on the side, you know, behind the driver. And, when we met the car, guess what? The bullets passed by me and Jimmy Travis was sitting in the middle in the back. There was five of us in the car, five or six of us. And two bullets hit him, and he died last year with

both of them bullets still in him, because they couldn't do anything because it'd do something to his brain.

D: Was Randall Blackwell in the car, too?

T: That's right, Randall Blackwell, mm-hm.

D: He worked for the agency I worked for, Voter Education Project.

T: Mm-hm. And . . . them three civil rights workers that—Chaney, Schwerner, and Goodman, who heard about those? Nobody? That got killed in Philadelphia, Mississippi? I was working with those guys for about four days. But when they found them guys after they killed them, all of them had sand and dirt on their lungs. So, therefore, you know that they buried them alive up on that—you see what I'm talking about, now? So, y'all just think about it. See, they had us in the fairground in Jackson. Y'all been to the fairground up there in Jackson, between there and that stuff? Okay, they had us caged off in the fairground, and they had police come through there, calling you all kind of names and dogs and, you know, everything. They dog you out. Then, they sent us from the fairground to Parchman. Stayed in Parchman thirty days before they got us out. Oh, what's the next question?

Student 14: We want to talk about luxuries and did you ever wanted to use the white's luxuries?

T: You know what? See, your parents, man—your parents tell you what to do. You understand what I'm saying? They teach you, from a early age, you ain't supposed to do this; you ain't supposed to do that. You ain't supposed to here. You ain't supposed to go there. Okay? But, your parents would go—your mama would go to this house, this white people house, and keep they children all day. All day long while they at work. Two dollars a day. And then, when you raised all they children, you cooked and you cleaned, okay? Two dollars a day. Then, when that girl get thirteen, you got to start calling her miss. But the black lady that's done all this, she never got grown. She was either a nigger, a girl, or auntie. That's what they call her. And used to—what did you say?

Student 14: For my first question?

T: Yeah.

Student 14: Did you ever want to use the white's luxuries.

T: Look . . . let me ask you something. All right, now, you take McDonald's right down here—you know, the one on Delaware, right there on the corner? You ever been down there? All right. Now, what if you couldn't go to McDonald's? You never thought of it, did you? You know how many times I got busted and beat up just for trying to go in for eating? More than forty times. See, when you try to come in them places, they have some rough—what you call them, how they say now? They used to call them rednecks. They had some rough, redneck white boys. Them jokers would beat you to death, man, if you tried to go in there. See, we had the . . . the courage to go and if we didn't have the courage, you wouldn't have been able to go today, because it's a lot of places in the United States that you can't go. You still can't go. You remember, what's that hamburger place? Most like a restaurant that had two or three times—

Student 15: Denny's.

T: Denny's, that's right. Y'all heard of Denny's? Denny's don't like black folk.

D: Even today.

T: Huh?

D: Even today.

T: That's right. Even today, they don't like black folk. They just had come out of a lawsuit, what, about two or three years ago?

D: That's right.

T: That's right. And they had one about ten years ago.

O: All right.

Student 15: Waffle House, too.

T: That's right, Waffle House. That's the place like on Delaware. They got one on Delaware now, right? Down there by a drug store there, where that old place used to be right there.

O: All right, now. We've come to the end of our time period. Now, when I finish an interview, I always thank the individuals I'm interviewing with, and I think about how important their stories are and how much we learn from them. So, I just want to thank you, Mr. Talbert, and Mr. Due, for sharing your stories, and I want to remind all of us again: this is part of making history. It's learning new things and, when Charles Payne

wrote that book, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, this is a big part of how he wrote that book, was sitting down, interviewing Civil Rights Movement veterans, and I want us to think as students—because we're all students now—how we might go on and write books. We might do films. Some of you all are already filmmakers, right? You might do a podcast. You might write an article. There's a lot of different ways you can put this history out there. It's important for us to share what we've learned here today with our peers, our friends, our parents, our families. So, think about oral history as a way to gain new knowledge and, at the bottom of all oral history is storytelling. You've heard two amazing storytellers, so I like to kind of end by thanking them again. Let's give them—

D: I want to add something else. This past fall, I was in Cleveland, Mississippi.

O: Cleveland, Mississippi.

D: Amzie Moore. And the occasion of the program was the relation to Fannie Lou Hamer.

O: Mm-hm.

D: I had told Paul Ortiz I was coming to—he didn't invite me, I just told him I was coming. When he knew I was coming, somehow, he had some students from McComb, Mississippi there to talk with me. And one of the people that I talked to was the niece of Emma Bell [laughter]. When I start talking about—listen, don't go, don't go. You've got to listen, I've got to tell you this. When I start talking about Emma Bell, she had never heard this story from Emma Bell. See, in every ethnic group there is the elder who tells the stories of the past. And this young lady never knew the story of Emma Bell. And, as a people, you are lost if you don't hear from your grandparents and your grand-uncles about what they did as a child. You are lost. You ain't going nowhere except to prison unless you know what your grandparents done. So, this is important, because every tribe has a story where they have the older people to tell the story, and we stopped doing that.

O: All right.

[End of interview]



OCTOBER 5, 2013

Narrator: John Dorsey Due
Interviewer: Justin Dunnivant
African American History Project 318
Date: October 5, 2013

JDT: Today is October 5th, Saturday and the time is 12:25 [pm] I'm sitting in Jacksonville Hotel with Mr. John Due and we're talking about a lot of different topics today stemming around the Civil Rights Movement as well as working Quincy, Saint Augustine, and hopefully we'll touch on the Dozier Boy School. So thank you again Mr. Due for talking with me and sitting down with me. Where do we start? I guess there's many different places –

JDE: You wanna start with my coming -at why did I come to Florida?

JDT: Coming of age- could we actually start right before you came to Florida? So how old were you when you came to Florida?

JDE: Oh, I was about 26 years old.

JDT: Okay. Let's start when you graduated from high school.

JDE: Okay I graduated from a desegregated high school called Terre Haute Valley High School, an academic high school. As I said, integrated and that's important because when I graduated in 1952. Most of my homies from the black segregated school, Lincoln Elementary School, first grade through sixth grade did not come to that high school. The reason being is that when we graduated from Lincoln Elementary School, sixth grade to go to the first desegregated middle school, Woodrow Wilson, the office at the school in process of registering us gave us a choice of what curriculum to get involved in; one was the pre-college curriculum, and the other was a general curriculum and the people there were trying to encourage all the black children coming from Lincoln to take the general curriculum and offered to fund opportunities of woodshop and carpentry, and things like that. I knew my grandmother wanted me to be a teacher so I said, I wanted to go into the pre-college curriculum and I was the only one in my class –in most of my classes- at Woodrow Wilson that was black. There were some other black children from other elementary schools who I did not know and they always sat in the back of the room and this is what I always tell other students, particularly black students who feel shy, don't sit in the back, sit on the front and be engaged because somehow I knew the teachers ordinarily have very low expectations of black students. Now, how did I know that? Well

I didn't know that but the good element, I believe is that when I was growing up in Terre Haute most of my life as a child was living in an integrated, working class neighborhood where the whites in our neighborhood were very poor and so they kind of looked up to my grandparents –I was raised by my grandparents as somebody special for some reason. So I had no problem in relating to white children. I didn't feel inferior to white children because my only experience were these white children you know, next door and across the field who really— I didn't feel any sense of inferiority. So when I went to that junior high school, most of the other black kids grew up in all black neighborhoods and never had any association with white children so they were naturally inclined to somehow to feel inferior, I had to say it that way but I've never felt that way. So while sitting the front row when there were question, I always raised my hand, I always asked questions 'til one day Mrs. Shortridge and she was about tall as I was, but she had the right name [laughter]. She said, Johnny, I want you to come up in the hallway for a minute and so we went out to the hallway and she looked up at me and said, Johnny I really appreciate you and you're gonna be a leader of your people. Now I didn't know what the heck she meant but it made me feel good. So I continued that process of asserting myself while I was in Junior High School but I noticed that some of the readings that we had, Huckleberry Finn I didn't like because they were racist and my relationship with girls by that time, I got interested in girls. This little white girl I was interested in and she had a paper she needed to write. She was not all that smart so I wrote the paper for her and she got an A, which I didn't spend much time doing and she got an A and I just got a B for my paper, which I just spent a lot of time on. So I began to realize that there was a dual system sometimes and attitude and this is the way it was in junior high school and when we went to high school one of my friends, Glenn Idleman, again I'm explaining all this to show the attitude about race that began to foster upon-

JDT: Where was this?

