

MRS. FANNIE LOU HAMER

Interviewed 1966 by:
Anne Romaine
Howard Romaine

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Interviewer: Where are they now?

Hamer: California

Interviewer: What are they doing out there?

Hamer: Working.

Interviewer: Just working. Not with SNCC?

Hamer: No, they're not with SNCC.

Interviewer: Bob Moses. Have you seen him?

Hamer: No, I haven't seen Bob in quite a ~~quix~~ while. I miss that man.

Interviewer: Why did he leave?

Hamer: I really don't know. Bob, I really think, you know, so many things happened, I guess if I wasn't as old as I am I guess it could happen to me too. I've seen so many ... things in this country. What we thought were different things. It was altogether another different thing. Bob become sick of it all, I guess. I don't even know where Bob is. That's one ~~stx~~ human being, one of the greatest men I ever met. One of the greatest human beings on earth.

Interviewer: What did he do? That's one of the things we've been interested in in interviewing people ... different style that SNCC brought in Mississippi when they first came in and so different from NAACP.

Hamer: It worked with the people. NAACP don't work with the people.

You know, I used to write membership for the NAA and they don't care. They care about folk. You see I'm not particular about working with nobody that don't say yes^{sir} to everything to Mr. Charlie, and that's all NAA does. There aint' nothing that I respect less than the NAACP. It's awful. Now the legal affairs. I don't fight the legal affairs because they have some good attorneys. But I don't respect no man that--as I said, is a traitor ~~to~~ to their own race. I don't respect no man for that. The NAA is different from everything, 'cause the people in the NAA, most of 'em is white man. And SNCC work with people. In fact, if SNCC hadn't of come into Mississippi there never would have been a Fannie Lou Hamer as far as the But they treated for the first time I ever been treated like ~~like~~ a human being, whether the kids was white or black. I was respected with the kids and they never told nobody to say what ~~you said~~, nobody. Everything you heard, us screaming and saying and ~~saying~~ saying, nobody tell us to say that. This is what's been there all the time and we had a chance to get it off our chests and nobody else had ever give us that chance. That's why today, that because my life I can never forsake those kids that... every hope in the state of Mississippi. All these other folk that's been here for years, we didn't know they was here.

Interviewer: When did you first meet up with SNCC kids? When did they first come in?

Hamer: In '62 and before '62 I was in my ... I'd never heard of a mass meeting in my life ~~at~~, in all my life. NAA was all over the state then. They didn't tell nobody but the people here in town that had their own homes.

It's something almost like the poverty program. The NAA is the big wheel in the state of Mississippi and so help me God nothing in the world is so unjust as this poverty program in Mississippi. It's disgrace and it's a shame before God for people to operate this kind of thing and call it a poverty program. The only thing I get a kick out of ~~is~~ when they say ~~is to~~ ^{it's a war on poverty} ~~property~~ 'cause that's exactly what it is.

Interviewer: War on poor people.

Hamer: That's right. It's a war on us, you know. I'm not kidding. They every bourgeois, every Tom. I'm giving you a fact. If you go right over to that church there, right to that church there, they got a few people that they pulling in 'cause we been screaming and raising so much cain. But honest before God they get the people to work not because they're better educated but if he got something he got a job and if you ~~are~~ ain't got nothing you better not go over there. You see, this is a shame and the NAA do that kind of thing, right up there to state president, Dr. Henry. I got a tape here. You should hear that tape. That's from citizens from Cahoma (?) County. They ain't thinking about none of those ~~poor~~ poor people. Now you see this is awful.

Interviewer: What's the tape about, Aaron Henry?

Hamer: The tape is what's about happening in Cahoma (?) County. This is a person talking about what's happening in Cahoma (?) County. It's happening all over the state but you see, now I'm one that's ~~naive~~ naive or whatever

