

Speaker 1 (00:00:02):

Uh, thank you. When, um, when I first, first met Charlie <inaudible> money and Tim who had come travel was in Europe. I think that was, I had never been out of Ohio. I mean, my only place I'd ever been from Ohio outside of Ohio was Orangeburg, South Carolina. And, um, I came here as a <affirmative> and by the time I had, uh, gone home for Christmas, I had been arrested like five times. My jaw had been broken and my arm had been busted because it was the first time in this, in this new world of South Carolina having come from Ely, Ohio. And it was a strange world. And so when I went to Sumter for Christmas for, uh, I'm sorry for Thanksgiving, and only reason I went to Sumter is because they closed the campus down. You had to go, you know, somewhere, you gotta get up outta here sort of thing. So I went to, to something. It was the first time I'd been off campus since I had been placed in South Carolina state. And, uh, we went to a party and my friends drank at time. I didn't. So I was the designated driver. After going to this party, as we were driving home, the police stopped me. I had never been confronted by a police officer in my life at that time, 16 years old, some South Carolina. And we started talking and the officer said, finally said, where you from? Boy? I said, Ohio, why said they didn't teach you how they said, not only did I say why? I said I'm from Ohio, you got the license. Can't you read

Speaker 2 (00:02:14):

<laugh>.

Speaker 1 (00:02:21):

It was the beginning when he said, what that particular I say, yes, sir, no, sir. The white men up there. I say that you gotta be J

Speaker 2 (00:02:37):

<laugh>.

Speaker 1 (00:02:38):

It was an suspicious piece. That man hit me

Speaker 1 (00:02:45):

So hard. But in, from the steel mill of Ohio, I had a few tricks of my own. I was hitting and kicking as I went down and before his fist left my face, I had struck him back and, uh, his partner grabbed me and we just got it on down there on the side of the road in sun to South Carolina, they got the better of it, broke my jaw, busted my arm. And as they were beating me, I was saying to the guys in the car, I'm going to get you <laugh> cause where I came from you didn't let your partners be with and not help. That of course was long before I'd ever heard of nonviolence. And I only knew of direct action.

Speaker 1 (00:03:38):

So by, you know, I got my jaw busting went, went to jail. And when I got out of jail and went to get on the train, coming from some to back Orangeburg, the, uh, conductor said, all right, get on back to the baggage cutter said, I, what? <laugh> not for \$7 and 82 cents go. I ride with a bunch of, uh, old cheap suitcases of Manji dogs. There are seats here. I'm sitting here. I look back now in times, say, was I naive or just a fool? <laugh> and I think it was a combination. It was a combination. But out of that combination of things, um, you know, I had that reputation of that. Nigga's crazy. And so most of the students sort of passed me by it on Berg, say hello and make wide circles around <laugh>.

Speaker 1 (00:04:45):

So I finally got home and my father decided this little venture meeting, your brothers and sisters, uh, and the confines of a black college. This wasn't going to be for you. Uh, I can't afford to have you there the way he put it. And besides you going be killed. So my year of penance was to end early with the understanding I'm taking you back to that campus. You stay here, stay there till I

get there and come back and pick you up. I said, fine. Well, on February 1st, 1960, there were sit-ins in Greensboro. Greensboro. Orangeburg is 80 miles from here. And, um, group of students came to me and we were talking about, did you hear what they did up in Greensboro said, yes, of course I did said, we want to do that here. I said, go ahead and do it. What's that got to do with me? <laugh> said, we want you to be the spokesperson.

Speaker 1 (00:05:52):

I said, y'all crazy. You all are out of your mind. If you're gonna put up with what them crack is going to do to you, you do that. It's not my place to interfere. I got 20 more days in this place and I'm gone and I will never see anything south of Cincinnati again in life while I was reading, I was reading, uh, the Toman and you all know all about that part of my life. There's a section of the Tom that says, if I am not for myself, who will be for me, find for myself only what am I, if not now, when? And I thought about that and I spent the night thinking about it. And I think the night thinking about my life, um, I was born the night, Joe Lewis knocked out Max Schmeling, where in Mass, on Ohio Avenue, Ohio, there was jubilation.

Speaker 1 (00:06:55):

I used to thank my father when we got older for several things, not naming me, Joe Lewis <laugh> and for every one of my birthdays, they had tried out this old eight millimeter film of, uh, the fight went in one minute and 28 seconds of the first round, Joe Lewis of Brown knocked out Max Schmeling the great white hope of the Western world. And what my father would say is look at the crowd, look at the crowd. And it was full of men with SW sneakers on said, these are the people you going have to deal with. And he used to call 'em pecker woods. All the time said, these pecker woods are going make your life. Hell nothing. I'm four years old when the cake Koolaid and he about you have to do something for the race. You are a race baby. And that's the first time I've ever heard anything.

