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Interviewees: Judy Richardson

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Interviewer: Emilye Crosby

Videographer: John Bishop

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START OF RECORDING

F1: From the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

EMILYE CROSBY: This Is Emilye Crosby on December 9, 2015, with Judy Richardson, and we're in her home in Silver Spring, Maryland, outside of DC. And we're here with the Civil Rights History Project, co-sponsored by the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. And also with us are John Bishop and Guha Shankar. Judy, thank you so much for doing the interview with us.

JUDY RICHARDSON: Thank you.

EC: Can you start by telling us when and where you were born, and about your family?

JR: Mm-hmm. I was born on March 10, 1944, in Tarrytown, New York, which is about forty-five miles north of New York City. My mother, May Louise Richardson, initially Tucker, was first a seamstress and then a homemaker. [She got]

married to my father, and my father was a--oh, and also, she was a jazz pianist, but I can get to that in a minute. Yeah. Oh, honey, played a mean jazz piano. But, my father was William King Richardson, and he grew up in the house that I grew up in, and that he married and took my mother to in Tarrytown, in the under-the-hill section--it's called that--of Tarrytown, which is where all the blue-collar folks lived, right near the railroad tracks.

My father had helped to organize the United Auto Workers Local in what was called "the plant," which was the Fisher Body Chevrolet Plant, where my father and the fathers of everybody I knew worked. And you could tell time from the shifts changing at the plant. And I found out, only after my older sister saw one of the many documentary series that Blackside had done, after *Eyes on the Prize*, and it was on the Depression. And the beginning segment of that was on the beginnings of the Ford factory. That was the first segment.

And she saw all of the archival material from that, and what it looked like in the plant. And she called me and she said, "Oh, I just saw, you know, Blackside's--and it reminded me of when Daddy was organizing the Local." And this is news to me. So, I said, "What?" And she said, "Yeah. Daddy was working in the plant, and," she said, "There were times when he had decided he wanted to organize a union, and the UAW Local there. And so," she said, "What I--." What she, my sister, remembered was that when the guy from the National--he was a white guy--and so, he would come up and sit in my kitchen, talking to my father.

And what my sister said was that my mother would immediately close the curtains. Because we were ground level. We had a little, teeny-tiny little house, right on

the ground there. And she said she would immediately close the curtains so that nobody could see that my father was talking to somebody from the Local--from the National.

Because she was afraid, of course, with good reason, that he might lose his job.

EC: Do you have a sense of the timing of this?

JR: Not really. I mean, I have no memory of it. And so, it would have had to be when he--so, he dies on the assembly line when I'm seven years. He dies of a heart attack. And so, that would have been probably [19]53--four and seven is eleven--[19]51. Fifty-one. So, I was seven years old then. He--.

Oh, and the other thing she remembers about this is that sometimes, people would leave bags of groceries on our porch, because they would be too afraid to overtly say they were supporting the Local, and the building of the organizing of the Local. But the way they did that was to then give my family some groceries, you know? And so, my sister, Carita, said, you know, you would come outside, and you would find these bags of groceries on the porch. And the result was that, as one of the white guys in Tarrytown mentioned to me, when we were protesting segregated housing, "Why are you doing this?" He said. "We loved Billy," my father. Which they did. They loved Billy.

Now, they wouldn't allow him inside-- [laughing] some other stuff, but they loved Billy, because he had--you know, he was treasurer of that Local when he died of a heart attack on the line in [19]51. So, yeah, there's all of that.

EC: So, your dad's helping to organize a union that's mostly white? I mean, is he one of the few--?

JR: No, there were--no.

EC: No?

JR: No, because Tarrytown had a--I would say about a ten percent black population. And like all of the white ethnics on our block--because my block--there was the projects down the road. And that was just about all black. And then on our block, [5:00] which again, was under the hill, so we--nobody had any money. But they were all working-class--my family, and then the working-class white people on the block; Italians, Polish, and Irish.

And so, in addition, though--and I should mention, by the way, that Tarrytown was steeped in tradition. So, I went to Washington Irving Junior High School. This was Washington Irving territory. Washington Irving Junior High School. Sleepy Hollow High School. [Laughter] Yes. Our mascot was the Headless Horseman. A horseman [goat?]. It was all of that. I mean, we had--but I didn't see any middle-class--certainly no middle-class black people, but no middle-class white people, either. Because it hadn't become that kind of suburban thing. There were white people who lived in Sleepy Hollow Manor, and Tappan Zee Manor-- something like that. But most of the people I knew, and certainly all my friends, were white kids. Some black kids, but mainly white kids, whose parents--whose father worked in the plant. The black people I knew, their mothers, mainly--their fathers worked in the plant, too. And their mothers oftentimes worked out. So, they were domestic workers.

EC: Well, I would just assume, when people were saying to you, "We love Billy. Why are you doing this," kind of thing, that's because you're protesting segregation, you mean?

JR: Segregated housing.

EC: Segregated housing?

JR: But also, on my block--at the end of my block, was a fire department. And it was all volunteers. I mean, it's Tarrytown, it's--you know. And so, they had no--none of the fire departments had any black people. So, when I come back from SNCC, that first summer, which would have been sixty--I guess the summer of [19]64, somewhere in there--not only have we already started a Tarrytowners for Civil Rights, but also with this wonderful black couple. Oh, golly--who was a doctor--oh, I may or may not remember her name. She and her husband--both black--she was the doctor. And he was an architect. And they moved on Broadway. And that was major. I mean, when I went back to speak at Marymount College in Tarrytown, they came, as did a number of former folks from Tarrytowners for Civil Rights. And I went up to her husband, and I said, "Oh, my gosh, you were the first black couple to actually make it to Broadway." And he said, "All the black people told us that." [Laughter] So, that was great. Yeah.

So, we're doing stuff around residential, but it's also specific to that fire department. Now, when we pull a picket line--it's on the end of my block. Right? One-thirty-three Franklin Street was my town, right? It was my address. At the end of that block, we had a picket line. And it was at a corner where all the commuters--because there were commuters. I just didn't know any of them, because they were white and middle class. But they would come through that when they got off the train. Because we're right across from the train, right? So, they would see the picket line. And we had thrown it up, because--you know, they blackballed. And they said that. "We blackballed--." And I remember one guy coming--oh, what?

EC: What does that mean for--if some people don't know what blackballed--?

JR: Yes, good point. "Blackballed," and during certain times when we were trying to rearrange the language, we started calling it "whiteballed." But blackballed meant that you did not--one blackball. It was kind of like you would put--well, I guess in terms of the fire department, it meant that, if there was any nay vote on a proposed person who would be invited in, to be part of this volunteer fire department, then somebody would either put a black ball, or put a black piece of paper--something to indicate "nay." But the ball, it was--oftentimes, I guess how it started, was that it would be a ball. It would be a little black ball that would mean that was a "no" vote.

EC: And they did that automatically with any black applicant?

JR: Yes. And what they reminded me of--and this was while I'm on the picket line. They reminded me that, first of all, "Yes, we loved Billy." But also, that when our house caught fire Thanksgiving Day, and we had gone out of town to my father's family in Yonkers, nearby. [We] came back, and found smoldering. I mean, they had--it was just--. And one of them said--my mother reminded me of this--she said that one of the firemen, who loved Billy, said, "I stopped one of the other firemen from using a hatchet on the door, because I said, 'No, this is Billy's house.'" And I'm sure he did that. Because that was separate. You know?

So yeah, it was smoldering. [10:00] I remember we all were in there. It was cold, because we couldn't put any heat on. But eventually, it got back to whatever. It didn't burn down, it just was very smoldering, and we couldn't have any heat, and it was Thanksgiving, and cold, and stuff.

So anyway. There were fond memories of my father. And we also picketed--again, after I come back from that first stint at SNCC, so I'm taking a break. We're

fundraising for SNCC. And it must have been--I can't remember if it was before or after the [19]64 summer project in Mississippi. But certainly, we're doing some kind of fundraising. And so, I bring Stokely, the Freedom Singers--so Bernice, and Chuck, and Rutha--and I don't know who the other--who was the other--? In that original group. It wasn't Matthew. Who was the other guy? Oh, and Cordell! Yeah, Cordell. Hello!

[Laughs] So, yeah.

So, they come up, and they--so, Stokely Speaks--now, this is before Black Power, so it's [19]64. Stokely speaks, the SNCC Freedom Singers sing. And it's in Patriots' Park, in front of the library. There was a woman, Mrs. Kenney, who was as right-wing as you could get her. And so, she protested about how, "In Patriot's Park, there were these communists, you know, singing these songs. And we all know they were communists." She had written a letter saying that SNCC was a communist--well, basically, what did they used to call them? Not supporters.

EC: Sympathizers?

JR: Sympathizer, yeah. And so, she put this in the *Tarrytown Daily News*. Now, my mother wrote--I mean, she had a beautiful handwriting. I mean, it was gorgeous. My mother had, like, an eighth-grade education, right? She read everything. Every Sunday, it was *Meet the Press* on the television. It was-- I remember her--she had stacks of the *New York Post*, which then was a real newspaper, right? And she would love Murray Kempton's articles, because he was a little left of cent--he was a liberal, basically. And so, she had all of these stacks in her bedroom. And she would write back to Mrs. Kenney in the *Tarrytown Daily News*, and say, "No, I--you know, *da-da-da-da*." And very rational. Mrs. Kenney at one point said something about--which I had to

respond to--but had said something about, "We know that they are communist sympathizers because it was read into the congressional record." And it's like, you could read the phone book into the congressional record. But she didn't know any better.

So, there was always that kind of--like the Tea Party now. But my mother would respond. And then, I have letters from her, where she's saying that I shouldn't--I should be careful, and not be around people because I'm going to be--I'm going to get a cold. And she said, "Stay away from anybody who's sneezing, because--" I've just realized that's part of what--oh, got lost at that Duke interview. Gosh. Anyway, but I have the original letter from her, where she talks about staying away from anybody who has a cold and is sneezing. And then she says--now, of course, this is--I'm in Mississippi. And it's 1964, and she's talking about worry about the people who are sneezing because they may give you a cold, right?

EC: She's really thinking about--.

JR: Well, then her next line is something about, "I've got to get to bed now. I haven't been sleeping well." And it was only after I got grown and looked at this letter--not back then--that I realized, she's not sleeping because she's worried sick about me. But she's not saying any of that in the letter. And she says in the letter, something about, in key to my sister, Carita, "It's cooking--[she] can't do Thanksgiving dinner, because she's organizing parties."

Now, the parties were that I had brought my sister in, and my sister was now organizing the Harry Belafonte parties in [19]64 on Long Island, out of the SNCC fundraising office in New York City. And so, my sister--who could really cook, unlike my mother--excuse me. My sister could cook. And so, she was going to--usually, could



do the turkey, but no, she's doing the Belafonte concerts. So [laughter], yeah.

[Discussion with tech crew]

EC: So, I want to go back just a little. I took you on a side tour--.

JR: Sorry, no, I go off, yes.

EC: --with--. So, you found out later from your sister that your father was an organizer.

JR: Yes.

EC: And he died on the line when you were seven?

JR: Mm-hmm.

EC: And what was your mother doing?

JR: Yes, good point. So, my mother--at some point, my mother--well, my mother could play piano. I mean, she could hear something, [15:00] and could just do chords. And so, she had written music. She certainly read scores, and stuff, but sheet music. And she loved *Porgy and Bess*. She had all that sheet music in the [piano] bench. But, in addition, she could play all kinds of things. And she loved, you know, Oscar Peterson, and she just loved lots of people. So--mm-mm. Not Oscar Peterson. Art Tatum. She loved Art Tatum.

So, for her own amusement, she is doing this. But before I'm born--I think before I'm born, she was the pianist in a little jazz combo in Westchester County, which is where Tarrytown was. And so, she was going around playing as the pianist with this Teddy Whiteley Orchestra, until my father stopped it. [Laughs] I guess he didn't want his wife going off when he was not there, on-site, you know, and off to these little clubs and stuff. So--.

EC: And you know jazz, I mean--.

JR: You got it. A little free, yes. Although my mother was so prim. But anyway, [laughter]. So, in any event, she's not doing that, but she still always played. I always remember my mother playing, to the point that when I come back from--oh, and I got to tell you about the numbers, because she also booked the numbers. But when I come back from--[19]64, from Mississippi, she's sitting in our little living room, on the bench in front of the piano. And it was a Lester, little small piano. And she said, "Come here, come here, come here!" And I go over, and I sit next to her on the bench. And she started playing "We Shall Overcome," with these blue chords. I still remember it. It's like--it brought tears to me. It was like, "Oh, my little mommy." You know, something like that. It was so cute. [Laughter] It was so cute. And they were so gorgeous. I mean, I had never heard "We Shall Overcome" that way. It was just gorgeous. And she had heard it. It wasn't like she was reading sheet music. She just heard the chords.

Also, though, what my mother did was that she booked numbers. So, since she wasn't playing in the orchestra anymore. And she booked numbers including--well, for everybody. Now, I'm in an ethnic neighborhood, right? And the mayor is Italian, Mayor Vetrano. Well, his mother used to come down from up the hill, and she would come down, and she would book the numbers--not every day. Some people did it every day. But she booked it every so often. And then, walked back up the hill, and stuff. And a lot of the people booked numbers with my mother. Or, my father also booked it, at the plant. And then, Trippy, who was this tall, white guy--Trippy was the runner. So, he would bring in the slips. He would take the money. And I think people felt comfortable doing it with my mother, because she was honest as hell. As was my father.

Now, my sister told me that my father once got arrested and had the numbers slips on him. And my sister said she was so embarrassed, because it was in the *Tarrytown Daily News*. [Laughter] Yes. And now, what was funny about that was, everybody booked with my father. So, somebody must have wanted something--somebody didn't get a payoff, something. Because it was the Italian folk, the Irish folk, the--Italians, Irish, Polish folks. Everybody booked with my father. You know, so--.

EC: And this is gambling?

JR: Oh, I'm sorry. Now, the numbers--I just found out recently that it was otherwise known as the--what did they used to--? The Italian lottery. [Laughter] So, if you look it up--and some people suggest that it came in through the Italian immigrants who first come in. So, it is otherwise known as that. But the numbers were based--the ones I knew--were based on the race, and certain races that were being played that day. And so, it was a three-digit number. You could combine it. You could do, you know, four-five-three, three-five-four, however. And it was called boxing it. And it was simple enough so that people could understand it, but I didn't quite get all of the stuff around it. I just knew it was based on that day's race. Didn't know how-- which in that day's race. And people would then come to collect, if they won the numbers.

And then, you know, my mother would get a cut off [of] whatever, particularly if somebody won who had bet with her. And then people would tip you, and all of this stuff. One time, my mother bet. And I always remember this, because she told me this story. She said she won. And she then called my Aunt Helen, her sister, who lived in the Bronx. They were close. I mean, they were so close that every day, I would call my Aunt Helen--Olinville [20:00] four, four-nine-eight-six. I would call her every night,

because my mother would say, "Call Helen." And I'd go, "Okay." Close, close. My mother wins. And she then calls my Aunt Helen, and says, "Helen, get ready. I'm going to pick you up. We're going to go buy some fur coats." [Laughter] So, she and my mother got these fur coats from whatever my mother had played and won. So, yeah.

[Break in audio; discussion with tech crew]

EC: What kind of work did your mother do, after your father died?

JR: Well, it was great, first of all. When my father died--[interruption] after he died, what was great about the unions, of course, is that there were pensions for the family. So, my mother has a modicum of--a small amount, but she also knows she has to work.

Oh, as a matter of fact, let me tell you what she does with that small amount of money. Because she realized she needed a car. And so, she was going to buy a car, and pay for it over time. The only--one of the two times that I have ever seen my mother talk about race was this time, when she goes to buy a car. It was going to be a Valiant. She buys this--she goes, and comes back, and she is huffing mad, because the man is obviously--the white salesman has obviously disrespected her, and suggested that she does not have the money to buy this. She comes back. She takes all of the money out--for not just a down payment, but to pay for the car outright, and gives it to the man.

So, that--it was an inroad in whatever might have been there. But that money was there because--you know, they didn't spend much money on stuff. But also, because there was a UAW pension that just went to her. However, that wasn't enough. And so, she then gets a job--.

Oh, well, first of all, she goes for--you had to get on a list. So, you had to take an exam. Now, my mother was very smart. She had an eighth-grade education, but she was really smart, and corrected my grammar. Because I mean, I would say, "Well, he went with Henry and me." She said--no, "With Henry and I." She said, "Me. Henry and me." She always--it's a preposition. She knew the parts of the--it was all of that. Even now, I correct my grammar based on my mother standing over my shoulder, right?

So, she knew all this stuff, but she kept getting low marks, and you had to be in the top whatever number, to be considered for a County job. She goes to Mr. Slaven, who ran the drug store, and says to Mr. Slaven, "You know, I can't seem to get hired." She said, "It seems to me that I'm coming up at the top of the exam, but nobody's calling me for work." He says--Mr. Slaven says, "How are you registered?" And she says, "Democrat." [He says], "Mm-mm. You've got to change your registration. Be a Republican." And she does. And--I always remember this--immediately, she gets called. She goes. And so, then she becomes a County worker as a secretary at the County office building in White Plains. So, she's doing that every day.

EC: You said one of only two times your mother talked about race?

JR: Oh, good pick-up, yes. Which I would not have remembered, so thank you. The other time was when she mentioned going to see *Birth of a Nation* in whatever that would have been--1915, or something, during President Wilson's presidency. And she said that she went--and for those who don't know, *Birth of a Nation* was based on the book--should I go through all that? Or--?

EC: You can do a quick--.

JR: Okay. [It was] based on a book written by a Klansman. And it valorized the Klan, and just said, basically, they were the protectors of white womanhood, after reconstruction, and that's the reason the white people were safe in the South. And they absolutely make horrible--they make the--it's the whole coon thing, and ignorant, and rapists, as the former enslaved people. But what film courses do with this film is that they teach it for the technique, because it was a new technique. And sometimes they don't even mention how racist it was. Okay, so I've gone to film departments and--Okay, so I know about this.

But what she remembered was that she had gone with a friend of hers. And she said she saw the way that black people were portrayed. And by the way, I should mention that--well, I'm sorry. The way they were portrayed--and she said, "I couldn't even lift my head." She said, "We came out of that theater, and all I could do was look down at the pavement, I was so ashamed." Never talked about the larger issue of racism, or any of that. Just, "That was the incident. That's what I learned."

[25:00] Now, I later find out, when we're doing *Eyes on the Prize*, and I mention to John Dittmer, I said, "I saw this--when I was the only black person in my AP history course--" at Sleepy Hollow High School, right? And I loved the course. But we were doing something on Reconstruction. And I said, "The only--" Of course it was just a short piece on Reconstruction. But it was so negatively portrayed. And in fact, the only illustration was the one that came from *Birth of a Nation*. Which I find out, but I didn't know what that was. I just knew it was an illustration, and it showed what was supposed to be a white scallywag, and they were--the black guy was disheveled, and he had his feet on the desk of what was supposed to be the state legislature during Reconstruction. And

you see the white guy, who's come down from the North, and he looks horrible. And the whole framing of it was as a really negative thing. So, you didn't get anything about South Carolina, first time you get free public education for poor whites as well as black people. It's all that.

So, I mention to--it's *Eyes on the Prize* school; it's say, *Eyes* one would have been somewhere around mid-[19]80s. And one of our advisors was John Dittmer, who does local people, but hadn't done it yet. And so, I say to John, "You know, John, I remember this book. And it had this illustration in it of what was supposed to be Black Reconstruction." And I said, "When we looked at it, and you saw that horrible caricature, all I remember is the white kids in my class kind of looking back at me, kind of trying not to look, but always looking back. And I felt really ashamed. I mean, as my mother had with the same--.

EC: Imagery.

JR: Same imagery. That's it. So, I say--and the thing is, what they were denied was the same thing I was denied, which was the reality of what Black Reconstruction really was. And the sense that I got coming out of that, which was, this is what happens when black people are put into any position of authority or control. So, I get that message, all my white classmates get that, and that's--so I asked John--John Dittmer, "What--? Am I remembering this?" And he said, "Oh, yeah. That was--." And he remembered the authors. And he said, "That was a nationally prescribed textbook, at the time." So, other people are getting this. [Laughter] So, anyway.

