CORE Chapter 33

DAVID DENNIS

Interview
David Dennis
Negro, Male
Director of Southern Regional CORE

0442-1 (cont. on 0443)
All sides
New Orleans, La.

Q: First of all, how old are you?

A: Twenty-four.

Q: Where are you from?

A: Shreveport, Louisiana.

Q: Did you go to school there?

A: Grammar school, elementary school, yeah. And then I went to high school in Lafayette, Louisiana, a Catholic boarding school there, and I went to college in Baton Rouge and here in New Orleans.

Q: What did you major in?

A: Political science.

Q: When did you first get involved in the civil rights movement?

A: Well, that all depends on how you want to... The structural type, just that part which people associate with just in life, you might say I was involved just in that sense at birth. The structural form of the civil rights movement I got involved in in 1960.

Q: Why then? Was there some specific incident?

A: Yeah. Guess you might call...We had, there were the sit-ins in North Carolina. At that time I was at Southern University, and people, students at Southern, decided that they wanted to participate in the sit-ins. So a small group of students which involved the president of the student body went down and sat in. They were arrested, and that stirred the entire student body, and we had the...I participated then in the first mass march that the civil rights movement in its new stages had experienced, that was about four thousand students marched on the capitol in Baton Rouge. So that's what, how I really got involved, to some extent. I didn't have any real strong feelings at that time, you know, for, as far as being involved in that structural movement, you see. Then I, we all, a number of us dropped out of school, who was really involved in that whole movement, and I came to, here to New Orleans, went to Dillard University. And then some people invited me out to a CORE meeting, and I came out, I was, wasn't impressed at all with what was going on, and I didn't, you know, become involved in anything that they were doing. They

were doing an awful lot of picketing, a lot of direct action. But I continued going to those meetings, because there was a young lady there whom I had a real strong attraction for, and she and I got to know each other better, and we would always meet, the CORE meetings became a meeting grounds for us, you see. And one day she asked me to go on a demonstration because she always went, and (inaudible) and so on this day I decided to go, because no one was being arrested then, they just let them go and sit in at this five-and-dime store, Woolworth's. And so I decided to go with her, because they weren't arresting people. Well, on this day they decided to arrest people, and so I was arrested. And this just made me angry, to some extent. And it was more at that time, about becoming involved with CORE, it was more of a, because of anger, at the police department for arresting me, the way they talked to me. I just couldn't let them stop me, you know, because I felt that if I stopped then, that they would have gotten the best of me. So I decided to continue, you know, to go... The more I got involved, you know, the more I came around to having some type feelings for the organization. And that's how I got involved in the structural type of the movement.

Q: When was this, that you got arrested?

A: That was in, I guess, November of 1960, I guess.

Q: How long were you in jail?

A: Oh, it wasn't long at all. Very brief. Somebody came and bonded us out and stuff like that.

Q: Well, you said you got more involved with the structure after this. What kind of things were you doing?

A: Well, I, I participated in an awful lot of direct action, you know, and this picketing and demonstrating, going to jail and all this type stuff like that. And that's what, you know, that was the usual type of thing that people did. And if you are involved in the student movement to some extent you either sat in or you picketed or you did something like that. Otherwise you couldn't really say you were involved at that time, you see, because the concept of the movement was in that direction, as to what actions that people should take, see. That determined whether or not you were in the in crowd, or not.

Q: Well, so did you just continue then with CORE?

A: Right.

Q: How did you get to be...Is it program director?

A: Yeah. Well, that's a good question. I just got that title which has no real meaning whatsoever, you know, last November, Novmeber of last year, '64. And that was, well, I drew up a program for CORE, I was working in Mississippi then for the Mississippi project, and I drew up a program for the South for CORE which, which entailed them establishing a Southern office and doing an awful lot of other things. And so at the beginning I was the only one that was really pushing for that, you know, had any feelings for it. Then finally other people began to have feelings for that and it was passed and the National Action Council, which is the governing body of CORE, and so as a result of that people decided that, since I pushed it, that I probably should serve them, which I was willing to do, because, oh, several reasons. One is that the need of the change, and the feeling that it would give me a certain amount of experience, you know, in that, and then also strong feelings that I had about certain things that needed to be done. That's how I got into this particular box.

Q: (inaudible).