JDE: Terre Haute, Indiana. Terre Haute, Indiana is the Midwestern town, somewhat west of Indianapolis, Indiana going towards Saint Louis. Pretty, well, conservative that town was. When we first went to this high school, my friend that –you know we were playmates at sports, soccer and all that, our first day of school, in lunchtime went to a restaurant near downtown at Terre Haute, Indiana and what was interesting is that it was one of these small restaurants short-order places and we ordered our beans and frankfurter, both of us, and I thought we were going to eat there in the restaurant. They put mine in a sack for me

to take out because they weren't going to serve me and I looked like –cause I knew exactly what was going on, they just don't want black people to be eating there so I looked at Glenn and I could see his eyes even today. My good 'ole junior high school friend, he didn't see. I had become a non-person and this is when I began to realize what race really does to people. But I was more embarrassed about myself. Because I took that sack and took it to the school and he just stopped. But this is when I began to really understand how racism in Terre Haute really can hurt.

JDT: Right, so then you went to college after that?

JDE: Yeah, but let me tell you one more experience I had. By 1952, when America was in its war with Korea and they were drafting people. My good friend Manford Carter who was a black friend of mine; we went to a movie theatre, a grand theatre, and we had to go upstairs black. Blacks had to sit upstairs and Manford said, John I'm not gonna wait to get drafted, I'm gonna go ahead and volunteer for the Air Force because you know if I'm in the Air Force I won't be flying any planes, I'm gonna be a mechanic on the ground, which is safe, so I'm not gonna get myself killed in Korea and he was so bitter about it and I began to realize again, how my uncle who was in World War II felt the same way, so bitter. So that's where I was in Terre Haute, Indiana. I finally transferred from that college in Terre Haute, Indiana, to Indiana State College. Again, I tell students, if you wanna go to University of Florida, you don't have to go to University of Florida for the first two years. You can go to a community college and save some money and then go to the University of Florida. Well, basically I did a similar thing. I went to the local college in Terre Haute, Indiana for my first two years and then I transferred to Indiana University and of course, I had taken all so many different courses. I was ahead in many people in my class. I had no significant pain about my first two years at Indiana University, it was only when I finally ran out of money even going to Indiana University so I volunteered for the draft just like a lot of people today you know, volunteer, go to the army so that they would have a scholarship when they get out of the army. But fortunately there was no shooting going on, so I volunteered for the army and while I was stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina there were two things to the curve. Number one, Rosa Parks did her heroic thing at Montgomery, Alabama, where she refused to give up her seat to a white person, which was a shocking element because just a few months before, Emmett Till, a black young man from Chicago came to Mississippi to visit his grandparents and because he whistled at a white girl, he was taken and brutalized, and killed, and

mutilated. So when Rosa Parks did her thing that's when I began to become motivated about racism in America. Particularly, where I was stationed at Fort Bragg I was serving in a special unit of this psychological warfare which uses seduction and misapplication to brainwash people, your enemy. I began to realize what they're doing, this is not just a so-called enemy but this is happening in America. So when I came out of the army, I got involved with the NAACP and we began challenging discrimination at off-campus restaurants and barber shops and we did not get arrested, we did what was testing. This was still the NAACP, which did not believe in direct action of getting arrested because the organization could be sued since it was a corporation so they just want you to test—get the information and then send it to the national office and they can get lawyers to challenge. So that's basically what I was doing. But by 19—when I graduated and I continued my activism in the NAACP at Indianapolis, after I graduated; by 1960, sit-ins began to occur in the South and Mr. Roy Wilkins, the executive secretary of the NAACP asked that all Northern branches of the NAACP picket the Woolworth stores in the North that's in their neighborhood in support of the direct action taking place in the south and there are two things that occurred; number one, the adult branch of the NAACP refused to follow those directions. So I participated in picketing by the youth council of the NAACP who was headed by William Raspberry. He eventually as you know became a renowned reporter for the *Washington Post* Newspapers, but back then he was only 18 years old and we picketed the store near the Indiana Memorial in Indianapolis. Now, when I came back to work, I was working at the Indiana State Penitentiary and Correctional Facility. And my supervisor, a psychologist, came to my office and said, the superintendent wants to see you. So I went to see the superintendent of this facility, and he said, John I'm going to ask you to resign. I said, why should I resign? Because you were seen picketing at the Indiana Memorial. I said, that was my right. Well I will have to fire you. So he fired me. Now, what was the mistake he made is that he wrote down the reason, Mr. Due made a display of himself at the Indiana State Memorial. Now, I don't know what that meant but I took it to my friend who was the director of the ACLU and who was also the NAACP attorney and he got in touch with the superintendent and of course I was hired—he called me up and said, hey come on back to work I made a mistake. But I knew since I was on probation that I could be dismissed where he would have to state the reason. So when I was at my grandmother's house, the *Jet* Magazine came and I saw a picture of this beautiful young black girl, young lady who decided to

stay in jail for 49 days and would not pay bail. She was from Florida A&M University, shoot –let me leave me this place. I went over here and enrolled at A&M Law School. I had made contacts with George Allen, who was the graduate student from Florida A&M attending Indiana University. He was a friend so he called some people at A&M and I drove on down to Tallahassee. September of 1960. I meet my future wife's sister, Priscilla. She was the secretary to the Assistant Dean Williams at the Law School. But I didn't meet Patricia for about 3 or 4 weeks. During this period of time, this was in the fall, right? Two other friends of mine, invited me to attend to a football game at Florida A&M and I was sitting up in the stand, there was a lot of noise going on, well the only ones to die it down, everybody was turning their head and everybody is looking at this young lady, black young lady, wearing dark glasses, orange leather jacket and boots leading these white children from Florida State University, of course to where they were gonna sit to watch the game because what had happened, she was at a CORE meeting that was at FSU's campus. And she just told them, I'm going to a football game, if y'all wanna come, you can come. There was a rule at that time that FSU students could not go onto the campus of A&M without the permission from a board of control and vice versa; Students from A&M couldn't go on the campus of FSU. But that did not bother Ms. Patricia Stevens. So that's how eventually I got to meet Patricia when Priscilla, as usual she knows how to maneuver things. She was dating Ike Williams who was from Jacksonville here, who was a law student with me but Ike didn't have a car, but I had a car and so Priscilla arranged that I'd take them to a movie where Patricia was working part time so that's how I got to meet Patricia. Then I started getting involved with Patricia, the courting of what she was doing, we both had the same cause, the same beliefs about racism about everything and we became friends. I didn't know she had some other intentions [laughter] because at that time, I was committed to the struggle, I wasn't gonna get married, I was gonna devote my whole life to the Civil Rights Movement. Eventually, in 1962 Patricia said, I'm going to quit Florida A&M and go and join my sister Priscilla in New York, so I'm going to New York. This is in January, right after Christmas. I said, how are you going? Oh, I'm getting a ride with somebody, he'll take me to New York. I said, no I don't want you to be going with some stranger, I will take you myself to New York but first we have to go to Indiana because that's where I live, my parents and everything, grandparents. As Patricia says in her book, she didn't know that Indiana was not on the way to New York [laughter]. So driving from

Tallahassee, I guess when we got to Birmingham at night I said, honey let's get married so we decided to get married and I showed her all to my mother.

JDT: You got married in Birmingham?

JDE: No we just kept on driving.

JDT: Okay. Alright.

JDE: We went to Terre Haute, Indiana and then from Terre Haute to New York then back to A&M. We had planned to have full family-type wedding but we went to Oregon Village for couples and they said we had to be married. So what we did is that we drove to Thomasville, Georgia where you can get married without waiting three days and we just –that's how we got married. So I was still in law school and being in law school asked me to hold off on my Civil Rights activities until I got out of law school. I even got a letter from a judge in Indianapolis saying the same thing cause they knew me, that kind of thing. Just hold off, but anyway when 1962 came around the Movement had moved away from sit-ins to testing segregation in interstate commerce. You probably heard about the bus of SNCC kids coming from Nashville to Birmingham, how the bus was burned up and the drivers was beaten up and things like that.

JDT: Right.