I can't remember how I started out. Oh, because that's the other part of that, was that imagery.

EC: ( )

JR: So, it's never just a film. People will tell me, "Why are you getting so upset?" Like with *Mississippi Burning*. "Why are you getting so upset? It's just a film." It's never just a film. [Laughter]

EC: So, you've covered a lot of different things about growing up. But I remember talking once, and you telling me you wrote a Letter to the Editor about the Little Rock de-segregation?

JR: Yes, I did! I forgot that. Yes! Okay, so I'm in high school. So, somewhere between tenth grade and twelfth grade. So, wait--[19]57. Okay, so fifty-seven, forty-four--what is that, thirteen? ( ) [something weird?]. Okay. And I remember writing a letter, which was to tell the *Tarrytown Daily News*, "I don't know why these students in Little Rock are trying to get into this white school. They are better off just pursuing their education however they want, because it's really about education, and we will progress through that" [Laughter] Oh, how far we've come.

EC: You who are de-segregating your school in Tarrytown, right?

JR: Yes, exactly. [Laughs] That's right. Exactly. That's right.

EC: Interesting.

JR: Yup. Mm-hmm. So, it was--I mean, until I get to SNCC--.

EC: Do you know where you're getting that attitude from?

JR: It could have been my mother. You know, it could have been. But I should not blame my mother for this. It could have been other folks in the school. I mean, since that's what I got when I'm at Swarthmore, a good Quaker college, when we are doing the de-segregating. And good Quaker children are saying to us, "You'd be



better off not doing any demonstrating, but staying on campus, and just pursuing your education.” As one of the students said to somebody else, “They would be better doing that, because they’ll be--,” oh, no. How did he put it? “Because they will be able to contribute more to their race.” [Laughs] That was the thing. Yes. So, I mean, that was the general line of thinking of most people--most white people. And some black people, too. But most white people. So, I can see that I would have incorporated that, given that I’m sitting there--yeah.

EC: Do you ever want to look him up, and compare how much you’ve contributed and he’s contributed?

JR: Oh, that one? No. [30:00] [Laughter] No. Forget him. [Laughter] Exactly.

EC: So, let’s jump ahead, and you just mentioned you go to college at Swarthmore?

JR: So, how do you end up at Swarthmore, and what’s it like?

EC: Yes. I was one of eight black students, who come into Swarthmore that year. So, that was [19]62. Now, I was in the top three. I mean, there were three of us who were in the top, as we graduated. It had small graduating class. And I applied to Bennington, where my sister had gone. Bryn Mawr, I think Antioch, and Swarthmore. And Bennington, actually--because my sister had not done that well at Bennington. And so, Bennington says, “Well, we will admit you, but we’re not going to give you the money that we understand Swarthmore is giving.” And that, “We understand they really are going to be doing--.” However, they said this in their letter.

EC: So, they’re colluding?

JR: You got it. And then I get the Swarthmore letter. And the Swarthmore letter says full freight for four years. Now, my mother obviously had no money. So, I'm thinking, "Oh, okay. I guess I'll do Swarthmore." So, I come in as one of eight. Four boys--four black kids. This is all incoming freshman class. Four black men, four black women. I assumed it was so that we would not have to date outside our little group. All eight of us--.

EC: Did you immediately pair up?

JR: Oh, yeah, immediately. Yeah., of course. [Laughter] But the main thing was, we were all housed with Quaker children. The assumption being, I think, that the Quaker children would be more accepting of us, right?

So, I got Meg--I can't remember Meg's last name. Let me just say, that was not automatically true, once we started doing demonstrations. But when we come in, it's eight, and it's four and four, and when I come in, there may be two other black students there. One was a senior, and one was a sophomore, to my remembrance. At least my memory, that's what I've got.

Somebody, when I said this--we had an all-day meeting, when we did our *Hands on the Freedom Plow* all day at Swarthmore. And I think the president, or somebody may have said they thought there was a third, and that that was an African student. But I'm not sure, because I've never checked the records.

So, we come in. And I had been--I mean, as senior year always is. You know, you've been sliding through. I come into Swarthmore, and it's like, oh my God. And not only is it academically really pressurized, but it's also that most of these kids have come out of, you know, Sidwell Friends. I mean, Quaker schools; come out of private schools,

which now are called independent schools. I'm coming from a good public high school. But they've also come from families where they wintered in Paris, you know? And I had been to Albany. [Laughs] That was--.

EC: New York.

JR: New York! New York, excuse me. Albany, New York. And that was my one and only plane ride before this. And that was only because I was part of the All-State Youth Orchestra, which went to--or was that Buffalo? We went to Buffalo. Sorry, Buffalo.

So, these were worldly young kids. Which was why I was so amazed when we did the demonstrations, and they turned against us, but--some of them. Not all of them.

So anyway, I come in, and I'm, as usual, very good in English. But it's like, even poli-sci, which was an eight a.m. on a Saturday course, [laughter] with a professor who was phoning it in. I'm not a morning person. Eight a.m. on a Saturday, and it's like he's reading from his notes. Please. But it was in that poli-sci class that I got to respect this one young guy, who knew about Lenin, and Trotsky, and all this stuff that I had never heard of before, right? He's the one who says--I overhear him saying, once we do the demonstrations, "They'd be better off sticking to education."

EC: Oh, really?

JR: Oh, yeah.

EC: Your little theorist.

JR: Yeah, my little theorist. Who I just thought was so amazing, because he knew all this stuff, right? Yes, "Because they will be a better credit--they will be able to do more for their race." Yes.

EC: Be a credit to their race?

JR: Mm-hmm.

EC: And do--. Yeah. [break in audio; interruption from crew] Were you aware of the sit-ins and the Freedom Rides, before you go to college?

JR: I was not. And that's so surprising to me. It's like, I probably even knew maybe Emmett Till. But I don't remember it. Because I'm sure, given my mother-- although we had a weekly subscription to *Jet Magazine*--but I don't remember seeing that then. Unless I just blocked it out, or she made sure I didn't see that issue. I don't know. Because I do remember reading the *Jet*.

EC: The *Jet* had plenty [35:00] on the sit-ins and the Freedom Rides, too.

JR: It did. But I don't remember any of that.

EC: Huh.

JR: I don't remember any stuff. And then, I guess, so that's why--I'm not really sure what, really, what draws me to the SDS meeting, but I don't know if you want to get to that yet.

EC: Yeah, tell us. So how did--?

JR: Okay.

EC: So, you were in your first year at Swarthmore.

JR: Yeah.

EC: And you end up at an SDS meeting?

JR: Yes. And the SDS chapter was called SPAC, the Swarthmore Political Action Committee. And the co-chairs of that were Mimi Feingold and Carl Wittman. Now, Mimi, I did not know until 2010, when I go back to Swarthmore for this all-day

*Hands on the Freedom Plow* meeting--conference. Whatever, event. And I go back, and I decide I need to look up who Mimi was. And I found out that she had done six weeks in Parchman Prison on the Freedom Rides. Before she comes back to be co-chair of SPAC.

EC: You didn't know that?

JR: I didn't know that! When I'm looking at her, I knew nothing about her background.

EC: Huh.

JR: So, she was a CORE person. She was on CORE staff. She later goes into Plaquemine County--deadly. Plaquemine County, Louisiana. Didn't know any of that. But mainly, I did not know that she had done the six weeks in Parchman before I see her standing up at a SPAC meeting. Her co-chair, Carl Wittman--later, after he leaves Swarthmore, they get married. That didn't work out too well; he was gay. And then, he then becomes big in the gay rights movement. And he does this big treatise that people use.

So, they were leaders then. And at this point, they were really doing a lot around--well, SPAC had three main things. One was organizing the all-black cafeteria staff for better working conditions, better pay, health conditions, all that stuff. And then I'll get back to that. Second was doing tutorials in Chester, Pennsylvania, which still has the pits school. I mean, just horrible, primarily black schools. So, they were doing tutorials. And then the third thing was helping Gloria Richardson and CNAC, the Cambridge Nonviolent Action Committee, a SNCC affiliate, with opening up the segregated public facilities. Cambridge black folks had had the vote since the [19]40s, but now they were

opening up the--trying to de-segregate the public facility. So, it was those three things. It was the black cafeteria staff, and the tutorial in Chester, Pennsylvania, and Cambridge, Maryland.

So, all-black cafeteria staff--I'm work-study. So, I'm--. See, it's hard, particularly for young people, to understand what something like Swarthmore was like. I mean, it was gorgeous. So gorgeous. So, the dining hall was this gorgeous dining hall, with these big, old, wooden tables. And we all sat around it. And we were served. Nobody had to bus their own tables. You never thought of that. So, the waitresses would come in, and they would not only serve you, but they would take the stuff back, the plates back.

Well, I was one of the waitresses in the evening. I think maybe two or three nights, because I was work-study, as part of my four-year all tuition paid. So, one of the things that the black cafeteria staff had been trying to get was covering on this open--it was a big hot-water pipe that was right on one of the walls. And so, they would--in the rush to go back and forth in the dining hall, they would sometimes back into it. And they would get singed, on their leg. Swarthmore never did anything about it. So, that was one of their--one. Just one of the grievances they had. Okay. I'm moving back and forth. I hit it. And I swear to God, I had "H2O" backwards on my inner thigh--oh yeah.

EC: Oh--.

JR: For years.

EC: Ouch.

JR: Oh, it was amazing. Now, of course, the college is really worried about me.

EC: Right?

JR: So, when it happens, I remember Mimi saying--.

EC: Because you're a student.

JR: You got it. I'm a student. And I don't have to worry about whether I sue them, because I'm not working--you know, it's like--.

EC: Yeah.

JR: Okay, so I remember Mimi saying to me, "We've got to figure out--." She was really concerned that I was okay. There was that. But the other thing was, "How can we use this to open up stuff for the rest of the really-working [40:00] cafeteria staff?" So, I remember being called into some--.

EC: Are already going to the SDS meetings, by now?

JR: Yes. I'm sorry. And I'm sorry, I should have mentioned that before, because it's how I get there. But anyway, yes. And I'll go back to how I get there.

So, she says, "This is what we're going for. *Da-da-da-da*." And there was this wonderful woman, whose name I can't remember, from the black cafeteria staff, who-- and it's like I'm doing trays--who would come to our meetings, and she often brought some other black--usually female workers, because I think it might have been all female. I don't know who was in the kitchen, but in terms of the waitstaff, I'm pretty sure it was all-black female. Anyway, she was amazing. Because I had, in one of my old diaries, I had that she had--she was commenting on how amazing she was, and stuff. And just smart as a whip. You know, it was just--so anyway.

So, I remember being called into some administrative office. The Dean's Office. Somebody who is clearly very nervous about the fact that I have gotten this thing.

EC: Injury?

JR: Yes, this injury. And they want to know what I want. And so, I had been schooled by Mimi about, you know, “Well, this is what we need, and *da-da-da*.” And if I remember correctly, we got some of it. But it was also because this waitstaff really was strong. I mean, they were really amazing, and stuff. And I’m sure Swarthmore was aware of its Quaker heritage, and the—you know, it looked bad.

EC: Felt a little pressure?

JR: A little pressure.

EC: In the right way?

JR: That’s right. Exactly.

EC: Make a move.

JR: Yes. That’s it.

EC: Yeah.

JR: And so, but the reason I first started going to the meetings is that, it really is because--I sometimes say it’s because my mother’s not there to stop me. I’m sampling everything. I’m a freshman. It’s like, “What can I get into? What’s going on?” You know, all that stuff. [Laughter]

So, I happen to--I don’t know who told me about it, but somebody mentions it, or I see a leaflet. And I said, “Let me just try this.” And I get deeper and deeper into it. That’s the thing. I have no idea what draws me. But for the first time, I see somebody actually protesting some of this stuff. I mean, I think in the back of my mind, I always knew there were things going on. But it’s not something my mother would raise, it’s not something I was talking about when I was at Tarrytown. And maybe it was cumulative.



You know, finally, at this point, at sixty-two, sixty-three, maybe I'm actually waking up to some of the racial stuff. I don't know. But I go to this thing, and they are so amazing to me. I mean, Mimi was just amazing. Carl somewhat but it was Mimi who I really-- because she was just energetic, and it was amazing.

So, we do whatever we do with them. I go to this meeting, I find out what their agenda--what programs they're working on. And then, through them, I go to that first bus ride, going down to Cambridge, Maryland. So, I sign up for the bus ride.

EC: Is this a weekend?

JR: It's a weekend. That's right. Because the guarantee was that you would go down on a Saturday, and you would come back Sunday night. And you would do picket lines. And the guarantee was that you would come back Sunday night, so we'd be there for Monday classes.

EC: And this is going to Cambridge, Maryland?

JR: Cambridge, Maryland, which I think was maybe about two and a half hours away. Yeah.

EC: And were Swarthmore students doing like Howard students and diverting student money into supporting the movement with buses, and the like?

JR: Oh, that's interesting. I don't know.

EC: Okay.

JR: You know, because I really am new. So, I don't really know what Mimi was doing.

EC: You just get on the bus.

JR: I just get on the bus. That's exactly it. I get on the bus. And we were one of many colleges from the area, who were going down. So, you would get there, and it wouldn't just be Swarthmore College students, it would be--because I remember Mark Suckel who later goes down to the national office. He's coming from someplace. You would see Morgan State folk. And I don't remember the Howard people, but I remember some of the other nearby--Goucher, I remember, was coming down.

EC: And so, this is spring? Fall?

JR: No! Oh, I see. Okay, I get in--.

EC: So, it's--.

JR: So, it would be fall. Probably late fall.

EC: Fall of [19]62?

JR: [Nineteen] sixty-two. That's right.

EC: Okay.

JR: Yeah.

EC: And what was it like, to go to Cambridge and participate in the picketing?

JR: I have certain memories. And so, that's really it. What I remember is the first--one of the first demonstrations. I'm not sure if it was the first. And I remember we were trying to integrate the Choptank Inn. And I remember being enough close that I could see inside the Inn. And it was an old bar and grill. It was dirty. [45:00] It was dank. It smelled, I would say, of rotgut liquor. I mean, it just--nasty. And I'm thinking, "Why am I trying to get in here? [Laughter] This is a nasty place."

EC: "I do not want to be here."

JR: No! Exactly. Under normal circumstances, you--yes. Okay. [Laughter] But it was like, I see this big, burly white guy, who's telling me I can't come in because I'm black. And I see him, and it's like, "You're telling me? I can't--!" You know, it was stupid. [Laughter] So, at a certain point, we start getting arrested.

EC: You didn't have a confidence issue, did you?

JR: No, right? [Laughter] Right. Well, in many ways, I did. But with this thing, no. It was clear. That was clear.

So, I then--either there, or we were also trying to integrate the skating rink. Which, you know, and everybody ice-skated at that. And it was a roller rink, too.

EC: Is that in Cambridge?

JR: In Cambridge, right. In Cambridge. And that was the source of it, initially. Because the reason Gloria Richardson, who is, at that point, the overt leader. I mean, she's the one who most of the media knows. But as she often said, this was a--you know, this was group leadership, in Cambridge. And so, there were a lot of people who were part of the main committee and stuff. But Gloria, it's her daughter, and the young people in Cambridge, who decide they want to integrate the roller--I used to know the name of it. But the rink, the skating rink.

And so, Gloria and one of her, maybe relatives. It might have been her cousin-in-law, as a matter of fact. But in any event, the two women go down to SNCC, because they decide they need help, in terms of how to organize demonstrations. And Gloria says, you know, she put on little white gloves, and they had heels and stuff. And of course, they walk into the national office, and everybody's in jeans and overalls. [Laughter] But they had their [work?] gloves. So, who gets sent as a SNCC field

secretary is Reggie Robinson. And he's the one I first meet as a SNCC person when I go in.

But the reason they choose the roller rink is because it's the young people. And Gloria said--it was her daughter who said, "We're tired of this." But the older people knew, "We don't know how to quite do this. We don't want the young people going crazy. And so, we need to figure out how to organize this." But also, Gloria was--you know, her family was well-known, both among the black people and the white people. She and her family had the drug store. They had various businesses. Pop Herb, whom I stayed with overnight, when I would come down, Pop Herb was [at] the funeral parlor.

EC: So, would a lot of people be there?

JR: I remember a lot of people. But it went off and on. You know, it wasn't always that. But in terms of Pop Herb, as the funeral director, he would put up bail for us. There would be people who would stay in his attic, because I remember staying there. Mark, I remember, was there. There were other people. You know, we would be housed up there. And yeah. So, that--yeah.

EC: Can you--you said Reggie Robinson was the first SNCC person you met?

JR: Yeah.

EC: And Gloria's the visible leader here in Cambridge.

JR: Mm-hmm.

EC: Do you remember what your impressions were of them, or of--?

JR: Yes, and before I forget, what I meant to say, before I got into who was staying there. One of the things that was clear with Gloria--and we can get into this later, but I want to, while I'm thinking about it--was that she was never philosophically

nonviolent. And in fact, when her daughter said--when she's bringing people in and stuff, her daughter said specifically to Gloria, "Ma, you can't come on the picket line, because you're going to hit somebody." [Laughter] And Gloria said she knew that was true, and said, in fact, that one time, she said they--she saw white guys, whom she knew. She said, "I knew these guys! I grew up here. They grew up here. They're calling me names." She said, when the picket line ended, when they started leaving, she said, "I tripped one of them." [Laughter] So, that was Gloria.

EC: So, it's not only that she wasn't philosophically nonviolent--.

JR: She wasn't even tactically nonviolent. [Laughter] Mm-mm. No. Except on the line. She understood that, "On the line, I will be tactically--." But her main thing was, when the demonstrations are gone, all bets are off. And she said, "If they come on our side of Race Street--," because Race Street was the dividing line between white and black in Cambridge, Maryland. She said, "I can't guarantee one way or the other their safety." Yeah.

EC: Mm-hmm. Yeah, and Cambridge, of course, became kind of notorious for some of the battles.

JR: Yes.

EC: But you weren't there for that.

JR: I was not there for that. [50:00] And I sometimes resent the way the history says it, which is, you know, it's when Stokely goes in that suddenly, or Rap goes in, that suddenly everything goes--. Those people were never philosophically nonviolent. And so, yeah, mm-hmm.

EC: And they were always protecting the black community when whites would come on rampages through--.

JR: Yes.

EC: Driving down the street, and shooting, and--.

JR: That's correct. They were like Birmingham, on Bombingham Hill. Same thing, which was, the black community protected its community. If you come in here--. And so, Cambridge did the same thing. When people, when the white vigilantes, the white domestic terrorists came through, then you would find that black people--and white people knew that--that black people did have their guns, and they would shoot them. I mean, shoot at them.

EC: So, you said that you're trying things out, because you're away from home, and do you remember how you felt, participating in the sit-ins?

JR: I felt amazing. I mean, I really did. It was such energy, to me, to be part of--. I mean, if I had done it by myself, it would be one thing. But it was like, I was part of this group, these young people who were my age, and a lot of them were black. I mean, that was the thing, when I get into SNCC, that--well, anyway, a lot of them are doing something about the stuff that I have sublimated, all of my life, in Tarrytown. I mean, I knew black people couldn't move anywhere on Broadway, or the other side of it. I knew that. But it was a given. I knew that I didn't see any black businesses. I didn't see this. You know, I didn't see anything, in terms of Tarrytown, aside from my father, and other people, going to the plant. There was no black middle class in Tarrytown.

The one time we got somebody who actually had money was when Chris Calloway, Cab Calloway's daughter came in, and she was in our senior class. Or maybe

our junior class, because she didn't last long. They eventually moved her to a private school, I think. But that was the first time I saw anybody who was middle-class. So, even seeing people who were running their own businesses, as I saw in Cambridge, and other black communities in the South, I didn't see any of that in Tarrytown.

So, this was amazing. It was, first of all, I see black young people. And white young people, who were fighting this thing. We are so tight. You know, the camaraderie is so amazing. I'm going to these mass meetings, where people are singing these freedom songs, and it's like, you lift up to another place. And I'm not religious, all right? My mother read the Bible every Sunday, but she hated organized religion, so I never went to church, except once, which we can mention.

