

1 May 29, 1993

2 Interviewee: Faith Holseart

3 Interviewer: Dr. Jean Smith-Young

4 *Dr. Smith: Give me some details about where you worked*  
5 *in the movement and approximate times? Don't start with too*  
6 *much of the times because people can't remember too well.*

7 I worked for SNCC from late summer of 1961 to I think  
8 early August 1962 in Southwest Georgia. I was sent home at  
9 that point which was right before the big foot march on  
10 Washington because I had caught hepatitis in the Albany,  
11 Georgia jail. Although, I had not been diagnosed no doctor  
12 in Albany would treat me. All we knew was that I was  
13 dragging along, all that summer. After I returned to my  
14 family in New York, I went back to Barnett College and I  
15 worked for SNCC in the summers 1964 and 1965. Prior to  
16 being involved with SNCC I had worked with a group of people  
17 called the Harlem Brotherhood Group in Harlem in New York



18 City doing housing surveys and was involved with a number of  
19 people who later became involved with Kenneth Clark's Harlem  
20 Youth Opportunities Unlimited Project and I also had done  
21 some tutoring in Harlem. After that .

22 Dr. Smith: What year are you talking about now. Where  
23 are you now.

24 In 1966, I married and moved to New Mexico and felt  
25 really strongly that I had to find a place for myself as a  
26 White person that dealt with racism and at that point  
27 materialism. Moved around a great deal but in 1971 ended up  
28 in the Appalachian Coal Fields where I lived about 20 years  
29 and worked in welfare rights and also the coal miners  
30 various issues connected with the coal miners. And really  
31 credit my experience with SNCC and helping me to see that  
32 was a good thing for an elitist liberal white girl from  
33 Greenish Village to do with herself. I am very glad that I  
34 did that.

35 Dr. Smith: Ok, I am trying to get my dates straight  
36 because I met you Faith in the summer of 1963 and now I am



37     understanding that you were quite sick at that time. That  
38     might be something to work with in terms of my being able to  
39     - - You were getting up going on everyday, I know you were.  
40     How did you know you were sick?

41             Well, we had fasted; I was in jail for a week or ten  
42     days probably in May of 1963 before the summer project  
43     started there and we had fasted most of that time drinking  
44     juices. I just did not recover my energy with the others.  
45     We know that one of the people who was in jail with us; the  
46     only person who was not in the movement who was in jail with  
47     us for more than a day was a woman who reported herself as  
48     being a dope addicted. And, it is possible that this is how  
49     I caught the hepatitis. What I remember about that summer  
50     was that it became increasingly difficult to get up in the  
51     morning.

52             Dr. Smith: This is about Mama Dolly.

53             She was a black landowner in a county where according  
54     to Sharod, anyway every single white people owned the land  
55     at every single cross roads in the county. The movement was



56 very controlled. She was also a nurse midwife or a midwife.  
57 Georgia at that time had a fairly sophisticated system of  
58 midwives that served primarily the African American  
59 community but Mama Dolly had also delivered hundreds of  
60 white babies as well. So, she had sort of a power edge such  
61 as Carolyn Daniels in Terrell County was a beautician and  
62 again independent, financially speaking woman. Who as far  
63 as I know, I am sure Carolyn owned her own house and her  
64 beauty shop. Mama Dolly as far as I know rarely went to  
65 meetings or anything but she made a tremendous statement  
66 fight taking the foot workers in. She had a very special  
67 relationship with Sharod. She ran her farm, she plowed, she  
68 half mind the stock. She must have been in her 70's maybe  
69 just 60's but she was quite old and when I went back for a  
70 reunion in 1982 she was in her 90's so I think that would  
71 have put her in her 70's. The only time I ever stayed out  
72 there was twice when I was sick, I stayed for a week each  
73 time. Once the summer of 1963 and once the winter I had a  
74 flu. I think Tracy and I both went out there for a week.  
75 But usually it was the guys who stayed out there. I don't  
76 know why. There was a summer project in the summer of 1961  
77 that Kathleen Conwell and Heavy Dannon and Bill Hansen and



78     Ralph Allen were involved in and everybody stayed at Mama  
79     Dolly's that summer I think, including me.

80             Dr. Smith: Have you thought about the central  
81     organizing experience.

82             It is hard for me to say a central one. The central  
83     feelings when I think back on that period and what it meant  
84     to me and moving it forward into my life as I birth it since  
85     then is when that incredible sense of involvement which was  
86     not just the primary strength of that was involvement with  
87     community which I experience doing organizing at home. But  
88     often it really was one of those communities where people  
89     across age lines and class lines as they existed in the  
90     black community were involved by the hundreds every step in  
91     various points of the whole thing.

92             Dr. Smith: I am not understanding I am not of  
93     community involvement. Do you mean the large numbers of  
94     people impressed you.

95             We are going to have to break it down a little bit more



96 even how I think about it. When I say community  
97 involvement, partly it's the numbers but it's also that  
98 quality of saying how Bernice Wiggins; Johnson at that point  
99 who was an extraordinary singer at the time through the  
100 process of being involved in the movement community which  
101 included primarily local people from Albany became the  
102 person who went on to find Sweet Honey and Rock. But the  
103 process of being in the movement and not just a small circle  
104 of people living in SNCC houses and came from outside but  
105 the many people who were involved. I guess some of that  
106 would be captured by the way we talked about participatory  
107 democracy. The people shared in choice making at least when  
108 we were doing well. OK, a central experience for me is  
109 going to mass meetings in the tents in Carroll County where  
110 churches three had been burned, one Terrell and two in Lee  
111 County. There was a tent that was put up on the site in  
112 Terrell County and listening to people who were farmers and  
113 share croppers and high school kids that have been thrown  
114 out of school talking about teaching one another the voter  
115 registration laws and voter registration history and  
116 reporting the news about what households that had been  
117 contacted by hostile white people and that sense of a



118 network of information was very powerful to me.

119 *Dr. Smith: The power of all these people coming*  
120 *together for a common purpose.*

121 Right, it's that plus what Ms. Baker would talk about  
122 which I think of as the teaching function of organizing and  
123 that if you are a good teacher which I think I am sometimes  
124 you learn as much from the student, of course, as you teach  
125 them. But teaching is a two way street and it's not just  
126 the high of the power of the people coming together and  
127 doing wonderful marches but it is also the teaching that  
128 goes into that and what comes after that. Because Albany,  
129 Georgia, I think for me I got down there after the movement  
130 had been traumatic. I got there when the mass marches had  
131 already happened. The beatings and the jailing and I can  
132 remember thinking well what would you do next? I would get  
133 up in the mornings and I would have to do everything from go  
134 to the bank where the white people might be hostile to me,  
135 to balance the check book which I hated and but that was  
136 probably the only job which I really felt I was assigned on  
137 a sexes basis. Because if anybody had ever thought about me



138 in math it was a bad job to give me, but Sharod's attitude  
139 was well other people are doing things you can't do, you are  
140 a woman so you are suppose to be good with detail. The  
141 tedium of the day to day things that we did even organizing  
142 the voter registration list, etc.

