

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: 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 oy, are supposed to be a Yiddish expression of pain or something like that. It was signed George Lincoln Rockwell. Malcolm read it, he said

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. I do not know if the meeting took place, I didn't hear from Malcolm on that. But I heard from Malcolm about a month later when he called me to tell me that uh, the uh, youth section of the American Nazi Party was going to picket the CORE office on Thursday. I asked him how he knew; he said they called him and asked him if he would join them. Uh, he said they called and said uh, Malcolm uh, you believe that uh, um, black, you're opposed to race mixing aren't you. He said yes. You think black men should leave white women alone and white men should leave black me, women alone? He said yes. Well CORE is a race mixing organization and we are going to picket the CORE office and James Farmer on Thursday afternoon, so you bring your followers down and join our picket line. I said, well Malcolm, are you going to picket me Thursday. He said no I told that creep I'm not picketing any black brother who's fighting for freedom. So, thank God, Malcolm had some integrity and did not come there. Well, we had a number of debates, uh, we debated on TV that TV show and I thought it turned out alright and was favorable. The uh, Big Six uh, felt that uh I'd handle it well and that uh, uh, it was successful from all our standpoint and not from Malcolm's standpoint. After we had had five or six debates, Malcolm suggested that we stop debating each other; I agreed with him. I met him on, uh, 125th street; he invited me to have coffee with him, in their restaurant, the Muslims restaurant, Shabazz restaurant. And he said Brother James, I think we ought to stop debating each other because we're not doing anything but conducting a service, two black guys belting each other's brains out for the amusement of largely white audiences, and I know what you're going to say and you know what I'm gonna say. I'm not gonna convince you

and you're not gonna convince me. That I could make your speech for you and you could make my speech for me, in fact you did once. And we, we laughed at that. He said, um, so I suggest that if I have anything to say to you I call you up and come by your house and say it. And you do the same thing, come by my house and say it. I agreed and we sipped coffee and shook hands on that gentleman's agreement. And that's the way we worked it. Malcolm was suspended from the Nation of Islam right after Kennedy's assassination. When uh, Kennedy was shot, and the whole nation was in mourning even many of those who had disagreed with Kennedy were in a sh, state of shock and mourning. But Malcolm was asked for his reaction by the press and it, what he said was quote 'the chickens have come home to roost' unquote. He did not elaborate. The press played that up. Elijah Muhammad suspended him because of that statement for one year.

Malcolm then traveled around the world spending a lot of time in Africa visiting African nations and heads of state, visiting the Middle East and Mecca in particular. I got postcards from him. Two postcards from Mecca seemed to me to indicate a developing change in the thinking of Malcolm X, the foremost black nationalist of the United States at that time. The first one said dear Brother James, I am now in Mecca, the most beautiful and sacred city in the world, where I have witnessed pilgrims of all colors and he underscored those three words, of all colors, worshipping Allah in perfect peace and harmony and brotherhood such as I have never witnessed in the states. The next postcard from Mecca, uh couple of months later, said dear Brother James, I am back in Mec, Mecca. I'm still traveling trying to broaden my mind, where I've seen so much of the damage narrow mindedness can make of things. When I return to my country, I shall devote the energies that I have to repairing that damage. Malcolm was over at my home, just two months before he was killed. He had heard on the radio that I was going to Africa on a tour, visiting African nations and visiting st, heads of state. And he called and asked if he

could come by and talk with me and give me names and phone numbers of people whom he met and talked with in Africa. I agreed. Malcolm came by with his bodyguard. I was surprised to see the bodyguard and asked him why he brought his bodyguard, did he think I was going to kill him. He smiled, said no Brother James, you are not going to kill me but there are people who are trying to kill me and they're going to get me, probably very soon. I asked him who those people were, the black Muslims? He said, I honestly think that the so called black Muslims are the only black people in this country capable of political murder and assassination at the present time. I know what they'll do, he said, cause I taught them what they know. Later, however when he spoke with Alex Haley on the subject and he was talking his autobiography to the tape machine, he said, I always thought it was the Muslims who were trying to kill me but I know what to expect from them. Now the people after me are doing things the Muslims would never think of doing, so I think other people must be mixed up in this. By the time he spoke with me he thought it was the Muslims who were after him. Well, we talked about many things that day at my home. I asked him also if the cards I'd received from Mecca indicated a change in his thinking. He uh, asked me to refresh his memory as to what he'd said. I did, I told him. He said yes, as a matter of fact they did indicate a change in my thinking. Um, he said Brother James, I was not lucky as you were; I had very little formal education only grade school education. Consequently, I believed everything the honorable Elijah Muhammad had told us. The Honorable Elijah Muhammad told us that Islam was a black man's religion and that whites could not get close to Mecca; that they would be killed trying to get in to Mecca. However, when I was in Mecca, worshipping Allah, there were blue eyed blondes kneeling beside me worshipping Allah just as I was. So obviously, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad had lied. I'm quoting Malcolm as exactly as I can, it, the words planted themselves indelibly in my memory; he said obviously, the