A: Yeah, well, no, the Southern Region of CORE itself was established back in February of last year, but the expansion of the office, see, when it was first established it had one person, that was Richard Haylor (?), who was the director, and you had, he had one office which was about the size of this right here, and the entire expansion of it to this amount of people came in November of last year.

Q: Why did CORE decide to withdraw from Mississippi?

A: I think you should tell me that, because I, we haven't withdrawn from Mississippi.

Q: You haven't.

A: We still have people there. We're working on a smaller scale than we did last year, just as all supervised groups involved, you know, SNCC and CORE both, you know, just work on a smaller scale, for a stronger belief that people're going have to determine their own destiny and work, and the more people, civil rights workers, you have in an area, the tendancy is that there, that they do most of the work, because there is very little for people to do, local people to do. And it's a human reaction that staff people have, you know. For instance, if you're director of a project, to get things done usually you turn to people whom you can most rely upon who're easier to get. Usually those are civil rights workers. If they're there you turn to them because it's much easier to get them to do things than it is to go and work and explain to local people about it and to try to train them to do certain things. And so, as a result of that,

we found last summer that, that when the volunteers left, a lot of things collapsed, because volunteers were doing all the work and the local people them selves had nothing to do, and we didn't, there wasn't any real basic attempt to get them really involved beyond just participants, that is, as a audience, you know, staff were like what you might consider actors on stage in a play, and they were doing everything and the community was like an audience, just watching and looking, and that's as far as they could participate, you see. And as a result of that, we found, felt that maybe we should have less actors, professional actors, which means to carry on a real good play in which you need a lot of people you have to go out and get them. So that's sort of a new technique of working, which right now CORE has really begun to implement on a wide scale, you know, inevery place that it op-, works, it has very few people there in those areas.

Q: Well, is CORE in Mississippi working with MFDP?

A: Right. They have, we have people in Washington and we have them working with the FDP in, in Mississippi. Mrs. Devine happens to be a CORE staff person. We haven't been able to contribute any money to it recently, because we don't have money to contribute.

Q: Are the CORE people in Mississippi still concentrated in the Fourth District? Or spread out...?

A: Right. No, they're still concentrated mostly in the Fourth District, see, as we were before that, because we felt that we could not undertake, you know, much more of an area, because of lack of people.

Q: How was the Fourth District originally chosen?

A: Well, that's a good question. It just so happens that some of the CORE people were working in Madison County before we decided to break up the whole area into districts and work it that way. And some SNCC people were in Greenwood, and they had a few SNCC people down in the McComb area, you know, like that, and as we were working with a very small staff, so we decided to expand it and try to get civil rights organizations to finance more of the projects. That would mean give money, not only pay their staff and support local projects, but give money to the COFO office. We decided to break it up according to that, you see, then we just gave certain civil rights groups an area and asked them to finance it, which meant that they would have to support all those projects, plus give a percentage of money to COFO to keep the main office running. So then we just said it meant nothing else, those lines didn't mean anything, but just to the national office, you know, to civil rights groups. We say,

CORE take this, SCLC take that, SNCC take that, you know. Then money would come in that way. That's something that they can see, you know.

Q: But you don't have any summer volunteers in Mississippi?

A: Yes, they do have some summer volunteers. Summer volunteers are working mostly with the Freedom Democratic Party, but CORE also has a few summer volunteers there, and SNCC, too.

Q: I wondered, because you're going much more strongly, or I got that feeling, in Louisiana. You know, having summer projects.

A: Yeah. Well, we, CORE concentrated more in Louisiana this year than in any other area, but they didn't use that many volunteers. Something like about fifty or sixty in Louisiana, because of the whole concern about oversaturating, to saturate an area, you see, with people. Then the big question came up as to what does a summer volunteer do anyway, see, when he comes down. The staff began to have strong feeling about what they want to do, and one of the things that they want to do is community organization, that is, going and talking to people about, about what their needs are and trying to service those needs, instead of going in with a fixed program. So that placed a limitation on the number of people from outside who could be effective in that type of a project, see. I mean, how can a person talk about, other people, about organizing an area when they have no familiarity even with that area or the type people whom they come in cintact with, see. The best they possible could do would be coming in as students, to learn more, than they could be as resource people to give something. And as a result of that, then they began to cut down on the number of people who could come into the state to work. And got foundation money which they hired a number of college students from Louisiana to work, instead of poorly (?) drawing from so many people from outside of the state.

Q: Well, how did you decide, from outside of the state, who you were going to send?