Speaker 1 (00:08:12):

I didn't know a boy or a girl, this man talking about you, a race baby. And I'm talking about when we going get the Kool lady, but that started very early for me, which taught me something later with, with my own child of those early lessons, come back and guide that night. When I was thinking about these students from clinic, most of them college had asked me to lead them or be the spokesman and the, the city ins, all of those things came back. The pictures of the fight. Yankee stayed in field with Nazis screaming discussions of my father about, you know, they killed three black people were killed in Detroit. After that fight, four black people were killed in Cincinnati after that fight and law knows how many they killed down south after that fight. And don't you ever forget?

Speaker 1 (00:09:19):

So that night after I thought about where I had come from and what I was supposed to do, I knew that next morning that I was supposed to be involved in this movement. So I went, um, back to these people and apologized for my being flippant and said, I will do whatever I can to help. And, um, joined the Orangeburg movement for civic improvement, um, and was, you know, the chairman of the Orangeburg movement for civic improvement. And we were sitting in by, uh, the 6th of February first when it started on first and on the sixth, I was leading demonstrations and not knowing a thing about what was happening except they said, uh, um, if these white folks hit you, don't get 'em back. Made sense to me. Cause last time I <laugh>

Speaker 3 (00:10:44):

Last. So we'll do that. I'll do

Speaker 1 (00:10:48):

That until we figure out something else, at least until I get enough of y'all to join me

Speaker 2 (00:10:52):

<laugh>

Speaker 1 (00:10:55):

And we were having sit-ins and by that fresh sit-ins on March 6th, went to jail. Uh, that next week I was in jail and by March 12th led the demonstration of 1500 students in Orangeburg of which 1200 of us went to jail. Uh, we put in, into an outside enclosure and attacked with, with, uh, water hoses. And, um, then we got the call. I think I mentioned this morning. We only thing I knew about Dr. King was what I read in, in, in, in newspapers and magazines. But when they mentioned Ms. Baker, when I mentioned two, our advisors in Orangeburg, the Ms. Baker letter came asking us this meeting, Ms. Baker sent the letter. And I remember Reverend McCullum telling me if miss Ella baker said that she wants you to do something. You can put your life in her hands. And, um, and we talked on the phone after that and we were, we were sort of ready.

Speaker 1 (00:12:16):

And when I, when I came here, there was already a sense that we were like, like Charlie said, I knew the names. I knew that Charles rod died. N I by Nash and lot Kings who the Charlie of Jones and what, what we had shared was I remember, and we talked about first things is what do you remember about? And we talked about, um, the brown <affirmative> and just about everybody had a copy of the jet with the picture of Emmett, till we had a common sense of remembering what was happening to our people with that thing on, um, on that picture, which I have today, uh, that they, that they of Emmett till lying in its cloth and it's coughing.

Speaker 1 (00:13:18):

So we all started at a common sort of ground when we got here. I thought that compared with people like, you know, Charlie who had been, uh, world traveling and, you know, Lonnie from Atlanta, I had never been to Atlanta, you know, and these people from Nashville, Hey, great, God is done. I, they, all these it's hot city people, hot shots. And, and the thing that sustain me was, was, uh, Jim Lawson. Cause Jim was from my hometown and I knew growing up that he had been in prison and he had been in prison as a pacifist. I knew what a sist was. And I knew there had been hours of discussion about going to jail for ideas, for belief, because we had an example from our small little colored community in national Ohio of, of, of someone, um, who evidence, whoever then scholarship, courage, compassion, and commitment.

Speaker 1 (00:14:28):

And it was again, um, who had gone to school with my aunts and stuff. And so the idea of going to, um, to jail for an idea was already acceptable, acceptable to me. Um, and so when we came up here, uh, there were people who argued and discussed the whole nonviolent philosophy. Most of these people were from, um, from Nashville, um, Diane and Bernard and, and bevel. Um, and that whole, the whole concept of discussion and discussion of a, of a beloved community, uh, was discussed. And I felt that we were already in it because these people I saw already is, is kinded spirits and brothers in, in a common sort of and sisters, um,

Speaker 1 (00:15:34):

In a common sort of struggle. So, so we cleaved very quickly. We all came to together very, very quickly. And we talked, I met Tim and, uh, there was this feeling that we were, you know, we came from the same backgrounds wherever we came from. For the most part, we, we were the sons and daughters of working class people, working people. I remember. Um, and if you had any sense of shame from when you came, when Tim claimed told me he was raised in his first crib was the bottom drawer of the, of, of, of the bureau in his parents' bedroom. Yeah. They'd say, and I moved up to the third drawer. I said, well, now if that is up with mobility

Speaker 2 (00:16:27):

<laugh>

Speaker 1 (00:16:31):

