

SCOPE Chapter 11

HOSEA WILLIAMS

Interview
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Negro, Male
SCOPE director of summer project
and right-hand man to M.L. King

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Sides 1 & 2
Atlanta, Ga.

Q: I wondered if you could just go on and explain about your religion and how you had envisioned SCOPE.

A: Well, I had envisioned SCOPE as a program of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference that would have a long life with a very significant impact upon the struggle for human dignity. First, the department, I head the Department of Voter Registration and Political Education in SCOPE, the Summer Community Organization Political Education program is just one phase of my work. I try to think of SCOPE as being a program with depth. There're so many side significances and values and contributions other than the three major objectives of SCOPE, which are mass voter registration, and our techniques were predicated upon the passage of a voting bill which we expected early this spring; political education, which is my pet project, my first love, because if we could get people educated politically, you wouldn't have to have voter registration campaigns, a get-the-vote campaign, because an intelligent electorate would respond to issues; and our third objective is community organization, organizing our people, not just politically, but to structure out evil and to accomplish the good that can be accomplished in a community. But I had one great fear when I first proposed SCOPE. The idea of SCOPE was kind of a birth due to an experience I've had with an all-white green Northern group. But then, too, there had been the problem of COFO, which I was not fully abreast of, and I don't guess, the problem of SCOPE anyone will ever be fully abreast of, because you have to be involved in something to fully understand it. But I knew I had a problem on my hands trying to have a summer program of Northerners, Westerners, Easterners, bringing them to a completely new environment, ten weeks this is hardly enough time to even adjust, you know, and at the same time have a program that would be productive and long-lived. I felt that if we could operate SCOPE this summer in a fashion, in a manner, that it'd be a respected project, it had to be one that these volunteers feel like their lives had been useful, and it had to be one, too, that would give the image to the nation that parents wouldn't mind their daughters returning next summer, fathers wouldn't mind their sons, and housewives and mothers and butchers and painters and doctors that came down just for their vacation. So I knew I had a problem on my hands, because of experiences with COFO, when SNCC came to COFO. Now I really didn't know that I was going to have some of the problems, or some of the problems that had the magnitude that they had, because SCOPE was something new to me and new to SCLC. But luckily, I can say this and I believe I'm correct, we are

probably the finest group of volunteers of non-Southerners that has ever been assembled by the civil rights organizations, the civil rights movement. And this was largely due to the fact that the colleges did the screening themselves, persons from the colleges. Usually the SCOPE chapters had screening committees something like somebody from the dean's office or the dean, maybe the president of the student body, or the chaplain. You know, none of the goof-offs and mess-ups and persons with ill intentions. So we ended up with a fine group of people. And I'm here to say that we had the most dedicated, the most idealistic concerned group of non-Southerners ever assembled for any civil rights project, movement project. But they were green. And it was just like how I feel I would have handled the situation in Los Angeles, but had I been on the scene, it might have been all a different situation. One of the largest problems we have had, well, some of the volunteers have misconstrued it, the extent to which a movement is organized. I often say this, that Selma, Alabama, that Alabama movement, was the best movement I've ever been in this campaign, and I've been in them all, Birmingham, Savannah, St. Augustine, Albany, you know, the works. And the weeks I was in charge there, I led the first march across the bridge, did the logistics on the march, I was in charge of the directing order of large (?) Freedom Monday, but many times in the movement you don't know from hour to hour what you're going to do because you don't know what the opposition's going to do. That's why it's pretty hard to become, you might say, a professional civil rights leader, because you've got to know how to respond to the situation almost abruptly, instantly. And you're going to make a bad decision, because a lot of times we make decisions that turn out beautifully, and we really wanted to make the other decisions. (inaudible) But the kids, they feel like SCOPE was unorganized to a great degree, not realizing you can't organize a movement. A movement has to be lucrative (?), it has to be flexible. If you're going to strait-jacket it, you're going to kill it. I think this is what happened to some of the civil rights organizations. The reason they're not as effective as SCLC, it's a very peculiar situation, at SCLC, we're usually very active, a competent organization, we talk you might say like Roosevelt's philosophy, you know, talk easy, but carry a big stick, because usually when we go into a community, they know something's going to happen. We don't do a whole lot of radical talking, but we do a lot of action. I feel that SCOPE is really, you might say, not the birth, but another step on that ladder when Johnson talk about the grand alliance. Because saying the Negro is ten percent of this nation is not very much... We as a group can accomplish, we must accomplish this in concert allies, the religious forces, the labor forces, and other forces of good will in this nation. Because, you see, what we're involved in, which we often define as civil rights, is civil rights, but it's also human rights, because I can