A: Well, we had people, staff people, in different areas, like on the West Coast, the East Coast, central United States, staff people around, and when people wrote in to apply, well, we would have them to see those staff people. Most of those staff people were people who were from the South, therefore, they were able to give a very good evaluation, to some extent, you know, allowing for the human errors that's going to be there anyway, you know, but they... And we've relied upon the recommendations of those staff people to choose volunteers.

Q: Well, is there any specific criterion or anything that they judge them on?

A: Yeah. Most of the judging's on attitudes of people, you know, and their feelings of basic philosophy. You got that by really talking to people, you know, and dealing with them to some extent. That we relied on more than anything else, you know, not so much as to who sent a recommendation, because people who usually send people's names for, send in recommendations, those people who you feel are going to give you a good recommendation anyway, so you can't really rely upon it. That's not very good. The other thing is that we sort of relied upon the person's background, you know, that is, civil rights experience in the past. So you put those two together and, what do you say, you get a good percentage, come out with a good percentage of good people. It's not, we have no airtight system.

Q: Well, at one of the...I know it developed at a meeting about the Louisiana summer project back at Stanford, it was said that Negro males would be accepted first, and then so on down to white females.

A: Yeah, well, we did have a priority on, on Negroes working, because we felt that for that type community organization maybe they would be just a little bit better doing that, you know, be able to do that. Then we had low on the list the white females, because that, they cause problems usually, you know. That's one thing that infuriates a white male in the South especially, but just about anywhere, any place, you know, just like Negro males, it's that whole interracial, the sex problem, you see, the sex question there, you know. You know, whenever, see, white people can usually, in the South especially, can usually stomach to see a white male and a Negro male walking down the street, or a white male and a Negro female, you know, it's accepted type things, to some extent. But it infuriates people, it causes tremendous reactions, happens to be when there's a white female and a Negro male involved, walking down the street. And that turns all type of things, you see, so to somewhat get out of that we decided that maybe the best thing to do would be to use that priority system also.

Q: Well, did this work out so that you accepted a higher percentage of Negroes than whites (inaudible)?

A: No, it did not, because we didn't have that many Negroes to apply as volunteers, because they just didn't happen wanting to do it, see, to come down and volunteer. Then that raises questions about a lot of things, why you have fewer Negroes to participate than white, you know, as college students from the North, and it goes on to dealing with the psychological problems of people. Those who do have money are caught up, usually, in society to the extent that they don't feel any place in that whole thing, you know. That's what they want to escape from. To go back down South, to work, everything like that, you know, you just want to escape from that. You don't want to identify with that, especially

if you're capable of getting out of it. The other thing happens to be, is the financial problem, and you just don't get that many Negroes to apply.

Q: Did you accept most of those who applied?

A: Right.

Q: About what percentage of all the applicants did you accept?

A: Oh, I would say, let's see...I guess we accepted about twenty percent. There were only about two hundred-fifty or three hundred who applied.

Q: What percentage of Negroes did you accept?

A: I guess we accepted something like seventy or eighty percent of the Negroes who applied, that's just off the top, maybe more than that.

Q: Well, CORE, I don't know, just from what I've seen of both SCOPE and the SNCC people that were working with MFDP, CORE seems to attract more Northern Negroes than those two organizations. Do you think there's any particular reason for that?

A: Well, yeah. I think the reason why is because CORE has somewhat of a Northern movement, they're making attempts to work in the North, which the whole chapter movement and things, that they really participate in direct action and are, you know, involved in Northern problems, you see. But, you have SNCC groups are nothing but fund-raising groups in the North. And SCLC only has a few fund-raising SCLC groups, but they don't partake into, in real community activity or actions, you see. And so therefore, with CORE being that type of a group, it attracts, you know, some Negroes in the ghetto areas. In fact, we could, see, if there was any way of paying people, you know, we could have really had a nice number of Negroes who would, you know, could have come, but they just could not come because they didn't have the money, see. Because the chapters have a nice number of people. You see, a lot of people came down, the chapters supported people last year for the summer project in Mississippi, where you had a large number of Negroes from CORE chapters who participated in that Mississippi summer project.

Q: Well, if most of these were the people who'd been working the North, what's the advantage of bringing them down to the South?