And we all had, had, had an appreciation, a thirst for knowledge and a commitment to doing something. Um, as, as, uh, as, as Shera mentioned earlier, we didn't know what it was going to be, but we knew it was going to be something. And you came and you came to, uh, trusting each other by spending time talking together, learning together, planning together. Um, I remember with, with pride when, uh, Jim got kicked out of Vanderbilt, uh, he was in graduate school and school theology there. And, you know, my thing was, you see, in the Christian school with kicked him out, they ain't see it's about another Christians that was, was continu with my other rebellion. But that was, that was, I, I hadn't seen him since I was a kid, but I, I had this feeling that we were kindred souls. And then there were all these, these others. And we started in the early discussions

Speaker 1 (00:17:51):

When we talked about, uh, the student coordinating committee, uh, the coordinating committee nonviolence was, uh, was kept out of it. And it was then in, in, in, uh, a concession, what Lonnie talked about, uh, those, those, those purists, the nonviolent purists that, uh, kept us together, kept us on the road. And we, and so it became a thing thereafter, a mantra that we gave us do this in the spirit of nonviolence and love. I had never told a man I'd loved him in my life. Wasn't too many girls. I said more than I liked him. <laugh>

Speaker 1 (00:18:37):

And here we were talking about love a word and the concept I use all the time now, because it was through the movement that I came to understand the deeper meanings of, of AGA and love of my fellow man, my brothers and my sisters. And there came in time that I understood how you could love somebody and an idea so much that you would die for it. And that became the case with all of you all. I remember when, um, when we first went me, Tim Jenkins, Charles rod, Charlie Jones, when we decided that we were going to drop outta school in full spend, full time helping to build the movement at whatever cost that was going to take. And we found out about that. Cause very quickly when Charlie Jones hit a little black dog owned by a big white lady driving to Alabama came the first ideological split. The, the, the, the, the, uh, Ministerio stewards Jones and shard was saying, the lady came big. White lady came out and said, oh my God, my baby's dog. And he got PO. And if y'all could just give him a few dollars to make him happy so I can buy new dog

Speaker 1 (00:20:20):

Jenkins dog ran in the street. We, we don't have extra money to pay for this woman's dog. Let's get outta here. We standing out there debating and in the spirit of not, and the spirit of nonviolence we should pay for this dog, shouldn't add the dog on the leash. The big white lady got tired of our discussion and told us if you don't pay for this dog, you will never make it outta Alabama. A lot. White folks have a way

Speaker 2 (00:21:09):

<laugh>

Speaker 1 (00:21:11):

Of defining issues. So we moved to a different level. It became no matter, no longer a matter of compassion, it became Sheira no, let's go. We ain't gonna pay for that dog.

Speaker 2 (00:21:29):

<laugh>

Speaker 1 (00:21:30):

Let's go morning, come. I'm there. Like, how dare she threatened us? I, these good Christian brothers don't stop talking about paying for the woman's dog, which next. And I said, all along, we shouldn't do. And we prepared, but we wouldn't have left their lives. One was right. There

was a white man, man, who looked like, you know, old Colonel Sanders had a white linen suit. I remember that had a white linen suit on. And he came out as this crowd was gathering around us in, in pale city, Alabama and told, and he sort like, you know, the local, uh, head white man in time.

Speaker 2 (00:22:10):

<laugh>

Speaker 1 (00:22:11):

He told these boys didn't do nothing wrong. I saw the whole thing. The dog ran out in the street and they couldn't help hitting it. So y'all just let 'em along and told us y'all better get outta town.

Speaker 2 (00:22:25):

<laugh>.

Speaker 1 (00:22:29):

And, uh, I remember we started, uh, driving towards return, turning to highway, driving towards Mississippi out running. Cause people were getting in cars coming behind us. I'll never forget this, but when we got to Mississippi to the board of Mississippi, we stopped scared running from a mile from Alabama, but still scared to go into Mississippi. I swear. I know each one of each, one of us who was in that car, remember that day, cause Gerard two had tried to use the bathroom along with man said one drop, blow your brains up. It was a terrible time. Speaking of time.

Speaker 2 (00:23:25):

<laugh>

Speaker 1 (00:23:26):

Thank you, Martin. Uh, there'll, there'll be, there'll be time to continue this later. We're trying to keep a, a rather close schedule. And so, and I, and I realized that, uh, I drifted off of it, but that it was here 40 years ago that, uh, I learned that the deeper men meanings of, of comradeship and love and, and trust and, uh, and a willingness to do anything, uh, to help bring about a change. And, um, and I knew at the, the different points along this journey that we wouldn't all get here together. Um, so I'm very happy and proud to be able to celebrate with you and those of us who have made it on thus far.

