



the
SNCC Legacy Project

Charles Sherrod: What His Life Teaches



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"You get ideas in jail. You talk with other young people you have never seen. Right away we recognize each other. People like yourself, getting out of the past. We're up all night sharing creativity, planning actions. You learn the truth in prison, you learn wholeness. You find out the difference between being dead and alive."

Charles Sherrod upon his release from jail
Rock Hill, South Carolina, 1961

More than biography describes Charles Sherrod despite the extensiveness of his range of work. The values of our movement were wedded to his life: love and nonviolence, organized continuing work for change, openness to new ideas, and a

belief that power at its most meaningful should lie with the people.

An important window into his character can be found in the fact that after Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. joined him for a campaign in Albany Georgia but then left claiming none of his goals had been achieved and that the movement in that city had been a failure, Sherrod stayed and continued the struggle. As he put it, "Now I can't help how Dr. King might have felt, or . . . any of the rest of them in SCLC, NAACP, CORE, any of the groups, but as far as we were concerned, things moved on. We didn't skip one beat." The 85-year-old Surry, Virginia native remained in Albany until his last days.

He will be missed—is already missed—but should not be mourned with tears, but celebrated around one of the Movement's critical ideals: the struggle continues. Many of us in SNCC spend considerable time in interaction with today's young activists. In them we can find the spirit of Sherrod and we think he can see himself in them.



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