

# NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

Civil Rights History Project

Smithsonian Institute's National Museum of  
African American History & Culture and the  
Library of Congress, 2011

Reverend C.T. Vivian oral history interview

conducted by Taylor Branch

in Atlanta, Georgia, March 29, 2011

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1		[START AFC2010039_CRHP0006_MV1.WMV]
2		[crosstalk]
3	01:00:00	REVEREND C.T. VIVIAN: --When you're
4		talking.
5		INTERVIEWER: Oh, yes.
6		REVEREND VIVIAN: Excuse me.
7		INTERVIEWER: Oh, yes.
8		REVEREND VIVIAN: But there were
9		three of them. But by the way, did
10		you know this story is--
11		[break in audio]
12		INTERVIEWER: They're in Nashville?
13	01:00:09	REVEREND VIVIAN: Mm-hmm.
14		INTERVIEWER: No. Why?
15		REVEREND VIVIAN: And there's about
16		15 of them--there used to be about 15
17		of them, 12 to 15.
18		INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.
19		REVEREND VIVIAN: Is because they
20		were looking for the center of
21		population in the United States.
22		INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.
23	01:00:21	REVEREND VIVIAN: Right, and it was a
24		part of the great Sunday school
25		movement in the country, right?

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
26		INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.
27		REVEREND VIVIAN: And that was the
28	01:00:33	closest one where they could get real
29		railroad and get the materials out to
30		every place in the country.
31		INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.
32		REVEREND VIVIAN: And so as a result
33		of that, that's why the publishing
34		houses were in Nashville.
35		INTERVIEWER: Yeah, oh.
36		REVEREND VIVIAN: I thought you would
37		like that kind of story.
38	01:00:47	INTERVIEWER: So can you hear okay?
39		Are we ready to start?
40		MALE VOICE 1: Sounds great. Yeah,
41		we are ready. We are rolling.
42		INTERVIEWER: All right, are we going
43		now?
44		MALE VOICE 1: Yeah.
45		INTERVIEWER: My name is Taylor
46		Branch. Today is Tuesday, March
47		29th, 2011. We're here in the home
48	01:01:04	of Reverend C.T. Vivian in Atlanta
49		recording an oral history for the
50		Smithsonian's National Museum of

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
51		African American History and Culture.
52		Welcome, Dr. Vivian. Please
53	01:01:17	introduce yourself and we'll get
54		started telling stories about your
55		career in the civil rights movement.
56		REVEREND VIVIAN: It's good to see
57		you, Brother Branch, and I'm so glad
58		that you're in our house and I
59		remember the last time you were here,
60		and so it's very good to have you and
61		everyone who is with you. And it's
62		so good to know that this is going
63	01:01:39	into the African American Museum of
64		Negro History. Is that right?
65		INTERVIEWER: That's where it will
66		be, on the mall in Washington.
67		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's exactly
68		right.
69		INTERVIEWER: So let's start at the
70		beginning, just a little bit of
71		background. You were born in
72		Missouri, so you have a heartland
73	01:01:57	background--this is not all in the
74		south, and moved to Illinois early.
75		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's exactly

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
76		right. In fact, we moved to Illinois
77		so I could go to school in a non-
78	01:02:08	segregated school.
79		INTERVIEWER: And this is the
80		influence of your mother and
81		grandmother, if I'm not--
82		REVEREND VIVIAN: My mother and
83		grandmother. Ultimately, though, it
84		was pushed by the Depression. The
85		Depression, we lost everything we
86		had, three farms and all that sort of
87		thing. This is why you see Howard
88	01:02:25	County, Missouri on where I was born,
89		right?
90		INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.
91		REVEREND VIVIAN: But then everything
92		was lost and as a result of the
93		Depression, and then we moved into
94		the house in town which was in
95		Boonville, and that's why you get
96		that, right?
97		INTERVIEWER: Yes.
98	01:02:46	REVEREND VIVIAN: Then somebody
99		burned, a fellow burned because of
100		the religion of my grandmother,

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
101		burned the house in Boonville.
102		INTERVIEWER: What was the religion
103	01:03:02	of your grandmother?
104		REVEREND VIVIAN: See, I knew that
105		would work. See, here's the thing is
106		my grandmother was a very religious
107		person and Church of God In Christ,
108		right, and she refused to let a man
109		down the street in a common law
110		marriage put this very nice woman out
111		into the streets and it was kind of a
112		snowy day at that, right, and she was
113	01:03:29	coming up the street and when my
114		grandmother found out she told her to
115		come on into the house, right? And
116		so she was making certain that she
117		would be all right. Her common law
118		husband was angered by it all, and
119		came in the middle of like, 3 o'clock
120		in the morning and put--went in the
121		basement or in the lower level, it
122		really was, because that's where you
123	01:03:59	kept the coal in those days and you
124		kept the wood and really fine wood
125		that you could start fires with. He

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
126		started a fire under the house and it
127		happened to be under my bedroom and
128	01:04:14	my grandmother was out screaming my
129		name in the middle of that morning
130		because of the fire. I awakened, ran
131		to the door of my bedroom or of the
132		bedroom, looked out and looked
133		straight through that house, through
134		the front door was open and I ran
135		back and jumped in bed, just kind of
136		in a happy mood, right? Kind of
137		something was all right about it, but
138	01:04:44	it was strange, it was different, and
139		I liked the idea. Then there was
140		some sound in her voice that was
141		panicky, and I jumped out of bed and
142		phew, shot right through the house.
143		They say that about 20 minutes after
144		that, my room fell into the fire
145		below, saving me, right? Well, after
146		that, the family decided that they
147		had nothing left, plus the fact--it's
148	01:05:22	strange what happens. Depressions
149		create more divorces than you could
150		think. Men could not stand what

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
151		happened to them, everything taken
152		away, everything they'd worked for
153	01:05:34	for their lives. They would wake in
154		the morning and they had nothing.
155		They didn't know what to do, right?
156		And it created crises all over--that
157		whole period is filled with divorces,
158		and both my mother and grandmother
159		ended in divorce. Well, the women
160		said that this was the time to move
161		out of a segregated society and they
162		moved into Macomb, Illinois, but they
163	01:06:02	moved there because there's a
164		university there, and they knew that
165		no matter what happened I could go
166		through college and that was a dream,
167		particularly of my grandmother. But
168		the family, her brother had gotten to
169		go to college at Lincoln University
170		in Missouri. She had not, and she
171		was really fulfilling her desire
172		through me by making certain that if
173	01:06:33	we moved to a college town, that
174		could happen, all right, and so those
175		two women made certain of it. That



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Line#	Timecode	Quote
176		move they made was I was just
177		entering the first grade--I was 6
178	01:06:46	years old.
179		INTERVIEWER: So that's in 1930.
180		REVEREND VIVIAN: 1930, right, and
181		that made the difference in the rest
182		of my life. If they had not decided
183		to do that and do it, I don't know
184		really what would have happened to
185		me.
186		INTERVIEWER: So your childhood is
187		marked by conflict not only of racism
188	01:07:11	to move, but conflict with the
189		Depression and influence by strong
190		women.
191		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's exactly
192		right.
193		INTERVIEWER: Who wanted to move you
194		into college--
195		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's it.
196		INTERVIEWER: A college town in
197		Illinois.
198	01:07:22	REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, that's it.
199		INTERVIEWER: Now, the next moment I
200		would like to jump to is that it

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
201		seems that you were a pioneer in the
202		sense that in a way you tried to, you
203	01:07:34	tried out the civil rights techniques
204		early to see how they would play in
205		Peoria--
206		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right.
207		INTERVIEWER: As the phrase goes.
208		You had a sit-in in Peoria, Illinois
209		in 1947 when you were a very young
210		man, long before, 13 years before the
211		Greensboro sit-ins.
212		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
213	01:07:53	INTERVIEWER: How did that come
214		about?
215		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, well, see,
216		here's what happened is that I was--
217		we had--well, let me tell you the
218		whole story. I had gone back to
219		Peoria or to Peoria, actually, in
220		order to work, in order to go back to
221		school, to go back to Western. I had
222		dropped out, went to work and then
223	01:08:25	was in Peoria. Well, Ben Alexander
224		who was a chemist there, he and I
225		became friends so I was living at a

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
226		huge house he had and there were
227		three of us there, a medical doctor,
228	01:08:45	and myself and Ben, right? And Ben
229		was involved with a church group that
230		was basically a white church--you'd
231		still say that whether it was north
232		at that time or not, right? And he
233		wanted me to join him in direct
234		action with--out of CORE, as that--
235		INTERVIEWER: The Congress of Racial
236		Equality.
237		REVEREND VIVIAN: Equality, see--
238	01:09:17	INTERVIEWER: Which had started in
239		World War II, in '41--
240		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, in '41 and
241		this is important because it was
242		really the commission, on, I think,
243		at first, as a part of the church.
244		Then Jim Farmer started there, and in
245		Chicago. Well, we began to get
246		material from him a couple of years
247		later, right, and the techniques that
248	01:09:51	had been formed by CORE is what we
249		used to open up the restaurants and
250		lunch counters in Peoria, Illinois

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
251		after that. In fact, Jim and I were
252		in jail together in Jackson,
253	01:10:05	Mississippi and we talked about that
254		same thing.
255		INTERVIEWER: Oh, well, we'll have to
256		get to that.
257		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, okay.
258		INTERVIEWER: So after this early
259		experience in Peoria, it's not too
260		many years later than that in 1954 or
261		thereabouts that you met and married
262		your wife, Octavia. Can you tell the
263	01:10:28	story of how that came about?
264		REVEREND VIVIAN: Oh, yes, in fact, I
265		love to tell this story. In fact,
266		there were very few black
267		professionals in that period, right?
268		INTERVIEWER: Yes.
269		REVEREND VIVIAN: And so whenever one
270		would come to town, we would--others
271		would have a party for that person,
272		right? And my wife came to Peoria to
273	01:11:00	be a women's director and girl's
274		director at Carver Community Center.
275		Carver Community Center was the

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
276		largest community center for African
277		Americans between Chicago and St.
278	01:11:13	Louis, and she came to be in charge
279		there. We had a party for her and I
280		met her at that party and found out
281		that within a couple of weeks she was
282		going to have a birthday, so I called
283		her after the party, the next couple
284		of days and let her know that we were
285		too nice of people to allow someone
286		new to sit around in their room and
287		that I would love to take her out so
288	01:11:50	that she could enjoy herself on her
289		birthday. Well, and she finally
290		agreed, and so we did, and from that
291		time on, if you saw one, you'd see
292		the other. So one year from that
293		day, we were married, so that day--
294		and I know better not to give it--
295		February the 22nd became for us her
296		birthday, anniversary of our first
297		date and our wedding anniversary all
298	01:12:27	in one day.
299		INTERVIEWER: On George Washington's
300		birthday, too.

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
301		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yes, exactly right.
302		It's so terribly important.
303	01:12:34	INTERVIEWER: And--
304		MALE VOICE 1: Just a technical
305		thing, if you could pause just a
306		little bit after he finishes
307		answering so we would edit there.
308		INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay. Just jumping
309		ahead a little bit, because your
310		wife, Octavia later became the
311		biographer of Coretta Scott King and
312		friend of hers in the movement--
313	01:12:55	REVEREND VIVIAN: That's true.
314		INTERVIEWER: Could you tell us just
315		a little bit about her background as
316		you learned it after you met her?
317		REVEREND VIVIAN: In fact, that is
318		one of the good things. The reason
319		that she had a chance to come to try
320		out for the job was because the
321		person that came to head the center,
322		his name was Harper, had been the
323	01:13:21	director of her community center
324		during the summers when he was a
325		student at one of the Michigan

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
326		universities. She was from Pontiac,
327		Michigan, and a group of wonderful
328	01:13:36	young people gathered around during
329		that period there in Pontiac, and
330		they had their own newspaper. They
331		knocked on doors, the local African
332		American doctor led them and they
333		registered people to vote, they got
334		people out to vote, they were
335		involved in all kinds of activities
336		in the community or anything that
337		came up that the doctor was concerned
338	01:14:08	about, they were all involved in it,
339		right? And that group of young
340		people continued as part of the city.
341		In fact, my wife said one day she was
342		going to go back and become mayor.
343		Well, one of her group did become
344		mayor of Pontiac--it was that kind of
345		group, and the intensity of it was
346		very important. Her father's
347		minister was a Morehouse man. And so
348	01:14:44	that history follows us, but she was
349		then part of - - Lunch Counter in
350		Peoria, Illinois--her pastor had them

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
351		to go out to Ted's Trailer and got
352		them in the car, took them out to
353	01:15:05	Ted's Trailer [phonetic] which was a
354		drive-in. They were used to going to
355		Ted's Trailer, but never inside,
356		right? So they didn't know it was
357		segregated, and they would serve you
358		in the car but they wouldn't serve
359		you in the place. Well, when he took
360		these young people out, a group of
361		them, the idea was to make certain
362		they ate inside. They tried to hand
363	01:15:34	them a bag with their stuff in it.
364		He went back to one of the tables,
365		they gathered around and they split
366		open the bag and sat there and ate
367		like human beings should have the
368		opportunity to do. The word got out-
369		-of course, he put it out as pastor
370		of the town, right, and it already
371		worked, so people began to come and
372		park their cars and go in and eat.
373	01:16:01	That opened that up entirely, but so
374		she had been a part of these kinds of
375		activities before and they were just



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Line#	Timecode	Quote
376		perfect for me. I was trying to
377		start a newspaper there because
378	01:16:16	journalism was my minor. I had just
379		found that they didn't teach me
380		enough about advertising, so I didn't
381		last long. Journalism demands much
382		if not more advertising and knowledge
383		of than writing itself, being an
384		English major I thought all you had
385		to do was write. I came to find out
386		it was a bit larger than that,
387		especially if you own the newspaper,
388	01:16:46	so I didn't own it long.
389		INTERVIEWER: Well, before we jump to
390		the south in your career, I'd like to
391		ask you one question--
392		REVEREND VIVIAN: Sure.
393		INTERVIEWER: Because a lot of people
394		today, all these years later, young
395		people tend to think that all the
396		African Americans involved in the
397		civil rights movement grew up like
398	01:17:07	Dr. King in the south.
399		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
400		INTERVIEWER: But here, both you and

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
401		your wife, one from Missouri and
402		Illinois, the other from Michigan--
403	01:17:15	REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
404		INTERVIEWER: --Are people in the
405		north, so I'd like to ask you two
406		questions: Did you have people from
407		the south in both of your families,
408		in other words where did they come
409		from?
410		REVEREND VIVIAN: Oh, I see.
411		INTERVIEWER: And then what drove you
412		back down to the south, to Nashville?
413	01:17:36	REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, that becomes
414		an important question that we who
415		were young did not come to until much
416		later, but my wife's folks were
417		really from Arkansas. They had come
418		north to work. Her father had,
419		right? And it was a large family and
420		a couple of the others of them also
421		came. He was the older son, and they
422		came so it ended up, there were three
423	01:18:11	or four of them in Michigan, most of
424		them in Detroit, the father went to
425		Pontiac, and that's where my wife was

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
426		born as a result. But the history of
427		that is interesting, because where
428	01:18:31	they were in Arkansas was rice
429		country, and my wife as a result
430		happens to know and is part of the
431		tracing that rice was a science that
432		was unknown or was not well-known
433		here in the United States. So when
434		they told--her great great great
435		grandfather was a person who knew
436		rice culture. He was told that if he
437		would--he could come to the United
438	01:19:11	States and that they would take care
439		of him and his family. No sooner
440		they got on board ship, they made
441		them slaves. So then when things
442		were much better, they made that move
443		on up north. That's how her family
444		got there. My family got there as I
445		was telling you earlier, right?
446		Because they had lived in Missouri
447		and grew--the whole family, three
448	01:19:50	generations, both my father and my
449		mother, my grandfather was a teacher,
450		right? He became a principal of

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
451		schools. He got fired, though,
452		because he was teaching black kids
453	01:20:05	algebra and the white school board
454		didn't know algebra. So they fired
455		him for teaching black kids algebra,
456		but that's how we really came
457		involved, first to the country and
458		then to the north from the south.
459		But to further the meaning of your
460		question is that everybody north
461		thought they were better than those
462		who were still south, right? And
463	01:20:43	thought that things were so much
464		better off north than south, right?
465		Which gave the beginning of an
466		expression we used--"up south"
467		because even then, as I was coming
468		through school, that was an
469		understanding. At first, we didn't
470		want to admit that things were that
471		bad where we were, but later on had
472		to face the fact that it was bad
473	01:21:17	enough to be no more than up south.
474		For instance, why we opened the lunch
475		counters in Peoria, Illinois was

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
476		around the understanding that we
477		could go into a restaurant, one
478	01:21:30	restaurant in downtown--it's the only
479		one we could go in and sit and eat--
480		that didn't have a sign that said
481		that you had to eat in a particular
482		place, but we all knew that if we
483		went any other but that part of the
484		restaurant, we would be asked to
485		move, so we naturally went there.
486		But always, there was that thing--you
487		want to change that dislike for it,
488	01:22:00	and so when this opportunity came
489		that Jim Farmer had produced in
490		Chicago, then we did the same thing.
491		But there were those years which you
492		mentioned between us and coming
493		south, coming back south, but had we
494		who came south not helped start a
495		great movement, there probably never
496		would be the population moves that
497		happened.
498	01:22:35	INTERVIEWER: I'd like to jump back
499		just one more little question,
500		because on your wife's side you went

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
501		all the way back into slavery with
502		the ricer grower.
503	01:22:45	REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
504		INTERVIEWER: Does your family go
505		back before Missouri? Do you know
506		anything before that?
507		REVEREND VIVIAN: No, in fact, I
508		think we were there for two or three
509		generations. In fact, I have
510		paintings and photographs of three
511		generations of my family--well, four
512		generations of them really, but my
513	01:23:10	great great grandfather was in
514		slavery, right? And he left slavery
515		to join the northern armies, and when
516		he came back after winning it, they
517		came--he came back to Boonville,
518		Missouri, and when he came back to
519		Boonville, he refused to take the
520		name of his former--I hate the word
521		"owner." I must admit in the middle
522		of the civil rights movement I began
523	01:23:52	to call them "murderers," not
524		"masters." And as a result of that,
525		I began to think a whole different

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
526		way. But I can trace four
527		generations back to slavery in
528	01:24:12	Missouri.
529		INTERVIEWER: You've said that he
530		refused to take his name--
531		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
532		INTERVIEWER: What name did he take?
533		What name was he and what name did he
534		take?
535		REVEREND VIVIAN: He took his wife's
536		name, which I like, too, because that
537		showed that we had no prejudice
538	01:24:30	either way, right?
539		INTERVIEWER: So what were those
540		names?
541		REVEREND VIVIAN: Tyndall [phonetic]
542		was my mother's name, and I'll show
543		you the whole thing, you can take
544		pictures later, but that was my
545		mother's name is that her name was
546		Woods, and so that was the family
547		name on the other side--Tyndall on
548	01:24:58	one side, Woods on the other.
549		INTERVIEWER: And what was the name
550		he refused to take, do you know?