Well, let me just divert. I started going to the Baptist church--the white Baptist church in Tarrytown. Mm-hmm. Didn't last long. [Laughter] I go one summer. And I think I came through maybe the camp. It might have started that way. My mother was very pleased, because even though she could not handle organized religion, for whatever reason, she never mentioned it. She was pleased that I was going to church.

EC: So, this was probably like Bible camp, or something?

JR: Yes, that's what was it.

EC: Vacation Bible school?

JR: It was Bible camp. Because--it must have been, because I remember--I got a dollar for memorizing the books of the Bible. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth. First and Second Samuels, First and Second Kings--

EC: Did you get extra money--

JR: --okay--.

EC: --if you said it fast?

JR: Yes. Well, that was the only way I could remember it. [Laughter] That's exactly--that's it. Yes! But I got this dollar, and my mother was very pleased. And I did--anyway.

But then, I overheard some of the--because it was all white. You know, I think I was the only black child.

EC: Little speck of dust.

JR: Yes. [Laughter] And I hear some of the white people in the church--I don't know, I happened to just overhear this. And I hear them saying that, you know, "We have to be--," they say, "We have to be careful, because we don't want too many black kids coming in, because then we'll get overrun." Okay. That was the last time I ever went to camp. I never went to church. My mother never said anything. That was it. So.

So now, I'm in Cambridge. It's this mass meeting. It's a black church. And it's like, "Oh! Okay, you know." Because it's the songs. It's the songs. And what they're preaching about, of course, is freedom, and liberation, and--I mean, it's all that stuff. So, when I go back to Swarthmore each Monday, and then it becomes maybe--each Sunday. Then sometimes it becomes Monday, because we get held over. Then--[pause] well, when I go back, I'm taking all of this back with me, to campus. And that energy, I'm taking back with me.

EC: So, you get church without religion.



JR: Yes, exactly. The best part. It's wonderful. [Laughter] [side discussion; not transcribed] [break in audio]

EC: [55:00] So, you're getting increasingly involved with the protests, the demonstrations, related to campus and in Cambridge?

JR: Yeah.

EC: And what makes you--I know you decide to take a year off school. How do you make that decision?

JR: Ah, right. Okay. Well, Penny Patch, who had been in her sophomore year. White student. She had gone down to Southwest Georgia. And I'd heard about her, but she wasn't on when I first come in that first semester. Second semester, she returns from Albany, Georgia, and the SNCC project. And she hears that I have been--from the SPAC people--that I have been going to the meetings. And so, she comes into my dorm room. And she said, "Look, I hear that you've been going to the meetings and the demonstrations, and you might want to think about taking off the next semester," which would have been the first semester of my sophomore year, "and working full-time with SNCC in Cambridge, Maryland." And so, you know, I start thinking. She said, "However, if you do decide to do this, you've got to apply." Because I'm coming from the North. If I were Southern and black, it wouldn't have been a problem. But so, she said, "If you do decide to do this, you've got to go by Ruby Doris." And that's what she meant. Ruby Doris Smith-Robinson, the amazing administrator in the national office in Atlanta.

I didn't know anything about Ruby Doris then. So, I said, "Okay, well, let me see what happens." So, I think I went ahead and applied, and then got confirmation that I had been accepted for this next--you know, for the--.

EC: And you're specifically applying to work in Cambridge?

JR: Yes.

EC: And so, you're going to live with the Richardson family. Not your kin, but ( )--?

JR: Right. And actually, probably not them. Probably Pop Herb, because that's where I used to stay. And so, I get that I've been allowed to do this. Because I'd gotten back from SNCC that there's confirmation. And so now, the point is, how do I tell my mother that I'm thinking about doing this? So, I go to the hall phone, because of course it's before cell phones. I go to the hall phone. I call my mother. And I tell her--you know, I frame it in the sense, which I had done, I contacted the administration. I was guaranteed that I was going to continue--I would maintain my full four-year scholarship. Nothing would change. I could come back in again. They were kind. They were cool with it.

So, I tell her all this. And to me, she was amazingly calm. She had some questions. But then, I hang up, and I go back to my dorm room, and I'm thinking, "I'm over. I've made it through this." And I had been so worried about it, right? I don't make it more than, in my mind, I'm thinking twenty to thirty minutes, and I get called back to the hall phone. Somebody picked it up, [and] calls me. I get to the phone, and it is my older sister, nine years older than me, Carita, who we call "Kita." And she is screaming at me over the phone, like, "What are you thinking of? You can't do this! *Da-da-da-da-*

*da-da.*” And at that point, I think she was working for Columbia Records in the A&R division in New York City. And she said--you know, her main thing was, “You can’t sacrifice your education for this.” Okay?

But then, somehow, I convinced her. And I told her, “I really have guaranteed that I’m coming back. It’s going to be okay. *Da-da-da-da.*” And it somehow convinced her. And so, everybody’s agreed. I can do this now. So, I finish out the rest of that year. And then, I had already accepted to be a student--not intern, but a student worker at the nearby kind of halfway house. It was for foster kids. And so, I was a counselor, a student counselor there. That’s how I made my money. I wanted to not do it. But then, the person who had hired me had said, “Look, it’s too late for me to get somebody else now.” So, I made it through that. And then, I took the bus. I took the bus with the--in the fall, September and--no, it was October. Because I remember I still had the stub, bus trip and I went down and went to Cambridge. But before I tell you that, I should say--because it reminds me of my mother driving me with my sister down to Swarthmore that first time. And she had never gone to Bennington. Right? But I could see through her eyes that this was just amazing. This was--she had no sense of what Swarthmore meant, that it was an elite college. She had no sense of that, but she did have a sense that this was prestigious. [01:00:00] Rolling hills and, and they let me drive.

Now had I known how I’d--if I had been them, I would never have allowed me to drive. Okay? [Laughs] Because, at that point I was--I have always driven fast. But I was eighteen, nineteen years old at that point and I remember driving through the, either the Holland or the Lincoln Tunnel. And at some point, I changed lanes. [Laughter] And I remember my sister saying, “No, you can’t change lanes in the tun--,” it was like,

[Laughter] and I'm--okay--so we get down there, and my sister was absolutely wonderful. Because my sister could talk to anybody. I was very--I was shy in my own way. I mean, I didn't know how to deal with strangers. I worried about talking to people and stuff.

My sister didn't worry about any of that. So, she could talk to anybody anywhere, whoever they were. So, she talks to everybody in the dorm. She gets to me, she introduces me, "This is my sister," you know, she's a--maid comes in. She's--my sister was the life of the party wherever she was, so I feel easier because she has kind of paved the way for me. And my mother, my poor mother. Because see, my sister left and so it was really my mother and I growing up for those last years, and I was the baby, we were like this, my mother and I and so I don't know how she made it.

For me it was like, oh, I'm in this strange world and--but she's going back to an empty house and I think about that now. It was just, it must have been hard. Yeah. So anyway, so she goes back with Kita and my sister Carita and I'm there and then my--get in and during the school year SPAC organizes not only this other stuff, but they decide to run a slate for the June, the May Queen. We did a May ceremony. That's right, it was the May Queen.

And so, it usually was the girlfriend of the football players. Or, no--no, not football because they had outlawed football at that point. Frats, all the frat boys, okay. So, it was somebody's girlfriend, it was a sorority sweetheart, it was somebody. But it would split the vote. Well, with us, we ran a slate, the SDS slate and we all block-voted. Right? So, Mamie, [Laughs] head of SDS, you know, just got out of Parchman, becomes

the May Queen and I become one of the princesses, because that's what we were. And we had a little crown of little roses and stuff.

My mother comes down for it. She is so proud. She does not know that a number of the frat boys and stuff are boycotting the ceremony. She doesn't know that some of the people in the newspaper have mentioned, have really, first of all, been absolutely deaf on our demonstrations. And their editorial policy and some of the reporting, including from one of the people, Elsa, Elsa, who was sixteen when she comes on campus, was a friend of mine, had a total photographic memory. She was on my hall. Let me just go back and say, the demonstrations really split the campus. And so--.

EC: And these aren't demonstrations on campus.

JR: No.

EC: These are the demonstrations that you're going to away from campus.

JR: That is correct.

EC: Okay.

JR: So, these are the demonstrations in Cambridge, Maryland and these are the demonstrations where I hear this, you know, person from my Poli-Sci class who says, you know, these black students would be better off doing. He's part of a group of folks who normally liberal, I thought. And so, that's really coming out in the newspaper, in comments, because they're interviewing students who are saying, again, the Negro students would be better off concentrating on their education. That's right.

So, when it gets to the point where--and we're getting arrested and all that stuff, but now it's getting to the May Queen and we have taken over the ceremony. So, a number of them don't come. Of course, all of the kind of lib--progressive kids come and

we do this. But the main thing is I'm thinking about my mother and she's just proud as she can be that there's her daughter with her little--the roses and the--and I introduce her to everybody and she had, she had remembered it from being down there, but it's like, my mother was not traveled, and so she had gotten on the train, [1:05:00] come down, by herself.

Now she was used to going to the city and to New York, but she knew the city and this was, this was new. And so yeah, she was very proud.

EC: So, you gave her a nice memory before you quit school.

JR: Yes, exactly, that's right. Yes, I did. And she didn't know that that's what I was going to do, so it was okay. [Laughter] That's right. So anyway. So, she goes back. We continue to the rest of it.

EC: Mm-hmm. Can I ask you, so you mentioned Mimi and how important she is, Mimi Feingold, and that she had been on the Freedom Rides in that spring, [19]61, summer of [19]61 and then she's one of the leaders of the SDS chapter when you're there. She ends up in Louisiana with CORE.

JR: Plaquemine Parish, that's right.

EC: And so, do you have a sense of sort of how she ends up in CORE and you end up in SNCC, sort of you two going in different directions?

JR: The thing is see, when she came back from the Freedom Rides she was already CORE. When she comes back from Plaquemine Parish, no, I'm sorry, when she comes back from Parchment she is already CORE, I think.

EC: Because of the Freedom Rides?

JR: Freedom Rides.

EC: That connection?

JR: I think it's the Freedom Rides. I don't know where she first hooks up with CORE, because she's from Brooklyn. I don't know whether she's doing stuff with Arnie, whatever, I can't remember his name, but the Brooklyn CORE chapter was major.

EC: I just kind of find it interesting that you're on the same campus and you end up in the field with different civil rights organizations.

JR: It is except that I'm coming through Cambridge and she's not necessarily. She's already an activist before we go into Cambridge.

EC: But she's still going to Cambridge, right?

JR: Absolutely.

EC: I mean, but that's not her introduction.

JR: That's it.

EC: Okay.

JR: Yeah. So, she--and I didn't even know about CORE, but she was already that when I see her, yeah.

EC: I wonder, you don't know when she goes into the field, do you? Does she go the same year you do?

JR: No. No, I don't know wheth--you see, I'm pretty sure that she continues her, well, she was a senior, so I think she leaves Cambridge. I mean, I'm sorry, when she graduates, I'm pretty sure that's when she goes into Plaquemine County in Louisiana.

EC: I'm just kind of trying to think about those. I've been interested, personally, just in how people get into different organizations and so, sorry about the distraction.

JR: No, no. Mm-mm.

EC: So, you have a commitment to a summer job so you go home and you do your summer job and then it's October and you head into Cambridge?

JR: Yes. And I continue doing the Cambridge work.

EC: What is your work?

JR: Truthfully, I have no real memory, except demonstrations.

Demonstrations, getting arrested, you know. It wasn't voter registration, obviously, because they had the vote already. So, I'm pretty sure most of that was demonstrations and organizing around that and getting adult community involved as much as the students, although they were pretty much already involved, adults at that point. So, I don't really remember, because see, I don't stay that long. Because then by--as a matter of fact, I hadn't thought about this. I go down in October. By November, I'm down in the Atlanta office. Because what happens is that Reggie Robbins, who says, "Look, I'm going, I'm taking the train to--," either Cleveland or Cincinnati, I can't remember which.

EC: Cincinnati.

JR: Cincinnati. Okay. Because--what's his name from Arkansas?

EC: Bill Hansen.

JR: Bill Hansen. And wife, from southwest Georgia. Oh God. No, not from southwest--it'll come to me. They're getting married. Right. Yeah, it--.

EC: Ruthie?

JR: Ruthie. Ruthie Harris.

EC: No.



JR: Mm-mm. Ruthie, well, Ruthie. We'll leave it at that because I'll get totally off. So, Bill Hansen and Ruthie are getting married in--

EC: Cincinnati.

JR: Cincinnati. And Bill Hansen was a white field secretary working in Arkansas, which is where Ruthie was from. Right? And they're getting married. Reggie knew Bill and so he says, "I'm going to take the train from Cambridge. Come with me and on the way back we'll go through the national office and then come back up again," okay. So, we take the train to Ohio. I meet Ruthie. Now either his or her family was boycotting the--because it was interracial, so Ruthie was black, Bill was white. I just remember that Ruthie said she had nobody to be her maid of honor. Now I had never seen either of these people before. They pour me into some little black dress.

They put heels on me. And now I've been in jean skirts all this time. I've been in sneakers, right. So, I have to fit into this little dress and then walk in these heels and I'm the maid of honor for this person I've never met before and then we go through the ceremony and then on the way back we get to the national office. So, [1:10:00] I get to this office, which in my mind I'm thinking is going to be like Urban League. With rugs on the floor and people dressed in little suits and stuff and okay. Well, maybe not the suits. Because I mean, I had seen what the field workers looked at, but see, in my mind I'm thinking also, this is a national office so they're probably dressed differently. Okay.

So, I get to the--the office was at 8 ½--6 and 8 ½ Raymond Street, I think, but anyway 8 ½ Raymond Street, which was a side street off Hunter--not Hunter Road. God, what was the main drag? It's now Martin Luther King Drive.

EC: You sure it's not Hunter?

JR: Oh, maybe it is. It's Hunter, yeah, it's Hunter. Which is now Martin Luther King Boulevard. Okay. So, you went down, it was right near the Atlanta University Center and you'd go off to the right if you were coming from downtown and it was a small, small street. And it was right next to either a beauty parlor; I think it was a beauty parlor. And it was like a door--what do you call it? A glass door and I see Reggie get to the door and there's this guy at the top of the stairs and he's sweeping the stairs. He's in overalls. I hear Reggie hollering and whoop and holler and either he or the guy says, "Hey, captain, how you doing?" and they hug like long lost brothers, right?

And I'm thinking, how egalitarian. Egalitarian is SNCC because this is the, you know, the custodian. Right? And then I find out it's Jim Forman, the executive secretary of the organization. And he is sweeping, as he often did, because it really was a lesson for him. It was everybody in SNCC needed to see him sweeping so that they knew that every job was important and yeah, you were supposed to keep it as clean as you could, the office and secondly, that no job was too lowly for anybody in the organization to do.

So, he would periodically, you know, sweep the stairs, not very well, let me just say. But he would do it. Okay. So, then I come up. Reggie says to him, "I'm coming from Swarthmore; we're on our way back to Cambridge," Forman finds out that I can take shorthand, which is like, I try and tell people it's kind of like texting, but with symbols. So, everything had a symbol that we did. And I knew, I had learned this and could type 90 words a minute; both of those because--Tarrytown public schools, when I'm at Washington Irving Junior High School in seventh grade, because I'm black and it really was that, because I was at the top of my class. They shift me in secretarial, assuming that I'm going to do the secretarial route. Okay.

Now at that point my sister, hello, was at Bennington, but that's okay. And so-- and also, I'm under the Hill, you know, it's all stuff. So. My mother makes sure that it's only that year. She--I do remember her being very upset when she heard that I was being shifted into this. So--I either took the whole semester in the seventh grade or the whole year, either way, I now can type ninety words a minute and I can take great shorthand. So.

EC: I wonder, somebody should like make a keyboard with shorthand.

JR: They should. And there are older--well, let me not get, okay, so, yeah. And I'll get to Joanne Grant in my shorthand notes when I'm taking it at SNCC, but--so Forman finds this out and then decides I'm going to be his secretary. So, Reggie goes back to Cambridge alone.

EC: So much for Cambridge.

JR: So much for Cambridge. I leave my clothes there. I don't remember what happens with the clothes. They probably stay in Pop Herb's--I don't know what happens. And then I go into the Freedom House, which is where the female staff, some of the female staff from the national office lived. But my first image was--.

EC: So, this is like fall [19]63.

JR: That's correct. And the reason I remember it was November was because the first staff meeting I remember was, and we had called in, it wasn't just the Atlanta national movement staff; it was also the--the field staff. And Kennedy had just been shot. And so, there's this whole discussion about how we're going to respond to it, particularly given that the federal government hasn't done diddly-squat for us and stuff and I remember Forman saying, "We have to be very careful about this," I remember Dinky

crying. Dinky, who was Forman's second, becomes later on Forman's second wife. But I remember her being the only one who was crying, actually. I'm sure there were others, but most of the people were really trying to figure out, how do we respond to this strategically? So yeah, that's how I remember I was there by November. [1:15:00]

EC: I remember something about that wedding. Buffington?

JR: Buffington.

EC: Buffington? Is that Ruthie's name?

JR: Ruthie, that might be. I don't remember.

EC: I don't know. Seems like I remember you telling me something about that wedding, like was something illegal or was something--do you remember anything?

JR: No.

EC: Okay.

JR: I might have once remembered it, but I don't now.

EC: I don't remember either. So--.

JR: Because I don't think there was any miscegenation law there. So, yeah.

EC: What was your job with Forman, as Forman's secretary, what is that--?

JR: Well, I'll tell you, before I get to that, let me tell you what--when you came into the Atlanta office, okay, when you first came in you came up the stairs from the, with the plate--with the window behind you. Come up the stairs. You came into the kind of reception area and that would have been, you would have seen, oh gosh, I remembered his name before.

EC: Jimmy Bolton?

JR: Jimmy Bolton, thank you, yes. Jimmy Bolton was there and he was one of the few guys--now Jimmy was the only person who was overtly gay. I'm sure there were other people, male and female, but he was the only one who didn't really try and hide it. And then there were other people at the two desks and Jimmy, by the way, eventually goes off with his mate to Australia. But at that point he is Jimmy and it's--maybe Nancy Stern, other people, other people, because we took turns being reception at the reception area. If you went off, if you looked to the left you would see Julian Bond and he was Communications Director. When I get there Mary King is his assistant. Then, yeah--we didn't have titles, but she was, Julian was the Communications Director, so--.

[Camera turns off and on again]

JR: So, when I get there Dottie Zellner had already left, who had been the previous person assisting Julian in Communications, but so it's Julian and it's Mary King, it's Bobby Yancy, who becomes the second in command at the Schaumburg later on and stays there for twenty-five years but is at that point she's head of, I think relationships with the--what now is known as the HBC, it was the black campuses. There was Billy Stafford.

EC: Campus Travelers.

JR: Campus Travelers, that's right. And so, she's head of that, the Campus Travelers, thank you. And then there is Billy Stafford, who was doing some other work with black campuses and Billy later goes to, is wonderful, social, urban planner at City College in New York, but at that point is doing work something around black colleges, but I can't remember exactly what. And then there is Jack Minnis, who was the main person, he was the head of our research department and we had this incredible, I mean, he

was incredible. He is this crusty old white guy who, excuse me, drank too much, smoked too much, you would go in office, it was like a fog, it was like China. And yet he could pull research from a stone.

So, can I mention the thing? Okay. There was something he did which became a--this is the Mississippi chronology and it's a chronology of--it's called the Mississippi, Chronology of Violence and Intimidation in Mississippi since 1961. And what Jack did was he compiled all of these pages with photos and what was called WATS Line, so that was the Wide Area Telephone Service; that was like the eight hundred number, that people could call into at any hour, either at, to our national office or to one of us in the national office. If a church were being bombed or somebody had been arrested. Some violence to voter registration workers; they would call in. And the WATS Line meant that it was--somebody--and this is when you still had operators. So, somebody say it's-- Emma Bell and Emma Bell calls and says, "Hollis Watkins has just been arrested," but she can't say that.