tell you, if I'm not free, you're not going to be free, because this country cannot endure, as Lincoln once said, half-slave and half-free. Because of our international image we've got to bring true freedom to this land in order to regain the influence and image we once had on an international level. So America's future largely depends upon the freedom of all Americans. We're not just dealing with a problem of civil rights, it's a problem of human rights. So I think these kids, they were down here this summer, and you know, you just can't read in a newspaper, you can't look on the television and hear radio, and understand and comprehend the scope and depth of a situation. So for these kids to come down here, now they know how vicious segregation is, they know what a miserable life black people have to live, how fearful you have to be. A lot of these kids had no fear in them when they came down here and now they're frightened to death because they have witnessed the inhumane treatment that the segregationists down here will perpetrate without provocation as far as we're concerned. A lot of these kids realize for the first time in their lives what a terrible predicament, what a hell of a shape, America is in, our nation, our country, our society. Because they may be from, say, the state of Washington, and this is the first time in their lives they were afraid to go out of the house after dark, they were afraid to walk down the street with a person that they liked, maybe a male or female, maybe a buddy, a friend, or sweetheart, because of interracial couples. Some of these fellows who really like a Negro buddy, but they're afraid to walk down the street with this Negro buddy. A man likes a Negro girl, but he's afraid to walk the streets with her, and vice versa. So they see they are not free, in their own country they have to fear for their lives, just like they'd be in Vietnam or many of the meaner places behind the Russian curtain. And another thing about SCOPE is the fact that Negroes in many of the black-belt counties for the first time in their lives were able to meet, to eat with, to talk with, to work with decent white people, white people that were sincere, white people that were attempting at least to understand their problem, white people that felt like the Negroes' problem was their problem, white people that did not look down upon them like they were grime or dirt or slaves, white people that want to help them realize their dignity and realize they're somebody though they may be poor and ... And this is a revelation. In many of these counties that we've been in this is the first time in the history of the Negro that white people had slept in the homes of black people. And a lot of the fear that they had of white people, this is really... We had a situation one night where we called a man and told him a SCOPE worker was coming in and he didn't know it was a white guy. And the white man didn't know it was a Negro, for some reason. But he got in this little hostile town and the white people

were so very friendly to him at first at the bus station, and he asked about this Negro. And they asked him, "What you want with this nigger?" and he said, "I'm coming down here to work with him and to live with him," and they got all, you know, just real mean. Finally the Negro drives up to the bus station and this fellow goes out and gets in his car. And the Negro, he's afraid now, which is probably right, and he's thinking about the white people who're going to come and burn his house and burn it down because there's white people in it, there's white people sleeping in it. So they were riding and they just rode around and rode around, and this Negro was afraid, ashamed to tell the white man, "You can't sleep in my house tonight," and at the same time this white was ashamed to tell him, "I'm not going to get out of this car tonight." So finally they made up their minds and they went on to the house, (inaudible), but they got to be very good friends and remained in this county. So Negroes are understanding that there are some whites that care. Because many of them up to this time, the insurance man comes by and smiles, but you know how he feels about you, he wants you to stay in a servitude position. He doesn't want your children to be able to go to the park or to go use the library and things like this. Another thing was, this was a psychological battle, too, because in many of the black-belt counties the white people have been able to keep the Negroes in the same positions, like, don't mess with those civil rights folks, don't mess with the political mess, it's going to get you in trouble, you're living all right, and why do you want to get involved in this political mess, why do you want to register to vote. And these Negroes have been conditioned through years of suppression to believe in white people, and one white man can do more with a flock of them, with a hundred, than I could do with ten. One white man can do more with a hundred than four Negroes, because through years of mental slavery and physical suppression they've been taught to believe white people. But we sent out SCOPE workers and the SCOPE worker says, "Well, that man's lying. He wants to keep you a slave and this is why he doesn't want you involved in that political mess. This is why he doesn't want SCOPE in here, he doesn't want Martin Luther King in here, because he's going to have to give you a greater share of that income, the money he's now taking home to his family which is rightfully yours. And you've got to involve yourself in that political process, in the governmental process, you've got to involve yourself in governing yourself." And you know, the Negroes caught on in many of these places. Another white man told them one thing, and then this friendly white man told them something, and this was a better way of breaking through to them to get them to see that you've got to participate in the political process before you can ever consider yourself a man or

an American. Now I believe another great contribution of SCOPE to the country is this: these kids have been down this summer, and all of them aren't kids, we had a lot of adults, you usually speak of a kid as someone fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years old, but young men, young women, and old ones like myself...I'm certain when they get back home they will never, never be the same. And they will not be as tolerant with segregation, with prejudices, with the evil of our system which would deny one to participate in determining his own destiny. I'm certain they will never, never be the same. And they're going to be able now... You see, because this has been the problem and this is why freedom should first come to the South long before the North and West. We'll be free in Georgia long before Negroes in California and New York City. Because the white man has acted in a way down here that you could see your enemy and you could focus in on it and you could zero in on it and it was very visible. But up there, you know, it's a very subtle, and in many instances is a very camouflaged thing. The thing that I'm saying here is that, these kids go back home, now they going to be able to see Watts. They never seen Watts before, although they rode through it a thousand times, might have had a maid that lived down there, might have been some place they liked to go down there to hear jazz, but they never seen it, you see. Now they're going to be able, they've been to Alabama, they're going to be able to see Watts. Kids'll be able to see Harlem, and understand the difference in the Loop in Chicago and South Chicago and the West Side of Chicago. And I think SCOPE has made a great contribution, a summer project, this non-violent army that Dr. King has been preaching about so long, because we are building, SCOPE was another builder, of blocks of soldiers all across the country. And they'll put backbone in Negroes, too. We were able to go into.. It was amazing, too, because the greenness of these kids, and I see this two ways because I'm a professional civil rights worker. One is to go to college and get your degree, like you would in engineering or chemistry or physics, and the other is to become an apprentice. I'm a professional civil rights worker, I've learned mine through apprenticeship, I've got about sixteen years now. Well, they don't offer a degree in college, so you have no other choice than apprenticeship. But it's amazing how these kids came down, as green as they were, and the contribution that they really made. And some of them had some weird ideas. Some of the kids were even kind of frustrated, they thought they'd be able to free the Negro this summer, bring freedom to America this summer. But it's still amazing how they went in there and in many instances Negroes had just been beaten and brutalized and driven back in a rat hole so many decades and centuries. So they just dared...these kids went in there and some of the counties they'd be run out, they'd go back and run out, but they put a lot of backbone in a lot of Negroes across the South. The South was never (inaudible) and

