

*Civil Rights History Project*  
*Interview completed by the Southern Oral History Program*  
*under contract to the*  
*Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History & Culture*  
*and the Library of Congress, 2015*

Interviewee: Freddie Greene

Interview Date: December 10, 2015

Location: Washington, D.C.

Interviewer: Emilye Crosby

Videographer: John Bishop

Length: 1 file; approximately 1 hour, 36 minutes

START OF RECORDING

Female 1: From the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian National Museum of African-American History and Culture.

Emilye Crosby: This is Emilye Crosby on December 10th, 2015. And we're with Freddie Green at the Library of Congress. This is part of the Civil Rights History Project, and it's co-sponsored by the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian National Museum of African-American History. John Bishop is also here. Thanks so much, again, for joining us. Can you start by telling us when and where you were born, and about your family?

FREDDIE GREENE: Sure. I was born in Greenwood, Mississippi, which is in the heart of the Mississippi Delta, in 1945. February the 15th, 1945. I grew up in a large, black family. Both my parents were originally from Mississippi and always lived there. My father in the early '60s had been involved off and on with the NAACP. So my father was a small businessperson. [He] had a house painting business where the majority of his work was to the white community. My mother had taught school up until the time she

married my father. She married my father when she was twenty-nine. At that stage in time, being twenty-nine and getting married was kind of late in life.

EC: Did she ever talk about that?

FG: Well, she talked about growing up in Greenwood. She actually grew up in Greenwood. She grew up in the exact same house that I grew up in. Actually, that house had been--. My great-grandmother had owned and built that house. My mother came after she married my father. My father was a farmer. He came with her to live on the farm. And to my mother, who had grown up in Greenwood, even though Greenwood was a very small thing--. Farming just was not for her. She couldn't--. She said it was just too quiet. It was too dark. There was nobody to talk to. Now, she had grown up in Greenwood in the 1600 block of Howard Street, which was just across the railroad from downtown Greenwood. So all of her life, she's pretty much been a city girl. She went to the Church of Wesley. She used to say that she and her mother went to Wesley every time the church doors opened. The church was two blocks from where they lived. My mother had had a kind of interesting life. She basically grew up in that house. Her mother owned a little florist shop. Her father owned a barbershop that was a few blocks away. So they were little businesspeople. But when my mother was a child, she had had a brother. The brother had gotten kicked in the head by a horse directly in front of the house. So as a result, it was just the two of them. My mother says that her mother became overly protective of her, because this was a traumatic experience of losing a child at five years old, directly in front of your house. It's something that you wouldn't think that would happen. Your two little kids are out front playing, but somebody ties a horse

and wagon to the tree that's outside. And the horse--. Inadvertently these two little kids go too close. The horse gets my uncle in the head.

EC: It must have been traumatic for the whole family.

FG: Yes. It was very, very traumatic. And my mother--. So from then on, my mother was the only child. Then she just went backwards and forwards all the time to church.

EC: It was all she was allowed to do.

FG: That's all she was allowed to do. She went to church. Though, in those years, in Greenwood, there was no--. The only school that she went to was a private school that she went to. Then she went away to go to high school. She went to Tougaloo to high school, during the '20s. Because at that time, Tougaloo had a high school. She went there to high school, and she also stayed there for college and stuff. Then she came back to live with her mother, and lived there [5:00] while she taught school up until she married my father.

EC: So that's an indication, I guess, of how well off her parents must have been, for her to be able to do that.

FG: Well, I think that--. Also, you have to consider the fact that it was only one child. It was only one child. I guess they were better off than most people, because you're talking about probably less than two percent of the black people in Leflore County owned property. So just due to the fact that her mother had inherited this house from her mother--. That did give her a little bit of a privilege. Now my father, in return had grown up on the farm, he and his brother. He only had one brother. My father could relate to

you, because my father went to--. When he got ready to high school and to college, he went to Alcorn.

EC: Out in the woods.

FG: Out in the woods. My daddy used to say that when they went to college, they went in the fall, and they didn't come home until the spring. You stayed through the entire year.

EC: Even Christmas and everything?

FG: All of that. You spent it all at school. You could not come home. Transportation--. So daddy says that the school would bring the wagon down to the train station to pick up the trunks. Then the boys and the girls would all follow the wagon back to school. That was his whole--. But it was nothing but country.

EC: It's still not a whole.

FG: It's still nothing but. So that was his idea of Lorman, was that he, he didn't like it. He thought it was too rural. He wanted to see something else. So then he convinced his folks, they sent him one year. He went to Tuskegee Institute to, then, to take up shoemaking, because he wanted to do something. He didn't--. He said he really didn't want to farm, but he wanted to do, but he wanted to work for himself. He had a thing that he did not want to work for anybody.

EC: Did his parents own their own land?

FG: They owned their farm, yes. Out in the area where he lived, his family owned there. There was another--. Two other black families around that also owned their land. We're talking about--. Because my father was born in 1900. His brother was born in 1898. We're talking about an older generation of people. It's basically--. There

were these little pockets where people, families, had owned land, and they had held it very, very tight. People lived off the land. They farmed. They raised animals. They had gardens and all. Daddy used to talk about the time he and his brother saw somebody stealing the truck. But they didn't realize that it was his truck that the guys were stealing. They saw these men struggling, pushing this truck. They got off the back porch to go out to help. As they started down the road, the guys took off running. Daddy said it wasn't until they got close that they realized that that's why they were running. It was their truck that they were taking.

EC: Oh, that's funny.

FG: Yes. That's the way it was. People helped people.

EC: Did your grandparents still have that farm when you were a child? Would you visit?

FG: Well, my grandparents did. My uncle sold it. My grandparents all--. Three of my grandparents died the year I was first grade, which was in 1950. One died in [19]51, the fall of [19]51. The other two died during the spring in 1952. I was first grade. My uncle actually sold the farm, probably, in the late '50s. Because he also--. My uncle was one of the two black postman in Greenwood.

EC: So that's a good job.

FG: Oh, yes. That was an extremely good job. Daddy used to say that--. [10:00] Uncle and this other man, Mr. Dickson, was the postman. They had very, very good jobs. There was another man, Mr. Thompson, who cleaned up the post office. All of these were definitely considered to be very, very good jobs, because they basically had benefits. My father always contributed towards his social security. My daddy had a

strong thing about that he felt that that was going to support him as he grew older. My parents had grown up--. My father, 1900. My mother was born in 1907. Of course, they knew about history before social security, and how people did not have any food and stuff, and have the ability to support themselves. And obviously, if there wasn't social security, that would definitely--. People working as maids in somebody's house, and then field hands, had no pension plans.

EC: Well, and weren't eligible for social security.