people wanted to say about it, but I believe in Christianity. But if a job that people have to do is Christian, you know, the fourth chapter, 18th verse Luke said, "The spirit of the morn is upon you because ~~you know~~ he has ... me to increase the ... to the poor." not to the rich. You know. The people... about the poor and right now, see this is the sad and ~~sad~~ sickening part about it, right now if you tell the truth your watched like you're some kind of criminal. They put secret service men following you, FBI-- "What is she saying now? Now this is a doggone shame, you know. When you speak out somebody's there to crush you and then we'll say, "The land of the free and the home of the brave." And a person say well, "I don't want to fight in Vietnam, because I ~~think~~ think it's wrong." The first thing they going to do is drag him before the House Un-American Activities and that ain't no lie. The House ~~knows~~ Un-American Activities, that's the most un-american thing that I ever heard. But as sure as the night follow the day, and it follows the day, one day, payday too, I'm ~~going~~ ^{won't} be around ~~before~~ 'cause there's too many things happened to me. This country ought to wake up because right this minute... the nation with sin... And today that's what's facing us is sin because a house divided against itself cannot stand. That same saying goes for a nation.

Interviewer: Back in the beginning of the ... they really had hopes that they could make it a world... power. white people were doing.

Hamer: ~~God~~ Yes, God knows I really did. Honest to God I used to say

I would be out in the field and I would say, you know, if I ever can talk to the Justice Department that was a real worry for me 'cause I had picked up some books and I would read about the Justice Department, the Federal Bureau of ~~Investigations~~ Investigators, the FBI, them creeps (laughing). You know I believed all of that. Honest to God I believed. And when we went to Atlantic City, we didn't go there for publicity, we went there because we believed that American was what it said it was--the land of the free. And I thought with all of my heart that the people would have been unseated in Atlantic City. I believed that, because if the Constitution of this United States means something to all of us, then I know they would unseat them. So when we went to Atlantic City with all of this hope, you know, and we-- sometimes we would be up 'till 3 o'clock and sometimes we would be up all night long, going and talking to the different delegations that was there and then we would talk to all the people from the credentials committee that we could talk to. ~~know~~

I never will forget the experience, one day I was going in the hall and Roy Wilkins said, "Mrs. Hamer you people have put your point across. You don't know anything, you're ignorant, you don't know anything about politics. I been in the business over 20⁺ years. You have people have put your point across, now why don't you pack up and go home?" That was blow number one.

And when I talked at one time with who is now the vice president of the United States, because all that we had been hearing about Vice President Hubert Humphrey and his stand for civil rights, I was delighted to even have a chance to talk with ~~this~~ man. But here set a little round-eyed man ~~with~~ with

his eyes full of tears when ~~xxxx~~ our attorney at the time, ... Rowe, if we didn't stop pushing like we was pushing them and was trying to fight the... fight to come to the floor, that Mr. Humphrey wouldn't be nominated that night for vice president of the United States. I was amazed and I said, "Well, Mr. Humphrey do you mean to tell me that your position is more important to you that four hundred thousand black people's lives?" ~~xxxxxx~~
~~xxxxxx~~

You see, this was blows to me, really b lows and ~~xxxxkx~~ left out of there I left out of there full of tears.

Interviewer: What'd he say in answer to you?

Hamer: He didn't give too much of an answer. In fact there was nothing that satisfied me because I walked ~~xxx~~ out and I was really let down.

From then on we didn't know what to expect. I felt I was like one of the three ~~Negro~~ boys, you know, ..., ..., and ... when they refused to bow to our God although he was in the... I wouldn't bow. And I didn't try to force nobody else to say it but I told him I wouldn't ~~speak~~ stoop to two votes at large... nothing... And it didn't.

I^Nterviewer: What about your attorney? What was his position in all this? He was supposed to be representing you...

Hamer: Well, he, actually, he really wanted us to take it. Because you see for year after year, for the past ~~100~~ 300 years, all that we have ever got was a compromise, you know. They said a hundred years ago we

were free but today people are being beaten, people are being shot down,
people are still begging for the same ^{chance} ~~things~~ that they were begging for a
hundred years ago. In fact, it's worse~~x~~ now than it was a hundred years
ago. So

....about us being local Mississippians, that that we will
accept two votes at large and said next thing, the reason I respect SNCC
now it was the only organization out of all the hardworking~~x~~ they had done
in Mississippi. They had done a job, 'cause nobody else in NAA or nobody
else would have tackled that job. It was a few CORE people but there
wasn't many of them and they were just in one little district. In fact,
~~there were~~ they were in one county at the time. That was Madison County.
and
The reason I respect SNCC ~~is~~ no other organization under the sun.