Honorable Elijah Muhammad had lied, so I had to do a lot of soul searching after that to come to terms with this. Said, a bit later, I was in Ghana meeting with the Ambassador to Ghana from Algeria. He asked me for my plans, my program and I told him my plans for my black brothers. And he smiled and said, well Malcolm, that leaves me out doesn't it. Said, what do you mean? He said that I am your Muhammadan brother but I am not your black brother, I am Caucasian. Malcolm said that shook him up too. And he has had to, to rethink and he has reached the conclusion that anyone who will fight with us, he said mind you I did not say for us but with us is my brother. And that goes for your three guys too, Brother James, Schwerner, Goodman and Chaney and Malcolm knew very well that Schwerner and Goodman were both white, in fact Jewish. I asked Malcolm why he had not uh, expressed this new line of his in his public speeches since he had gotten back from the Middle East. Indeed in his public speeches at Harlem Square, Lenox Avenue and 125th Street, he was spouting the same old line. He said, well you must be politician enough to know that if a leader makes a sudden right angle turn, he turns alone; in other words, he has to move gradually for a change in direction if he expects anyone to follow him. Well, Malcolm um, was a complicated man and a very brilliant man and yes, I say this, he was an honest man who was honestly trying to think his way through problems. He died before he completed that thought process. He was coming along toward the Civil Rights Movement in my opinion. Now when I heard that he was shot and killed, I was more than stunned, I was crushed. In Ghana, on my African trip, this was just uh, two months after Malcolm had been at my home, I had dinner with a friend who had been on the Freedom Ride, she told me that she had dined with Malcolm when he was there, I had known that already. She said to me, Malcolm is going to be killed you know. I said when. She said sometime between now, now being February 1, 1965, sometime between now and April 1st. I said, that's calling it pretty close, isn't

it. Yes, she said. [Conversation between the two] That's two months! yes. But you must know something! yes. Who's going to kill him, the black Muslims? Said, no, no, no, no; they're after him but they probably just want to beat him up, teach him a lesson. There's another gang after him, much more dangerous than the Muslims and they'll get him and it will be blamed on the Muslims. I asked her who this other gang was. She said, I have nothing more to say on the subject and if you quote me and use my name, I will deny that I ever saw you. I uh, continued to press her on the identities of these other people, this other gang as she put it and she became semi-hysterical; got up and left the table and walked out. That was February 1st mark you, 1965. I got back to New York almost immediately left town to write uh, my first book, um Freedom When. Got a call from my wife, this is late in February, that Malcolm had been shot and killed at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem, this was the last week in February. She'd called it right, within a month. I got in the car and rushed back to New York, held a press conference and said two things. First, the uh, black Muslims had not killed him. Second, that his murder was political assassination with international implications. Well, I said a third thing, that he will be sorely missed; he was an honest man, a man of integrity and a very great man, though I disagreed with him on many things, our views were coming closer together. The New York Times in its editorial the next morning said that what I probably meant was that Malcolm's murder was somehow connected with the drug trade in Harlem with its ties to the mob downtown and its international connections. That's what I had in mind, but I could not prove it. I tried to reach the young lady and found that she had left Ghana. I checked with a close friend of hers here and found that she had gone someplace and was uh, to another country and was doing a striptease act, in a nightclub and was allegedly on dope. We uh, at my home began to get threatening phone calls then. Callers calling, speaking to my wife, all through the night when I was out of town,