JDE: There was an order approved by Bobby Kennedy who was the Attorney General, ordering desegregation of interstate transportation. So being active in court we had to test the compliance of this order. In my situation although I was a student I felt I needed to participate. Patricia was in Fort Myers at the time. She really almost had a nervous breakdown because of her leadership in the Movement so she wasn't in Tallahassee at the time. What I did is that I participated in a testing activity trail way bus to Dothan, Alabama. The job was to go into the restaurant, order something to eat, and then come on back and report. So we had on the bus, a student from FSU – a white student –who would be the observer. So when I got to Dothan, Alabama I had already made arrangements to see Reverend Creecy who was a good friend of Reverend C.K. still elite of the minister leader in Tallahassee; he had his friend in Dothan. So what I decided to do is get off the bus, walk on over to Reverend Creecy's house since it was near the bus station and stay there until near time for another bus to come back to Tallahassee and then when I had time to talk with Reverend Creecy, then go back and do all the activities of ordering

things and stuff like that. So Reverend Creecy did not want to take me back to the bus station because he did not want to be identified with me, you know that kind of thing. He has to live there so I had walked back to the bus station, went into the bus station and I had my law books, I did a couple of chapters then went to the counter; they sold me a coke for \$5. By that time a bus to Tallahassee arrives so I get there and got on the bus then everything was okay –

JDT: Did the coke normally cost \$5?

JDE: \$5 yeah. Now what I did not know is that the observer that was on the bus. You see what had happened when I got off the bus, and went into the bus station, there was somebody acted like they knew that I was there, I was coming. So he had left the bus station, this other white –whoever he was –he left and came back to the bus station with a whole group of people. Well see, I didn't stay in the bus station, remember? I just went through there and went on to Reverend Creecy's house so when he came back with his crowd of the people, I wasn't there you know. So they all left. Then when I left Reverend Creecy, he did feed me, came back to the bus station and went through all my activities, this same guy had to go out looking for these guys again, you know. By the time they all collected there, I had already gotten on the bus. Now one, just as I was getting on the bus, one of them said, hey do you know you're supposed to be sitting on the colored side? I said, colored side? I didn't know there was a colored side. But I kept on going and got on the bus. Now, they did not get on the bus to pull me out, nothing like that, they didn't have that kind of bones. So that was pretty, well safe, as far as I was concerned. Another group of students from FAMU and FSU had gone to Albany, Georgia to test the facility there and they were duly arrested and charged with sedition and found guilty of sedition and crimes against the state of Georgia and all that. So that was my experience in [19]62. In [19]63, *Due v. Florida State Pier*. By that time there was a mixed activity going on, it was kind of hard to get the students at A&M and FSU continued to be involved. We were testing movie theatres at that time. CORE asked Patricia to send a picture of what we were doing in Tallahassee and the only thing we could do is get a picture of Reuben Kennan, he was the black young man, FAMU student. We got him to go to the ticket counter. We had one student from FSU, a white girl who had a sign and somebody took a picture and that's all we can show. Well, what happened that evening on CBS news was a report of how a group of 50 students at Jackson State University had gone to the theatre there. What occurred is the police with bludgeons and billy clubs, just beating down these

children and it was showing on CBS news. So the next morning, Rueben Kennan went to the student union building –do you have a student union building at University of Florida?

JDT: Uh-huh.

JDE: As usual, to try to get students to climb up the hill to picket the movie theatre and this time the whole campus went about the hill because they saw what was on CBS. So that's what you see there. All those students, they were demonstrating theater in front of the theatre. You see Mrs. Due in her shades and you see John Due with my legal pad observing as usual, trying not to get arrested. Anyway, they were arrested anyway. I wasn't arrested, however I had gone to see the judge to get a copy of the summons as to what this case was about and the judge invited me to be the attorney for the students. I said, I'm not an attorney, you know I'm just a law student. So when I got back to our apartment, Oregon Village, they was waiting for me and Marshall with some papers where I was named a co-dependent. They weren't gonna get me as an attorney, they were going to get me as a defendant so I'm listening on the case as a co-defendant. It was *Patricia Steven Due v. Florida State Theatre* and what have you. So that was the climate we were in during the Civil Rights Movement it's hard for people to understand. One of the reasons I came to Florida, is that racism in the north is very indirect and covert. It's not done by balance, it's done by economics and refusing to hire you, all kind of indirect ways and to report those who go along with the system as a house negro, I guess you've seen the movie *The Butler* –

JDT: Uh-huh.

JDE: That's the way racism was in the north and the reason I came south is because it was more direct and overt and you could deal with it. People were angrier than in the north so it was better for me and to Patricia to organize people when they're angry. If someone that was going to describe Patricia in psychological terms; Freud has a book called *The Discontent of Civilization*. Well she was a discontent, she always had that nature about her that she didn't like anything that wasn't right and felt that she did not have to comply with it. Even as a child when she was 14 years old, knowing that the principal was not a good principal but a terrible principle she had learned from her father's social studies class about the right to petition, so she circulated a petition and she describes it in her book where she had students signing this petition to have this principal fired and when

other teachers heard about it and threatened the students that they would go to jail if they signed the petition to talk about how she tried to run away, and she ran away from other students who wanted their names deleted from the petition. However, that principle was removed so she had that kind of attitude which was I guess rewarded for doing the right thing. So by [19]63, the Civil Rights Movement had become more and more angry. When the march on Washington [D.C.] was planned and carried out in Washington D.C., we received an invitation from the Miami chapter of CORE to come to Miami, Patricia and I, and that we would right the freedom train from Miami to Washington D.C. this train was stopped at different sites on the Florida east coast railroad going towards Washington D.C.; Pompano Beach, Palm Beach, Fort Lauderdale, Jacksonville, Daytona, then into Georgia then into South Carolina first, then Georgia, then North Carolina. All the stops, particularly beginning in Georgia the students were from SNCC would be coming in with their people. So we had a party, all the way, going up towards D.C. you know singing freedom songs and all that. It was a release from the anger that we really was having in relation to what the status of the Civil Rights Movement was –

JDT: And this was for the March on Washington?

JDE: Yeah, yeah. The train going to Washington D.C. and then of course when we got to Washington D.C. there were the CORE people waiting for us and we were you know brought up to the stand where all these people were giving their speeches and stuff like that. Now, Patricia was a CORE celebrity because when she did that 49 days in jail without bail that was an event that turned on a lot of people that wanted to get money to CORE. So she went all over the country speaking towards she and the other students that were involved in that jail-in. So she had an abrupt celebrity status. When we got to the march in Washington, James Farmer who was the national director of CORE wasn't there. Now all the leader of the Civil Rights organizations were supposed to speak – what's his name? Wilkins from the NAACP, John Louis from SNCC, James Farmer from CORE. James Farmer wasn't there so the idea was for Patricia to speak but the handlers of the march didn't want her to speak because they did not know what she was going to say. All of the speeches were particularly controlled because Ben Reston and other people had made an understanding with President Kennedy that this was not gonna be a riot because the President Kennedy, his idea was that 200,000 black folks coming into Washington D.C. they're gonna tear up the town. There was precedent in the sense that in

the [19]30s a group of World War I veterans came to Washington D.C. and the army had to be called out –

JDT: The war bonus, yeah

JDE: Yeah so you know about that. So that was his point at reference and that was only about 20,000 so 200,000 black folks [laughter] so they was agreement as to what the speeches was gonna be and everything like that and Patricia, she is a spontaneous speaker, she don't speak from any list. John Lewis, he made a mistake of having his speech read so it was edited. The child losses speech was edited because he was supposed to say, we black folks, unless we get our freedom we're gonna march to Georgia like General Sherman so they kind of deleted that [laughter] but as I said, the young people had all the anger mood. Then you had all these middle class folks, you know from the unions who thought it was a picnic so there was a social clash going on as to the mood of people. So I know I was getting frustrated and I was getting tired of the whole thing then Martin Luther King [Jr.] came out and did his thing and of course Martin had a capability, you don't even remember what he said –

JDT: But you know it was good.