FG: And were not eligible for social security.

EC: So there wouldn't have been that many people in the community doing it. So that's a kind of unusual--.

FG: Well, yeah. My daddy did it. So did--. He had another good friend, Mr. Hilton, who also had another little business. I think that--. They both used to talk backwards and forwards with other people who had small businesses, trying to encourage a person to do it. The real question, and what daddy always said, was the question of whether this was going to work. It was talking about something that you were told that you had never experienced, and never knew anyone else who had experienced it. So you had to have faith that when you're doing up this form, and depositing money over in an account that's supposed to be there for you when you reach a certain age to be able to retire. And daddy had faith. His friend did. But, as he said, most people didn't. From time to time, when he had other painters to work for him, most of them--. No one wanted to do that. As far as they were concerned, you're giving your money away.

EC: They didn't have any experience with how it worked, or that it really did work, that they really would get a pension.

FG: No. No one had any experience. You're talking about--. In [19]35, when this is really first being introduced. You're also talking about a generation of most black people who didn't have much formal education, and you're doing everything that you can to survive. No one is really providing you with a huge amount of information on how this is working.

EC: It is really kind of interesting to think about, right?

FG: Yeah. This is all before the internet.

EC: It is really an act of faith, isn't it?

FG: Yes. It's an act of faith. It's an act of faith. However--.

EC: I guess it says something about your dad.

FG: Yeah. He just had faith that this was really going to work. And as it turns out, the social security process was probably one of the things that was able to help my father. Because as we begin to, as a family, get involved in the movement, less and less jobs people called daddy for. So, as a result, in 1964, he literally had to retire on his social security. Because he was not getting work. People would not call him for a job. Now, the good thing is that it correlated with the same time that he was really eligible for social security. If he had been a younger person--.

EC: It would have been much harder.

FG: It would have been much harder. I think that that was the other advantage that I had with growing up with older parents. They had a little bit more advantage than people who were much younger.

EC: So that when the movement puts the--. When being in the movement brings pressure against your family, they were in a position where they could withstand it.

FG: They could withstand it. They owned the house, and daddy was able to draw his social security. I think that that was--. That made life easier.

EC: Before we start talking about the movement, can you talk about what your schools were like? Can you give us a picture of what Greenwood was like?

FG: OK. Consider the fact I grew up on Howard Street. [15:00] If you looked at a map then, the 600 block was--. There was a railroad track that really separated the street, the block that I lived in from downtown. If the 500 block of Howard Street--. That would have been Goldberg. That was a shoe store. All downtown Greenwood is going that way. We are also on the edge of the streets going--. So that's going north. If you then were talking about the east-west, streets go over about four other blocks, and then you're in the white neighborhoods. We are technically living on--. Even though that's the oldest part of the city, where I grew up, it's really on the edge of the black community when I was growing up. We could technically, at my house, hear the white kids over at the playground at the park. You could hear them in the park playing. We're that close to that community. I went to the, the school--all the black kids walked to school. I do believe all the white kids walked to school, except for the kids who lived outside the city limits. That was always one of the big problems that my father had. They used to say all the time they had school busses that they went around and picked up kids in the counties, white kids in the counties, and brought them into school. So that they went to better schools that his tax dollars were really paying for, that his children



couldn't go to. My schools were all segregated. The schoolbooks in my school came from the white schools. As white kids got new textbooks, they then shipped over textbooks to the black schools. Considering the fact that I started school in 1951, so you're talking about. I graduated in 1963, and schools were still totally segregated in Greenwood.

EC: So much for Brown, right?

FG: Yeah. So much for Brown. I think they did not even start desegregating the schools in Greenwood until 1970.

EC: Really? They didn't have freedom of choice?

FG: They didn't have freedom of choice. But what did happen is--after the Supreme Court decision--what Mississippi did do is they began to build high schools in small communities. Now, Greenwood was one of the small communities that had a high school. As a result, a lot of black families that could send their children and found people for their kids to be able to stay with to be able to go to high school.

EC: So people out in the county?

FG: People out in the county and people like that. But that was something that you had to organize yourself, with no system in that. If you were lucky enough to know somebody for your kids to be able to stay with.

EC: In Claiborne County, after Brown, they did like you're talking about. They built a new school. But at the same time, they actually started providing buses to bring black children from the county into Port Gibson. That's one of the things they did after Brown.

FG: Well, they definitely built high schools. The high school prior to Brown became the junior high school. Then they built a new high school, and they just began to build high schools all around.

EC: Did they start bringing county kids in toward the end?

FG: No. What they did do in the early '60s, is they built a county school for the kids. Then they had to go to the county school. So they did pick them up, for the kids, and have a man to ( ) that they built in the '60s. That was solely for the county kids.

EC: What are some of your first memories of race, being aware of race?

FG: Well, first is we didn't--. Schools were all segregated. We only went downtown with our parents when we went specifically to buy something. School clothes, when it's time to go. [20:00] The whole process was that you--we went what we called window shopping to look at the things. You went and looked in the window. We did that with mama and daddy. One of the biggest things I remember, is my folks always talked about keeping you safe. They did not want you--. Downtown, they didn't want you around different areas. A block from where I lived, there was a guy who had a little corner store. He was a white guy. My father didn't allow us to go in there, because he said that Huges didn't treat people right. He did not want you to deal with that. Growing up in a completely segregated community like that, you really don't--. Since there's no real reason to go downtown, my contact was with all black people most of the time. We had a telephone. We were probably one of the few people who had what's considered to be a straight line. Because a lot of the people had what's called a party line, and there's several different people who share the same line. So, as a result, they

do--. But my father said that, for his business, he needed this private line. So he had this line. But the phone was strictly for business. It was where people called him about jobs and stuff. We answered the phone, took messages, and all of that for him. But the phone was clearly business. Occasionally, somebody would come by to ask him about work--. Come by to see him about work. As I said, these were all white people. I did notice across the street from us there were people who came by to pick up their maids. There were some people who picked up their maids and carried them backwards and forwards to work. There was also people who dropped off their laundry. People did ironing for folks. There was all of that. But just coming directly in contact with white people, we just didn't do it.

We used to--. The superintendent of schools was always white. And the superintendent of schools used to come to the schools once a year for commencement. He would make--. He was always first on the program, and he would make his five or ten minute little speech, and then he would exit. During the time when I was in high school, our football team was really good. They were Big Eight champions. That was the division that we actually played in. So what would happen is, they would occasionally bring in the white football team to watch. They set up these special bleachers down for the boys from that team to watch the team play football. Then they--. Football is big in the South. They used to do that. They used to come by for that. But there was no interaction. I could not tell you a single person's name that was a white person that was growing up at the same time there. Because I had no interaction with them whatsoever. My father was determined that we were not going to work--. A lot of

people did babysitting and little stuff like that. But my father was, "No." He did take my brothers out in painting houses with him.