143 *Dr. Smith: Tell me about that. What did you do to*  
144 *organize?*

145 So, when I got up in the mornings I might have to do  
146 some SNCC maintenance stuff in terms of going to the bank or  
147 writing up vouchers or sending a report to voter education  
148 project. Then I would do, I would say most of my day was  
149 spent out running the streets, working with high school  
150 students or actually when I look back on it they were even  
151 younger than that the Christian girls, Joanne Christian who  
152 married Bob Bens and I think as in every town there was an  
153 amazing crowd of teenagers mostly girls who worked with us  
154 and what that would involve would be figuring out a  
155 neighborhood we were going to go to or having spent time  
156 maybe over a month developing contacts of people who we were  
157 going to speak to and then haranguing someone in to lending



158 us a car or giving us a ride over to that side of town and  
159 spending the afternoon walking from door to door or whatever  
160 and a lot of playing around because we were pretty young and  
161 some people who probably just spent the afternoon drinking  
162 coke in somebody's living room but a lot of us did do a lot  
163 of work. That is sort of the straightforward part of it,  
164 but it was also possible that on one of those afternoon that  
165 police would be following us in their cars and people would  
166 not talk to us because they have been threatening or there  
167 was a meat packing plant in Albany which is were a lot of  
168 the men worked.

169 *Dr. Smith: Do you have the name of it?*

170 I think it was Hormel or Smitfield?, it was one of the  
171 big companies. There was a little black ? it was separate  
172 from big black Albany and it was separated by that plant.  
173 That was like the roughest area, that's were the gangs lived  
174 and some of the younger kids who were involved in Albany  
175 said they were gang members.

176 *Dr. Smith: I think we might be on to something with*



177 the student's about the teaching function because I think it  
178 would be good to try to tie in what the person  
179 thought???????????? it may work out. But we have to talk  
180 some more about the teachings about what you learned from  
181 Ms. Baker. I just thought Ms. Baker was a mean old lady.  
182 So, I didn't learn that much from Ms. Baker. So tell me  
183 what you might have learned.

184 I don't even know that I learned it from her directly,  
185 of course, so it may have been Ms. Baker said this and  
186 Ms. Baker said that. I didn't have very much personal  
187 contact with her but I was at some SNCC meetings she was  
188 present at and she also had relations with the Southern  
189 Conference Educational Fund and now it is called Raven's  
190 Group. She was a staff person. I think probably after FCLC  
191 they asked her to leave but I don't really know that. What  
192 I think I learned from her directly or not is expressed in  
193 her writings that Bernice turned into that song "We believe  
194 in Freedom."

195 Dr. Smith: Oh, that's from Ms. Baker.



196           It is directly from a letter or a journal of hers.

197           *Dr. Smith: I love that.*

198           Yea, and that is a

199           *Dr. Smith: I only know the first line, what part do*

200 *you remember? I remember "We believe in freedom, can't*

201 *rest." What part do you remember.*

202           Now, I am drawing a total blank. It is in my computer.

203           *Dr. Smith: Well, I will get it. I will ask you for*

204 *it.*

205           OK, it's in that speech actually that I did. ?

206           Looking back on it what I think that I came away from it

207           with is the sense that the people in the community know what

208           they need and that we can learn from them as much as we can

209           teach them. In the song is that line about "I think the

210           idea I know I am in good hands when the hand reigns are in

211           the hands of the young." She had a tremendous respect of



212 young people and that is why we sent her writings and that  
213 was one reason that I was very disappointed in Chuck and  
214 Reggie. Since Reggie had cited Ms. Baker I thought it was  
215 very bad to put down these young people because . . .?

216 *Dr. Smith: They really did not give them a break at*  
217 *all.*

218 And, then at the end there is a line about herself as a  
219 strong woman. "Well, there is the question of race until  
220 the killing of black men is as important as the killing of  
221 white men, white mother's son." That's what touches me most  
222 is that I had a chance to work with people passing on to  
223 others that which has passed on to me. That is really  
224 important to me because when I went South what I learned as  
225 a Northerner we did not, we smart young people and SNCC did  
226 not spring entire and brand new. There were movements in  
227 histories that preceded us and that it wasn't even, it was  
228 primarily the history of black struggle certainly but I  
229 remember spending a night, the first night I met Ann Bradon  
230 and her telling me about white woman who had fought about  
231 lynching in the 1930 in Alabama. And, that made Northern



232 liberals - that did not fit with what I had been taught so  
233 the idea that there is a continuity in the history of  
234 struggle is something I learned partly because I met people  
235 like Mr. Page who was a very elitist black man in Albany,  
236 Georgia. But he had, he owned property like rental  
237 properties and I don't think he was an insurance man, but he  
238 was something like that. According, to the Justice  
239 Department in 1962 or something when the last recording,  
240 recorded so call lynching in this country . . No, I am  
241 getting mixed up. There was a man who in Baker County south  
242 of Albany was beaten so brutality that Mr. Page as a member  
243 of the black community for some reason went to pick him up.  
244 I remember Mr. Page telling me that he could hear the man's  
245 bones rattle like dice when he picked him up. And, that  
246 feeling being in the room with this man who I knew had  
247 become quite conservative but I guess the feeling that  
248 history resided in all of us even if we are flawed. And,  
249 that that piece of history the description of those bones  
250 rattling was lost unless; that's the power of oral history I  
251 guess, and some how that is connected with the idea that I  
252 associate with Ms. Baker is that all of us are important and  
253 all of us have a contribution to make or something. I know



254       that is kind of abstract.

255               *Dr. Smith: Can you think of a time when that was*  
256       *operational and that made you do something.*

257               Yea, that which.

258               *Dr. Smith: The process - The teaching function of*  
259       *organizing or all of us are important.*

260               Well, certainly when I went on to be a public school  
261       teacher in West Virginia one of my difficulties was in the  
262       public school was I thought all of my pupils were important  
263       whether they came from the big houses or the little rental  
264       units, and/or mobile homes or they were labeled special  
265       education or whatever and that really put me in direct  
266       conflict with school psychologist and my principal.  
267       Sometimes in principle in terms of function not - that I  
268       assumed every child came into my classroom had an equal  
269       chance to learn and there was times when in terms of my  
270       evaluations and in terms of how other teachers related to me  
271       that there was a price it wasn't a big price but I didn't



272 fit into that teaching establishment because of that  
273 attitude.

274 *Dr. Smith: You didn't want to just throw them away.*

275 No, and say I have five good students and 20 so, so  
276 students and five bad students. If anything I was more  
277 interested in the circle bad students.

278 The other way I think that it affected my life is in  
279 the 1970's and 1980's, when the so called women's movement  
280 began - turned to electoral politics in a big way. My  
281 unwillingness to say OK, so and so is the leader of the  
282 democratic party so I am going with whatever they say  
283 estranged me from the so call now - the people are involved  
284 in now and that was only important because West Virginia  
285 like some other southern states was so small that I think  
286 the so called feminist really allowed themselves to believe  
287 that they could change things by playing games with the  
288 democratic party and they got themselves elected but I think  
289 they allowed themselves to buy or they had always believed  
290 or sort of believe this analysis that said that "I Ann



291 Smith, if I can get to be a leader that is more important  
292 than." Even the whole question of the historical voters  
293 list, I don't know if you know about this, but when is it  
294 going to quit. Historic voters lists are something you can  
295 buy and it's who has historical voted for the democratic  
296 party the last election and the election before that and the  
297 election before that, I think you can buy them back  
298 countless numbers of elections if you want. The basic idea  
299 I think is that you can win that now and regular democratic  
300 party polls have that you can control an election with a  
301 very small number of people if you can capture those so  
302 called historic voters you have it made and you don't have  
303 to worry about black people and you don't have to worry  
304 about women and you don't have to worry about whereas our  
305 approach I think was

306 Dr. Smith: Which our are you talking about?

307 Say in Juilian's first election, well I don't know,  
308 what makes more sense to me is to register large numbers of  
309 people who has disfranchised and the effect the ? process  
310 that way. To trust that the large number of people who has



311     been disfranchised understand how the systems works.