it will never be the same. And there were many counties, you see, like Hale (?) County where we... Counties in South Carolina where the conservative Negroes have gotten to, you know, and they keep waiting on the Lord and waiting on the Lord, and everything will be all right. Well, ain't a damn thing going to be all right until the Negro get up and face the challenge of the times and make things all right. Demand the right to register, after you get that right, register, and not only register, but vote in every election, and vote for politicians on the basis of how they deal with issues, rather than how they deal with the emotions of people. And integrate the schools, just go on over to the white schools, say, "Here, I want an education like your children are getting. If your children can't go to this other school, I'm not going over there. If the Negro teachers are not fit to teach your children, they're not going to teach mine. If the equipment over at the Negro school is not adequate for your children, it's not adequate for mine. (inaudible) and put us all in jail, open up the school, let's go to school again." Same thing about public accommodation and all these things that SCOPE really did a lot for, like many citizens in the South had no implementation of the 1964 civil rights bill, the public accommodation section. Well, SCOPE kids would go in there and get those Negroes and they'd go down there and eat. They'd get beat sometimes or go to jail, but they'd open up some of those reataurants.

Q: What do you think is left, more communities to work on, or work on the communities was in this summer?

A: Well, that's the problem, because I feel now, and I'm selfish for feeling this way, there're so many problems in the North and East and West, now I'm certain these kids are going back and getting involved and doing what's right in solving those problems, and I wonder how many will I get back South next summer. A lot of them are very elated, you know. But I'd like to expand SCOPE to five hundred counties next summer, but kind of on a different measure, because I'd like to use this experience. You know, I have an old saying, you probably heard me say it down at orientation, "Sorry, Negroes, the smart white folks have messed up your movement," and a lot of these kids I meet now say they inderstand now what I meant when I said "smart white folks," because we've had to learn the way of the Negro to understand what needs to be done. A lot of them want to stay with us through the fall, but we couldn't keep everybody because we don't have the budget, we've spent quite a bit of money. But I'd like to see SCOPE in five hundred counties next year.

Q: What kind of programs do you see for next year?

A: Well, basically the same, but I'd like to put more emphasis on political education. I have one little girl here

right now, young lady, rather, she has a Masters degree in political education, and I have another one here who has her B.S. in political education, and they're going to do a lot of research and try to get a lot of material and format (?) the programs, and really next year going into political education in depth. You see, we have a problem. You've got to get people involved. We had a meeting here in Georgia, I've been in meetings, I've been in politics and so forth, for the past fifteen, twenty years, and he asked me one question, "Mr. Williams, will you tell me just one thing? How can you get Negroes to register?" And I said, "Listen, I'm going to tell you, but you're not going to agree, you're not going to believe it. Negroes in Harlem are not registered in a significant number. Negroes in Los Angeles. Negroes in Atlanta, Georgia, you don't have no problem registering in Negroes in Atlanta, Georgia, because they have not been given the kind of leadership that would get them involved in a movement. You've got to get people involved in the movement." This is what I meant in Los Angeles, what you got, about sixty percent, seventy percent, of Negroes registered? Sixty, seventy percent. And it's probably the same, fifty, sixty percent in Harlem, where you have no problem registering, Chicago. But the people have never gotten themselves involved, there has not been a way of expressing themselves and participating in the movement. And I told him, I said, "What you need is a movement, you're not going to believe, you've got to find an issue. There are many issues, but you've got to find an issue with community taste, community appeal, speaking about the Negro community now, and get people in motion around this issue." You see, I don't care what type of legislation they pass in Washington, D.C. They will never be able to pass legislation that will call the Negro people to gain that which is necessary, to acquire the necessary tools that would cause them to participate and govern themselves. The movement is going to have to do that. They can pass every kind of legislation in Washington they want to. So now, political education. We've got to somehow launch a program next summer in depth so that Negroes can gain the necessary tools that would cause them to participate and govern themselves. Of course, naturally, voter registration, we hope, and community organization. And the other thing is that we've got to get Negroes to run. I often talk about the ultimate of SCOPE, which is to rid the American body of politics of racism, you see, but it's a long ways to go, so that it will not help a candidate to wear green in Boston in an election time, and it will not help the Negro to be friendly with the Black Muslim in Harlem, just before the election in Manhattan, it will not help a white man in Alabama to use the word "nigger", but it's a long ways to go before we rid the American body politic of racism. There're some steps we have to go. We first got to get our people, as the young lady who's doing the research now says, to have a self-realization, a realization of self,

