

ANNOUNCER: The following program is produced in cooperation with Mary Washington College of Fredericksburg Virginia, continuing a tradition of academic excellence in a changing world. James Farmer's reflections, a personal perspective of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. [background talking] In the past, James Farmer was one of the most eloquent and outspoken voices of the struggle for racial equality. From the Freedom Rides, to the sit-ins, to the March on Washington, he motivated both blacks and whites and articulated for the nation the demands and the dream for racial equality across the country.

1960s FARMER: You have started a revolution in the past ten years since those historic words were uttered by the nine men of the Supreme Court. You have been in the streets marching, the staccato march of your feet punctuated by the clanging of jail cell doors have set the stage for this revolution.

ANNOUNCER: James Farmer is currently Commonwealth Professor in History at Mary Washington College. Tonight he continues his thirteen part series of lectures on the Civil Rights Movement from his personal recollections.

FARMER: Last week we discussed the great drama of the Freedom Ride, probably the most significant of the projects of the early 1960s and the Civil Rights Movement. And when the Freedom Rides had their successful conclusion with the Interstate Commerce Commission order that was enforced bringing down all of the segregation signs from the buses and the bus terminals used by interstate passengers. That victory was widely proclaimed throughout the country by Civil Rights advocates and this was in a way, a turning point of the civil rights movement because now, no longer were people confined to their own, own community their own town for their activity. The Freedom Ride had put the movement on wheels. Uh, years later,

several years later, in Selma when Dr. King issued a call for people to come down and march with him, people came from all over the country. There were Catholics, Protestants and Jews, laymen and clergymen who went down to march with him because they would not be confined by the locality of their origin any longer. And that was in part, because of the activities of the Freedom Rides. Furthermore, from the Freedom Rides on, people no longer went to jail and then bailed right out. The slogan became 'jail, not bail' and the tendency was to stay in jail as long as possible. When the, those arrested chose to file appeals and they stayed in as long as it was legally possible and yet, a file an appeal. So those changes had taken place in the movement. Nonviolence was well known throughout the country and was being proclaimed as the new mood of the black community. That is only partly true. The black community was never monolithic and certainly was not monolithic at that time. There were threads of violence, certainly violent rhetoric within the black community. There was the Nation of Islam, for one, the so-called Black Muslims and by the way, the Nation of Islam hated that phrase, the Black Muslims. They did not use it, it was coined by a black author, a minister by the name of C. Eric Lincoln, in his book by that title, the Black Muslims. Um, the book was a kind of a study of the Nation of Islam. And the Nation of Islam had come to popular attention back in 1959 when um, uh, Mike Wallace, now popular with 60 Minutes, um did a TV documentary entitled The Hate That Hate Produced. And the documentary was on the Nation of Islam dealing with such personalities as Elijah Muhammad, who was the leader of the Nation of Islam and Malcolm X, it's a minister in New York, who was its most eloquent spokesman and many persons were curious at the name X. Was this a man, Mr. X? born of Mr. and Mrs. X? of course not! He'd taken the name X because Muslims, the Nation of Islam members insisted that uh black Americans did not uh, know what their names were. The names which most black Americans bear are the names of their slave