312             *Dr. Smith: I am trying to get something visual. I am*  
313     *trying to get you in this tent with this idea of teaching.*  
314     *Do you want to think about it for a minute. Should we*  
315     *brainstorm for a minute.*

316             Sure.

317             In that tent, I remember one time specifically when  
318     Larry Rubin, who was this kind awkward, verbose, Jewish Guy  
319     from Philadelphia who was organizing with us and with whom I  
320     wasn't particularly close was teaching a lesson I think  
321     about the poll tax and some of the historic barriers to  
322     black registration. And, as I remember it anyway, he was  
323     teaching this lesson,

324             Dr. Smith: Visualize the tent.

325             The tent was a huge old canvas like Army green canvas  
326     that would seat probably about 20 people in folding chairs  
327     and in the Winter there was a really smelly gasoline heater



328 that was probably incredibly dangerous and as I remember it  
329 there was

330 *Dr. Smith: Did it have windows?*

331 It did not have windows. As I remember it we were on  
332 the ground there was no platform.

333 *Dr. Smith: Is this where they had Sunday Church there*  
334 *also?*

335 You know, I don't know if that congregation met there  
336 on Sunday's or not. I think they must have. The first time  
337 that I went there it was early, early autumn and it was when  
338 people slaughter hogs and what I remember was that several  
339 families connected with the movement who had very little  
340 money for whom these hogs were going to be meat for a good  
341 part of the Winter brought these huge, huge paper bags  
342 filled with barbecued pork with white bread. All I remember  
343 is these sandwiches with white bread and lots of pork in  
344 between including the bone. The sensual experience of  
345 being terrified of night riders and all of that because that



346 was a site at which the sheriff had intimidated meetings  
347 many times and then this pleasure of this of this pork which  
348 I had not eaten pork very much as a child although my family  
349 wasn't kosher and the bones mixed in with the white bread  
350 and the gravy and then going in and talking about the  
351 business of voter registration was very exhilarating and  
352 hard to describe to my family back home.

353 *Dr. Smith: I can visualize that. How did you get*  
354 *these sandwiches. Who brought the sandwiches.*

355 Well a couple of families brought them and at the time  
356 I did not know their names. I probably, I mean I am sure  
357 that they are people I knew later but at the time there were  
358 just lots of new faces. They brought these big paper sacks  
359 that were kind of greases and fragrant and hot and damp and  
360 at the mouth when it went it.

361 *Dr. Smith: There was a sandwich within each paper*  
362 *sack.*

363 No, no it was one great big sack with just this kind



364 of, I don't know if they were wrapped in napkins or they  
365 were just loose inside.

366 *Dr. Smith: I can visualize the bread was clinging to*  
367 *the meat.*

368 *Yea, Yea, ha, ha.*

369 *Dr. Smith: That was . . they handed those out like at*  
370 *the beginning of the meeting.*

371 *I think so, yea, the people stood around and talked and*  
372 *ate them. Because they would not have been hot which is*  
373 *what I remember, if they brought them and waited for the end*  
374 *of the meeting.*

375 *Dr. Smith: Right, so you are at this meeting and your*  
376 *stomachs are full now, and Larry Rubin is up talking.*

377 *Larry is up talking and what is interesting is he is*  
378 *teaching as I remember it with Carolyn Daniels who is an*  
379 *African-American woman who Sharod use to describe her as the*



380 Magnolia of Southwest Georgia or something but she was a  
381 woman whose house had been shot into, owned her business  
382 which was a hairdressing business, had lived in terrible  
383 Terrell County all her life and very, very strong person.  
384 And, what I remember is that she and Larry were teaching  
385 this class together.

386 *Dr. Smith: How old was she?*

387 Carolyn at that point was 34. She had a son whose was  
388 almost my age who had been run out of the county the year  
389 before.

390 *Dr. Smith: She was sort of like Mrs. Gray down in*  
391 *Ha?burg?*

392 Probably, she was very young when Rochester was born,  
393 very feisty. She had gentlemen friends but she was by  
394 herself in a lot of ways.

395 *Dr. Smith: Was she good looking?*



396           Yea, she was.

397           *Dr. Smith: Show me how she looked?*

398           She was light skinned and had long hair that I don't  
399    think she straightened but I really don't know or I don't  
400    remember but it was long; as I remember it she wore it like  
401    in a french twist or even maybe in a flip, great big eyes  
402    that could be really sarcastic, dark, very dark and the real  
403    tinkling kind of laugh that you could hear in a big meeting.

404           *Dr. Smith: Was she sexy?*

405           Yea, I think yea. I just looked at these two people  
406    who had nothing in common even if they both had grown up in  
407    southwest Georgia they would have had nothing in common and  
408    yet they were together and I don't even think they  
409    particularly like one another but they were together and  
410    they were teaching and it worked and people were learning  
411    about the poll tax, and the grandfather clause.

412           *Dr. Smith: How did you know it was working?*



413           That is a good point. Maybe, it wasn't. I learned  
414 something from them. I think there had been a series of  
415 Supreme Court Decisions the summer before and a couple years  
416 before. I guess I think it was working because people were  
417 attentive and by then I think it was kind of cold and not  
418 super comfortable to be in the tent but people asked  
419 questions, and people of course were responsive in terms of,  
420 flowery Carolyn said something that had a lot of moral or  
421 emotional impact people would say amend or tell a story or  
422 whatever.

423           *Dr. Smith: Why was education important?*

424           Well,

425           *Dr. Smith: I really never thought this as being an*  
426 *education that is why I am trying to see how ???*

427           Talking specifics, say about the poll tax or whatever,  
428 I think must have had the impact that it does for me now  
429 actually when I read specifics about repression in the 60's



430 or whatever. I understand the emotional truth of repression  
431 in the late 60's and I know it is garbage when people say,  
432 "oh, you know SNCC people were just a bunch of brats who  
433 gave up after the 60's. I understand that we did not give  
434 up, we kept, some of us, and that there was a lot of very  
435 heavy duty repression and it is really only when I read the  
436 specifics the Go and Tell Pro, the Black Panthers, that I  
437 can say, "oh, yea those are the facts that validate what I  
438 understand emotionally and I feel like some of that  
439 educational work was part of that" and oh yes, it is not  
440 just that we have always been disfranchise and it's not just  
441 that we were a bunch of timid, black people who never tried  
442 to vote, there is a reason that I did not vote, and my  
443 mother did not vote and actually, I remember my uncle so, in  
444 so really did try to vote in the 50's and both the  
445 validation and then placing yourself on a historical picture  
446 that did not begin in 1960 and end 1961." But also because  
447 then when as I remember that night after Carolyn and Larry  
448 were finished the cultural had been setup by the organizers  
449 and by the people in the community that it was a good thing  
450 to ask questions and to contribute and to discuss it wasn't  
451 just these little saints coming in and giving a lecture.



452 So, it was a interactive process and everybody was at that  
453 point as they must have been there in Mississippi most  
454 people were simply building up the courage to go and  
455 register. So, I think that was part of it too. It was  
456 registering to vote was almost a theoretical construct at  
457 that point and learning history and getting together and  
458 talking about it I think was one of the steps that made it  
459 possible to go down there, even for me to go down with  
460 people to the Court House.