to recognize yourself, and then develop within them an awareness of politics, and then you can organize and mobilize, get them in action, get them registered, get them to vote, get them to run for political office. We're going to lose a few times, we've got to. You see, white people have been involved in this game for the past three or four hundred years. It's something new to us. And I thought I knew some politics, I was supposed to be one of Georgia's best Negro politicians. And my wife ran for clerk of superior court, and I didn't realize what I fool I was until we got involved in that election, and particularly election day. There were four different places they could have taken the election, and we were helpless. Well, next time we won't make those mistakes, and if we stop up those gaps next time, I'm mighty afraid there's some I didn't recognize that time. We've got to run a few times and get some experience, and finally we'll win. And that's why I kind of push Negroes and whites support Negroes because of this mental change in the social change. Once we win, we're going to have to show that we can't mess the government up now worse than the white folks messed it up. And finally working around to the point where I can win an election in Alabama as easily as Wallace, a white man can win an election in Harlem as easily as Powell, you know, get to that point.

Q: Do you think things like the voter registration problem will be over by next summer, or will you still need people to do that kind of work?

A: Oh, sure. The voter registration problem is going to be a problem for years to come, even when we've reached a significant number of registered voters in the South, you're going to have to have programs like SCOPE all over the West, the North, the East. And until we get our people educated politically, voter registration will be a continuous problem, because of so many people you get registered who're not going to vote, (inaudible) and you got to put them back on, and so many people are not going down, year after year, there'll be others going down, and until we get an intelligent electorate, so many, that's the problem now. We have more people even under the present voting bill, say, in Alabama, where they open the courthouse once a month and the federal government is doing nothing about it, we have more people in some of the counties becoming of voting age than the registrars can register in any one given day.

Q: I'm wondering about the concept of a summer project, is this the only way you can get people to work, or will you be able to expand on a year-round basis?

A: Oh, yeah, because I believe that you have just as much responsibility to contribute to the movement down South as

I have, because I go back to Khrushchev saying that your grandchildren would grow up in Communism, and I'm saying that unless we do something about the hypocrisy of this country, this nation, your grandchildren may very well grow up in Communism unless we do something. Therefore, you have just as much responsibility as I have. Therefore, I would like to encourage young white people, white people, also the Negroes from the North and different places to give a year of their life to the struggle for human dignity, to help save this nation which can save many other nations abroad. And I, still, as you know, SCLC, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, is somewhat moving into the North and other areas of the country, concerning itself about the problems of segregation there, but I have not grown to the point, have not matured to the point where I can see the significance of the North over the South. I feel that the South, this is where the struggle for human dignity is most significant, because, have you ever noticed, we could have a great campaign in the South, and the folks up North or in the West will start doing something. We can break down segregation down here in some phase, and they up there will start fussing about slum houses, or job opportunities. So I think we can set a pattern, a pattern for the country, which the country may follow.

Q: As far as numbers of people that you directly affect, you mentioned before how many people you could get down here next summer (inaudible) something like five hundred, and I know one of the lists we had showed something like four hundred out in the field, what was the turnover, how many people were here altogether?

A: Oh, six-fifty. We had about twelve hundred people involved, six hundred and fifty were volunteers and what I'd consider the non-Southerners, and about four hundred local folk and about a hundred and fifty staff, so we had approximately about twelve...I think the persons you're talking about, the persons coming from the West and North, the East and so forth, approximately six-fifty. But, you know, at one point I was crazy enough to want two thousand, and I would have lost the project. We were not absolutely organized that we could have supervised two thousand this summer. The number that showed up worked this well, and it was fortunate that we didn't get any more, because Reverend Young, our executive director, and I had quite a few heated debates about how many individuals ought to be in the county. And, you know, when we had large numbers in small counties, we had trouble, because there wasn't an opportunity for all of them to express themselves. And when we had lots of money to give them to large groups, naturally it was expensive, because every individual (inaudible) to maintain them, and when you got a small county and you begin to figure what

you spend in that county per vote, it's just not good for your program. So next summer I will not advocate, because I would send thirty-five people into a county if I get thirty-five to go, (inaudible) five or ten in these smaller counties, small black-belt counties, would be enough, and I find that this is true.

Q: Some people I know have said that you need two or three good people in a county to get less of a group turning inward and thinking about the group itself, and more turning out to the community...

A: This is true.

Q: But it takes really skilled people and I don't know how students will...

A: Well, it doesn't take as much skill, it takes skill, but what is skill? Skill is intelligence and dedication, and when you can get an intelligent, dedicated young man, the skill of doing the job is no problem. This is what I preach to the kids, which I have never, I ask them to do something I have never been able to do. Every campaign I've involved myself in, I end up Hosea the leader. And I lead (inaudible) and this isn't good, see, but we preach...You know, it's hard not to, and I preach to these kids, you're not to do the work, you're not to lead the county, but you're to go there and to react to the leadership that is there. And you're not to do the work, but you're to prick the conscience, you're to prick the conscience of the folk there until they do the work. And you know, it really worked in some counties. Some of those kids accomplished what I haven't been able to accomplish. One guy told me the other day about his county, said, "Williams, you can just about pull the SCOPE workers out, they need a little (inaudible), a little help (inaudible) speakers and things, but the Negro leadership is responding to the problem." And I'm very happy, because in some counties the SCOPE workers have done everything, negotiating downtown, but this is expected, everyone can't be good at what we're trying to do.