A: That's the question that we're wrassling with now. I mean, that's just the question that staff in Louisiana was,

you know, really wrassling with, when you talk about bringing in Northern people, period, you see. And one of the things happens to be is what I was talking about earlier, that it's a learning process, that they could get a chance to see what's going on in other areas, you know, and that can be a type of exchange. Beyond that it's very debatable as to what the, the real effect that they will have on communities or changes in the South. See,it's just good for people from the North, maybe,to get to know what happens in the South, and people in the South get to know what happens, really happens, in the North. Community problems are, there's really no difference between the Negro communities in the South and the Negro ghettos in the North, see. Those problems are the same, you know, and where...If they're not, where does the change come in, see, because at some point there has to be some type of base on which the movement can operate as a whole, not so separate, you know. One of the problems now happens to be, is that there's no real movement. We have isolated projects. They're very isolated. Then once they become very big or aggressive, you know, to the point at which they become a threat, they're very easily crushed because of their isolation. The FDP has been the only real thing that's been able to survive, and that's because they've been able to make real connections outside of Mississippi, you see, by which, I mean, it has gotten this ability to (inaudible) outside of Mississippi. And so when, you know, when they weaken, they have something to hold onto.

Q: Well, is this because they're a political party?

A: Well, it could be. I think that one of the things, one of the things that makes it real is that it's involved with an issue that people can associate with in other communities outside. So this in itself, because, I mean, you might say it was political...That's a broad term, you see, because we look upon just about everything we do now as a political move, because of the way that the administration successfully co-opting the movement and what the efforts have been, what the civil rights movement's been trying to do they're co-opting that into a federal program. Then that means that everything that you do, regardless of what it is now, becomes a political question at some point.

Q: When you're doing community organization, I guess you can do community organization, it's allowing the people to decide (inaudible). Well, you know, in some parishes voter registration is not a big thing because there's quite a bit more to do, is that right?

A: That's true, in some places it's not. In many places it is, now that the voting bill has passed and it's become one of the basic issues, you know, that people are beginning to

mobilize around. Well, I think for a lot of the staff people that raises a question, you know. There's an awful lot more that has to come along with this now, because there're attempts to get people registered, if people want to get registered, because, you know, what are we doing, do we build them a, you know, a paradise, you know, to be constituted by, you know, the established leadership in those particular areas. And what I mean by that is that people are registering to vote, you know, they have that right, they're getting that right, but that doesn't give them any power, you see. And they won't get that power unless they organize, you know, that whole, all those little fragments and pieces come together and become some thing that can be powerful, see. And staff is beginning to see this, and the people who, what you can do is get all those little things out there and someone else'll sweep up the pieces and build a powerful machine that doesn't do anything for the people, see. And so to go along with that happens to be a feeling of a real massive type of political education project by which you begin to talk to people about what that whole thing means, to register to vote, what their local government is and how it really affects them. And we talk about the necessary changes in that, and people talk about things and stimulate thoughts and people to begin to respond to that. And from that you begin to build some thing that's really, can be an asset to those people.

Q: What kind of advice do you give people on how to, on doing community organization?

A: The best thing you can give a person, the only thing I know to talk about is, to listen.

Q: Well, that would go along with the idea of their being there as students to learn about the movement.

A: Yeah. See, one thing we just tend not to do, I mean, the civil rights movement as a whole, which is very frustrating to a lot of people now, has never spoken to real community people. Instead, they have attempted to speak for them, see. As a result of that, you have an awful lot of frustration. You have Los Angeles, you have a Harlem, you see, and those people in Los Angeles and Harlem, when they erupt, you have a Martin Luther King or a James Farmer or Jim Foreman or Roy Wilkins to say what a terrible thing, and why don't you people stop, and those people don't listen to them. And that's because they don't recognize them as leaders, you see, and they don't recognize them as leaders because you didn't talk to me when I really had problems. And now when I'm trying to do something about them in my own way, then you criticize it, without giving me any alternatives, you know. And so