JDE: It was good, it was music. It was just like, you know I play music, I play the trombone. I know how to do risks and he was a risked man [laughter]. So afterwards we had all this mood, I love everybody. Patricia and I had planned of going to New York after the march, we had our banks with us to go to CORE and we didn't know how we was going to get there and I was talking out loud and the lady from –oh you wanna go to New York? I'll take you, you wanna go to CORE? I know where that is. So we got this ride to New York City because of this I love everybody stuff you know? When we got to New York, Patricia went into her office to discuss the politics of CORE and I was in there at her office with the local CORE people and you know I was taking about how great it was, Dr. Martin Luther King [Jr.] was and they said, you from Florida? They just, Dr. King, bang. They called him, the lord, Dr. Coon you know? Oh you like Dr. Coon, huh? And they really put down the whole thing and then I began to see something that was going on; that CORE was beginning to change. CORE was organized by white pacifist back in 1943 with a few black people; but by the time it got involved in the Civil Rights Movement you begin to develop chapters witch black who were much more militant and then believed in non-violence except as means. Even Patricia always said you know, non-

violence is not a way of life, it's just a means –political means. So this was developing within CORE even as early as 1963. The Black Power connection. But anyway, the stuff I have here is about what happened in New York and my coming to Jacksonville after the Freedom March. What happened in New York, my idea was for the reason for coming to New York is to wait for my results from the Florida Bar because I had taken that spring; and number two work as an attorney for CORE in a national office of CORE. That was my idea. All righty, when I got there no one really offered me a job from CORE that kind of thing. Patricia did have connections though, one was with Jackie Robinson and she called Jackie Robinson, and Jackie Robinson made arrangements for me to come to Chock Full of Nuts Company that he was the president of. So I went to see this guy and they hired me. I was assistant to the janitor.

JDT: Oh wow, with a law degree?

JDE: Yes [laughter] my supervisor was 18 years old. I made a mistake. 18 years old, right? Attorney Due, there is a slot over there in the corner you forgot to mop up [laughter], hey attorney! [laughter] now I had decided that I would go ahead and work in the Department of Welfare by taking a test until I get my two years- you know you had to be a citizen of New York before you could take the New York Bar. I said, I ain't gonna stay here in New York. So we –both Patricia and I had a great convenience of coming back to Florida. Patricia went to Jacksonville to be a –what do you call it? Not a substitute teacher. What is it when you're a student? Practice teacher for Rutledge Pierson. He's the one that people I thought we might be able to talk about today; who was president of the Jacksonville branch of the NAACP. He taught history at this middle school and he had arranged for me to work as a legal assistant to attorney Earl Johnson who was an NAACP attorney. So that was better than staying in New York in the first place. While I was working with Earl Johnson, he covered not just Jacksonville but all of North Florida practically, that included Saint Augustine. One day, I happened to be coming out of our office when a car drove up and came in this car came out with Dr. Robert Hayling, I had never met him before and for four distraught women and they walked up to be as pissed off and mad, and screaming at me because their boys been sent to Dozier School. Now I didn't know where it was, I had just got in town. I didn't know what was going on but they had to be mad at somebody and they knew that we were attorneys that we supposed to be representing –the NAACP is supposed to be representing the Youth Council and all that so they had to project the anger at somebody and they projected it at me and

everybody else at that office. That's when I began to learn a little bit about Dozier School for boys. What had occurred that the judge told these young men, I'll give you a choice you either start demonstrating or I'm going to send you to Dozier School and these four boys would not accept that agreement so they went to Dozier School. So when all this stuff, this past year or so about Dozier School, it really hits because I first learned about Dozier School when I was a legal assistant for Earl Johnson in the poll of [19]63. Now, because of what happened, it became a national cause on the national level with the NAACP and publicity and all that so those boys were finally able to come back home in March. Of course they missed Thanksgiving and Christmas but they were able to come back home in March of [19]64 –

JDT: Was this the first time that that had happened? That the judge had sent kids to Dozier?

JDE: I do not know, I think so because nobody else was doing the Civil Rights activity like that because Dr. Hayling was carrying on a heavy campaign picketing sit-ins and all that. So I would suggest that this is the first time that young people were sent to Dozier School for Civil Rights activity, I would say so.

JDT: And what were those four boys were arrested and tried for?

JDE: Disorderly conduct, disturbance of peace, those are the common charges.

JDT: Okay.

JDE: So that was –then of course in relation to Patricia Stevens Due; now she had already been suspended several times. Roger Pierson, before she came to him being president of the NAACP threatened Florida A&M that he would have all the alumni association to a boycott, the orange blossom class of football game, she was able to –suspension would be ended and as you probably know the orange blossom class of football game is a money venture of the NAACP at that time it was always held in Miami and A&M would always play the best HBCU football team at the time in Miami.

JDT: You said the NAACP would make money off of that?

JDE: No I mean FAMU.

JDT: FAMU, right.

JDE: Right, so you can see what kind of person he was. Also, I would discuss this on the panel; Roger Pierson was just like my wife. He was very forceful, he was a great organizer, the Jacksonville branch of the NAACP was the largest branch of the country with 6,000 members it has its own office, its own staff person and secretary. So he had clout with the national office of the NAACP –

JDT: Why do you think he got so big? Why did you think Jacksonville was so large?

JDE: Well, for one thing Jacksonville is more of an industrial town, you have the longshoremen, you have people from the working industry as opposed to service people; working as teacher that kind of thing. That's my take, because Jacksonville had a radical history ever since the beginning. Blacks when they escaped from slavery –you know the North Star? It's kind of hard to go up to Georgia and South Carolina and North Carolina [laughter].

JDT: And Maryland and Virginia.

JDE: Yeah, see all they had to do is come to Florida and join the Seminole Indians. So therefore that's when you go through Osceola County, you need to know-

JDT: The Seminoles, right.

JDE: It's named after a black chief of the Seminole Nation so you can understand why General Jackson had to deal with the Seminoles because too many blacks were becoming part of the Seminole Nation and as you know, that's right close to Jacksonville. So black always had an opportunity in Jacksonville and in Saint Augustine area because Saint Augustine is the oldest city in the state of Florida, in the nation. And one time it was a Catholic city –there are still a lot of Catholics there. Catholics are a little bit more, not as much anti-black as the Protestants because Protestants as puritans believe white means purity. Anything that is not white, is not pure so that's how the race thing got so bad in the north. See, a lot of people wanna compare the north and the south but in the north it was just as bad but they just not as violent. White people in the north, they just wanna get rid of you. Whereas white people in the south, they want to exploit you as slaves. So that's where the conflict was. Anyway, I think that is reason for the condition of militancy in Jacksonville is very historical and people need to understand the historical roots for all that. Anyway, in Saint Augustine Patricia was suspended again because you know the kids started picketing the theatre for the spring and then started picketing again in the fall, they were

arrested again so she had to go and join and she was suspended again. But I was still in Jacksonville and I was busy with Dr. Hayling. Dr. Hayling is another person –he’s from the military –so there are 5 clan groups in Jacksonville. There was never a Ku Klux Klan for one reason. Can you mention what that reason is? The Ku Klux Klan doesn’t accept Catholics so most of the whites in Saint Augustine were Catholics but the Klan organized a front organization, called the Saint Augustine Gun Society [laughter] and the head of it was Hoss Manucy, he was a deputy sheriff of Saint John’s County, Saint Augustine so they carried on a war you know with Dr. Hayling and his people and one night –I guess I can say this- one night a car driving near Dr. Hayling’s house there were two white people, two white men, and one of the white men –now they were by his house –and one of the white men had a shotgun in his hand and when he was hit, I can’t tell you from what direction he was hit because I’m the attorney. However, he was hit and killed and when he was killed he blew a hole through the roof of his car so Dr. Hayling and his people, they defended themselves and I had to represent them. All that kind of thing but the NAACP –

JDT: Can you say their names? Can you say the same of the people who-?

JDE: It’s in here somewhere.

JDT: Okay, all right.

JDE: Yeah, they’re in there. Let’s see, so I’m passed 40 now so I can’t remember the names now.

JDT: That’s okay, you’ve been good with names so far.

JDE: But anyway, what happened is that –so national office got rid of a-

JDT: Sorry related to that, did Hayling have security at his house on a regular basis?

JDE: Oh, yeah, yeah.

JDT: Where did they come from? How did security at his house work?