masters. Jones? A black man's name was not Jones they said, his ancestors were slaves of a white man named Jones hence he is named Jones. Or Andrews, or Anderson, or what have you and so they went on to argue that the black American did not know what his name was since he did not know what his African name was. And not knowing what his name was, he took the name of X, X standing for the unknown. So Malcolm X meant Malcolm Unknown. He did not know his name, he was born as Malcolm Little but he dropped the name Little and chose X until he was given a Muhammadan name by Elijah Muhammad, head of the Nation of Islam. And sometimes he used Malcolm X and sometimes he used that Muhammadan name. He was more widely known as Malcolm X. Now he stood in stark contrast to Martin Luther King. King preached as Jesus had preached, turning the other cheek. If a man strikes you on one cheek, turn the other cheek. Malcolm scoffed at that, says attack no man, but if any man molests you, may Allah bless you. In other words, strike back and strike back hard but in self defense and um, Dr. King preached that though you spit on us, though you hate us, though you curse us, though you kick us, yet we will love you and we will wear you down with our capacity to suffer. Malcolm scorned that as being soft, milk toast nonsense. Capacity to suffer he did not want to suffer, he did not want his people to suffer. And if you spit on us he said and you kick us then we will spit back and we will kick back. And his crowds, his audience, and he really packed em in those huge auditoriums, they would shout their approval. And he'd pack them in wherever he spoke, New York or anyplace else. Filled ballparks. Malcolm was tall and gaunt while Dr. King was short of stature and tended a little toward being overweight. So the contrast was physical, the contrast was intellectual. Both were good speakers but totally different types of speakers. King was a preacher's son, a PK and he was a preacher. Malcolm was a preachers son but he was a preacher's son who had been schooled in hate because he tells us in his autobiography that he

had seen his father lynched. And he, this led him to hate those who lynched him. Malcolm had uh, been to jail, served time in prison. He had been uh, Vice Lord in Harlem, where he was called Big Red, dealt in prostitution and drugs. He was taught the Muslim religion by Elijah Muhammad and followers of Elijah Muhammad and he was converted to it. Uh, his talents were in born, he was a gifted man, sharp intelligence without much formal education as he tells in his autobiography. He was self-educated but he read a great deal. Well Malcolm X name became extremely well known in the country after the documentary film *The Hate That Hate Produced*. He spoke all over the country, was in demand as a speaker on college campuses, university campuses around the country, black and white. He was feared as a debater; one of the fiercest debaters I've ever seen. In fact, he was debating one black man, a second rung black leader in Chicago one occasion and destroyed his opponent with a one-liner. Malcolm insisted as the Muslims always insisted, the Nation of Islam Muslims that uh, black Americans should not consider themselves Americans, they are not Americans, they are black men and they should call themselves black men. Don't call yourself an American, Malcolm shouted at his opponent, you're not an American, this is a white man's country! Call yourself a black man! His opponent insisted, I am an American. Why do you call yourself an American brother? Malcolm asked. Because I was born in this country, he replied. Malcolm smiled and slowly answered, now brother, if a cat has kittens in the oven, does that make them biscuits? The audience roared with laughter. And the man could mumble some sort of response but what was the use. The audience didn't stop laughing, laughing long enough to hear it. Oh he was a good debater and was feared as a debater. Now the leaders, the Civil Rights leaders, uh had no trouble with Malcolm. He was not a member of the 'Big Six', the Council on United Civil Rights Leadership which was made up of King, Wilkins, of the NAACP, Whitney Young of the Urban League, Dorothy Hite of the

National Council of Negro Women, John Lewis of SNCC, and Farmer, of CORE. Malcolm was not there because he was not considered a Civil Rights leader. He was not in favor of what we were doing. We were seeking integration; he was opposed to integration. He wanted what he called separation in that there's no possibility to integrate into white society. It would be undesirable if it were possible, he insisted, instead we should have our own nation. Land, land is power Malcolm argued. We must have our own black nation. He insisted that we return to Africa; if that does not prove to be possible or feasible, then let us have a separate state in this country. The nation owes it to us; it extracted our labor by force for centuries; it can pay us back by giving us the land, giving us a state. We can build our own nation there or it can give us land, buy land and give it to us elsewhere in the world. An island in the sea, or somewhere else where we can separate from white society, American society. So he was not an integrationist, he was not for Civil Rights, he was opposed to the Freedom Rides, the sit-ins and everything else, considered that a waste of money. Why you spend time trying to eat in somebody else's store; why don't you spend that money building your own stores. Build your stores, build your businesses, build your own bus lines, Malcolm and the Nation of Islam argued. Well the uh, Big Six didn't want to debate Malcolm. In fact, in one of the Big Six meetings, one of the leaders, Whitney Young of the Urban League announced that he had read in the Times that I was scheduled to debate Malcolm X on network TV and he thought that was a mistake. He said no way we can win in a debate with Malcolm, we simply give him a platform and an audience. He thought we ought to form a pact that none of us, top Civil Rights leaders would appear on the same platform with Malcolm X. Well the others agreed, but I disagreed, I felt that we could, I could handle Malcolm, I wasn't afraid of him. I'd uh, met him before on radio and in other head to head confrontations. I thought I could handle him. I was invited on one occasion to debate him