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
551		REVEREND VIVIAN: Oh, I didn't know
552		that. I've never found that out.
553	01:25:05	INTERVIEWER: And where did Vivian
554		come from?
555		REVEREND VIVIAN: Vivian came as my
556		father's name, you see, was Vivian,
557		right--as the family moved through
558		its generations and so there was the
559		Tyndalls, the Vivians and the Woods.
560		In fact, the most interesting thing,
561		I've looked all over the country for
562		Vivians and it wasn't until about
563	01:25:33	four years ago--I've even gone to
564		Vivian, Louisiana, right? Found that
565		there had been a great number of
566		Vivians there in Monroe, Louisiana,
567		and that we lost everything we had
568		there because of the Louisiana
569		Purchase. As soon as the United
570		States took over the Louisiana
571		Purchase, they took the land and so
572		forth and went to graveyards--went to
573	01:26:02	a graveyard in Vivian, Louisiana
574		where the family tombstones. I
575		couldn't find Vivians. I've went all



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
576		over the United States looking for
577		Vivians that connected. In Iowa,
578	01:26:19	near the Missouri border, I found a
579		Vivian family, but we couldn't make
580		any identity in terms of the move.
581		Then a man about four years ago
582		called me and said I've been wanting
583		to do this and I'm traveling through
584		and I'd like to meet you, and so we
585		got together and he had two of his
586		daughters with him and we all got
587		together and just sat around and
588	01:26:53	talked. Well, he shows up every now
589		and then. He's a minister, by the
590		way, but he's done about four things-
591		-he's also a minister, and he comes
592		every now and then. He was here
593		about a month ago, but it's the only
594		Vivian that I had met then so I went
595		to a funeral that he was telling me
596		about, and I met several other people
597		who were related to Vivians.
598	01:27:23	INTERVIEWER: So you are carrying the
599		legacy to some degree in your own
600		family of the famous statement that

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
601		after slavery it is by choosing a
602		name that we first placed ourselves
603	01:27:35	into the world--
604		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yes.
605		INTERVIEWER: Because your names in
606		the family are to some degree choice
607		and in some way it makes it harder to
608		trace but more interesting to trace.
609		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, precisely
610		right. This is one reason my great
611		great grandfather I really appreciate
612		because he refused to take a slave
613	01:27:54	name. Now, my grandfather--my great
614		grandfather Woods, he might as well
615		be a Woods, right? In fact, although
616		it's the family name, one of the sons
617		is really his father--you can tell
618		when you look at the pictures how
619		different in color everyone really
620		is.
621		INTERVIEWER: Let's shift to your
622		move to Nashville in the 1950s. How
623	01:28:30	did that come about from Illinois to
624		move with Octavia, I presume--
625		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
626		INTERVIEWER: To Nashville?
627		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, because now
628	01:28:42	there's a long story and a short
629		story to this, but the thing is--
630		INTERVIEWER: I want the good story.
631		[laughter]
632		REVEREND VIVIAN: Is that we got
633		married there, right, in Peoria,
634		Illinois, and I was working for Helen
635		Gallagher Foster, a mail order
636		company, when I got my call to
637		ministry, and I thought I'd go to
638	01:29:09	Colgate Rochester. And my final year
639		of college, Western, is I had been
640		picked to go to Colgate Rochester.
641		They picked what they call the hot
642		100 every year, you know, across the
643		country they pick them and invited
644		you in and paid all the bills and
645		asked you to come and they set up a
646		two-day thing hoping then that you
647		would come back, right? And I had
648	01:29:39	made my choice to go to Colgate
649		Rochester but when I got the call to
650		the ministry I found out that my

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
651		pastor had already been saving money
652		for me to go, but to go to a school
653	01:29:54	he was on the board of which was in
654		Nashville. And as a result, that's
655		where I ended--in Nashville. And I
656		often think that had I made up my
657		mind I was going to Colgate Rochester
658		in spite of--see, I was going to wait
659		until I got the call to ministry.
660		People had always told me in my
661		hometown I was going to be a
662		minister. I'd even tried to bring
663	01:30:22	the three black churches in my town
664		together to create one good solid
665		church, right? And so they always
666		knew me as that kind of person but
667		then I wouldn't go because I had not
668		been called to ministry. The calling
669		came in Peoria at Helen Gallagher's
670		place, and then when that call came--
671		and that's the story that my wife was
672		involved in a way that you should
673	01:30:58	hear, because a good deal of all the
674		movement was deeply religious and
675		that's not a CORE idea that has been

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
676		carried through and should be. When
677		I got the call to ministry, as I
678	01:31:13	said, I wanted to go to Colgate
679		Rochester but I was on my way to
680		American Baptist Theological Seminary
681		in Nashville because of how
682		everything happened. So I go there
683		and I've often thought if I had gone
684		to Colgate Rochester, I would have
685		missed my life because the
686		connections and the attitudes and the
687		actions of going to American Baptist
688	01:31:49	made it possible for me to be
689		involved in the movement. And if you
690		notice that I ended with Martin King,
691		but that even before that, in
692		Nashville, Kelly Miller Smith was the
693		pastor of First Baptist Church and
694		the natural leader of the movement,
695		right--was a minister, right? When
696		you look at the people, Bernard
697		Lafayette and Jim Bevel and any
698	01:32:25	number of others of us, John Lewis,
699		we were all at the seminary. And
700		when we came out to struggle for

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
701		freedom there, the leadership was
702		from religious side of life. In
703	01:32:44	fact, basically all over the country
704		that was true because you see, Martin
705		had called ministers together to form
706		SCLC, of which Kelly Miller Smith was
707		one of those that was called to that
708		meeting. When I first came to
709		Nashville, he had me to preach for
710		him, and that was First Baptist and
711		that was the intellectual church of
712		the community, and so he and I were
713	01:33:17	very good friends so when he came
714		back, he called a group of ministers
715		together. They started only with
716		three of us that really heeded the
717		call to form SCLC in Nashville and it
718		grew to six, but half of those were
719		not pastors in the town. Half of
720		those were in one of the other
721		publishing houses in the town, all
722		right. But then once they saw what
723	01:33:47	the movement was all about, once the
724		movement really got under way, boy,
725		all the ministers joined us.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
726		INTERVIEWER: Let me ask you one more
727		question about this calling.
728	01:33:59	REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
729		INTERVIEWER: You've mentioned it
730		several times.
731		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
732		INTERVIEWER: A lot of people in
733		modern life may think that a call to
734		the ministry is on the phone,
735		somebody tells you that you're going
736		to be a minister.
737		[laughter]
738	01:34:10	INTERVIEWER: Explain to the world in
739		posterity how a call came to you in
740		Illinois.
741		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, it's very
742		important. And especially because I
743		was one of the persons that didn't
744		really totally believe in a call, yet
745		I said I was going to wait until I
746		got one. It seemed a little backward
747		in one sense to me, right? But it
748	01:34:36	happened. I was walking across the
749		floor at Helen Gallagher and it's
750		where everything was being packaged.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
751		It was a mail order company and I was
752		walking across the floor going
753	01:34:55	towards the front. At the time when
754		it seemed like that the roof opened,
755		right, and I heard "I want to work
756		for you eight or ten hours a day,"
757		but it was a booming voice that came,
758		right? And all of it, I don't
759		totally understand yet because how
760		could those be the words, right? But
761		they were. Then things just
762		disappeared, but it seemed like it
763	01:35:35	came right through the ceiling, right
764		through the roof really of that part
765		of the building and I turned around
766		me because I wondered how everybody
767		else was taking this because it was a
768		booming sound. There was no way you
769		could not hear it as far as I was
770		concerned. It filled me, right? And
771		I turned around and everyone was just
772		about their regular business. I can
773	01:36:06	see a woman now that I don't remember
774		her name by any means, but I can see
775		a woman now--she was just packaging.



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
776		She was one of the regular people.
777		They had about 50 or 60 people that
778	01:36:19	did nothing but package all the time,
779		and she was one of them that was
780		always in my memory, and I turned and
781		she was just about packaging things.
782		Whatever the gift was, right, she was
783		packaging it. And then I walked on
784		up to the front. Well, now, as I
785		said, my minister had money for me--
786		he had come to the place and Helen
787		Gallagher had given him a gift for me
788	01:36:57	to go to college. Now, an
789		interesting thing, though, is I got a
790		letter last year, right? I got a
791		letter last year signed by Helen
792		Gallagher Foster but the letter was
793		sent to me by a woman who was her
794		neighbor, and she told me in the
795		letter that she had gone over to
796		Helen's house and found that she had
797		had a stroke and died there in her
798	01:37:30	kitchen. But she had written me this
799		letter and she had told the woman
800		about me so she knew who I was,

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
801		right, and so she found out where I
802		was and sent me the letter. One of
803	01:37:48	the last things she did, and we had
804		not talked to each other in all of
805		those years.
806		INTERVIEWER: What did the letter
807		say?
808		REVEREND VIVIAN: Well, the letter
809		was so thankful that I had done well
810		and all of that sort of thing and
811		that she'd kept up with me throughout
812		the years and every time I came to
813	01:38:07	Peoria and all that sort of thing,
814		right, but I hadn't even gone back to
815		the place, even the few trips I made
816		back to Peoria I had not. And it was
817		one of those kind of mysterious kinds
818		of things, you know? Here a person
819		dies the same morning she's writing
820		me a letter, and it would have been
821		the only letter that she would have
822		written during all those years and
823	01:38:36	would have been the only time we
824		would have communicated but we both
825		remembered each other quite well. In

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
826		fact, I've still got a piece from
827		Helen Gallagher Foster's shop--it was
828	01:38:49	really Helen Gallagher and Foster is
829		a young man that came on much later,
830		and I have it right there on a stand
831		as you come in the front door, not
832		because of Helen but it was a gift
833		that I still had from there.
834		INTERVIEWER: Helen Gallagher's mail
835		order company in Peoria, Illinois--
836		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
837		INTERVIEWER: Mail ordered what kind
838	01:39:15	of products, remind me--our museum is
839		collecting artifacts from places like
840		this and I'm just curious a little
841		bit about what it involves--
842		REVEREND VIVIAN: Okay, one of her
843		very important sales was of things
844		with roosters with them, all right?
845		Glassware, all kinds of things to put
846		flowers in, things for the kitchen,
847		all kinds of things, right, would
848	01:39:49	have that sign on it. Helen
849		Gallagher Foster advertised through
850		all of the home and garden and House

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
851		Beautiful and all of the great
852		magazines, house magazines of that
853	01:40:02	period, both lower ordinary and the
854		high class and you could tell a great
855		difference, all right, between House
856		Beautiful and some of the others,
857		right? But that's how she
858		advertised.
859		INTERVIEWER: So was she selling to
860		an integrated white market and black
861		market?
862		REVEREND VIVIAN: No, I'm glad you
863	01:40:23	said that, because that's why I was
864		there. What I wanted to do was to
865		start an African American mail order
866		house--well, under her--she had about
867		three different companies through the
868		advertising but they were all out of
869		the same place and they were all
870		under her, right? And she had a
871		great business mind and her husband
872		wasn't bad at all either, right? He
873	01:40:53	was good at the backroom. She did
874		the stuff out front, and picked items
875		and etcetera. Now, so that she, when

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
876		things happened, what I wanted to do
877		was to start a mail order house
878	01:41:17	because we had just come out of the
879		war. African Americans had more
880		money than they had ever had before,
881		right? You don't send letters and
882		advertising to people who don't have
883		money, right? We had come to a point
884		which I thought that we could stand
885		and develop an African American mail
886		order house, right? If you would
887		have followed Johnson Publications,
888	01:41:49	one of the only ones they didn't
889		duplicate was House Beautiful,
890		because we were just coming to the
891		point. I wanted to get in on that
892		market before Johnson did, right?
893		And then right at that time, I got
894		the call to the ministry so I dropped
895		all of that, but the main story that
896		I think that you need to know about
897		the call to the ministry is that a
898	01:42:19	couple, two or three days afterwards,
899		I knew I had to tell my wife because
900		I knew I was going to go a seminary

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
901		somewhere, right? As I said, I had
902		Colgate Rochester in my mind so I
903	01:42:37	decided to tell her. I came home
904		from work and I said to her, I said,
905		baby, I've got something I want to
906		tell you and she said, I got
907		something to tell you, too. So we
908		always waited until we got in bed and
909		we'd share with each other, right?
910		And so after we had eaten and one
911		thing and the other, we'd go up to
912		bed and we're lying there and she
913	01:43:06	says, you tell me your story--I said
914		I was going--you tell me your story
915		first. And I said, no, baby, you
916		tell me, because I knew she was just
917		bursting to get it out. Well, we
918		were having our first child, that's
919		what she wanted to tell me, right?
920		So after we celebrated that fact, she
921		said, well, now, tell me your story.
922		And I said, no, I'm not going to tell
923	01:43:41	you right now. And so she finally
924		coaxed it out of me, right, and so...
925		[background noise]

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
926		REVEREND VIVIAN: Shall I get it?
927		[background noise]
928	01:44:04	REVEREND VIVIAN: So I know it's not
929		going to work.
930		MALE VOICE 1: That was a great
931		story, by the way.
932		REVEREND VIVIAN: Well, we haven't
933		finished the good part.
934		INTERVIEWER: So wait just a minute.
935		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
936		INTERVIEWER: So tell us when we're
937		going again.
938	01:44:17	MALE VOICE 1: Good.
939		INTERVIEWER: Okay. Picking back up,
940		you're in bed and you've got--your
941		wife has given you her news but you
942		haven't given her yours.
943		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's exactly
944		right and so I refused to tell that
945		and she coaxed it out of me. So I
946		told her that I had my call to the
947		ministry but that I wasn't going
948	01:44:44	because I would have to leave her in
949		Peoria--there would only be one job,
950		that would be her job, and she was

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
951		having a baby as well. I was going
952		to stay there through that, and so I
953	01:45:04	was going to let it go at that, and
954		we laid there in the darkness and
955		suddenly she says, "Whose faith is in
956		question now?" I'm the faith boy,
957		right? I do everything on faith.
958		Well, how do you answer?
959		Particularly your wife, right? When
960		they say--fine, you go to the
961		seminary because God will make it all
962		right. And I had to go, because you
963	01:45:46	know, her reply was too much for me,
964		so I went to seminary.
965		INTERVIEWER: And she stayed in
966		Peoria?
967		REVEREND VIVIAN: And she stayed in
968		Peoria, and so one day at the
969		seminary I get a call, all right, and
970		I get the call and we were--I mean,
971		we didn't have a phone in every room
972		as most seminaries do now, right,
973	01:46:14	because they're graduate schools and
974		they just have one and so on, but
975		there was one phone on each floor.



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
976		Somebody called down to the end of
977		the hall where I was and said,
978	01:46:25	"Vivian, you've got a call" so I go
979		down and it's my wife, right, and I'm
980		standing there looking at the window
981		and it's just so wonderful to think
982		she's coming and she says I'm coming,
983		so I said, well, how long are you
984		going to stay? And she said, oh, I'm
985		coming to stay. Well, I was suddenly
986		silenced. I looked out the window,
987		and I couldn't believe it. I said,
988	01:46:58	how was this going to happen? Here I
989		was in one dorm room, right, and
990		didn't have a job, and didn't have
991		any way to get an apartment. I'll
992		tell you what happened is that before
993		she got there, the publishing house
994		had called me and I was using the job
995		would have had me use everything that
996		I had ever done before, the various
997		tasks that I had done before I was
998	01:47:35	going to do. I had been in boys work
999		with the YMCA--this job was around
1000		boys' work. I had been an editor of

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1001		this newspaper I tried to put
1002		together, right? I was going to do
1003	01:47:48	that. I had been a speaker all my
1004		life. I was going to be able to do
1005		that all over the country, so that
1006		this job would take in each and every
1007		important thing I had done in my
1008		life, and it was so perfect for me,
1009		right? But most important for that
1010		moment was that there was only one
1011		student dorm open at the end of the
1012		school year, and I got it, and so by
1013	01:48:24	the time the wife got there,
1014		everything was ready. Everything was
1015		ready.
1016		INTERVIEWER: Did she come with the
1017		baby born or before the baby--
1018		REVEREND VIVIAN: No, the baby hadn't
1019		been born yet. The baby was born--
1020		INTERVIEWER: In Nashville?
1021		REVEREND VIVIAN: Mm-hmm, in
1022		Nashville, but he had cerebral palsy-
1023	01:48:50	-he just died last year. He was,
1024		very seldom were people born with
1025		cerebral palsy--they usually die

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1026		between 30 and 35. He lived to be
1027		45, and so he just died last year,
1028	01:49:11	but all of that is to anchor me in
1029		Peoria--I mean, in Nashville. It
1030		should have been--the movement
1031		starts, I meet Martin King there in
1032		the first place doing an article.
1033		The wife and I were going to produce
1034		a 24-page piece on Martin. Well,
1035		that's how it ended--we ended up
1036		doing it. I was trying to do it for
1037		the publishing house. The publishing
1038	01:49:47	house actually was really afraid to
1039		publish anything on Martin. This is
1040		important to be said because then it
1041		makes you realize the climate,
1042		because they were afraid that the
1043		publishing house would be blown up.
1044		I led--I and Diane Nash led a
1045		movement, an action in Nashville,
1046		4000--the paper said 2000 people.
1047		INTERVIEWER: You're jumping ahead
1048	01:50:23	to--
1049		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
1050		INTERVIEWER: To April 1960.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1051		REVEREND VIVIAN: There we go.
1052		INTERVIEWER: Let's back up just a
1053	01:50:29	little bit.
1054		REVEREND VIVIAN: You amaze me, how
1055		you have the dates.
1056		INTERVIEWER: I want to know first--
1057		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
1058		INTERVIEWER: How you met Jim Lawson
1059		in those workshops that were going
1060		there--
1061		REVEREND VIVIAN: Good.
1062		INTERVIEWER: And we'll come back to
1063	01:50:40	Dr. King.
1064		REVEREND VIVIAN: Oh, that's good.
1065		Yeah.
1066		INTERVIEWER: Because so much of the
1067		national movement was incubated in a
1068		way in that Nashville nonviolent
1069		workshop there.
1070		REVEREND VIVIAN: It really was.
1071		INTERVIEWER: I'd like to know--and
1072		you were a critical part of it, how
1073	01:50:56	you met Lawson and--
1074		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, well, that's
1075		very important. We had started the

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1076		action as I said--Kelly Miller Smith
1077		had put things together with a few
1078	01:51:10	ministers, right? It was beginning
1079		to build but not really heavily. We
1080		were having workshops and so forth
1081		but for ministers in the city--not
1082		many came, all right? They did not
1083		quite understand nonviolence
1084		whatsoever, right? They did not see
1085		how it was going to work so that they
1086		sort of pulled away, except for a
1087		half a dozen, and I was one of those,
1088	01:51:41	but as I said, Kelly Miller Smith was
1089		the leader. Well, Jim Lawson comes
1090		to town to go to Vanderbilt, but he's
1091		also working for Fellowship of
1092		Reconciliation. He's coming in to do
1093		training across that region of the
1094		south, and he's going to be anchored
1095		at Vanderbilt in Nashville, so as he
1096		comes, he comes to train, and
1097		training is what no one had done for
1098	01:52:21	the movement at that time. Martin
1099		had just gotten started good. The
1100		24-page piece the wife and I did was

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1101		because he had come to Fisk to get--
1102		at the time, he'd come to Fisk to get
1103	01:52:38	an honorary doctorate and part of
1104		that was for people also in town to
1105		hear him and understand what had
1106		happened. In fact, nothing really
1107		happened in the 11 months that that
1108		went on, right? Nothing really
1109		happened anywhere in the country
1110		until they won it.
1111		INTERVIEWER: You mean the bus
1112		boycott?
1113	01:53:03	REVEREND VIVIAN: The bus boycott,
1114		yeah.
1115		INTERVIEWER: You're talking about
1116		it, you came there--?
1117		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, and then the
1118		bus boycott. Well, they won it. Jim
1119		Lawson is in Nashville and begins to
1120		train ministers, begins to train
1121		students, and that training of
1122		students went on for several months.
1123	01:53:31	It was through that that I met Jim,
1124		because I had already been in
1125		movement in Peoria, so I knew Jim and

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1126		then it ended up that Jim got an
1127		apartment right across the street
1128	01:53:46	from our apartment, and his wife was
1129		working at one of the colleges near
1130		where my son was going to school, to
1131		a special school across the street
1132		from the Vanderbilt campus. And so
1133		she would take him to school. Well,
1134		we met each other through that means
1135		and really--but I had done it nine,
1136		ten years before, but Jim really knew
1137		far more about nonviolence than I
1138	01:54:38	did, and so I welcomed him because
1139		this was what we needed, as much
1140		knowledge as we could get of the
1141		method. I had done it, but he had
1142		the background to be able to teach it
1143		in quite a different way. I had
1144		gotten techniques and so forth and it
1145		was naturally for me a natural way of
1146		life, right? But that's what fit the
1147		ministry. But then to teach the
1148	01:55:08	students and so they can get it is
1149		another thing. Jim was excellent at
1150		it.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1151		INTERVIEWER: Of course, he had just
1152		come back from India.
1153	01:55:15	REVEREND VIVIAN: That's what I was
1154		going to say, and that kind of coming
1155		back from India just was the kind of
1156		thing that the kids were, you know,
1157		bug-eyed about, and they really
1158		listened, they really learned because
1159		Jim was a good teacher, still is.
1160		INTERVIEWER: Now, those workshops
1161		with the students, of course, were
1162		very influential.
1163	01:55:35	REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
1164		INTERVIEWER: They were quite
1165		dramatic. I've talked to many of the
1166		students who were in them. Many of
1167		them didn't know how nonviolence was
1168		going to work either and were quite
1169		skeptical--
1170		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right.
1171		INTERVIEWER: I never will forget
1172		Diane Nash saying that she was a
1173	01:55:49	very, very good student and she said
1174		that her government professors
1175		defined government and politics as a



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1176		monopoly of violence so how can
1177		nonviolence work? And they were
1178	01:56:00	doing all these experiments and
1179		slapping each other around and
1180		everything--she was horrified by it.
1181		Did you actually participate in any
1182		of those and watch that or having
1183		already done it, did you not need to-
1184		-?
1185		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, I watched
1186		some of it and participated in some
1187		of it. I never will forget one of
1188	01:56:18	the ministers there, they burned--put
1189		out a cigarette on him and it burned
1190		a hole, some of the fire fell and
1191		burned a hole in his trousers, and he
1192		made it very clear that we were going
1193		to buy him a new suit.
1194		[laughter]
1195		REVEREND VIVIAN: Quite a guy--he
1196		went to Morehouse, too, by the way,
1197		and was a Methodist, and his church
1198	01:56:50	was near Fisk campus which we used to
1199		meet in all the time.
1200		INTERVIEWER: Now, these workshops

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1201		are going on before the sit-ins,
1202		after the bus boycott but before the
1203	01:57:00	sit-ins, that period of kind of
1204		percolation in the late '50s--
1205		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yes.
1206		INTERVIEWER: With you starting a
1207		family and working a job and going to
1208		seminary, and meeting Dr. King and
1209		all of those things. Talk a little
1210		bit about your relationship with
1211		Lawson in the early days. He always
1212		used to tell me that it was somewhat
1213	01:57:19	difficult because the people around
1214		Dr. King were all Baptists and he was
1215		a Methodist, and that Dr. King would
1216		always tease him about getting his
1217		bishop to tell him what to do and
1218		that sort of thing. In fact, Dr.
1219		King had helped recruit him to come
1220		south--
1221		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, so that's
1222		what it seems as though.
1223	01:57:37	INTERVIEWER: How did the two of you
1224		get along together?
1225		REVEREND VIVIAN: Oh, wonderful,

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1226		wonderfully--those kinds of things
1227		were jokes.
1228	01:57:46	INTERVIEWER: Right.
1229		REVEREND VIVIAN: They had nothing to
1230		do with real life. In fact,
1231		actually, though, the president of
1232		the board of SCLC at that time was a
1233		Methodist, Joe Lowry. Everybody else
1234		was in fact Baptist and they had
1235		known each other in Alabama, all of
1236		them, Joe as well as the rest. In
1237		fact, most of the guys, even the
1238	01:58:15	pastor from Tallahassee had gone to
1239		school in Montgomery, so many of
1240		them, Fred Shuttlesworth, the great
1241		guys came out of Alabama. And
1242		Martin, in fact, we often--well,
1243		didn't joke, it's just a fact of
1244		life--Martin came from Atlanta but he
1245		had to come to Alabama to become
1246		famous and he had to come to Alabama
1247		to find a wife, right? Coretta was
1248	01:58:48	from Alabama. Abernathy, who was his
1249		sidekick--Alabama. And his wife,
1250		right? And Andy's wife was from the