I went to them one time because I got ~~am~~ so upset I might be just...
you know just too full out. Maybe I'm wrong. I'm going to ask some of
them just see if the way I feel, I'm wrong for this. So I went to Bob, I
went to Jim Foreman, I went to Ella Baker and I said why don't you tell
me something. I believe I'm right but I might be wrong. I respect you and
I will respect your decision. Whatever you say, if you think I'm wrong, even
though I felt like I was right, I would have done it. They told me, I'll never
forget this, everyone would say almost the same thing, they'd ~~just~~ say, now
look Mrs. Hamer, you're the people living in Mississippi and you people
know what you've experienced in Mississippi, we don't have to tell you nothing

you make your own decision. See we'd never been allowed to do that before. And I said, although it might have been wrong but I felt like it. 'Cause you see if we are free ~~ex~~ people as Negroes, if we are free then I don't think you're supposed to tell me how much of my freedom I'm supposed to have. Because we're human beings too. You see there just a difference in our colors. People can say what ever they will or whatever they ~~ma~~ may, but the 17th Chapter of Acts in the 26th verse said... made of one blood all nations. And we were all made from the same blood. And just think its a ~~tragedy~~ ... because we are dark, because you see we say white and black, but I... to see a real white person. They're lighter than we are but if you put on a white shirt you look ridiculous if you say you're ~~which~~ white. You know, you lighter. And we have people in our own race that's just as white as either one of you. You know ~~thx~~ they have so many ridiculous things about, well ~~hx~~ there's sex this and sex that. The white man has done more to our race than we ever done to ~~thx~~ his. You know that .

....just as white as you are... because my grandmother was a slave. I got uncles with blond hair, I got some with kind of black hair, some with real blue eyes. ~~Yxxxxx~~ You know my cousin down at Morehead down there, eyes as blue as anyone else. You see, and this is what's been done to us.

All we want to do is be treated as human beings and we have a chance to elect our own officials and-- We want people in office that's going to represent us because so far we ~~xxxxx~~ haven't had it.

Interviewer: What about some of the other people that were up there as delegates that had had more experience with NAA than they had with SNCC? don't I/guess there were many but what were some of their feelings?

Hamer: Well, that's one of the things, Dr. Henry, at one time I was very ~~lx~~ close to Dr. Henry and I remember one time he met me in the hall and he said, "Mrs. Hamer, we going to have to listen to some of them that know much more about politics than we know. And we going to have to listen to ~~th~~ them." I said, "xxxxleaders you talking about?" And he said, "You know we got some great leaders." I said, "That's right. 'Cause all those ~~xxx~~ people from SNCC are some of the greatest leaders I ever seen. But now go don't telling me about somebody that ain't been in Mississippi two weeks and don't know nothing about the problem, cause they're not leading us." And that's the truth.

....in Mississippi that they ...time out for white people choosing the leader, hand picking the leader that going to lead me 'cause we ain't going to follow. They might kill us but you ain't going to pick this white owl over there for me when I know everything she going to say when she get in front that white man, Yas sir, yas sir. We're getting sick of this. We want somebody that's going to say, well, now this is wrong, let's talk about doing something this way. And that's what we been fussing about.

The NAA ain't going to do nothing, nowhere but say yes sir, even though it's wrong. I think a person have a conviction and if they know they're right,

they'd die for that right, they have that right.... You might kill me but I know it's wrong. You see the NAA don't say it.

I^Nterviewer: When Aaron Henry say that to you in the hall did he mean he wanted you to listen to them or mean he wanted you to follow their advice?

Hamer: They wanted us to do what he said do because, you see they had told the press, they didn't have to worry about us 'cause they knowed we would accept that compromise.

Intervidwer: Who said that?

Hamer: ~~x~~~~xxxx~~ Aaron Henry and some of the others. 'Cause we learned it ~~about~~ after we didn't accept the compromise. So many things happened in that church that day. After I spoke out and said to the vice president now, I said, you know, you mean your position if more important that four hundred thousand black people's lives, well what happened to me was I wasn't even allowed to meet then because I said that.

Interviewer: With him, you mean?

Hamer: No, I wasn't allow to meet with Humphrey. ~~Whxxxx~~

Interviewer: Who met with him from then on?