EC: But they were working for him, not for--.

FG: But they were working for him, not for that. That was during the summertime. But for the girls--and there were four of us--none of us were involved in doing that. It was one of the things that--. To making sure that he kept his family safe. My father had a real proudness about the fact that he felt he was able to support his family. He felt very, very good about that.

EC: Did you have a sense of him being protective at the time? Did you understand that?

FG: I think I understood it more--. I do remember when Emmett Till was killed. His, actually, body was brought into a funeral home there in Greenwood. There was all this whispering about what really happened to the boy, and stuff. My father was always very protective, and always saying that if you don't do what he said, things could happen. He wanted to make sure [25:00] that nothing happened to any of his children.

EC: Were you aware of Till's--that his body was in Greenwood?

FG: There was a whispering about that after the body was taken out. I remember my parents had said that the funeral homes were all nervous about which one of them--none of them really wanted it, because nobody wanted to get involved in what had happened. They were worried about what had happened. My mother had once talked about that she had heard when she was growing up about a person being burned alive. All of these are gruesome tales, and all of this that--. One is always cautious about what could really happen to you.

EC: Yeah, I guess so.

FG: It was always being very, very careful that nothing was going to happen. Mississippi was considered to be a complete dry state when I was growing up. It was dry in terms of no liquor, no beer, or no nothing. But there were people who sold liquor and stuff. My father used to always say that one of the problems with the people who were bootlegging and all of that, is that they basically had made a pact with the folks downtown. He said that, "You have to be very careful about them. They have to provide information so they can stay in business." He said that, "Sometimes, if they don't have information, they make up stuff on people." So they would--. A combination of those folks that daddy was just saying, "You've got to watch out for." So you're just very, very careful. It was always the question of being careful about what you did and where you went. Daddy would tell you--. If he was here, he would say, "I know all the good people in town. I know all the bad people, too." That's the reason why you have to do that.

EC: I've been in Greenwood, and it seems to me that Greenwood is as stark as anyplace I've ever been in terms of the contrast between the white part of town and the black part of town. Did you ever have any reason to go in the white part of town?

FG: Never.

EC: Did you know how that difference was?

FG: I knew how that difference was, mainly because I had--. I did have my tonsils removed. The hospital was over in the white part of town. But, now, Greenwood--. Not only in terms of that, but Greenwood has a large Jewish community. It did. And they had their little community where they lived. Daddy used to say it's the north Greenwood. North Greenwood was considered to be--. These were the old folks who

probably traced their roots back to the plantation owners. These were people who really had money. Then, there was the regular white folks who, the only thing they had going for themselves is that they were white. They went to better schools than we did. Then there was the Jewish community. When I was growing up throughout the black community, there were Chinese people. The Chinese people had these little small grocery stores. But the Chinese people lived above their stores. Now their children went to the white school--.

EC: But they lived in the black the community above the stores?

FG: But they lived in the black community.

EC: That's an interesting experience.

FG: I know people that were over near the school where they lived. They lived--. They used to play with the Chinese kids in the neighborhoods. Now, there were no Chinese over in our neighborhood, so I definitely never played with them. A block from us was a little strip where about four different white families lived with children. But we never played with them.

EC: For people who can't visualize it, can you paint just a quick picture of what the difference is between the different parts of town? How they looked?

FG: I think that in most of the black community were what we called shotgun houses. They were little. They were houses that were built, also, on--. They set on pillars, just about, and a brick stack, [30:00] of bricks. Three room houses, one right behind the other one, throughout the black community. Some places there were sidewalks. There were some places that there were not sidewalks. There was also-- throughout the black community--there were places where there were not sidewalks,

where you went across a plank. Which really means that you're really going across an open sewer. That's how people--. That's probably how it was in the majority of the black community. Now, as I said, in the older part of the black community, over in the area where I lived, we're still talking about frame houses. We're talking about--. These are just older houses. Considering that my mother was born in 1907, and her mother had been born in 1874, they had all lived in this house. Over time, the family had added more and more space onto it. My great-grandmother had originally owned that land, so it was like a little piece here and there. Now, because we lived inside the city, you were not allowed to raise chickens or anything like that. People did. My grandmother had had a garden. My mother was not into gardening, so she did not. When my grandmother was alive there was fresh vegetables, and stuff. Otherwise, we bought those from the farmers who came into town with that. But in the white community, you're talking about--. In north Greenwood there's these huge Antebellum houses, with the vines growing on them. Some of those are really beautiful, back in--that's in the olden days. Then, in the regular white community, there was still frame houses. Brick houses are an exception to the rule. That's really, when you're talking about the swank. Then, right in the early '60s, they built up what they called a housing development. People were coming back from the war. They were finally able to get--. Because, I think part of the problem is that there was no way to get financing for a house. So that then these GIs were coming back, and they did build up this little development, which was directly across the street from the high school. That was a--. But that was, still, you're talking about four-room houses, a very small place. But at least this was--. For the first time, people began to see an opportunity to be able to buy a place, or to have more space. I think that's the problem, is

just having decent housing rather than all of these families having to live in these three-room shotgun houses.

EC: I've heard--and I don't know if this is true--that some of those shotgun houses were moved from plantations to some of the towns.

FG: I'm not sure. I'm not sure. You're talking about, really--. You're talking about frame houses, and frame houses that, over time, maintenance is not done. People don't own the houses, so you've got--. The wood just deteriorates over time.

EC: It's inevitable.

FG: Yeah. That's part of the reason why they painted, to protect the wood and stuff. So you're talking about these frame houses as being there. You're also talking about large families that have to live there, because this is the only place that they actually have to live. So it was kind of a little rough.

EC: What do you remember about--how did you first encounter the movement?

FG: Well, my father had been involved in the NAACP. My father and mother really had registered to vote in the late [19]'50s. Even though they actually never voted, they had registered to vote. My father had been involved, off and on, with the NAACP. Then in 1962--.

EC: Did they talk to you about that?

FG: They did. They just mentioned that they had done it. But it was like--. People talked about registering to vote. This was [a] whispering kind of thing. This was not something that you wanted to advertise. It was always--. My father definitely [35:00] always let you know that you never knew who you were talking to, and that some



people would just cause trouble. But in 1962, my brother Dewey had just returned from doing a tour in the Navy. He applied and was going to, at that time, it was Mississippi Vocational College, and now it's Mississippi Valley State University in Itta Bena. He was going there, but he wanted to go to Ole Miss. So he applied--.

EC: Do you know why?