She calls and calls person-to-person for Hollis Watkins. Okay. And so, Hollis Watkins we know, oh, so that's Hollis Watkins, he's in the second CD, Second Congressional District; we know the number. We know it's about--oh, no, no, I'm sorry, mm-mm. She would say, "I'm calling for Emma Bell," okay, she would call for herself and then she'd say, "I'm calling person-to-person to Emma Bell," we would say, "Miss Bell is not here right now," "Is there a number where can reach her?" and then we would know to call her back. What happened is that at a certain point the all-white operators, telephone operators in Mississippi [1:20:00] realized what we were doing. They would then cut off when the person tried to give the number. But until that, we at least always

had the name. Okay. So, then we would hang up and then on this eight hundred line, the WATS Line, we would call back for free and find out that Hollis Watkins was in jail or somebody had been a church had been burned or whatever. Those WATS Line reports are the reports that are compiled for that Mississippi chronology and I'll--

EC: Go ahead.

JR: Okay. The reason that was so important, having a chronology was that it showed the pattern of racial, of white supremacy. So, nobody could say, well, it was just Governor Thompson. He's particularly racist. Or it was this sheriff in Greenwood or in a sec--it's the system of racism and you show that through the pattern of all of these churches, all of these people being beaten for voter registration; the systemic nature of the white supremacy. And then what they've done to basically, supposedly, federally protected rights, just run roughshod over them, right. I will say I used that. I used it not only to give a chronology when we're doing the films, but more particularly when I leave Boston the first time and its LA and there's yet another case of police brutality in LA.

And I'm working for a film company; Rainbow TV Works. This was [19]80 to [19]81-[19]82. I know from Jack Minnis's chronology. So, I say to the people who were working on this, "We need a chronology, so that we can che--" and I say, "So that we can show the pattern of it," and to them it's like, oh, what a good idea. I would not have known it, had it not been for Minnis. Okay. When I'm working as the Director of Information of the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice and there's this spade of police brutality. You know, it's Howard Beach racially motivated violence. It's Eleanor Bumpers is sixty-nine years old, gets off by Officer Sullivan with a shotgun

on an eviction notice. It's Michael Stewart, twenty-three years old, gets beaten to death in a, for doing graffiti in a New York City subway--it's all of that.

But what I say to the committee that we're working with is, "We need a chronology," Minnis, right? We need a chronology to show it's not just the cop hasn't had enough sensitivity training is because he's in the midst of a systemic, racist police department. Right? It's like what they're doing--but anyway, so.

EC: Like what *The Guardian* is doing now, trying to log all of the police murders in the U.S.?

JR: That's right. Because the NRI wouldn't let us keep any stats in this country. Right? So, the UK is keeping the best stats, hello. Which is why I'm glad, by the way, that in Chicago--I'm going to far field. But I'm going to say this. Why in Chicago, they had gone back to that brutal man who tortured black citizens in the [19]80s and then got finally put up for charges and I think may have spent some time, I'm not sure, but he's legend. And people kept talking about him because he was brutal. He tortured people. That ( )--got guilty pleas from them when they weren't guilty. We did an *Eyes on the Prize*, the Hampton and Clark.

Fred Hampton and Mark Clark assassinations in the second series of *Eyes on the Prize*, which people are now harkening back to because that's another case where, you know, the cop said, "Oh, we had to protect ourselves," and they found out that all of the bullets were going inside the Black Panthers' Chicago office, all of them, because the cops were stupid enough to leave the office open. So, people of the communities walking through, the media's walking through, right, anyway, the main thing--.



EC: And this is the, from *Eyes on the Prize* second series, the episode, *A Nation of Law?* About the police murder of Fred Hampton and--.

JR: Mark Clark.

EC: Mark Clark in Chicago?

JR: That's correct.

EC: All right. You were going to say, and this is important because?

JR: And so, this is important because one of the things you get is the pattern of it. People always wonder, well, why are they going off? It's like in Detroit. Why would they go, why would the black community go totally berserk because some cops are closing what's called a, what's called The Blind Pig there; an after hours joint. That makes absolutely no sense. Well, if you go back and you find out there was the Big Four; two white and two black cops, which would stop all of these people, even if they were just singing doo-wop, this is Detroit, right? Doo-wop, we have to explain all that in *Eyes on the Prize*, because otherwise it makes no sense. It's the pattern, the systemic pattern of police brutality that always exists in any of these cities and it's always, always the jumping off point. Always.

It's something Steve Fayer, who was the white writer and just a great guy, I mean, we clashed sometimes, but he was really serious [1:25:00] about his stuff and a great writer. So I remember at one point we're doing *Malcolm X: Make it Plain*, right, for *American Experience*, PBS and I say, "The point is that, you know, when you're doing Malcolm, what happens in LA, what happens in New York with the Muslim guy from the Fruit of Islam guy from Number Seven Mosque that's part of the pattern and he said and he actually said, because he was interested he said, "What are you talking--?" I said, "The

police are an occupying force in these communities,” and I said, “Now I know you can’t say that in there,” and she said, “Why not?” and it’s a line of narration. Right?

EC: And you say “we” that’s Blackside.

JR: Blackside and, yeah, Blackside and also, I wasn’t sure whether Orlando would be okay with that because it’s enough that we’re doing just the thing, enough that we’re doing *Malcolm X: Make it Plain*.

EC: Sorry, I mean when you said “we were doing the film,” I meant it was Blackside that was doing the film.

JR: Right. No, I thought you were going to say something else in the middle. No. And yes, it is Blackside, but it’s--Henry was not that much involved in *Malcolm X: Make it Plain*, so it really is, Orlando was the producer/director, I’m the co-producer and Steve is the series writer along with Orlando. So, it really is, you know, what Orlando and Steve feel, well, we can get through *American Experience* at that point. So, I was very happy that people could see, yeah, it’s an occupying force. And actually, I think I said “occupying army,” it’s like an occupying army. Yeah.

But that has to do with back to this, chronology and the fact that it’s systemic and that you have to show that. And so, in fact, when we’re doing the police brutality, I did a chronology, right? And I’m saying to the groups that are there, “We need to do a chronology, so people see us. Not just Eleanor Bumpers. It’s not just Michael Stewart. It’s not just--.” And so they give me early stuff, because this is now the mid, this is the mid [19]80’s, so they go back to the [19]70’s, the [19]60’s. I draw up a chronology.

I remember sending a packet out to a journalist, a reporter, black journalist who was with *New York Newsday*, because they were based in Long Island, but they then had

a New York edition and they were really good. It was a great paper. And the reporter calling me and saying, "I'm getting this packet," and it was not only the press release, but this chronology and he said, "Are you a reporter?" and I said, "No," I said, and what I said was, "I was trained by the movement," I didn't say SNCC because I figured he wouldn't know what SNCC was, but I said, "I was trained by the movement." And so I said, "And one of the reasons I did the chronology was because--," *da-da-da*, I didn't say because Jack Minnis told me how to do this.

But it's always good and I was meeting with some young people, oh, BSO, Organization of Black, oh my goodness, OBS, not Organization of Black Survival. Organization of Black something, it's OBS and it's a group that's been going on for the last twenty some years and they were involved also in the Ferguson responses. But they do grass roots community organizing. Struggle. Organization for Black Struggle.

So, I had been showing our Orangeburg Massacre film at Washington University. This is right after Ferguson, so it was this year. And I'm showing the film and one of the professors, a young, black professor who was there in post-doc and he came up, he intro'ed me and then he said, "Would you be interested in speaking with some of the young people who are part of this organization of--," what did I just say?

EC: Black Struggle?

JR: Black Struggle. And I said, "Oh, yeah," so the day that I'm, the next day he brings some of them by WashU and we sit in the cafeteria and we're talking and it's clear. I said, "Look, I know that the stuff that we get in SNCC is not really, some of it will be useful, but it's a different time," and I know that it's not just the technical stuff,

it's you're dealing with a community that has seen all the stuff; it was supposed to change stuff and it hasn't it.

And the other thing they told me was, they said, "Well, the other thing is," and actually the young professor said, he wasn't a professor but anyway, the young faculty person said, and the other thing was that the movement kind of bypassed St. Louis, so the kind of folks you talk about with, you know, with Amzie Moore and Fannie Lou Hamer and-- he said, "That didn't really happen here," and one of the people from OBS says to me, "Look, every King Day they have the usual Dr. King ceremony and the black glitterati come past," you know and he said, she said, as a matter of fact she said, "And they get out of their limos," and she said, "I call them the fur-coated ones." [Laughter] And she said, "They come out with their fur coats. They go into whatever big black church and then they come back and they go back to the suburbs or wherever," and she said, [1:30:00] "and so we don't have that grounding that maybe you guys did at that time."

Now I'm sure that there are grass roots leaders they had there, but--and they've been working with them, but it made me realize, not everybody had the kind of stuff that we had. Nor the kind of cohesive communities that we had because for whatever, I made not churched, but I know the role that the black church played in the southern communities where we organized and you could go up on somebody's porch and sit for a while and have some sweet tea and talk before, so they could get to know you. You can't do that at Cabrini Green, when it was existed in Chicago. So, all of that stuff I know is different. But I showed them Jack. I showed them the chronology, right, and I said, toward the end--.

EC: These are the kids in St. Louis now--?

JR: These kids in St. Louis, young people in St. Louis and one older, because she was like forty, so she said, "I'm the older person here," I show them this, they were so, it was like, we could use that. Because I said, you know, once these people see, it's not just this and it's not just that and it's not just for any grade and I said, "History of it." And it's like when they're finally now saying that, like ninety-nine percent I'm making this up, but certainly over ninety-five percent of the cops that have been put up on charges never go to trial. Because they just, it never goes anywhere. So, to know that kind of stat from the [19]60's and the [19]70's, how many cops get put up? How many cops, how many judgments are found? And when somebody said, "Fifteen million dollars has been put out to victims," all that stuff, those stats are important. Yeah, you can have the protests and that's important, too.

But those stats are, you can't, you can't deny that kind of stuff. That's Jack. I learned that in, in SNCC. So, he's doing the Research Department. Back to the national. We get, we have a printing press and so, oh my goodness, I can't remember the guy--.

EC: Wilson Brown?

JR: Wilson Brown, he was one of them and then there was another one who married and they went to Antioch. Oh, my goodness, who also ran it? But I'll do Wilson until I can remember any--we had our whole printing press in the basement, right? So, that we didn't have to depend on anybody, saying they wouldn't print a certain leaflet. Had our own printing press. And then we had, so communications were also sending out the *Student Voice*, because we knew that the mainstream media wasn't going to print the stuff that we wanted. So, we would send that out to the SNCC offices and so I forgot, we

also had a Friends of SNCC, which was like Philadelphia, Mimi Shaw's mother, Mrs. Shaw had a Friends of, is part of Friends of SNCC in Chicago or they're all over the country. And so, if somebody got arrested, for example, then we'd get that WATS Line report, then we would call the Justice Department in the national office and then we would call a Friends of SNCC person.

So, for example, you would call Mrs. Shaw in Chicago and she would then call the sheriff's office, if we had it. Well, his home at night, if we had his number. Or the office and then that person would say, Mrs. Shaw would say, "Look, we know you got Curtis or Hollis or, Mrs. Fannie Lou-- Mrs. Hamer and they better come out of the jail the way they went in," so you, for the first time, the white supremacists in Mississippi know somebody outside Mississippi is actually looking at this. Even before the summer of [19]64, we're connecting people to this. So, we have somebody coordinating Friends of SNCC and that was Dinky Constancia Romilly and then there was, she was also doing Campus Friends of SNCC until Betty Garman comes in and she does the Campus Friends of SNCC and that was all the campus chapters; UC Berkeley, NYU, University of Chicago, all these campus things. So, we can call them.

So, they're being used as points where we're getting information about the struggles that we're doing. We're getting photos out; we're getting *The Student Voice* out. Press releases are going out. They're trying to get it published in their school newspapers, information about it. If they have any contacts with the local media, they're trying to get that in. So, it's this network. Out of the national office are these networks of people all over the country whom we're using for fundraising, for communications and for, yeah, fundraising, communications and whatever else.

EC: What's your contact like with people in the field in Mississippi and Georgia, Arkansas, [1:35:00] Alabama?

JR: Yeah. They're calling in. So when, for example, Emma Bell calls in, she calls into us. But also we have--or Margaret Block, for example, she said to me, "Do you remember, I had to call into you," she said, "every day," and during the summer of [19]64 they're calling into the Jackson office, but before that they're calling into the national office." And I think we might have done it once a day, until [19]64 when it's twice a day and going into the Jackson office. But once a day into the national office to say, "This is what happened," to make sure we know they're still there. And the main thing is, this is before cell phones, so if somebody didn't have a dime for the coin box on the phone, you wanted to make sure they could get to you.

So, they're calling in, they're telling us, maybe something incident that's happened. But the other thing was Ruby Doris was serious about, "You will get me your monthly field reports and unless you send those to me, you will not get your little ten dollars a week," which was of course, \$9.64 after taxes. So, she was, I mean, Ruby, and the thing is, people really respected Ruby because I remember Ivanhoe saying, he said, "Yeah, people respected Forman for what he brought," which was that administrative sense, knowing about history, collect everything, knowing how to construct an office and also just that long-range thinking. But Ruby, he said, "We knew she really, really cared about us," and Ivanhoe once said to me, he said, "You know, when I was in jail," and that was probably in Parchman, he said, and I guess it was Ivanhoe in Parchman? I'm trying to remember. Or was it a local jail?

EC: When he went in with the truck of stuff?

JR: Yeah.

EC: That was in Cleveland, Mississippi. That's where Amzie--.

JR: Cleveland, Mississippi and Amzie, that's right.

EC: No, no, no, no. He was with Clarksdale. It was Aaron Henry. He was outside--

JR: Yes. With the drugs and the pharmacies. That's right. Was that the only time he was in? Maybe it was--.

EC: Probably not. I mean--.

JR: One of the times he was in he said he was in for however long and that he would get letters, Ivanhoe said every day and I said, "How did you get them every day?" He said, "I don't know but I was getting," he said, "letters from Ruby Doris every day, asking how I was doing. Just making sure that I knew somebody was taking care of me, was thinking about me and stuff." And so Ruby would do that stuff and also because you know, she had such an amazing history. I mean, yeah, Jim Forman had been just brutalized in LA and he had been in Monroe and he'd been this and that.

But Ruby had been in Parchman and Ruby had been in Rock Hill, South Carolina in those thirty days jail, no bail. And also just Ruby was just--Ruby had a presence. I mean, when Penny Patch says to me at Swarthmore, "You got to go by Ruby Doris to get your application accepted." I didn't really know what she meant, but I know that a lot of people were scared to death of Ruby Doris. I was. It was just, she was nice, but she was kind of like Miss Baker. She did not suffer fools gladly.

EC: Was she still a Spellman student when you met her?



JR: No, she was totally off that. She was fulltime in the office at that point. She had not yet married Cliff and had not yet had the baby. And that was funny, too. I remember we had a shower for Ruby when she was pregnant and the thing is, and it was all female, right? And normally, I mean people, women know what to do at showers. You have little chitchat and baby and so and so. We were SNCC women. All our discussions always had to do with politics and what was going on in the field and who was doing what. And so, I remember whole periods of silence. It was like, okay, so how do we talk about this? It's like the kind of informal, it wasn't like we weren't friends. It wasn't like we didn't party.

We knew how to party. But to have small talk, we didn't do small talk too well. And we didn't do baby stuff. It's like, Julian was a family member, but he had his kids and Alice was off somewhere, she wasn't part of the staff. I'm trying to think, Minnis was married, I'm sure, but they would--there were no babies. [Laughs]

EC: So, was it different when the men are married and have their families, the men and the women?

JR: Right. But also, I don't remember ever seeing Ruby's baby. I'm sure she brought him in at some point. But Chris took care of the baby. When she was away, but when she was away, [1:40:00] when she came into that office she was in the office. So, the shower was not--and she hadn't had the baby yet and it was like--and none of the women that I remember had any babies. Nobody had any babies. [Laughs] How could you have babies when you were on call twenty-four/seven? It was like, anyway.

So, I just remember the silences at the shower, yeah. So anyway, Ruby. Yeah. Was--she was just like a major force in that office and she's saying, "I need your

reports,” which is why, I remember you saying how interesting it was that you got, that there was so much documentation with SNCC and that’s because you had Ruby Doris saying, “You’ve got to write it down or you’re not going to get--.” Oftentimes we didn’t get the little \$9.64. But at least you could expect it. Because I remember when I was in Cordele, Georgia, I didn’t get it one week and I had to go to the NAA guy, who really didn’t like my being in town, Cordele in southwest Georgia.

And he ran the restaurant. And I had to say to him, “Could you just, I don’t have enough money for a hamburger, but could you just take this,” whatever little bit I had, and he said, I remember saying something about, “I’ll expect the rest when you get paid,” he was not pleasant. But I also remember putting a dime in--I spent thirty cents on his jukebox to play *Walk On By*, Dionne Warwick. But anyway, so.

EC: [Laughs] It’s like a theme here.

JR: Yes, there is. That’s right. [Laughs] That’s right.

[Camera turns off and on again]

EC: So, what is your day-to-day work like in the office? What’s your job with Forman?

JR: Okay. So. What’s interesting to me is that Forman had a way of giving you as much responsibility as he thought you could take and more than you thought you could take. I mean, there were times that he let me do things and I thought afterward, hmm, it’s amazing that he let me do this. But what happens is when I come in I get this bird’s eye view of the whole SNCC organization; the Friends of SNCC, the Campus Friends of SNCC, the field offices, the daily who’s in the field offices.

Who's responsible, who's not responsible. I'm taking minutes from the executive committee meeting, so I know who's in trouble. I get a real sense of the field and all of the operation and so I remember--.

EC: Have we said what Forman's job is? ( )

JR: Oh, I'm sorry, no, I may not.

EC: I think you did. Well anyway, you said when you met him with Reggie--.

JR: And he was the executive secretary. That's right. So, Jim Forman, yeah, he's the executive secretary. And he's in an office, I'm right outside his office with, along with this teeny, tiny little area and Dinky Romilly is the Friends of SNCC and Campus Friends of SNCC and I'm, we're back-to-back and I'm at this little, little desk and Forman's office is over here and I think Shessie, Shesslonia Johnson who was the bookkeeper, poor Shessie; I mean, that was a thankless job. I mean, it is thankless anyway with a nonprofit, but we're--it's the field staff saying, "I don't have to give you anything. I'm putting my life on the line." Okay, so it's all of that coming out. So, I'm sitting there and I have--I remember letters to Mike Standard, who was one of the lawyers in our pro bono--one of the many pro bono firms, Rabinowitz and Boudine and we had this, I mean, we had this chatty relationship and part of it is all these people are making me feel that I really belong to this thing.

I mean, this is like this family of people. And so, when I call Mike Standard, it's not like Attorney Standard, it's, "Hey, Mike, how you doing?" *da-da-da-da* and I had these things I sent something to him where, to him or somebody where I said, "And we could not do what we do." And it was in fun. I mean and they knew, I knew they would get it. "We could not, we here in the South fighting for our freedom and our civil rights

could not do what we do without you doing what you did there.” And it was the kind of thing that you send to a contributor. And “Freedom now,” and then I would sign Forman’s name and then he would always know I was the one because it was the typical steno thing. So, you would put Jim Forman, J.F. up, all upper case, initial caps and then colon and then lower case “jr” so I was the person who was typing it, but oftentimes I’m the one writing it, too. So, which was amazing.

I mean, he’s given me this responsibility to write these letters, so I’m writing letters to the so and so, or to the so and so, or you know. And then sometimes I’m transcribing as well. [1:45:00] So. I remember transcribing a speech by, oh, *d-d-d-d-d*.

EC: Prathia Hall.

JR: Prathia Hall, thank you. Prathia Hall, who could, I mean, she could just lift you up. So, it’s on a reel-to-reel recorder, right, and I’m typing on this IBM Selectric II, which I love because--. Anyway and--she’s doing--it probably was not southwest Georgia, it was probably Selma, but I’m not sure now. And I swear to God, I’m typing on this typewriter and tears are just streaming down. I’m, it’s like, she’s so captured me. She just lifted up, you know, she just, she brought you to the place where you would go through hell to get your freedom. She [Laughs] would follow her anywhere. Somebody said to, about Prathia that even Dr. King once said, when both of them were at a mass meeting, that he did not want to fol--he did not like following Prathia, because [Laughs] it’s so--.