Hamer: ~~B~~ Henry and Mr. Wilkins and a lot of people that ~~hadn't~~ hadn't worked in a day.

Interviewer: No one from Mississippi besides Henry?

Hamer: Well, it might have been, yeah they did have another tall bourgeois from down there, Vicksburg. He's a doctor. I don't know his name but anyway

Interviewer: What about Ed King?

Hamer: Well, Rev. Ed King at the first beginning he figured that Dr. Henry and them was right he favored it. So I said I m not making a decision for the sixty-eight delegates. I won't do it. So you see after they ~~conferences~~ talked to these people and we didn't know nothing about it, then they had the press outside waiting that they was going to accept the compromise. They had them out there. And they had said that they could We just, you know, I said, I'm just going to get up and say what I feel. People come in to talk that day, ~~Wax~~ that we hadn't never seen before. I think you ~~that~~ people is ~~making~~ making a moral victory. I said what do you mean moral victory, we ain't getting nothing? What kind of moral victory was that that we'd done sit up there and they'd seen us on the television, we come on back home and go right on up the first tree that we get to because you know that's what they were going to do to us. What had we gained?

So when we went to this church some of the Congressmen, Negro Congressmen ~~like Mr.~~ had called in, like Mr. Charles . . . and told his pepple . . . t hat we had accepted the compromise. So then we said that, we went to this church meeting they get us all in a corner, you know in this country we were really cornered and they begin to corner us. You know the kind of shoved this down our throats.

Interviewer: By yourself?

Hamer: They get little groups, little groups. But I ~~that~~ thank God that he got the power and he did use his power to let us be on one ~~stage~~ ^{stage} and when

we walked out from there ~~upstairs~~ upstairs, downstairs and went in that church I was really upset by this. Because I began to feel sick that we had. And I got up and I soon said what I had to say and I sat down. I said, I don't see how all of these people that are stepping on the bandwagon now that didn't even know we was coming to Atlantic City and we didn't come way up there from Mississippi, 68 delegates subject to being killed on our way back, and we didn't come all the way up there to compromise for no more than we 'd gotten here. They only gave us two votes at large 'cause they knowed we ~~wouldn't~~ wouldn't have had nothing. I said we just didn't come here for just that.

Then other people they just said what they felt. O^ut of all of that Dr. Henry no compromise. He told me--see I was vice-chairman of the delegates and he was chairman of the delegates. Now Henry gained his, this national figure by going to Atlantic City and on the strength of little people, 'cause nobody didn't ~~no~~ know nothing about Henry and Fannie Lou either but after he got up he failed to look down on the bridge that carried him across. But he still was going to . . . use at that convention because after we said that we didn't want the compromise and we was getting up to walk out Henry told me, he said, "What I'm going to do, I'm going to get up and go out there and say we'll compromise. . . . I said, Dr. Henry you know that you're going to have but two votes ~~at large~~ at large? You do it don't you do that." I meant that. . . . And I said. . . .

I meant don't sell me and me standing there by you, why you ~~sell~~ sell me? I was sold standing there, auction me off and me standing there grinning.

You just don't auction people off like that. And he didn't do it. He looked around at me and he said, ^I ~~XX~~ was looking honey I was looking at him and he said, no compromise and when the man puts the speaker, the newsman put the speaker up to my mouth, I was so upset about what I thought Henry was going to say I didn't do nothing but blab. I couldn't say nothing. He said what do you thing aboutk. . . . 'XX 'Cause you see I was watching Henry. He had told me what he still would do and we, sixty-seven people done said ~~donk~~ don't and he was still going to walk out and say do.

Interviewer: So what did he do?

Hamer: He didn't.

Interviewer: That was after the meeting in church? He was going to say something else? Had the people voted not to compromise?

Hamer: I declare they had. Y u see, this was what was going to happen. I was standing between Dr. Henry and Rev. Edwin King so they wasn't going to hear nothing but what me and Henry and Rev. King said. ^{If} /Henry had said compromise, the country would have thought today that we ~~have~~ had compromised. But that's one time they weren't going to hear that word, not out of Henry.