Speaker 4 (00:24:21):

Thanks. I,

Speaker 5 (00:24:33):

I, I really wanna apologize for the time. I just wanna make sure that we all get some lunch a little bit later. Um, I think that we're hearing in these talks a sense, a different sense than the traditional of what leadership can be of something that can be created by people themselves when they decide to act, or that can be a quiet unassuming kind of thing that really makes pivotal and important decisions that can change the course of history. And right now we'll hear from Joyce Ladner. And I'll say this, when we're doing the program, as you know, we're doing all this at the last minute and everything. So we were trying to put in, uh people's before their SNCC, um, accomplishments and their present day accomplishments. And one of the reasons that we just totally gave up on the whole project and said, we're just gonna put people's names in, is that when we came to Joyce's names, there were so many accomplishments on both sides. We said, well, it'll take up half a page. <laugh> so, um, I won't say anything else and let her come and talk to you about, uh, the spirit of Ms. Baker and organizing in Mississippi.

Speaker 6 (00:26:04):

Good. I was about to say good morning, but it's good afternoon. Um, the war is, uh, remind that I've heard from, um, the three previous speakers reminds me of time back in the sixties. When we used to hear people who came out of the thirties movement, and we used to say, God, I was so sick of the thirties. And I can imagine that, um, some of you may, well, um, feel like my son and my niece, uh, my sister do's daughter, when we tell them, watch this program recently, I told my son watch freedom song it's coming on. When he said, he said, what is it about SNCC?

Speaker 6 (00:26:59):

I said, yes. He said, I already know all about SNCC <laugh> mom, you've taught. I said, you don't, you, you gotta see the real snake. He said, well, what is this? You've been telling me all of my life, then it wasn't a real SNCC <laugh>. But I think that, that, um, first I wanna thank the organizers for bringing us together so that we can tell the war stirs because there, there are deeper meanings hidden within all of them. And the second is that in remembering Ms. Baker, I think she would want us to remember a legacy of, of doing, um, because she was indeed a doer. She was not, she was an quite eloquent speaker, but you can probably count the number of times that she was, you know, the keynote speaker on, or she shot, tended to want to shy away from that role.

Speaker 6 (00:27:53):

Um, I'm gonna make two points. One is that, uh, to describe what Mississippi was like, uh, when miss Baker's philosophy began to resinate in that state and why did it resonate? And then just say a few things about the lessons she taught us. Um, all of us necessarily have to be autobiographical in making our comments. And so I was a high school, senior 16 years old in 1960. When, on Easter weekend, when, when, uh, sneak was founded, um, probably don't remember, um, having read about it in the Hattensburg Mississippi America newspaper, because it censored everything. I do remember that it did carry some information about the city ins, what that were occurring.

Speaker 6 (00:28:49):

Nevertheless, we, um, all of us were not all of us, but, but I was particularly blessed because I had have a sister Dori who was coming later today. Who's only 15 months older than I, and I cannot remember a time in our lives when we, when race was not the central most important thing that, that we focused on, I have always been, and I say care, I've always cared, both the burden and, and the, the blessing of, of this strong racial consciousness. Um, and perhaps it came from, from my mother who, um, taught us that you look white people dead in the eye and don't blink.

Speaker 6 (00:29:37):

Um, she, I remember, um, when door and they all the salesmen who are an insurance collector, people who came around our house deferred to her, and she always told us, there's a certain way. You carry yourself in order to keep your dignity so that white people don't walk over you. Uh, so when Dory was, and I were at the grocery store, Hudson's grocery a block from my house, and we were looking at magazines, uh, magazine rack, and, and Dory had bought some donuts. And she, I remember clearly because she probably just gotten her first bra, but we were, we were entering puberty and I was the younger, and certainly didn't had not yet bought my 28 triple a bra <laugh> <laugh>. That was the size. I remember clearly of the first one. Um, and this there's this man, this cashier white cashier in the store who all four of his fingers on the right hand had been cut off for some reason.

Speaker 6 (00:30:45):

And, um, he walked up behind her and tried to touch her bra. She turned and took the bag of donuts and began beating him over the hit. And we ran all the way home and told mother, mother, mother, guess what happened? We, and we told her, and she said, you should have killed him. <laugh> um, so that we were taught to stand up for our beliefs and, and to have, and another

thing she taught us, she becomes the plural because we learned this within this all black community called Palm crossing outside four, four miles from downtown Harrisburg, we were taught to stand up for our beliefs. And if, if you couldn't stand up for them, they weren't mother used to say that they're not worth very much, and you can't stand up for what you believe in beliefs can't be worth much start with, but they taught us how to survive with dignity.

Speaker 6 (00:31:38):

And that was walking a tight rope. They told us that we could indeed stand tall and have the courage of these convictions and carry ourselves in such a way that if a white man makes a P and they did, they were quite plentiful. You stand proudly and don't even respond and just walk away like a lady. And, and it worked. Um, we knew we couldn't turn around and beat too many people over the head with donuts, um, for fear that, that we could have been killed. Um, but we, we, um, I remember some things that, that had an impact on us that, that became threads throughout the larger soci that were threads throughout the largest society, but that followed us as well from the time of childhood, uh, the brown decision. I remember very, very clearly and how the local newspaper covered it. I read the newspaper.