EC: High praise.

JR: High praise. Very high praise. And Prathia, you know, Prathia’s parents were Pentecostal or Evangelical, whatever. Ministers in a small black church in

Philadelphia. So, she came out of that and then when she passed, she had just taken the Martin Luther King chair at Boston University. And, she was very religious. But she never let religion get in the way, so she, in Selma, really, well, she never cursed but, really points her finger at some of the SCLC people who say to the folks after Bloody Sunday. And there's--and she talks about that in her *Hands on the Freedom* file section. She says, "I told the SCLC, Dr. King's organization," Southern Christian Leadership Conference, they had, some of the field staff had said to the local people, "You can't come on the demonstration unless you're philosophically non-violent," not just tactically, but philosophically non-violent. And in fact, you are not really in the movement unless you can do this and she said, "I had to really get on their case because," she said, "that was like blackmail." And she said, "And it wasn't true and you don't do that to people; you don't use the movement in that way."

Now she was philosophically non-violent, but she understood that you separate that stuff. But no, I remember, so I'm sitting there in the national office just typing this stuff and the tears pouring down. And I would also transcribe, I would take the minutes for like exec committee meetings, executive committee meetings. We would bring the field staff in from Mississippi, southwest Georgia, Alabama, you know, Arkansas. I want to say it was quarterly, but I'm not sure.

So, they would come in quarterly and we would always meet, normally we couldn't meet, I don't think, at our offices, because they were too small. The workroom, because that's what I neglected to say, there was a workroom and so there's all this other stuff going on and then you would go into the workroom. I'm going to just divert for a second. You would go the workroom and there would be where you would put together

press releases and staple them and, because at that point the mimeograph machine didn't have a collator so it wouldn't automatically collate and staple.

Later we get that, but right then, it's pumping off the mimeograph machine and the stencil and we're taking and Wilson Brown is taking it up so we have, it's a--it's a group of people and they're in the workroom and you have all this stuff on the table--on the work table. And somebody would take it off and hand it to the second person; somebody's stapling, somebody's collating, stapling, putting it, folding it, putting it in the stuff, stamping it and so there's a relay, it's a thing.

EC: An assembly line.

JR: Assembly line, that's the word I'm looking for. So, it's an assembly line. So now we also have water bugs. And they were the flying water bugs that you get in the South. So, I say that just, oh, and also by the way, if you were on the assembly line you were always singing freedom songs, because the work really does go quicker if you sing something. And so, you know everybody's singing and we're working and we're doing the stuff. Okay, now on exec committee meetings I would--but the workroom was not large enough, usually, to hold the staff. So, we would then, we could get sometimes [1:50:00] Paschal's, although Paschal's really was a black businessman and so he would charge us.

So, we would go to Frasier's, who really, he was so lovely. Frasier's basement, we would go down and have our meetings there sometimes. And he would feed you if you didn't have money, unlike Paschal.

EC: Is that why Paschal's in the Atlanta Airport now and Frasier's not?

JR: Well, that could be. That's true. [Laughter] One made money and one, yeah. But Frasier's was wonderful, they were just lovely and you would go to Paschal's for the--they had the birdcage and so they would have, what's his name and the Pips, and they would have all the R&B people come in. And sometimes you would get to meet them and they would be so excited to meet the SNCC kids and all that kind of stuff. But it was a birdcage. That was at Paschal's.

But anyway, so I would be taking, no, it's in shorthand. Well, the first exec committee meeting I take, it's thirty-three pages and it's thirty-three pages because I'm in awe of all these SNCC people, right? They are--.

EC: This is thirty-three pages typed or--?

JR: Typed.

EC: Thirty-three pages shorthand?

JR: No, thirty-three pages typed.

EC: So, after you took it in shorthand, then you would type it out longhand.

JR: That's right. I would take it in shorthand and then I would transcribe my notes. I would type it onto the long green stencils and, which was a problem because of course, the stencils you couldn't correct except with this little green fluid. So, you had to take the film up, the screen up and then put the little green on and then wait for it to dry, [Laughter] put the film down and then hope that you hadn't put too much of this green stuff on because if you did, then when you put, type over it, it would smudge it. And you'd get these smudgy letters all over the place. So. So, I was fairly accurate.

That was the other thing. I could actually type ninety words a minute with pretty good accuracy. Anyway, so I had thirty-three pages of notes, of minutes, pages of

minutes typed out and then I had to run them out. Now the problem was, I was there late at night, so I would sometimes be there, during this period that I'm getting these minutes out and again, I'm really in awe because these people know more than I had ever heard of. Not only do I never talk in staff meetings, but I'm also just in awe of all these people who, who are talking about organizing in ways that I never thought about. They've been through stuff I've never thought about. You've got, the Howard, the NAG people who are talking about, Nietzsche. You know, I mean it's--[Laughs]

Going through that. And also, Byron Weston and this other, but who have organizing techniques and then you've got the Southern young people who know black history in a way that I don't know, so it's all of this, all of this is combining to say you, shut up and take the minutes. [Laughter] Right? So, I'm taking the minutes, okay, get all these things. But I have, it takes about a week and I have it in my diary, still taking the minutes. I mean still, still typing the minutes, still typing the minutes. Now the meeting has since disbanded, right? And I think this was the one that we did at ITS, Interdenominational Theological Seminary, ITS, which was part of the, what becomes the Atlanta University System. Interdenominational Theological Seminary, okay? And so, okay, typing it up, I'm about to run it off and I'm by myself. So, I have to go by myself into the workroom. Now the workroom really does have these flying water bugs. They're big.

EC: Is that a cockroach?

JR: It's like cockroaches, but I thought they were water bugs. Maybe they were cockroach. They were flying cockroaches.

EC: I mean, I don't know if they might be the same thing.



JR: Okay, but they flew. That was the main thing, it was operative.

EC: Well, cockroaches fly.

JR: Yes, that's true, but that's the main thing for me was that they flew. What they were, it was that they flew. And so they would be, you would come in and they'd be all on the floor. They'd be on the wall. And so, you would have to steel yourself for, I'm going to go in here; I'm going to run this off. I'm not going to pay any attention to these things. [Laughter] I'm just going to run this thing off.

EC: Get ready to duck. [Laughs]

JR: Yes, if you had to, that's it. And you tried not to crunch anything. You see, that's the other thing because, okay. So, doing that and then I finally got it and then I had to mail it to the various field offices and that was the other thing. And as a matter of fact, the day that I mailed it off, it's--I have in my diary, "The sun is coming up. I have just finished doing the minutes," and I say, "The birds are singing, it's a wonderful day," [Laughs] and so, I get that off to whoever was going to disseminate it in the field and stuff. And so, I would do that. [1:55:00]

And then I would often [take] the minutes and other people would, too. But because I knew shorthand, you see, and typed so quickly, it was like, well, Judy can do this because she does this stuff. And then I would correct things because I've always been editing things and, I wouldn't edit the thoughts and I don't even think I would actually, back then I wouldn't even edit anything else. It would just be whatever I heard. That's true. Yeah.

So, I wouldn't try, for example, finish a sentence or do whatever, it was whatever they said got into it. Okay. So, I would do that. What else? I'd support anything else that was going on. Yeah.

EC: So, talking about the minutes, at a certain point you and some of the other women have a little protest?

JR: Yeah.

EC: I mean, the way I understand it--.

JR: Well, I'll tell you, that's right. So, what happened is--you see, I had been saying to Forman, "Forman, I want to go to the field, I want to go to the field," okay, which meant I want to go into Mississippi and in my mind, it was Mississippi, because that's where all the action was. I knew about Alabama, I knew about southwest Georgia, but most of what we, where I was getting information about was, because it was Bob and it was that whole Mississippi thing.

EC: Mississippi, you mean Bob--.

JR: Bob Moses. And that's where it was. Okay, so I keep saying, "I want to go to the field," and he was saying, "No, wasn't going to happen," I mean, he did not want to lose a good secretary, right? So, at one point I end up, oh, I know. He goes someplace and Dinky got me a ticket for the first Freedom Day in Hattiesburg, that's right. So, January [in] Hattiesburg, it's [19]64, Hattiesburg. I'm down there. And I come back, Forman was livid. But then at some point in here I get tired of taking the minutes. There were other women who got tired of the minutes, but also, they kind of I think, wanted to be in the field, too, but also it was like we get the secretarial stuff.

Now aside from Jimmy--Jimmy Bolton, the guys--see the thing is, the field, the national office was where you put white people. Because white people really risked the lives of the local communities and other SNCCs, black SNCC's staff people if they were working in Mississippi. Sherrod wanted an integrated staff in southwest Georgia, right, because he wanted to model what this thing could be.

And philosophically, he absolutely believed that and he believed that it was based on his, his theological understanding of what was supposed to--so "beloved community" meant you did it in your project as well. Other folks were not playing that. And because it really did risk lives. So, what it meant though was that for white people who want to be involved, oftentimes, particularly white women, who could get black guys killed in the field, they were then in the office. So, Mary King's in the office. Casey's in Jackson, but she's in Jackson.

EC: Casey Hayden.

JR: Casey Hayden is in Jackson. But mainly, you didn't really have any white women in the field, except for southwest Georgia and so Dinky's there, Nancy Stearns is there. White women in the national office.

EC: Mary King.

JR: Mary King. Oh, I thought I mentioned her, yes, Mary King.

EC: ( )

JR: Yeah, that's right. And even for Mark Suckle, I mean, he's not there. He's doing some print stuff, too, later on. When Tamio Wakayama comes. Oh, and that's the other part that's part of the national office, is there's a photo department. And so, Danny Lyon is there, and then Tamio Wakayama, who was Tom then, but as part of

the nationalist thing, where people are really going back to their heritage, right? Tamio, then Tom, is Japanese Canadian, right? And so, he goes to Tamio. And so, that's what he known now as, as a really premier photographer. Has had exhibits and wonderful photobook and stuff. Okay. He's--he gets--he comes in through, he's doing a book, and he says similar to Eldritch Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*, he's calling it, Tamio is calling his book, *Soul on Rice*. Yes. So, he's doing this book, and he mentions how he talked at our SNNC fiftieth about how he--I don't know whether you can use this or not. No, don't worry about it. So anyway, he comes into SNCC through Birmingham, and he arrives in Birmingham the day that the [2:00:00] four little girls are killed. He cooks up, because there's a black person in, where he lands who says, "Son, you really don't need to be around here, you need to go to this hotel, and stay there. Because I don't know what's going to be happening." He gets there, he finds Forman, and Danny Lyon, and Julian Bond. And Forman says, and they find out that he wants to join the movement. And so, they--Forman says, "Do you have a car?" And Tamio says, "Yeah I got a little Bug." He said, "Fine, you can drive us down to the national office." So, from Birmingham to Atlanta.

Tamio says that, for the first week or so, Forman has him sweeping the floor. And finally, he gets--and for no money, by the way. Because he's not even on staff at that point. Tamio says he looks at Forman, at some point, says to Forman, "You know, I really would like to do something else." And so, Forman then puts him in, I don't know whether Tamio already knew some stuff around photography, I don't remember. In any event, he then goes into photos. And so then, he becomes part of the photo department. So, he's down there as well, and how did I get off into photo department?

EC: You were going to tell us about the minutes, the protests.

JR: Oh yeah, so all these other people are doing, the guys are doing this other stuff, right? But none of the women, except for Mary King is working with Julian in communications. But generally, we're not going in the field, we're not doing other stuff. You know, and let me just say, I know why I shouldn't be in the field. I'm from Tarrytown, New York. I don't know anything about Southern mores, black or white. I don't know this stuff. I'm not church-ed, it's like please. But--.

EC: But that didn't stop you from wanting to.

JR: You got it, that's it. I still want to go to the field, because that's where the action is. Okay. So--.

EC: So much for being shy and scared.

JR: Well, I did it in my own quiet way. So, [laughter] we decide, Forman has gone away, gone to--I don't know if it was when he went to the UK, I don't--see, he goes to the London for an anti-Apartheid meeting at some point. And that's that whole connection that Forman brings around the South African anti-Apartheid stuff, as well as African liberation stuff, and Ghana, and Kenya, and all that stuff. So, I'm aware of all of that when I come into SNCC for the first time. But at some point, I know in my minute, in my diary, I have that I'm going to meet Forman, coming from an international anti-Apartheid meeting in London. And I'm going to meet him at the Atlanta airport, and how excited I am to hear about--I'm excited to think about what I'm going to hear from him. But I don't know if that's that time. Because he used to go away, he'd do fundraising meetings, he'd be at the Friends of SNCC stuff.

In any event, he had gone away to some meeting. And, or fundraising party. And I don't know how we get to this, Ruby Doris, Dinky, Mary King, and I, and it seemed to me there was a fifth person. Was somebody else there?

EC: Well in the picture, Bobbi.

JR: Oh, Bobbi Yancy.

EC: And Mildred.

JR: And Mildred and Bobbi Yancy.

EC: And Dinky's not in the picture.

JR: Dinky's not, you're right, no, she wasn't in that. And she wouldn't have been with Mildred, as a matter of fact, now that I think about it. Okay. So, Mildred was Forman's first wife. Okay. So, you're right, it is Mildred, Mary King, Bobbi Yancy, and Ruby Doris, and I. And we made up little signs, little placards, that said no freedom, no minutes until something--what was it? Freedom comes--.

EC: No work until justice comes to Atlanta office.

JR: That's it! That's right. And freedom now, I mean, so we're standing up there, and he comes back from whatever, he comes back into the office, and he sees us in my little area with--and we're sitting on the floor with our little protest signs. And he is behind us, because clearly, I think it was Danny, I'm sure it was Danny, who takes this photo. So, it's a staged photo, but it's after Forman comes back, and sees us sitting, and--

EC: In fact, because I think Forman's in the back of the picture with a sign too.

JR: That's--oh, I don't remember him having a sign. But he is, that's why I was saying, he's in the back, but I don't remember him having a sign. But I'm not sure about that.

EC: I'm not sure either.

JR: Yeah, I don't know that we would have let him have a sign. But I don't know about that. And I actually have a copy of that, but so, we do that. Now, what's interesting about that is that when Forman does the second edition of *Making of a Black Revolutionary*, in his second edition, he says that [2:05:00] his editor, and I can't remember, she was a SNCC staff person, I can't remember who.

EC: Martinez?

JR: No, not--white female, I can't remember who it is. Yeah, I may or may not remember it. Anyway, says to him that he should do more on the women's liberation movement. And so, he does a section. And in it, he says that, this woman says, you should talk about this, and talk about the sit-in in your office. And he says, in this intro, "So, I talked to the women in the office, and I"--and no, no! I'm--mm-mm. He said, "The women in the office came to me, and asked me what I--about how they could best do this, get--come to the attention of the men in the organization. And I suggested to them they do a sit-in in my office," says Forman. And usually when I'm saying this, I actually have the book, because I read from it. And what he says is, "So I suggested they do a sit-in, and that they do placards, and that they do this sit-in, and it will come to the attention of the guys." Okay, now he comes out with this next edition while I'm in Boston, working on the second--working, let's see, that came out in the [19]80's, I guess, mid-[19]80's. So, I'm working, I think, on the first series of *Eyes on the Prize*, I think.

And I'm reading this on the train. And I see this section, and I still have in my copy, "What?" And exclamation point, exclamation point, in blue highlighter. So, I get down there to the book party, and I wait until the end, and it's just he and I at the end, and

he's signing my book, and I said, "Forman, what are you talking about, that you suggested the sit-in? You know that we're the ones who did this." He said, "Well that's not what I remember." [Laughter] It's like, so what do you say behind that? You know? It's like, now fast forward, we're at the SNCC fortieth in Jackson, and was that--I think it was at Jackson, wasn't it?

EC: The fortieth was at Duke.

JR: Duke, it was at Duke, we were at Duke, you're right. And I'm on a panel with Ivanhoe, and Forman, and somebody else. And I'm sitting next to Forman. And Forman starts talking about this, and he looks over at me, and he says, "And I know that Judy has another interpretation of this." And I said, "No, I have the facts." I said, "But you're telling the story now, so you get to go." You know? It's like, what? So, it was interesting, because at the same time that this is happening, I also felt the most powerful I've ever felt. I always felt that I had no limits. That people let me do--and it really was let me, because I had no real power in this, it was like they let me do stuff that, well like the Residential Freedom School, right? I come up with this idea after [19]64. Let's do a residential freedom school. Now it means that it must have been--actually, it must have been sometime in [19]65. Because I had already been to Cordele southwest Georgia, and had been the staff person there, and so anyway, come back with this idea. We'll get, and my thing was okay, we'll get the energy of the southern kids, in the sense that you really can change things, and together with some of the young people who are associated with the Friends of SNCC offices. And so, we ended up going through Monroe Sharpe, who was head of the Chicago SNCC office then, and so we based it out of Chicago for the Northern end, and then we were going to go back to Cordele for the southern end. We



were going to do three weeks in one place, and three weeks in the other. And the idea was that we would have a whole curriculum. And okay, I had this whole idea about what would happen. And the northern kids, the advantage of putting these together, is that you get the energy of the southern kids, and the northern kids' reality of this is just up South. And there would be this kind of inter--you'd have this, there's a word for that.

EC: Interaction?

JR: Interaction, yes. So, I come up with this idea, and I remember Ivanhoe saying to me, yeah, that's interesting, he said, "Why don't you put it down, let me see a draft of the proposal, maybe I can see if I can get it funded." And he says the same thing also that Stokely says. Stokely says, "Yeah, let me know when you want me to come, [2:10:00] and I'll come up." Charlie says the same thing. Nobody says to me, you have never done this before in your life. What the hell do you think you're thinking of? If I had been those other people, I would have said, no, no, no, no, mm-mm, we're not giving this to you, you know? [Laughter] Nobody says this. Nobody ever said this to men or women. There was a sense that if it seemed like a halfway decent idea was part of the agenda of the organization, that, go for it. And so, Ivanhoe somehow got this funding. Because I know I didn't. I knew how to write a proposal. And--or I knew, I must have seen proposals written, because I certainly didn't know, coming off Swarthmore's campus. So, I learned all this stuff in how you do this in SNCC. And I do this, but again, it was go for it.

EC: And this is Ivanhoe Donaldson, and Charlie Cobb?

JR: That's right, and Stokely Carmichael, that's right. So, yeah. It was this sense of being limitless within the agenda of the organization, the philosophy of the

organization, that--and if you got people to support you. I mean you couldn't just decide to do this. Clearly, there was some support that had come through somewhere, probably honchoed by Ivanhoe, that had allowed me to go ahead and move with this, yeah.

[Camera turns off and on again]EC: So, I know that at a certain point, you're in the Atlanta office, and you participate in a couple different sit-ins.

JR: Oh yeah.

EC: One's at the Toddle House, and then there's another one where you get arrested, and get some publicity? Or you just get some publicity.

JR: See, I got arrested several times in Atlanta demonstrations, that's the thing. So, I'm not sure which one was associated with arrests, but the one, if I remember correctly, and I'm pretty sure this one was right, the one at the Toddle House, the Toddle House was like a Shoney's Big Boy in Atlanta, or Wendy's. It was a restaurant chain like that, like IHOP. And so, we were trying to get them to integrate. Well, that particular day, Forman had found out that Oginga Odinga, who was at that point, I think foreign affairs officer from Kenya, may have had other things, but under I think Jomo Kenyatta. And so, this is newly independent Kenya, and so he's this high-ranking diplomat, and he's now in Atlanta. And Forman finds out, because Forman really kept aware, was very much aware of the international relations part, when it came to African affairs. So, he finds out Oginga Odinga is going to be staying at the Peachtree Manor, which had only a year before been integrated. Because it was that whole thing about Atlanta, the city too busy to hate, and it had become really embarrassing for the federal government in this Cold War time, for these newly African nations to send diplomats into the South, and they couldn't eat at restaurants, right? Really bad publicity. Particularly

because this was the time when Russia really was major, so major force, it's the Cold War. This country wants these newly independent African countries to go onto the side of the United States, and not on the side of Russia. So, how the U.S. looked with all of this horrible segregation and stuff, was, it was a black eye. And of course, Russia was taking, as Vestia would put headlines when the Birmingham bombing, church bombing, everything. Okay.