Q: During the very early part of the summer, comparing the CORE projects in Louisiana to the SCOPE things here, it really did seem like the SCOPE workers here were doing a lot more.

A: Yeah. You know, you go into Birmingham, if you've got a supervisor, you can use fifty people, because you could just give a guy Wards(?) or Jefferson County, Birmingham, Alabama, or you go into Washington, D.C., or New Orleans, but to go down in Hale County, Alabama, you know, three or four persons, if you can get three or four dedicated, intelligent young people, with skills and a little experience. We intend to do a lot this year, much more, in giving the

kids some guidelines to go by during the college year, so quite a bit of orientation can be done at the college level. This is why we have these young ladies now trying to get this material on political education. In that phase of our program we're going to try to fix it so they can have workshops and training sessions, week-end workshops training in SCOPE on the college level.

Q: Some of the people I've talked with say that they thought students could be used best when they had particular skills, that they would have to be screened for those skills when they come down here, that is, people in political science or with an economic background. What do you think about that?

A: I don't think too much of it. I don't think too much of it at all. You see, you have to know what you're doing, you have to know your problem, you have to see your problem. It's very hard for a kid from Stanford with a degree in political education to teach political education to a Negro man fifty years old, with a folk education of Demopolis, Alabama, you see. That's why I'm not too worried about the skills and so forth. I believe I could take a music major, a sophomore in college, and it all depends upon the individual, because there are many music majors, there are many athletic majors, that you could make better political education teachers in the black belt than you could many political education majors. Because, see, to take the knowledge, these kids, most of these white kids, have backgrounds, as far as their families are concerned, when it comes to three hours, reading, writing, arithmetic. And here's a kid that came from a family, his mother and father had college degrees, he's been to pretty good schools, and always read newspapers, and interested in art, liked music, good books and so forth. Goes to college and gets a degree in political education. Now to take the knowledge this young person has acquired and break it all the way down so that a fourth-grade fifty-year old man can comprehend it, and at the same time allow this man room for mental matriculation, that his mind will question and analyze, this is the only way to educate a person. Why you can take a person with a high school education, many times they're better than a person with a college degree. You know, you can't get to this person concerning him about international affairs, national affairs, state problems, this man is interested in meat and bread for his family now. He's interested in a better house for his kids to live in now. And you've got to talk to him in these terms, you can't tell him nothing about bad steak, any steak he gets is good steak, because he hardly ever gets steak. You got to tell him something about neckbones and pigfeet, hogsnouts, this is what he's been used to eating. You can't tell him about a vacation in New York City, he doesn't hardly get across the county line for a vacation. You see. So I don't agree. I know a lot of young people who are very, very set

on saying that political education majors ought to be used in political education, but I don't agree. I've seen... It's like age, too. I've seen some seventeen, eighteen-year old kids, be just as effective in voter registration as forty-year old, well matured, well educated people. Because if they're sincere in their dedication, and you know, you can look... I'm a great believer in mental telepathy. If he goes up to this Negro and says, "Mister, will you please go register?" and (inaudible), that nice little young white kid, begging him to go down and fight for his people. Now some people say he's too young, he's got to have a certain amount of education, you got to be a certain age, this, that, and the other. If the right supervision is there, no one knows what is going to happen until after it happens.

Q: I know in some of the counties in Mississippi where they've had two years of projects, in Alabama, too, where the movement's been around for quite a while, they're working on things like co-ops and political parties and this seems like it demands a certain amount of sophistication.

A: Well, you reach that point, you're right, you reach that point, but I've noticed this too, young people like yourself come in and they know little or nothing as far as civil rights is concerned, they mature as the project matures. If I sent you into a county now, and you were a music major, by the time you got to the point that you needed that sophistication you would have matured yourself. You would have developed yourself. You ever thought of that? You see, this is the thing you've got to realize, that the individual's working there, too. It's a two-way street.

Q: What do you look for then? What would be your idea of the ideal worker?

A: Well, the two basic and main qualifications are dedication and sincerity. A person that is sincere about what they're down here to do, and a person that is dedicated, not one that is coming down looking for a new way of life, one looking for a novelty summer, one that feels that white folk down here hang everybody at night by their necks, or one that feels that Negroes are almost animalistic, cannibalistic. A person that is dedicated and concerned and wants to help, is sincere, that's the only type of person we need. There's no better training. Training helps, sure, it always helps. Sex has nothing to do with it. We've got some very fine girls down here that really are effective. We've got some fine young men down here who're really effective. So, I would say, training helps, it helps a whole lot. And you know, this thing of maturity, I don't think a person can be sincere and dedicated unless they're mature. I don't care, a kid may be seventeen years old, but if that kid is

sincere and dedicated, as far as I'm concerned, they're mature.

Q: In some civil rights organizations they're trying to talk about what are their right reasons to be down here, and I'm wondering how this relates to that kind of maturity, that is, a person being dedicated to the work he's doing.

