# TRANSCRIPT: STANLEY BOYD

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| Interviewee: | Stanley Boyd |
| Interviewers: | Jennifer Donnally and Max Krochmal |
| Interview Date: | April 15, 2010 |
| Location: | Raleigh, North Carolina |
| Length: | One audio file, approximately 58 minutes |

START OF INTERVIEW

[Transcript begins at 00:07]

Jennifer Donnally: So my name is Jennifer Donnally and today is April 15, 2010. I am on Shaw's campus in Raleigh, and it is about 2:30 pm, and I am doing an interview for the SNCC fiftieth anniversary reunion. My first question to you is what is your name, birth date, and age?

Stanley Boyd: My name is Stan Boyd and I was born on February 14, 1941, which makes me sixty-nine, and I was born in Norwich, Connecticut.

JD: Where were you raised then? Were you raised in Connecticut as well?

SB: No. No, I actually was raised in California. I grew up in Pasadena, California, and graduated from Atascadero Union High School, which is halfway between Pasadena, or Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

JD: Were you aware of racial issues as a child growing up in California?

SB: My mother was a great believer in equality. I was raised as a Christian and I remember in Sunday school how there was a picture on the wall of Jesus with children of many different nationalities, colors, around him, and how he loved all children, so I was

brought up to believe that we should treat everybody equally. In Pasadena all the schools were segregated except one, of the public schools, and I went to that one that was desegregated because I happened to be living in that zone which had both Asian and African American and white students, and there was quite a large number. I mean it was a good mixture; it wasn't just a small representative of each.

JD: Was it segregated by housing or was it segregated in terms of school districts, in terms of how the schools--?

SB: I think it was segregated more by housing in the city but the principal of this one school was quite insistent that there should be people of all different races in this school so when they drew the boundary for that school it included different neighborhoods.

JD: Okay. Who were your most important influences while growing up?

SB: Well, my mother, and I would say my church. I attended a Methodist church for a while and a Baptist church for a while. And then Boy Scout leaders, I was active in Boy Scouts, and I would say my step dad and my grandparents.

JD: Well, we're going to do this one again. How did religion play a role in your early life and movement life, in terms of how religion--? Did religion mobilize you into the Civil Rights Movement?

SB: Yeah. My grandfather was a Quaker and the Quakers historically have been very much in favor of equal rights for all, but my biological father was a Congregational minister and then my mother got divorced and moved to California where her parents were and so as I--. Basically I was raised in the Methodist church for a number of years

and then the Baptist church until I went to college and then in college I joined the Quakers.

JD: Who recruited you into the Movement?

SB: I'm not sure it's one person that recruited me. I went to Antioch College in Ohio, which is very progressive, and Eleanor Holmes Norton was a student there at the time I was there and she got some students involved in sit-ins. I didn't play a very active role at that time but at least I was aware of it and it was at Antioch that I became much more attuned to the need for justice and change in our society. I had been invited to go to the SNCC organizing committee but at that time I was involved in another program that I was in so I couldn't, but certainly by--. Well I was very involved in the peace movement also at the time so I had limited time to do both of them at the same time, but I did come to the point through I think my college primarily and other students in the college to feel that I should be very involved in the Civil Rights Movement.

Max Krochmal: When did you get to Antioch?

SB: I entered in 1958 and graduated in 1962 and then I did two years of what's called--. I was a pacifist, you know, so I did alternative service for two years and it was during the second summer at that time that I went to Mississippi in 1964, and I'm not sure which person got me into it because there were several people that were talking to me.

JD: So what did you do in 1964 when you went down to Mississippi?

SB: Well of course we went to Oxford, Ohio to get training and then I was asked to serve in a very small part of the project which most people have never talked about, which is to work in the white community gathering intelligence for SNCC. They wanted

to know specifically who were the most powerful people in Clarksdale, Mississippi because if they had to negotiate with people to make change they wanted to know who they should really be talking to, so I said I would be interested in doing that. It was a little dangerous because Clarksdale, Mississippi had a police chief who was famous for beating up civil rights workers so I knew I would have to get in his confidence or basically on his side if I was going to be free to really do a lot of finding out information.

JD: Did people know that you were a civil rights activist as you were trying to seek information, or did you kind of--?