On top of which, the African diplomats are coming, driving down Route Forty, before there's a Highway Ninety-five, and Route Forty was the direct line between New York City, their chanceries, and the embassies in Washington, DC. So, they would come down, they would not be able, once they left, really once they hit Delaware, they couldn't really--and actually they couldn't eat even in Chester, Pennsylvania, because Chester Pennsylvania was segregated, too. But, they get down, and they can't stop anywhere. Right? So, the US is really, the federal government is not happy. And so, that whole line of, particularly Route forty, and then going into Atlanta, is not looking good.

So, somehow, the Feds get the Peachtree Manor to integrate the year before. So, Oginga Odinga, [2:15:00] the foreign minister, whatever he is, of Kenya, stays there. Forman finds out, Forman--now the State Department would take foreign diplomats to SCLC, which was on the other side. They were on the Alban Avenue side. They would never bring them to us. Forman finds out though that Oginga Odinga is in town, he somehow makes contact with Oginga Odinga. It was also a time when the executive committee meeting was going on. So, people were coming in from the field, and we're--we all go over. Okay? So, we go over to meet with him at the Peachtree Manor, and I remember we, this was one, I mean we're talking old line, colonial hotel, you know?

This is the place with white dowagers, you know? I mean this is, you can take this right out of, what is it? Oh, Miss--.

EC: *Gone With the Wind?*

JR: *Gone With the Wind*, yeah, I was about to do--“Oh Miss Scarlett, I don’t know nothing about birthing babies.” That was the other one that got me, but anyway, okay. So, it was that. And we go into this thing, and you could tell it was almost like, stop action with some of these white people. Because it’s--we’re talking not just well dressed black middle class from Atlanta, we’re talking overalls, we’re all in--the guys are in overalls, blue jean overalls, all the women are in our usual uniform, which is denim skirts, right? And sneakers, and probably we had our denim jackets on too, our little denim jackets. So, and a lot of us, you know? So, we’re coming into this prestigious Southern hotel. And Oginga Odinga comes down. Now for me, see, the only image I had of anybody African was in Tarzan movies. Right? So, I often, talking about for me, it was like I expected him to come down and say something like, “Ooga booga,” you know? He comes down, because you had nothing, when I’m growing up, there is nothing about Africa that says anything other than Maasai warriors, and they cannot speak English, and they’re ignorant. That’s all I know, coming out. It’s like basically the way they frame us, because of course it’s all related, hello.

So, he comes down, he is in flowing robes, he is grandiose, he has this hat on, and of course he speaks four or five languages. Do I speak one? Yes. Hello. So, it’s like he’s doing all of this, and he sits down in the lobby with the rest of us. And we’re talking. And he’s talking to us about what’s happening in Kenya, and rural education. I remember this was a time when we had bumper stickers that said, “One man, one vote.”

So of course, we had taken it from the African liberation struggle, and we show him that, and we're talking about what we're doing with freedom schools. And so, and we hadn't done--it wasn't [19]64, so we hadn't done all of the freedom schools, but we had, the idea was already, we were talking about that. And--.

EC: Were the Freedom Singers with you all? Are you all singing?

JR: Chuck is. So, it must have been, I don't remember in that thing whether-- so no, yeah no, well I'll get to the singing for a minute. Hold tight just a second. But, so he walks down, he sits down, and we're seated on the couch, and we're doing all this talking and stuff. And then, at some point, he says, "I have to get back, I have another appointment." And Forman says, "Well, before you leave, let's sing a freedom song." So, we start singing something like, "Ain't Going to Let Nobody Turn Me Around," and he's rather delighted, actually. But the, not the maitre'd, the guy who's the bell, the head, what do you call it, the person at the hotel.

EC: Bell captain?

JR: Bell captain, yeah. But not the bell captain, he's kind of the head honcho, the manager, we'll say the manager, yeah. The manager comes over really in a tiff, because I could see the other white people, the white people in this are floored. I mean, they are, like this. And so--.

EC: An invasion.

JR: An invasion, that's exactly what it was like. So, the manager comes over and says, "I'm sorry, you will have to leave." Okay. So, we walk out, and then Forman says, "Well, since we're here, let's go down the street to the Toddle House and sit in." So, we all go over there. We occupy the seats. And there's this photo where--[2:20:00]

that Danny Lyon takes of all of us. And one of the frames is of me sitting there with my--because I always had a clipboard, so I could take the names of whoever was arrested, and stuff like that. And then, next to me is Chuck Neblett from the Freedom Singers. You've got Joyce Ladner, I think there's the head of John Lewis, Ivanhoe was sitting by the window, evidently standing guard, I think we talked about this. And I think he probably was--to see what else was going on. I'm trying to remember if Julian was in there. But if you see some of the other frames from this shoot, from --.

EC: You get different angles?

JR: Well, I'm sorry. If you see different frames from it, from the same event, then you see also Stokely and Marion Barry, and Charlie Cobb, and I think somebody else. I'm trying to think, I'm thinking there were four people in one of the frames. And then you see one of the other booths, where you see somebody else in the frame. And so, there--at the same time that we're seated at the counter, you also see some of the other people who were seated, because we've occupied basically the restaurant. So, and then at some point, they do come and arrest us, I'm pretty sure that's the arrest. Now at one of these arrests, because there's another one that's Grady Memorial Hospital. And actually, I think that's--no, it isn't. Because, can I just--okay. There is--oh no. There's another, there's another--oh gosh, see now, I'm confusing the two of them. Because, I think actually in that demonstration--.

EC: Toddle House?

JR: Toddle House, I think in the Toddle House demonstration, that's the one where we spent so much time, I think that's the one, we spent so much time in jail, and, well so much for me, because I hadn't been usually more than overnight. So, it's not like

six months, like a lot of other people. But I come out, and I've only been there five days. But it was over Christmas. And that was the one where they'd also put us in solitary, and so I'd been by myself, and they put us in the hole because we wouldn't do something that they wanted us to do. So, the hole was a bare cell, and you were in there by yourself, and it was the hole because there was no bunk bed, and there was a toilet, but that was it.

There was a toilet, and then the drain. And yeah, and no bunk beds. So, you slept on the floor. And then they opened the windows on us, and we were on a hunger strike, and the trustees, the black trustees would sometimes give us candy bars and stuff. But anyway, so I came out of that, and I came with all of the other people who were part, who had been jailed with me.

And so, I remember coming into this church, and it was like, filled with freedom songs. I mean it was a black church with, I mean it was alive with song. And it was filled with parishioners, and community people, and it was just, and they're singing, you know, whatever, "Woke Up This Morning With My Mind Set on Freedom" or whatever. And just singing, and harmonizing, I mean it was just the glorious, it was just so glorious. And I came in and was like, whoa! Because I'd gotten a little frightened.

And actually, I should say about Annie Pearl being in the cell next door. But, I had been frightened in that way, because I was by myself. And other jailings, I had been with other people, other women, and stuff. But, that one I was by myself. And I really, that one also, that was the one where I--Annie Pearl Avery, who was fierce, Annie Pearl was from Birmingham. And it was like, [laughter] no--I mean you knew Annie Pearl carried. I mean, she, you had to tell her to leave her revolver at home, or at the office, if she was going to be on the picket line. Annie Pearl, but you also knew that if Annie Pearl

had your back, nobody would touch you. Now, that might have only been in your mind that--because of course if there were cops and they were going to bludgeon her, they could have gotten--but in my mind, I thought if I'm with Annie Pearl, nothing can happen to me. So, I'm in the cell, in the hole, and she's somewhere near me. And she--and it's like two o'clock in the morning, right? And I hear Annie Pearl, and she's whistling, and I'm wondering if I can do this, hmm, I'm going to try and do this and not look at you. [2:25:00] "You Made Me Leave My Happy Home," and it's--[whistles tune].

Now, I'm hearing her. It's cold, they've opened the windows, and I hear her whistling this thing. And it's like, they can't touch me, you know? I go, I lay back down on this, the coat that I had, because even though I didn't say anything to her, I didn't say "Annie Pearl, I'm here," it was like, it's going to be okay. It's going to be fine. So, having had that experience, and now I'm coming into this church, it's like what? It, the community thing is so important. It's like you can't move without community. And it's not just the organizing that you're doing. It's whatever you build in your own organization, you've got to have community. It's one of the things, like when I was mentioning it to the St. Louis people, I said, what got us over, we had petty stuff, I remember when I used to do lecturing on campuses, right? And young people, this was when Bush was about to drop the bombs for no reason, on Iraq. And I remember going to campuses, Minnesota, wherever I was. And I remember young people coming up to me, that just happened at Exeter too, as a matter of fact. And they said, "How did you get all those people? Because he said, I'm trying to get my classmates organized to protest this upcoming war, to stop, to make sure he doesn't drop the bombs, and I can only get me, the only people in my meeting is my roommate, and somebody else, and myself, and



that's it." So, my usual thing is first of all, if all the people who say they were in the movement were in the movement, we'd be free now. Hello. But the other thing is, you never, you don't know what's going to set it off. You don't know, it could be a year from now, you don't know what's going to happen. When I was in Cordele, I didn't know that the little bit of organizing I was going to do meant that a month later, they were going to protest the unfair jailing of somebody. You never knew what was going to happen. But, oh God, I'm trying to think why I got off on that though. Because there was something I said--.

EC: You were going into community.

JR: Oh, community. That's right. However, you also knew that yeah, there were people you didn't like in the organization. Somebody, and that's what I was trying to tell this young person. I said, somebody might be going out with your boyfriend, and you found out about it, and you were pissed, but the bottom line was, they're trying to kill you. So, you have got to make sure that you are tight enough that they can't get through that. Yeah, this other stuff is going on. Yeah, you may not be happy with somebody. You might be pissed as hell with them. But bottom line is, you've got to get their back. You've got to have their back, and they're going to have yours. And you know that. No matter how mad they might be at you about some personal little stuff. Because they're trying to kill you.

So that for me really, that culture, and that culture of purposefulness, I mean we were so--we really, I mean the fact that we had four day meetings, and we had those four day meetings because you had to come to consensus about any particular major action of the organization. And consensus meant that you argued forever about it, until the people

who really opposed it either stopped opposing you, or at least said, “We do not agree with this, but we will abide by the decision of the majority.” And at that point it went to basically majority rule. But before that happened, you talked a blue streak to argue your position, and see if you could convince people. So, all of that is coming to make a culture. And then, you have all these local people who are amazing, I mean I knew strong people in Tarrytown, strong black people in Tarrytown, but the kind of stuff I’m seeing in local communities is like, where does this come from? It’s all this stuff that’s surrounding you, and then your fellow workers in the community are living with these local people, and it’s--there’s this culture that, yeah.

EC: A lot of people think about the movement, and they think about getting arrested, right? That’s one of the big things. And you just talked about people being pissed off at each other, and irritated. You got in trouble a couple of times with getting--with demonstrations in Atlanta, didn’t you?

JR: Yes! Thank you, oh thank you, yes. That’s what I started with, thank you.

EC: [2:30:00] It seems to me that you told me that one time, Dinky was upset with you, because --.

JR: Yes. That’s right. I got--that’s actually true. I got arrested, and it really was at a crucial time. I mean we were in the middle of something, in that the national office was supposed to be responsible for, and I was secretarial stuff. I was supposed to be typing something, or doing--getting something out. And I go ahead and get arrested, right? So I call in with my little dime from the jail phone, and Dinky was pissed, she said, why on Earth would you get arrested like that? You know what we have, and now, she apologized afterwards. She understood what it meant for her to be on the outside,

that I had been on the inside for however, a day, two days, whatever, and that if she's talking about, she's mad at me. And, but for me it was like, I really didn't need this. But sometimes it would come through. Because she is thinking about, I'm being left with all this work, and you decide--because they didn't need me on this demonstration. They did not need me. They did need me in the office. But I chose, because it was--it was a demonstration, and I'm going to get arrested. [laughter] So.

EC: I want to be in the field.

JR: Yeah, I want to be in the field, and the closest I can get is this demonstration in Atlanta. That's it. Now, another demonstration was in the *New York Times*, and it was like-- I got a picture, a thing of this. And it's like this extensive article that starts, and it goes on and on, and it starts with this. And the headline is, "Negros to Step Up Pressure in Atlanta." And it's January 1964. Well, it mentions that we are trying to integrate the Crystal hamburger stand in the heart of the city, it says. It says, "A youthful biracial group of men and women belonging to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee lined the sidewalk outside the restaurant this afternoon, after robed, hooded members of the Ku Klux Klan had jammed the counter in an apparent move to prevent a sit-in demonstration." Okay. So, we go in, John gets put into a patrol wagon, Forman says, "On the ground." And so, then it says, "Mr. Forman dropped to the sidewalk when the police sought to seize him, screaming, "Image of Atlanta! Great Atlanta!" Okay. "Then, Judy Richardson, Mr. Forman's"--this is in the *New York Times* article, right? "Judy Richardson, Mr. Forman's secretary and a Swarthmore College student from Tarrytown, New York"--now I saw an early version of this, and it said

“Barrytown” but they corrected it to Tarrytown--“kicked a policeman in the stomach as he and four others struggled to put her in the wagon.” In the *Times*, right?

EC: Five cops?

JR: Five cops. So, this, and now I realize what this was, okay. So, this was one where I had seen John get--being manhandled in front of me. And they had two cops in front, or one cop in front had his feet, one cop had his back. So, they had him off the ground. And so, I got pissed, right? So, I'm--they have me up, but I'm struggling, because I'm trying to get to John, and it's like, you don't treat him this way. Okay, so I'm struggling. I will say, inadvertently, my toe landed in not actually the stomach, a little lower than this, a little lower than the stomach. And they get me into the paddy wagon, and I serve whatever, I'm in there a few days. I come out, and Forman calls me into the office, into his office, and he shows me this article. And he says, and he's very serious, and he says, “Did you really kick the cop?” [laughter] And I said, and really, I really have no memory of this, okay? And he says, I said--yeah, now I'm frightened that I have done something horrible. And he says, “This does not look good for our fundraising.” It's not that I have gone, I've done this thing, it's that it does not look good for our fundraising. And he said, this is the *New York Times*. And truthfully, I don't remember him saying that. It's just because I'm looking at it. What he does say is, “This is not good for our fundraising.” And he said, “We can't have this.”

Now for me, now I had just gotten there in October, it is now January. Of the next year. And I'm thinking oh my God, what have I done? Because this is my beloved organization, I am in--I love these people, I love what we're doing, it's like, [2:35:00] for me to put this in jeopardy in any way, I just feel so bad. So, I remember walking out of

the--I really assured him, I didn't know, I didn't know I was doing this. Okay. But I felt, I really did, I felt like I had let the organization down. Okay? Now, let us just fast forward. We're working on *Eyes on the Prize*, Julian Bond was the narrator for the fourteen hours, our communications director, right? And so, at some point I remember over the phone, talking to him, and I said to him, "Julian, you remember when I kicked that cop?" [laughter] And I actually said the groin. And he doesn't wait a beat, I mean Julian is so funny. So, Julian says, "Oh yeah, I remember that, and he talks like this now." Okay.

So, I say, because I'm really gullible, I said, "Oh my God Julian, you're kidding!" [laughter] He said, "No, I'm kidding, I'm kidding." He said, because Julian knew everybody too, right? So, he said "No, as a matter of fact, he's now retired." He knew who he was. He said he moved up, he became whatever, captain of the so and so. He said he often eats at Paschal's, which they often did. White cop, but they're all at Paschal's. And he said, he recently retired. He even knew that he had however many grandkids. I mean it's like, he knew all this stuff. So, in no way impaired the officer.

EC: He survived your attack?

JR: He survived, he--yes, intact. Intact. [laughter]

[Camera turns off and on again]

EC: So, I know that at some point, you get your wish and you get into Mississippi as part of Freedom Summer, and SNCC moves the national office to Greenwood, Mississippi. What was it like for you to be in Greenwood?

JR: I liked being in Greenwood. I liked--we had, the SNCC national office was in Greenwood, and then the Freedom Summer office was actually in Jackson. So, I'm in Greenwood. And so, doing some of the same stuff I did in Greenwood.

EC: In Atlanta?

JR: Oh, I'm sorry, in Atlanta, yeah. Still getting lots of reports, they would call into Jackson, but if Mary--since Margaret Block remembered calling me, that means she was also calling the Greenwood office twice a day. And then I remember, at some point Julian came down with his brother James, James Bond, in a VW Bug, because James taught me how to drive stick shift. And I almost stripped all his gears, in his VW Bug car. And, but James and Julian, at a certain point, they came through Mississippi. And see, what was great, and I know Dottie probably told you about the whole application process and stuff. But what was great about the application for the volunteers, when they came into Mississippi in [19]64 was that in this voluminous application, both the written and then the review process they had to go through. What was good about it was that among the many things we asked them was, what are the media outlets in your location? In your home town? And with that, that meant that we also could, if something happened to them, if you--happened to them, or happened in their area, that we could go back to whatever the local newspaper, and get back to them.

Well what Julian and his brother James did was that they would go to certain locations, and they would do little, four or five minute stories, tape them, with the particular volunteer who was on site. And then, and it might not have been, because that seems too long to me, but little stories. And then they would send that tape back to the

local outlet, media outlet, from that child, from that young person. And hoped that really encouraged the outlet to play it.

Because the main thing was, how do you get the rest of the country to care about what's going on, and the killings in Mississippi? And how do we get, basically black people registered to vote without getting them killed? So, with that as the main thing, then how do you make anybody in the rest of the country care about what's going on? So, that was of course the point of Mississippi Freedom Summer, but it's also the point of what James and Julian were doing, and Julian particularly, and so he would do this around the Delta. I don't know how long he did this for, I don't know how many stories he sent back. But he certainly, that was one of the ideas. Again, keeping the rest of the world, the rest of the country connected to what we were doing in Mississippi. And so, there was that, that was going in. And it was, we did get--I got, Dottie and I got shot at once. Although I refuse to believe it was that, I kept saying, "It's a backfire!" [2:40:00] But she was right, they actually were shooting at us.

EC: Want to tell us about that?

JR: What I remember, truthfully, I now remember, I can't remember whether I actually remember this, or that, because I've heard Dottie tell the story, I now remember Dottie's. I mean it doesn't, it's--when she first told, when I first heard it from her, I got a feeling, I did have this memory, but it's hard now for me to know whether it's really my memory or her memory. But in any event, what happened is we were coming back from, we were walking back to the house that we shared in Greenwood, Mississippi, that summer. And until Bob, her then husband, Bob Zellner, came, I think they--he came back to Mississippi, whatever, then they stayed together. But at that point, she and I were

staying together in this local house. And they were always poor--I mean it was amazing to me that these local people, whose home this was, I could go back to Tarrytown, right? These people lived here, you know? It was their whole community that they were putting in jeopardy. And they just did it anyway. And they knew a whole lot more than I did about the history of violence that came to the black community.

So anyway, we're staying in this local house, and we're walking to it from having worked all day at the SNCC office. And at some point, there are these sounds. And so, Dottie says, "They're shooting at us!" And we hit the ground. Now I don't know whether I said hit the ground, or she said hit the ground, but we hit the ground. In my mind, I actually do remember hitting the ground and getting up. And then running to where we were staying and stuff.

Now, so that was one. Then another time, and I hope Dottie told you about this, the McGhee brothers were these young kids who, brothers, who Mrs.--was it Laura McGhee? Yes, the mother, who was fierce. I mean this is another non-violent person. Who was known to have kicked a cop, and gotten mad, and so, and was just this wonderful person in the community.

EC: She kicked a cop too?

JR: Yes. She kicked a cop, too. Yes. If I, I think she was in John's--was that Mrs., or was that another person? I thought I saw that as part of her story, yeah. So, she--okay, so--

EC: Her sons?