Speaker 6 (00:32:37):

Um, from the time I was very little, I used to spend a dime a day to buy this PA paper, um, and know that it was called referred to the brown. The date, the decision was handed down was referred to as black Monday. Um, but we didn't get, there was no rush to integrate no, no attempt at all to desegregate the Harrisburg schools or schools, anywhere in Mississippi. What we got were new public schools. They built the county, built us a new school that we had always needed. Um, um, and that was their way of sting off any, any attempts by, um, uh, to say that, that we were unequal or we had unequal facilities, we lived in a very, very close society, but it was possible to get certain information. Uh, I don't even remember whether I maybe I heard national news on, on the radio, but we got a new television.

Speaker 6 (00:33:38):

We got a television station, w D a M um, and had Burg in about 19 was the late fifties. And they were very, very racist. But I do remember see seeing, um, um, oh, it was an NB C affiliate. So David Brinkley chat Huntley and David Brinkley, that was the one window of national news that we saw. But what was most important was that, that we had this friend, an older man who came by a house all the time. We called him cousin a cousin. He really wasn't our cousin, but we call others, referred to him as Dr. McLeod. And he was a race man. He sold herbal medicine today. He'd be en Vogue back then my mother said, I wouldn't take anything. Cause gave you Mike poison. You <laugh>. She said those roots that he he's boiling. I don't know what's in them, but cars was a race man.

Speaker 6 (00:34:33):

He was a member of the local NAACP. I was 10, 11, 12, 12, maybe a little bit older, but probably not 10 but 11, 12, 13. And he brought us weekly, the Chicago defender, Pittsburgh Curion and we got the Monte Ebony and the jet. It was funny. Uh, I think Charles referred to it as de jet black people in the south, always called jet magazine, the jet. And we, that is where we got information. We also, he also brought books. I read the first biographies, uh, uh, about black people, um, because I don't know where he got the books from, but I guess he ordered them. But, um, he, he brought, introduced us to literature on black people. And he used to tell us, you girls are going to have to change things. Uh, it'll be your generation. That's going to change things. When you get older, we, several references were made to, to the veterans of world war II.

Speaker 6 (00:35:36):

And I would add world war. I, my uncle Archie went to friends and the French asked him if he would pull down his pants, according to him and show him their, uh, them his tail, because they had been told that black people were black were kin to monkeys that had tails. He told us this.

And I remember as a little girl sitting on his back porch, when he talked about how disappointing it was to come back home and, and see how terrible conditions were. But he going to France had given him a, a perspective that was very different. Uh, the veterans of world war II, especially were very, very important because they were sent abroad to fight for freedom with the expectation that they were also going to reap some benefits. They came home, they saw the white soldiers, uh, reaping the benefits, but they did not.

Speaker 6 (00:36:29):

And many of these people were the founders of the then underground NAACP in Mississippi throughout the state. Um, I, I could, I cannot emphasize, uh, enough how important the role of these men were. They were the ones who, who to, who I always felt that my generation was the one that they felt would be was ours, was the generation that would change things that there, the environment was pregnant with possibilities of all kinds of change, but it was almost as if they were on the press piece of it, but it knew it was to come. Um, I referred to ours as the Emmett till generation, because I cannot think of a single thing that had a more profound impact on so many people who came into SNCC, who had seen the cover of the jet magazine cover of Emmett Till's UN body, where he, they didn't do any cosmetic, uh, surgery or whatever, to the face of him.

Speaker 6 (00:37:39):

And in the 1980s, I asked Mrs. Mobley, uh, his mother, why did you have him, uh, bear it with, uh, Barrett was open casket without, um, them, they pulled him out of the river. So he didn't, you know, he was not didn't look like her, anyone son. I mean, he was just awful picture. And she said, I wanted the world to see what they did to my baby. And that we were his age. We were, I mean, psycho in terms of psychosocial theory or whatever we identified with him. I felt personally that if they killed a 14 year old, they could also kill me. They could kill my brothers. They could, we knew they, that men were lynched, but we didn't, we'd never known of a child being lynched before. And I believe that on a per deeply, profoundly personal level that had a strong galvanizing effect on all of us.

Speaker 6 (00:38:43):

Uh, the image is with me still, it became etched in our consciousness. We were also very, very fortunate to have mentors, a Eileen beard, a woman, um, was a member of our church. Eileen beard was the sister Vernon Damer, Mr. Damer, um, and cl ARD, uh, who lived in that same community. Um, and Medgar Evers were the three mentors I had had, who were killed. And I thought about this recently, um, that it's so ironic that these three men who had such a profound influence on my life were all died for their beliefs. Mr. Damer, Mrs. Damer, brother beard, and sister beard, as we call them in our church. And cl canard used to take Dora in me with them to Jackson, to the state NAACP meetings when we were in the fifties, when we were in high school. Um, I don't know. I think mentors, you seek mentors out as much as they, and this is the message I'd like to give to the young people here today.