461 *Dr. Smith: Tell me more about that if you can?*

462 I didn't go down to the Court House that many times but  
463 I do remember one time when Praitha Hall and Carolyn and I  
464 went down with, I think it probably would have been two or  
465 three older, well that is irrelevant, people in their  
466 forties probably older women from a very rural, isolated  
467 section of Terrell County who lived, worked, I don't know  
468 whether sharecropper would be the correct term, but they  
469 lived in a way that was very dependent on the landowners  
470 although they lived in their own individual houses. I think  
471 there may have been one or two men who went with us but the



472 women that we went, the only time I ever chewed tobacco when  
473 I was in Southwest Georgia was that day. One of the women  
474 that we went down to the Court House with offered me a chew  
475 and Praitha was very horrified and Carolyn was very mute, I  
476 think but I went ahead and took a chew boy did that . .

477 *Dr. Smith: What was it like?*

478 It burned like ?. The first thing that burned was the  
479 back of my throat and then my eye balls burned and then I  
480 just felt like I wasn't going to be able to breath and of  
481 course I was in Carolyn Daniels car and I wasn't about to  
482 like spit it out.

483 *Dr. Smith: Did it sort of like make you sedated? It*  
484 *calmed you down.*

485 I think tobacco is actually a stimulant.

486 *Dr. Smith: What do people want it for?*

487 I think it's intended sensation in a way must be a bit



488 of a high.

489 *Dr. Smith: Did you feel high?*

490 No, I just felt horrible. But, it also was kind of, I  
491 can't remember whether I took that chew before or after we  
492 went to the Court House, but it was also that intense inward  
493 discomfort was very comparable to what I felt when we went  
494 into the Court House and were interrogated.

495 *Dr. Smith: Tell me more about that - were these woman*  
496 *trying to vote?*

497 They wanted to register to vote.

498 *Dr. Smith: There were three ladies.*

499 There were three ladies as I remember it and maybe one  
500 man. Carolyn was as she said kind of sexy, lively person,  
501 everyone in the Court House knew her even though not in a -  
502 there is no question - there was still a color line in  
503 Terrell County so it is not as if she were in anyway viewed



504 as a peer by any of the white people in the Court House but  
505 everybody knew Carolyn Daniels in Terrell County.

506 *Dr. Smith: ??so that makes a difference.*

507 Right, Right.

508 *Dr. Smith: Did she look like Diane Masterford?*

509 Here skin was a little darker than that and she did not  
510 have that graveness, gravity I remember Diane having, what  
511 people in West Virginia call a firecracker. She was very  
512 vivid, very hot.

513 *Dr. Smith: Oh, I like her.*

514 But did not like White girls very much. It was  
515 interesting I really appreciated a lot of that but I did not  
516 get to enjoy Carolyn and some of those. But anyway we went  
517 in there and as I remember it, it may not be true but  
518 Carolyn had her car keys kind of clicking and she wore high  
519 heels and they were kind of clicking and we were going down



520 these marvel corridors and, of course, everybody in the  
521 world and his cousin was gawking at us.

522 *Dr. Smith: What was the sequence? Who was first?*

523 I think Carolyn was first and that probably Praitha and  
524 I was kind of behind the people who come in to register and  
525 Carolyn was like to point and then this wedge coming behind  
526 her and me and Praitha at the end. And, actually she and  
527 Praither and I were an interesting combination of  
528 personalities because Praitha was so strong in her own way  
529 and I was too in a way. I honestly can't remember whether  
530 people were allowed to register or not that day. I know we  
531 had to wait and wait and wait and that there was a lot of  
532 gawking and you know one white man would come out talk to  
533 Carolyn and talk to the women and say, "are you sure you  
534 want to do this? and what do you want to vote for" and I  
535 really, there was some question, the registrar was a woman  
536 and there was a whole to do about how she did not want to be  
537 in the room with us by herself.

538 *Dr. Smith: Try to describe the room.*



539           Well, this sounds like a terrible stereotype and I  
540   don't even know if I have rewritten history to suit my own  
541   purposes or not. As, I remember this woman with a big, kind  
542   of grayish curly hair that you could see the scalp and  
543   glasses, wire rim glasses, maybe.

544           *Dr. Smith: Was it blue? Wasn't blue hair, OK.*

545           And, with this big tentsie dress, lots of bosom  
546   kind of and she was very agitated just by the thought of  
547   being in the room with us.

548           *Dr. Smith: What color was that dress.*

549           I think pastel, may white with a little flowers on it  
550   or something.

551           *Dr. Smith: I think she was going to be thin. She*  
552   *wasn't thin?*

553           No, she wasn't thin. She was like a farm wife or even  
554   some of the cold miners wives like in West Virginia. I had



555 a friend to grow up in very rural Michigan a white woman  
556 that I met in West Virginia who talks of her aunts as being  
557 farmer wives with big bosoms like pillows and that is kind  
558 of how she was and as I say I really don't remember after  
559 all this agitation and stuff whether people got - I think I  
560 remember that we were very excited because at least one  
561 person had been able to answer all the questions. What you  
562 had to do was answer questions as I remember it about the  
563 Georgia Constitution and I think that one of those lessons  
564 that Larry and Carolyn had taught and Carolyn knew this  
565 stuff cold was that the Supreme Court said that you could  
566 not question people on the United States Constitution  
567 anymore and you could not maybe even block their right to  
568 vote in Federal elections. So that what people had to learn  
569 was also what happen in that tent was how to answer  
570 questions about the state constitution in Georgia.

571 Dr. Smith: Can you?

572 I can't remember any of the questions. I was probably  
573 pretty terrified. This was terrible Terrell County, now  
574 that this is where according to the Justice Department



575 reports that was issued back in 1961 or 1962 the first  
576 reports by the on Commission of Civil Rights, Terrell County  
577 is were the last recorded lynching in the United States had  
578 taken place.

579 Dr. Smith: What year?

580 50's and it was a man name James Brasher and a fear  
581 operated word of mouth in the south everybody knew where the  
582 James Brasher house was and actually some people maybe his  
583 children, some people connected with his family did come to  
584 meetings once or twice. As, I remember it I was just aside  
585 from the whole tobacco experience I was just dry in my mouth  
586 with terror that morning.

587 Dr. Smith: So you can't remember exactly, but we can  
588 piece it together. So we can know what kind of questions it  
589 was like. What was some likely questions.

590 I think likely questions would have been very nick  
591 picky questions about meaning of particular sentences. The  
592 people would maybe have been asked to read aloud. You know,



593 memory is very strange, of course, I have read all the  
594 accounts.

595 Dr. Smith: So, did they let you come into the room?

596 As I remember it, we came into the room but we, of  
597 course, could not talk and these women went up one by one to  
598 the desk and had to of course sign their names. I don't  
599 believe that you had to be able to write, actually, I am not  
600 sure. Or maybe you would not have to be able to read to  
601 interpret.

602 Dr. Smith: How much was it to vote?

603 The poll tax was illegal at that point.

604 Dr. Smith: I was made illegal when?

605 I believe 1961 but I am not for sure about that.

606 Dr. Smith: So, what I am trying to do is get you to  
607 time the educational, your experience as being a teacher or



608 watching Larry be, or anyway. Was these ladies using that  
609 educational?

610 I can try but I remember going to somebody's house and  
611 this might be in Albany rather than in Terrell County. I  
612 worked in both places. But, I remember this man who was  
613 probably in his 50's just being very angry and passionate  
614 about the fact that mother wit was much more important than  
615 book learning and that his mother wit and his intuition told  
616 him not to register to vote. Even though, I disagreed with  
617 him he was using mother wit as an argument against  
618 registering. I think one of the things that I learned that  
619 year was that mother wit might be a sexes term but that  
620 there is a quality of intuition that people have that is  
621 very powerful and that part of the teaching process is  
622 trying to connect with people at that level and being open  
623 to what they have to give you. I don't know I am getting  
624 sort of vague. But my best years later on as a teacher were  
625 the years when I really took risk. I remember the first  
626 time I mentioned my civil rights experience to students in  
627 the classroom, I was teaching elementary school in the  
628 public schools in West Virginia and because those systems



629 were even in communities where there were large numbers of  
630 African-American people the schools were still predominately  
631 white because that is the make up of West Virginia which is  
632 why you decided not to move there, I think.