when you talk about community organization, the way civil rights organizations have operated in the South, I think some are on the same basis as that. I mean, who's talking about, you're talking about registering to vote, who's talking about the people who do have felonies in the ghettos, you see, and who're going to have felonies, they have those felonies because they were hungry, they had no jobs, they had no food, so they stole, they robbed. And now what do you do about those people, too, you see. And the administration in Washington are talking to voting bills and stuff like that, without really talking about, at the same time, the problems in the Northern ghettos, you know, and in some of the Southern ghettos. Because the problem goes beyond just the right to vote, you know, the right to sit at a lunch counter. And the civil rights movement and people, including myself, are just finding that out, see, because as you get those rights you find out that very little change is coming about in those particular areas, you see. The middle-class people are profiting from the civil rights bill, 'cause they can go to eat in those places, restaurants and things like that, they can afford to do that. That still doesn't speak to that little man, you know, who can't do that, and that's the majority of the Negro people. So you talk about integration of the schools. Well, the Negroes in those ghettos don't, they're embarrassed about that. They don't want to send their kids to a white school, because then they feel, they feel, the psychological thinga tell them, what society's taught, that to do that means that you have to dress your kid up, you see, and therefore you have to also show that your kid is just as good as those kids. And also, farther than that, is that the civil rights movement even talked to those people about, you know, when they're recruiting kids to integrate the schools. They's nice and clean, you know, and has good grades in school. So what are you saying about school integration when you talk to those people, you see, and we talk about the voting bills, it's the same thing. So, you know, people, including the civil rights movement are going to have to begin to speak at some time to those people and their problems. See, my feeling is that they don't know how, because the leaders in the civil rights groups and many of the civil rights workers know very little, if anything, about those communities that they claim to be fighting so hard for. You see, I think that, I mean, what happens when a person talks about Harlem or some other areas in the North as being disorganized. See, I don't feel that they're that disorganized. I feel that they are organized to a large extent, but we just can't relate to that type of organization. You have some of the best prostitution rings... See, you have teen-age gangs in all those ghetto areas, who're organized, who within five minutes can call out hundreds of fellows for rumble on a block, and we call them disorganized. I mean, the problem is, we can't relate to those, you know, we don't know how to relate to that type of organization and

we can't speak to those people. See, the Watts area, you know, those people, when you talk about, well, let's deal with another situation about which, you know, the whole culture of Negroes in the South, whereby, many places, you have some beautiful things that happen in the South in the Negro community, and the cities, you know, the administration wants to tear down what they call the slums and move Negroes out, urban renewal and all that stuff like that. And they kill that culture, never recognizing...Right here in New Orleans they have a place here which they want to tear down, a whole Negro neighborhood, in order to build a cultural center. And in that Negro neighborhood you have jazz bands who march and dance in the streets and stuff like that, that's a real culture those people have that the white community doesn't know anything about, and the Negro leadership in New Orleans, so-called leadership, I'll say, knows nothing about it. When those people get out in the streets and dance and things like that, you hear Negro leaders saying, "You know, we've got to do something about changing that, that's really disgraceful." You see. That's part of those people's culture and they identify with that, you see. And the whole thing about the concept of integration in the country is that to integrate means that we must integrate into white society. And to me that's not really integration, you know, that just means, you know, co-opting me into your society, you know, not integrating, 'cause, you know...And that means a lot, that right now this country isn't ready or prepared for integration, you see, because it, they don't really know what it really means. See, it really means to me that you have to accept me for what I am, and I have to accept youfor what you are. And neither of us should try to change each other.

Q: Well, in terms of trying to talk to people in the community, how successful do you think the people that you've brought in from (inaudible) have been?

A: Well, that's very difficult to, to analyze at this particular time, see, because first of all,I haventbeen that close to the projects this summer, all of them, just very few of them that I've been close to, most of the places that are beginning to move, are moving, happen to be places that were moving before the people came in there. I mean, there're very few new places that have begun to really move in a significant manner. And so it's very difficult to say, really, what that effect is, has been for this summer. See, last summer they were not that very effective except through the FDP, you know, to get FDP moving they were somewhat effective as volunteers. But beyond that, of getting with the freedom schools and community centers and things like that, they weren't that effective, I don't think, you see. You had some areas where people decided to build a freedom school, a community center, you know, local people built it, you know.

And those was places the local people got involved and worked, and those places, they're, you know, successful, to some extent. But the majority of places that you went to, you know, the volunteers did every thing. It wasn't successful. I mean, they introduced something to the community, but the community didn't respond to it, because they didn't feel it was theirs. You see, one thing that people need to feel is that to belong to something, you know, and more than that, just to belong to, that that, that also belongs to them. It's a give and take thing, see. And it's very difficult for me to feel that something belongs to me when I had no part in establishing it, I had no part in its functioning, see. See, if I borrow someone's car, I notice how I drive that car, you know, I don't take the same car as I do with my own car. I'll ride in it and I'll drive in it, because it's there, but I don't think about, you know, trying to slow down at every track, you know, bump in the road and things like that (inaudible). My car, I'll slow down till a creeping stop, almost, at that bump, 'cause it's mine and I'm feeling for it.