JDE: Well, it worked like it worked everywhere else you know, sometimes you don’t talk about it. You just have people watching your house. That’s all that is, somebody watching your house but regardless of all that, the national office removed Dr. Hayling as advisor to the youth council of the NAACP but he still continued to be the leader in the

Saint Augustine Movement. While occurred, this happened after I left Saint Augustine and moved to Miami. After my wife was kicked out of school –again –we moved to Miami and this was in the fall of [19]63, late fall of [19]63. During that period of time and the early part of 1964, Reverend Steel who I always told you about in Tallahassee, he was the first vice-president of SCLC. SCLC was having a national convention in Orlando so Dr. Hayling was invited by Reverend Steel to talk with Reverend –Dr. King. Dr. King decided to help Dr. Hayling in Saint Augustine so that’s how SCLC came into Saint Augustine in the early part of [19]64 because the NAACP no longer was supporting Dr. Hayling. The critical thing that happened during that –now I wasn’t around then, I was still in Miami when the lady who was the governor’s wife of Massachusetts, a white lady, it’s in the history somewhere. I can’t think of her name. She was arrested, the mother of the governor of the State of Massachusetts, because see what King did was import all of these white folks to get involved in Saint Augustine and I think this is a very important point. When white people get involved, particularly white people of stature, class that has an impact upon the progress of Civil Rights. As I tried to say in another meeting today, Derrick Bell who was a professor at law at Harvard University, he propounded a theory called Critical Race Theory which basically says as far as blacks receiving Civil Rights; they receive only those rights which are a fortuity when they converge with the interest of the white power structure. So if you want to have a strategy of achieving some goal in racist America you have to determine what is the material benefit that will be enjoyed by the power structure if this action is taken place. Now a lot of us don’t think that way. We all think about all of your grievances, reparation that are owed to us, our Civil Rights, but when you are pleading towards these other folks to give you freedom of the civil rights, why should they give you anything? So you have to be an asset or a benefit before they give you anything. Now this was the strategy of Booker T. Washington. I didn’t understand it at the time, but now I do. Back in 1880, he was able to argue with the white business community on the national level and in Georgia in order for the south to recover from the Civil War, you had to find some way to make former back slaves an asset of value and therefore you need colleges, Historical Black Colleges to educate these negroes so that they could be trained in industrial education; agriculture, and mechanical and all that kind of stuff. Of course you know what happened in the end game when the whites – I’m talking about the poor whites- got control of the politics of the local government. They weren’t too much interested in buying machinery and all that other stuff that goes to

these universities and black people being trained on so that's how come we have so many black teachers. It's easy –cheaper to teach teachers but basically that is the theory of critical race theory and this is the same thing that was happening in Saint Augustine. When all those black children were being beaten up that fall, nothing happened but when you start getting white folks getting all beaten up so we in the Civil Rights Movement said, why don't we have Freedom Summer? Why don't we go ahead and prove all these white children to come to the south [laughter]? So these dynamics began to develop, you have to understand several things behind these dynamics. President Kennedy was no liberal, Bobby Kennedy was the General Council for Senator Eastland's Committee to investigate communism in the United States. Then you had the un-American activities committee on the house side. Not too much difference the way it is today, you know? Now Senator Eastland had a massive resistance campaign to resist the implementation of the school desegregation court order on 1954 –[19]55 because the Supreme Court can issue this ruling, but how is it going to be enforced? You need plaintiffs, you need parents, you need people to go file stuff in federal court. Now, let me see who's filling a case today, where do they work? See what I'm talking about? So in this massive resistance campaign they developed a system that was under the Mississippi Sovereign Commission that included the Florida department, the law enforcement, and something similar to that in Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, this was a data collection system. Now you think it's bad now, you know it was bad then. They had a book –I went to a Unitarian church in Tallahassee way back in [19]61 and one of the white members that worked for Florida department said I was a controller for the Communist Party and my job was to supervise Patricia. Can you imagine me supervising Patricia? But because they had me identify way –I picked up my FBI record. They were following my butt as soon as I came out of the army. I have stuff that I didn't know I did coming from the army into the university and in the end being a conservative state I was just labelled. I still wonder how come they allowed me to take –how they do about all this. How come they allowed me to take the bar? I really think they did all that they can see who I meet, who are my friends, who I was related to, all of that. I was toxic and didn't know it, you know what I mean? I really think I was used and didn't know it. Well, anyway so you can understand what was going in so when I came to Miami –this is very funny – when I came to Miami I thought I was gonna be in this law firm and I thought I was gonna be working with what was called the community relations board. I was gonna try to get them to have a state-

wide boycott of stores and all that and the same court chapeter; they invited Patricia and I to go to the march in Washington. Oh no, no we don't need to do that we just gonna get the Community Relations Board to go to the county and pass an ordinance but they were the first to pass a non-discrimination ordinance. I always believed that even Miami court didn't want many in Miami because they were getting a lot of white support, you know somebody had to pay for that train, right?

JDT: That wasn't free [laughter].

JDE: So I began to realize it was to the financial –remember I talked about what Derick Bell said? It has to serve the interest. It was to their interest to get my butt out of Miami and before I knew I was invited to work for the Board of Education project of the Southern Region of Council. Now, why had that been worked out? Bobby Kennedy –you can check this through *Ramparts* magazine. Bobby Kennedy, attorney general, arranged that CIA money that is not supposed to be used within the United States, was to be spent through dummy non-profit corporations that will fund the Board of Education project of the southern regional council in Atlanta, Georgia to do voter registration in the south. See, their understanding was, if we could pay black folks to stop demonstrating and all this other stuff and do voter registration, that would help the democratic party and it would stop all this violence and the image that we have in the world so they went before all these Civil Rights organizations, SNCC, CORE, SCLC-who am I forgetting?

JDT: SRC.

JDE: SNCC, CORE, NAACP, SCLC or at least those four.

JDT: COFO, was COFO in there too?

JDE: COFO came out of it. Say, we really support your civil rights but don't you think it would be better if you would do voter registration and help educate the people to vote? Now some people in SNCC knew the game. No, no, they're just trying to get us off the street. But Bob Moses, now he's a key person. Bob Moses and SNCC in Mississippi – University of Florida has done a couple –that's one of the new project areas you know, Mississippi.

JDT: Right.

JDE: Bob Moses said, let's take the money and we're gonna get some resistance there. The people are gonna be crazy, let's do it. So SNCC became part of the plan, all right? Now, I became an attorney for Board of Education project, now my official title was a human relation specialist helping to do research on the issue of why it is difficult for black people to register to vote, that was the legal reason. The real reason was to provide my legal services as an attorney to assist people that might be arrested and stuff like that. I had a double job working as an attorney and also working as an investigator and one of my first opportunities in [19]64 was to go to Mississippi and that's where I met the appearance of the children that you all are working with now in Macon, that's when I came to Macon and started working with Mr. Bryant and started doing affidavits about the people that were killed and all that. We got to know Bob Moses, and we got to know the sherrif. One thing I like about the south, in the north white people are very –in particular middle class white people are very distant and cold. Whereas whites in the south, particularly who have that klannish attitude, they're just down home people. I hate to tell you this, but I had a lot of fun when I was arrested and they were the county. What happened? This SNCC young lady freaked me out, she told me how the police would stop you, arrest you, then turn you over to the Klan. So she freaked me out when I saw the state policeman waving his light I said, shit [laughter] and I had a big Ford so I tramped down the big Ford that I rented in Jackson but his Ford was bigger than mine [laughter]. But he was very cordial, he brought me back –it was an accident scene, that's why he was trying to get people to be careful driving by there. So while he was investigating the scene, I was sitting in the front seat and the police radio was on and I heard the police radio Julian Bond had just arrived at Jackson airport from flight da, da, da, da he was rented a car, license plate number da, da, da, da we believe that he is going to, so that's when I really began to know, they know who the hell you are, what you're doing and all that. Apparently after I went to the office of the sheriff, he was telling me how this place in Tennessee where they do training –you know what I'm talking about.

JDT: The Highlander?

JDE: The Highlander, the big old mural of a Highlander on his wall with Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks, and all that. He says, son you're being brainwashed [laughter] that's the attitude of the white folks. You can be an attorney, but you're still a child so he let me go with an understanding that I had to be back in court for trial and all that. But I don't know how much time we have.

JDT: Yeah I think we should start getting ready to head down that –

JDE: Okay I just wanted you to know my kind of experience with Patricia, particularly in the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi and I would like to talk to you again, after the Civil Rights Act had passed and what was the second phase of the Movement. You will like to talk about doing something in –

JDT: In Quincy? Yeah.