633 Dr. Smith: I am sure.

634 Well, anyway the times that the things really clicked  
635 in the classroom and my students learn from me the most  
636 were the years I took risks talking about - well  
637 particularly race - I think that was one of the things I  
638 think I brought into the classroom in West Virginia - I  
639 didn't push it all the time but when an opportunity  
640 presented itself I broke that all American norm which is  
641 kind of if you don't have to don't talk about race because  
642 we don't have a problem, black people have a problem or  
643 whatever. I remember the first year I taught, I taught all  
644 children who were 7 or 8 years old who had been left back in  
645 previous classes and it seem so sad to me that these very  
646 young children had been labeled failures and I was a teacher  
647 on probation so I was under scrutiny but I remember that I  
648 had this little white boy from up the Holler? somewhere



649 Charlie Larrie who was blonde, and came from this very  
650 stereotype white racist family and I said that I have very  
651 few rules and one of them is when somebody use word - I said  
652 one of the rules is you cannot use the word nigger in this  
653 classroom it is just not acceptable and most of the kids  
654 pretty much lived with it and Charlie Larrie just - it was  
655 just something he used so casually it was very hard for him.  
656 I remember one they he came into class and he had on brand  
657 new plaid pants and I said something about Charlie I really  
658 like your pants and he said these are nigger pants and he  
659 looked at me and he got these big tears in his eyes and he  
660 said Ms. Holseart, I tried, I really try, I couldn't help  
661 it. This little macho kid who would not cry for anything.

662 Dr. Smith: Oh, that is a great story.

663 I knew that in that community that if it got back that  
664 I was telling their kids that they could not use that word  
665 at all, ever, period, they probably would have been very  
666 critical. But, I really shared myself with those kids and I  
667 feel like that, like this little boy who was really trying  
668 and I don't know whether when he was a cold miner fifteen



669 years later and he was involved in the strike and people  
670 starting using racial ? threats if he remember it, maybe he  
671 didn't, maybe he did.

672 Dr. Smith: I just thought of a good way of connect  
673 this. ??????

674 That is my quarrel with Dandelions so he makes San?  
675 and dandelions sound like these wonderful unique heroes?

676 Dr. Smith: What I am thinking about is there maybe a  
677 way to tie that this concept of teaching and education and  
678 it would go to the point that the words were very important.  
679 The reality that we verbally constructed were real to us we  
680 weren't just using the words to fight or just keep ourselves  
681 busy. If you can somehow go from that over to how you took  
682 a seriously, not words the philosophy, what would you do  
683 with that - do you see what I am saying?

684 Like, well it is interesting the beloved community  
685 really meant something to me and it would take a while to  
686 say what that was I guess. As, you indicated, non-violence



687 as a way of life I understood wasn't me. Although, I was so  
688 chicken that I couldn't really image fighting back but I  
689 didn't have a problem with guns and gangs and all in Albany.  
690 So some ways, I believe more than others. Now, I have  
691 gotten confused.

692 Dr. Smith: I am trying to tie the teaching function of  
693 organizing with the importance of having a sound theoretical  
694 basis for what your doing as an organizer and being willing  
695 to follow though on your theoretical construct and  
696 especially I admire you for having done that with in the  
697 decision that whites should go and organize with other  
698 people. I still in myself never thought that.

699 I think you need to do both probably but you did get  
700 some good white people went to organize whites and ended up  
701 being active white racist. One of the things that was very  
702 exciting to me, I mentioned the word involvement, not just  
703 involvement at the community level but maybe because I was  
704 very young. I was also very involved at the intellectual  
705 level. I was tremendously exciting to me to hear somebody  
706 say, I think the first person I heard articulate this was



707 Bier Ruston, I only saw once or twice when I was down there  
708 but I think he is the person who explicitly said, "If the  
709 United States in 1962 seriously addressed and redressed the  
710 question of racism that would be inherently revolutionary"  
711 because race relations as they were so inherent in U.S.  
712 society and what I found really exciting I think I was and  
713 maybe I still am an intellectual but I was a young  
714 intellectual.

715 Dr. Smith: How old were you?

716 I was 19 when I went, actually I was arrested the  
717 Christmas of 1960 in Cambridge, Maryland when I was still in  
718 New York and then I was 18. Ideas were real and that was a  
719 very important thing to me, important in the sense of really  
720 exciting, almost like falling in love, Oh, wow, if you  
721 really try to figure things out you could see how they work  
722 and maybe suppose some solutions. Once again, I have  
723 wondered off from . .

724 Dr. Smith: So when the issue came up was it in 66?



725 I was already in New Mexico by then.

726 Dr. Smith: Tell me how you made the decision to  
727 organize in white community based on theoretical.

728 Dr. Smith: Tape 2 side A: Faith Holesart: Faith is  
729 continuing on the theme of her decision - the intellectual  
730 basis of her decision to work in the white community and the  
731 importance/the power of ideas.

732 Actually, having said that I will go first to the  
733 sexual piece. I realize in the late 65 or so, I don't know  
734 if realize is quite the right word but I had been involved  
735 with Reggie Robinson off and on for many years and he had  
736 been involved with many people too and certainly like many  
737 movement men but I suddenly had a sense that maybe I was  
738 just trying to protect myself but this wasn't the right  
739 thing for him as much as anything and as I say I don't know  
740 how honestly this was emotionally in 1965 and for the first  
741 time thought that I should start looking more in the white  
742 race and the Jewish community and ended up marrying a person  
743 who is Jewish who was very nice, although, well it was not a



744 very happy marriage I probably should have waited a while.  
745 But in some ways that marriage and those sort of fumbling  
746 very isolated lonely decisions that I made are the way in  
747 which I retreated into the personal although I continued to  
748 be a political person and actually maintained friendships  
749 with a number of people primarily women who I had either  
750 known when I worked in Harlem or in SNCC who were not white.  
751 I was lucky partly through my own effort, nevertheless I was  
752 lucky that I did not totally lose contact with my black  
753 brothers and sisters in the struggle and I think the fallacy  
754 of retreating, if it is a retreat in the white community, or  
755 even forging into the white community and thinking that you  
756 can do politically meaningful work totally divorced from the  
757 struggle around the questions of race that people of color  
758 are waging is it's a fallacy.

759 Dr. Smith: I don't know about that. How does that go?

760 Because I think you lose feedback from the community  
761 that always has been in the forefront of the struggle and  
762 that whole question is so much more complex now when many  
763 political organizers are saying you can no longer talk in



764 terms of black and white if you are talking about ethicist  
765 whatever black and white televisions are gone, you have to  
766 talk in terms of color television. You have to talk in  
767 terms of Latinos and Asians and I agree with that but I also  
768 find talk about multi-culturalize can be copout in the sense  
769 that through the bedrock of racism in this country based on  
770 slavery. So, that is a little bit of diversions but I did  
771 marriage someone who is Jewish and therefore white, I never  
772 thought of my self as a Semitic person but certainly our  
773 cultural sees Jewish people. And, we ended moving, I put in  
774 a very strong plea for moving south and working with Ann and  
775 Carl Braydon who even in 1966 when we were leaving New York  
776 I had just finished college as I understand it Stokely and  
777 some people and SNCC were still in communication with  
778 Southern Conference Educational Fund, Ann and Carl and some  
779 of their projects. That is where Bob and Dottie Zelner  
780 worked for instance.