JR: Her sons. So, her sons had decided it was June, and so the Civil Rights Bill is now law. So, it's a real act. And so, you're not supposed to have any segregated



seating or anything in public accommodations, including this movie house. So, the McGhee brothers decide that they're going to go in and not sit in the crow's nest, which was where black people often had to sit, or you had one day when you could sit as black people in a movie house. But, they decided they're going to sit on the regular downstairs. And so, they sit, they're coming out, and I don't remember the first part of this, Dottie was involved in the first part, where the McGhee brothers come out, and they are, something happens, I can't remember what happens the first time around. When I get to the story, it's that somebody has tried to pick them up, it hasn't worked, so now I'm sitting in the SNCC office, and June Johnson--I'm sorry, what happens is that they go in, they come out, a small white mob amasses outside the theater. And so, some stuff, we're told that we need to rescue the McGhee brothers, and one attempt is made, but that is unsuccessful. So now, I'm in the SNCC office, and there's now a second attempt to rescue them. June comes in, June Johnson, from--who at that point, probably was maybe, she was fifteen years old in [19]63, when she gets beaten at the Winona Mississippi jail with Mrs. Hamer, and Annell Ponder, and then Guyot. So, whatever she was--so this is now [19]64, so I guess she's sixteen. And she comes running in, and I always had the keys to the SNCC Plymouth, the Sojourner fleet cars. So, I have the keys. And, which is the reason, by the way, I'd gotten James Bond to teach me how to drive stick shift, because I had this image that I was going to have to be in the SNCC car driving away from some mob, and I was going to be in a stick shift, and I wouldn't know how to drive it. So, he had taught me.

Okay, so now, June has run in, I have the keys, she says, "Judy, we've got to go to the hospital, [2:45:00] the segregated county hospital in Greenwood. The McGhee

brothers have been taken there.” What had happened was that Silas McGhee had been seated in the car, in a car, and some--one of the white mob had thrown a rock through the window, and that glass had gotten all in his eyes. So, he had been taken to the hospital, and he’s now in the hospital, June has come, we go in the car. And so, I’m driving, and it’s nighttime. And I remember the car, there was a car that came up slowly, with a white couple, who give us this evil eye, and kind of track us, alongside us. And then somehow, either they pull up or they move behind us. And we’re very aware of the couple, I’m driving, but in my mind, I always kept in mind that people always said, don’t drive over the twenty-five miles per hour speed limit, because they will arrest you. So, I’m driving away, and then suddenly there’s what I say is a backfire. June says, “Judy, speed up. They’re shooting at us.” And I say, “No, no, no, June, that’s just a backfire.” [Laughter] And I drive, and I said, “We can’t exceed the speed limit.” Now I’m from Tarrytown, right? She’s from here. You would think I would believe her, that she knows whereof she speaks on this, right?

EC: You would think, even self-preservation would kick in.

JR: You would think! It did not. I continue driving twenty-five miles an hour. And so, we get to the hospital, and there’s a little small white mob. And they have some kind of brickbat, they have something that’s like, actually it probably was baseball bats, is what they were. And it’s a parking lot in front of the hospital, and there’s a picture window into the reception area. And so, I and June, and I think there might have been other--one or two other people in the car, we had to hightail it into the reception area. And I see what I remember as like, four white FBI agents, and they’re milling around in the reception area. So, I immediately do as I’d been taught to do. I take my dime, and I

always brought dimes with me, so I put the dime in the phone, in the reception area, to call the Justice Department. First I call the SNCC office in Atlanta, and I don't know if I talk to Forman, I might have. But I certainly talked to somebody. And then I immediately start calling John Doar's office at the Justice Department. So, I'm doing that. And then suddenly, this --,

EC: Do you try talking to the FBI right there? The ones that are right there?

JR: Yeah, I'm sure I did in my mind I'm not thinking about that, because they never did anything. So, I'm trying to think, what--certainly they don't engage me. But I don't remember what I did with them. Except for a minute later. But at that point, I just remember them milling, yeah. And so, I mean there's a reason why I'm now calling the Justice Department, I think, because obviously, the FBI under Hoover was doing diddlysquat. So, and I leave messages at the Justice Department office about what's happening. And then at some point, the rock comes through the picture window. And we all scurry into the hallway, because there's a wall off--the reception area's here, the wall is there, and then we go behind the wall. And I come by, and I see they're like the three monkeys. Except there are I think four of them. And they're seated on the ground, like this, and all I could think of was see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. It was like they're just there. So, I go off. As much as I knew about the fact that the FBI would do nothing in the face of this kind of violence, I said, "What are you doing? You know you're the federal government," I mean I go *da-da-da*. And of course, when I get excited, I talk more quickly. So, I'm sure on their end, they are seeing this lunatic woman, who was speaking like a turn up toy or something, a windup toy. Because I'm just going off, like why don't you do something? You see these people, and he's in the

hospital, and, you know. So, they really do, it's like they blank out. They make no response, and finally, I keep peeking around, and June reminded me of this, because I'll tell you the end of this. So, I keep peeking around, and finally I go back to the hall phone, and I put another dime--I finally start doing that again, and then, I find that somebody comes and rescues us.

Now, let me just say, [2:50:00] I had told this story to the *Eyes on the Prize* production team, I had told it when I was on the circuit. It's not until *Mississippi Burning* comes out in, what was that, mid-[19]90?

EC: Eighty-eight.

JR: Eighty-eight, [19]88. Okay, so this is *Eyes Two*, okay. And *Mississippi Burning* comes out, and I had written an article about it for the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and how they had made the heroes, they had made the enemy the heroes, it was like Vichy France, and putting the Vichy government as the freedom fighters, and the resistance, you don't do that. And I had argued this with the co-executive producer of *Mississippi Burning* at a Harvard Law School debate. Okay. So, I've been doing all this old stuff and local programs around *Mississippi Burning*. Okay. So, I get called, invited down to the NBC affiliate, WRC in DC. And we're doing, because of course, a lot of SNCC people are in DC, and so I'm on this program, where they're discussing *Mississippi Burning*. And I'm on it with June Johnson. And we're in the green room before the program shoots. And I said, "Remember June, when the cops, and we were in the hotel and the McGhee brothers, and--."

EC: The hospital?

JR: The hospital, I'm sorry, the hospital. And we're in the hospital, and the McGhee brothers were there, and finally Forman and Ivanhoe and Stokely came and rescued us. [laughter] And she looks at me, she said, "No they didn't." And I said, "Yeah, you don't remember it?" She said, "No, no, no they didn't." She said, "You remember you came around, finally, you started calling again," she said, "on the hall phone, and you finally got through to somebody." But then she said, "Forman evidently also got through," and she said the person who rescued us, she didn't say rescued, but the person who came for us was the sheriff. And I said, "The sheriff?" She said, "Yeah, it was sheriff whatever his name was." And she said, "You said to them," and it's actually in my deposition, but I had not seen the deposition at that point, you gave me the deposition, so I'm reading what I said--okay. She says, "Yeah, you said in the deposition that it was the sheriff, and he came, and that you had demanded that he escort you to the--back to the SNCC office." Because I said, what are you going to do about the mob here? And she said, and I think I also put it in my deposition, he refused to respond to me. But she also reminded me. So, I said oh my God, and I said to June, I said, I've been telling it wrong all this time. Okay.

But then, I had second thoughts. So now, fast forward, I'm writing my piece, so it's now early 2000s, I'm going into the final draft of my piece in the SNCC women's anthology, *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*. And I want to fact check. So, I had forgotten, I remembered what June said, but in my mind, I'm thinking I wonder, I even called Ivanhoe. I said, "Ivanhoe, I'm doing the final thing on this, but I'm not sure, I think, that it was the sheriff." He said, "Oh no, I can't imagine it would be the sheriff." He said--but now by that time, June has died. So, I'm thinking

about okay, who else can I--and then, you sent me, or had given me already the deposition that I did at that point. And I'm looking at the deposition, and there I say, the sheriff came, and got us out of the hospital, and brought us back to the thing. But it was like all these checks, how your memory can play--which is why the documents are so important. But anyway, yeah. So, yeah. That was the other time we got shot at.

EC: Wow. Okay. So, well we're moving ahead a little bit--oh no, you were going to tell me something about your sister Carita, and--.

JR: Oh, should I do that?

EC: Yeah.

JR: Oh, okay. No, just that my sister, the one who tried to convince me not to leave Swarthmore, she then gets put into the fundraising office in the New York office of SNCC, and she coordinates the Harry Belafonte concert. So actually, there is one story out of that I could tell you. This is in [19]64, it's the summer, there are all kinds of things going on. And at that point, the three, those three particular civil rights workers, Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner, were missing, we all knew they were dead, as we knew as soon as they were missing. And Belafonte was going to do, come down, and I think this was a time he was coming down with Poitier, Sidney Poitier, to do a concert. Now my sister had been coordinating the Belafonte concerts that he had given--he had given us five concerts on Long Island. And so, these, he was just giving of his time, his talents, to five different events on Long Island, as fundraisers for SNCC. [2:55:00] So, she had coordinated that out of the Atlanta office. Out of the New York office of SNCC. Now, she's calling to say we were all getting ready for Belafonte's arrival. And she says, she calls me, in the Green--.

EC: In the Mississippi Delta.

JR: In Mississippi, in Mississippi, in the Greenwood office, and I get her on the phone, she's on the phone, and she says, "Judy, Belafonte is about to miss his plane," and you'll know how long ago this was, because it wasn't LaGuardia, it was Idlewild. And so, she said, "He's about to miss his plane at Idlewild, can you see if there's, if you can hold the plane?" And either she said this, or I said, "Let me see if I can hold the plane." Either way, I hang up with her. I actually call the airline, I said, "I'm calling from Greenwood, Mississippi, Harry Belafonte is about to come to us to do a fundraising, he's late, can you hold the plane?" Okay. First I get the ticket counter, whatever. And they actually said, "Oh my God, let me put you"--they put me through to the tower. So everybody was focused, because the three are missing, right? So now, people are focused on Mississippi. They put me through to the tower, I get whoever's in the tower, and I explain, "He's on his way, if you can just hold the plane a little longer." And the guy on the line says, "Oh my goodness," he said, "let me see what I can do." And he's not playing. He's not just, he really, he gets off, I can hear him, he comes back, and says, with true sorrow, "I'm sorry, ma'am, we just can't hold the plane. We just can't." And he, you could tell, he's unhappy about this. I hang up with him, and I call back to my sister in New York. And now, I am somebody, just to preface this, who would get angry at FBI agents, right? Little Tarrytown person, Mr. Policeman is your friend, meet the hostility on the phone of these racist FBI agents, right? And get a--go from Mr. Policeman is your friend to you will listen to me. I could do that at nineteen. However, now my sister's putting Harry Belafonte on the line. She turns the phone to him, I hear his dulcet tones, and I swear to God, I open my mouth, and nothing would come out.

There was no tone, there were no words, and it was like watching myself in a movie. That this really does happen. I'm trying to say something, I hear Belafonte say to my sister, "Carita? There's nobody on the line." [Laughter] And finally, I get back, so then he hands the phone to her.

EC: You can talk to her.

JR: Yes! So, I say to her, I hear her say, "Judy?" And I said, "Oh my gosh, I couldn't talk to him. I couldn't talk to him." And it's like, she's too through, she said, "Oh, all right. Well look, see if they have another plane, a later plane. Okay." So, I hang up, and I call and see, there is no later plane. And I call her back, she never puts me back on with Belafonte, okay? And she says--.

EC: For good reason.

JR: Yeah. And I say, okay, so no, there's nothing, but this is the first plane in the morning. And so, we get that done, and I hang up. But it was like, how could I be so stupid? It's like, [laughter] yeah. So anyway.

EC: Star struck, not stupid.

JR: Star struck. No, star struck, that's true.

EC: So, can you, I know that we're skipping some things--.

JR: That's fine.

EC: --that are important. But can you talk about SNCC and black power?

JR: Yeah. By the time SNCC gets to black power, I have left the organization. So, I've gone through Julian's campaign, I left out of Lowndes County, I've already done Cordele Southwest Georgia, I went in, in that first foray, off the Selma to Montgomery march, with Jim--with Stokely, with Stokely and Ruth Howard. And oh God, what--oh,



it was Preacher, Preacher, I can't remember what his real name was. But anyway, we were the first group going into Lowndes County, and Wilcox County. And building an all-black political party in Lowndes.

EC: Did you go in with that intent?

JR: Yeah. Yeah. And because it was different. We had seen what happened, I mean I had gone to Atlantic City, and so, we were really, I mean we were really sophisticated. It was amazing to me, I'm looking at nineteen, twenty year olds, and because it was Baker and Thelwell, and folks who were running Atlanta, I mean the DC office of the Challenge [3:00:00] and stuff. I remember having lists of the delegates from the delegations at the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City that year, August of [19]64. And knowing whom I should talk to, and how we--what the approach was, what the line was. We knew who the sympathetic delegations were, we were just, as you know, trying to get it out of the credentials committee. That's all we wanted, and to get it into the floor, as a debate. So, but what was amazing to me is that we were so politically--so we knew all that stuff, and I'd gone through that, I had seen what the Democratic Party had done, so it made perfect sense to me that we were now building an all-black political party in Lowndes County. And it was being done as, it wasn't just, it was groundwork. It was organizing the way that we always organized, SNCC always organized, grassroots community organizations. I did not know until Hasan's book that there was this existing organization that had recently formed, that they, and who those people, those local people were. I knew about Mr. Hewlett, I knew about Johnny Jackson, I knew, oh, and the SNCC person, who in *Eyes on the Prize* says, "I'll be clear

with you, you know, we were just about to-- we wanted to take his body back to, you know, in the casket.” Oh, who says--.

EC: Orange?

JR: Not James Orange, no.

EC: No, no, no, it was--.

JR: Yes, a SNCC person. I know, that’s all right, we’ll not get--so, there were other SNCC people in Lowndes County, but truthfully, what I most remember is that waking up in Wilcox County, and thinking I am in the most gorgeous place I’ve ever been in my life. It was the prettiest place, and I’m not a morning person. And so, what I remember also, and this is the northern thing. But no, it’s also, it’s specific. It’s specific to Judy. I’m waking up, and somebody comes in at about seven o’clock in the morning, the woman of the house, right? And it’s their land, I mean we’re on their land, because Wilcox and Lowndes had black landowners still. And so, we’re in their house, the house on their land, their farmhouse, and she comes in, and it’s about seven in the morning, and she says, “Oh, I just wanted to let you know, breakfast is ready,” and she said, “and we didn’t want to wake you up too early, so we let you sleep late.” This is seven in the morning! [laughter] So, it’s like I had to kind of adjust to a whole different thingamajig.

But it was really, I loved it. I loved the organizing, I loved, in Greenwood, that was a little kind of town. This was rural. And it was just, I loved it. But then, Ivanhoe calls, I end up leaving Lowndes County, I got to work as the head of the office for Julian Bond’s first, what becomes successful first campaign for the Georgia House. The only staff person, too. But, the staff person. So then, after that, Julian goes, I become the

temporary head of communications, only because he has told me exactly what to do, I'm doing pro forma stuff.

EC: I didn't know that.

JR: Yeah. Mm-hmm. But it's because he's set everything up for me. And he goes off to take his seat. I become that before I leave. And then, I've gotten a full scholarship to Columbia, general studies, so I leave, and then do that. And then we're doing, I remember Forman getting me into a demonstration in front of the South African embassy, I'm still in touch a lot with the SNCC people. And then I leave that, because it really was, it's like, when veterans talk about coming back to the world, that's what it was like. It was unreal. I mean, coming back to New York City, and what I was-- anyway, and studies, and okay. So, I leave there after a year and a half, and I get a call from some SNCC people. Actually, Hayes. Curtis.

EC: Curtis.

JR: Curtis Hayes, Curtis Hayes calls me, and says that Charlie Cobb and Courtland Cox are doing this bookstore. And so, do I want to come down and administrate the parent organization? And I say yeah. So, I pack my mattress, put it on the car, Curtis and I drove down, this was, I had just come back from a one-month road trip through Mexico with Maria Varela, where her car kept breaking down, and *da-da-da*. But anyway, so now I've just come back, I'm now going to D.C., and they had named it Drum and Spear Bookstore. And it was drum for communications, through education and books, and spear for whatever else you need for the liberation of your people. Okay. So, [3:05:00] we had that Drum and Spear, and we had a big drum and spear as a sign above the door. And it was right in the middle of the black community. At Fourteenth,

between Fairmont--Euclid and Fairmont. And when I first get there, the first day, I come to look at the store, it had just been tear gassed. That was the end of--and it was unusual, because by that time, most of the rebellions had been finished. I mean, that was April [19]68, now it's June [19]68. But, everything was, you know, you could see burned out hulks of buildings and stuff. And--.

EC: When you say most of the rebellions?

JR: Oh, what they--riots, rebellions. What happens on the day of the assassination of Martin Luther King, on April 4, 1968, is that everything goes sky high in many cities. So, among those cities was Washington, D.C. And so, there were just wholesale burning of the black community, everywhere. And it took really up until now, I mean it took a good fifty years for money to move in, and gentrification to come, and all the black people to be evicted from their homes, and all that stuff. But, for a long time, there were just lots of burned out places. When I come in, because they have now, that day, they--the cops are tear gassing, something has gone on, on Fourteenth Street that day. So, I come in, and it's tear gas everywhere. I could barely breath. When I go into this new store, which has nothing in it at this point, it's full of tear gas smell. And so, then we have to--but our main office was around, on Eleventh Street, Eleventh and Ninth Street, African American Resources. AAR. And we're above Bohemian Caverns, which was the jazz place. And--or were we? Anyway, so that's what I do. And it becomes actually, the largest black bookstore in the country. Because at that point, all of these new black studies departments and programs, not departments, but programs, are--James Turner is ordering humongous numbers of books for Cornell. You've got Thelwell and Strickland up at UMass Amherst, humongous numbers of books. We've got San

Francisco State, we are sending everywhere. Because at that time, there was not any central agency on the campus that they had to order through. So, they could just order from us.

So, we're sending all this stuff out, we're doing displays at the black caucus of the so and so, ALA, the American Librarians Association. Or the so and so, all of these black caucus things. And our first manager was Tony Gittens, who had just been one of the two leaders with, I won't remember her name, a female. Leaders of the takeover, student takeover at Howard University. Which was a five day thing. Just before we opened the bookstore. We opened the bookstore June of [19]68, they had done it that spring. And the takeover was around making Howard University a black university. And in fact, the reason it's in the second series of *Eyes on the Prize* as a segment is because I proposed it. Because I said to Henry, and mainly Henry was the one you had to convince, so I said to Henry, you know, we're talking about--.

EC: This is Henry Hampton?

JR: Henry Hampton, who was the founder and head of Blackside. And who was the initiator of *Eyes* one, the six hours of *Eyes on the Prize* one, and then the second eight hours, which starts in 1988. So, in 1988, we're doing the second series of *Eyes on the Prize*, which starts with Malcolm X, and ends with the election of Howard Washington as the first black elected official from a major city. Between Hatcher and Washington. Anyway. So, wait, I'm sorry. So--,

EC: You were talking about the Howard takeover.

JR: Okay, so the Howard takeover, I proposed as a story, because I said, sometimes we're not trying to convince white people. Sometimes, trying to convince

ourselves that we're good enough, and that we're trying to change ourselves. And at Howard, we're not trying to say to white people let us have black studies, we're saying to black people, let us have black studies. You couldn't play jazz in the music room at Howard, the Capstone, because it was considered low music. Only classical. Right. Sterling Brown was there, who was amazing, and so all of the NAG people, the SNCC affiliate on Howard's campus, loved Sterling. Because Sterling was imbuing the literature department with black poetry and not just Lawrence Dunbar, which everybody got. [3:10:00] But he would talk about DuBois, and you had Sterling. But generally, not a whole lot. And then one of the people I tried to get to talk to us, unsuccessfully, was a classics professor who enjoyed walking around Howard's campus with his Yale baccalaureate robes. So, it was all of that. So, Howard University had this takeover. And it became a story. But, this--one of the two, oh I almost remembered her name. Anyway, Tony Gittens was the--oh, huh?

EC: Robin?