I've never carried no weapon but I would have bit him so hard he would know what had happened. ~~kxkxkx~~

Interviewer: Well, I don't understand how he could say compromise when you just voted--

Hamer: Well, that's what happened. He told me--and we was getting up to go out--"Now what are we going to do. I'm going to walk outside and I'm going to say we compromise for twenty-four votes." And I said, "Why you going to compromise at 24 votes Dr. Henry. You good and well that we won't

have but two. If you go out there Dr. Henry and say that, you go to that convention hall and you stay there, don't you come home. Don't you come out of that convention hall."

And then they said I was ~~bying~~ violent. Ever since then, so many rumors have got out about me that you would think I was King Kong. A lot of people I advocate violence. I've never been in a violent, you know, nothing, in my life. But if I think I'm right I'll ~~kick~~... If I know I'm right you don't stop me from... Now you might kill me but you will not stop me from saying I am right.' Just like they beat me in Wyoming jail, they beat me till my body was and I said everything I wanted to say. I said it inside. If I ever get out of here.... Now they thought they had us sewed up, bag sewed up, but I told it everywhere. You can kill a man but you can't ~~xxxx~~ kill ideas. 'Cause that idea's going to be transferred from one generation from one generation till after while, if it's not too late for all of us, we'll be free. But that's ...

People try to really be free but keep the other human being down. No man is an island unto himself. And until I'm free you might feel mean you might feel ... of us, not all in Mississippi but across the United States, but until I'm free you won't be free either. Because if we're free then that kills excuses that people would have to wear hoods at night, people would have to have the minute meetings, people would organize for violence, just to kill human beings because ~~what~~ they want to have, something to say about their government, ~~some~~ thing to say about their own destiny, something to

say about their children. Until we consider that all of us are God's children and we can work together and really have democracy in this country, we're going to have problems, we're going to have riots, we're going to have, what you call, human sickness. 'Cause I don't ~~not~~ think nobody realizes how late in life it is. My position, until we heal our own house and America to me is our house, and until we clean up our ~~house~~ own house, how can we run around saying that we're protecting the freedom of other people's lives when we have people being born, we have people being blowed up right in our own country because they desire to be free. The purpose of being free is not to marry your son or your daughter, because I think that is ... to the individual, if they love each other if one of them is white and the other one is ..., that's their business and not mine, but what I'm concerned about is my children having a decent education knowing something about their own heritage, because it's no race in American that's given more than the black man, for so little in return. We didn't have nothing to say about how we got here, our ancestors, and then we have been robbed, cheated out of our ..., our ... parents, our ancestors have been raped and they've been ~~kept back~~ treated less than some animals because I've seen in many cases where a dog was thought more of than we were. But until we consider that all of us are human beings ~~we~~ we're going to have problems and not only that. Why we are so engaged in watching a particular people, keep them down, like we're treated here--like you just can't give him all of his rights,

you know, just a little amount, 15 more years...take that, because if you watch the...right now, there's something happening, just like in Reconstruction. There's something happening right now to the movement. I was in Washington a few weeks ago, about a week ago and I heard this decision whether...court of the land had decided to stop people from public demonstrations. This is a crush, a crush to the movement. If the Constitution means something to all people, we better straighten up. Because writing a bill a week and not enforcing the one that's been on the book a hundred years won't do any good. Because now the world is watching America and we're a sick country. We pretend we ain't but all of us are shock up because we don't know, we really don't know what might happen next.

Interviewer: What about some of these conventions that lead--I mean I'm trying to see where this SNCC spirit prevailed as opposed to the NAACP, the established leaders. In the conventions that ~~lead~~ led up to choosing the delegates what were some of these conventions like, were a lot of the people that SNCC has brought there, that they lead the convention, the county conventions?

Hamer: Yes, a lot of the people. In fact SNCC was the only thing that gathered all these people together, even with the 1964 summer project. Nobody would have dared, got all those kids down here for the summer project. It was SNCC. They all of these, you know, the kids. White and black. They come into Mississippi to see what it was like. And these people are just like veterans of foreign wars, 'cause they have certainly...the storm, weathered the storm and nobody else, regardless of what people say now, nobody else

young have gone through would have gone through the danger that all of these ~~people~~ /In the state of Mississippi. In fact the reason all of them worked ~~there~~ there now. . . .