SB: They did not know that. I had to have a cover story, and although I was in touch with the other COFO workers or civil rights workers they understood that I was on the other side of the tracks gathering information and they should not be in touch with me more than what was necessary for my safety.

MK: Did they have a specific name for what your work was inside the Movement? What did they call it?

SB: I've forgotten the exact name. I was basically intelligence but I'm not sure that was the word they used at the time.

MK: Had you ever been to the South before?

SB: No, except just to travel through with my family one summer.

JD: So then what was your cover story?

SB: Well, I had to think of something creative that I thought would work and I had already graduated from college as an undergraduate and was planning to go onto graduate school to become a teacher and I would have to write a thesis so I thought, oh, I can use this statement that I'm gathering information for a thesis that I'm going to be

doing for graduate school. To make it palatable or convincing--well, not convincing, but to make it something that would interest or get the support of Southerners--I said that I thought the media was very biased against the South and that I wanted to go down for myself to really see what was happening, because I knew that Southerners felt they were being maligned by the press, so that if they felt, oh, here's a man who's got an open mind, we can really tell him the story and cooperate with him, that would be a good approach. Then what I did was to go to speak to the Congressman from the area where I had been assigned in Clarksdale, Jamie Whitten, and I told him that I was going to be doing this for a thesis and I wanted to find out from him where he thought I should go. I wanted to be in the Delta region, which is where the rich cotton country is of Mississippi, and would he suggest a place where I might go.

Basically I told him what I wanted to do and then I asked him where he thought I should go and I figured he would probably say Clarksdale because there were three major cities in the Delta and one was extremely racist and one was extremely moderate or progressive, you might say, and then Clarksdale was more typical of the overall area, and sure enough he suggested I go to Clarksdale. Then I asked him where he thought I should stay when I was down there and he suggested the Alcatraz Hotel which is a completely white hotel in the center of town. Then I asked him what did he think I should do before getting there, or something, and he said, well, you should probably write the mayor and let him know you're coming and I'll contact him too and let him know about you so that it will be okay, and that gave me an entrée, so I did exactly what he said.

The thing that was really scary to me, knowing that I'd have to get on the good side of the police down there, or policemen, was that I happened to arrive in Memphis at the same time that the civil rights workers were getting on the Greyhound bus, so I actually was on the same bus as the civil rights workers and I was just really worried if the police happened to be out there and saw me with them then that would really blow everything apart, probably. But as it happened nobody was there, we got there on a Sunday morning, and so I went to the hotel, but it was good because I had a chance to talk a little bit with the workers and they knew where I'd be and so on and we made an arrangement where I would call once--. I think it was--. If it wasn't every day it was at least once a week to let them know I was okay, because if something happened to me--especially until I felt confident that everything would be settled.

In any case, that was fine, and so on Monday morning I called the mayor and told him who I was and he said, "Oh, yes, sir. I got your card and in fact the Congressman contacted me and said you'd be coming. Where are you staying?" I told him where and he said he'd come and pick me up, so he did. He came to the hotel and picked me up and took me to--. He has a little manufacturing place, or at that time he had a little wrench assembly place and he had the big room that was filled with African American women who were assembling wrenches. I went to his office with him and he talked to me for two or three hours all about the town and everything and one of the things that most surprised me was that he said he only had a sixth grade education. I asked him who were the most powerful people in town because those were the people I wanted to talk to and he said, "Well I'm certainly not one of the powerful people," and then he told me that the most powerful person in the town was Eddie Peacock, who was the head of the biggest

bank in town. Then he told me that the second most powerful person in town was the head of the second largest bank in town. Now he told me there was one other major bank in town and there was a maverick who was the head of that one. He was not the same as the other two. It turns out that that bank was very sympathetic to African Americans and would give them loans and things even if they registered to vote whereas the other two wouldn't give them any loans or money at all. Now do you want me to continue with this story in this detail?

JD: Yeah, no, this is good.