Q: What other things do you do as a program director?

A: What I'm doing now? Mostly talk to people, that's right. I try to, I don't try to do as a lot of people feel I should do, and that is, sit down and come up with a few brainstorms and write up programs and give them out to people, because I look at people who are in civil rights movement, the structural form of the civil rights movement, it's that, they represent a community themselves, a community of people. You might say a community trying to deal with problems of another community. And so I have to, I relate to those people within the organization that way, the same as I would if I was in a community talking to people. That is, for them to have a feeling for a program, a directional movement, they must have some part in developing it, you see. I might write a paper for discussion and staff sit down and we discuss it, and out of that we come up with, you know, a program, see. And sometimes I encourage other people to do the same thing and they write up stuff, you know, just ideas and suggestions, and people draw out of that various alternatives, you know, and then from those alternatives they make a decision as to which direction they want to go in, what they want to come out of that.

Q: I forgot what I was going to ask...Oh, the twenty percent of applicants accepted over all, was this about the same as last year?

A: No, we accepted a higher percentage last year in Mississippi?

Q: Did you cut it down because you wanted a smaller project?

A: Right.

Q: Do you think that the smaller projects do more good than the larger ones? That you can accomplish more in the long run?

A: Yeah. At the stage that the civil rights movement's in now. You see, one thing is very central, and that is, that communities are going to have to move on their own, for a number of reasons. First of all, the civil rights organizations aren't going to be able to finance projects as they once did. They're not going to get that tight money, you see, because the liberal forces from which we once received money now feel that things are about over with. And then also, on top of that, you're confronted with an international crisis, see. So therefore, you're not going to get the same type of funds, so they're forced to cut back. See, the thing that is needed now is the fact of community people catching hold and going on them selves, and community people of various communities hooking up with each other. And you can't find many people who know how to talk to other people, you see. So, you know, I think it's much better for a community to have a small number of people who know what they're doing, than to have an awful lot of people who don't know what they are doing.

Q: Then you think that some time in the future there'll be a time for larger numbers of volunteers?

A: Could be, could be.

Q: What do you think would cause that? What would be necessary for that?

A: You see, I think that...See, I think that a large number of people are necessary maybe in order to establish a movement in various areas, you see. But those large numbers of people I think would be much more effective if they work in their communities. For instance, if you got twenty-five, thirty people want to work, reallywork, in the summer, then why not put them in a place, someplace on the West Coast, and let them work. See, and they should be more familiar with that, you see. And at the same time we should be able to set up some type of means by which there can be a real exchange of activities and ideas between those people who work on the West Coast and those people who work in Louisiana or Mississippi, wherever they work, you know, by which we can meet at times and talk and have an exchange of ideas. But, you see, my question is that, why is it so many people want to run South? When you have so many problems in where they come from, too, see, vice versa. And see, one of the things, maybe it's because the fact is that what happens in those areas is so isolated and those people that work there work in such a vacuum, so they don't know how, you know, they, you know,

they just happen to feel that they're not, maybe, not doing anything and that, well, other people don't want to find out about it, and all those things play a part, you know. Maybe. That's just one rationale. Then the other is just the whole thing of adventure, you know, and the whole idea that, that the movement is in the South, or the problems are in the South, you know, and that's crazy.

Q: Do you think the things in Los Angeles and Chicago this summer will have some effect on this? Keeping more of the students in the North?

A: You had a Harlem last year, and we had a tremendous amount of people down South from New York.

Q: Do you think that some of them (inaudible)?

A: Maybe some of them did. I think most of them, a lot of people came down to the South last summer, to the summer project, I think found out that maybe that their place just happens to be up ther now. Also, they found out that there are some things that maybe can be done. And that goes back to what I was talking about, the whole idea, the need for connections between people, because they made connections with people from the South who began to talk about, why aren't you doing X,Y,Z in the North, you see. And then with that, then they stimulated thought, and I guess a lot of people began to say, yeah, why aren't I, you know. But, see, I think that there's enough people so that you don't have to, people don't have to feel, you know, that, you know, for instance, you've had, you've got a lot of movements that came out of what happened last summer, maybe, you know, that's one of the good parts that came out of that, you know, that FSM, you know, and all those people came out of that whole thing of what happened in Mississippi. So now people have things that maybe they, you know, should be able to, and the question is, why don't connect with, you see, to carry them on. But then if you ever begin to build that bridge between what happens there and what happens down here, you know, the bridge of, that's maybe where that connection comes in.