Interviewer: You mean the whole sort of atmosphere around here in Mississippi is kind of dangerous?

Hamer: In some sense. In a way it's not as . . . , but man that problem is here. And they get a chance they'd shoot me just as quick as they would shoot you. Don't kid yourself. 'Cause I'm one of the most hated human beings in the state. I read in a book--I didn't know it 'til I read it.

Interviewer: What book was that?

Hamer: It was the book put out by Nick Van Haufman. ~~XXXXXX~~ You know he had interviewed different people. And the reason I'm hated is because I said, you know, I wanted to register and I wanted to vote. My husband wouldn't work this fall if the people from the outside of the state ~~hadn't~~ hadn't had a job in Mississippi. And that show you the ~~problem~~ problem. . . . Don't kid yourself. My husband couldn't get a job doing nothing, nothing. And he is a man that worked on one plantation 30 years and we made those white people creamy rich.

This is what we want. We want something for our labor. Because the biggest . . . in Mississippi know if that white man had give us justice he wouldn't be in a mansion and me settin' in something like this. Something for our labor. And we want the vote. Let us vote that cat out! Now we want him out, you know. I don't want nobody settin'; up in a office over me that would let a lynching happen right here in . . . ville, cause there's going to be one of us. It ain't going to be no white person. And nothing

something, if I had one dollar I would share that dollar. They might feel like blowing me up but that's the way I feel about human beings, because, you see, I know what it's like to be homeless. 'Cause many a day I didn't have nothing but bread. To see a little home with kids, or see people looking down on the kids, whether you is middle class white or middle class black, it make me sick because those little children, regardless of how poor they are, they're God's children. I'm fighting for one just as hard as I'm fighting for the other, because I know one day, if we gk fight in the right way and in the right spirit we will help to make democracy a reality for everyone of us.

That's why it's important to. . . 'Cause the door's open to people.

Interviewer: What did some of the other, say Martin Luther King, or Roy Wilkins or some of them, what did they say?

Hamer: They said something on the same order about we should accept the compromise and, you know, it was a moral issue. If we got a compromise-- you know, the two votes at large, and that meant that they would let me and Dr. Henry go in and sit down there and look foolish while the others were on the outside, or let Dr. Henry and Edwin King go in and they look foolish while all the sixty--you know, sixty-seven, sixty-six of us be on the outside and them two be on the inside. That was a big sin thought. That was wrong, because at one time they said you're the leader ain't you? And I said, I'm vice chairman of the delegation. You can go in and they told Dr. Henry, you can go in. Dr. Henry walked in and when I walked inside I turned around and

I said, are the others coming? He said, they're not coming. I said, then I'm not going. You see that woman standing in line there? I told one of the . . . , I said I see it. That's the wife of Michael . . . and she's a widow and if anybody was going to set in a seat, it's to be recognized, I would give her my seat. But until she can go in and the others can come in, I'm going to stand right here and I'm going to ~~stay~~ stay.

And Henry was hustling to get inside. . . . Doggone, he didn't give a damn. How can you respect a man like that? This is a woman have lost she have lost as much as anybody in Mississippi. . . . Negroes had lost in Mississippi, their husbands their wives, their brothers, their sisters, their . . . , and she lost her husband and she had every right to go in that place there. I couldn't walk out of there with my head up, and left her on the outside.

Interviewer: What happened afterwards when it was clear that you all would accept, that you went inside and sat in . . . ?

Hamer: Well, what happened, you know. You know how . . . white . . . are. They still wanted to do something for . . . So they would give us these little things--what's this little thing, identification cards--to get one or two of us in. . . . when we would get in we would give it to somebody else to slip him in, so we slipped all of the delegates in.

Another person in the room: That was real funny to the newsmen. They were . . . how all of 'em got in. . . .

~~H&K~~ Interviewer: But you didn't really see that as important?

Hamer: That was more important than anything 'cause they was going to keep most of them out, we got in anyway. That was important to me.

Interviewer: I mean the fact that you went and you sat in the seats through the rest of the convention.

Another interviewer: No they took them out after the first night.