FG: Well, in Mississippi, if you went to college, the only thing you could take was education. He didn't want education. He wanted to find something else to do, so he applied to be the second black student at Ole Miss. Now, he did not get accepted, but that began to cause a lot more attention on my family. Daddy said that he got a call from the mayor to come downtown. They wanted to talk to him. "Come downtown as quick as you can." Daddy just said that he said that, he wasn't--. He had just come home from work. He said he figured he'd go down and see the man tomorrow. He went down. He told him, "Your boy applied to go to Ole Miss, and we want you to tell him to take back his application. Daddy said that he said he told him, "Well, I can't tell him to take back his application." He said, "I didn't tell him to apply, but I won't tell him to take it back." He said that the mayor told him, "Well, you better think about it." Daddy said that's how that whole conversation ended. He didn't get in, so then he went to work for the Mississippi Free Press, which was a small little newspaper that was given out in Jackson. Dewey began to meet other politically active people. Bob and all the people that was--. Because at that time SNCC had people down in southwest Mississippi. He also met Medgar Evers.

EC: Bob Moses is who he met? Bob Moses and Medgar Evers?

FG: He met Bob Moses. He met Sam Block. He met Willie Peacock, Reggie Robinson. All the people who were then down in the southern part of--. These are people down in the southern part. He also met--I can't think of his name right now, over in Cleveland, who was--.

EC: Amzie Moore?

FG: Amzie Moore. Amzie Moore. And Amzie said--Amzie was interested in the Free Press, because the Free Press probably was the only kind of paper that basically was giving out factual information on what was really going on. So he and Amzie had cultivated this relationship. He said, "Well, Amzie said, 'I'll help distribute your paper, and you can help me get things in the paper.'" This was how things basically was done. Making things work. So all of this began to hit, and then Willie Peacock and Sam Block came into Greenwood that summer. So this is like the summer--. We're into the fall of [19]62, and they're coming in and stuff. I just began to go to mass meetings, because they began to have those mass meetings. Now, we talked about mass meetings all the time. I must have--. We give a new definition to mass. Because you think about mass as being this huge crowd. Sometimes it may have been twenty people. But we called them mass meetings.

EC: What was it like? Can you describe any?

FG: A mass meeting--. There was the Hollis version that comes in with the singing to arouse people, to try to encourage people to register to vote. So it's just starting out with singing, to give some type of spiritual [40:00] uplifting, and to encourage people, to get people involved. Then there's different speakers from time to time--Medgar Evers and Bob and all of this--all to talk to people about trying to get folks

to register to vote. We are going to all of these. I'm going. My brother George, who was eighteen months older than me, George is really going. We are all involved in trying to do that. This is that--.

EC: Would your parents be going?

FG: My father did. My mother was not very much involved. She did not go, but my father did. We go to all of this now. At this time, [in] Mississippi in Leflore County, surplus food is being distributed to people, because people are really having a hard time surviving. Mississippi, in the Delta area, so many of these people had been cotton pickers. In [19]62 was probably the first time they began to introduce the cotton pickers into the electric machines to pick the cotton. The people then are not making much money because they're picking up after the pickers have come through, the machines. It's a very hard winter for them. It's cold. They haven't made much money. People are trying to survive. They really do need the surplus food. We're not talking about luxury, we're talking about powdered milk, come cheese products, peanut butter. But this is what people needed to survive. In Leflore County, they discontinued the food, the surplus food, to all these people. This is as a result of people getting involved in the movement. That made it extremely difficult. As a result, throughout the north--. Dick Gregory rented a plane and brought food down. The food was distributed from Wesley Methodist Church, which is two block from where I lived, and my church. We helped with distributing the food, because I'm too young to register to vote. This is one of the things I can do. That's when it became very clear. My daddy was definitely saying, he said, "They are trying their best to starve these people to death. All they have is this little dried milk and peanut butter, and they're discontinuing the commodities for the people."

EC: So on the one hand, there's less need for labor, and on the other hand, people are trying to register to vote.

FG: Right. As a result, Mississippi says, "We are going to do everything we can to stop you from doing this."

EC: What was it like for you? You're a high school student, and here's Dick Gregory chartering a plane to come to your community.

FG: I was not that familiar with who Dick Gregory was. He was an entertainer, but I was not--. But it was a real big surprise, and it was a welcome idea that somebody really did care about these people. It was a big effort, when he brought in the plane and brought in food and stuff. Then, even when Ivanhoe Donaldson was driving down a truckload of food from the North, that was also the idea that people really were trying their best to help.

EC: What was your job at the church?

FG: To help distribute the food. We were dividing up stuff, bagging or boxing up things, helping distribute it to families.

EC: What do you remember about the SNCC workers coming into town? What was your impression of them?

FG: I felt very good, because they were like--. One, it was people who always talked to you about different things. It was like--. Stokely would tell me about growing up in New York, and about his family being from Trinidad. It was a lot of information. It was an exposure to something else other than Mississippi as it was. People used to [45:00] watch the soap operas on television, and it's just like--. All of a sudden it was very clear to me that there was an outside world that you could see other than things that

you read about in the books. Because, growing up, there was nothing to do. The library used to be--. The public library was not open to us, but what they used to do is that, at the junior high school, they would open up that library two days during the week. So at least you could go and check out books. But there was no summer programs. There was nothing to do. As a high school person growing up, there was nothing. Now, all of a sudden, I have all of these people who are coming down, who are college students, and they are going to all of the schools who I have just heard about. Harvard, Yale, Howard. I had never known anybody to go to all of this. So I just feel there is so much information out there, and my father is encouraging me to do it. I can remember, I was a senior in high school and I met Eleanor Holmes Norton who was in law school.

EC: Did that change your sense of what was possible?

FG: It definitely made it very clear there was a lot of things that were possible. She was going to Yale. These were--. And Tim Jenkins. I met all of these when I was in high school. So it just gave me--. And people talked to you about other things that were going on.

EC: Who were some of the people locally in your community who were leaders?

FG: Well, I guess when you talk about leaders, I guess most people think about the teachers as being--. But none of the teachers were involved in the Civil Rights Movement. They were not. I think most of it was people were terrified of losing their jobs. June Johnson's mother was--. Mrs. Johnson was involved in the movement. The McGhee family who owned a farm--. They didn't live directly in Greenwood, but on the outside of Greenwood. They were very involved in the movement. Reverend Johnson

who had had this little church. His church was called the First Christian Church up until he had--. He had the first mass meeting held at his church. Then the white folks said that he could not be the First Christian Church, because they had the First Christian Church downtown. He had had this church as the First Christian Church for years. But then the white people said, "No, you can't." So he had to change the name of the church. I can't think of now what the name of his church is, but his church had to--. Even though clearly there was--. Everyone would know which was which. But he had to change the name. He was, Aaron Johnson, he was a big activist in the whole big movement. Tucker, Sterling Tucker, was another minister that was involved. You had ministers who would get out and do things. You had the McGhee family, you had the Johnsons, and you had us the Greens. You pretty much--. People were afraid. It became very, very clear to me that people were definitely very much afraid. They were afraid that you were going to make something happen to them.