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1251		same area of Alabama, about a 75 mile
1252		radius, and you had them all, which
1253	01:59:11	is the most interesting kind of
1254		thing. All of them were talented
1255		people--in fact, one of the stories I
1256		like best that Abernathy could have
1257		been the president of SCLC had he
1258		wanted to be, right? He was the most
1259		important single minister in
1260		Montgomery. He was the one that had
1261		the largest church. He was the one
1262		that had gone to the university which
1263	01:59:41	is the part of Montgomery--
1264		INTERVIEWER: Alabama State.
1265		REVEREND VIVIAN: Alabama State. He
1266		was the one whose parents had been in
1267		Alabama for at least two or three
1268		generations, right? And so he had
1269		everything going for him, but when he
1270		met Martin and saw what Martin had,
1271		he became the sort of John the
1272		Baptist to Martin's Jesus, you see,
1273	02:00:12	because he did not care to be the
1274		leader with a man like Martin. They
1275		had become friends in the time and he

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1276		understood Martin and loved his
1277		background and his ability and wanted
1278	02:00:29	to go to Colgate Rochester and in
1279		fact, he had on his mind after he met
1280		Martin to go to Colgate Rochester but
1281		then things really happened before
1282		then and that never happened.
1283		INTERVIEWER: Well, I think we should
1284		take a break before we start the sit-
1285		ins--
1286		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
1287		INTERVIEWER: But what I'd like to do
1288	02:00:48	just before that is that because
1289		these workshops that you're involved
1290		in with Jim Lawson in Nashville, you
1291		don't know that the movement is about
1292		to take off--you're doing these
1293		workshops in nonviolence. You met in
1294		these workshops a number of people
1295		who later become consequential and
1296		some who didn't, but can you share
1297		your memories of meeting the people
1298	02:01:11	in those workshops--the students?
1299		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, the students-
1300		-well, basically--

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1301		INTERVIEWER: Bevel, Lafayette, Nash.
1302		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, this is what
1303	02:01:19	I'm remembering, and most of them
1304		that you will know except for Diane
1305		and there was another young woman
1306		with Diane. I can't think of her
1307		name but she was also from Chicago,
1308		and by the way, Diane was Catholic--
1309		INTERVIEWER: Right.
1310		REVEREND VIVIAN: And the only
1311		Catholic one in the group. We have
1312		funny stories about that, but I
1313	02:01:50	talked about John Lewis, talked about
1314		Jim Bevel, talked about Bernard
1315		Lafayette, we mentioned--there are
1316		two other fellows I'd like to think
1317		about but can't come up with. There
1318		were three or four from the seminary
1319		but they were not fully engaged.
1320		They would come to actions but they
1321		were not fully engaged.
1322		INTERVIEWER: And there were some
1323	02:02:17	white kids in those groups, too.
1324		REVEREND VIVIAN: In fact, there was
1325		one in particular that stood out, and

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1326		the guys--he was Southern Baptist and
1327		the only guy from the Southern
1328	02:02:33	Baptists that was involved in
1329		anything, anything positive with the
1330		movement. But I can't think of his
1331		name, but he was--
1332		INTERVIEWER: Was it Paul Laprad?
1333		REVEREND VIVIAN: Oh, Paul Laprad
1334		came and became--
1335		INTERVIEWER: Right.
1336		REVEREND VIVIAN: The one I was
1337		thinking about went to school--
1338	02:02:57	INTERVIEWER: All right, not Jim
1339		Zwerg?
1340		REVEREND VIVIAN: No, Zwerg wasn't
1341		really from Nashville.
1342		INTERVIEWER: Right.
1343		REVEREND VIVIAN: No, this fellow was
1344		from Vandy, and there's a great story
1345		there in terms of the president.
1346		INTERVIEWER: Maybe we'll come up
1347		with his name. What about Sellen
1348	02:03:19	McCallum [phonetic]?
1349		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's a name--I
1350		don't remember that as a name.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1351		INTERVIEWER: All right. I guess
1352		we'll take a break here.
1353	02:03:24	REVEREND VIVIAN: Okay, good, and
1354		then but we'll continue this, though,
1355		while he's dealing with the camera.
1356		INTERVIEWER: Because there were a
1357		lot of--when we get to the freedom
1358		rides, these were all characters and
1359		if you have stories about them, how
1360		they got in, because most of them
1361		came in through the workshop, right?
1362		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, see, that's
1363	02:03:41	the point--I remember very few white
1364		guys and gals in the movement, right?
1365		INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.
1366		REVEREND VIVIAN: Until after that
1367		time--
1368		[audio ends abruptly]
1369		[END afc2010039_chrp0006_mv1.wmv]
1370		[START AFC2010039_CHRP0006_MV2.WMV)
1371		REVEREND C.T. VIVIAN: --See, for
1372		instance, Martin King without doubt
1373	01:00:00	was a minister but it was surprising
1374		to me how many people didn't know he
1375		was.



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1376		He was Dr. King.
1377		FEMALE VOICE 1: Do you need water or
1378	01:00:11	anything?
1379		REVEREND VIVIAN: No, I think I'm all
1380		right.
1381		FEMALE VOICE 1: Okay.
1382		REVEREND VIVIAN: For some reason my
1383		throat isn't been as clear as usual,
1384		but--
1385		INTERVIEWER: You know, I'm sorry; I
1386		should have brought my book or
1387		something because I have a lot of the
1388	01:00:25	names of those people in--
1389		[break in audio]
1390		FEMALE VOICE 1: --Part?
1391		INTERVIEWER: Yeah, part--
1392		[break in audio]
1393		INTERVIEWER: --That I know of, to
1394		Gandhi and nonviolence because you
1395		had different conditions here.
1396		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
1397		INTERVIEWER: You weren't 95% of the
1398	01:00:35	people--
1399		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
1400		INTERVIEWER: And various other

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1401		things and so they--
1402		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
1403	01:00:39	INTERVIEWER: Anyway, we don't need
1404		to go back to that.
1405		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
1406		INTERVIEWER: We can pick up where we
1407		were planning to.
1408		REVEREND VIVIAN: But you know, when
1409		you look at Martin's quotes later on
1410		he talks about a real difference
1411		based upon the Christianity involved,
1412		right? Now, there's one other--the
1413	01:00:57	thing I've heard, I want you just for
1414		this to--so you can deal with it for
1415		the rest of the time, because I never
1416		liked to talk about it, because I
1417		don't know enough, but the idea that
1418		there were Indians as late as the
1419		world conference we had in South
1420		Africa that were talking about
1421		Gandhi's not really liking the
1422		untouchables. These were the
1423	01:01:27	untouchables, talking, right? They
1424		got a new name now, right? But they
1425		gave themselves a name instead of

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1426		someone else giving them a name,
1427		right? But they were all there--I
1428	01:01:41	mean, a gang of them were there at
1429		the conference and they were very
1430		active about it, but the way they
1431		were talking about it gave a
1432		different picture of Gandhi's
1433		attitude toward the untouchables than
1434		our attitude toward the untouchables.
1435		So it's just something to, you know,
1436		keep in mind--
1437		INTERVIEWER: Right, and of course
1438	01:02:04	Dr. King and Coretta had just come
1439		back from India. They had their
1440		visit over there--
1441		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's exactly
1442		right. That's right.
1443		INTERVIEWER: When we had Richard
1444		Gray [phonetic] there, but anyway,
1445		jumping back to Nashville and picking
1446		up where we were talking before--
1447		REVEREND VIVIAN: Sure.
1448	01:02:15	INTERVIEWER: You said that you had a
1449		story about the president of
1450		Vanderbilt.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1451		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, you see, it
1452		was interesting that remember, Jim
1453	01:02:28	Lawson was kicked out of Vanderbilt
1454		but he was kicked out by a president
1455		that had written the book that we
1456		used on the life of Jesus, that we
1457		used in seminary on the life of
1458		Jesus. Here is the president of the
1459		seminary, had been, and became
1460		president of Vanderbilt, and he was
1461		kicking Jim out of school and they
1462		ended up putting him in prison and
1463	01:03:06	his book on Jesus was refuting what
1464		he was doing in fact, all right? And
1465		that was our text. I'm trying to
1466		think of his name, but that was our
1467		text and we couldn't see how he could
1468		have written that book and be
1469		anything because at the time we used
1470		it. We saw it as refuting the south
1471		without his saying it directly.
1472		INTERVIEWER: I'm sorry, I can't
1473	01:03:36	remember his name myself, but you
1474		weren't taking his class--he was not
1475		teaching that?

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1476		REVEREND VIVIAN: No, it was his book
1477		was being taught at American Baptist
1478	01:03:45	Theological Seminary on the life of
1479		Jesus, and here he was kicking a man
1480		out who was talking for Jesus as we
1481		saw him, and yet he was talking from
1482		Jesus so the south could accept it,
1483		right? Because that's really what
1484		had happened in his mind, but that
1485		was always interesting to me. See,
1486		there are so many religious stories
1487		like that that it makes it difficult
1488	01:04:23	to see how the south could have gone
1489		on thinking as though they can be
1490		Christians and racists at the same
1491		time.
1492		INTERVIEWER: Well, we should
1493		continue to pick up the religious
1494		themes as we go forward here.
1495		REVEREND VIVIAN: Okay.
1496		INTERVIEWER: We're starting at the
1497		beginning of the sit-in movement.
1498	01:04:45	The timing for me was always very
1499		striking, that the Greensboro sit-ins
1500		started on February 1st because

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1501		January 31st, just the night before
1502		was Dr. King's farewell from Dexter
1503	01:05:00	moving to Atlanta.
1504		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
1505		INTERVIEWER: So he was literally
1506		finishing his ministry and the bus
1507		boycott in Alabama, moved to Atlanta
1508		and said farewell the night before
1509		and as he's driving to take up his
1510		new residence in Atlanta, these sit-
1511		ins break out in Greensboro and
1512		looking at it from another angle, you
1513	01:05:20	people in Nashville had been
1514		preparing to do things like this--
1515		REVEREND VIVIAN: For a year.
1516		INTERVIEWER: But hadn't quite got
1517		going so that a lot of the students
1518		told me that the students in
1519		Greensboro stole the march on them
1520		because you were preparing--
1521		REVEREND VIVIAN: And they did. In
1522		fact, I'm glad you said that about
1523	01:05:38	the day before, right? I really
1524		didn't put that together. I'd never
1525		thought of that. It's good. I mean,

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1526		I never will forget it, though, but
1527		you see, we had been preparing. They
1528	01:05:53	moved without preparing, right? They
1529		just went and sat down, but see, we
1530		knew--that had they done that,
1531		especially in Greensboro, anything
1532		could have happened. Remember later
1533		it was in Greensboro in broad open
1534		daylight they killed what they called
1535		communists, remember? And I remember
1536		being there the day afterwards and so
1537		and talking with the police chief,
1538	01:06:28	and he did not mind the killing at
1539		all. He let us know that he'd been
1540		killing communists during the war and
1541		so--
1542		INTERVIEWER: Now, this is a story
1543		from the 1970s, jumping way forward.
1544		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right,
1545		pardon me.
1546		INTERVIEWER: That's all right.
1547		REVEREND VIVIAN: We've got to get
1548	01:06:50	back to the story because we're--
1549		INTERVIEWER: No, that's all right.
1550		It's pertinent. I just wanted people

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1551		to know that it was from a different
1552		time.
1553	01:06:56	REVEREND VIVIAN: Oh, I see what you
1554		mean. But did not mind killing at
1555		all--well, see, that same attitude
1556		was an attitude toward us as far as I
1557		was concerned, that any uppity
1558		nigger, right, was asking to be
1559		killed. In fact, truthfully I don't
1560		see why more of us were not killed,
1561		not less. In fact, what we found was
1562		that less people got killed, less
1563	01:07:33	black people got killed during the
1564		heat of the civil rights movement
1565		than did before. The Klan didn't
1566		seem to kill nearly as many of us--
1567		INTERVIEWER: Don't you think that
1568		some of that is the religious
1569		training and the nonviolent training
1570		that made it harder?
1571		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, in fact,
1572		let's look at this--you see, once
1573	01:07:57	it's brought out in the open, this is
1574		the Bible Belt, right? Once you
1575		bring out in the open and you make it



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1576		a religious confrontation, that
1577		changes everything to me. When we
1578	01:08:17	begin to ask questions, which I did
1579		in workshops later on--can you be a
1580		Christian and a racist at the same
1581		time? 90% of everybody in the
1582		workshop was always white because
1583		that's the way I wanted it, that was
1584		who I was trying to get to, but I had
1585		to have blacks in the workshop or
1586		what I would hear was, well, you said
1587		that but our black people don't think
1588	01:08:42	that way, so I just turned and asked
1589		black people and said, am I right or
1590		am I wrong? You get my point? Tell
1591		him. And they would, right? And it
1592		was always a surprise to these white
1593		folks--I work with him. He didn't
1594		think that way. And that would
1595		always make everybody black in the
1596		room kind of look down and smile.
1597		They would not act like they were
1598	01:09:15	laughing at him, right--because they
1599		did not quite understand who we were,
1600		what we were, what we thought and

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1601		what we did, right? Now, that's why
1602		I think had we faced them boldly
1603	01:09:32	every day after day with their
1604		Christian message--not the Old
1605		Testament message, the Christian
1606		message, am I right? That would have
1607		changed things a lot sooner, a lot
1608		sooner. I believe so, right? Now,
1609		my wife used to say, the other thing
1610		that we used to do, we should have
1611		done, was carry the flag--in other
1612		words, it was our flag we were
1613	01:10:56	defending. Their flag was the
1614		confederate flag, right? So to
1615		speak--I mean, it wouldn't be stated
1616		but that's what we would be saying,
1617		is that this flag, you don't really
1618		represent a racist. You don't
1619		represent the American flag. But
1620		we'd always fought it on those
1621		grounds and it didn't get anywhere,
1622		but if you're in the deep south, the
1623	01:10:30	one thing that's believed in is the
1624		Bible. Theologians don't get nearly
1625		as far as Bible school people in the

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1626		south because Bible school people can
1627		quote texts. Theologians don't quote
1628	01:10:45	texts. They quote a series of ideas,
1629		right? And so the Bible people in
1630		the south say, well, that's what you
1631		think, but that's not what my pastor
1632		said. Well, but they never
1633		questioned their pastor because they
1634		didn't know how in the first place,
1635		right? But all you had to do was
1636		state scripture and they'd go look it
1637		up. That's what I found in my
1638	01:11:11	workshops--I'd state scripture and
1639		people would come back the next day
1640		when I was doing reconciliation and
1641		say, well, we looked it up last
1642		night. My husband and I looked that
1643		up, and we found out that you're
1644		right, that it's right there and it's
1645		clear--because I don't want to quote
1646		some stuff that there was no way of
1647		getting around, love your brother as
1648	01:11:39	yourself, you know, your fellow man
1649		as yourself but things like that,
1650		right? I think we could have won if

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1651		we'd really kept talking nothing but,
1652		but most of the civil rights movement
1653	01:11:55	was based on getting new law.
1654		Totally different, but Martin was
1655		leading a movement that was a moral
1656		and spiritual movement. See, there
1657		were two movements going on all the
1658		time within the one--there were two
1659		going on. One of them was by any
1660		means necessary, and the other one
1661		was nonviolent direct action. And
1662		with a biblical base--difference,
1663	01:12:27	that's a real difference between
1664		nonviolence as we had known it in
1665		India, and what we knew here, we did
1666		it with a biblical base, based upon
1667		Jesus. But there were great deep
1668		religious undergirding for
1669		nonviolence in India as far as that's
1670		concerned, but the one thing about
1671		this American culture is the matter
1672		of the Bible as being the final
1673	01:13:00	authority on everything.
1674		INTERVIEWER: Well, of course the
1675		movement, it's interesting to hear

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1676		you say that because there were a lot
1677		of people in the movement who thought
1678	01:13:09	it was too religious. You're saying
1679		it wasn't religious enough and that's
1680		the decision.
1681		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right.
1682		That's a good point.
1683		INTERVIEWER: And the same thing on
1684		the patriotism--there were occasional
1685		marches where people did carry the
1686		American flag--
1687		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's true.
1688	01:13:20	INTERVIEWER: Famously at Medgar
1689		Evers' funeral, they were carrying
1690		American flags because he was a
1691		veteran--
1692		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
1693		INTERVIEWER: And he had been
1694		assassinated, and the police in
1695		Jackson, Mississippi waded in and
1696		took the flags away because they were
1697		upset with them, so--
1698	01:13:33	REVEREND VIVIAN: That's the point.
1699		INTERVIEWER: It was both patriotic
1700		and spiritual, grounded in

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1701		nonviolence, and one other thing I'd
1702		like to ask about--
1703	01:13:40	REVEREND VIVIAN: Keep going.
1704		INTERVIEWER: Before getting into the
1705		sit-ins--a number of the people that
1706		I've talked to who were in Lawson's
1707		workshops said that there were
1708		psychological aspects to it as well,
1709		besides the religious, the patriotic,
1710		that what you were doing was that
1711		they'd come into the workshops
1712		thinking that nonviolence meant a
1713	01:14:00	kind of curling into the fetal
1714		position and that sort of thing to
1715		protect yourself and Lawson would
1716		tell them no, you need to make eye
1717		contact and keep eye contact with
1718		people. They have a harder time
1719		being violent with you when you're
1720		looking at them and making human
1721		contact with them, which is kind of
1722		related to a religious thing because
1723	01:14:19	you're saying we're fellow creatures
1724		and everything.
1725		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1726		INTERVIEWER: But there was a lot of
1727		training about how that would work.
1728	01:14:24	REVEREND VIVIAN: Well, see, the
1729		thing, there was a lot of
1730		conversation about it. It was easy
1731		to understand it, but you see here
1732		again are these various parts of the
1733		movement, you see what I mean? SNCC
1734		was the one that wanted to curl up
1735		and get beaten and put over your head
1736		and all that sort of thing, you get
1737		my point? That was not true with
1738	01:14:43	SCLC at any point. I never remember
1739		that true from beginning to end, and
1740		the very picture of Martin King is a
1741		man standing looking at you and
1742		giving his opinion, or stating the
1743		truth, you know how it is--giving our
1744		opinion to the public, right? But it
1745		seemed as though that if you didn't
1746		have a moral and spiritual
1747		understanding of what you were doing,
1748	01:15:21	there was the willingness to duck the
1749		deal, be willing to get beat, but
1750		only as a way of saying you're

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1751		nonviolent. But you see, I don't use
1752		nonviolent by itself anymore. It has
1753	01:15:40	to be nonviolent direct action to me,
1754		right? You have to be acting
1755		nonviolently against the negative
1756		forces, and that you didn't try to
1757		get away from being beaten or get
1758		away from being hit by a car. Fred
1759		Shuttlesworth tells about Martin
1760		walking across the street and a car,
1761		he and Martin, and a car was sort of
1762		bearing down on them. The guy wasn't
1763	01:16:21	slowing up, he was picking up speed,
1764		right? And Martin just kept going at
1765		his regular pace, and Fred tried to
1766		get him to move forward, or said to
1767		him, you know, out the corner of his
1768		mouth--that's the way we talk to each
1769		other when we're in situations like
1770		that--Martin, this guy is going to
1771		run over us, right? And Martin said
1772		well, you've got to die when your
1773	01:16:46	time comes and just kept going like
1774		he was going. Now, I don't believe
1775		that's exactly what Martin said



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1776		because the way Fred said it, you
1777		know? But that was the idea and the
1778	01:16:59	guy did stop, right? He built up
1779		speed but he refused to hit them,
1780		too. That's what I found--when you
1781		look people in the eye--I'll tell you
1782		my story, looking people in the eye.
1783		INTERVIEWER: Certainly the
1784		culminating one when you looked Jim
1785		Clark in the eye in 1965, that's
1786		where we're headed.
1787		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
1788	01:17:22	INTERVIEWER: And you spoke directly
1789		to him and you maintained eye contact
1790		and you talked nonviolent direct
1791		action. That's where we're going,
1792		but let's start at the sit-in, you
1793		are in Nashville--
1794		REVEREND VIVIAN: I was going beyond
1795		that to Jackson, Mississippi.
1796		INTERVIEWER: Right.
1797		REVEREND VIVIAN: But we will add
1798	01:17:36	both of them later.
1799		INTERVIEWER: Okay.
1800		REVEREND VIVIAN: Okay.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1801		INTERVIEWER: But you are in
1802		Nashville in the workshops and you
1803	01:17:41	get word that the sit-ins have
1804		occurred in Greensboro. That's on
1805		February 1st and it's April 19th is
1806		your big march with the mayor, so
1807		you've got basically two and a half
1808		months there of moving into action as
1809		the sit-ins are sweeping the south.
1810		What's your memory about how that
1811		occurred there within this Nashville
1812		movement?
1813	01:18:05	REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, see, the
1814		thing I remembered but it turned--I
1815		thought I remembered, right? And
1816		that's very important--what you think
1817		you remembered and what actually
1818		occurred, but I know what I
1819		remembered but I think I had in the
1820		wrong timing. Jim called--Jim and I
1821		were in one of the school buildings,
1822		and Jim stopped to make a call to the
1823	01:18:44	guy who led the group in Greensboro.
1824		Now, when he did that, he was talking
1825		to this fellow and I was listening,