Hamer: They took us ~~xxx~~ out. 'X 'Cause we was beginning to be a little ... in their pants. From then on when any of us try to get in they , the entrance was blocked. At the same time we ~~xxxx~~ had a short wave radio in their and we knowed the place was empty. More was on the outside than was on the inside. Inside 'cause we was talking to the folks ~~xxx~~ We asked them... and they no there ain't nobody in the hall... So we... You see we knowed what was in there.

Another interviewer: Somebody was testifying and they said that Johnson got on--they were testifying--and they immediately got a press conference and tell them to get you all off the air.

Hamer: I was testifying.

Interviewer: They beat him anyway because they played it back later.

Hamer: That's what some of them said, they taped it off. I didn't know what part had been cut off.

I_n interviewer: He did call a conference when you were testifying, is that true?
I'm settin' here

Hamer: I couldn't tell because ~~xxxx~~ before this mike, talking. My experience, it's not too many times that I tell it, that I can keep from crying. I was telling it you see. A couple people in the audience saw what was going

on.

Interviewer: Who might know about it?

Hamer: Lot of people, I don't know who..

Interviewer: Why do you think all these people, Roy Wilkins and all these people were so anxious to get you all to compromise? I don't see what they could have to gain. Do you think the President told them something?

Hamer: Let me tell you. I really don't know now. I wouldn't even dare who told them to say what, but at a pattern, it's, that's what been accepted for the past hundred years. You always just take a little taste and you say yes sir, thank you. You just accepts that, but when we rebelled then that made folks take a second look. We didn't take it.

To me it's very simple. If we was free almost a hundred years ago and if we are really free citizens what is we going to take a little something for? Just like if Mrs. White there cook a ple... and the ple is mine, it's mine well then you don't take it and dish out how ~~much~~ much I should have of my own ple. You just don't issue me my portion of ple if it's my ple. Well, wait man, let me have something to do with this. ~~XX~~ If it's any compromising let me say what I want. Now it wasn't mean that we was too ~~naive~~ naive , that we couldn't think, that wouldn't accepted a compromise. 'Cause Miss Edith Green from Oregon had a very good compromise there but it's.... Just like the ... we had in Washington, we challenged the seating of the representatives from Mississippi. It wasn't

any different. But you know a lot of people said, oh we really having gains. The Negroes now are doing fine. That's a few that they got picked out doing fine. The masses of folk are taking the same hell. That's what we're sick of. That's what we're absolutely sick of.

When you're meeting a secret agent. Would you think about a secret agent or, what you call 'em, CIA or any of them kind of folk, would ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~xxxx~~ trail me? We must be scared of outsiders, if they'd trail me. That's sad. That's the sickness you see and the only reason you see people don't trust other folk, don't trust me, ... the country. ~~xxxxxx~~ ... countries. If they know they would treat me right, he would feel what I would feel. But when you see a white folk following me, or anybody else, ~~as soon as~~ ^{this} a man know he's so full of dirt he don't trust ~~himself, he don't trust~~ me, cause he don't trust himself. When people start trusting themselves they'll trust me. "So thinketh a man, so is he." When your heart is so black that you don't see nothing good about it you is nothing yourself. And that's the truth.

We would be such a problem if people understood us as human beings. They never tried. You know even in college, if they going to have a race relations class, they don't have none of us there. The white folks going to be there and discuss us don't know anything what they discussing. Ain't that the truth? Race relations! Now how can he discuss us if we ain't there?

The sad part, now what's happening now is lot of white people, they don't want to admit it, but they scared to death and the only reason they scared, they scared of what they been doing to us. At night they can't sleep.

"Oh my goodness, what I been doing to him." See? This is that guilty complex. This is a man knowing that he been doing wrong and he can't even. . . .

Let me tell you something today. I have never, maybe I'm just foolish, but I could never treat nobody like we been treated. I wouldn't want a goat, if I know today if Mississippi would be taken over by all the black folk, nothing but Negroes, I'd fight that just as hard as I'm fighting this all white power. I'm concerned about people running the government but let it be people that we elect instead of pigs. I am sick of these hand-picked folk.