A: Well, I would dare say, to answer your question, that the average worker...I kept my daughter away from her vacation this summer and away from school, so she could participate in the civil rights movement. For instance, last year we marched from Selma to Montgomery. I pulled all of my kids out of school. I've got one seventeen, she was in Catholic school here, I've got another one who's twelve, she's down in South Georgia at a Presbyterian school, and two of the other kids was in the Seventh Day Adventist school, and the baby, Barbara Jean, who's four, and my wife were at Atlanta University. And I got the whole family and we went to Selma, because I knew that my kids could learn more about human dignity in one week down there than they could in some college for twelve months. So the reason that one should have to come down here is an understanding of life, a purpose in life. You see, by profession I'm a research chemist. I make much less money here, the work is much harder, the likelihood of being killed is much, much greater, but I'm much happier than I've ever been in my life because I've found myself, I'm living a very purposeful life, a very productive life. What I'm doing, now Kennedy said it like this, it's not what the country can do for you, but what you can do for your country. This is the place to really do some good for your country, for our way of life, for the principles in which we believe, for a republic form of government. I don't think there will ever be a pure democracy, but there certainly can be a much better one than we have today. So the reason why one should come down, I would say you have a much greater reason for coming down here than you would have for going to Vietnam, going down into the Dominican Republic, much greater reason, because down here, I'll tell you, I had a white girl tell me once, that was in the march on Montgomery, too, she explained what it had meant to her to be down in Selma two weeks. She said her father was a very rich man, he was a millionaire when he was born, born a millionaire, and when her father married her mother, her mother was a millionaire. She said, "Mr. Williams, I've been to all sorts of good schools, prep schools, all my life." And I think, yeah, she said she was sent to Europe to study even before she graduated from high school. And she said, "A common theme around my table, our breakfast table or our dinner table, is not what is good for people, but what stocks are good, what stocks are falling, money, money, money. I found myself with just a void, empty

useless life. Down here I found out more about living, just these tow weeks, than I have in all the other parts of my life." And she went on to tell me about the lieutenant governor of Massachusetts. I never met him, but obviously he's one of those persons that we usually find as the American blueblood family, a very sophisticated, very articulate man, very educated, wealthy man. And she said it was one of the greatest thrills of her life to see him standing in the back door of a low-rent housing project, eating cold chicken out of his hand. She says it must have been a great revelation to him. He must really understand how people love, and the warmth and the welcome on the part of the Negroes in the South, to a race of people that have been their oppressors and still are their oppressors in the South. So I'm saying why one ought to come down here is to learn what life's all about.

Q: That's a very personal reason. We've noticed some people for whom to learn what life is about involved a lot of rebelliousness, breaking away from his family, breaking away from all kinds of structure. I supposed you've noticed that, too.

A: Well, I would say these kids have a right to break away from what America possesses today, because we're the most hypocritical nation on the face of the earth, we're the biggest liars on the face of the earth, when it comes to talking about what type of government we have. It was written in the books a long time ago that we have a republican form of government, of the people, by the people, and for the people, and we have continually denied the Negro the right to participate in government. We continue to deny over twenty million of our citizens the basic right of our constitution. These kids are not going to live a lie like their mothers have lived, a lie like their fathers have lived. They want to concern themselves and straighten this thing out, that America will be the America that Thomas Jefferson talked and wrote about, that Abraham Lincoln died for. And that some day not only white people, but black people can wake up one of these mornings and breathe a deep breath of air and say, "Truly God, this is the land of the free and the brave." You see, that's why I'm against the John Birch Society. The John Birch Society is largely responsible for a lot of this going on in the South, a lot of the interviews, a lot of the news articles being written, because they like status quo, they like things the way they are, they like having maids because they're black people and not because they're able to have a maid, they like cheating a man out of his manhood and robbing him of his dignity. And these kids, they just feel like...You'd be rebelling against something, they're rebelling against evil, they're rebelling against sin, the damnation of our own country. That's what they're rebelling

against. Now, I know there's some kids come South with, you might say, undesirable motives, but I say it's a few, it's a very few. I know in SCOPE now, and I can't speak for other groups, but I still think we've got a doggone fine group of kids in the South. I think we got the rulers of tomorrow's world, some of them anyway, I know we haven't got all of them, but I guarantee we have some of them. I know these kids are not all pure, but where are they pure? It goes back to this problem of sex. I dare say less sex is going on down here than would have gone on had they stayed home. I dare say that if there's someone down here that's involved in sex, they was involved in sex back home. And we probably keep them busier down here, so they have less time for sex than if they'd stayed home this summer. I got an answer for those questions, I'll tell you, yessir.

Q: The question of how a movement is organized was one of the first things that you mentioned. Some students came down with the idea that it wasn't going to be organized at all, that they would just go to the community and that communications with Atlanta wouldn't be at all important, there wouldn't be any kind of supervision. How do you feel about this, and your need to know and to plan?