781 Dr. Smith: Where they went in about 1966.

782 Yea, they moved to New Orleans, actually, Jack Menas  
783 did too for a while. But Hallard Leadberg my ex-husband



784 really did not want to move to the deep south and so we  
785 ended up moving to New Mexico and occasionally I saw Mary  
786 there.

787 Dr. Smith: He was a affordable kind of guy?

788 His parents had been born in Zorrish, Russia and were  
789 very poor. They were not your sort of stereotype Jew. They  
790 were very working class people and he had put himself though  
791 an elitist public high school, Brock Science or one of  
792 those, which is were Stokely went, and then had gotten a  
793 scholarship to Swaitemore and I think it played with like  
794 communist party kinds of politics, although, people who were  
795 in that party in those days were as much in the closet as  
796 some of my lesbian and gay friends had ever been so even  
797 though, I was married to him for seven years I don't really  
798 know if he ever belonged. But that is where he came from he  
799 had had very low experience with black people as friends or  
800 co-workers and I think that really especially as we chose to  
801 move to New Mexico increase my sense of being in exile and  
802 estrangement during the last couple of years of the 60's.  
803 We lived in New Mexico for two or three years and Leadberg



804 decided to go to the school of Social Work and we moved to  
805 Detroit to do that. I had a child by then. When we were in  
806 New Mexico I had worked with the Brown Berets and the local  
807 peace movement 67 to 69 or so. And a lot of my ambivalence,  
808 I was not a staff member I worked for the welfare department  
809 actually during that period for income. A lot of my  
810 ambivalence about being white and the necessity to work in  
811 the white community focused on my feelings of members of the  
812 peace movement who some of them were communist party members  
813 and some of them just seen like do gooder liberal type  
814 people and non of them were people I could really talk with  
815 about how lonely I was and how frightened when Dr. King was  
816 assassinated when I was out there. Lots of horrible things  
817 were happening to my friends and I did not have enough money  
818 to go East. But I did, when we moved to Detroit I, maybe  
819 because there is a strong history some of it pretty  
820 sectarian but never the less a strong history of white  
821 organizing there.

822 Dr. Smith: What does sectarian mean?

823 The line to different parties, like sex. I think that



824 is how it is used.

825 Dr. Smith: You mean like union stuff.

826 But also every left wing party in the county, I think  
827 probably had a chapter there.

828 Dr. Smith: In Detroit.

829 Yea, they all had like there own little line on various  
830 stuff and their own little interest. It was also the first  
831 Autumn I was in Detroit I remember was when the Chicago  
832 Seven trial was going and some of the participates in that  
833 trial would fan out on the weekends and even nights and do  
834 speaking engagements so I remember Abie Hoffman, I believe  
835 were Jerry Rubin coming and there is a lot of yippie, hippie  
836 kind of craziness in the white community. There was the  
837 white Panthers who were doing, put youth cultural to  
838 simplify and drugs kind of were - I knew that I didn't fit  
839 in with any of this - but what I ended up doing was working  
840 with a collective that has grown out of SDS. SDS sort of  
841 split into two wings one of which went underground and very



842 violent and this other group revolutionary youth movement I  
843 started working with a group of them that was my job on  
844 something called radical education project interestingly  
845 enough. We were printers and we would isolate what we  
846 thought were important articles and reprint and sell them  
847 for 10 cents, quarter or whatever cover cost and postage.  
848 We work as a collective and I think one of the things I  
849 learned there, I was only a few years older than them but I had  
850 children by then, I had a daughter by then too, and they  
851 sort of looked at me as this person who had experience in  
852 the black movement and realizing that 1970 and 1971 there  
853 were now young white people who considered themselves  
854 political who never had experience working in the black  
855 community and that there was a poverty of experience not  
856 because black people are inherently better or more political  
857 but because the nature of experience by and large in this  
858 country if you are black, mean even statistically, is  
859 something that white people just can't appreciate from  
860 within their own experience.

861 Dr. Smith: You mean experience with oppression and  
862 having to?



863           Well, think of Martha's boys being picked up by that  
864 policeman when they went to pick her up at the airport.  
865 There maybe white boys in this country who are in medical  
866 school who occasional get picked up. But, I don't think so,  
867 although, he had long hair and he was stopped by the police  
868 more than his short hair peers that never happened to my  
869 son. And, if I didn't know Martha, you wouldn't know that.  
870 So, even just at that understanding of all that is important  
871 but also because of the nature of people's experience there  
872 is a history of struggle that is very power, very inspiring  
873 if nothing else.

874           Dr. Smith: What can we do with . . . all these things  
875 are personal anyway. All these decisions are personal or  
876 have a personal aspect to them. I don't know what to do  
877 with that though.

878           Well, I almost feel like within that marriage I was,  
879 not because I was married to him particularly but because I  
880 was so isolated in some ways that experience taught me that  
881 I had to rely on myself and I started constructing a reality  
882 at best I could kind of like you did in that room in the



883 Masonic Temple and that I had to do things like read Rampage  
884 magazines, read - I read an incredible amounts of very  
885 diverse stuff.

886 Dr. Smith: Just to stay focus.

887 Trying to figure out, here I was in this box and how  
888 not to get me personally out of it so much as I knew that  
889 there was a beloved community and that there had to be a  
890 similar meaning in my life and life in the white community.  
891 But, I didn't know how, to me that is the power of the idea  
892 of the beloved community it is something that you have never  
893 experienced but you are going to go ahead and do it anyway.  
894 You are going to live black and white together in all the  
895 segregated south and you are going to live.

896 Dr. Smith: But we actually did do it.

897 Right.

898 Dr. Smith: So, maybe that is the idea that we are  
899 trying to flush out some more. The idea about what was your



900 day to day experience or not day to day. What was a time  
901 when you really felt you were within a beloved community.

902 Living in SNCC with that group I worked with in Harlem.

903 Dr. Smith: That is a list I want a particular moment.

904 A particular moment, OK. The year I was in Georgia,  
905 the Christmas of that year we went to Georgia ?center which  
906 was actually had been started by Carpetbaggers but  
907 Dr. King's SCLC owned it was an educational center.

908 Dr. Smith: That wasn't the same as Point a ?

909 It was near the coast in Georgia and we went there as a  
910 staff at Christmas time and there was a lot of singing and  
911 people feeling united and strong and all that. What I  
912 remember is Sharod with whom I had a complex relationship  
913 because he was so self righteous and he was involved with my  
914 sister and Carolyn and all these other things. But he also  
915 had taught me so much and he, I guess it was New Year's eve  
916 and people were doing a lot of singing and feeling good



917 about being together and Sharod got a phone call that really  
918 upset him and I went into the room where he was it must have  
919 been one of the bedrooms because he was, as I remember it,  
920 he was sitting on one bunk bed facing me and I was sitting  
921 on the bunk bed across from him and I think his sitter must  
922 have gotten sick but really seriously so and he was as I  
923 remembered it the only male in his family felt a tremendous  
924 responsibility for his mother who had been single mother in  
925 Petersburg, Virginia and a sister and a grandmother maybe  
926 and he just, I don't even know exactly why, but this really,  
927 he just broke down in tears and was just crying and the fact  
928 that Charlie and I through the emotional fact that even  
929 though we had a lot of conflicts for lot of reasons but in  
930 that setting we were safe to and it was OK for him to cry in  
931 front of me and even though he was often kind of grouchy  
932 with me that evening when I talked to him he could hear in  
933 spite of race and in spite class and in spite of his anger  
934 at his white great grandfather who had rape his black -  
935 which you know that was often part of our relationship was  
936 his anger but that one night in that one room we were able  
937 to sort of be in pain and comforted by one another in a way  
938 that was sort of extraordinary.