Speaker 6 (00:39:58):

That it's not just a matter of older people saying we want mentor young people, but young people also have to seek out the older people. It's possible that the reason they took us quite likely is because they knew we had this interest in race. We talked about it, you know? Um, and it, it was then that we saw people like rub Hurley, who was, uh, first black woman, lawyer I ever saw probably didn't know one existed. She was a Southeastern regional director of the NAACP. So she would come and speak then Glo the current director of branches spoke. Uh, but we saw these outside people coming into the state and all the meetings were held at Masonic temple, uh, up the street from Jackson state college. Um, we also organized they these same mentors, uh, especially cl and I, Mr. Damer helped, uh, organ helped us to organize an CBP youth chapter in the very late fifties.

Speaker 6 (00:40:57):

Um, and cl was a very, how many of, you know, heard of cl and our, all the older people, but the younger people don't know him. He came back home after having been in the military, having been a student at the university of Chicago, came father daddy came back to Burg to help his mama run. The farm, wanted to finish, uh, go back to college. So he applied to south Mississippi Southern college. Now the university of Southern Mississippi, um, twice, I believe it was two times maybe three. Uh, but at any rate, it was in the late fifties and they, uh, planted some, some, they arrested him for having \$3 and 50 cents worth of stolen chicken feed in his car, sent him to the forest county jail, then sentenced him to Parchman state penitentiary, got cancer and was literally dying. Uh, by the time governor Ross Barnett gave him a pardon.

Speaker 6 (00:41:56):

Um, for something he never, I mean, it was awful. I mean, I, I have never cried yet. I still feel the tears that one day will come over how terrible they treated him. But he got out after the pardon, went to Chicago, uh, university of Chicago billings hospital and died within, I believe it was a month or six weeks from cancer. Um, um, he was a very quiet person who moved easily without you're noticing his presence. Um, a since, um, except there was a profunda to there that, that, um, I, and I, as I, I must confess also that I had a crush on him for some reason, even though he was like an older man, he was early thirties. No, but he was, he was an older man. I was maybe 4 14, 15, and up to 16. Um, but the, the, um, there was also a network of, of students in the high schools around.

Speaker 6 (00:43:05):

I knew Leslie Macklemore who stood up to criticize <laugh> the organizing of, of, um, this conference, uh, from high school because he lived in Northern Mississippi and I lived in Southern Mississippi, but what facilitated a lot of the people was joining younger people. My age joining the, the, uh, movement of getting active in the movement was that we were also active in certain high school organizations. Like, I believe you were state president when I was a state president tri how you were state president of high. So we, we traveled around, you know, our, some, a lot of us, I had been out of Mississippi, but once, maybe twice <laugh>, you should go to new Orleans, but then, but most of us travel within that CLO closed circuit. I often wondered how did our high school teachers and especially music teachers teach, where did they learn opera when they taught, uh, say Dory, who had a great voice taught her, uh, to sing opera, or where did, where did they get their books from?

Speaker 6 (00:44:10):

Because our librarian, uh, had \$150 a year to, to, to replenish the, um, to buy, buy books. Uh, and we got the, the hand me down used textbooks from the white schools after they used them five years, we got them. And I bristle even today when I walked past that public library, that was for whites only because as a child, I wanted more books to read than there were available and they didn't give them to us. Um, anyway, we went, uh, went to college, uh, to Jackson state in the fall of 61 and six, the fall of 60. And this again, I began to see some of those same, uh, freshmen in my class and some older, uh, uh, upperclassmen, um, that I'd seen at, at the Masonic temple at the state statewide NA ECP meetings. Um, uh, one of the students, an older student was James Meredith. Um, we used to sit before he he's very strange now, but back then, I mean, he very, very strange.

Speaker 6 (00:45:26):

And because this is all on tape, I won't say how strange he is, but he wasn't strange. Then he, and we knew absolutely nothing about the fact that he had applied to go to Ole miss nothing. And I was as close to him as the other small group around him. He was an upperclassman, been in the military, was married. Um, and, and, but, you know, he, he, you could, we could recognize who each other was in a way, if I, I don't know if I'm getting through to you, um, as a freshman, every Wednesday afternoon was free time. So we, you could sign out always to go downtown and that meant to shopping do, and I would go up to the, see Meger who's office was on the second floor

of the Masonic temple and our, because we, as I said, we had met him when we were in high school.

Speaker 6 (00:46:26):

And, um, one time we, we went in to, to talk to him and he would always tell us what was going on, NAACP chapters around the state. And they, um, one time he told us that there was going to be a sit in and we said, really, can we join? We didn't know what they were gonna sit in where or when or what. And he said, um, um, well, yeah, you can. And we said, oh, that's great. Tell us when. And he said, I'll let you know later. And each time by his office, he, he, he would say some, it was vague. And you knew not to ask too many questions, um, because inf having information could be dangerous to you. I mean, if you were ever pressured enough to give it up. So, um, finally he, he told us that he said, you, you really can't.