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1826		and I wasn't clear on who the guy
1827		was, I just knew he was one of the
1828	01:19:05	real leaders of it, right? And Jim
1829		was talking as though there should
1830		have been some waiting and joining
1831		forces on that, because Jim had been
1832		training for such a long length of
1833		time, but you see, the action in
1834		Greensboro, should have is quite
1835		different--the action in Greensboro,
1836		what these three guys, four guys--
1837		four it was, wasn't it? They just
1838	01:19:37	sat down. They hadn't talked to
1839		nobody, seemingly, right? They
1840		decided just to go sit down. Now, I
1841		think what Jim was thinking about and
1842		where we came from out of that whole
1843		thing was the understanding that you
1844		can get people destroyed that way,
1845		that if you just go sit down, you can
1846		get killed and get a number of other
1847		people destroyed, whereas if you
1848	01:20:13	prepare your people, they don't fight
1849		back in a way that you can be taken
1850		over and fight back. This is why we

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1851		could take guys off of the street
1852		with knives and all that, but we
1853	01:20:33	never put them near the front and we
1854		always had people walking alongside
1855		that were trained, because we
1856		understood that without training,
1857		people will lose it. I like to think
1858		this another way, too, by the way,
1859		and I say I like to think of it--this
1860		is not something that everybody was
1861		saying or that I would go hollering
1862		up and down the street either, right?
1863	01:21:00	But see, I really think that when we
1864		picked places--for instance, we
1865		picked Alabama, and the three biggest
1866		most important events of the whole
1867		movement happened in Alabama. We got
1868		the method in Montgomery, we got the
1869		civil rights bill in Birmingham and
1870		we got the voting rights bill in
1871		Selma, right? When you look at those
1872		three, there's nothing that comes
1873	01:21:36	close to them, right? Now, that was
1874		SCLC. When you look at SNCC, they
1875		went into Mississippi. The youngest

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1876		least experienced going into the most
1877		difficult place. We basically saw
1878	01:21:59	Alabama and then if necessary, go to
1879		Mississippi. Now, let me say what I
1880		mean by if necessary. See, the thing
1881		is that when we saw Alabama, that's
1882		where we started. We wanted to clean
1883		it up, but we saw it not as the way
1884		SNCC did. SNCC saw it as going into
1885		a place and putting people in various
1886		places until they changed, until they
1887		helped the people of that town
1888	01:22:41	change, you see? We didn't. We saw
1889		it as changing, changing Washington,
1890		changing the national laws, not just
1891		having--not just doing legal stuff,
1892		right? But making for certain that
1893		we change the laws which we did, you
1894		see what I mean? This is why we got
1895		the voting rights bill. This is why
1896		we got the civil rights bill, because
1897		we created what was necessary to do
1898	01:23:17	it and stayed with it. St. Augustine
1899		was a part of finishing up
1900		Montgomery; you see, the march on

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1901		Washington was a part of finishing
1902		off Birmingham.
1903	01:23:29	INTERVIEWER: Let me jump in here
1904		briefly just to make sure people
1905		understand that when you speak of
1906		SNCC, you're speaking of the Student
1907		Nonviolent Coordinating Committee,
1908		which is an allied group but with
1909		slightly different tactics, the
1910		younger folks--
1911		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, and basically
1912		all students.
1913	01:23:46	INTERVIEWER: And some of them were
1914		out of your Nashville movement.
1915		REVEREND VIVIAN: And not only
1916		Nashville. Once the meeting at
1917		Raleigh, at Shaw, once the Shaw
1918		meeting, students all went there.
1919		Very few stayed anywhere else, right?
1920		But a number of the leadership came
1921		back to SCLC, right? John Lewis,
1922		because--and check this, because
1923	01:24:19	you're the kind of person that really
1924		checks good stuff. Here's it, is
1925		that when we look at John Lewis

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1926		coming, being at Bloody Sunday, John
1927		Lewis at Bloody Sunday was coming
1928	01:24:37	away from SNCC, right? Remember,
1929		there was no other staff member with
1930		Hosea from SCLC and there was no
1931		other SNCC person with John.
1932		INTERVIEWER: John.
1933		REVEREND VIVIAN: Now, because John
1934		was leaving SNCC, because guys like--
1935		the more violent and violent in fact
1936		side of SNCC was taking over, right?
1937		INTERVIEWER: All right, that's
1938	01:25:15	several years down the road.
1939		REVEREND VIVIAN: Okay, okay, okay.
1940		INTERVIEWER: But you're right,
1941		that's in 1965.
1942		REVEREND VIVIAN: Okay.
1943		INTERVIEWER: But in the 1960 period,
1944		just to set back you in your
1945		progression--
1946		REVEREND VIVIAN: I have to do this
1947		right.
1948	01:25:25	INTERVIEWER: The sit-ins start in
1949		February, on February 1st. The time
1950		that you're talking about, when SNCC

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1951		was formed, when the students got
1952		together, only because the sit-ins
1953	01:25:35	spread so rapidly that Dr. King
1954		enabled them to come together and
1955		talk about coordinating. They wanted
1956		to coordinate their sit-ins. They
1957		had spread like lightning--I call it
1958		the quickening, all across there
1959		including in Nashville, that's on
1960		April 15th that they get together--
1961		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
1962		INTERVIEWER: And form the Student
1963	01:25:53	Nonviolent Coordinating Committee ten
1964		weeks after the sit-ins start and
1965		it's that very next week in April
1966		19th that you lead the march--now,
1967		you had been having sit-ins in
1968		Nashville as part of all of this.
1969		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
1970		INTERVIEWER: But it culminated just
1971		a week, the very time that SNCC was
1972		formed, people come back to Nashville
1973	01:26:16	and you have the big march through
1974		Nashville of the 4000 people and the
1975		confrontation. Tell that story,



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1976		attorney Looby's bombing and...
1977		REVEREND VIVIAN: Okay. See, it's
1978	01:26:30	that--I was telling you about the
1979		minister who had, his suit was
1980		burned. He was the pastor of a
1981		Methodist church and a strong
1982		follower, person, leader within the
1983		African American community in
1984		Nashville with Kelly Miller Smith and
1985		around the idea of nonviolence.
1986		Well, we were meeting at his church--
1987		INTERVIEWER: Do you remember his
1988	01:27:02	name?
1989		REVEREND VIVIAN: No, that's why I
1990		kept talking. I was trying to think
1991		of it. I can't think of his name,
1992		but it will come up. No, we'll have
1993		to look it up because I don't think
1994		I'll think of it, right?
1995		INTERVIEWER: All right.
1996		REVEREND VIVIAN: But we were at his
1997		church early one morning because
1998	01:27:24	that's what we had our leadership
1999		meetings for the movement--it was
2000		early in the morning. We'd be at one

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2001		of the churches or the other and his
2002		was an ideal church to be at because
2003	01:27:39	it's about two blocks or so from the
2004		college, Fisk, and then about six
2005		blocks or so away from Tennessee A&I,
2006		right, all on the same street which
2007		made that easy for meetings because
2008		the rest of us were ministers and so
2009		forth, and we could take one car. We
2010		could drive across town to the
2011		seminary, right? And we were older
2012		anyway. Now, we were having the
2013	01:28:21	meeting when we heard a bombing sound
2014		but we didn't pay much attention to
2015		it. It didn't seem like it was
2016		close. The next person coming in
2017		told us that they had heard what
2018		seemed like a bomb and they thought
2019		it was coming from over to Meharry
2020		Medical which wasn't too far away
2021		from where we were. Well, we
2022		immediately--because we were planning
2023	01:28:54	action anyway--immediately came to
2024		what we would do, right? If it was a
2025		bombing over there, what we would

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2026		have to do, so we figured out before
2027		we left the room how we were going to
2028	01:29:08	organize community to make certain
2029		that they dealt with that fact. And
2030		then we broke out of there. Bernard
2031		Lafayette tells it the best way
2032		because Bernard, when he broke out of
2033		that meeting, went to Tennessee A&I
2034		[phonetic] and started organizing. A
2035		couple of other people went to Fisk
2036		and started to organize.
2037		INTERVIEWER: Even before they knew
2038	01:29:34	what had happened?
2039		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, well--
2040		INTERVIEWER: When did you find out?
2041		REVEREND VIVIAN: Well, they found
2042		out right afterwards. We didn't get
2043		outside long before people knew that
2044		the house had been bombed but what
2045		they first thought it was Meharry,
2046		because it knocked out--somebody had
2047		counted the windows, 140--some windows
2048	01:29:52	were knocked out, right? And that's
2049		the big building, so you could tell
2050		that from some distance, whereas

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2051		Looby's home was a small house on the
2052		furthest corner across the street
2053	01:30:09	from Meharry. So they immediately
2054		finding out that Looby's house had
2055		been bombed just kept going onto A&I
2056		to get the word out, right? And in
2057		order to get the word out, what they
2058		did was to go into where the
2059		announcements were made for the whole
2060		school and started announcing then,
2061		and they broke for lunch at 11
2062		o'clock and part of 12 o'clock, and
2063	01:30:51	so right after--11 or 11:30--right
2064		after lunch is when we would start
2065		the march, and started it from
2066		Tennessee A&I [phonetic]. By the
2067		time that we got to Fisk, Fisk was
2068		letting out. We met them--instead of
2069		17th, on 16th, the other end of the
2070		campus, off of Jefferson Street. And
2071		then--no, met them on 17th and the
2072		students from Pearl High School cut
2073	01:31:32	through and met us on 16th Street.
2074		That's what it was, right? And we
2075		kept walking and then the people

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2076		began to join us as we walked, people
2077		would come off their porches and join
2078	01:31:47	in, and keep going--cars would begin
2079		to drive slowly alongside of us as we
2080		walked down the way, right? As we
2081		were singing a part of the time and
2082		then when we got close to town, we
2083		stopped singing and it was a silent
2084		march where you could hear nothing
2085		but feet move. New York had
2086		pioneered that back in the 1920s, and
2087		we were really doing the same thing,
2088	01:32:22	so that you couldn't hear anything
2089		but the feet fall. I remember when
2090		we turned to go right down into the
2091		heart of town, some fellows at one of
2092		the little factories there were
2093		playing ball at their noon hour, by
2094		the time we got there it was their
2095		noon hour and they were playing ball
2096		as they ate lunch. Throwing the ball
2097		back and forth, I mean, playing pitch
2098	01:32:53	and catch, and they saw us coming and
2099		they began to--you could see them and
2100		then they began to back up against

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2101		the buildings, and as we passed, it
2102		was very clear that we were not to be
2103	01:33:11	played with, there was nothing--and
2104		they were just so, they thought it
2105		was quite different, right? They
2106		didn't know what to do or what to
2107		think. They had never seen this many
2108		black people before in any mood but
2109		just, you know, walking down the
2110		street, but this was quite different
2111		and they reacted to it quite
2112		differently but they didn't attempt
2113	01:33:34	anything to stop it or to speak back
2114		to it or to holler or anything,
2115		right? They were dead silent, backed
2116		up against the building and we passed
2117		on by. As we came closer to
2118		downtown, we cut across and went over
2119		one block over to City Hall. When we
2120		got to City Hall, I made a speech to
2121		the mayor and we had to wait for
2122		them. They hadn't come down yet, and
2123	01:34:16	made a speech to the mayor and then
2124		Diane made the speech with the line
2125		that really caught the attention,

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2126		right, when she asked him point blank
2127		about his manhood, and what would he
2128	01:34:39	do and so forth, and it really caught
2129		him and he had to answer, and that
2130		was the goodie. But we had planned
2131		it so that the final question would
2132		be asked, but when she asked it he
2133		really wasn't ready for it and the
2134		place was surrounded, all that side
2135		of City Hall was surrounded with
2136		students, and I remember seeing
2137		students that had come from Meharry,
2138	01:35:10	but they had not walked down with us
2139		because they couldn't afford to walk
2140		out of school, right? But by the
2141		time we got down there, there were a
2142		number of them down there, right?
2143		Note--the newspapers said the next
2144		morning there were 2000 of us. There
2145		were 4000 of us, and the thing that
2146		surprised me is that there were
2147		still--when we had finished there
2148	01:35:40	were still students and people coming
2149		up the staircase still coming into
2150		the meeting, coming up to the stair

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2151		steps, and coming to the meeting. In
2152		fact, we had had the meeting and it
2153	01:35:55	was over before some people actually
2154		got there. That's still baffling to
2155		me and I don't talk about it very
2156		often because I can't explain it too
2157		easily, all right, but people were
2158		coming and coming and coming to be a
2159		part of that and to make clear where
2160		they were, what they thought and what
2161		it was all about. Now, when we did
2162		this, right, he said he was, that--
2163	01:36:29	INTERVIEWER: He--Mayor West? Mayor
2164		Ben West?
2165		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, Mayor Ben
2166		West--that's what I should say--
2167		responded, right, to us and said
2168		something to the effect that he was
2169		going to examine the matter, right?
2170		But what he really did, one week from
2171		that day, everything in Nashville was
2172		open. Everything in Nashville was
2173	01:37:00	open. It was a great victory for us--
2174		-that had not been done anywhere in
2175		the south. You'd had an action in



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2176		Greensboro but they were nothing like
2177		ours, right?
2178	01:37:12	INTERVIEWER: All right, let's back--
2179		because you have just described one
2180		of the seminal marches in the early
2181		movement.
2182		REVEREND VIVIAN: Right.
2183		INTERVIEWER: This is April 19th,
2184		1960, just a few weeks after the sit-
2185		ins started. Your confrontation with
2186		the mayor of Nashville at the end of
2187		this march--you describe very well
2188	01:37:29	how something is both spontaneous and
2189		planned, because people went out to
2190		mobilize, made announcements on the
2191		phone and everything.
2192		REVEREND VIVIAN: Sure.
2193		INTERVIEWER: And instantly created a
2194		march but it wouldn't have happened
2195		without those people kind of seeding
2196		the clouds like Bernard Lafayette.
2197		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's it.
2198	01:37:44	INTERVIEWER: So it was spontaneous
2199		and planned--
2200		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, and he was in

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2201		the meetings that we had. He was in
2202		the planning meetings. He was part
2203	01:37:50	of that.
2204		INTERVIEWER: The dialogue between
2205		the mayor and Diane--of course, this
2206		is all preserved on television and
2207		they made a film of it.
2208		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, I got a
2209		record in there, by the way.
2210		INTERVIEWER: Yeah.
2211		REVEREND VIVIAN: I pulled it out so
2212		you could see it.
2213	01:38:05	INTERVIEWER: So this is a remarkable
2214		event, this became one of the
2215		recruiting things that people would
2216		use saying if students want to do
2217		something they can have a march like
2218		this in Nashville. This, we had 4000
2219		people who confronted the mayor and
2220		Diane said to the mayor, "Do you
2221		recommend that these segregation laws
2222		be changed?" And he kept dodging
2223	01:38:24	saying well, I don't have anything to
2224		do with the laws, that's up to the
2225		merchants--but she kept pushing,

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2226		well, what would you do? And
2227		confronting him and finally he said,
2228	01:38:33	well, yes, I guess I would recommend-
2229		-I can't justify it and so that
2230		became quite famous.
2231		REVEREND VIVIAN: Oh, it did.
2232		INTERVIEWER: Tell us a little bit
2233		about who attorney Looby was, because
2234		it all started with the bombing of
2235		his house and we haven't really
2236		explained to people who he was and
2237		his relationship to your movement.
2238	01:38:50	REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah. Attorney
2239		Looby was the lead lawyer among
2240		African American lawyers and
2241		therefore the movement in Nashville.
2242		He had a doctorate in law, in fact,
2243		which most people don't even take the
2244		time to get, but he really had it.
2245		He was from the islands, spoke with a
2246		slight break in it, he'd been there
2247		for years, been in Nashville for
2248	01:39:20	years. Looby was the natural leader
2249		of all the lawyers, right? And a
2250		spokesman on many occasions but there

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2251		were other lawyers that were
2252		spokesmen, but Looby was the person
2253	01:39:34	looked up to.
2254		INTERVIEWER: And when his home was
2255		bombed--and of course we just a
2256		little bit more background--his home
2257		was bombed probably because in-
2258		between the beginning of the
2259		Greensboro sit-ins on February 1st
2260		and this march on April 19th, there
2261		had been sit-ins in Nashville with
2262		arrests and he was defending your
2263	01:39:54	sit-in people who got arrested at
2264		lunch counters.
2265		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, and that's
2266		true, and he was, and--
2267		INTERVIEWER: And that's what upset
2268		the white folks, that this was the
2269		guy who was in the newspapers
2270		defending them.
2271		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, in fact, he
2272		had been defending us from the very
2273	01:40:09	beginning of the action. I mean,
2274		when students came down from
2275		Minnesota and Wisconsin in particular

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2276		that I remember, as they went to
2277		jail, he and all the other black
2278	01:40:23	lawyers met there and worked on their
2279		behalf as well. In other words,
2280		every time anything happened where we
2281		had to face the law, white law or the
2282		courts or so forth, all these lawyers
2283		came forth, but Looby was their
2284		natural leader and best strategist.
2285		INTERVIEWER: So that's why people
2286		would react when his home was bombed-
2287		-
2288	01:40:47	REVEREND VIVIAN: Precisely.
2289		INTERVIEWER: --Because he had been
2290		the defender of the movement.
2291		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right.
2292		INTERVIEWER: Now, when you said that
2293		the mayor opened everything up, these
2294		were lunch counter demonstrations.
2295		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
2296		INTERVIEWER: He didn't open up all
2297		of Nashville. He didn't open up the
2298	01:40:59	library and the theaters--go ahead.
2299		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, that's it,
2300		but most of the stuff he opened. He

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2301		didn't open the theaters, though--
2302		INTERVIEWER: Because you had a big
2303	01:41:07	campaign on the theaters--
2304		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's exactly
2305		right.
2306		INTERVIEWER: Coming up, between then
2307		and the freedom rides. Actually,
2308		it's a wonderful transition to the
2309		freedom rides a year later.
2310		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
2311		INTERVIEWER: Because I think John
2312		Lewis's phrase was that once we won
2313	01:41:20	this victory through the mayor and
2314		got a lot of things opened up, we
2315		were going to march through the
2316		yellow pages and get other things
2317		opened up.
2318		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
2319		INTERVIEWER: The library and--
2320		REVEREND VIVIAN: That was the
2321		statement but it didn't happen that
2322		way.
2323	01:41:32	INTERVIEWER: Right. But you had a
2324		long campaign about the movie
2325		theaters--

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2326		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, but that
2327		theater was a long campaign and it
2328	01:41:38	was really different--now, I left
2329		about that time. I was not there at
2330		that particular time.
2331		INTERVIEWER: You mean for the
2332		theater campaign?
2333		REVEREND VIVIAN: For the theaters.
2334		Actually, I was trying to think of
2335		the fellow's name--I was in Denver.
2336		I had just gone to Denver to make a
2337		speech or something, I was coming
2338	01:42:06	back from there. But that night on
2339		TV, I saw this tall fellow I'm
2340		thinking about--can you think of his
2341		name? He was the vice president of
2342		the adult group. You remember that's
2343		about the time we had this kind of
2344		halfway split, and he was hit in the
2345		head with a stone and you saw the
2346		blood run. I got up the next morning
2347		extremely early and took the quickest
2348	01:42:37	thing out of town. It happened to be
2349		a train, and I got to Kansas City, I
2350		got off the train, I took a cab

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2351		across town and flew into Nashville
2352		so I could be there in time for the
2353	01:42:54	action because there was a march
2354		afterwards, right, that day coming
2355		out of--and they were starting at
2356		Kelly's church. I remember it better
2357		for that than for anything else
2358		because when he was hit in the head,
2359		that electrified all of us, when he
2360		started bleeding and I was in Denver
2361		and I was electrified by it and had
2362		to come to join it, right? And we
2363	01:43:25	started marches the next day--also
2364		started some arrests, though, as
2365		well.
2366		INTERVIEWER: We have to remember
2367		that one of the things that made the
2368		theater campaign different is
2369		theaters aren't open in the daytime
2370		so these are night marches so it
2371		gives the Klan and the people
2372		attacking the cover of darkness, so
2373	01:43:47	it required an extra level of
2374		commitment to march at night.
2375		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, it was at



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2376		late evening or night, and the reason
2377		I say that is because Hosea started
2378	01:44:00	real night meetings, midnight
2379		meetings in Savannah, I remember.
2380		INTERVIEWER: Right.
2381		REVEREND VIVIAN: And I was wondering
2382		if we had already--were we doing late
2383		night or were we doing evenings?
2384		INTERVIEWER: I think you were doing-
2385		-trying to get as much daylight as
2386		possible when people were trying to
2387		get in the theaters.
2388	01:44:19	REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, that's what I
2389		thought.
2390		INTERVIEWER: You have to wait until
2391		the theaters open.
2392		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, that's why I
2393		brought that up because I saw them as
2394		that evening matter, right?
2395		INTERVIEWER: Right.
2396		REVEREND VIVIAN: Once everybody got
2397		in, then we didn't wait for them to
2398	01:44:33	come out to keep going, right?
2399		INTERVIEWER: Right.
2400		REVEREND VIVIAN: But in Savannah, we

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2401		started at 11 and 12 o'clock at
2402		night.
2403	01:44:43	INTERVIEWER: Right.
2404		REVEREND VIVIAN: That bell would
2405		ring, right--pardon me, we're--
2406		INTERVIEWER: That's two years later.
2407		But the sit-in movement has taken
2408		over the whole country in 1960,
2409		Nashville keeps marching. The
2410		theater campaign was at the end of
2411		1960, about the time President
2412		Kennedy was elected and went into
2413	01:45:01	1961, and the reason we know that is
2414		because this is the transition to the
2415		freedom rides--
2416		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
2417		INTERVIEWER: Because Nashville was
2418		having a picnic to celebrate the end
2419		of the theater campaign to
2420		desegregate it a year into the sit-in
2421		movements when the freedom riders
2422		were ambushed in Birmingham on
2423	01:45:21	Mother's Day, 1961.
2424		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's true.
2425		Mother's Day, yeah.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2426		INTERVIEWER: And we know that
2427		because one of the seminal moments in
2428	01:45:26	Nashville is you're having a picnic
2429		to celebrate this, a lot of shell-
2430		shocked people who have been doing
2431		marches and going to jail for a year
2432		and you get word about the terrible
2433		thing, the bus burned in Anniston,
2434		the Greyhound and the Trailways bus
2435		went into Birmingham and people were
2436		beat up, and the question is, what if
2437		anything we're going to do about it,
2438	01:45:48	and some people at the picnic said
2439		let's worry about that tomorrow. We
2440		deserve this picnic, and other people
2441		said let's not have the picnic
2442		because this is a crisis.
2443		REVEREND VIVIAN: You know, I don't
2444		even remember anybody saying no. But
2445		that meeting that evening was
2446		something else. And these are the
2447		agreements and disagreements here
2448	01:46:13	again--you know, who saw, felt and
2449		thought what, right? I remember we
2450		took a break, but we took the break