SB: All right. [Laughs] So, I had never anticipated that, but he said that when I called Eddie Peacock to mention that I'd been by his office, so I did that. The next day I called Eddie Peacock and told him that I had met the mayor, and evidently the mayor had been in touch with him. Anyway he was very receptive and he said he'd be glad to talk to me, so he arranged to come by the hotel and pick me up and he first drove me out in his Continental, which was one of most expensive cars at that time at least, took me out to his plantation and showed me around and was very gracious, and we talked and talked and I took copious notes. Then I was so glad, as he was taking me back he mentioned to me that I might want to talk to the police chief, and that's what I was so hoping for because I needed a good entrée. So the next thing I did was to call the police chief, and when I told him that Eddie Peacock had suggested that I talk to him he said, "Oh, yes, sir. I'd be glad to talk to you." So we set up a time and I went to talk to him. He talked to me for a couple of hours and then he asked me if I'd like to go to a Little League baseball game because he was umpiring that, or officiating at it, and so I went and watched that. He also made suggestions on people I might want to talk to and so between Mr. Peacock

and the police chief I had a list of people that I should see. Everybody I talked to I usually asked them if there was someone else they suggest I should see.

So that was very helpful. They told me that one of the most powerful people, I don't know if it was third or fourth, was the lawyer for the school board, and also the superintendent of the schools. I went and I talked to the superintendent of the schools and I was quite amazed at how he launched right into this whole long dialogue about how inferior blacks were compared to whites and how the anthropologists had proof that different races had crossed the threshold into being human beings, or whatever, you know, at different times and that the blacks had crossed thousands of years later than the whites and the Asians, and that Carleton Coon, who was a famous anthropologist, had spelled all this out, and he gave me several points there, like I was in college, you know. It just amazed me that the person who was the head of the whole school system would have this mentality.

But it was fortunate because I forget if I asked or he offered but in any case I ended up at the end of my stay with SNCC staying until the schools opened, because they opened a little bit sooner than my graduate school, and I was able to then attend the white high school and the black high school, and what a contrast between the two schools. It was just unbelievable. When I went into the history class in the white school they were having a fierce discussion and debate, the students openly expressing how they felt on the question of whether literacy tests should be required before you could vote or not. It was very germane to what was happening that summer with registering people, blacks, to vote and I thought it was an excellent and free, open discussion. When I went to the black high school and I went into the history class they had a book that was very rudimentary, it

was almost on an elementary school level, and the teacher was talking about the culture of Mississippi and he talked about the state bird and the state flower and how part of the culture was the temperature. It just to me was so irrelevant to what was happening that summer in Clarksdale, and nothing that really touched on civil rights or race relations at all. I asked him after class where he had gone to school and he said he went to a small black college in Mississippi and I asked him what books he had used in studying history, and he said, "The only book we had was the book that they're using in the classroom." I don't know if he was telling me the truth or if he was just saying this because I was white and I might say something back to the principal or this might get back to the superintendent. He might have felt intimidated and didn't really--it might not have been a typical class. It might have been because he knew I was coming he would make something nice and safe. I don't know, but the contrast was certainly very dramatic and it was interesting.

Anyway, I pretty much talked to--. Oh, one thing that was very interesting when I was there was I wanted to visit the different churches that were in the community. There were a number of churches and I went to the biggest church, the Baptist church in town.

JD: Was this the white Baptist or--?

SB: The white Baptist church, yeah, and I found out from--. I don't know if it was somebody in the church that told me this but in any case--it might have been one of the people I interviewed--but in any case what I found out was they had had a minister there who had bravely stated to the congregation that all people have God as their father which makes us all brothers, and that as a result of him making that statement from the

pulpit a number of the big contributors left the church and there was a big row, and as a matter of fact he was removed as the preacher from that church.

Well there were civil rights workers in town who went in mixed, integrated, groups to visit a couple of churches and they were always stopped at the door. They weren't allowed in to the white churches. I wanted to see how it would be if I just went as a white person from the North and all the churches I went to except one they were happy to see me. In fact one church I mentioned what church I was from and how I was in the choir and they said, "Oh, would you like to sing in our choir?" so one Sunday I sang in their choir, which was fun. But when I went to one particular church I was stopped at the door and they asked me, "Who are you" and "Do you have identification? Where are you from?" and they said, "Are you a civil rights worker?" and of course I wasn't going to admit I was a civil rights worker. That would have blown my whole cover thing, right? So I said, no. They said, "Well, who do you know in town?" Well at this point I was very angry that in order to get into to praise God or to pray to my God I had to be cross examined and they're going to treat me like this, so I mentioned Eddie Peacock and the three most powerful people in town and immediately they got very nervous and, "Oh, yes, sir! Go right on in." I didn't get much out of that service because I was so upset [Laughs] the whole time, but the pastor was greeting people as they came out and as I came out I said I was really surprised because I was questioned and interrogated before I could even come in to worship at the church, asking where I was and all this, and he just said, "Well, that's the way it is."