EC: Do people start avoiding?

FG: They just didn't want to be involved in the movement. It was clear lines between people who were movement-involved and people who were not. During March of [19]63, after my brother George had attended a meeting over at the SNCC office, when he came home, somebody evidently had followed the car that had dropped him off. Somebody came by and blasted the house with shotguns, through the front door and through the front bedroom. [50:00:00] This was all the scare tactics that were happening to people.

EC: Did it make you afraid?

FG: No. If anything, my father said that, “This is a clear indication that we have to do something. They’re doing things to us no matter whether we do something or not. We have to change the way things are.” However, for some of the people who I knew at school, they did not--. Their parents didn’t want them involved with us, because they were afraid that we were going to get them in trouble. That was the whole fear, is that you were going to get me in trouble. It was my senior year in high school, and people were applying to schools. They’re trying to get scholarships, and they don’t want you to do anything that may jeopardize their chance for something to happen.

EC: But you felt confident with the support of your parents?

FG: I did. As far as I’m concerned, my parents were--my father was definitely very, very supportive of us being involved in the movement and stuff. I went on that September to Dillard University in New Orleans. But it was like-- I did not want to go to school in Mississippi. I wanted to go somewhere, to see something. I was also, at that time, interested in nursing, and Dillard had a nursing program. It was the first time I had ever been to Dillard was when I took the train. My folks carried me to Winona which was twenty-five miles away, and took the train down and went to school.

EC: That’s how you got to know Dillard, was by being there.

FG: That’s how I got to know Dillard. There was no college visit.

EC: A different world, wasn’t it?

FG: Yeah.

EC: Were you around when they had the festival out on Mrs. McGhee’s farm, with different singers, and--.

FG: Oh, yes, indeed. There's no question about it. Pete Seeger and all of that. Pete Seeger came down. Peter, Paul, and Mary, and all of that. The papers talked about them all as being communists. Daddy said that, "They talk about everybody who wants to do something to help the black folks." That was a big concert, and I think that it was one of the kinds of things that helped people like me see that there were other people who definitely thought that you deserved an opportunity to be able to do something.

EC: Do you remember the day? Do you remember being out on the farm, what it was like?

FG: I remember being out on the farm. I remember hearing Pete Seeger.

EC: Did the Freedom Singers perform?

FG: Mm-hmm. Yeah. That was a big, big cultural enrichment for the black community. See, I think it was those kinds of things--. It was also as the Free Southern Theater began to travel throughout Mississippi and do plays, that it became very clear that you could get a chance to see other kinds of activities, that you were not just relegated to a segregated school with no opportunities to do something. This was the encouragement to do something else. I honestly think that teachers in school always--. They taught the schoolwork, that's all. There was clearly a line that they--they didn't talk about doing other things. I guess part of it was because all of them had either gone to Jackson State, or they had gone to Alabama State. These were all teachers, and education was the only thing that they knew. They didn't think about how things could be.

EC: What was it like for you to be so involved in the movement and then leave to go to college?



FG: That was very hard. It was very hard, because when it was time for me to go to college, we had just had some big demonstrations in Greenwood. They had arrested my brother George, and MacArthur Cotton, and Hollis. There was a big group of them that were down in Parchman. They had sent them down [55:00] to Parchman. They arrested them, and they had the trials, and transferred them on down to Parchman probably within a day of the whole big process.

EC: What would they be charged with?

FG: Trespassing. Trespassing was always--. Since we lived so close to downtown, when they actually had the police dogs, we could hear the dogs barking at my house. The dogs would go into town. The dogs are barking. They had sicced the dogs on the people for the marches. Then they arrested the group of people, sent them down to Parchman, and now it's time for me to go away to college.

EC: And your brother's in Parchman?

FG: And my brother's in Parchman.

EC: You two went through school together, right?

FG: Yes.

EC: You were almost like twins.

FG: Yes. We had gone to school together. I was really concerned. I remembered talking to my daddy about that being very concerning. I remember talking with Jim Forman. Jim Forman was a good mentor for me. I really did like him very much. I remember saying, and Jim saying, "Well, don't worry. We're going to look out for George, for you. You go on and get your schooling." He said, "Because this is going to help you, and you're going to be able to do so much more when you come back." So I

went off to Dillard for my freshman year, and I was there. I was at Dillard when they bombed the church in Alabama. The girls were killed. That was really, very, very shocking, because it seemed as if nothing was ever going to stop. There had been all of this. This is also after the time Medgar Evers had been killed, and the gunshots in my house. It's just seeing--. It was very hard studying and stuff, and being separated from all that was going on, because at Dillard, nobody was concerned. Nobody was interested in the movement. It was like they did not have any student group at all. Now, I did make connections with Tulane. Cathy Cage was over at Tulane in the Newman School.

EC: She had been in Albany?

FG: Yes. She had been somewhere in southwest Georgia, but I can't remember--. She had been somewhere, because someone had given her my name and told her I was at Dillard. She came over, because, during the time when I was at Dillard, rules and regulations for girls in schools was extremely strict. My rules were tighter than my mom and dad had ever had. So Cathy could come over to visit me, but I couldn't go to visit her. I went to visit with her, and I had to get parents' permission for her to be able to take me, for me to ride in the car to go to Tulane. Because Tulane did have some student group that wasn't that active, but they were at least a group.

EC: It was something.

FG: Yeah, since Dillard had nothing. I got involved, and went over to see them after I had gotten my parents' permission, a letter from my parents and all of that. And you've got to send all of this by mail, because we don't have the fast letters of communication. That was very interesting times, just being there. Then I find out from my brother George that there's going to be this big summer project the summer of [19]64.

Of course, I'm all interested in doing that, but since I'd been away from home, I don't want to go back to Greenwood. I want to go somewhere. So George tells me that he's going to be working on a project in McComb, Mississippi. He said, "I'll talk to daddy, and let's see about whether it's going to be OK for you to come to McComb." So I go. George helped me get daddy and mama to agree for me to go work in McComb during the summer of [19]64. But prior to the summer of [19]64, I went to the orientation up in Ohio.