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2451		in the meeting. When we agreed we
2452		were really going to Jackson,
2453	01:46:31	Mississippi, there were some people
2454		that broke down and cried. Diane was
2455		in charge of the meeting, and she
2456		asked for a break. I remember we
2457		talked outside and were looking
2458		around, just taking a break, right?
2459		I remember looking at the sky that
2460		night and I remembered that we were
2461		going to leave here and go to
2462		Jackson, and by the time we got all
2463	01:47:06	back together there were 10 students,
2464		10 or 12, but I think it was 10
2465		students that were ready to go, all
2466		right? The adults that were part of
2467		the group had to go home to talk to
2468		their families because we had
2469		children and had wives and so forth,
2470		and so we had to go home, but the
2471		students started to Montgomery--
2472		INTERVIEWER: To Birmingham.
2473	01:47:32	REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, to Birmingham
2474		that night. Now, by the time I get
2475		there it's Montgomery.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2476		INTERVIEWER: Right.
2477		REVEREND VIVIAN: You see what I
2478	01:47:45	mean? They had that meeting.
2479		There's a great picture that was in
2480		Life--a great picture of everybody
2481		that was at that meeting at the
2482		dentist's home.
2483		INTERVIEWER: Right.
2484		REVEREND VIVIAN: And the next
2485		morning, we were at the bus station.
2486		That's when I joined them. I'd been
2487		there that night and then got up and
2488	01:48:11	joined them the next morning. We
2489		were at the bus station and there
2490		were a number of folks there at the
2491		bus station to start. Now, I can
2492		give you a story from there.
2493		INTERVIEWER: Let me give a little
2494		context and then pick up your story,
2495		because this is a great moment in
2496		history. This is when really--the
2497		kids in Nashville and your group in
2498	01:48:35	Nashville refused to let the freedom
2499		rides die because everybody was
2500		beaten up--they went home.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2501		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, that's true.
2502		Keep going because I want to see what
2503	01:48:45	you're saying--
2504		INTERVIEWER: So you decided in these
2505		meetings in Nashville--
2506		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
2507		INTERVIEWER: We cannot let violence
2508		stop the movement.
2509		REVEREND VIVIAN: Defeat nonviolence,
2510		that's the way we said it.
2511		INTERVIEWER: No, you cannot let
2512		violence--the violence against the
2513	01:48:55	movement stop it.
2514		REVEREND VIVIAN: Stop nonviolence.
2515		INTERVIEWER: Right.
2516		REVEREND VIVIAN: But we really--
2517		that's the way it was really stated
2518		in the meeting. We had come to that
2519		conclusion a long time before though,
2520		right?
2521		INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.
2522		REVEREND VIVIAN: So we restated that
2523	01:49:11	as basic. That was right before we
2524		took the break.
2525		INTERVIEWER: Right.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2526		REVEREND VIVIAN: You see what I
2527		mean? We stated that, but that was
2528	01:49:19	very, very important because it
2529		became the real statement of not only
2530		that movement but it became the
2531		statement for the rest of our
2532		history, when in no way would we
2533		allow nonviolence to be destroyed by
2534		violence, or violence to destroy
2535		nonviolence, right?
2536		INTERVIEWER: Exactly, so these kids-
2537		-
2538	01:49:39	REVEREND VIVIAN: But there's one
2539		other piece to that you want to add.
2540		INTERVIEWER: All right.
2541		REVEREND VIVIAN: See, because this
2542		is where there's a mix-up, and if you
2543		can find some way to deal with it I'd
2544		like it. See, Jim Farmer--I heard
2545		Jim on the radio saying that he'd
2546		already proven the point that an
2547		African American could not go from
2548	01:50:12	one end of the country to the other
2549		on public transportation without--
2550		INTERVIEWER: Submitting to

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2551		segregation.
2552		REVEREND VIVIAN: And in fact the way
2553	01:50:27	you said it was what he was really
2554		saying, submitting to segregation.
2555		The point is afterwards we were
2556		thinking of it in terms of even you
2557		couldn't go from one end to the other
2558		without being possibly killed, you
2559		get my point? But I think the way he
2560		was really saying it was more like
2561		you said it, right? Now, both of
2562		those things became very, very
2563	01:50:58	important for us. I remember a story
2564		before that, though, that you might
2565		like to know about. I was coming
2566		through Birmingham from somewhere and
2567		I went into the white room--I
2568		remember there were two expressions
2569		that were used because they were
2570		trying to get around it, and one of
2571		them--what were the two terms?
2572		INTERVIEWER: Interstate and
2573	01:51:32	intrastate?
2574		REVEREND VIVIAN: And intrastate,
2575		intrastate, remember? So I went in



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2576		and I sat in the white section. This
2577		huge policeman came over and he was
2578	01:51:48	"wa wa wa wa wa," right? And so I
2579		went over to the telephone booth to
2580		call Fred Shuttlesworth because I was
2581		in Birmingham now, right, and I was
2582		calling Fred. I called Fred and his
2583		house had been bombed so he could not
2584		answer, right? I went--this guy
2585		looked like he could have played on
2586		the Chicago Bears, great big guy--
2587		I've met two or three of those in
2588	01:52:23	Alabama. But I went over back and
2589		sat down and he wanted to get me out
2590		of there but he didn't call the
2591		police, which was interesting to me.
2592		He didn't call the police. They
2593		didn't physically move me, which they
2594		normally would, especially after he
2595		had made all this--you know, by
2596		coming over and leaning over the
2597		telephone booth and all of that. I
2598	01:52:53	thought that he was really going to
2599		go out of his way to have me moved.
2600		It wasn't an us, it was me--have me

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2601		moved--but he didn't. I just waited
2602		for my transportation and got on and
2603	01:53:11	came on back to Nashville, I think,
2604		right--but all of these kinds of
2605		actions were used because that
2606		interstate is very, very important
2607		for where we were going. For
2608		instance, when we--and I mention that
2609		because as we were getting ready to
2610		leave Montgomery to go to Jackson,
2611		that was the next morning--everybody
2612		was ready to go, right? And people
2613	01:53:44	had come in. Some of them were from
2614		the meeting the night before; some of
2615		them were coming from wherever they
2616		were in town. Most of the people
2617		that were coming in from out of town
2618		were adults who had had to talk with
2619		their families before they left.
2620		When we were there, then when we had
2621		tickets, but they were going to--the
2622		idea was to deal with those tickets
2623	01:54:15	the way that Alabama was doing it,
2624		intrastate, right, give you a ticket
2625		that you could only use in-state, but

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2626		it was seemingly more of a guise than
2627		a fact, because they never tried to
2628	01:54:35	take our tickets away from us. When
2629		we got onto the bus, there were
2630		already white people on the front of
2631		the bus, right? And we had to go to
2632		the back of the bus because there was
2633		no other space. They'd put the white
2634		people on first, put them right up
2635		front and the rest of us had to go to
2636		the back behind them, really. But
2637		that took most of all to the very
2638	01:55:04	back of the bus, right? Then when we
2639		got on, then the state troopers came
2640		and got the white passengers off the
2641		bus, and then filled that first with
2642		the Alabama militia, those first
2643		three or four rows, and we started
2644		for--
2645		INTERVIEWER: Jackson.
2646		REVEREND VIVIAN: Jackson, but when
2647		we were in Alabama, there was kind of
2648	01:55:40	a sensible driving and so forth.
2649		When we got to the state line, the
2650		bus stopped, and the Alabama militia

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2651		got off, but before I say that--as we
2652		were going to the state line, there
2653	01:56:01	was a long trail of cars behind us, a
2654		huge trail of cars. Most of them
2655		turned out to be news people, right?
2656		We get there, we stop, but we stopped
2657		to change so that Mississippi militia
2658		could take the place of Alabama
2659		militia, but that stopped is what
2660		they needed to come up along, the
2661		news people needed to come up beside
2662		and ask questions, right? Well, we'd
2663	01:56:32	made up our minds that we were not
2664		going to everybody talking, and we
2665		chose Jim Lawson to explain
2666		nonviolence to them because that's
2667		what we wanted them to know and we
2668		had learned that what you do, no
2669		matter what they want, you tell them
2670		what you want and they have nothing
2671		to use but what you said, so you
2672		would get your story out, regardless
2673	01:56:59	of what was asked. So then it was
2674		handled that way, but I remember the
2675		Life magazine reading on the front

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2676		cover, I'm pretty certain it was the
2677		front cover or it was the statement
2678	01:57:19	over the article--"Asking for trouble
2679		and getting it." They didn't
2680		understand nonviolence and nothing
2681		Jim said or anybody else said--and
2682		there wasn't anything in the article
2683		that said that they understood
2684		nonviolence and yet that's what we
2685		were using. That's why they had the
2686		movement in the first place. That's
2687		what it was all about, because we
2688	01:57:42	couldn't have moved the nation
2689		without the understanding of
2690		nonviolent direct action. But the
2691		news people did not get it, so we
2692		moved but when we moved out from
2693		there, there was a colonel from
2694		Mississippi that got on and he
2695		unfastened the speedometer, undid the
2696		speedometer and told the driver to go
2697		into Jackson, and boy, they just
2698	01:58:15	barreled into Jackson, I mean,
2699		barreled into Jackson. All along the
2700		way, people were on--every little

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2701		town we'd come to and all that,
2702		people were out on their porches,
2703	01:58:27	which is a Mississippi thing anyway,
2704		right? And if you had a house like
2705		that you'd want to be out in the open
2706		too, right? And they were out there
2707		and they'd be waving at us and so
2708		forth and they knew we were coming.
2709		They weren't saying nothing, they
2710		weren't hollering nothing, but they
2711		were all waving, you know? And then
2712		later on as we came closer and
2713	01:58:52	closer, and I don't think it was just
2714		the closeness--I think some of the
2715		towns are larger than others and in
2716		the places that were larger, people
2717		came right out to the edge of the
2718		road and waved and so forth. In the
2719		smaller towns, they stayed on their
2720		porches and waved. We came on in to
2721		Jackson, and when we got to Jackson,
2722		it started off the bus--well,
2723	01:59:23	everybody had had to go to the
2724		bathroom and he wouldn't stop for us,
2725		right? So everybody was anxious to

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2726		get off and get into the bathroom,
2727		but we were anxious to get into the
2728	01:59:36	white section that the orders were
2729		clear, right? But as I started off,
2730		I was on the first row--in fact, the
2731		colonel and I had an encounter about
2732		that because I was trying to get him
2733		to stop for all of the--so that
2734		everybody could get off and go to a
2735		bathroom and so forth, right? It had
2736		been a long time, but he wouldn't do
2737		it and so we had a real--Ebony played
2738	02:00:12	that up rather big. I don't remember
2739		if any other places did or not, but
2740		the idea was that when he changed
2741		that thermometer--
2742		INTERVIEWER: Speedometer.
2743		REVEREND VIVIAN: Speedometer, I knew
2744		from that time on that we were going
2745		to have real problems, you know what
2746		I mean? And we sped on in and I
2747		wanted to get off the bus but I heard
2748	02:00:40	a voice from up front telling me
2749		"Stay on the back; we need experience
2750		on the end," right? So I was the

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2751		last one off the bus. I get in there
2752		and I'm in there quite a while,
2753	02:00:55	right, and--
2754		[background noise]
2755		[audio ends abruptly]
2756		[END afc2010039_crhp0006_mv2.wmv]
2757		[START AFC2010039_CRHP0006_MV3.WMV]
2758		INTERVIEWER: Because we were in the
2759		middle of a very historical
2760		significant point here in the freedom
2761		rides.
2762	01:00:05	REVEREND VIVIAN: Okay. Yeah.
2763		[break in audio]
2764		INTERVIEWER: --Where it left off, in
2765		Birmingham.
2766		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
2767		INTERVIEWER: They were stalled
2768		there--it took, by this time,
2769		everybody's scared.
2770		There's national press, national
2771		attention: Can this bus go forward?
2772		These kids want to
2773	01:00:18	take up where the adults left off--
2774		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
2775		INTERVIEWER: It took a long time.



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2776		President--
2777		[break in audio]
2778	01:00:23	INTERVIEWER: The state patrol--
2779		[break in audio]
2780		INTERVIEWER: --Got beaten right
2781		there in--
2782		[break in audio]
2783		INTERVIEWER: --Having been beaten in
2784		this spectacular thing in Abernathy's
2785		church that night.
2786		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah. Now, but--
2787		[break in audio]
2788	01:00:32	INTERVIEWER: No, John had been
2789		beaten in Rock Hill, South Carolina
2790		on the adult--John is the only one
2791		who was on both ends of the freedom
2792		rides.
2793		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right.
2794		INTERVIEWER: He was coming down from
2795		Washington--
2796		REVEREND VIVIAN: In fact, he gave us
2797		the message that that caused us to
2798	01:00:45	get involved.
2799		INTERVIEWER: Right. He came down
2800		from Washington with the Jim Farmer

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2801		group, was beaten in Rock Hill, and
2802		then he--
2803	01:00:51	[break in audio]
2804		INTERVIEWER: --For a fellowship in
2805		India--
2806		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
2807		INTERVIEWER: So he wasn't there when
2808		it went into and got burned in--
2809		[break in audio]
2810		INTERVIEWER: --Is that in the week
2811		between the mother's day picnic when
2812		you guys decide that--
2813	01:01:04	[break in audio]
2814		INTERVIEWER: --General gets
2815		involved, they get beaten in
2816		Montgomery. Then they're holed up in
2817		Abernathy's church because Alabama's
2818		trying to arrest them, arrest the
2819		people that caused the freedom rides-
2820		-
2821		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, Martin was
2822		there.
2823	01:01:16	INTERVIEWER: That's when Dr. King
2824		was there--
2825		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2826		INTERVIEWER: And mobs of 3000 people
2827		are outside the church and they threw
2828	01:01:22	rocks through the windows and Bobby
2829		Kennedy finally had to send in
2830		marshals and all that sort of thing.
2831		Then the question--they survive that,
2832		and then the question is, is the
2833		freedom ride going to stop in
2834		Montgomery because it was beaten yet
2835		again, and that's when you arrived
2836		and had the meeting at Robert Harris,
2837		the pharmacist's home.
2838	01:01:41	REVEREND VIVIAN: That's his name.
2839		INTERVIEWER: And argued, are we
2840		going to go forward or not? And
2841		famously, in some of those--at that
2842		meeting, Diane asked Dr. King to go
2843		and there was an argument about
2844		whether he was going to get on the
2845		bus.
2846		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
2847		INTERVIEWER: But you and Jim Lawson
2848	01:01:57	did to continue.
2849		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right.
2850		INTERVIEWER: So you continued the

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2851		freedom ride, and by that time it is
2852		a national and even international
2853	01:02:04	phenomenon that this integrated bus
2854		has been burned once in Anniston, and
2855		a new group came, got beaten up in
2856		Montgomery and they're still going.
2857		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, because--
2858		INTERVIEWER: And you went on into
2859		Jackson--
2860		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
2861		INTERVIEWER: Not knowing what was
2862		going to happen there, and tell us
2863	01:02:19	what happened in Jackson.
2864		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah. So you still
2865		got--is that--
2866		INTERVIEWER: We'll have--
2867		REVEREND VIVIAN: But we'll get that
2868		later right? All right, now--good.
2869		So we get there and as I said, I was
2870		the last to get off the bus, but as
2871		they were getting off the bus, the
2872		lieutenant, was he? Or captain--
2873	01:02:43	captain--
2874		INTERVIEWER: Are you talking about
2875		the Mississippi highway patrol, the

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2876		one riding with you?
2877		REVEREND VIVIAN: No, no.
2878	01:02:49	INTERVIEWER: The one riding with you
2879		was Colonel Birdsong--
2880		REVEREND VIVIAN: That was the
2881		colonel--yeah, Birdsong.
2882		INTERVIEWER: He was on the bus.
2883		REVEREND VIVIAN: But I'm talking
2884		about when we get off the bus--
2885		INTERVIEWER: Oh, the captain of
2886		police, yeah.
2887		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, the captain
2888	01:02:57	of police, remember?
2889		INTERVIEWER: His name's in my book
2890		but I can't remember it.
2891		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, because we
2892		all knew it--we'd call his name all
2893		the time. We were in jail, right?
2894		But he was putting people in as fast
2895		as they came out from going to the
2896		bathroom, he was putting them into a
2897		wagon to go downtown, right? Well,
2898	01:03:22	being the last one out, I came across
2899		and they were getting ready to close
2900		the doors, so I patted him on the

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2901		back and I said--he turned around and
2902		I said, "I'm with them." And he
2903	01:03:46	couldn't help but smile--I think
2904		that's the first time anybody ever
2905		asked him to go to jail, right? So
2906		he turned around the other way so I
2907		couldn't see his face but he turned
2908		so far, I could look around and see--
2909		the side of his face, he was smiling.
2910		Then he straightened it up and then
2911		he turned back around and he said,
2912		"Get in there." So we got in, and we
2913	01:04:17	got in, and went to the city jail.
2914		This is where some stuff can easily
2915		get mixed up, right? The difference
2916		between the city jail and the county-
2917		-
2918		INTERVIEWER: The Hinds County Jail.
2919		REVEREND VIVIAN: The Hinds county
2920		Jail, but we went to the city jail,
2921		all right? I've got my certificate
2922		from there, hanging on the wall in
2923	01:04:48	there, right? Now, I wasn't for
2924		certain because Jim Farmer comes a
2925		day or two later, but the way Jim

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2926		writes it is as though he was right
2927		there coming off that first bus. But
2928	01:05:07	he was not coming off that first bus,
2929		right? But the way it sounds--but
2930		Jim came off a bus with Clarinda
2931		[phonetic] something, right? She was
2932		of Nashville, but she had come lately
2933		if she was on the bus with Jim, and
2934		it's something I've never got figured
2935		out straight in my mind because
2936		reading to them in the beginning--
2937		it's only later I was trying to get
2938	01:05:41	that figured out, right? And so we
2939		went to jail and later Jim joined us.
2940		Now, I bring later Jim joined us up
2941		because that kind of funny thing
2942		there is when did Jim come, and--
2943		INTERVIEWER: Jim was on the second
2944		bus.
2945		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's what I
2946		thought.
2947		INTERVIEWER: You were on the first
2948	01:06:03	bus, you and Jim Lawson--
2949		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
2950		INTERVIEWER: And a number of them--

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2951		he was on the second bus.
2952		REVEREND VIVIAN: The second bus.
2953	01:06:07	INTERVIEWER: It wasn't days later.
2954		REVEREND VIVIAN: It was the second
2955		day.
2956		INTERVIEWER: It may have been days
2957		later when you wound up in the same
2958		jail--but it was eight hours later or
2959		something like that.
2960		REVEREND VIVIAN: Okay, that's what
2961		I'm getting at is--did that second
2962		bus unload to go to the county jail,
2963	01:06:25	all right, or--
2964		INTERVIEWER: It may have, and then
2965		you got--because you may have filled
2966		up that jail or something or they
2967		just wanted to use another one.
2968		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
2969		INTERVIEWER: But he came on--now,
2970		remember this is an interesting
2971		connection because this is the James
2972		Farmer who, as the director of CORE--
2973	01:06:44	REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
2974		INTERVIEWER: --Started the original,
2975		the adult freedom ride, and then he



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2976		rejoins after the kids have taken it
2977		up.
2978	01:06:52	REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
2979		INTERVIEWER: So he comes back and in
2980		fact tells the story on himself that
2981		he wasn't planning to get on the bus.
2982		He was there to see them off.
2983		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's it.
2984		INTERVIEWER: And had a fit saying I
2985		cannot justify this, and he yelled at
2986		somebody, put my luggage on, I'm
2987		going on the bus--he was kind of mad.
2988	01:07:09	I've got to go, but he came in alter
2989		and this of course is the person from
2990		whom you had done your demonstrations
2991		all the way back in Illinois.
2992		REVEREND VIVIAN: In Peoria, yeah.
2993		[break in audio]
2994		REVEREND VIVIAN: --When we'd eat,
2995		how we were served, when we'd take
2996		our breaks, when we would have our
2997		meditation periods, when we would
2998	01:07:32	discuss strategy, right? We'd set up
2999		our whole thing in jail. Now, I was
3000		trying to get when Jim came because I

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3001		have a hard time--I know Jim wasn't
3002		there in the beginning. But I have a
3003	01:07:47	hard time after that remembering when
3004		he was no longer there.
3005		INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I don't know when
3006		they put people together and I do
3007		have the date that they transferred
3008		everybody to Parchman. That's
3009		different, but--
3010		REVEREND VIVIAN: They woke us very
3011		early that morning--
3012		INTERVIEWER: The two jails,
3013	01:08:02	different jails there in Jackson I
3014		don't really know, but I do know he
3015		was on the second bus. I do know
3016		that from the standpoint of the white
3017		people, that is the attorney general,
3018		the federal government and the state
3019		government, that the second bus was a
3020		terrible surprise to them because
3021		they had worked out this whole thing
3022		of rushing the first bus through
3023	01:08:23	Alabama and Mississippi, getting it
3024		in and allowing you to be arrested
3025		even though that was against federal