About a week or two after that I went to visit the city council, the city council was meeting, and the mayor was there, and when he saw me he--early on, maybe at the

beginning of the meeting--he introduced me to the city council and what I was there for. He asked me, "How has it been so far?" It had been about three weeks, I guess, I'd been there by then. I said, "Oh, it's been great. The people have been so hospitable and everywhere I've gone it's been great, except for one church and at that church I was stopped and I wasn't even allowed to go in and worship God without first being interrogated." He said, "Which church was that?" and I said, "Well, I'd rather not say," because I knew that would get into the newspaper and then every church the people would be asking, "Was it our church? Was it our church? Did we stop this guy?" [Laughs] and that would get people to thinking and to say well we shouldn't be stopping people from worshiping God.

Then when I had pretty much finished going to everybody that had been recommended in the white community I then went into--. Well actually it's interesting. Clarksdale has railroad tracks that run right through the center of the city and all the white people live on one side of the tracks and most all the blacks live on the other side of the tracks except for one section, which has poor whites. I then started visiting the poor white section and I talked to people there and then from there I talked to a few blacks like Aaron Henry and a few others and [I] had been told to be sure and talk to the undertaker by the conservative whites because this undertaker was what the blacks call an "Uncle Tom." He would always do things to please the whites and I guess that's partly because a lot of his business came from the white community and if any black person got killed because of a civil rights thing he would keep it quiet. He would just take care of it. He gave me the argument that it's very important that blacks and whites get along together and he didn't think there should be protests and that sort of thing. He was

against this--. It appeared to me he was against the civil rights workers coming down from the North and disrupting the Southern way. But I think he was the only black person that really talked like that. The others were more supporting of what we were doing--of what the civil rights workers were doing, I should say, because even then I did not reveal to them that I was a civil rights worker.

One thing that was great was that the newspaper in town was pretty progressive and they would print things as they really happened. I had stopped on my way from the Congressman's office, before I went into Mississippi, I stopped at a place to talk with a very well known moderate newspaper publisher, editor, and he had suggested that I go to talk with the newspaper editor soon after I got there, and it turned out to be good because I established a good relationship with him. That editor said, "When you're finished with the whole thing we'd like you to write up a report on what you learned and we'll publish it without changing what you say," and I thought that was pretty amazing. So I did that, but before I did that I had a chance to talk to the Junior Chamber of Commerce and the Junior Chamber of Commerce had young businessmen, people starting out, and so they listened very attentively as I told what had happened to me. Oh, one of the things that I haven't mentioned now but I did mention to them was that the attorney for the police chief told me that the police chief had beaten up civil rights workers. Of course I never revealed what the source was before now but in any case when I went to the Junior Chamber of Commerce I told them the things I had learned and everything and I mentioned that I had proof that the police chief had beaten up civil rights workers, without telling them what the proof was. They were quite--. I finished; they came up; they had lots of questions and they were quite appreciative that I'd talked to them

because they'd heard one side here and one side here and they didn't know what to believe, but since I was doing my research and just reporting what I had seen and heard then they were influenced by it. Then the last day before I left I gave my report to the newspaper and I left town and it was published in full, and in that article I also mention that I had proof that the police chief had beaten up civil rights workers. I got a letter from one of the reporters that I had been in touch with on the newspaper. He sent me a copy of the article and he said that the police chief had been very moved, so I don't know if it's because of what I had said or he was retiring or what.

In any case, that was very exciting. It was very tense, certainly, at the beginning; but a very exciting time of my life. That's pretty much my story of Clarksdale Mississippi. Now, I went to graduate school and during the--.

JD: Can I interrupt you for a minute?

SB: Okay, I'll stop there and let you ask questions.

JD: Yeah, I want to talk a little more about your involvement in Mississippi in 1964.

SB: Well I have another thing that follows this in Mississippi but it's not with Clarksdale. It's still with SNCC but it's a different location.

JD: Okay, we'll go into that a little bit later.

SB: That's fine.

JD: So one of my first questions to you is exactly how was the information you provided used by SNCC activists?