saying 'your husband's not home yet, is he?' 'no' 'that's right you see, he's gonna be a little delayed, in fact he won't get home, he's been called away to a funeral, his own' call back later and say, 'what kind of funeral do you want for him and what kind of flowers would you like us to send'. Next call would say, we're gonna kill your two little girls. Well, Lula was pretty cool through most of these calls, up until the time they threatened the girls. After, after a few of those calls, when they said what kind of a funeral do you want for him and he'd been called away to a funeral, his own, she said oh thank you very much! They said what? She said thank you, you just reminded me to pay last month's uh life insurance policy for my husband. But when they threatened the kids, uh, then she got upset and called me and I called the police commissioner of New York and he provided some protection around the building and school where the children were. And uh, other things happened such as on one speaking trip in the Midwest uh, I was confronted with um, a bag at the airport, said you gotta take this bag man, you gotta take this bag, take this bag. The bag looked very much like mine and almost thrust it in my hand as I was about to get on the plane, I refused to take it and uh, almost threatened, 'you gotta take this bag, you don't know me do you. I never saw you before in my life. I'm the cap who impersonated Martin Luther King in Philadelphia', I didn't know King had ever been impersonated. 'Take this bag, man, take this bag' I uh, walked onto the plane without taking the bag of course, I almost took it out of curiosity, you know, I wondered what was in it. When I got to Chicago where I was changing flights, walking to my New York flight gate, I looked up and there were four policemen at that gate. One of them said, in the stage whisper "That's him, that's the one". Eyes went from my head to my bag and I walked by them holding up my bag, which looked very much like that bag the fellow almost thrust into my hand. But I'm sure that other bag had some identifiable marking on it. The policemen made no move. If I'd had the other bag, what would

have happened? My guess is that, they would have taken it from me, confiscated it, opened it, ripped the lining, and found dope in it. I would have been sent away for possession of or whatever the charges would have been and what would my defense have been. 'well, Your Honor, it's like this. This little fellow came up and he said take this bag man, you got to take this bag. So the judge would still be laughing [laughs]. That was 1965'. Well, fortunately, I didn't take it, but um, the funny things like that, strange things that began happening. I think that I was on the right track, now three people were convicted for Malcolm's murder. One was guilty, indeed he confessed near the end of the trial and said that he had three accomplices but the other two, who were Muslims, who were on trial with him, were not among the accomplices, indeed they had nothing whatever to do with it. He never saw them before the trial began. When he confessed he said he was paid to kill Malcolm, he refused to say who paid him or why he was paid to kill him or how much he was paid. Yet, all three were convicted. The two innocent ones and the one guilty one and are serving long prison terms in New York state. So that is one of the unsolved murders. Um, now, Malcolm's memory has grown larger with the years. People, young, are black militants. Not only militants but others have been avidly reading transcripts of Malcolm's speeches. Malcolm's tapes have been, the tapes of his speeches have been duplicated, replicated, over and over and over and over again, have been widely distributed. They are being listened to in dormitories uh, throughout the country in predominately black institutions. You will see youngsters around stereos listening, not to the latest rock song but listening to the voice of Malcolm X, those speeches of his, which are on tape. So he became a much more important figure after his assassination than he was before. He was not a violent man; Malcolm was a fairly gentle man, he became violent in his rhetoric and then violent in his rhetoric when there was a microphone there and when there was a camera there. Otherwise, he was a gentleman. Now, I've

given a fairly long lecture; I want you to know that there were two threads in the black struggle in the sixties. One which we can call 'the King-CORE-SNCC thread of nonviolence' the other, we can call the 'Malcolm slash Muslim thread of rhetorical violence'. Springing from that thread of violence was a rhetorical violence now, was the Black Panthers who became violent in their deeds in the early stages, later they changed it and other groups as well. But the two threads went side by side and one interesting fact as I rushed to a conclusion is that the black masses did not really take sides. When Malcolm and I spoke in the black community, in the ghetto, we could speak to the same audience. He is speaking with his rhetoric for our separationism and speaking of violent language and they would give him thunderous applause. I could speak for integrationism and for nonviolence and get an equally thunderous applause from the self-same audience. That does not mean that the people were ambivalent or that they were dumb. No far, from it. What they were saying is that they were not social architects, you are our leaders. All we know is that there is a foot on our neck. We want the foot off. You may argue and fight about how to get the foot off but we love you both because both of you are trying to get that foot removed. That was the spirit of the '60s. We will go on with the movement of the nonviolence in the later '60s next week. [music, static]