Speaker 6 (00:47:21):

He said, I would never be able to explain to your parents why you were arrested. That would be important to me because one time he had seen my mother in the grocery store and Palm was crossing and she'd given him some money and said, will you give us to Joyce? Uh, he saw, just ran into her accidentally. He came on campus and found me and gave her this money. Motherson <laugh>. Um, but he finally, he told us that, um, you, the sit in is going to be on such a date. And it was within, I would say a short period of time. My memory is not very good, maybe a week or two weeks or so. And he said, what you can do is, is, is try to organize the students on Jackson state campus. I, and that was, uh, talk about being ingenious and having, so we began to do things like do was president dorm council.

Speaker 6 (00:48:14):

So we had meeting one night and the dormitory, regular scheduled meeting, she told it was decided I, everything in Mississippi at the time, you know, was open with a prayer. So I was to give, she said, you give the prayer. And I talked about, oh, dear Lord, there are perilous times ahead, please. Uh, uh, protect us as we go into this danger and song. Next morning, we were called before the Dean of students, Dean Rogers, he asked, what did we mean by the, what did I mean about the prayer and perilous times ahead? And do you know most of, you know, do she's? Uh, well, she is a hell racer and the guys and SNCC were scared of her. And that's why I say that the thesis about men dominating women and SNCC, well, they never dominated do she dominated <laugh>, but anyway, that's an aside. But, um, I, we, I said, what do you mean asking me about my, what I said to my God, you have no right to, to question me about my relationship with Jesus and, uh, D jumped in and said, as a man of the cloth, how could you and we, you know, because he was also an ordained minister, so we went off on him and <laugh> and walked out of the, and, and he said, well, you're right, you're right. You're right. And we walked out that laughing, you know,

Speaker 7 (00:49:39):

<laugh>

Speaker 6 (00:49:41):

Um, but, but what we, we began to talk, I mean, about the, the PO, well, what we actually did was just told you, you spread rumors so that they could never get back to you, but something is gonna happen and we gotta be ready of students to support it. When, when it goes down, um, the Tual of what happened was that eight Tulu, nine Tulu students sat in at a public library, the Jackson public library, um, sponsored by the NAACP youth chapter on the campus and supported by Medgar. He organized it actually. And what happened is that because they didn't go to Woolworth's or the crest store, because they wanted to attack a facility that was, were tax payers, black people, paid taxes, too, uh, uh, tax supported by blacks. What we did was, um, a number of us at that point, um, um, got together and, and said, start spreading the rumor again,

that couldn't be traced back to one person that there was gonna be a prayer, uh, VI, uh, meeting, um, uh, at the lab, in front of the library at seven o'clock that night.

Speaker 6 (00:50:58):

So what happened is that, um, the guys gathered first because they were, they had free reign. They didn't have curfews like the girls and so on. So we signed all the women were to sign out to go to the library. So by the time we got out there at seven o'clock here's, the, the, uh, Emmett burns, uh, was also a, a minister. And the student was, uh, in the middle of his prayer. When all out of the blue, we heard this noise, stop it, stop it, shut up. And everybody was looking, where's this coming from? And it was Jacob, Reddicks the president of, of the college. He ran through. He was absolutely out of control. He was in a frenzy and like, what is this? What's going on? Stop it. And he, it was arms were flailing. And my, one of my two roommates, Margaret, and, uh, Eunice, he took UN by the shoulder and pushed her like that on the ground.

Speaker 6 (00:51:57):

And then we turned on him and, and the rest, um, they brought, they brought, um, a lot of police on the campus that night. Um, and, and, um, the next day we tried to March down to the courthouse when the two blue students were being arraigned and they shot, all I remember saying is, oh Lord, they're killing us. They restored, it was tear gas, being canisters, going, being shot. Right. And they sounded like, like guns. Um, and I hid and we ran into, uh, different people's homes. And I'll never forget. There was this older, this black lady, and we were just knocking on her front door. And I reached, she didn't. I heard the radio, I reached a hand through the, a hole in the screen and unlatched it and ran in her house and told her what happened. And, and she said, come on in, nobody's coming in my house.

Speaker 6 (00:52:51):

Um, the funeral home, some of the kids were hidden in, in the embalming room. I mean, it was, it was Bedlam, but I'll never forget. This lady kept ironing and it was on the radio. And she kept saying so low down, dirty shame. These white folks are treating these children like dogs. And she ne I mean, she was quiet, soft spoken, and she was talking to herself, you know, uh, eventually we got back to campus. They closed school early next day for our centers home for spring break. And, um, we came back, it was quieted down. They expelled the president, student government. Now we kept going to maker's office one day. He said, I want you girls to meet Tom Gaither. Tom has come to help us get our freedom. And we said, oh, that's good. How are you? <laugh> you didn't ask any questions?