SB: I don't know. I sent it to them. As a matter--

JD: What did the reports look like?

SB: --of fact, they sent someone to me from SNCC to collect the papers. I typed up reports on everything and they came and collected that at one point pretty far in. I don't remember them collecting the last bunch. I don't know whether I mailed that to them or what, but in any case I never did find out how they used it or even if they did use it.

MK: What was the most surprising or shocking or important piece of information you think you relayed to them?

SB: Well, who really had the power, the fact that it was the bankers, and that there was one banker who was more cooperative and that they could get fair treatment with. I think that's what they really needed to know so that was, to me, shocking. I figured the mayor or some of the maybe members of not the Ku Klux Klan but the Citizens Council, although the Citizens Council did have the bankers on their board, so.

JD: Did you talk to many people on the White Citizen Council?

SB: They didn't call themselves "white," but it's the same thing.

JD: Oh, yeah, Citizens Council, sorry. Excuse me.

SB: Yeah, but I mean like I said I talked to the most powerful people and they were on the Citizens Council, so. I didn't ask for a complete membership list or anything but I think I talked to the main people who were on there.

JD: Did any of this change your ideas about how white supremacy works when you were going through any of these interviews?

SB: Yeah, I did. I did not realize the way the economics, who has the power over the money, had such a major part in racism. I hadn't been that aware of that. I mean I'd

heard Marxist theory but I didn't really see that in practice before and here it was very clear.

JD: How did you feel about your involvement in SNCC, because it seemed like you didn't the sort of collective, collaborative experience of other SNCC workers? How did it feel to be one of the people on the outside?

SB: Well, there were two experiences that happened where I was involved with one of the SNCC workers, okay, and when I got to the point where I went into the black community then I went to some of the SNCC gatherings. They had gatherings in a black church and stuff like this and I know I was at--they called it the Freedom House at that time--I was at the Freedom House when most of the workers had left there. It was just one black young man and myself there and then a white man drove up in a pickup truck with a rifle and he--. The rifle, I think, was on the back of his truck but he actually approached us with a gun in his hand, like he was going to kill us, so at that point that was really scary but we were calm and tried not to do anything that would anger him or upset him and after awhile he just left, so that was one scary thing.

Then another time when I was talking with one of the leading racists in the town I had asked him, because he had said something about how awful these civil rights workers were, you know, and I said, "Well I have had a chance to talk to one of them. Would you be interested in meeting this person?" I think he had already invited me to come to dinner at his home but since he had indicated how he felt about civil rights workers I wondered if he would be interested in having, or would object, if I brought a female civil rights worker with me. So he said okay, that would be okay, so we went there for dinner and of course then he started engaging her in questions. One of the main questions he

wanted to know: Would you marry a black man? I don't think he said black; he probably said nigger. But in any case she said, "Which one?" [Laughs] That irritated him. He just wanted a yes or no and the fact that she would consider one if it was the right one, that was just so upsetting to him that he had to excuse himself from the table and leave the room. Those are two things that stand out in my mind that were a result of having contact with civil rights workers.

JD: I'm going to have Max--. Could you identify yourself, because you came on the tape? Do you have any follow-up questions?

MK: On that part, no, I'm good.

JD: [Laughs] I'm trying to think--.

MK: Max Krochmal from the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke.

JD: Do you want to go into your second SNCC experience?

SB: I got notification from SNCC that there was going to be an election held for agricultural stabilization committee, I think it was, and they wanted to know if I could come down and help in contacting some of the people to come out to the election, encourage them to come out to the election, and then be there on election day, and since it happened, I think, during a break that I had at my college or at least it wouldn't interfere too much with my studies because I was in graduate school then I agreed to it and I came down to Holly Springs, Mississippi.

JD: And what year is this, '65?

SB: This would be--. I believe this was actually--. I don't remember the month but I believe it was--. It might have been November of '64, so it was the same year. So I went there and I went around with a black civil rights worker to some of the houses.

Then on election day I had a vehicle, and that was helpful to them, so they asked me if I would first work at this polling place a little bit, watch this, and then they contacted me, I got a message from someone. They wanted me to come over to this other place so I drove, but the problem was that they thought there might be some violence about to ensue. There were white men; I don't know if they had guns or something that was threatening to the civil rights workers and they wanted me to come in case it was necessary to evacuate them. When I got there and looked down and saw all these white men milling around I thought it probably wouldn't be good to drive down into that situation so I pulled to the side of the road. I had somebody else with me and I guess the person [36:32]. Anyway, I had someone else, a civil rights worker, with me and they got out and went down and I stayed in the car just at the side of the road.