at Cornell University. The student government invited me then and uh, I told them I would accept on one condition, that is, that I speak second, Malcolm speak first. That would mean that I would have the second and last rebuttal so that he could not uh, blow me away with a one liner. Malcolm accepted that, he agreed to it. But uh, a few days before the debate he got in touch with them and said uh, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches us to attack only when attacked. Therefore, I, meaning he, must speak last. In other words, he would wait and see if I attacked him and if I attacked him or the Muslims, then he would attack. So I was asked if I would debate under those conditions; that I'd speak first and have the first rebuttal. I agreed to do that, provided Malcolm would agree to an open ended cross discussion after his rebuttal with the moderator staying out of it, so that he and I would sit at a table, each one having a microphone and we uh, just would speak and answer each other and make our points and answer each other until we'd exhausted the subject or thought we had. He agreed to that, so we went through with it. Um, well, my strategy was to make Malcolm's speech for him. I'd studied his speeches and he was devastating on the attack; devastating when he was attacking the crimes committed by white society against blacks, historically the robbing of the land in Africa, the sucking of the wealth of the land, the enslaving the people and selling the people into slavery in foreign lands, the killing them in the process, the shave, slave ships and the brutality that took place on them the many that died in the process of crossing the oceans. When he was chronicling those crimes he was absolutely devastating and if his opponent got in a defensive position, defending white society against the attack of Malcolm X his opponent had to sound like an idiot or an Uncle Tom. Malcolm was at his weakest when he was providing a solution. What would you do about it because then he had to rely upon the Nation of Islam's program, Elijah Muhammad's program of a black state or a black nation someplace in the ocean and what idiocy that is. You know, one

controlled hydrogen bomb could wipe us all out if it wanted to. Would it be better to be dispersed? Where they can't get at you so easily. If you're all in one place, [wiping out sound effect] then you're through. Uh, so uh, he was at his weakest then of course so what I did was to in my first presentation in the debate was to make a speech telling of the crimes that had been committed and then say this is what we do about the situation now and then go through CORE's program of interracial, nonviolent, direct action. And we did it in the Freedom Rides, we did it in the sit-ins. And then they, I have three more minutes, I don't need them, I'm not gonna use them, I'll turn them over to brother Malcolm X. and uh, Malcolm, don't tell us about those crimes. We know what they are. We know the disease now, so physician, what is thy cure? Malcolm got up to speak, I've never seen him at a loss for words before but he had no speech and he floundered. He began by praising me and I accepted the praise gratefully of course. He said, um, Brother James ,they never call people by nicknames or diminutives, I was not Jim, Brother James is the only top leader of so called negroes and the so-called negroes because they never spoke of negroes, they spoke of black people. Negroes, according to the Nation of Islam, was a term that whites coined. A white man said, you are negroes and we said uh huh, we are negroes [laughs]. So you know, he said what's a negro you know what are negro, where's our country called Negroland, no such place [laughs]. So says all those black people ya'll are negroes. So he said Brother James is the only top leader of so called negroes who has the guts to meet me on a public platform and debate and I respect him for that. Then he floundered around for a few more minutes; he was looking for a speech, waiting for it to come together. Finally it came together in that fertile mind of his, untouted but fertile and he came roaring back on the attack and it was vintage Malcolm. He did not attack me but he attacked what he considered to be the absurdity of nonviolence. 'A man hits you on one cheek and you are gonna turn the other cheek? What kind