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3026		law. Attorney General Kennedy said
3027		arrest them as long as you're not
3028	01:08:32	going to do any violence and the
3029		whole thing will be over, and the
3030		governor of Mississippi--
3031		REVEREND VIVIAN: He did, huh?
3032		INTERVIEWER: Yeah. The governor of
3033		Mississippi was profoundly upset when
3034		the second bus came and called up and
3035		said, "You promised me only one bus."
3036		And Bobby Kennedy's saying well, it's
3037		as big a surprise to me as to anybody
3038	01:08:50	else--I didn't know there were going
3039		to be anymore, and then all of the
3040		sudden the freedom rides became a
3041		phenomenon--
3042		REVEREND VIVIAN: They kept coming.
3043		INTERVIEWER: They kept coming all
3044		summer.
3045		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right.
3046		INTERVIEWER: So they felt betrayed
3047		that they were trying--and it goes
3048	01:09:02	back to this thing you were talking
3049		about earlier which a lot of people
3050		may not understand if we don't

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3051		explain it, about the difference
3052		between interstate and intrastate.
3053	01:09:10	REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
3054		INTERVIEWER: Intrastate means within
3055		the state. The function for
3056		segregation is wholly a state matter-
3057		-
3058		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's exactly, a
3059		state matter--
3060		INTERVIEWER: Interstate gets the
3061		federal government involved.
3062		REVEREND VIVIAN: Essentially right.
3063	01:09:21	INTERVIEWER: So the movement wanted
3064		it to be interstate so that the
3065		federal government would be
3066		responsible for enforcing citizens'
3067		rights to ride an integrated bus--
3068		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
3069		INTERVIEWER: And the segregationists
3070		all wanted it to be intrastate--
3071		REVEREND VIVIAN: Intrastate.
3072		INTERVIEWER: And say it's a matter
3073	01:09:35	of--
3074		REVEREND VIVIAN: The states' rights.
3075		INTERVIEWER: --The sovereign laws of

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3076		Alabama, and that's segregation and
3077		there's nothing you can do about it.
3078	01:09:40	REVEREND VIVIAN: Precisely right,
3079		and this is why I was so surprised
3080		when the policeman didn't arrest me.
3081		INTERVIEWER: Right.
3082		REVEREND VIVIAN: You see what I
3083		mean? Because I was going interstate
3084		regardless of what he wanted, right?
3085		INTERVIEWER: Right.
3086		REVEREND VIVIAN: Because I really
3087		didn't want to bow to states' rights.
3088	01:10:01	I just didn't want to bow to states'
3089		rights.
3090		INTERVIEWER: Right.
3091		REVEREND VIVIAN: Now, we're there.
3092		We go to the place, they write us up
3093		as we're going in, right? We go on
3094		in. We are there for several days.
3095		In fact, it seemed like we were there
3096		about a week because we had a Sunday
3097		service inside, and we had the
3098	01:10:35	service by writing up who was to do
3099		what and passed it through the bars
3100		to each other, and then who was

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3101		opening, who was singing, who was
3102		doing everything, right? And we had
3103	01:10:53	this special service and that's why I
3104		knew that the weekend had to have
3105		passed, and I could see us there for
3106		totally then, because we didn't leave
3107		the next day, right? So we must have
3108		stayed there a week and a half, at
3109		least. Do you remember what days we
3110		entered Jackson and what days we left
3111		going out to the Parchman Farm?
3112		INTERVIEWER: I don't remember it
3113	01:11:24	right now, but it was about 10 days
3114		you were in Jackson--
3115		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's what I
3116		thought, good, about a week and a
3117		half.
3118		INTERVIEWER: Other freedom riders
3119		were coming in and they moved you to
3120		Parchman because you filled up both
3121		jails--
3122		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
3123	01:11:36	INTERVIEWER: But that was the next
3124		big thing--
3125		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3126		INTERVIEWER: You're there with
3127		freedom riders.
3128	01:11:40	REVEREND VIVIAN: That's it, and we
3129		go to--we're there. We set up a
3130		whole routine. I think that's very
3131		important to know, because it showed
3132		how to do nonviolent direct action.
3133		Jim had talked about it in India,
3134		right? They had a time to meditate
3135		and a time to--well, he talked about
3136		time to meditate, what I really
3137		remember, but I know he must have
3138	01:12:13	talked about more than that. But the
3139		thing that surprised them in the jail
3140		is that they'd always slipped food
3141		through the place where they're
3142		supposed to slip it through, but then
3143		people are fighting for it, fighting
3144		for their meal. Well, we all went
3145		and sat down in our chairs around the
3146		tables that we had, and we'd have two
3147		people delivering the food to us, two
3148	01:12:50	of our people delivering food to us.
3149		And that just stunned them--they just
3150		didn't ever understand that, that we

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3151		were having order and it put us in
3152		charge in a way that they didn't like
3153	01:13:04	the idea because they were so used to
3154		people just wanting the food and
3155		fighting with each other over it that
3156		they couldn't understand that they
3157		had to understand the difference
3158		between us and what they normally
3159		dealt with. Now, this deeply
3160		impressed the black guards, right?
3161		They really weren't guards. They
3162		were prisoners that were--
3163	01:13:31	INTERVIEWER: Trustees.
3164		REVEREND VIVIAN: Trustees, right,
3165		and the trustees began from that
3166		moment on as I remember it. Maybe it
3167		was before, but some people remember
3168		it--as I remember it, from that
3169		moment on, we could trust trustees.
3170		They would do things for us. They'd
3171		let you know in meaningful ways that
3172		they were on our side, and that
3173	01:14:01	whatever they did they had to do, any
3174		negative thing, that they had to do
3175		it because of the white guards. And



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3176		that was very important to us because
3177		they saw that sense of dignity, liked
3178	01:14:17	it and they understood what effect it
3179		had on the white people running the
3180		jails. Now, let's look at that
3181		again, because that was the kind of
3182		thing that was making the difference
3183		for us when we did the church
3184		service. I remember the next
3185		morning, the morning before we went,
3186		it must have been two, three days
3187		later, because the day before we went
3188	01:14:51	out to Parchman, this tall--it was a
3189		lieutenant type, right? He had a
3190		certain--he had something in for me,
3191		right? And I was trying to get where
3192		he was coming from. I just couldn't
3193		understand where he was coming from,
3194		so Jim Bevel was from Mississippi,
3195		right? So I said to Jim, I said,
3196		what is wrong with this guy? And Jim
3197		laughed and he says, you're a man.
3198	01:15:34	And I said, what the heck are you
3199		talking about? And he said he's not
3200		used to anybody black looking him in

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3201		the eye, and to look him in the eye
3202		to him was almost an insult and you
3203	01:15:47	never turned away and you talked to
3204		him straight. And I wasn't being
3205		unusual, I was just talking to him,
3206		you know, just like you'd talk to
3207		somebody, right? And it seemed like
3208		the more we talked, the madder this
3209		guy got, and yet there was nothing in
3210		the conversation to me that would
3211		create anger under any circumstances,
3212		right? And Jim laughed because he
3213	01:16:19	was the only one that--we northerners
3214		didn't understand this white-black
3215		relationship. Jim Bevel understood
3216		it totally and he understood what was
3217		moving this guy. Well, we wake up
3218		the next morning--they wake us up the
3219		next morning very early and take us
3220		out to Parchman, right? So we're out
3221		to Parchman--
3222		INTERVIEWER: We should stop and tell
3223	01:16:48	them what Parchman is.
3224		REVEREND VIVIAN: Oh, Parchman
3225		Prison--famous prison. Parchman

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3226		Prison is one of the most vicious
3227		prisons ever. I have an entire book
3228	01:16:58	on Parchman that was written years
3229		ago, right? They had two burial
3230		grounds there, right?
3231		INTERVIEWER: It was modeled on a
3232		plantation. It is a farm. It's a
3233		farm-prison.
3234		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's it--it's a
3235		farm-prison. And the best way to say
3236		that--and I like that it was modeled
3237		on a plantation. I had never heard
3238	01:17:20	it that way, but it was. I mean, the
3239		whole thing was in fact--it was
3240		probably a plantation at one time
3241		before it was the farm that they
3242		used. And they don't know how many
3243		people were killed in that thing,
3244		right? Because there wasn't any real
3245		formal cemetery arrangements, as much
3246		as people were just buried on top of
3247		each other as they died and as things
3248	01:17:51	went on. So we get to Parchman and
3249		so they start to find out about us.
3250		The next day they start questioning

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3251		us really--the regular arrangements,
3252		and so they start questioning us and
3253	01:18:16	there's a girl that was in there
3254		right before me, was first, and ends
3255		up in tears, right--I could hear it
3256		through the walls. And we were upset
3257		about it, but nothing to do about it.
3258		In fact, we weren't even where you
3259		could see in. We were hearing
3260		through the walls. And I was next.
3261		Well, this guy that didn't like the
3262		fact that I was looking, just looking
3263	01:18:51	at him and talking, right? He was
3264		there. He didn't go back to Jackson.
3265		He stayed there for all the
3266		questioning, right? When we started
3267		to question, they asked me a question
3268		and I said yes and no. And then they
3269		said, "say sir," so fine, you know, I
3270		wasn't there to be making an argument
3271		for anything, and so I said "sir."
3272		So they ask a couple of other
3273	01:19:24	questions, and then I answered them
3274		"yes, sir," and "no, sir" and they
3275		were simple questions, and then they

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3276		asked me right quick, the guy that
3277		was asking questions, turned right
3278	01:19:37	quick--and that was the warden of the
3279		place, and he said, "Do you have
3280		syphilis?" And I said no. And they
3281		jumped on me, right? We were sitting
3282		close to each other, and they jumped
3283		on me--there were about five or four,
3284		I think, four or five of them, and
3285		they jumped on me. Well, it was
3286		obvious, this is what the guys from
3287		downtown had been waiting for, right?
3288	01:20:08	And he out comes with this flapjack
3289		and he's right down on top of me,
3290		right? And I was just warding off
3291		blows, right? But that caused his
3292		hand to turn, and his hand to turn,
3293		it was no longer a flapjack, it was
3294		the edges of this--it was a pretty...
3295		See, some of them are just black
3296		leather around a piece of lead,
3297		right? This one was pretty
3298	01:20:44	embellished with figures and so
3299		forth. But it was so pretty, it was
3300		thick tan leather so that steel was

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3301		inside, but it was thick and it had
3302		sharp edges, and when his hand
3303	01:21:05	turned, it was no longer hitting you
3304		like a flapjack would, right? It
3305		turned and it cut me right down the
3306		side, there. As soon as the blood
3307		spurted out, they jumped back. I
3308		mean, they jumped back and they
3309		looked at each other. I wondered
3310		what really happened, because I
3311		didn't understand until later and I
3312		was looking at them as if to say,
3313	01:21:30	"What is this all about?" No more
3314		beating, no more questioning--they
3315		had a guy to take me back to the
3316		cells because we were out in front--
3317		back to the cells, so he's taking me
3318		back to the cells and we make a turn
3319		and go down, you make a turn and go
3320		straight on in to the first part of
3321		the cells and then there was a turn
3322		there, right? Where a great big
3323	01:22:01	steel gate was, so the guy unlocks
3324		the gate and tells me to go on in, so
3325		I start in and I'm going into the

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3326		jail and suddenly I feel something.
3327		Now, the guy's really a long ways
3328	01:22:24	from me--he's about 10 foot from me,
3329		right? He's at the end of that cell,
3330		right--at least I thought he was, but
3331		I know he was in where this--if the
3332		door had been closed, he would have
3333		had to have moved, right? And I'm
3334		walking in, and I feel something
3335		right down the back of my neck, and
3336		it's just like that, just like it's--
3337		looked like a half question mark in
3338	01:23:02	my mind, and I saw it as red, and
3339		only occasionally do I ever dream in
3340		color, much less--and I wasn't
3341		dreaming, and I was standing up
3342		walking and I could feel this thing,
3343		and so I stopped and I look around at
3344		him, because any time anything that
3345		you've never felt before and never
3346		had any knowledge or thought of
3347		happens to you, what you do is to
3348	01:23:35	turn to any human, another human
3349		being, you know, anybody that's
3350		there. So I turned around to look at

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3351		him and so much as if to say, did you
3352		feel that? When I realized I was
3353	01:23:50	looking in a 45, or a 38, either one-
3354		-I think it was a 38, actually. I
3355		was looking into the barrel of this
3356		38 because I was looking in his eyes,
3357		because you look to see him, you
3358		know, to ask him the question without
3359		announcing it, you know, what did you
3360		feel? You're feeling at the same
3361		time you're asking, and then I
3362		realized he had a gun on me and I was
3363	01:24:18	looking down the barrel of it so I
3364		just kind of slumped and looked at
3365		him as if to say, "What kind of human
3366		being are you," you know what I mean?
3367		I just couldn't take it in, that
3368		somebody was standing there with a
3369		gun. You're just, you're going to
3370		take two more steps and you're
3371		totally inside with all the other
3372		guys, right? Because you have to
3373	01:24:39	make little quick turns there. And
3374		so I look at him and he's got this 38
3375		on me, and I just look at him and I



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3376		look him straight in the eye, looking
3377		at him as if to say "What is wrong
3378	01:24:58	with you?" You know, and he's trying
3379		to make up his mind whether he's
3380		going to shoot me or not. That's
3381		obvious and I just keep looking at
3382		him and he decides he's not going to
3383		shoot me, so he just pulls down his
3384		gun and throws it in his holster,
3385		slams this big steel door and those
3386		big jail doors, you know, you don't
3387		forget the sound them, right? You
3388	01:25:31	can't repeat it but you don't forget
3389		the sound of it, right? And then he
3390		turned around and walked straight
3391		down that long hallway, and I just
3392		kept looking until we came to that
3393		first turn going back.
3394		INTERVIEWER: But all this time
3395		you're bleeding, right?
3396		REVEREND VIVIAN: Oh, yeah. Oh,
3397		yeah. But they--I don't know how
3398	01:26:01	that--I guess we just stopped it
3399		somehow, right? I don't remember. I
3400		remember being beat like that in

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3401		another place, but in that place they
3402		had doctors come, right? But this
3403	01:26:16	one, I don't remember a doctor coming
3404		at all. But they prepared--they
3405		began to prepare--well, let's get the
3406		rest of the story. That's very
3407		important. So I go on in and the
3408		guys wonder what's happening and we
3409		talk, you know, but then they let a
3410		guy out because by that time there
3411		were people all over the jail.
3412		Remember, bus after bus kept coming--
3413	01:26:49	it wasn't just one bus or two buses,
3414		right? Buses kept coming, kept
3415		coming, kept coming, right--and so
3416		this one white fellow that was with
3417		us for some reason was let out and
3418		I've read why he was let out but I
3419		don't remember why it is now. He was
3420		let out and there was press that he
3421		talked to and Washington began to
3422		call, and then I began to understand--
3423	01:27:23	-I mean, afterwards I understood,
3424		what really happened is they were not
3425		supposed to beat anybody. And they

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3426		bled me--they beat me until I bled,
3427		right? Well, that's what they were
3428	01:27:38	upset about--not the beating but the
3429		fact that I bled. This guy said that
3430		I'd been beaten. It was--Kennedy got
3431		it within a couple hours, and it was
3432		back on the warden, right? The
3433		warden was very, very fearful that he
3434		was going to be removed. We found
3435		that out later--I didn't know that,
3436		but we found that out later. Then
3437		about that time, Kelly Miller called,
3438	01:28:15	right, and a woman from my church had
3439		called earlier than that, and they
3440		weren't going to let her talk but she
3441		demanded to talk, right? So I knew
3442		what the kind of stuff was like and
3443		that was the day or two before,
3444		right--that my member called. But
3445		then Kelly called and within hours
3446		Kelly showed up, right? Remember all
3447		this started early in the morning,
3448	01:28:48	and Kelly showed up and took me back
3449		to Nashville.
3450		INTERVIEWER: He shows up at

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3451		Parchman?
3452		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah. He came in
3453	01:29:01	to get me, and then we drive back. I
3454		know we drive back into Jackson. I
3455		think we took a plane into Nashville,
3456		though.
3457		INTERVIEWER: That was a very nervy
3458		thing for him to do, to come into
3459		Parchman.
3460		REVEREND VIVIAN: Oh, yeah, that's
3461		exactly right. See, but he's got the
3462		word now from Kennedy, you see what I
3463	01:29:28	mean? The difference--that same fear
3464		was in them. See, as soon as the FBI
3465		has showed up and/or official
3466		Washington showed up, because most of
3467		those guys in the FBI were from the
3468		region that they were sent back to,
3469		right? So I didn't see that as a big
3470		thing but I found out that when they
3471		do come, generally because
3472		Washington's given them the word,
3473	01:29:59	they act as though--they started
3474		becoming creepy, right? They start
3475		worrying because they don't know

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3476		what's going to happen. No longer
3477		are they in charge--they know they're
3478	01:30:13	not in charge and they don't know
3479		what's going to happen to them,
3480		especially when they have done
3481		something to someone and Washington
3482		cares about it, right? For instance,
3483		there were a number of people that
3484		were let in the jails that a marshal
3485		was in one of the jails. I didn't
3486		see him because I was a short length
3487		of time, but Marshall was in one of
3488	01:30:39	the jails. The NAACP was in one of
3489		the jails. Our top man in
3490		Mississippi got to come in and visit
3491		early, when we were in the downtown
3492		jail. A woman, I can't think of her
3493		name but she was a powerful Methodist
3494		woman could come on into the jail
3495		when we were in Jackson-
3496		INTERVIEWER: To visit?
3497		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, uh-huh, and
3498	01:31:09	to bring stuff and--
3499		INTERVIEWER: So this is, the freedom
3500		rides, you have described your direct

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3501		participation in an event that really
3502		transformed the whole movement from
3503	01:31:23	May through the summer of 1961,
3504		because by the end there were 600
3505		freedom riders.
3506		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, that's it.
3507		INTERVIEWER: Staying in Parchman for
3508		the summer and it became quite a
3509		phenomenon--can you tell me, when you
3510		came out of prison, what was it like
3511		to come out of Parchman as a freedom
3512		rider? Could you tell the world had
3513	01:31:41	changed?
3514		REVEREND VIVIAN: No. See, this is
3515		one reason I wished I had been there
3516		all summer. See, I wasn't there but
3517		a week and a half, two weeks--that's
3518		a good point. The blood came out,
3519		right? I was saved by the blood.
3520		INTERVIEWER: Right.
3521		REVEREND VIVIAN: So by the way, I
3522		used that--when we got back to
3523	01:32:05	Nashville, when Kelly brought us back
3524		to Nashville we went to a mass
3525		meeting and that's what I used as

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3526		text, right?
3527		INTERVIEWER: Saved by the blood.
3528	01:32:16	REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right--I
3529		used the other one--no, I used
3530		another one, that there is no
3531		redemption--without the shedding of
3532		blood, there's no redemption of sin,
3533		and that's what I used for that
3534		evening because every time, it got to
3535		be a habit that I had to talk for
3536		each mass meeting.
3537		INTERVIEWER: Well, nevertheless, you
3538	01:32:42	didn't stay for the whole term in
3539		Parchman.
3540		REVEREND VIVIAN: No.
3541		INTERVIEWER: But you were a freedom
3542		rider, you were on the first bus as a
3543		freedom rider--
3544		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, first bus,
3545		that's right.
3546		INTERVIEWER: And how has that marked
3547		your life? Are there many people
3548	01:32:52	that are aware--given all the other
3549		things you've done, is the fact that
3550		you're a freedom rider--has it been a

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3551		large or small part of your identity?
3552		REVEREND VIVIAN: Oh, no, it's been a
3553	01:33:05	large part of my understanding of my
3554		identity, right? But the major one
3555		for me is that--internally is the one
3556		where I got feel that down the back
3557		of my head, right, and that this guy
3558		wanted to shoot me and didn't, all
3559		right? Now, that to me is the
3560		deepest piece. It was as though I
3561		was warned--I'm walking away from the
3562		guy. Parchman is a place where they
3563	01:33:41	kill anybody black any time they want
3564		to, right? We were the only two
3565		there because whatever the prisoners
3566		said wouldn't have made a difference,
3567		but we couldn't even see them. It
3568		was as though this--I've often wanted
3569		to go through and walk through all of
3570		this again, but it's as though they
3571		made this place in the jail as though
3572		most of the jail, the open area where
3573	01:34:09	people came to is back here--then
3574		there was a crook, well, you've got
3575		to do it this way. A kind of crook



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3576		there, so that only one person could
3577		get through here, you see what I
3578	01:34:22	mean?
3579		INTERVIEWER: Yeah.
3580		REVEREND VIVIAN: And then you went
3581		back to where the bars were, right?
3582		And you know, the big gate, and only
3583		one guy could get--well, two or three
3584		guys could get through the gate but
3585		they would be jamming up trying to
3586		get any further, but I think it was
3587		really to keep guys from coming out
3588	01:34:52	of the cell in case anything
3589		happened, right? Jammed them up
3590		there at the gate. The guys, the
3591		policemen would be standing down at
3592		the end of the hall and they would
3593		never get out of the hall. See,
3594		that's really what was happening.
3595		But see, it's the mystery of that--I
3596		feel something that causes me to turn
3597		around and the guy's got the gun on
3598	01:35:20	my head.
3599		INTERVIEWER: Right.
3600		REVEREND VIVIAN: And when he invited