Well the side of the road is very narrow so I guess I had just a little bit of this vehicle out into the road and the sheriff pulled up behind me. I didn't want to leave them but on the other hand I didn't know what was going to happen. He came up and he charged me with illegal parking. The motor was still going, I was just idling, waiting, but he immediately charged me with illegal parking and when he saw my license that I was out of town he then--or out of state, I should say--he then said that I would have to go with him to the judge because they would have to hold me until they could try me or I paid a fine, whatever it was. I ended up then being taken before a--. I'm trying to remember. Oh, I couldn't go right then because it was already evening. It was past the hours that the judge was there so they took me to jail.

When they took me to the jail there was a black side and a white side so they put me on the white side and there were three white men there. When they put me in there

they told me--I mean they told the three guys--"Here's a nigger lover; cut his nuts out," so I knew I was probably going to get beaten up. In any case I went in and I saw right away that there were three small cells where they had, I think, two bunk beds but there were no mattresses on them, I don't think. Anyway, I saw that one of the three guys that was in there was really drunk and he was in the back and he was out of it, so I knew I just had to deal with these two. One of them was more aggressive than the other, came up, and said, "Take your glasses off," you know. "Take your glasses off!" and I wouldn't take my glasses off. [Laughs] It was so funny he didn't just take my glasses off, right? So then the jailer came over and he conferred with the jailer and the jailer said, "Take his glasses off. Just go ahead; do what you want to do." So he took my glasses off and at that point they pushed me into this smaller--there were three parts there--to the smaller cell there and I guess they told me to sit down or I sat down, but in any case this one guy who was very aggressive, he kept making statements to me hoping I would say something that would anger him so that I wasn't just a nigger lover but I had personally offended his views or whatever. I looked him right in the eye and I calmly responded in a way that basically was letting him know that I meant him no harm, and there was nothing I said that really angered him. So after about five minutes of this--it just went on and on and on--he finally said, "You're just a boy, aren't you?" and I didn't respond badly to that. That could have been some--. People might, you know, [Grunting sound] [want to] get in a fight or something, but didn't.

Then he pulled back, and the other guy, who I hadn't been looking back at all because I was so intent in dealing with this particular conversation--because we had been trained, always look the person who's the most aggressive right in the eye and deal

directly with that person and everybody else will sort of just wait and see what's going to happen, so that's what I had done--but then this other guy hauled off and hit me. He didn't say a word; he just hauled off and hit me, [Laughs] you know, so then I just curled up into a defensive position where he could do minimal harm. He hit me and he kicked me and so on, yelled at me and stuff, until finally I guess he was tired, and then the jailer came in and took me out and took me up to another cell. Then they called a doctor in to examine me so the doctor could certify that I hadn't been injured in any way. I did have some lumps on my head where I'd been kicked that I hadn't known about before but nothing that would prove anything. So that was quite an experience in Holly Springs.

Then, of course, I knew that would probably go out to all the police chiefs in the county--not county; in the state--but I left after that. I mean when I went before the justice of the peace I simply said, *nolo contendere,* which they said you could say without admitting guilt or anything, and then they released me to go back.

So that's my experience with SNCC, although I do have something to tell you about Washington, D.C., which was kind of SNCC related, and that's the Free D.C. movement. Shall I continue, sort of finish up, or do you want to ask questions first?

JD: I'm just curious, where did you go to graduate school?

SB: Okay, so graduate school I went to Antioch-Putney graduate school and that was a graduate school started by Antioch College, and that was in Vermont, so the first semester or study period was in Ohio at Antioch College and then the next two study periods were up in Vermont. I was getting my MAT, master of arts in teaching, and after that I got a job teaching in Washington, D.C. Just as I got to Washington, D.C. to start teaching Marion Barry arrived in Washington, D.C., so I got in touch with him, and he

was happy, and we worked a little bit together on the boycott of the bus system because the bus system had raised their rates and mostly African Americans were using the buses and it was a real hardship to them. Basically my role in that Free D.C. movement was to get in touch with teachers at different high schools and we organized a great big meeting, public gathering, and then a march on the Capitol, and Marion Barry spoke at that and we went to the Capitol. Some of the people who were working quietly with Congress to try to get changes and try to get home rule for the District were very upset at this because if you offend the Congressmen who have to make a decision on this then we'll never get home rule. But as it turned out it galvanized things into action and followed up after that where Walter Fauntroy and others went down to this Congressman's district that was preventing anything from happening because he was chair of the committee, and so it wasn't but a couple of years later until we got home rule.