Speaker 6 (00:53:45):

I didn't ask him maybe what is he gonna do? He was core organizer who was the come, had come to organize Mississippi to get ready for the freedom rides. Um, that's what Mississippi was like before miss Baker's philosophy entered. There were a lot of people who carried on their work underground, less, they be killed and many were killed, even without it. Um, Ms. Baker came into a state that was no longer, totally closed, but a wedge had been put in it, it was being pride open, um, because there were the Vernon dams Amey Moores to Stepto, uh, cl ARD. I could go on and on of the local men and women, Ms. Hammerer, my dear cousin, Victoria Gray. Um, these are people who had taken stands. So by the times, the SNCC people came in direct action. Couldn't be, uh, carried out in Mississippi. I mean, but we'd also met matured to a point where we realized that eating in lunch counters, eating outta lunch counter was not as important as having the right to vote.

Speaker 6 (00:55:04):

And to, we thought, naively that if you get some political power, then things you can change things. The economic, we hadn't really progressed yet to a point where we understood that the economic power power was very, very important. Um, Ms. Baker taught us several things. First of all, I saw her as the kind of mother figure. She reminded me quite frankly, my mama, I never,

ever thought of calling her Ella. Even today. She was still alive. I mean, she'd be Ms. Baker. Ms. Baker was kind of secretive. No one had said that, but I remember asking her over and over. And when I lived in New York in the seventies, when I used to go over to visit her Ms. Baker, tell me about your husband. I looked at her, it was not until I read Joanne's booklet. I got to know who Ms Baker's husband was, or, and she didn't really talk very much about, about herself or what she believed personally in.

Speaker 6 (00:56:02):

I mean, it would, would've been hard. She wasn't a talker about the philosophy of things as to me as much as she was a do I re I understood who she was from her actions. Um, I think she felt that we should, it was important for all of us to have a very, to be firmly grounded, have a strong sense of our identity, because it was the source of our strength. Um, know, knowing who we, I think she, she believed that we needed to know who we were because we were going through some turbulent times and whatever strength you could derive from your roots. And that's why I believe in part the kind of circle and embracing of each other and Snicker's brothers and sisters, um, came, came out of that. Uh, she believed firmly in a democratic ethos. Uh, the concept we used to talk, always say, let the people decide was very, very much Ella baker.

Speaker 6 (00:57:04):

She was an, she also was anti hierarchical and don't get her talking about black Baptist preachers. Now that's the one thing she would go off on <laugh>. Um, she also, um, taught me that courage is, and my mother taught me the same thing is that courage is not the absence of fear. It is not the absence of fear, but that you keep on, even in the face of understanding, recognize and accept that fear is a natural reaction to dangerous situations. But despite it that's, it goes back again to the, the, the strength of your beliefs have to be such that you, you risk something. Uh, a lot of us probably didn't think that we, and I've heard this more from SNIC guys, then from women, then they, we lived to see 30 years old, or you, I didn't even think about the next month not to consider, you know, in a long term lifespan.

Speaker 6 (00:58:06):

Um, uh, she taught me as she did the others of us, that we had to work with what we had, that, that we had to be resourceful, that whatever was available in the environment you use as prudently as possible. Um, and that you don't stop your work because you don't have a lot. I mean, the \$10 a week check that SNCC sent out was actually \$9 and 64 cents after taxes. People like Sam block slept for the first several weeks in his car in Greenwood, before he found someone who would take him in. But that was what, um, was meant by being resourceful. He, she very, very much taught us that we had to start with where the people are that you don't go in and tell people that you're to do this you're to do that, but to get a sense of the lay of the land and where the people are, and then try to begin to build the consensus, help, to work with them, to build a consensus.

Speaker 6 (00:59:14):

And she felt that leadership emerged out of, out of the local people, that they already had it there, but you had to be able to, as a facilitator to help, help to bring it about, um, she also, um, taught us that we had to be resilient. And I learned this at the feet of my parents. That just because you fall down doesn't mean you don't keep getting up. So that, that, I think one of the reasons non Val, the nonviolent philosophy was able to prevail for as long as it did was because we, we, we were taught to be tough. And to understand that that times would get rough, that you get beaten up. I was never beaten, never in a situation, but I spent a week in jail and, and it wasn't easy, but, but we also knew that that, that this is just part of, part of, part of what, what being, uh, involved in this kind of very dangerous social change work meant. She taught us that we had to think on our own, I can't think of anything more important than her empowering us to be free thinkers and to be critical thinkers and to, to, to, and that's why some of those, you remember that, that SNCC meeting in, I believe it was spring of 63 or our sixth sport.