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3601		me in it was almost like--it was like
3602		he was doing wonderful, doing me a
3603	01:35:30	favor, right? And then suddenly when
3604		I feel this red, I can see red,
3605		right? Down the back of my head, and
3606		I turn around and there's that gun.
3607		To me that's one of the most--I've
3608		only had a couple what I call truly
3609		religious experiences like that in my
3610		life. I had another one in a jail in
3611		Alabama where I just put my fingers
3612		behind my head just in time--if I had
3613	01:36:14	had more time, my fingers would have
3614		been like that and when that billy
3615		club hit me, it would have broken my-
3616		-
3617		INTERVIEWER: Knuckles.
3618		REVEREND VIVIAN: Knuckles, and
3619		probably would forever be--knuckles,
3620		that's kind of a funny thing. You
3621		break them and they crack and you
3622		feel it the rest of your life, right?
3623	01:36:42	Had I not got to this position,
3624		right, he could have really--the blow
3625		could have really hurt me deeply, you

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3626		know? But it hit me right, just as
3627		my fingers came together, so it
3628	01:37:01	padded the blow, but the ends of my
3629		fingers I couldn't feel for three
3630		days. It took three days for the
3631		pain to stop in my hand.
3632		INTERVIEWER: Do you remember which
3633		jail this was or when?
3634		REVEREND VIVIAN: No, I can see the
3635		jail, I can see the jailer, and I can
3636		see the warden of the jail because
3637		the whole thing was--for instance,
3638	01:37:27	they bring me in, I think it was
3639		right after this thing with Sheriff
3640		Clark.
3641		INTERVIEWER: Oh.
3642		REVEREND VIVIAN: See, they put me in
3643		jail there.
3644		INTERVIEWER: So this is in Selma?
3645		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, this is in
3646		Selma, and they take me over to the
3647		jail, and this is another one of
3648	01:37:45	those great big guys. Remember I
3649		said a while ago, every now and then
3650		there was some one of these policemen

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3651		that looked like he should have been
3652		on the--playing halfback for the
3653	01:37:56	Bears or something, right? Huge guy.
3654		I kind of knew what was happening
3655		when we got onto the elevator--it's
3656		one of those little dinky elevator
3657		types from that period, you know,
3658		we're talking about 50, 60 years ago,
3659		right? And it worked by hand, you
3660		know, they used to all work by hand
3661		like department stores and they had
3662		pretty girls there doing it, all that
3663	01:38:26	kind of stuff, right? But this guy
3664		was the head of the jail, and he
3665		started to take us up, and we were
3666		crowded on this, because the other
3667		guy's so big, and the guy was in
3668		charge of the jail and I'm about the
3669		same size, but all three of us
3670		together filled that little--
3671		INTERVIEWER: Elevator.
3672		REVEREND VIVIAN: Elevator, but what
3673	01:38:58	bothered me about it was I knew when
3674		I stepped on it what was happening.
3675		I just knew that this guy was going

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3676		to try to hit me, but I could feel it
3677		but I didn't really know it until he
3678	01:39:15	said to the jailer, he said to him,
3679		let me hit him. And it felt as
3680		though he would be able to be okay
3681		with the jailer, right? And he said
3682		let me hit him, and this great big
3683		guy, and he was behind me, right? He
3684		couldn't swing too well--it was kind
3685		of tight in there, but he was behind
3686		me, and then he asked him, let me
3687		hit--and the jailer looked at him as
3688	01:39:48	if to say, you are sick, you know
3689		what I mean? But he couldn't say
3690		nothing. See, one of the things you
3691		learn, and you don't have to be in
3692		the deep south, and you don't have to
3693		be in jail and you don't have to be
3694		between policemen--is that the
3695		hardest thing for a white man to do
3696		is to tell another white man he's a
3697		racist. And I don't care where you
3698	01:40:10	are, and I can give it to--25, 30
3699		years ago. I could give it to you
3700		north as well as south, but

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3701		particularly in the south. So I knew
3702		what was going to happen, and the
3703	01:40:26	jailer turned his head. When the
3704		jailer turned his head, I knew it was
3705		coming, boy, and I just went up like
3706		that, and I was trying to get my
3707		fingers together and just as they
3708		came together the blow came down,
3709		right, and that gave me a cushion,
3710		and that cushion made all the
3711		difference in the world, because when
3712		they hit you with a club--and he was
3713	01:40:51	a big man, boy, and--
3714		INTERVIEWER: Do you think this was
3715		the same day as your confrontation
3716		with Sheriff Clarke?
3717		REVEREND VIVIAN: I think so, that's
3718		the only time--
3719		INTERVIEWER: Because I know the
3720		record was that you went into Good
3721		Samaritan Hospital. Dr. King tried
3722		to visit you, but by the time he got
3723	01:41:06	there, you were already back in the
3724		jail.
3725		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah. See--but

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3726		this wouldn't have--no, because let
3727		me tell you, no, it couldn't have
3728	01:41:13	been then. Let me tell you what
3729		happened. When they took me
3730		upstairs--you know, that's why we
3731		were in the elevator. We went up to
3732		where the cells were, right? Because
3733		that's different than the other place
3734		we were talking about--we were
3735		talking about Parchman, right--
3736		INTERVIEWER: Right.
3737		REVEREND VIVIAN: They were all on
3738	01:41:29	that same floor, right?
3739		INTERVIEWER: Right.
3740		REVEREND VIVIAN: Because they're out
3741		on the farm, they've got plenty of
3742		room. So we go and the guy, the
3743		warden opens the cell and this other
3744		guy just shoves me in, right? And
3745		the beds are made to the wall. I
3746		mean, they're made to the wall. And
3747		so man, when I got in there, I jumped
3748	01:42:03	with joy, right? Well, now, it
3749		sounds like I jumped with joy because
3750		they didn't shoot me or something,

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3751		right? No, I jumped with joy--I
3752		said, and I got down on my knees, I
3753	01:42:14	mean, very quickly I was praying--
3754		thank you father, because I did what
3755		I was supposed to do. Do you
3756		understand the point? And this is
3757		why I know I'd had an encounter with
3758		someone and this is why I was
3759		thinking about, it was Selma, because
3760		I felt that way after the encounter
3761		in Selma, that I had said all the
3762		right things, I had done all the
3763	01:42:41	right things. That Selma thing
3764		sounds like it's almost written,
3765		right?
3766		INTERVIEWER: Oh, all the dialogue.
3767		REVEREND VIVIAN: The dialogue,
3768		right.
3769		INTERVIEWER: We have the names of
3770		your badges, we know what you've
3771		done--
3772		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right, it
3773	01:42:54	sounds like a dialogue, but I had no
3774		idea what I was going to say as I was
3775		walking to it.



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3776		INTERVIEWER: Yeah.
3777		REVEREND VIVIAN: I hadn't even
3778	01:43:02	thought up anything. In fact, I had
3779		no idea what was going to happen when
3780		I got there. I thought they would
3781		let us in and we would have some sort
3782		of encounter or conversation or
3783		whatever with whoever was in charge
3784		of the voting.
3785		INTERVIEWER: The courthouse?
3786		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, see what I
3787		mean? But he comes out of the
3788	01:43:29	courthouse--right, he comes out of
3789		the courthouse and closes the door
3790		behind him. The door's closed, but I
3791		mean, he let the door close behind
3792		him but he had all his guys out up on
3793		the top step, so when we get there on
3794		the bottom step they're on the top
3795		step, right? And we march up to him,
3796		okay? About 40 people.
3797		INTERVIEWER: This is February 15th,
3798	01:43:56	1965. We're jumping ahead. We'll
3799		stop, but it's in the middle of
3800		Selma.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3801		REVEREND VIVIAN: I don't know what
3802		date anything happens. I always come
3803	01:44:03	to my wife about dates.
3804		INTERVIEWER: That's all right. But
3805		this is--
3806		REVEREND VIVIAN: It's marvelous to
3807		hear you sit there and lay it out.
3808		INTERVIEWER: This is three weeks
3809		before Bloody Sunday in Selma.
3810		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
3811		INTERVIEWER: Just to finish this
3812		off.
3813	01:44:12	REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, just to get
3814		this out, right?
3815		INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.
3816		REVEREND VIVIAN: Because I was
3817		talking about the various times that
3818		have been a real mystery for me, you
3819		see what I mean? And this was one of
3820		them, right? The other one was the
3821		one, though, just to keep us line,
3822		now, right--the one where we're in
3823	01:44:32	line with where you're going, right,
3824		is when the guy that took me back to
3825		the cell had pulled a gun on me.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3826		INTERVIEWER: Right, in Parchman.
3827		REVEREND VIVIAN: I had no idea-
3828	01:44:46	right, in Parchman.
3829		INTERVIEWER: Well, that finishes
3830		off--the Parchman story, your part in
3831		one of the great seminal
3832		transformations of the civil rights
3833		movement, which is the freedom rides.
3834		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, that's
3835		exactly right.
3836		INTERVIEWER: Which became a
3837		phenomenon, kind of internationalized
3838	01:44:59	the movement.
3839		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
3840		INTERVIEWER: We probably need to
3841		take a break and figure out our
3842		strategy--
3843		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, because
3844		you've got another hour or two as far
3845		as I'm concerned.
3846		INTERVIEWER: I'd like to ask you one
3847		last question--how did you become
3848	01:45:09	director of affiliates at SCLC?
3849		Because that will set us--and then we
3850		can stop. Just--this is just a job.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3851		REVEREND VIVIAN: I'll do it very
3852		quickly. I was a leader--I had left
3853	01:45:23	Nashville to go to Chattanooga and I
3854		was pastoring in Chattanooga. I'd
3855		built a church in Nashville--when I
3856		went to Chattanooga, I wanted to
3857		build a church as well, because the
3858		church we had--nice, but it wasn't
3859		what I wanted. But there was a
3860		fellow there that was the pastor of
3861		the church a block away, who was--he
3862		loved journalism as I did, right? We
3863	01:45:52	had met one time before because we
3864		were trying to put our two newspapers
3865		together to save money and all that
3866		sort of thing and just change names
3867		and use both his information and my
3868		information to make it more of a
3869		newspaper. And also, Jesse Hill here
3870		in Atlanta, we were trying to all
3871		three get together and after all,
3872		Jesse had money and we didn't, right?
3873	01:46:26	But so I had met this fellow from
3874		Chattanooga before, and he was a
3875		bright guy and it was just nice to be

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3876		with the group, but he had the stats
3877		on voting in Chattanooga. That's
3878	01:46:46	what I needed in order for us to plan
3879		strategy. When I saw what the stats
3880		were, I thought, well, what are we
3881		standing still for? And I'm used to
3882		the action--I'd just left where we'd
3883		just opened up Nashville, right? And
3884		I begin to organize it and he had all
3885		the stats we needed and had some
3886		contacts, but he wasn't light and
3887		that was what was slowing him down.
3888	01:47:21	I happened to be light, so coming in
3889		from a victory like that and
3890		everybody thankful in Chattanooga,
3891		get my point, that anything had
3892		happened. So we got together and
3893		then we began to plan the real action
3894		for it. We created--we ended up
3895		before it was over electing three-
3896		fifths of city hall, and on one of
3897		the rainiest election days that
3898	01:47:52	anybody would want to see--that
3899		usually slows us down tremendously,
3900		slows everybody down, but if you're

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3901		not used to voting it slows you down
3902		more than that. We went and got
3903	01:48:07	people out of beds and so forth,
3904		right? The rain slacked off by the
3905		end of the day and we were getting
3906		people out and into vote. We took
3907		three-fifths of the city council. We
3908		didn't get the mayor. Now, this is
3909		what I forgot to tell you about, an
3910		important part of the strategy was
3911		this--we found out that 20% of the
3912		vote in Chattanooga was paid for.
3913	01:48:39	They paid black people to vote, but
3914		we saw that 20% as totally different
3915		so my basic speech was--or end to the
3916		basic speech as I was going over the
3917		city, getting people out the vote was
3918		that they have been making a fool out
3919		of you by buying you, as though you
3920		were slaves. Let's make a fool out
3921		of them, right? And take their
3922		money, keep it. They can't pay you
3923	01:49:16	what they owe you, but vote like you
3924		want to. In fact, I was right down
3925		the street behind a car during the

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3926		voting on another day, not on the
3927		rainy day but on another day, because
3928	01:49:37	we had to take--we took three
3929		straight elections. This guy had his
3930		straw hat on and waiting for people
3931		who wanted to go vote to get in the
3932		car and the woman was dressed all
3933		nicely and with a ribbon across her,
3934		all that, vote for whatever this
3935		guy's name was, and I really saw a
3936		guy get into the car to go vote, and
3937		the next thing I saw him getting out.
3938	01:50:20	I mean, within minutes, so when he
3939		left, I walked up to them and I said,
3940		"What happened?" And he says he
3941		wanted to vote for, I think the guy's
3942		name was Brown, and he wanted to vote
3943		for Brown and I said well, yeah, but
3944		that's who you're supposed to be
3945		taking. He said I know it. The
3946		point is, he was keeping the money
3947		but he wasn't going to take anybody
3948	01:50:46	who wanted to vote for the guy that
3949		was buying him--it was that kind of
3950		thing that helped us win in

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3951		Chattanooga. So--
3952		INTERVIEWER: How is that connected
3953	01:51:00	to?
3954		REVEREND VIVIAN: Well, that's my
3955		point--that's how Martin knew how
3956		effective I could be, and Nashville,
3957		next thing was Chattanooga, and we
3958		won that. In fact, we even created a
3959		statewide voters organization. So
3960		Martin asked me to come and Dorothy
3961		Cotton had heard me give a speech
3962		somewhere and Dorothy Cotton had been
3963	01:51:27	telling him about me, right, so he
3964		wanted to--
3965		INTERVIEWER: Dorothy's on Dr. King's
3966		staff.
3967		REVEREND VIVIAN: Right, that's
3968		right, Dorothy Cotton, right. And so
3969		he wanted to see me and the next
3970		thing I know, Wyatt Tee Walker is
3971		asking me to come to Atlanta about
3972		it, right? About being this new post
3973	01:51:53	they had, national director of
3974		affiliates. If you were in the
3975		NAACP, you would have called it



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
3976		branches, you see? We had affiliates
3977		just so we could have a name for all
3978	01:52:09	the things, so if it had Martin's
3979		name on it or if it was SCLC-
3980		affiliated, I was over that and
3981		having to take care of it and deal
3982		with it and etcetera. And the way we
3983		were structured, the money didn't
3984		come from the ground up. The money
3985		came from the national office down,
3986		you see what I mean? Every local
3987		tried to get as much of their own
3988	01:52:37	funding as they could, but for
3989		serious projects we got it from the
3990		office so they called me to come in.
3991		I was also a troubleshooter in that
3992		sense, so I traveled everywhere.
3993		INTERVIEWER: So for the rest of the
3994		career that we'll talk about later--
3995		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
3996		INTERVIEWER: Your movement
3997		affiliation is with the SCLC as
3998	01:52:57	director of affiliates.
3999		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
4000		INTERVIEWER: You've still got your

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4001		church.
4002		REVEREND VIVIAN: No, I gave it up.
4003	01:53:01	INTERVIEWER: You gave it up when?
4004		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, I gave it up
4005		as I left to take SCLC's job.
4006		INTERVIEWER: So that became a full-
4007		time job--I think you went in 1962,
4008		which is before Birmingham.
4009		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah. Oh, yeah, in
4010		fact that is exactly at Birmingham.
4011		See, that was my first assignment out
4012		of the national office. That was my
4013	01:53:18	assignment out of the national
4014		office. Wyatt Tee Walker and I began
4015		Birmingham.
4016		INTERVIEWER: Right.
4017		REVEREND VIVIAN: See, Fred
4018		Shuttlesworth really had begun
4019		Birmingham a long time ago, get my
4020		point? But our participation in it
4021		was at that exact point.
4022		INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.
4023	01:53:39	REVEREND VIVIAN: I joined Wyatt Tee
4024		and we go into Nashville to open it
4025		up.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4026		INTERVIEWER: Right. You mean into
4027		Birmingham?
4028	01:53:47	REVEREND VIVIAN: Into Birmingham.
4029		INTERVIEWER: Yeah, that was Dr.
4030		King's big gamble, to go into
4031		Birmingham.
4032		REVEREND VIVIAN: It was, but I was
4033		there giving a speech last week, two
4034		weeks ago, something like that in the
4035		last couple of weeks, and something
4036		really became very clear as I was
4037		going to the speech, that had we lost
4038	01:54:09	Birmingham, there wouldn't have been
4039		a voting rights bill. If we'd lost
4040		Birmingham we couldn't have made
4041		Selma. Birmingham was the necessary
4042		thing, but we see--you see, we could
4043		not lose--I know I'm not on your
4044		track right now.
4045		INTERVIEWER: No, you're on the
4046		track--
4047		REVEREND VIVIAN: Okay, good.
4048	01:54:31	INTERVIEWER: Because your first
4049		assignment as director of affiliates-
4050		-

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4051		REVEREND VIVIAN: Okay, good.
4052		INTERVIEWER: --Is Birmingham, and
4053	01:54:35	Birmingham is Dr. King's big go-for-
4054		broke, because what he said was--at
4055		his convention in Birmingham in '62
4056		at the end, he said in the eight
4057		years since the Brown decision we've
4058		been working hard in the movement but
4059		the opposition has organized as
4060		powerfully as we have, and right here
4061		during his convention he said it took
4062		23,000 soldiers to get James
4063	01:54:59	Meredith, one black student in Ole
4064		Miss, we've got to take a big break
4065		or we're going to lose our window in
4066		history, so he said we can go in and
4067		try to do Birmingham, so that's your
4068		first assignment, and Wyatt Walker
4069		presented his plan for it called
4070		Project C for confrontation--
4071		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, that's it.
4072		And this is why he goes in, right?
4073	01:55:21	INTERVIEWER: Wyatt Walker was Dr.
4074		King's chief of staff.
4075		REVEREND VIVIAN: Chief of staff at

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4076		the time, and the thing is that we go
4077		in to open it up. But what I was--
4078	01:55:35	well, I've said what--
4079		INTERVIEWER: Just do a little bit of
4080		the beginning of Birmingham, what you
4081		remember about that, where we can
4082		end.
4083		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's what I want
4084		to do right now. In fact, when we
4085		began Birmingham, when we began
4086		Birmingham, SCLC began Birmingham,
4087		because Fred was so important--I just
4088	01:55:51	never like to act as though it
4089		started with us. It started with
4090		Fred, right? But when we first moved
4091		in, this story tells you exactly what
4092		was going on. We were trying to set
4093		up this little office, right, that we
4094		had--Wyatt and I, right? And so
4095		looking out a window and you saw the
4096		telephone company building--you could
4097		see the whole side of it, right? And
4098	01:56:28	it had balconies all the way up on
4099		each floor, and there were two guys
4100		out there smoking cigarettes, so I

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4101		think it was Wyatt--I don't think it
4102		was me, I think it was Wyatt that
4103	01:56:44	made a telephone call. And I saw
4104		those guys sort of hurry in as he was
4105		making the call, all right? So when
4106		Wyatt gets off the phone I said
4107		Wyatt, I think I know that those guys
4108		over there on that balcony are
4109		government guys, right? And so let's
4110		have some fun. So we started making
4111		telephone calls and they would run
4112		in, and then we'd hang up the phone
4113	01:57:22	and they'd appear again. So we did
4114		it about four or five times and so we
4115		knew what was really happening and it
4116		was always funny to me to think
4117		about, it's bad enough that you're in
4118		Birmingham, right, but the feds on
4119		top of that increased it, but you
4120		were very clear where you were, what
4121		was going on, who you were going to
4122		have to deal with--it all became very
4123	01:57:54	clear when you picked up that phone,
4124		and you knew that the regular stuff--
4125		well, remember, the regular stuff is

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4126		where we always knew that we were
4127		being bugged, right? And as we
4128	01:58:07	rented this little space, the first
4129		thing we did was to begin to look for
4130		bugs, because if we could stop it,
4131		fine, you know? If we couldn't,
4132		fine, but we knew that we had
4133		problems that we weren't expecting in
4134		terms of cutting off the whole
4135		telephone call. It's one thing to be
4136		bugged in your room. It's another
4137		one that every telephone call that
4138	01:58:36	comes in and out of your place is
4139		also going to be covered, you know
4140		what I mean? But it gave us
4141		something to go with. Now, let's
4142		look at another because you're
4143		looking more for high points--let's
4144		look another at Birmingham, because
4145		everybody knows when the hoses were
4146		turned on, right?
4147		INTERVIEWER: Right. May 3rd.
4148	01:59:01	REVEREND VIVIAN: I love it--May the
4149		3rd.
4150		INTERVIEWER: 1963.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4151		REVEREND VIVIAN: I want this tape
4152		because I want to know all these
4153	01:59:06	dates, right? But May the 3rd, you
4154		say it was?
4155		INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.
4156		REVEREND VIVIAN: Okay, good, all
4157		right. So we were sending students
4158		downtown--
4159		INTERVIEWER: Young kids.
4160		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right. They
4161		were turning the hoses on them. We
4162		were sending guys out--Wyatt and I
4163	01:59:33	were inside the church, right? Wyatt
4164		and I were inside the church so that
4165		we were sending folk out the front
4166		door towards the park, and while the
4167		firemen and so forth were all
4168		involved in that, we were sending
4169		others out the back door right down
4170		the street, get a bus, and we're
4171		going right downtown. Finally, the
4172		sheriff who is head of the--
4173	02:00:08	INTERVIEWER: Bull Connor.
4174		REVEREND VIVIAN: Bull Connor, head
4175		of police department and the fire.