A: Well, you have to understand one thing, and I know why you're asking the question. This is a question that often comes up. I was supposed to start working on SCOPE in January this year, and Brother Wallace entertained us, entertained me until, let me see, when was it, April. I didn't get a chance to go out until April. And I'll say this, that in some instances, if the Atlanta office had had more to do with the project, much less would have been gained. But at the same time there are other instances where had we had a little more to do with the project, more would have been gained. You see, we spent a lot of time, a lot of time, money and effort and energies, on orienting the Negro community. We've gone into every county at least three times, not every one but just about every one, talking with the Negroes, leaders of the Negroes, because we knew white people were going in there and they'd never been around white people in their lives, and they'd never had the opportunity to tell a white person what to do. You take me, I'm very authoritative, the average Negro is very authoritative, we are authoritative by tradition, heritage, you see. All my life white people have told me what to do. My daddy's been bossed all his life by some white man, so he bossed the children, bossed his wife. The Negro school teacher's bossy. So just by training we are authoritative. Now, white kids, the majority of them are more relaxed and they are rebellious to authority, because their parents were educated persons in lots of instances, and give their children much greater leeway in making decisions, the white teachers are

even more liberal in allowing the white students to make decisions, white fathers are usually...It is not because of race, but it is because of training and education, and largely, it has to do with economics. I'm saying that next year I wouldn't like to exert any more influence than I've exerted this year, but I will do a better job in preparing and orientating the SCOPE workers that will come South, and also will do more to orientate and prepare the Negro community for the SCOPE workers.

Q: What was your feeling in terms of programs, things like violent demonstrations and the emphasis on voter registration? There was sort of a rebellious feeling, maybe not too much action, on the part of the SCOPE workers.

A: Well, a lot of the kids came down to do what we had agreed to do, voter registration, political education, community organization. But many of them found things so disgusting, and they didn't know they'd be this disgusted, in the community, that they just said, "By George, let's demonstrate." And we had demonstrated for the voting bill and I thought it would come out much earlier than it did, and the kids were just fed up, they were just frustrated, by being held in a vacuum, canvass, canvass, canvass, you can never register nobody. So their feeling was a normal feeling, a rightful feeling, but I kept thinking, as an old Uncle Tom, you might say, that the voting bill would be passed, and I didn't want to get...You see, to demonstrate to me is almost sacred to the movement. It's kind of like a labor union. Labor unions favor the picket line, they put a picket line around you, you count on some trouble with these real labor unions. Now some of us in civil rights, we don't take to the picket lines, we'll put up our picket line today, maybe this afternoon nobody's there and tomorrow afternoon maybe... Now the labor unions throw a picket line around you, you're in trouble. This is the problem, this is the way I see demonstrations. Once you get out in that street there's got to be a victory. It's victory or death then. And I didn't want to get all bogged down in confrontation, physical confrontation, and the bill passes, you'll be caught with a... You can't just quit demonstrating unless you didn't have nothing to demonstrate for in the first place. So this is my feeling and I don't have any, I know there's a lot of objections to me on that part.

Q: Would you see the role of demonstration in the future in the various organizations across the South, I mean, I remember that one on that Tuesday...

A: Well, I think now if we demonstrate we're going to have to demonstrate in concert. I'm hoping that Johnson will give the type of leadership and bring about the type of legislation without being pressures into doing it, without America having to tell him what to do. I think demonstrations

are still useful and they're needed in some cases, but I think, I'm certain that the day of demonstrations passes away, the day of demonstrations. Now it's what you call a demonstration. You call marching in the streets a demonstration, but you also call a rent strike demonstrations. You see what I'm saying? Demonstrations will take future form, but the type of mass marches we've been having, night demonstrations, it begins to be less legal than it has been in the past.

Q: As these problems get more subtle, and can't be solved by mass confrontations, do you see a need for the use of the people in the community for a long-term kind of thing, say, in the community, or can you still use people to come down just for short periods of time?

A: Well, you want people to come down for short periods of time, but we've got to train a group. That's why orientation is so vital, because when I send John down to Bee (?) County, I don't want you coming up with an entirely different philosophy next summer. That's why we need to study these communities and learn the needs of these people, let these people express their needs. That's going to continue to help them, but that isn't helping them to achieve their aims. But one fellow comes in and says they need to change the political structure this time, next summer you're going to come in and say no, it's the educational lag, next summer another fellow comes and says no, it's the industrial potential they need to work on. We would be hurting the community. This is why I say I'm certain my supervision of the county and its activities, it was great enough, because then I reach a point that I deny the local people to express their needs. You've got to be sure they see their needs. This is why I tell the Negro community, "You've got to tell those SCOPE workers, 'I am the leader. You're here to help us, but we are the leaders, and we make the final decision in this county.'" So, that's how I feel about that.

Q: How do you build up an idea of what the problems of each community are? How do you keep continuity?

A: Well, yeah, that's one thing, you see. You've got to think about what are you here for and what's the objective. We try to choose counties within a certain perimeter, that we can affect the political philosophy of a state senator or a United States congressman, we can affect the political philosophy of an overall county situation, you see. The individual county now, you've got to concern yourself first about human nature needs, natural needs. What is it, the first law of nature, self-preservation? I don't believe in this, but you can't teach a hungry man something about some tax bill. He's short of that food, so you get them to first concern themselves about basic human needs. Food,

education, better housing, better medical care. So you've got to study the complexity of a community to concern yourself about its needs.

Q: How do you decide which one are you going to...

A: Well, you don't decide, you let them decide. You let them decide. You let them make the decision. This is why I say I don't think much more supervision was needed, no more supervision was needed from the Atlanta office. You motivate the people and organize them and teach them political education, but you let them decide. They know what they should get rid of first in the county. The sheriff. Or they need to get the poverty program. But let them... You guide them, you give them guidance, but you let them make that ultimate decision.