JDE: I was just suggesting that we ought to do a partnership with other institutions because Patricia was more than Quincy, it was all these other counties and we need to not just make Quincy the focus point; we need to include Tallahassee, we need to include Jefferson County, and we need to include Madison County, and Marion County. See that's where what's-his-name is now, right? Who's your friend from University of Florida that teaches in Marion County?

JDT: Marna Weston?

JDE: No I forgot his name. But anyway, when I talk to Portis, when can we make this a partnership?

JDT: Yeah, we can definitely do something. We thought of Quincy specifically because of the history of Quincy. Quincy has always had a unique.

JDE: Yes it has. Well I understand you're right but we need to do that too.

JDT: But we can start with that and expand out if that works for you.

JDE: Yeah we can do that.

JDT: Yeah that sounds good.

JDE: What time is it?

JDT: Thank you again, it's 1:45pm.

JDE: Oh we only got 15 minutes.

JDT: Thank you again.

[End of interview]



JUNE 24, 2014

Narrator: John Dorsey Due
Interviewer: Justin Hosbey and Steven Houston
Mississippi Freedom Project 166
Date: June 24, 2014

H: It is June 24, 2014. I am here, Justin Hosbey with John Due. I am also here with Steven Houston. Justin Hosbey and Steven Houston are the interviewers and this is John Due who is the interviewee today. So you said you want to develop an outline.

D: Yeah, what more did we want to talk about?

H: We did want to talk about your connection to Natchez, number one. So what are your connections to Natchez? Number two, we can speak more about your involvement with the legal proceedings in that case that you just mentioned right there. We can speak on that. Particularly, your work during the Civil Rights Movement and the legal work that you did and what was there. Just general experiences in Mississippi with Freedom Summer and contractions that it had with other Civil Rights and Freedom Movement leaders.

D: Okay good, because we began talking about that before you got there.

H: Is that enough or do you want to add another thing?

D: No, that's it.

H: Okay. So what are you connections to Natchez? I know coming here has brought back lots of memories for you. So what are your connections to Natchez?

D: In the spring of 1964, a person who headed it then the National Council of Christians and Jews came to the office where I was working as an attorney on Miami Beach. Herbert, Hiken and Marten, which by the way was not making any money. And so he is providing me an opportunity to work for the Voter Education Project of the Southern Regional Council. They need because you had to join, I never applied for it, but I had won the human rights internship program of the Elder Jessup Foundation. I guess that I didn't apply for it. He came to the office and said that I won it. He said, "your wife is working for the Congress of Racial Equality as the director of the Voter Education Project in North Florida that is also funded by the Voter Education Project of the Southern Regional Council. And the Voter Education Project will be happy to have your service because you will be not only a human rights, human relation intern, five thousand dollars a year, you will also be assisting CORE, who needs an attorney to assist its program in the South. Shortly thereafter, I was asked by Wally Branton to come to Baylor University to a meeting that was chaired by the Department Director of the Urban League, Mr. Dusty

Grander. And now it was a president of Baylor University, which is a historical black college. And at this meeting was myself, Bob Moses, who was the SNCC Field Director in Mississippi and Co-Chairman of the Council of Federated Organizations. That was a coalition of SNCC, CORE, SLC and NAACP operating under the name of COFO. So in that meeting was myself, Mr. Granger, Bob Moses and his wife, and an attorney. I don't remember who he was. And they discussed the need for me to come to Mississippi to interview some people in Mississippi who had been intimidated and harassed because of doing voter registration in Mississippi. Particularly in the southwest portion of the state of Mississippi. So after that meeting, Bob Moses, myself and his wife, he was driving rogue from Baylor University to McComb, Mississippi where Bob Moses had his office, not only for COFO, but also for the particular area that had been assigned to SNCC. The state of Mississippi was divided into regions based upon congressional districts. For example, CORE was assigned to 4th Congressional District that included Meridian, Mississippi, Canton, Mississippi and Philadelphia, Mississippi. SNCC had McComb, Hattiesburg, Natchez, you know, those cities in the south. So his assignment for me, after we got to McComb, was to begin to interview the lists of people of who had been intimidated by bombs. And I was advised that the information and the evidence that I would produce would be presented to the Mississippi Advisory Committee to United States Civil Rights Commission, which will hold a hearing in Natchez, Mississippi. My information and evidence was set forth in the report called the John Due Field Report that is now included in the book *Climbing Jacob's Ladder* by Pat Wallace. Now we can discuss all the activities that happened in McComb, Mississippi and other areas near there. I have done that in other interviews. I will focus right now on Natchez, what happened in Natchez, Mississippi. Now before the hearing, in Natchez, the day before the hearing, I interviewed two people. One was Mr. Archie Curtis, who was a business man. He was also the head of the black business organization, which don't remember a name of but might be in that report. And also a man by the name Jarvis Metcalf. Archie Curtis was a solid. I think as to how that happened, his business man included being an owner of a mortuary and an ambulance service so they sent him to a ruse, that there was an accident somewhere. He went to pick up to try to provide a service because of a black person being injured. And when he got to that particular site, he was kidnapped by a group of whites, who then took him to a place and beat him up very seriously. So I interviewed him. Also, there was a Jared Metcalf. I don't think I had the particulars as to why he was

assaulted, but when I talked to him in the hospital, he said, “he was running for his life” and he went to the property of a white lady who saw what was occurring and he ran into her house at her request. Nevertheless, he was still beaten up.

H: Mister, I do have a quick question. Just about the particulars politically, why were blacks being intimidated against voting? Was it because politically they were voting for a party that was not in power? Or was it just in principle, we don't want blacks to vote?

D: It was even bigger. At the moment, it was what was going on. This is before bigger to what was really going on. Not only was I very active in the congregation politics because of the WISE connection, being the field director of CORE, but also connected to the political basis. I was the National Action Council in the year of 1964 and 1965. So I had very close relationships with the national leadership of CORE. And back then, I began to realize that the Ku Klux Klan, which we all assume covered all Klan groups, but there was a certain Klan group that we called the “White Klan,” because we understood that this Ku Klux Klan group was not like regular Klan groups that had a religious connotation. That this Klan group was a serious terrorist organization that didn't have any connection to any religious ideology. It was anti-black organization, terrorist organization construed to be a counter the insurgency organization. And this understanding resulted from what happened previously when we were taking interviews, oral interviews in the McComb area. Because, it led to the talking to people who were intimidated by the Klan. I happened upon Emma Bell, who was a young lady about eighteen years old, who was a SNCC worker. She was my assistant, she had drive, she had told me, survive, and all of that. And she told me how and what the Klan was doing to people like me. She was saying that the police in the state of Mississippi including local police and the sheriff office, if you were identified as the enemy, they would arrest you and then turn you over to the Klan, who would do what they had to do.

H: So the state would kind of collude with the Klan?

D: Yes, yes. This is the reality that she told me. Particularly, the state police and local sheriff offices and local police. And one night, I lost my sense of professionalism driving from Amite County to McComb. And driving to McComb, I saw the state officer with a flashlight. I lost my professionalism thinking I could escape driving fast. That was unfortunate because his car was bigger than mine. So he caught up with me, told me to get in the car, told Emma to follow me, and then he drove back to what, I did not know what going on, was the scene of an accident. So he locked me up in his car, but the police

radio was on. And I heard on the police radio that Julian Bond, the director of communication of the Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee had just arrived at the Jackson airport. He has rented a car with license plate and gave the color of the car and gave also on the radio and a proposed designation to go to the COFO office on Ninth Street in Jackson, Mississippi. That is when I had determined that state police and local police had information at all times as to who we were and what we were doing in the state of Mississippi. So that is when I saw the evidence of collusion between whoever was on that radio giving that information to the state police that was given them instruction what to do. Shortly, thereafter, after Officer Butler finished his work with the accident. He looked in my car, he got the remnants of the burning cross I had in my trunk, he picked up my legal pad, drove me Amite County to the office of Sheriff Don Jones.

H: I have to see where those counties are.

D: Amite County is adjoined to a county that was a county for McComb. I think Pike County but I am not sure. And the sheriff interviewed me. He asked me what I was doing there in Mississippi. I said I am a new minister and I embellished a young lady and he winked at me. He looked at my burning cross and saw that I was a member of the Florida Bar. "So attorney, what are you doing now?" That was the way he said it. Then he told me to come into another office and he showed a way big picture of Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks and Teddy McNeedy of the Highlander Folk School, run by Reverend Dombrowski . So that is why I have been very interested in the Dombrowski that works at the University of Florida.