of nonsense is this? He said, you have seen it on TV, you have seen those police dogs that the police down in Birmingham turn loose on little black children, you've seen those dogs fangs tear the clothing and tear the flesh of those kids' and then he rocked back on his heels and said don't let those dogs bite those children, kill the damn dogs. Everybody in that audience rose to his feet with a wild applause and most of em were white [laughs]. They rose to and applause. He had that audience, kill the damn dogs and then he, he turned and Brother James, how much money did you spend on the Freedom Rides for the right to sit in the front seat of somebody else's bus line? How much money was spent in the South for their right to sit at somebody's lunch counter and eat a hot dog? If you had spent half that money building your own bus line, half that money building your own lunch counters, you'd have the white man crawling and begging for the right to sit on the front seat of your bus line and eat a hot dog at your lunch counter. Again, he got a thunderous applause from the audience. Malcolm could be devastating. Well he, he was getting the audience so I had to come back in the rebuttal period and do a little loud talking myself. I did some loud talking, we were both shouting back and forth. However I had a trump card in my pocket which, um, I was only gonna use if I was losing the debate. And I would know that in the uh, the one on one cross discussion period. But I felt, when we went into the cross discussion period that I was ahead, I was winning the debate. Uh, if we had had an applause meter I think that the frequency of applause, I was ahead. Um, I'll tell you later about the trump card which I had. We went through the uh, cross discussion and uh, finally we'd exhausted the uh, issue and we agreed that we ought to cut it now. We called the moderator, we cut it. Malcolm, his bodyguard and I went out for coffee and I uh told him I enjoyed the debate. He did too he said. I told him that uh, I had a trump card in my pocket that I was going to use if I thought I needed it but I didn't think I needed it because I thought I won the debate and he said I think you did too



Brother James. And uh, I took a piece of paper out of my pocket and handed it to him. He read it, then showed it to his bodyguard who read it also. This piece of paper was a letter, Xerox copy of a letter. I had had a staff member of mine get on the mailing list of George Lincoln Rockwell. You may never have heard of that name. He was head of the American Nazi Party, the American version of the Hitler rights of Germany and there was and there is an American Nazi Party, it's small, sort of like the Ku Klux Klan but more so. So this uh, staff member of mine received the mail from the American Nazi Party and this letter from George Lincoln Rockwell, addressed to everyone on his mailing list. Said uh, dear friends, I have just had a meeting with the most amazing black man in America, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad head of the Nation of Islam, the so called Black Muslims. I was astonished to discover that they and we agree on most issues. They hate Jews and we hate Jews. They think black people ought to get out of this country and go somewhere, maybe back to Africa and so do we. They want to make black men leave white women alone and so do we. They want to make white men leave black women alone and so do we. We have worked out a mutual assistance packet. This is George Lincoln Rockwell head of the American Nazi Party, addressing the people on his mailing list in a letter. We have worked out a mutual assistance pact with the, with Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam. When we speak at outdoor rallies, the Fruit of Islam, that's the elite core of Nation of Islam, will provide us with protection, bodyguards. Can you imagine it? Speakers from the American Nazi Party addressing a huge crowd at Union Square in New York protected by a solid phalanx of Elijah Muhammad's stalwart black storm troopers. Oy, oy, oy. At last those three words I suppose oy oy supposed to be a Yiddish expression of pain or something like that. It was signed George Lincoln Rockwell. Malcolm read it, he says well first of all Brother James I want to thank you for not bringing this up during the debate. And second, I want to tell you that I knew nothing

about any such meeting if such a meeting did take place. But I will assure you that I'm gonna look into it and if such a meeting did take place, there will be hell to pay within the Nation of Islam. [announcer voice: this lecture continues next week, music] [music, static]