JR: No. She's the first black--yes. But, remember that. So, Tony Gittens is the leader, one of the two leaders, of the takeover that had just happened that spring, we're opening in June, Courtland and Charlie tap Tony to be the first manager of this new store, Drum and Spear Bookstore. Now, this was the time when Muhammad Ali had just been to campus, and one of the things the--well I won't go through that. Anyway, one of the other things that happens during this, just before the takeover, is that they get the first homecoming queen with an afro. And we tell that story in *Eyes on the Prize*, too. And it's Robin Gregory. And Robin and, yeah, it's a wonderful story.

But anyway, so Tony comes off, he's the manager of the bookstore, and we really survive. And it's--but it's the diaspora. It's the African diaspora. So, it's not just African American literature and Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston, and that was my first contact with Zora Neale Hurston, and *Their Eyes Are Watching God*, and I'm giving it to every woman who comes to the store, right? And, but it was also black comic books, I developed a big children's section.

So, I'm going up to Bookazine, which was the big distributor in New York City, and we would drive up, usually Curtis and I would drive up, there was a black person who was, who knew all of the--he was the guy on the warehouse floor, he knew everything. Not just the black literature, but--all we wanted was that. He was so happy to see black folks who wanted some of this stuff, he knew where stuff was, we would send him an invoice and stuff. But even, he would say, "Well, you might be interested in this too." We're going through the Bookazine warehouse, finding all this stuff, it was great. But then, I don't know why, I think because there's always been that education thing with kids, and so it was like the residential freedom school, and *da-da-da*. And so, I said well, we need to really bulk up the children's section. It became one of the best sellers within the bookstore. We had the best children's book section. And I subsequently did a thing for Howard, their journal, Howard *Journal of Negro Education*, the Howard University academics--.

EC: School of ed?

JR: --academic journal, whatever their, was called the *Chronicles of Negro Edu*--no. *Journal of Negro Education*, that's what it was. And I did a piece on racism in black kids' books, because I was doing a study for their education school at Howard.

And so, I made it into an article, and they did that. But that became my real focus, was the children's section. And what was great is that there had been, the federal government had just recently come down with ESA. And it was whatever that federal law was, that if you, as a school system, wanted to continue to get federal funding for your schools, you had to have representative literature. Literature that represented the community that you were in. So, if you had, like a large Latina population, you had to have some Latina literature. So, we had all of that. We were bringing, and we were bringing the African writers series in. We even had Mao's *Red Book*. We got written up in the *Washington Post*, because two FBI agents came in, and of course we knew they were FBI agents, because not too many white people came into Drum and Spear at that point. And they had those funny little shoes, and they had--but anyway, so we knew who they were. They got, I mean a load of our books. And then the next thing we knew, we were written up in the *Washington Post*, selling Communist literature, and revolutionary literature and stuff. [laughter] So.

EC: If only.

JR: If only, that's right. But we had--well actually, wait. So, yeah. So, we had all of this, Caribbean writers series, we had the children's books, we had magazines, we had--and then literature, [3:15:00] lots of literature. Because Charlie was a poet, Charlie Cobb was a poet. So, we had lots of stuff. You could come in there and we had one, Fletcher, Fletcher Robinson, who was a skin doctor--.

EC: Dermatologist?

JR: Dermatologist. And who would buy his Christmas presents from us. I mean, Fletcher came in for Christmas and was like, oh come, Fletcher, just buy--because



he bought the big picture books and stuff. And then we were going to fairs. We would make more in a day sometimes at a black caucus fair, or oh, than we would in a week through the traffic, yeah.

EC: Traffic through the door.

JR: And then Charlie Cobb's aunt, his mother's sister, was superintendent of English for the DC public schools. So, when we did our first children's book with Eloise Greenfield, and I was the children's editor of the press at that point. So, I moved over. We had a Drum and Spear Press, and we had three floors of a big brownstone. And I had gotten her piece, she had been rejected by a number--this was the first time she had been accepted.

EC: Eloise Greenfield?

JR: Eloise Greenfield, oh I thought I said her name. But anyway--.

EC: You did, but then you talked about Charlie's--.

JR: Oh okay, fine. And so, Eloise Greenfield sent us a manuscript. And I loved it. And it was called--but, well, it was about a little boy who learns his first three words. And he sticks it down, he crumples the, puts, folds it really carefully, and puts it down in his sock. And so, he can't wait until he tells his mother these first three words that he's read. And so there are no illustrations, but it's so cute, and so she--and so, he goes, and he gets his first three words and stuff. So, I read this, and I call her almost immediately, and it was at night. And I said, "I didn't mean to call you so late, but I love your book. This is a--we want to publish this book, and it's"--so we did. And it's, I mean Eloise is now the foremost children's book author. She's gotten umpteen awards,

and she has, I think, probably thirty-five titles now on major publishers. *Da-da-da*.

Okay.

[break in audio)

JR: Charlotte, we get all of these school system people coming in. And I think we did it at her house, I can't remember. But it was in DC and I had this bright idea, because it was called *Bubbles*, because one, we got this illustrator from--Topper Carew's New Thing Art and Architecture Center. Because it was--there was a whole thing. It was the black bookstore was on one side. Then there was the Center for Black Education, which was across the street, that Charlie and Courtland taught in, as did Jeriva Gusto, and all these people. Then Jeriva Tate. But anyway. And it was--we had a clinic in there, in the Center for Black Education, there's somebody in DC, Kojo Nnamdi, who now has a big time radio program. He learned his stuff at the Center for Black Education. We had this, a lot of stuff going on. And then down the street, we had aligned with us, was a cultural center and stuff. So, there were all these things going on. Then there was a graphics place. The New Thing Art and Architecture Center. So, we pulled this black illustrator who did the illustrations for *Bubbles*. And so, what I remember is this cute little boy, and he has his bubble, and the first three words and stuff. And it's just too cute.

Okay. So, we have this book party. Eloise comes, it's, I think it is on Charlie's house. But certainly, it's at somebody aligned with Charlie. And it's in one of the, you know, the row houses, and it's original wooden floors. I have this great idea of doing a bubble machine, right? So, the bubbles come out, and they're soapy. So, I swear to God, people are having to hold onto the walls in order to walk down these halls, because

they're slipping on these wooden floors with the bubble machine. Yes. But it was great, and Eloise was so pleased and stuff. And then, we did the Palestinian poetry book, oh God, I almost remembered the name of it. Something about the mask, I can't remember, but it's a Palestinian poetry book.

EC: Do you have a sense--.

JR: Oh! And *Pan-African Revolt, History of Pan-African Revolt*, yes, mm-hmm.

EC: Do you have a sense of how come so many SNCC people ended up in DC?

JR: Well, because it really was Chocolate City at that point. I mean, and we had had an office there, there had been an office from the Challenge on. And then, you know, Marion and Betty Garman were working in trying to get, still, and still is, trying to get a vote for the District. And so, there was a lot of kind of things, but also, because it was so heavily black, and people knew it, and I think that was part of it. I mean folks had gone to Howard, they knew everything about DC. Charlie was born, well, I mean Charlie's folks were here, [3:20:00] there were just a lot of things going on, I think. And Ivanhoe, there was the Institute for Policy Studies, where Ivanhoe was a fellow, and other people, there was--it became a nexus, I think, for I think a variety of reasons, yeah. And then it was the DC--the federal government was here. And so, you could have some impact in some ways. But mainly it was that it was Chocolate City, yeah.

EC: So you talked already some about *Eyes on the Prize* and some of your work with the Committee for Racial Justice, the national council ( ) no.

JR: United Church of Christ Commission of Racial Justice.

EC: Commission for Racial Justice. But can you talk about sort of how the movement's influenced you in some of the work you've done over the years?

JR: See, I mean when I went to Swarthmore, I was going to be a social worker, okay? Which is good. You need them. But, one of the things that took me off was I found out, when I got to Columbia and still thought I was going to do that, that you had to take chemistry, because then you had to do all the sciences. But in addition, I now had this thing that I liked community. I liked the community I had in SNCC, and so, a lot of what SNCC taught me about what you were supposed to be about, and whom you were supposed to do it with, and the general politics, I mean the politics of stuff, I then have carried with me through the rest of my life. So, yeah, it's at the bookstore, and then when I leave the bookstore, I work as the assistant and then the director of the Black Student Fund. And one of the founders of the bookstore, Anne Holloway, and Marvin Holloway, were part of that, but it was Anne Holloway who was the director of that. And she subsequently becomes staff director for the Senate Subcommittee on Africa, and all this other stuff, but at that point, she was director of the Black Student Fund. Which gave funding to black kids who wanted to go to any of the private, otherwise known as independent, schools in the Washington area. So, it's Sidwell Friends, National Cathedral, and Georgetown Day. And Holton-Arms. And so, I then go into that. And then finally, got my degree, because I certainly didn't get it at Columbia or at Swarthmore, and a SNCC person at Antioch, the Baltimore extension at that point, says to me, "Look, I am director of admissions now, if you want your degree, you need to come quick, because I don't know how long I'm going to be here!" [laughter] So, I went through, and I did a lot, I had already done a lot of work around children's literature.

That's right, so I write my paper on racism in black kids' books. That's what subsequently becomes the *Journal of Negro Education* article for Howard University.

And so then, I'm trying to think. I get into film because Henry, while I was down there, knew a good friend of mine, Mimi Hayes, who had married Curtis Hayes, she was from Chicago. She was in broadcasting. She was the only black person I knew who had actually gone through Annenberg, the premier, one of the premier broadcasting schools. And so, she had gone through that, and I think she was actually the first black female to go through Annenberg. Anyway, she's now working with us at Drum and Spear, she knew Henry Hampton, founder and head of Blackside. At that point, he was thinking of doing what was then going to be either a one or two-hour documentary on the movement. She puts me in touch with him, I'm still in DC, he asked me to do a chronology. And I think others may have been asked, too. But I do, and I found that in my papers, I did like a five page with all these citations and stuff like this. Okay. So, was somewhere in the mid, when did I move? I moved up in [19]80-- Okay, I moved up to, yes. Somewhere in the [19]70s, mid-[19]70s, I do that for him, for Henry. Then I move with my new boyfriend to Boston. And so, I move with him, Henry says oh, good, because I'm just about to get money from Capital Cities Communications. He had put in a proposal to do this one or two-hour documentary, Henry had been himself on the Selma to Montgomery march. And so, and had, in that, had been there in the position of communications director for the Congregational Church. So, and there's a photo of him, as a matter of fact there. And so, he had wanted to do something on this early movement. Basically, the modern Civil Rights Movement.

So, he hears I'm coming up, that's why he had done the chronology with me, hears I'm coming up, great. You can be the associate producer on this piece. "I'm about to get funding," he says, "but it hasn't come in. But, we'll do something else," I can be a receptionist. Okay. So then, and Cap Cities at that point [3:25:00] had been a funder, they had small stations, TV stations, and wanted to do more, quote, "minority programming." So, this is one of their things. Henry submits a proposal, and he could really write a proposal. So, I come up, I stay, we start what becomes *Eyes on the Prize*. Except it's not known as that then. Because Henry had this other wonderful title, which was, *America, We Loved You Madly*. And he loves the play on words, and it's madly because we love you madly, because that's what Duke Ellington, the big bandleader, used to say at the end of a concert, and he would throw his arms open and say, "I love you madly" to the audience, right? Henry loved the play on words of madly. I hated it. And so, from jump, I'm saying I hate it, okay? But I'm the only staff person for a while. For really six months. And I'm looking at all the research, *da-da-da*, I find Jo Ann Robinson, I do this, I do that. Then we get the staff in. And I, because Steve Fayer, the writer, recently sent me a memo of my, of what I said about the title, it's October [19]79, and I say, "Dear Cap Cities team, y'all know how much I hate the current working title. Below are freedom song titles, they're in no order, peruse, you know, do whatever you want." And I have this list. And number six was *Keep Your Eyes on the Prize*. Now up until broadcast, Steve Fayer, the writer, said to me, he said, "Up until broadcast, I was telling Henry, 'You picked the wrong title.' They'll never get it. They will never understand what this--they'll make jokes about it, they'll say 'Eyes on de Prize.'"

Okay, so anyway, I do that, then I continue on film. But then, I come back with my then boyfriend to New York. Don't have a job, Charlie's daddy, Charlie Cobb's daddy was reverend, the Reverend Dr. Charles Cobb, head of the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice. He founded it, he was the head of it for nineteen years. I come in first as a secretary, then I become director of information, and the first series, I'm going back and forth with *Eyes on the Prize*. Stay up for a few weeks, I'm writing the weekly commentary for the executive secretary. And then I'm going back and forth, the second series, I stay up. That starts in [19]86, I think. And the idea is that I'll go back after the two weeks, after the two years. After my stint on *Eyes Two*. We don't know it's going to be two years. But I'm still keeping up with things. I'm writing the commentary, I'm doing this, I'm doing that. And then, at a certain point I say no, I really have to stop this, but I will be coming back.

But in the meantime, the United--the whole United Church of Christ, which had three whole floors at this big building in midtown Manhattan, at 31 and Madison, decides that they want to get away from midtown Manhattan. As a matter of fact, they want to get out of New York. Part of that has to do with the fact that Ben Chavis at that point, who is the new executive secretary, is pictured on the front page of the *Daily News*, stopping the subways, because around the police brutality, there's real direct action going on. And so, there's--we're very involved in that, and there's some more conservative churches within the UCC around the country who want to--who think if we can get the national church out of New York City, we'll bring it back to more our politics.

So, I know, while I'm up there, that it'll either go to Cleveland, or Chicago, or I think they were thinking of somewhere in the South, I can't remember, probably North

Carolina, because they're black. Anyway. I find out while I'm working on *Eyes Two* that they've decided on Cleveland. And I tell Ben, I'm not going to Cleveland. Henry wants me to stay, so I stay there. So, I stay with *Eyes*, I stay through *Eyes*, I become education director, people want--we get a grant to do PD, the professional development workshops for teachers.

I start doing that, somebody calls and says they need somebody as part of their lecture series, Steve Fayer says gives it to Judy. I, at that point am frightened of talking to more than three people in a staff meeting. But, I learned how to do it. Because I'm talking about the movement, so then I do all this stuff around the movement, and then I'm talking about Iraq, and then I'm talking about affirmative--but all this stuff, again because of the grounding I get in SNCC. I know nobody's going to believe me when I say Iraq is a war of choice, but I'm going to show them a quote from the *Wall Street Journal*, and they're saying it's a war of choice. I'm going to show them an editorial [3:30:00] from the *New York Times*. I don't use the *Village Voice*, I'm going to use paper of record, I'm going to use this. Of course, it wouldn't work now, because Trump can say any stupidity, and it doesn't matter that it's not true. But then, it really actually made some difference that I could show real traditional media saying stuff. You know, I even quoted four-star Marine Corps Major Anthony Zinni, from the *Washington Post*, saying "What are they talking about? It didn't happen from Iraq," I mean so it's all of that, right? But I learned that from the fact that I knew you were supposed to really have hard evidence when you said anything, right?

So, I had been doing all this stuff, I decided I can't do this anymore, but I always had stuff with me when I traveled to lecture and do all this stuff. So, I was doing



sometimes three and four lectures a month through the lecture bureau. They love Pennsylvania, they love Minnesota, they love--so I was going--I even went out, oh yeah, it was hard. I went out to Alaska, and that was during, again, it became hard for me during the up--the move up to the Iraq War, and during that whole period, because I used to really enjoy it. Because I would talk about the movement, and who was really in the Montgomery bus boycott, and finding Jo Ann Rob--.

(break in audio)

JR: But with the Iraq stuff, I mean I was almost booed by 4,000 right-wing students at Pepperdine. So, it's like, it was no longer fun. But I also knew you're supposed to do that. So even at the NSA, National Security Administration, five layers of security, I ended up still talking about that. But I always had the goods. Because I learned it from SNCC and Minnis and stuff. Like, so.

EC: Can you talk about what you're doing now with the SNCC legacy project, and Duke?

JR: Yes.

EC: And maybe we can close on that?

JR: Oh yes, please, yes. So, now we have--mainly because of Courtland Cox, who was Drum and Spear Bookstore, too. We have a SNCC legacy project, which has a few programs with Duke University. And it's because there's institutional will at Duke. When it comes to Wes, Naomi, and a number of people at Duke, Bill Chafe. And John Gartrell, I have to make sure I remember everybody. And that there is that will, so they wanted us there, and what we're doing with them is a wonderful website called One Person, One Vote, and it's [onevotesncc.org](http://onevotesncc.org). And that is a website which we're now

expanding on for the three years, and will have not only SNCC folk on it, but also like, local people. And people are doing interviews. Charlie Cobb's doing interviews, we're getting interviews from other sources, because of your stuff, we're getting the Trinity SNCC papers.

EC: What do you hope people will get out of this?

JR: That first of all, we were young. We were their age, particularly young people, that we were their age, that we weren't just talking about desegregating facilities, that we were talking about economic justice, that we were talking about the growing gap between rich and poor, even then. That we understood about grassroots organizing. We were organizing not the--even the middle group of black folks, we were organizing the lower group that did not have a voice. And so, it's who we were organizing, why we were organizing them, and it was for systemic change. It wasn't just so more black people could get the vote. It was, what is that vote? We had a thing that I think Courtland talked about, which was that the vote was necessary, but not sufficient. And so, that's what you see all the way through this. So, there's--the website is the ongoing program, we're doing other programs at Duke, bringing SNCC people in as archivists, as visiting activists and stuff, and then we're also, we just did a voting rights conference where we brought in young people from Black Lives Matter, the larger hashtag Black Lives Matter group, and oh, this wonderful child from Dream Defenders. United We Dream. Which is the group of young people who are immigrants and undocumented. And as well as the Dream Defenders out of Florida, everybody. Young people together with SNCC people, talking about what can we, SNCC people, learn from you. And then what can you young activists learn from what we were doing back then, and maybe

adapt? Not always transferrable, but where it is, let's talk about this, and how can we support you.

For me, I'm not passing the baton. I always remember Amzie and Miss Hamer, they did not pass the baton. Their thing is, we will walk along with you, Miss Baker, and we all know Miss Baker, okay. Miss Baker, you never got a sense she was passing the baton. She was helping to guide us when we needed it. And so, for me, it's like you know, use me where you can, and I'm doing some film stuff, like [3:35:00] Chloe Murray, we hope to get a doc. I'm still in film, but a lot more with the education pieces now.

EC: So, what are, so do you have any kind of final thoughts on what you think is important about the movement? What you want people to know?

JR: I think what the movement, I will talk personally. I think what the movement did for people, for people, not just the country, but for people, is it transformed them. It made them realize, they really could affect systemic change. Now, it wouldn't be everything. And I keep remembering what like, Evie Nixon and them said about how you may never see the change that you're working for, but if you do nothing, nothing changes for the better. It's going--your grandchildren, and your grand-grandchildren, they're all going to be sitting in the same doo-doo that we are now. So, if you don't do anything, it stays that way.

Part of it is that, but part of it is also what it does to you. I mean the fact that I'm coming out of Tarrytown New York, don't know diddlysquat about anything, right? I come in, I see Gloria Richardson, I come in and I see young black people as part of SNCC, and white people, but for me, young black people my age and they're changing

the world as I know it. And it's like, it changes everything for me. It changes what I think I can do myself. It's not just what, how the country changes, because that's major too. The fact that you've got all these--and you really want people to know the women's rights stuff, the handicapped people's rights, all these rights stuff, Gray Panthers, LGBT rights, all of that stuff, the impetus for that is helped by what we were doing in the local movements. The way we expand the Democratic Party, the reason you can look at the Republican Party now, and their conventions, and it's all white, except if the camera finds one black person on the floor, the reason the Democratic Party is different is because we forced them to say that in the next, in the Church amendment, two conventions down, the Democratic Party now, the delegations now have to represent the districts that they come from, in terms of the ethnic makeup of those people, the class makeup of those people. So, you don't--we did that. Mississippi people did that, SNCC did that. CORE did that. We changed fundamental stuff in this country. Didn't mean that you got rid of some of the endemic stuff. Which is systemic racism, and systemic economic disparities. But we did a lot. And what I learned is that I could do a lot. That was major. Yeah.

EC: Thank you.

JR: Thank you.

F1: This has been a presentation of the Library of Congress, and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

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