Q: I wonder about things like voter registration. Does that mean something to everybody? It certainly seems that it had to be done, but everybody has to do it, and it takes a lot of work, kind of a concerted effort, and if it's just a few people in a community, say, voter registration as a political device, as keyed to getting the sheriff out, where everyone else doesn't see a way to get the sheriff out, how do you go about it?

A: Well, how could you get a sheriff out? Well, we know this. You see, you've got to understand this, you suggest programs to them, but once you get them mobilized, organized, and in motion, then you more or less leave it up to them. Out of a good registration campaign can come a boycott against a grocery store. Out of a good voter registration campaign... You know SCOPE did a lot for desegregating schools this summer? They get a voter registration campaign, they get people at a place, and they start talking about certain things. They see they don't have many Negro kids going to that white school, and they start getting kids going to white schools. So, the idea is that you've got to get a program going, you've got to get people involved in the movement. And this is what you're speaking of, which is, I know, one of SNCC's basic peeves with SCLC, they say we think for the people. But we don't think for them, we motivate them to think for themselves. This is a difference in philosophy. I'm not condemning SNCC by no means, it's just a difference in philosophy. SNCC doesn't believe too much in mass meetings. I believe that spirit is generated, enthusiasm is generated. And I think after a mass meeting you start people to thinking, and you motivate a lazy mind. So there's a difference in philosophy. SNCC, well, I guess they will continue adhering to that philosophy. We certainly will continue, and I think that there's good in both of them, and both of them are effective. SNCC has been most effective in some areas.

Q: What do you see as a way of getting everyone in the community educated, I mean, it seems like a real problem.

A: Sure, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference spends about \$200,000 a year on adult education. We have a whole department, just like my department, of citizenship schools, adult education.

Q: (inaudible).

A: That's a great place. You may not dig it, but we turn a lot of civil rights soldiers out of there. Usually they go to Dorchester, they're never the same. Yessir, we turn a lot of civil rights workers out of there.

Q: I'm thinking about mass change and how you get a whole community educated. I guess it has to be brought into the school system, must be brought into it in what people read, when you get things for them to read.

A: Well, now, we're involved in a revolution. And that means you revolve, and I can't just start here, say this is a wheel, and say I'm here. So there is no panacea. All we have been discussing today is education. The whole movement is education, that's all it is. But there are different ways. You know, one of the greatest schools I've ever been in in my life was the march from Selma to Montgomery. That's the greatest school I've ever been in in my life. And that's the only time in my life I ever participated in government. We determined where we ought to have targets, we determined residential areas, we determined what should we drive with, you know, we participated in the government down there. But it was also a terrific institution of learning, of how you learn. So all these things, adult citizenship schools, a voter registration drive is an education in itself. A political education. Community organization. So there is no panacea, don't let nobody tell you there's a panacea. A freedom school is not a panacea, but it's a contributor.

Q: What would you say the impact of the new federal programs that are coming in, things like literacy work and Headstart programs, will be?

A: Well, some of them I have the highest respect for and some of them I don't, well, it's kind of like, say, for instance I've got a splinter in my hand, you put something on to heal the wound and a large splinter is still in my hand. It's kind of like what has been happening to illegitimacy among Negro people in the South in particular. They have many homes in the South for illegitimate, for unwed mothers, white mothers, many homes. A white girl becomes pregnant, they send her to this home. Her edu-

cation continues, she gets the best of food, the best of treatment and care, she has a good house, good surroundings, she gets psychiatric treatment, she gets all of this. So, you know, she really learns while she's in there, so she has something to help her guard against this mistake again. But what happens to the Negro girl, she's sent back to the gutter, she's sent back to the slum, she goes to the clinic on Wednesdays. She never sees a psychiatrist. She gets (inaudible), she's an indigent patient. The doctor looks at her like dirt and he treats her like it, because most of these kind of hospitals have white doctors. Well, that's the way with some of these federal programs. And there are other federal programs. I think Headstart, I think it was President Kennedy that came up with that statement about how far a Negro child is behind a white child, I guess it starts off at birth, and at first grade and so forth. It does give our kids an added opportunity and it helps rid them of some of the backlog, a problem they take into life. The other programs, you see, it's kind of like the welfare. I don't see too much in welfare. I think we ought to spend more money, and spend that money in a different direction. You see, you can give me all the welfare you want to, but I just couldn't be on welfare and be happy. When I'm sitting at home, looking at my wife and my children, looking my wife in the face, and the thought keeps hitting me, "You know, you're sure not much of a man. You don't even have sense enough, you don't have enough on the ball to make a living for your family. You've got to be on welfare, you're a charity case." I'd go crazy. But to take that same man and give him a job planting roses from Maine to Miami, you see what I'm saying? Or cutting underbrush (inaudible), and give me a dollar an hour and let me buy groceries for my family, it makes me feel like a man, you see. And we've got to have more programs that allow one this self-realization. And the federal government can get a little enthusiastic sometimes. They can carry all the money they want into the Watts area, they better take something to help those Negroes understand that they're human beings and they're dignified human beings.