Q: Do you think that...Did you accept any people at all who hadn't worked with the civil rights movement this summer?

A: I'm not sure about that. I don't think so, but I can't be sure about that.

Q: Well, what was your reason for using prior experience as a criterion?

A: Well, because there we felt that those people might have some idea of what you mean when you say community organization, the need to listen to people and talk to people, you

know, and not so stuck on the fact that when you come down you've just got to build a thing, you've got to have a freedom school, you've got to have a community center. Well, some people came down like that, you know, some people came down saying, well, I want to work in a freedom school, where do I set it up at? And you say,where do people want it, you know, and that's crazy, that you just go in and set it up. That's what they would say.

Q: Well, take a person that came down and said that, did you try to assign them to a place that wanted a freedom school?

A: We sat down and talked to them about what we were trying to do. It just so happened that no place in Louisiana wanted a freedom school at that time. You know, you want to talk to people about your freedom school, talk to them about it. If they want to do it, well, do it. But before you do that even, you've got to let them know that they're going to have to take full responsibility for that.

Q: What about Northern people who come down and plan on, you know, continuing to work in the South? Are they more effective?

A: I couldn't even talk about that. I don't know.

Q: Did you have anything to do with the community conferences?

A: Not in setting them up, only in talking about them to people before they were set up.

Q: Talking to whom about them?

A: Well, some of the staff people, you know, and local people, about the need to build bridges within even that, the state, the communities, you see, and people begin to talk and exchange ideas. And that came from the feeling that I've talked about before, that staff just aren't going to be able to be there, so people have to, should be able to hook up to something more than just those staff people that're there, you see, as far as their connection with civil rights movement, you know, and that the best thing to connect with happens to be themselves. See, and that would mean that Bogalusa connects with West Feliciana, Tallulah, Monroe, Jonesboro, and then they begin to build a base from which they can operate, you know, in their own area.

Q: Well, by connection, you mean also connections to other areas in the North?

A: Right, right.

Q: You think CORE is in a better position to do that than the other organizations?

A: I can't say that. I really couldn't say that.

Q: Do you think that it would be something that's more independent of the organizations?

A: Doesn't necessarily have to be, you know. Doesn't necessarily have to be. But I can't say right now as to whether or not it will be, or not, you see. Depends on how the civil rights organizations respond to that. It wouldn't be difficult to work independent of the civil rights organizations, to get that going, because you have a tremendous upsurge of little independent movements, you know, to a certain extent, that are still isolated, but, you know, who are somewhat seeking some type connections to make. Some of those're emerging out of the frustrations that people have of civil rights organizations, you know, to a large extent. People just branching out and doing what they feel that they want to do, have to do.

Q: Why do they get frustrated with the organizations?

A: Well, like I said, they just feel that the organizations don't speak to them.

Q: Well, would these be people in the local communities, or people who are more or less professional civil rights workers?

A: This is usually people, community people, you know. And some people in the civil rights organizations are beginning to drop out because of their feelings, that whole thing. This isn't going to say that civil rights organizations aren't doing the job, you know. It seems as if I'm kicking the civil rights organizations when I'm part ofa civil rights organization, but I'm not, you know, that way. I'm just saying that at some points we have missed the boat. And, well, I could speak for CORE at this point, and that is, that I know that, that people begin to realize that they don't, you know, that they do have these problems, and the y're trying to speak to those problems now, you know. The other problem happens to be is that, you know, the question is, how do you speak to a community, you know. Really, how do you speak to community people? How do you talk to them? And then, if you talk to them, what do you do? How far do you go with that? And these are very basic queations. I don't know where you find the answers, except in the community, probably. Then the, I think that they find this out to a large extent, but the lack of funds and everything, and it's like time running out, see, for them to begin to make that effort, you know. If we had done that two years ago, might be in very good shape now. But at that time we had, we felt that there were certain things, federal intervention and central solution to the problem. We find out that it is not the solution to the