939 Dr. Smith: I think that is a good illustration. Can  
940 you talk a little bit about the conflict between the two of  
941 you.

942 I can try. Everything from the fact that Charlie never  
943 was able, of course, always had prayer for everything people  
944 made jokes about Sharod praying over breakfast and praying  
945 over meetings.

946 Dr. Smith: Well, why did that bother you.

947 But, that did not bother me. I think some movement  
948 people it did but he never ever changed or acknowledge the  
949 fact that putting Jesus in ever single pray that he used was  
950 -

951 Dr. Smith: Might be offensive to some people.

952 Not even offensive so much as not acknowledging the  
953 fact that there might be another way to do. I can  
954 understand that Charlie Sharod being who he is might always  
955 want to include Jesus but I don't think he ever - - he knew



956 I was Jewish and in a way that was important to him. But it  
957 was the lack of acknowledgement I guess, that was not like a  
958 big part of it but it was that quality of heedlessness and I  
959 am sure he saw a lot of what I did as insensitive. I was  
960 one of the first white woman to come down there. Specific  
961 examples.

962 Dr. Smith: Well, just tie up like how did he make it  
963 hard for you being a white woman.

964 I am trying to think of this specific time. There was  
965 always - the only way I can talk about it is in a way to  
966 talk about the flip side which is when I was getting ready  
967 to leave Charlie came to me and he said girl you really  
968 should stay you finally got enough sense to be afraid in a  
969 way that it makes you a good worker which you know was a  
970 very wonderful thing that he said to me but it was that I  
971 think it was that sort of insensitive innocence of white  
972 people that probably that lack of fear.

973 Dr. Smith: Can you think of a time when you were  
974 walking down the street.



975           Yea, I am trying to think of a time when I would have  
976 done that. I thought of myself as pretty respectful and  
977 soft spoken and I think generally, I was. Well, he wanted  
978 me wear stockings more often then I did. He didn't want to  
979 drink coffee in front of people because it was a stimulant  
980 and some of those.

981           Dr. Smith: He was an old devil you know?

982           Sometimes people says he just ran a line on me. I  
983 smoked, he said I couldn't do that. Of course, I never  
984 smoked in public because he told me that I couldn't do that  
985 but and he was just.

986           Dr. Smith: He was going out with your sister, right.

987           Yea.

988           Dr. Smith: At the same time he was saying there was no  
989 interracial - didn't he have a rule about interracial  
990 dating. I can't remember. I thought he had a rule about no  
991 dating.



992           No sex for women. No sex for everybody but practice  
993   but he was a big do as I say not as I do. He also hit on me  
994   some and the idea that he would hit on his girlfriend's  
995   sister was just - how could you do that - I threw a phone at  
996   him one day when he came up behind me and grab me by the boobs  
997   and I just turned around and threw it at him.

998           Dr. Smith: He was - that is what is so infuriating.

999           Right and I think he probably still is. And just his  
1000   rambling on sometimes got to me. It got to lots of people.  
1001   But I will also recognize that there was something good or  
1002   very earnest about him but sometime I think he was a little  
1003   on the evil side but he was just very, in his own divinity  
1004   students sort of way driven. He was very self righteous.

1005           Dr. Smith: You made a couple of references to your  
1006   sister. I did not know your sister. Was she there before.

1007           She was never in the south she was actually sixteen the  
1008   year I was there. So, she was very young when she was  
1009   involved with him.



1010 Dr. Smith: You did not like that because of the age  
1011 then.

1012 Well, you know at the time I didn't really think about  
1013 it looking back on it its kind of amazing but especially ?  
1014 Carolyn was twice her age more than twice her age.

1015 Dr. Smith: He met her like when he was going on

1016 I met Sharod when Reggie was in New York doing some  
1017 fund raising things and I was in a meeting with Reggie and  
1018 Sharod. Actually, it was the same time I met Forman.  
1019 Forman and Sharod showed up at a speaking engagement. That  
1020 would have been like the spring of 1962.

1021 Dr. Smith: Beloved community and idea of the matter  
1022 and teaching. What comes to mind. I am trying to keep the  
1023 time frame right back there because if I get away from the  
1024 time frame I will definitely be lost.

1025 Great. You will have many volumes. I think I function  
1026 better as a teacher and organizer in meetings then directly



1027 teaching although I did so in a classroom later on. So,  
1028 what I remember is discovering like in those meetings when  
1029 six of us in the movement staff or 15 of us maybe including  
1030 the local Albany were meeting a growing sense of my own  
1031 power to figure things out and express them. It is very  
1032 different from public speaking and some other kinds of  
1033 teaching but that - I really came into my own in some of  
1034 those settings I felt like.

1035 Dr. Smith: Did you have some doubt about your  
1036 analytical abilities before that.

1037 No, not in terms of book learning as oppose to mother  
1038 wit. I knew that I could do a good job in blue books, exam  
1039 books and, but in terms of I think educational system at  
1040 least in those days and especially since I got a scholarship  
1041 to Barner which is a very elitist school, schooling is all  
1042 about impressing the teacher. And, what I got into those  
1043 meetings in terms of myself as a learner and teacher was  
1044 that peers were my brothers and sisters were a place I could  
1045 feel really that I could contribute ideas and learn from  
1046 them. I did not need a teacher up at the head of the class.



1047 Dr. Smith: That was one of the biggest things for me  
1048 was having people to check with and think with and validate.

1049 In fact, that was exciting.

1050 Dr. Smith: Yes, and I miss that very much not having -  
1051 for me I don't have people with a same set of assumptions  
1052 that I have now. Sometimes I think I am talking to the wall  
1053 or the air of something. Because these people don't have?  
1054 What do you think those assumptions are that we shared at  
1055 that time. I know that we had them.

1056 We had that quality that McDoo talked about of knowing  
1057 we were - he didn't say tough - but we knew we were together  
1058 and tough and that we could change things. We may had been  
1059 a little bit overestimating but we knew that it was Ok to  
1060 say that something was wrong or right which I think children  
1061 in Maliak, Taric and Joan and Carmel our children generation  
1062 talking about right and wrong is like they might know how to  
1063 do it personally but they wouldn't necessarily do it with  
1064 their peers to say, I don't know, it is a different moral  
1065 atmosphere but race, segregation and oppression were wrong.



1066 Absolutely, lynching was wrong and I was shaped a lot by the  
1067 Brown vs the Board of Education Case in the sense that at  
1068 that point I believe there was a higher authority probably  
1069 the Supreme Court that if we could just make telling enough  
1070 case we could - if we could just convince people of the  
1071 justice of our position then John Kennedy I didn't really  
1072 believe John Kennedy would do it but at some level I  
1073 believed if we could make a good case we would win. I think  
1074 it is much more complex than that although the progress that  
1075 was made in South Africa kind of revived some of that  
1076 optimism that right ideas can win.

1077 Dr. Smith: That was a big . .

1078 And, then there was something about the south, a pride  
1079 the south which this country had stereotype as backwards and  
1080 particularly black people of the south. This is what I  
1081 think I heard in Albany a lot and what I came to feel that  
1082 in fact it was the reverse. I mean the south was in the  
1083 forefront and black people were in the forefront if you well  
1084 with justice, dignity and I felt a lot of excitement that we  
1085 were overturning old ideas that were no longer and maybe old



1086 generation that I don't know. What do you think the  
1087 assumptions were?