EC: Was your brother--did he have more freedom than you did? [1:00:00]

FG: Oh, yeah. It's no question about it. Partially because one, he was older. Partially because he was a boy. There was no question about it. They were much, much more--rules were much more strict on girls than they were on boys. George could drive. Actually, George taught me to drive. My father had taught my oldest two brothers to drive when George was a little boy. He was younger than them, and he used to--. When daddy would go to sleep, he would steal the car to teach. So George technically taught himself to drive. But he was--.

EC: I heard he was some kind of driver.

FG: Yeah. He was determined to drive. So he learned to drive, and then he taught me to drive. George was a big car person. Loved to drive all around. He convinced me to come to McComb. I went to McComb. [I] went to the orientation up in Ohio, and then we came back to McComb. But I was here in Washington, because the group that was going to go to McComb came from Ohio over to Washington to try to see--. The volunteers. We came with the volunteers over here to try to meet with their

congressional representatives to ask for additional protection for them while we were in Mississippi during the summer project.

EC: Why was that? Can you explain why?

FG: Partially, the group that was going to be in southwest Mississippi, because they figured the southwest was going to be worse. So we came in to discuss with the congresspeople, the representatives for the volunteers who were going on that project. We were here when the word came to Ohio that Schwerner, Chaney, and Goodman had been kidnapped. Then we got that message, and we went immediately back to Ohio for that. Now, there's no question about it, when I arrived in Ohio, it was very clear everybody felt that the people were dead. I think that among the staff, the SNCC staff and the whole summer project staff, they definitely felt that they were dead. The question was what Mississippi or what the FBI in the bay was going to do anything about it. So that group organized a search group that then went into Mississippi to try to look for them. But I'm sure you recognize that whole story of what happened. I went on to McComb, and our group--. We divided up the work in McComb. There was the freedom schools. There was the people who canvassed to try to get it. We also took turns with cleaning up the house. We had this one freedom house that all eleven of us were staying there. In that process our house--. We used to take turns supposedly staying away to guard, to protect everybody else. Unfortunately, the night before that happened, we had had this big staff meeting there at the house, trying to decide whether it was time for the other volunteers to come down there. Because we had been down there for two weeks, and we needed help.

EC: Can you explain why there was a delay with the other volunteers?

FG: Well, they wanted to make sure that it was safe, and so first we just carried in half the volunteers went into that group. Because McComb was considered to be a hotbed, so whether it was going to be safe. We went down for two weeks, worked hard, and they just felt that things had gone very well. We had a big staff meeting there at the house, everybody voted for the other volunteers to come except my brother George, who felt that it was not--. He said, "I don't want to be responsible for somebody getting hurt. So we bring down more people, it's going to be more responsibility." But since we voted for it, he was outvoted. That night, the house was bombed. Basically, somebody [1:05:00] really walked up to the garage door and put down a couple sticks of dynamite. It took out the garage door. It shattered windows in houses for people from two blocks away. No one was seriously hurt. Curtis Hayes, who was sleeping very close to the door, had fragments of glass that were really implanted in him. But nobody really got seriously hurt. My brother George, the morning after the whole bombing, drove Curtis back up to Jackson, so that he could be examined by a doctor, so we could make sure that nothing really had gone on, that no one was really hurt.

EC: What was it like to be in that situation?

FG: I heard this loud explosion, and I'm asleep. It woke me up, and I instantly thought they were out there playing. I couldn't understand--. It was like, I came out of the room, and somebody yelled, "Get down! Get down!" Then, as it turns out--. It was like all of a sudden, and then it was like we were--. The other guys were--. People were on the floor, and it was like, "Something has happened." And it was like, all of a sudden we were crawling towards the garage, and you can see that half of the house has been taken away, where it's been really bombed. That was really very frightening. The police

came, and they pretended like they didn't understand what had happened. They said, "What did y'all do to this house?" It's a strange kind of thing. Then a call is made to Jackson, and also to Greenwood, which is where the national office for SNCC was the summer of [19]64. They temporarily moved the national office to Greenwood. So they relayed over what had happened down there, and George is going to take Curtis into Jackson as soon as daylight comes into see the doctor. The next day, you're walking around--. We decided that we have to--. To keep the community calm, we have to go on as a normal day, canvassing and all. But as we were walking down the street, it's very clear people are closing their doors when they see you. This is all the fear, that people are really very, very much afraid. They are just very afraid that something is going to happen, and we're trying our best to act as normal, and keep things going as normally as possible.

EC: Were there any whites in McComb who spoke out against the violence or anything?

FG: Not really. What there was--. And I can't think of the family doing the--.

EC: Heffners?

FG: Yes. This is the relationship, because their side of the story and what actually happened is slightly different. There was a minister from Oregon who had known him while they were in the military. They were--.

EC: Had known the Heffner family?

FG: The Heffners. Yeah. He had known the Heffners during the military. Over time, the families had exchanged Christmas cards backwards and forwards. Then

when he came there, he wanted to go and visit them, because this is somebody that he'd known from the military, and he wanted to go and visit.

EC: So this is one of the volunteers?

FG: This is one of the volunteers. He's a minister.

EC: And so he's going to visit this--.

FG: He wants to go and visit. We all have this discussion about whether this visit should take place. Then they decided that he could go, but he was also going to take with him one of the other volunteers that was there. We picked out the one guy that he was going to take, Dennis Sweeney, who was a Stanford student. White, blonde, blue eyes, you know. The two of them could very easily pass off as father and son, father and uncle. They would not be noticeable. They would go and visit. So technically they went to visit the Heffners. [1:10:00] As the Heffners now tell the story, that they made the overture. But it actually happened the other way around. The minister went in to visit them. Naturally, of course, he's shocked to see him standing on his doorstep. But the Heffners were what's considered to be a--. Their daughter had been the runner up to Miss Mississippi. They were a respected family. They owned the hardware store in downtown. But as a result of this visit, then from that point on, the white folks there gave them a complete hard time. They, in return, left. But there were none who came out to our support.

EC: Nobody's saying anything in the face of even the house being bombed, right?

FG: Even that, the house being bombed. No. No one is saying anything. The house is bombed. All around the county there were, I think, nine different churches that were set on fire, black churches that were set on fire. And nobody is saying anything.

EC: It must have made it very hard to do the work.

FG: It was. It was extremely hard. Because it was like people-- You were all-- One, you could die. Secondly, you could definitely lose what little that you have. People are all just very much afraid. So you are definitely putting your life on the line.

EC: Were you involved in organizing the MFTP that summer?

FG: Well, that's basically what we were doing. We're canvassing, getting people. We're going to set up little meetings to vote for our delegates and all of that. That's basically what we were-- That's the project that I'm working on. Some people were dealing with the freedom schools that were going on. It was a very short summer, so we were trying to get that organized, and get our delegates selected. Then I go up with them to Atlantic City for the convention, the Democratic convention.