H: Diana.

D: She claims that she is not any relation. But I am trying her, it is okay now [laughter].

D: Well anyway, the sheriff, attorney dude, I feel sorry for you. You are just being used by the Congress. I advise you to go back from Mississippi, go back to Florida. However, I am going to be nice to you. I want you to come back Thursday, there will be a trial and right now you have to pay bond until that trial." Then they let me go. So I came back to McComb, I was taken to the Negro Motel. That was exactly the name of it in McComb, because she did not want to take me to the home of the leader of NAACP where I stayed before. She had enough sense as an eighteen year old young lady, she did not want the leader of the NAACP to be connected to me. So I just stayed at the Negro Motel then I picked her up the following morning and we went to interview the other folks that needed

to talk to. We drove by the national forest. I think it was Woodlong, Woodland, I think it Woodland, and I saw all these cars coming into this park. This national park. All these cars representing different counties in the state of Mississippi, police cars and sheriff's. And I asked Emma, what is going on? And she just casually said, you are just coming to a meeting of the Ku Klux Klan.”

H: So I have a question Mr. Due. When you were talking about the Klan and I was just rereading about the history of the Klan, it just seems as if the Klan in terms of class composition, so social class, the Klansmen were mostly poor and working class whites whereas the White Citizens Councils were the middle class and kind of the business leaders who kind of directed the Klan. So like the Ku Klux Klan. So the Ku Klux Klan became the strongarm of the White Citizens Council which was a more a middle class, I guess, presentable face for white terrorism at the time. Would you agree with that?

D: Based upon my study of since then, since March of 1964, I have come to the same conclusion based upon reading the history of Aaron Henry, president of the NAACP, and other black leaders in the state of Mississippi who were business leaders. And I learned later about this other group that you are talking about. Whereas on the specific work that I was doing during that spring of 1964, I was in connection and relating to the activities of the so-called White Klan who did not appear to be representative of the white business class in Mississippi. And this was combined based upon my interviews with Mr. Curtis, who was a businessman.

H: And what was his whole name?

D: Archie Curtis, who was a black businessman saying to the other black businesspeople that I had been working with in Mississippi. But the people who assaulted him said were young Caucasian people, males. I can discuss what happened when I went to the trial that I had in Mississippi. But that is not directly related to the rest of what I want to talk about. That is a story by itself. But I need to talk about what went on in Natchez. After collecting my evidence from all over Southwest Mississippi, I think about ten to twelve different persons who had been assaulted and hurt by member of the White Ku Klux Klan and all that is set forth in the John Due Field Report, that is where all the people that I interviewed. But what was very significant that when I came to the meeting of the Mississippi Advisory Committee for the United States Civil Rights Commission, I was there waiting to be called to present my information. Then abruptly, walked in a group of Caucasian males who appeared to be in their late-teens, early-20s wearing dark shades

and had a very casual walk like this was just a lot of fun. And walked in and the chairman of the Advisory Committee invited them to come in and he explained that this is a hearing to discuss with people or to hear from people who had been hurt or violated or injured because of exercising their civil rights in trying to register to vote. So everybody is welcome to come into this proceeding. So they walk in with this swagger and sit down in the audience as if they were just people there to hear what other people had to say. That is when I began to recognize that they did represent an economic class of what we called white poor in the state of Mississippi. So after that hearing, we all had to leave in a caravan to go back to Jackson. So that was the end of my presentations and the end of that committee's report. And I have since learned, I learned from Bob Moses, that it was critical that this hearing take place, because the information from that hearing was going to be presented to the United States Civil Rights Commission and it is a written report. I just talked to a lady that happened to be a member and a chairman of the United States Civil Rights Commission a couple of years ago and she said that all that information that I presented and that information from others submitted to the United States Civil Rights Commission is in a written form and a library at the United States Civil Rights Commission. I also learned from Bob Moses and when I was in Natchez that it was critical that this report be presented and written up and given to the United States Civil Rights Commission so it can be given to Mrs. Edith Green, who was an empowered lady in the United States House of Representatives. An empowered lady and also very connected to President Lyndon Johnson. That it was important that President Lyndon Johnson have this information to support his strategy in relation to the registration of black people in the South. At that time, I did not know what that meant. It was only later, as a member of the national CORE by the spring of 1965, I realized that an article by *Ramparts* magazine, a national magazine at the time, that reported that the CIA funded voter registration activities by civil rights groups in the South to support the national security interests in the United States. Then, the investment began to conclude that the interest, the national security interest, was related to the war on communism but also related to the interests of the Daley machine that was the head of the Association of Municipalities and the Democratic Party to control the white vote. So that is how I realized how critical it was for this information be given to the committee so President Johnson could move his agenda in making sure that the black vote was in control of the Democratic Party. That was my, to him, deduced interest. And that this other group,

called the White Ku Klux Klan was sabotaging that interest. So there was a political war going on in the Democratic Party between this radical group that felt that this voter registration program was a communist movement versus the national interest that we need to do voter registration to fight communism. So we had those two counter interests going on.

H: Competing interests.

D: Yes, competing interests. And since I have been here, there is a case called *Anderson v. Moser*, which I have filed. I was an attorney graduate but it was filed later in the [19]60s and by that time the National Bar Association, at the request of Robert Kennedy who was the Attorney General at the time, asked the American Bar Association to organize lawyer organizations to do civil rights work to supplant the ad hoc work that I was doing. It was their interest to get the respectable American Bar Association to do the civil rights work in Mississippi as opposed to people like John Due who has a very suspicious connection to this work of civil rights based upon my FBI file that indicates that I may be a subversive. So they needed to control the civil rights activity that was in pursuant of to the national interest of the ACLU and [...] as opposed to the civil rights work done by alleged communists like John Due. Do you any questions in relation to that? I might want to supplement what happened to me.

H: Go ahead.

D: Well, I go back to Amite County.

H: And that is A-M-I-T-E?

D: Yes, for my trial. I had Emma Bell with me.

H: And who is that?

D: She was a young lady from SNCC who was my assistant and knew how to survive in the state of Mississippi. I prepared motions such as, I stand moot. For those that want to be lawyers, I stand moot is neither admission or denial of anything. You just stand moot. I did not want to authenticate the proceeding as a legal proceeding. I also asked Mr. Siceloff, who worked for the United States Civil Right Commission to come to the trial, hoping that his presence would keep me from being lynched in one form or another. He called the United States Civil Rights Commission in Washington, DC, and the Head Attorney William Taylor said, "I understand the situation, but as an unbiased organization, we cannot have you, Mr. Siceloff to come there. So you are not authorized to come." When I got there, I was in the Justice of the Peace office. They had my legal

pad, no one can read it of course. And the Ku Klux...I don't think they have a Ku Klux Klan. They borrowed my legal pad. They had a Klan. Just before they began to proceed, . Downstairs I hear, My name is Mr. Courtney Siceloff from the United States Civil Rights Commission. He bowed in and the sheriff and the justice of the peace were, Oh yeah, we know who John Due is. Here are his papers. His fine is for \$100. And we hope to see you again Mr. Siceloff someday. And I was able to go back. And I was able to come back home to my wife. That is when I began to realize that what was going on in Mississippi was part of a national problem in America. During that period of time, I had to go back and forth like filing these motions. By the time the American Bar Association had set up their lawyers committee for civil rights, and there was another committee. The lawyers constitutional committee. I was no longer respected except as a driver practically. So I filed these papers on behalf of a group of other attorneys that were involved in the case and never really took interest in the outcome of this case. Be this as it may, in my continued work, I tried to pound motions in the appellate court and having no buttons, we had to do our own service. I tried to serve papers on the governor of the state of Mississippi, Governor Paul Johnson. And I really had a serious belief that when the state policemen stopped me from entering the office of the governor, that the governor himself was a prisoner. That the problem in Mississippi was a serious problem that not even the governor could not really address. And after I left the state of Mississippi in all these last forty or fifty years, I have been trying to figure out the psychology of what was going on in the state of Mississippi. I really believe for example and one reason I wanted to come to Natchez, on reason I wanted to come to Jackson, Mississippi, one reason I wanted to go to Meridian because I was here fifty years ago. And I was the attorney for Schwerner and Chaney in Meridian and the demonstration that Schwerner and Chaney organized against the store. And I filed a petition of removal. The petition of removal is a proceeding is a procedure that was used after Reconstruction, removing cases from the local court to the federal court. It is automatically removed by just filing the papers. There is no need for any hearing, whatsoever. And filing a petition of removal, as soon as you drew up those petitions, put in the names of the persons who are offended, it is removed. All you have to do is take a copy of the petition of removal, after you file it...you file it with a clerk, you don't leave for a hearing. You take a copy of the proceeding and take it to the city that is prosecuting the case. And when I came to the city of Meridian, the city manager said—the attorney, his last name was Waterman—and he

had a conversation with me saying how important the Jewish community has been in Meridian even before the Civil War, particularly as a business community. Unfortunately he said, because of COFO and CORE, the progress in Mississippi is being damaged. Particularly because of people like Michael Schwerner, who was a Jew just like I am. His name was Waterman. The Jewish word for Waterman is Wasserman. He criticized Mickey Schwerner for wearing his yarmulke.