problem, because those things are not really speaking to those problems, the real basic, you know, problems that people are having, you know, in this country now. So the very difficult work is just beginning in the civil rights movement, see, because now you're not going to have so much of those dramatic things to fall upon, you see. Most of the things that you're going to have which are dramatic are going to happen, as I see, are those things which are going to do more to antagonize the white liberals than it is to appease them, because the fact is that they don't understand, and therefore those acts are just going to be looked upon as acts of agitation, you see. You know, you've got all this, now what are you continuing for, you know. And then you have, you know, what happens in Los Angeles and things like that which people don't ever look at the underlying causes of that, you know. People say, well, you know, they're ungrateful people, you see, and not realize that none of those bills have really spoken to the problems of those people. Just ungrateful people. Savages. And tehn, see, they pick up the paper and look at it, one civil rights leader who spoke about, you know,really those problems, what caused the things in Los Angeles, you know, that's really went in debt for them. It seemed as if they each spoke with a fear, maybe he might step on someone's toes. Instead of really trying to deal with those things.

Q: Well, is this a problem with the leadership being too (inaudible)?

A: That could be, that's part of it, yes. That's part of it. I mean, people just don't know, you know, those areas, they just don't know them. Don't know the people, you know, and see, those are the unrepresented people in the country. The invisible people. And whenever they make themselves visible, people turn their back on them, you know, they don't try to, they still don't look at them. They don't see them. And they don't see them as they really are, you know. See, in the white community, the middle class, they don't want to. You know, they close their eyes to that whole thing. These people can drive through Harlem or Watts area of Los Angeles and never see it. Never see the people there. They never see the dirt, they never see the large number of people on the streets, nothing to do. And then you talk about the city for some type of real enforcement of housing codes and establishment of better housing codes for the area, and they don't do it. I mean, it's like they're not even talking, you know. They don't even see that. So suddenly one day you find the whole Watts area burned down. And so it's a bunch of savages and things like that. But what they...Never looked at it and say, well, you know, that Watts area'll never be the same. They're going to have to put new houses there. They have to

build new things there. They'll have to straighten that out. And no one is saying, well, maybe that's what those people're trying to get us to see. And they're willing to die just for us to see that that's what they really want. Are they really stealing because they want to show people that if you don't make ways by which we can get a decent living, make it, we'll just take it, because we have no alternatives.

Q: Well, why doesn't this sort of thing happen more of the time?

A: Well, let's put it this way. You know. How soon do you think it might happen here in New Orleans, see. See, because I don't see it being too far around the corner for New Orleans. See, it just takes something to spark it, and the fuse hasn't been lit yet. But people are scratching, you know, around, and matches are being lit and we're coming close to that fuse. See, Governor McKeithen, to show you what happens, the Governor of the state came out with a statement after Watts' riot to say there's no potentiality of riots here in Louisiana, you know, that we don't have those type problems. See, right there again he's doing identically what happened in Los Angeles and other places. See, he refuses to recognize that they are basic problems. And instead of trying to do something about it, saying,you know, what we ought to do is take a serious look at our communities to see if we can, you know do something to alter, you know, the possibilities of riots in our neighborhoods, he says there's no problem, nothing to worry about. See. And I think he is just an outright liar or he just doesn't know the community which,you know, well, the communities that surround him, see. Because the Negro areas in Louisiana are very explosive. You know, all it would take, you know, in some areas, just might be a policeman running up and hitting a Negro, and suddenly all hell breaks loose, you see. I just don't believe you've seen a riot yet, till you see one in one of these, you know, Southern areas. I just don't believe that people have seen a bloodbath yet. See, the people who're going to get it are going to be Negroes, they're going to be, they're just going to be slaughtered. But the thing happens to be there that this country has to look at, is that those people know they're going to be slaughtered, they're willing to die. See, they're really willing to die for that. And the civil rights movement says, well, you know, what can we do about that, you know, and they don't know that they can't talk to those people and they haven't offered those people any alternatives beyond violence, you see.

Q: Talking to a couple of people I found that some of them

interpret this as the beginning of a violent revolution.

A: Well, I, I have nothing to say about that. I just, I just think their concept of what is happening is way off, you know. They call it "black revolution." That revolution has been in progress a long time, it's no beginning. Then it's a question of whether or not you really want to call that a revolution, you know... Well, do you think we've reached our limitation?

Q: Yeah, I think we have. The tape's about to run out.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you have anything else you wanted to talk about?