1088 Dr. Smith: I think there is a truth in right is right  
1089 and right don't wrong nobody. Perry Bowie has a good quote  
1090 "truth crush to the ground will surely rise again." I  
1091 believe like that but there are some other assumptions about  
1092 the respect for the nature of each individual that had to do  
1093 with this beloved community idea. That is what I am saying  
1094 I can't find that anywhere in my current life. I am trying  
1095 to stay with something that we can illustrate.

1096 Martha once said to me we know we were all at our best  
1097 when we were 19 years old. I am not willing to accept that  
1098 but I am not sure that my life is proving otherwise.

1099 Dr. Smith: What her summary statement would beginning  
1100 didactic and I think it is about the special knowledge that  
1101 each individual brings to an intentional community - a group  
1102 who would try to work together and I think it is tied to  
1103 Bier Ruston's statement about "if this country would really  
1104 fix racism it would be revolutionary."



1105           Oh, dear. When I think about it's partly the idea that  
1106 we are all learners and that we grow and I think one of the  
1107 basic tenants of society right now is that we don't keep  
1108 growing and if we as a society said that every sixteen year  
1109 person at 16 years in 1994 we are going to do everything  
1110 possible to help them realize our potential - their  
1111 potential which is our potential. The impact of those  
1112 hundreds of thousands of 16 years old over the next,  
1113 assuming that we could do that, and that we could protect  
1114 their games the impact of those children over the next 50  
1115 years would be phenomenal and that the reverse that is the  
1116 price we pay for the society we have is that most of us  
1117 don't begin to continue to learn either we are too hungry or  
1118 for various reasons racism certainly one of them and that  
1119 capitalism which is suppose to realize and husbands so  
1120 called and cared for resources and let them realize their  
1121 full potential and profits in fact weighs our greatest  
1122 resource which is our people. Now, I don't know where I am  
1123 exactly except that teachers such as the bare foot teachers  
1124 in the end Bernice Wiggins talk about her teaching in this  
1125 one room school house in Albany, Georgia and the teachers



1126 who taught me when I was a child many of whom had grown out  
1127 of the labor movement and were radicals and that didn't show  
1128 up in their classrooms but they respected me when I was four  
1129 years old and I think although I was in some ways a very  
1130 soft spoken even timid young white woman when I went south,  
1131 there was a core of self respect because those women had  
1132 loved me which was very important it is what gave me the  
1133 strength to survive being really scared in Albany. And,  
1134 also gave me the strength when I didn't know what to do with  
1135 myself political to not give up but to keep trying to forge  
1136 your way into trade in ultimately West Virginia where I  
1137 could use some of what I had learned in the course of my  
1138 life.

1139 Dr. Smith: If you were making a statement to the young  
1140 person about - it would be a statement about if you are  
1141 going to organize people you would have to respect each one  
1142 of them individually.

1143 And, yourself. I think as a white woman part of what I  
1144 had to get over was somehow thinking because I wasn't black  
1145 I had nothing to contribute. That was one idea I had to get



1146 over. The other idea I had to get over was that somehow all  
1147 these white people were problem in this country were  
1148 inherently different for me. And, what I slowly learned  
1149 and it to decades was that yes, there are many people white  
1150 people who are organized racist. But by and large the  
1151 people who's children were in my classrooms and the children  
1152 I taught were just like me and that is why it was important  
1153 for me to be there. They needed to meet someone like me who  
1154 has had this very positive experience and who had picture of  
1155 how things could work if they were different. And that is  
1156 understanding that the classroom is not a place to preach  
1157 but simply by respecting all the students whether they were  
1158 circle A students or not in itself the way I conducted  
1159 myself in the classroom was partly a lesson.

1160 Dr. Smith: Can you think of a time. You talk about  
1161 that one time with Mr. Page where you could appreciate his  
1162 intuitive knowledge. Can you think of another time.

1163 Another time.

1164 Dr. Smith: Another time something descriptive, a theme



1165 you catch onto the intuitive knowledge of the person that  
1166 you have come to teach.

1167 In talking with you, I am realizing a lot of what I did  
1168 in the movement was observed which is what I have done a lot  
1169 in my life but somehow listening to that question what I  
1170 think of is Rev. Wells who was a leader in Albany unlike  
1171 many of the Albany leaders he was very involved with the  
1172 surrounding counties and when we went to mass meetings in  
1173 the tent in Terrell County or whatever he went, he saw this  
1174 as part of his mission and he really function like a SNCC  
1175 staff member although he had a job as a welder at the air  
1176 force base. In fact, but what brings to mind when you ask  
1177 me that is remembering on a very hot day and being in  
1178 Rev. Wells car and there must have been at least four  
1179 teenage girls from the Albany movement with us going out to  
1180 a mass meeting in one of the counties. These girls were  
1181 like 13 and 14 and very bosses playing his radio really loud  
1182 and just being loud. Looking at this man who is a minister  
1183 a preacher after all and who had just put a hard day in at  
1184 the air force base and watching him let them play with his  
1185 radio dial and be ornery and loud and he didn't say anything



1186 but I just really felt he just love these girls for their  
1187 energy and for their - they might be kind of pesky and he  
1188 was sort of the authority figure but it was ok with him that  
1189 they were just running wild in his car. I really loved him  
1190 for that and it made me see them in a new way too. The only  
1191 thing in somehow ties in with teaching that I just have to  
1192 tell is that with some of those girls with some other girls  
1193 we went to a SNCC staff meeting like in November 1993 and  
1194 it's a lot of picture from that meeting in Dandelion's book  
1195 and we were - I don't know where we were driving - I guess  
1196 we were in Tennessee and we were just in this real noises  
1197 car and all of a sudden one of the girls said, "look at  
1198 that" and they all started screaming and they had seen I  
1199 happen to wonder if it was a black trooper cause it seems  
1200 early than 1962 but they had seen a black man in uniform  
1201 driving a car and what they said, "a black police we have  
1202 been organizing to get black police, I never really knew  
1203 there could be such a thing." I guess what was central to  
1204 organizing was that energy that those girls had and the fact  
1205 that they had been beating and gone to jail for something  
1206 that on some level they weren't even sure that it really  
1207 exist and they said "wow, black police I didn't know such a



1208        thing could really exist. It was so moving I mean.

1209            Dr. Smith: I know you are trying - but I want to hear  
1210 a little bit about - do you see something interesting  
1211 between your family origin and all of this. Or is it all  
1212 experience.

1213            Yea, I do and I don't - maybe a long story but I think  
1214 one of the reasons I was able to continue beyond my SNCC  
1215 years as an organizer years my role working with SNCC scared  
1216 my mother she was petrified and I don't think she really  
1217 wanted me to go South but I didn't go south to rebel  
1218 against her and so there was a sense of continuity and  
1219 certainly with these old time radicals.

1220            Dr. Smith: Your mother was a radical.

1221            No. She was not like Dottie Zelner's family, I think  
1222 was but some of the women at this elementary school I went  
1223 to I think was part of the teacher's union which was black  
1224 was red listed or whatever. So, I felt like I was taking my  
1225 heritage with me but I also felt like I was doing it better



1226      than the earlier generation.

1227           Dr. Smith: I wasn't sure about that. Is your mom  
1228      black.

1229           Dr. Smith: Black. No., I lived with my mother and  
1230      this woman Charity Bailey who is a music teacher. And, from  
1231      the time I was five until seventeen or eighteen, Charity was  
1232      the one.

1233           Dr. Smith: Charity was black.

1234           Yes, and she functioned as my co-worker. Long before I  
1235      realize what race was.