H: Yarmulke.

D: In public. He said, Jews don't do that in the South. He is hurting all of us. We are in danger. You are in danger. I did not know what he meant at that time. After I filed that petition of removal, I got the all clear for Chaney operating a freedom library meeting. I learned that he had organized a unit of the Freedom Democratic Party in Philadelphia, Mississippi. He had gone to Philadelphia. Mickey Schwerner, white, he was with me. He needed a ride back to Jackson. Mickey Schwerner was driving to take a plane to pick up his volunteer for the summer. So that was the last time I saw him. The Schwerners had gone to Jackson. I drove on back to Florida. Mickey had gone to Ohio, Oxford, Ohio, to pick up his people. And that is when he heard that the church had been burnt down in Mississippi, and he and Chaney was on his way to talk to the people that had opened their church for this activity. They wanted to apologize. But I realized right then and there, because I knew, everybody in the Movement knew that the local police and the sheriff's office at all times know where you are. I hope to talk to Ms. Schwerner tomorrow. Did Mickey follow the security rules? Security rules are as follows. If you are leaving your office or site, you tell the people at your site that you are leaving and you call the site where you are going that you are leaving and the time that you are expecting to be there. We all knew that they were listening when we would make those kind of calls, and I always wondered: did Mickey not get through?

H: And not tell anybody?

D: But I think Mickey was smarter than that. I think he did call, but it did not make any difference. When I met the policeman protecting him, it didn't make any difference to me. They were going to get hit anyways. But why did they decide to hit Schwerner, Goodman and Chaney. That is the mystery. That is thing that I want to talk with Mrs. Schwerner. Did Mickey violate the rule or did it make any difference? Now if it did make any difference, why did it happen? Why did the hit happen? Could it be possible that the CIA, representing the White House, knew also, also knew that they were making the trip

to Philadelphia, Mississippi? Could it be possible that the White House or CIA felt that the Freedom Democratic Party was a threat to the security of the United States? Or did the Democratic Party, which is the same thing? So those are the unanswered questions, because I believe that President Johnson could have prevented the hit. He could have picked up the phone, "Governor Paul Johnson, this is President Johnson. Now you know that you are going to be having these summer children coming in, these white children coming to the state of Mississippi. It does no good that they get hurt. I want you to make sure that nothing happens to our volunteers. To these, I know they are communists but don't have nothing to do with it. Make sure nothing happens, because it is not good politics." Now I think the president could have made that phone call. But he didn't. But he didn't. That was like a dream I had.

H: Open scene.

D: That is what happened. Like I said, I need to talk to Miss Schwerner to see what she knows. I believe that the Freedom Democratic Party was a danger to the regular Democratic Party because their politics was to control the white vote. And here, this crazy Freedom Democratic Party, which must be communist, is not controlled by us. So that is when the religion again, to be that was the politics. Particularly as to what happened in Vietnam, when President Johnson sent some advisors to Vietnam. And all of the sudden, the president of Vietnam gets assassinated by some generals. So, you know, this is some serious shit.

H: So what do you think the overall prerogative of the state was, on the federal level then in terms of the Movement that was happening?

D: I believe that the federal government, in my present brain of mine, is that Schwerner was not negligent and didn't make phone calls, but it didn't matter. That the federal government, by indirection, ordered the hit on Schwerner, Goodman and Chaney. And I said by indirection, because the president or the White House could not say, "Hit those boys." But by not calling and saying, "Don't hit those boys," That was the green light

H: Because that was the question that I always had, because there were several activists at all points in time going back and forth through Mississippi. And I thought it was, like you just mentioned, kind of a telling exception that these three were killed, doing what they were doing at the moment.

D: And the Freedom Democratic Party. But Chaney was considered by the power structure in Meridian to be a thug. Now thugs are not supposed to be organizing in Freedom

Democratic Party in Philadelphia, Mississippi. I had talked with Dave Dennis, who was the director of CORE in the Fourth Congressional District, just like my wife was the director for CORE in North Florida. Dave Dennis does not like me using the word ‘thug.’ I don’t think he is thug.

H: But that is what they were saying about him?

D: Because he was a juvenile delinquent, he had trouble with the local police authority. So he was a bad nigger, according to the power structure.

H: He wasn’t a respectable...

D: I argue to say this, he was a thug for the Black Power structure in Meridian.

H: So when you say thug...

D: Even the NAACP saw him as a black thug. Lower class.

H: When you say thug, what you do you mean? In terms of him being a delinquent or do you mean in terms...

D: Delinquent was in link to a person who don’t do stuff. A thug is an active person who do wrong stuff.

H: So were they afraid of with him being associated with them that he would do something that would make them look bad?

D: Yes.

H: He wasn’t respectable enough.

D: Black community was scared of Chaney. The Jewish community was scared of Chaney. I don’t know whether or not the NAACP that sponsored Freedom Summer wants to talk about that. That they were scared of James Chaney.

H: Because I had never heard that before. I thought that he was just a benevolent...

D: That is the only way it makes sense. He was no...

H: Just because of the way that he is lionized now.

D: His brother has been convicted and arrested for stuff, you know. His brother has been adjudicated. So when I went to visit the shrine—I came to Mississippi in 1994. This was thirty years after Freedom Summer. The first place I stop was at McBowens. And I saw a group of black ministers, I could tell they were black ministers, because some had a collar and they were talking about religious stuff. And I told them what my mission was: I want to talk to somebody that knew James Chaney in Meridian. And the group of ministers looked at me kind of funny. Said, “Where are you from?” “I am from Miami, Florida.” “Oh yeah. Do you know Reverend Duh-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh. Oh

James Chaney. Oh, we had those kinds of problems back then, but we have gone beyond that. You don't want to go and find the James Chaney burial site. You don't have to do that. We have gone beyond that." So I began to believe that the black community was embarrassed by the Chaney family back then. I finally did find somebody who knew James Chaney and they took me to the burial site where James was. It was run over by weeds, bullet holes at the site. There was no celebration of James Chaney in 1994. Tomorrow will be one. This is about my experience in the Movement. Natchez and how it relates to the killings of later on in Meridian. OK.

H: A follow-up question before you head out. James Chaney, he is buried, where is he buried?

D: There is a little community called Springville that is part of Meridian. It is about five miles, it is really part of the city of Meridian, but I think they called it Springhill or Springville. And there is a church. I will try to give you more location after I go to Jackson tomorrow. I will be meeting some people from Meridian and we will see what is going on. I hope I can take some pictures to see whether or not there has been any difference from 1994.

H: Twenty years later. Thank you Mr. Due for the interview.

GUIDE TO COMMON ACRONYMS

AAHP – African American History Project

ACLU – American Civil Liberties Union

AFSCME – American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees

COFO – Council of Federated Organizations

CORE – Congress on Racial Equality

FAMU – Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University

FSU – Florida State University

IUPUI – Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

KKK – Ku Klux Klan

MFP – Mississippi Freedom Project

NAACP – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

SCEF – Southern Conference Educational Fund

SCLC – Southern Christian Leadership Conference

SEIU – Service Employees International Union

SNCC – Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee

SPOHP – Samuel Proctor Oral History Program

SRC – Southern Regional Council

UF – University of Florida

VEP – Voter Education Project

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