EC: What was that like?

FG: That was definitely a mind-blowing event. One, it's something that I had never considered was possible, that we could go, that we could even go. My father said, "I don't care whether they seated us or not. We showed everybody that it was possible for us to go, and we could present our case for the whole country to see." I think that was probably one of the biggest things, that people really did feel that now at least it's opened up. So when Ms. Hamer is making her speech that becomes a worldwide, that the people-- It's like, all of a sudden, people know what they are doing to us. And now they have to make their decision about which side they're really on.



EC: Were you disappointed at the compromise that was offered?

FG: Well, I must admit, I really thought we were going to win. I honestly felt that the delegates were going to say, "Yes, you all are the legitimate group. You should have the seats." But I think that what it did expose me to, finally, that--. I just thought it was just Mississippi that treated us like that, not realizing that Mississippi was able to do that because the rest of the country didn't care. I think that that's when it really became very, very clear, that it wasn't just bad white folks in Mississippi. There were a lot of these people, and bad white folks in Mississippi had been able to do all of this to all of us down in Mississippi because the rest of the people did not care.

EC: What did--

FG: After that summer I went back to Dillard for my second year. That was the hardest year. It was just very hard. It was very hard, because I definitely felt that we needed to do something to make changes. I felt that we needed to make changes, and everybody that I was going to school with kept saying, "Well, you finish school, you [1:15:00] get yourself a good job, and you can have a good life." I just didn't feel that that's--. It just seems to me that I felt that there were basic changes in this country that we needed to make, and we needed to have, and I needed to do things. I could not just keep studying and stuff, and then just keep hoping and keep saying that I'll get a job, and I'll--.

EC: Personally be successful.

FG: And I will be successful, and the world would go on. People kept saying, "Well, folks are doing bad, because they don't have an education." And we were just

like, “They don’t have an education because the system that we live under is so structured that people can’t get an education, and you can’t have a good life.”

EC: After that summer in McComb, that fall, wasn’t there just bombing after bombing?

FG: There was. It was not only in McComb, but it was everywhere. It could get to be very interesting. You could have one conversation with somebody. They’d say, “Well, you know, if these people wasn’t causing trouble, things wouldn’t be happening.” You’d say, “Well, we have to make changes.”

EC: They’re acting like you’re the problem?

FG: Yeah. That’s where the question gets to be. Some people would say that if we just sit back, things are going to change. Things are going to get better. And you just say, “Well, things will not change on their own. People don’t just decide one day, ‘We’re going to build good schools, good hospitals for everybody. Everybody’s going to have an opportunity.’ To make this happen, people have to be active.” So at the end of my second year, I knew I couldn’t go back. One is, I didn’t want nursing any longer. I couldn’t go back to Dillard anyway, because I could not stand the idea that all I needed to do was get myself a good education, get a good job, and have a good life. I wanted, basically, the system to change. I wanted for there to be decent houses, decent places for everyone to live, and opportunities for people. It had to be more than just education. It had to be-- There’s healthcare. Healthcare conditions in Mississippi were deplorable. People never went to the doctors and stuff. I think if it wasn’t for the shots that were given in the school systems, the vaccinations and all of that, people wouldn’t have had anything. Because of public health, they at least gave you vaccinations in schools.

EC: That's interesting.

FG: Yeah.

EC: What did you do when you left Dillard?

FG: I left Dillard, and I went back to work in Jackson on voter registration. In the summer of [19]65, there was massive demonstrations in Jackson, and I was involved in all of those demonstrations. What they did in Jackson is they sent the black people to the fairground. They set the fairground up as a penitentiary. I spent a week there in the fairground penitentiary. They put the white women that were arrested in the actual jail.

EC: What was it like to spend a week at the fairgrounds in jail?

FG: Well, the first thing is, in the fairground, you're sleeping on a concrete floor. Basically they give you a blanket at night. At nine o'clock every night they give you these blankets. It's a huge tent, the fairgrounds. The tent is constructed over this concrete floor, so you're sleeping under this. It's no picnic. Basically, the way the food is a tin tray that you get. Your breakfast is syrup [and] a slice of light bread. You're going through, and you're getting your food. Then after you eat, you go in and dip your tray into this hot thing of water, and that's how it was washed. Then it's stacked on, and you're doing this. And it's a couple hundred people, so this is a line of people going through there. [1:20:00] For lunch you get some type of grits, but it's the same process. The same tin tray that you're going through doing. It's a very harsh condition on the fairground. By the time I went in, people had been there for a couple of weeks, and people were getting very upset, because this is a depressing condition, and nobody really knows when they're going to come out. So part of the process of the later folks who went in, like me, is to try to help lift up the morale.

EC: So you go in almost intentionally, just to encourage people?

FG: Just to encourage people to stay on, because we don't know--. At present time, they're trying to raise money to get all these people out of jail, and you have no idea, so you're really trying your best to encourage people. As much as possible, to motivate. Janet Moses and I went in at the same time. It's hard. You can understand the reluctance. But there's nothing that you can do. They're getting you up at six o'clock, and you're going to bed at nine. Going to bed, you're lying on this concrete now with a blanket. Imagine sleeping on a concrete.

EC: Do you remember what the issues were that summer?

FG: It still is a question in terms of registering to vote. The summer of [19]65 is before the Civil Rights--the Civil Rights bill I believe is signed that fall.

EC: I think it was August, but--.

FG: Yeah, it's August. This is all right prior to that.

EC: I know that there were these huge arrests and everything.

FG: Huge arrests. And the fairground was the--.

EC: What did you do when you got back out of jail?

FG: When I got back out of jail, that's when I actually moved over to Atlanta. I went to work in the Atlanta SNCC office. I originally started out--. Jim Forman was also part of my motivation for going there. Jim was trying his best to keep--. He was like the secretary of SNCC. Jim was an organizational person. He was always trying to mix the groups of people, and such. He encouraged me to come to work in the Atlanta office, too. I worked on the switchboard. He wanted people who had been in the field to work in the office, and some of the people in the office to work in the field.

EC: Was that a way for people to understand the organization from different perspectives?

FG: It was a way to do that. It helped you to understand what was going on in the organization. For all of us who had been in the field, since sometimes there had been complaints that you didn't feel that the other people were as understanding as they may have been--.

EC: And so having people from the field helps--.

FG: Helps with that. Because also you get to know each other, and you can discuss different issues.

EC: Who are people that stand out to you, either from the organization in general or from your time in the office?