The Bible--at one time Christ. . . heaven and earth and he said before one of his word would fall the earth would pass away. And he said there would come a time when he would take it from the wise and from the poor and reveal it into. . . That's why you see leaders coming up. There's no way under the sun they can be stopped. No way. It's like a cancer. If you cut a person for cancer, it's got a hold somewhere else and you cut that place and . . . another place and you can't cursh it. Because the purpose right now in this whole United States is to get them Negroes ~~quiet~~ quiet and to kill this movement. . . . Because what Christ has said has been said and until all of the scriptures have been fulfilled, because when the time comes he will make the war cease, even to the end of the earth because God knows I believe in that Holy life.

That's stupid to some people, but I believe it. I believe it with enough

faith that made me what I am today because through prayer--prayer is the substance, faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not ... Some of the work we're doing today, we prayed for this a long time and today it's becoming a reality, an actual reality... Nobody will ever be able to kill out the ideas that's in the people now. There might be millions of people but God ~~can't~~ ^{going to} stand by these people because he knows they're right. 'Cause he didn't make one man to be white knight of all these folks, pull all the strings, just like we were puppets, pull the strings and we dance. It's wrong to make a great nation, you're going to have to work.

Interviewer: Mrs. Hamer when they were in that convention when they were giving you arguments about why you should accept the compromise did anyone ever say anything, well some people have said that Johnson was afraid that if he let you all be seated that all the South would go for Goldwater--

Hamer: They did anyway.

Interviewer: Right, they did anyway, but ~~they were~~ that Goldwater might win or something like that. Did ~~anyone~~ anyone ever raise that with you all say you all better give the compromise or Goldwater might win?

Hamer: I've heard that.

Interviewer: But they didn't give you that argument? You just heard it? What about this thing you were going to ask her about Rowe and Henry the convention. ... paper on that?

Another interviewer: talking about Aaron Henry and Rowe at the very beginning of the convention were telling the press that they didn't think that

they'd never be able to get enough credentials to, people on the credentials committee to support them, that they only had five states, in other words they were sort of advertising their weakness of the FDP

Hamer: Un hum, but you see, the part was it shocked them all, because this testimony turned the tide of the convention. It began to shake the people up. ~~ix~~ At that time, you know, it really shocked them that, you know, we could have got this much attention because they didn't figure these testimonies would have got the kind of attention that they did. I didn't know anything about Mr. Rowe and Dr. Henry saying all of this because all of this they hadn't discussed with us. In fact none of... you go up there and you know we won't get this and you know we won't get that because we went in hopes that something, you know. ~~W&N,XX~~

Well, I had a little feeling that some kind of tricks might have been pulled but I never would have thought that they would have compromised for two votes at large...

Interviewer: Can you remember anything else ab out the convention that might be helpful to history? Anything we haven't asked you?

Hamer: As I said when we tried to go into the regular Democratic Party and we couldn't and we, you know, held our own precinct meeting, local people because the first precinct meeting we went to, they had the doors locked and there wasn't nobody there. We held our own precinct meeting, right here in ... here. Eight of us. We elected our secretary and our chairman, our

delegates and our alternates and we passed a law to resolution (?) and we moved like that from the precinct level up to the county level and then from the county to the state ~~in New Orleans~~ ... the 26th of April, 1964 the Mississippi ~~Free~~ Freedom Democratic Party was organized at the Masonic temple in Jackson.

Interviewer: Who brought them together?

Hamer: You see, we had, the registration forms of the Freedom Democratic Party, Freedom Registration forms ~~wx~~, everybody that registered with the Freedom ~~Democratic~~ Democratic Party we have record and we have address, you know the address and all.

Interviewer: That was during the summer that was done?

Hamer: Yes,

Interviewer: In April who brought you together... and formed the FDP ... person or...?

Hamer: Well, SNCC was more effective with bringing the people together and then you see a lot of people think that SNCC is the Freedom Democratic Party but that's not true.. SNCC is separate from the Freedom Democratic Party cause SNCC is an organization and the Freedom Democratic Party is a political party. Lot of people wouldn't like to see it as a party but it's a party, it's political.

Interviewer: Who was at that '64 meeting, April '64? Were there any sort of planning meetings before that to plan that convention? Before with small groups of people in the state, who planned to have it?

Hamer: Well, we'd had planning sessions, you know.

Interviewer: People who were leaders, ~~like~~ like you and Aaron Henry, and people like that did you all come together and talk about it or what?

Hamer: No, people mostly decided, you know, in a sense it wasn't just a

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