JD: What are your thoughts on inter-racialism as a commitment or a tactic?

SB: Interracial what?

JD: Inter-racialism.

MK: First, what are your impressions about race relations within SNCC in your time there?

SB: I was very happy that it had the symbol of the hands clasped, the black hand and the white hand working together to bring about justice. I thought that was a very good way to go because first of all if it's all just within the black community, at least before that summer, then there probably wouldn't be much publicity. I heard that there had been a number of lynchings and things among blacks that never got reported in the press but then when they bring in whites, especially from the North, and something

happens then, oh, the government's all involved, and of course we saw that happen when the three civil rights workers got killed. Lyndon Johnson sent in the FBI and sent in even the, what, National Guard or something to try to locate these three, so I think that that's much better. It becomes an issue of human rights instead of, oh, this is just something that blacks are complaining about and want to do.

MK: What made you decide to go?

SB: Well,--.

MK: Or why did you go?

SB: First of all Martin Luther King was, from the press, I mean he had already persuaded--. I'd heard him speak also. He just seemed to me such a visionary and such a great Christian man and one that was trying to bring about justice and I just felt that with the sit-ins, with the activity going on to try to bring about justice, that I should be involved too. It was something that was only the right thing to do. I should also say that there were a couple of years there between when I graduated from undergraduate and went into--when I did the alternative service. My alternative service was to actually introduce middle class white students, or upper middle class white students, to the problems of the inner city. I was working for the Quakers and they had a weekend work camp program and I was a weekend work camp leader. My job was to find homes where students could come and they could paint and help fix up, you know, work with families and then they would come back to camp and I would help them think about the issues of social injustice and what could be done, that sort of thing. Certainly by the time this came along I was very much interested in helping out.

JD: In your involvement with these Quaker programs what were some of the students' reflections about race in the North or class--?

SB: Are you talking about--?

JD: Up in--. I'm assuming--. Were these programs in--?

SB: This was in Philadelphia.

JD: Yeah.

SB: You're talking about during the alternative service,--

JD: Yes.

SB: --the weekend work camps?

JD: Mm hmm.

SB: For the most part these were students, most of them came from Quaker schools and they already had these liberal views, they just didn't understand why things were the way they were and when they saw it firsthand they had even more questions to ask, so they believed in equality and equal rights. They were very progressive minded for the most part. A lot of them weren't as well informed but that was why they were there.

MK: What did you learn personally from the Movement, or as a personal experience what did it do to change you?

SB: Did it change me?

MK: Did it? You said it's--.

SB: Yeah. I mean--. Well one thing, it just confirmed that I was not completely free of prejudice myself before I really got into the Movement. In fact, even though I'd gone to an integrated school and my mother had progressive beliefs the fact was that the

blacks lived in very poor housing and there were more crimes from blacks than there were from whites and most of the black students in my school were not very good with their studies. They were more into music and into sports and that sort of thing. It just made me wonder, is this really a difference between whites and blacks or is this some other thing? Then when I went to Antioch and I had a chance to meet black students that were definitely superior to me then that made me realize I've really got to re-examine some of these beliefs that had been engendered by the culture, because there was racism within the culture and even with a family and a progressive church you can still pick up some of those things. So that was one reason that I wanted to go and do alternative service in the black community and work with blacks in poverty and so on. This just kind of confirmed in me that there was great racism in our country that needed to be addressed and I wanted to spend my life doing something about this. It also confirmed in me to become a teacher and to work in Washington, D.C. and help to work for self government there and prepare students--my students would be ninety-eight percent black [50:06] would be black--so that they could demonstrate. You can have good government and they could promote the whole idea of racial equality.

JD: Do you have any more questions?

MK: Maybe just talk briefly about where you went next. You mentioned Freedom D.C. and the peace movement. How did that evolve for you personally?