FG: Well, I went to work at the switchboard, but I was also working very close with Ruby Doris Robinson. Now Ruby Doris was also, in a lot of ways, like Jim. She was a black woman, had graduated from Spelman. She had also been a Freedom Rider. She had also been one of my heroes, because I had met her at a SNCC conference once before. She was a few years older than me. She had graduated from college. Ruby just seemed to have done everything, but she was also an organizational person. Ruby also would say that nobody couldn't outwork her. They couldn't outdrive her. In everything that she did, she was just terrific. She always encouraged you to do just as much. She was always telling me, "Freddie, what you want to do is learn as much stuff of as much different things as you can, so you can always decide upon what you really like." She said, "Most people say--because they've only done one thing in life--they just say, 'This is me. This is the kind of thing--.'" She said, "But that's because they never saw

anything and never did anything else. So you try doing all these different kinds of things.” She was one of the people who got me involved in finance. [1:25:00] Growing up in Mississippi, I would never have understood finance. As a result, I end up doing a business career in understanding how offices function, how accounting, and all of this. But this was all foreign. This is all as a result of Ruby and Jim, basically encouraging me to do different things. Also, they’re always encouraging you to read things and telling you about something else.

EC: You move onto the Atlanta office. Your brother George, does he continue organizing in the field?

FG: George stays in the field. He goes from Mississippi into Georgia-- into Alabama. Because during [19]65, as SNCC begins to set up more projects, the Lawrence county project, the Greene county project, George is working in Lawrence county. He’s a field person. He would have never made it in an office. In terms of personality, he just liked going more in the field. He liked going out canvassing, talking to the people and stuff. He liked that a lot more.

EC: Who else were you working with in the Atlanta office? What are some of the things that are going on?

FG: Well, I go to work in the Atlanta office, and I get involved in the finance. First, I’m doing the switchboard, then I’m helping Chessie Johnson, who is SNCC’s bookkeeper in terms of the finances. We’re receiving in all the checks, in terms of donations and all of that that’s being made. Now, I’m there in the Atlanta office at the same time when we-- Like, Stokely Carmichael, who I have grown to love and consider him like my brother, because he lived with my family when he’s in Mississippi and stuff.

During the whole time--. We're talking about going into [19]66, when black power comes out. There was no question about it, as a result of the shouting of, "black power," on the Mississippi March, I experienced the direct process that SNCC's money is beginning to really drop off. People are just very uptight about the money. It's the news media, and, "Tell me what 'black power' means." I definitely feel that the media definitely came after us in strong motions. "What are you all talking about with 'black power?' Are you all going to set up a separate nation?" That was, in my opinion, one of the big changes in the whole process. Then when SNCC decided to, at one of the staff meetings, that the white staff people would work in the white communities, and the black ones in the black community, the news played this up much more than I think that the staff talked about it as. We basically talked about it as, "These are the problems that we have. We have problems in the white community. We have problems in the black community. We feel that the problems in the black community would be better solved by black staff members working on it. And the white staff, we feel that they could contribute a lot more if they could help change some of the problems that we have in the white community."

EC: Were you still on SNCC's staff when Bob Zellner and Dottie Zellner made a proposal about staying on staff and working in the white community? I think this was in [19]67.

FG: Well, I was still on staff, yeah. I actually left SNCC in 1968, June of 1968. King was killed in April. I think pretty much, by [19]68, we were beginning to--. Because the money was all gone.

EC: Do you remember their proposal?

FG: I'm not sure about remembering that proposal. I do remember that--. I know Bob and Dottie both quite well, yes.

EC: You mentioned that Stokely used to stay with your family?

FG: Yes.

EC: Can you describe him for us? What he was like?

FG: Stokely was a [1:30:00] tall, dark, handsome young man. He was a very nice person, and a personable person. I'm not sure whether it was George or it was my brother Dewey. One of them brought him home to our house in [19]62. Then, from that point on, whenever Stokely was in Greenwood, he always stayed with my family. My family did--families took in Civil Rights workers. That's how people worked. But Stokely was a regular stayer at my family's house. He was always personable. He always talked about his family. He used to talk about the group of students that he worked with at Howard. When I knew him, he was going backwards and forwards. He would be in Mississippi in the summertime and back at Howard. When I told him I was going to go to work in McComb for the summer of [19]64, he said, "Oh, you're making a mistake. I'm bringing back all my people. The whole congressional district is going to be just flooded with all of my NAG friends. You're going to be down there. You're going to be sorry." But that was him. He was ego, but he could make himself as much at home with anybody. He could sit down, and he could really talk to you. Not in a belittling way. He was always trying to--. Always the encouragement, and always to talk about what we have in common, how we can do things to make a difference in the world.

EC: You know all these college students at Tougaloo, probably, and Howard. They didn't persuade you to go to school with them, right?



FG: Oh, no. I don't think they could have possibly persuaded. I wanted to leave the states. I'm telling you. It's growing up in Mississippi and wanting to see what's out there in the rest of the world. I think that that was one of the biggest things that impressed me the most is that when I met people like Marian Wright Edelman, all these people I'm meeting when I'm in high school, and they are from different places, and they have done and are doing things to help us. I just see this as really making a difference. No, I had met both Joyce and Dorie Ladner, who were also from Mississippi and stuff. But I had no interest in going to Tougaloo. Actually, one night--. When I think about Dorie--. Movement people make connections with people, and they just have friends. Stokely and Dorie are in New Orleans when I'm at Dillard. It's after hours for girls to receive guests. They had come down for the Mardi Gras parade. They know I'm there in school, and they know I'm in the dormitory, because after so late you can't be anywhere but in the dormitory. So they come by to see me at the school. They tell the house mother at the dormitory that they are my sisters and brothers. They cop a plea. She agreed to send for me from my room. I come down, and all of a sudden I'm overwhelmed. I'm just so happy to see Stokely and Dorie, and they've come to visit me.

EC: That's wonderful.

FG: That's the way movement people were.

EC: Are there things that you would want people to know about the movement?

FG: I think that one of the biggest things that I found is that it had the ability to attract people from all facets of life. Everybody, Bob, and Jim, and everybody that I came in contact with, always tried to do things to help you, and always tried to do

[1:35:00] things to help you expose other people to doing something to make a difference. I never felt that anybody was looking for any personal advancement. It wasn't like, "I want to be the richest person." I want to do something to help somebody else. I think that was one of the things that impressed me the most about it. I met Bob. You're talking about people who had possibilities to live comfortable lives, and yet they were willing to set this aside to come to help somebody else.

EC: Thank you. Sorry, were you going to say something else.

FG: No.

EC: Thank you so much for doing the interview with us.

FG: Well, hopefully I provided you something.

EC: Absolutely.

Female 1: This has been of the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian National Museum of African-American History and Culture.

END OF INTERVIEW

*Transcribed by Audio Transcription Center, March 29, 2017.*