SB: Well when SNCC changed and went to black power movement and said they didn't want the whites anymore as part of the movement, to go work in our own communities, that sort of thing, then my direction was more on trying to do something about the Vietnam War because to me that was a racist war too. We had no right to be

over there at all. The people there were just trying to fight for--. They were fighting for independence essentially. First they fought against the French and now they're fighting against a government that was supported by the United States. That's more of where I--. I was involved in a couple of protests and in fact Congressman John Conyers--I think it was him; maybe it was Dellums. I guess it was Congressman Dellums from California had said he was going to come and address the protesters against the war on the steps of the Capitol, so I talked with my students about it and told them I was going to go to this and there was a possibility, since we weren't supposed to be protesting on the Capitol steps, that we could be arrested, so I left work for them to do and everything and they thought this was fine. I went down there from school in the afternoon, in my suit, and sure enough, we were arrested by the Capitol police, and they had so many of us that they took us to the coliseum. It was kind of funny because Marion Barry, who I think was still with SNCC, but in any case he sent food to us so we'd have something to eat. We were then from there moved the next day into holding cells behind the courtroom and when the policeman came to--.

One thing that was kind of interesting I should say before I go over that part is that one of the national guardsmen that was there knew me because I had taught him, he was a former student of mine, and he asked me if I wanted to get out, he could get me out, and I said, no, I'm here because I believe in what's happening. Anyway, the policeman came and he grabbed me and twisted my hand way back and I just said calmly to him, "That's not necessary," and he just released it and I walked out with him.

They packed ten of us into a cell that was made for two people, right, and it was just incredible to be in there. Many of the others were acting crazy and stuff, yelling and

stuff, screaming. A couple years later, maybe three or four years later I think it was, there was a suit that was brought, I think it was brought by Dellums, on our behalf and I testified in a courtroom. As a result of that they gave everybody who had been arrested and kept overnight compensation for violating our constitutional rights. That turned out actually to be something I hadn't expected but it was good that it happened that way. So, yeah, does that answer your question?

JD: Mm hmm.

MK: Mm hmm. Well do you have anything else you want to add?

SB: I'm really glad that they had this reunion. I'm hoping that SNCC will get a little bigger place in the history books. I was great teaching this time period because I could do it from first person experience, but I think that our country and our world is facing very, very dangerous times now. We really need to have a strong movement that's going to address that to counterbalance the tea baggers and what's going on. One of the things that I'm most concerned about is our voting system because if we have people voting on touch screen machines where there's no paper ballots at all, touch screen machines can be so easily programmed to lose votes, and they've actually found places, like in Ohio and Florida and New Mexico and Alaska, where a number of people who voted, their votes were not recorded, and this was in heavily black areas or extremely liberal areas. I'm very concerned that our electoral system can be hijacked to where the people who are not really elected get elected because those who don't have the ethics will--or the companies that do the counting. Diebold was owned by a very Republican leader and he even made a statement that he would see that Ohio would go for Bush in the year 2004 and sure enough it did, and there's been exhaustive studies to show how

that election was stolen and Bush really wasn't elected that year. It's so easy for us to lose our democracy if we have basically Republican corporations counting the votes, and I think the biggest reason that Obama won even when they had that ability was probably twofold. Number one--I'll make it threefold--number one was that it was such an overwhelming vote across the country that they hadn't anticipated having to lose so many votes, and number two that the person that actually had manipulated the machines and was going to testify in court, just before he was going to testify--this was before the election of Obama--just before he was going to testify he was in a plane crash. He was flying a plane; he's a very experienced pilot. But he was going to actually let it be known what was happening and then he was killed, or died. The third thing is that McCain--and it's very different from Bush--when McCain saw he had lost the election he immediately conceded whereas Bush waited until--. Then suddenly the results were changed from Florida and there was all the--from the first election in 2000. I just am concerned about our elections. When you have a big difference in what the exit polls show by five percent or more than what the machines are recording then that should raise a question. Instead of saying, oh, the exit polls were off they should do something about looking at the machines, because in other countries like Ukraine and elsewhere when they have that big a difference they stop everything and it's examined.

MK: Well thank you very much for talking with us.

SB: Sure.

JD: Yeah, thank you.

SB: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcriber: Deborah Mitchum

Date: May 3, 2010