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4176		He was head of everything at the
4177		time.
4178	02:00:10	INTERVIEWER: Head of police--right.
4179		Public safety commissioner, they
4180		called him.
4181		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right, and
4182		remember, in this same time he ran
4183		for mayor. He was trying to take it
4184		all, right? And he thought this was
4185		the time to do it. Remember, we
4186		stopped then and went to Washington.
4187		So he must have gotten a call that
4188	02:00:35	said they're downtown, because all of
4189		the sudden the hoses stopped, because
4190		there wasn't any sense to keep
4191		turning the hoses on us. We were
4192		already downtown. They expected us
4193		all to come out the front door. We
4194		had them going out the back door,
4195		taking buses downtown, and changed
4196		the tenor of it all, right?
4197		INTERVIEWER: Absolutely. That was
4198	02:00:59	the--of course, there had been all
4199		these demonstrations in Birmingham
4200		and I want to talk after a break

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4201		about the decision to use young
4202		people because I know that was
4203	02:01:09	crucial. What you just described was
4204		when finally after the big
4205		breakthrough that melted people's
4206		hearts in a way, you occupied
4207		downtown so much that the city powers
4208		wanted to make a deal so that was
4209		really the beginning of the deal.
4210		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's exactly
4211		right; that was the beginning of the
4212		deal.
4213	02:01:27	INTERVIEWER: The great climax of
4214		Birmingham.
4215		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's the only
4216		thing--one other piece with that, it
4217		was the dogs.
4218		INTERVIEWER: The dogs, right.
4219		REVEREND VIVIAN: You see what I
4220		mean? That dog thing backfired on
4221		them.
4222		INTERVIEWER: Oh, absolutely, and the
4223	02:01:37	hoses too. The dogs and the hoses.
4224		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, it's that
4225		combination. It was that

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4226		combination--it said how really
4227		brutal they were without our saying
4228	02:01:47	it, and the whole world knew that
4229		that kind of brutality couldn't--made
4230		us honest. I mean, they knew that we
4231		were saying everything that we were
4232		saying was right.
4233		INTERVIEWER: Absolutely.
4234		REVEREND VIVIAN: And I'll tell you
4235		what, when the dogs showed up, when
4236		they turned those dogs on us and the
4237		hoses, the next day, you see the one
4238	02:02:15	where the guy's trousers are ripped
4239		down there with the dog--
4240		INTERVIEWER: Right.
4241		REVEREND VIVIAN: The next day is
4242		that ministers were coming in from
4243		all over the country.
4244		INTERVIEWER: Absolutely.
4245		REVEREND VIVIAN: And it changed the
4246		very tenor of everything.
4247		INTERVIEWER: One of the great
4248	02:02:31	breakthroughs. Well, we need to come
4249		back to Birmingham but we should--
4250		[audio ends abruptly]

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4251		[END afc2010039_crhp0006_mv3.wmv]
4252		[START AFC2010039_CRHP0006_MV4.WMV]
4253	01:00:00	INTERVIEWER: Back for one thing that
4254		you mentioned--
4255		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
4256		INTERVIEWER: That Elaine has asked
4257		about, which is that you said that
4258		when you did the march in Nashville,
4259		the Looby march in April of 1960,
4260		that you sang for a while and then
4261		switched to a silent march going into
4262		downtown after a technique that had
4263	01:00:19	been developed in New York in the
4264		1920s.
4265		Can you just tell us briefly about
4266		that, in New York in the 1920s, if
4267		you know, because we hadn't heard
4268		about that.
4269		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, I don't know
4270		much about it.
4271		INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.
4272		REVEREND VIVIAN: Except that it was
4273	01:00:31	called the silent march, all right,
4274		and it was designed by W.E.B. Du
4275		Bois. But all the great ones of that

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4276		period were involved in it, right?
4277		And they had--according to what I
4278	01:00:51	remember in pictures I saw, they'd
4279		put up banners and so forth. It was
4280		around lynching, right?
4281		INTERVIEWER: Right.
4282		REVEREND VIVIAN: To the end of
4283		lynching, and this was this silent
4284		march--
4285		INTERVIEWER: Silent marches against
4286		lynching in New York.
4287		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's it.
4288	01:01:08	INTERVIEWER: Organized by the NAACP
4289		if it was Dr. Du Bois.
4290		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's exactly
4291		right, and that was W.E.B. Du Bois.
4292		Now, you see, they didn't stomp or
4293		anything but you couldn't hear
4294		nothing but their feet.
4295		INTERVIEWER: I see.
4296		REVEREND VIVIAN: You couldn't hear
4297		nothing but their feet.
4298	01:01:23	INTERVIEWER: And you people knew
4299		about it in Nashville.
4300		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right, and

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4301		this is what we--so as we were going,
4302		we didn't do it until we were going
4303	01:01:35	into downtown, as we turned--see, you
4304		come down, you turn and you go in
4305		towards City Hall, and you cut across
4306		the street. You would come to the
4307		publishing house and go one block
4308		over, right?
4309		INTERVIEWER: Right.
4310		REVEREND VIVIAN: And down in that,
4311		as you turn toward town, there's a
4312		lot of small factory-like buildings,
4313	01:02:04	right? Now, some of them are still
4314		there. I don't know whether that's
4315		still there or not. Some of them
4316		they moved and some of them are still
4317		there, and that's when these guys
4318		backed up against the wall.
4319		INTERVIEWER: Right. Yeah, you've
4320		said that.
4321		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
4322		INTERVIEWER: Tell me this--if you
4323	01:02:21	have a reaction, I'm going to try to
4324		jump around a little bit.
4325		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's all right.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4326		Oh, please, please, please, yeah.
4327		INTERVIEWER: If it triggers a story,
4328	01:02:26	tell the story; if not, just tell me
4329		and I'll move on.
4330		REVEREND VIVIAN: Okay, good.
4331		INTERVIEWER: The moment when Dr.
4332		King in the Gaston Motel had to
4333		decide whether or not to go to jail
4334		when he went into the Birmingham
4335		jail--
4336		REVEREND VIVIAN: Oh, that's great.
4337		INTERVIEWER: The famous story about
4338	01:02:40	Dr. King and everything--
4339		REVEREND VIVIAN: I'm not the one to
4340		tell you that. I wasn't there.
4341		INTERVIEWER: You weren't there,
4342		okay.
4343		REVEREND VIVIAN: But the person who
4344		tells it so well is Dorothy Cotton.
4345		INTERVIEWER: Right.
4346		REVEREND VIVIAN: She tells it so
4347		well.
4348	01:02:52	INTERVIEWER: Dorothy Cotton was on
4349		Dr. King's staff, actually came down
4350		from Petersburg with Wyatt Walker.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4351		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right, with
4352		Wyatt Tee.
4353	01:02:58	INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I know her very
4354		well.
4355		REVEREND VIVIAN: And there was
4356		another guy with them--Wyatt Tee
4357		brought two people, one of them was
4358		Dorothy and another one was another
4359		person that never gets brought up.
4360		He turned to radio here in town very
4361		early after coming.
4362		INTERVIEWER: All right. The
4363	01:03:21	decision--because even after Dr. King
4364		came out of jail in Birmingham,
4365		before those big dogs and hoses
4366		marches, the Birmingham movement was
4367		almost on life support and Bevel and
4368		Dorothy Cotton and the people running
4369		those youth workshops said we're not
4370		out of volunteers yet, we've got
4371		these young people. And lots of
4372		people have talked about debates
4373	01:03:42	within the movement over whether to
4374		use young people and how young to use
4375		them. Does that trigger anything?



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4376		REVEREND VIVIAN: Oh, yeah,
4377		definitely. That was a real
4378	01:03:52	argument--what should happen. Bevel
4379		was the one that really said young
4380		people should go, right? That you're
4381		never too young to fight for your
4382		freedom became the thing for all of
4383		us, but I mean it was Bevel who
4384		brought it up and really fought for
4385		it, and Diane of course, they were
4386		married at the time.
4387		INTERVIEWER: Right.
4388	01:04:16	REVEREND VIVIAN: But that changed
4389		things. In fact, I have a list of
4390		six things I want to give to the
4391		museum in Birmingham, I mean, ideas,
4392		right? And that's one of them, that
4393		they're not highlighting that enough.
4394		It's the only place--I want to say in
4395		the western world, but it's the only
4396		place in nonviolent work I know in
4397		the west where there was a children's
4398	01:04:45	movement. Now, but do you know the
4399		other part of it where they get out
4400		to the jail, because when the people

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4401		that Sunday, when people come out and
4402		go out to the jail to sing to their
4403	01:05:00	kids and the firemen refused to turn
4404		the hoses on them? Okay, I just
4405		wanted to be certain that that's--
4406		INTERVIEWER: That's a great story.
4407		REVEREND VIVIAN: Oh, that's a great
4408		story.
4409		INTERVIEWER: But the decision to use
4410		children--and you're absolutely
4411		right. I wrote in one of my prefaces
4412		that the only parallel that I know of
4413	01:05:20	is the Passover story, where the
4414		children in Egypt had--
4415		REVEREND VIVIAN: Talk about going
4416		back.
4417		INTERVIEWER: But I mean, where
4418		people that young have that kind of
4419		historical impact.
4420		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's a good
4421		story. That's exactly right. That's
4422		exactly right. It just didn't
4423	01:05:36	happen. In fact, this is why there
4424		was an argument against using them,
4425		because it was thought--everybody

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4426		thought, oh, you shouldn't use
4427		children. Why not, right? But I
4428	01:05:44	think one of the reasons is because
4429		most adults weren't ready to do it,
4430		period, right, much less have
4431		children do it. Listen, I remember
4432		doing that thing, having kids out of
4433		one of the high schools--high schools
4434		are like small colleges, right? And
4435		they were coming out of windows,
4436		coming down, and you reminded me when
4437		you said that one of my arguments I
4438	01:06:14	was making to the kids is that it had
4439		been raining one morning when I went
4440		over there and the stream was coming
4441		through the schoolyard and I told
4442		them, cross over Jordan, baby, let's
4443		go. Let's go do it, right? And we
4444		did, and we did, and they were right
4445		with it. Listen, they so badly
4446		wanted to come out, the principal had
4447		to so badly keep them in, they locked
4448	01:06:43	the doors and so the kids were
4449		crawling out of windows and jumping
4450		down from that second floor because

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4451		the first floor's always a little
4452		higher. They were coming down and
4453	01:06:54	hanging down and falling and jumping
4454		out of windows so that they could go
4455		on out and do it. There was no doubt
4456		in the kids' minds, none at all--
4457		INTERVIEWER: No, but plenty in the
4458		adults' minds.
4459		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's exactly
4460		right, but not in the kids' minds and
4461		I think part of it, I think that the
4462		adults were afraid they may be blamed
4463	01:07:15	for something, you see what I mean?
4464		Rather than--because all of us in
4465		Birmingham knew, everybody in
4466		Birmingham was part of the movement.
4467		INTERVIEWER: Right.
4468		REVEREND VIVIAN: But then like so
4469		many things, you never knew what the
4470		police were going to do to them.
4471		INTERVIEWER: So that's a good
4472		comment about the fatefulness of the
4473	01:07:38	children in Birmingham.
4474		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
4475		INTERVIEWER: So jumping from there,

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4476		what about the march on Washington?
4477		Any memories or stories about the
4478	01:07:45	march on Washington?
4479		REVEREND VIVIAN: Oh, stories or
4480		memories--no, I have a picture where
4481		they cut my head off. Who was the
4482		great writer of that time?
4483		INTERVIEWER: Baldwin?
4484		REVEREND VIVIAN: Baldwin. Baldwin's
4485		being there was the most interesting
4486		thing for me that I consider a story,
4487		but it's just that he was there and
4488	01:08:09	we were involved in the back and we
4489		were talking and so forth--and not
4490		just he and I, I mean, you know, a
4491		whole gang of us, about 15, 20 of us.
4492		INTERVIEWER: Back to Birmingham,
4493		just briefly, for all the argument
4494		and the resistance of the parents in
4495		Birmingham, there were arguments in
4496		practically every black home in
4497		Birmingham about what to do with
4498	01:08:28	this, should we let our children do
4499		it, should we keep them from doing
4500		it. It's also true, though, that a

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4501		lot of the parents who didn't want
4502		their children involved in,
4503	01:08:36	practically none did, were converted
4504		by their children when they actually
4505		did it. There's this famous story of
4506		the woman walking along the line, all
4507		upset that she sees her 8-year-old
4508		marching and then she says sing,
4509		children, sing, because...
4510		REVEREND VIVIAN: She changed her
4511		mind.
4512		INTERVIEWER: She just kind of gave
4513	01:08:55	into it, so that happened.
4514		REVEREND VIVIAN: Sing, children,
4515		sing--I guess, I never heard that one
4516		but I love it, because whether it's
4517		true or not it gets the whole feeling
4518		of everything that happened, the
4519		stuff that happened. But I was very
4520		clear that everybody wanted it to
4521		happen. Now, not that--when I say
4522		everybody, it's over 200. There was
4523	01:09:25	a lot of argument but I don't think
4524		it was nearly as intense as it seems,
4525		because--and when the children went

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4526		to jail, that did change everything.
4527		There was no longer anything but I
4528	01:09:42	think it was no longer because they
4529		knew they wouldn't be hurt, right?
4530		INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.
4531		REVEREND VIVIAN: But the story to me
4532		is more so than the kids going is
4533		their parents coming out.
4534		INTERVIEWER: The Birmingham church
4535		bombing, where were you on that
4536		Sunday in September?
4537		REVEREND VIVIAN: The church bombing-
4538	01:10:02	-oh, I don't know.
4539		INTERVIEWER: You don't know? did
4540		you go in for the funeral or any of
4541		the things right afterwards?
4542		REVEREND VIVIAN: No, I wasn't into
4543		that funeral, no. Jimmie Lee
4544		Jackson, I was.
4545		INTERVIEWER: Well, okay.
4546		REVEREND VIVIAN: That comes later.
4547		INTERVIEWER: Later in '63, right
4548	01:10:16	before the Kennedy assassination,
4549		just very briefly if you had any
4550		memory, because this has been a big

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4551		year and breakthrough for nonviolence
4552		and everything and your SCLC
4553	01:10:25	convention was in Richmond, and you
4554		had a nonviolent workshop there that
4555		I know you were on called the Power
4556		of Nonviolence with you, Bayard
4557		Rustin, Jim Lawson and James Bevel
4558		talk about the power of nonviolence
4559		in the year 1963. It was in a hotel
4560		in Richmond. Is that in the blur?
4561		REVEREND VIVIAN: To me it's just
4562		another one of those speeches.
4563	01:10:47	INTERVIEWER: All right.
4564		REVEREND VIVIAN: What I mean is you
4565		did so much of them at that time, you
4566		know, it didn't stand out.
4567		INTERVIEWER: Yeah. The next year,
4568		1964, is the year of the filibuster,
4569		the passage of the civil rights bill
4570		and for Dr. King it's widely
4571		overlooked and not very much known
4572		because what dominated the news was
4573	01:11:07	Mississippi summer where the students
4574		and SNCC were in freedom summer that
4575		year--



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4576		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, we all went
4577		down for that.
4578	01:11:12	INTERVIEWER: But Dr. King was more
4579		in St. Augustine and you were a
4580		leader of that group. Some people
4581		told me that Dr. King actually didn't
4582		really want to go--in fact, I think
4583		Andy told me that Dr. King didn't
4584		want to get engaged in a major
4585		movement there with the filibuster
4586		going on but it just kind of
4587		happened. Does that seem true?
4588	01:11:32	REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, there was
4589		more to it than that because I went
4590		down. There was an argument over
4591		should we, but the real argument was-
4592		-but what we need to do is to keep
4593		the legislation moving in Washington.
4594		INTERVIEWER: Right.
4595		REVEREND VIVIAN: See what I mean?
4596		The real reason for St. Augustine was
4597		not St. Augustine, right? It was
4598	01:11:56	keeping the legislation going, coming
4599		out of Birmingham. It's because we
4600		had to get Johnson to really come

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4601		through with that stuff, right? We
4602		had heard it, and then Johnson came
4603	01:12:11	through with it which is why we got
4604		to march, had to wait until the
4605		second, third time, right? Because
4606		Johnson hadn't signed off on the
4607		stuff we wanted to. You knew that of
4608		course, right? But then the next
4609		step was that once it got to
4610		congress, could we get it through
4611		congress? St. Augustine's real
4612		purpose was to get it through
4613	01:12:36	congress. Well, you can tell that
4614		story better than I can probably, but
4615		the point is that I wanted to go.
4616		Bevel didn't want to go, you notice
4617		Bevel wasn't there because part of
4618		the argument was that it's not
4619		necessary, it's unimportant, you
4620		know, it's small stuff. But usually
4621		I didn't get in the arguments and the
4622		only reason was because once the
4623	01:13:04	decision was going to be made, it's
4624		going to be made, right? And we were
4625		going with it. Now, if I didn't

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4626		care, I didn't argue. If I cared, I
4627		only then argued. I mean, if I
4628	01:13:15	really cared and I saw my side was
4629		losing, that's when I jumped in the
4630		argument, right? And this is when I
4631		had to jump in the argument with
4632		those who said it's unimportant, and
4633		no, it's not unimportant. Action
4634		isn't finished until it's finished,
4635		right?
4636		INTERVIEWER: So tell us about St.
4637		Augustine itself. Why St. Augustine?
4638	01:13:34	It's the oldest city in North
4639		America.
4640		REVEREND VIVIAN: And it was their
4641		100th anniversary or 200th or
4642		whatever it was--
4643		INTERVIEWER: Their 400th.
4644		REVEREND VIVIAN: 400th, that was it-
4645		-it was their 400th anniversary.
4646		Well, with the 400th anniversary and
4647		the tourists coming through there and
4648	01:13:52	all of the meaning of that, this was
4649		the time to be there. And we
4650		couldn't swim on the beach, right?

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4651		Here are 1600 feet of beach and you
4652		couldn't swim on it.
4653	01:14:11	INTERVIEWER: We should stop there.
4654		People don't know what you're saying.
4655		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
4656		INTERVIEWER: It was a segregated
4657		beach--black people were not allowed
4658		to go on the public beach into the
4659		ocean.
4660		REVEREND VIVIAN: Precisely right.
4661		INTERVIEWER: And if they did, what
4662		would happen?
4663	01:14:23	REVEREND VIVIAN: Now, the 1600--
4664		okay, let me answer your question,
4665		because I said 1600 feet. That was a
4666		black-only--
4667		INTERVIEWER: A black-only, right.
4668		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right. Now,
4669		because if you went in they would
4670		drown you to give you an idea of what
4671		I'm talking about--they would create,
4672		all the guys because they were always
4673	01:14:45	on the beach, the white guys because
4674		they were always on the beach, all
4675		the white guys were on the beach and

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4676		they swam all the time, right? It
4677		was just natural. They almost swam
4678	01:14:50	like fish--they're used to it. Most
4679		black people don't swim at all, much
4680		less swam in the ocean, so what they
4681		would do is to create like a net,
4682		like a human net, and then as you
4683		walked forward they would go deeper,
4684		walk forward into it, they'd go
4685		deeper, right? Walk forward in,
4686		they'd go deeper. Now, we would have
4687		really been in trouble on the big
4688	01:15:21	one. I was leading it, Fred
4689		Shuttlesworth came out from nowhere
4690		and joined me and Fred said "Can you
4691		swim?" out the side of his mouth. He
4692		said "Can you swim?" I said, "Yeah,
4693		but not in an ocean," the idea being,
4694		these guys are going to take you out
4695		in the ocean, right? So Fred
4696		couldn't swim, right? But he wanted-
4697		-he said, well, let's go in at an
4698	01:15:53	angle. I said Fred, this is the
4699		ocean--go in at an angle. And these
4700		guys know what I was saying, right--

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4701		all they'd do is move over a step.
4702		You're talking about going in at an
4703	01:16:07	angle. But he came on and we got out
4704		to about here, and one of their guys
4705		jumped too soon, because they were
4706		going to take us out to our neck,
4707		which you can do in St. Augustine--
4708		you can walk straight out up to your
4709		neck in St. Augustine. That's why I
4710		love the beach out there. But a guy
4711		moved and he moved too soon and then
4712		all of them, they disconnected their
4713	01:16:38	hands and they jumped, and that
4714		really saved us, actually. A guy
4715		jumped on top of me, however, and
4716		wow, took me right to the bottom, and
4717		he's on top of me. Well, as I said,
4718		I can't swim in an ocean, right? I
4719		used to teach at the YMCA in a pool,
4720		but I didn't do it in the ocean, and
4721		my face was in the sand and I said--
4722		and I laughed to myself. I said,
4723	01:17:11	"this is it," and I figured this was
4724		it, this was over, I knew I wasn't
4725		going to get out from underneath this

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4726		guy, right, and my face was already
4727		in the sand so what, right? And
4728	01:17:22	right after that there was a jerk, a
4729		phew--I shot straight to the top. A
4730		policeman had come over and jerked
4731		this guy off of me. I didn't see any
4732		police and there was a picture that
4733		shows a policeman but that's an after
4734		shot, because there weren't any
4735		policemen when we started in, and
4736		there were two guys way over to the
4737		side and I know they couldn't have
4738	01:17:49	gotten there, two policemen way over
4739		on the side, and almost--it was yards
4740		and yards, like 100 yards away from
4741		us, and that's about right, about 100
4742		yards away, and I knew they couldn't
4743		have gotten there that quickly. But
4744		the guy who was a policeman, he
4745		pulled the guy off of me, I shot to
4746		the surface and then he started to
4747		arrest me. And I said, you don't
4748	01:18:22	arrest me. I said, he's the guy that
4749		jumped on me. I got a right to be on
4750		this ocean. And he looked back and

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4751		forth and this guy ran because he
4752		knew I was right. This guy ran and
4753	01:18:37	the policeman was caught between and
4754		he was afraid to go get him because
4755		he was still thinking about what I
4756		said, and then he decided that I was
4757		right, so he was very nice from that
4758		time on. He took me out to the beach
4759		and got me towels and everything. He
4760		was very nice then. And that's
4761		another thing I found, that the jail
4762		was horrible--in fact, when I looked-
4763	01:19:08	INTERVIEWER: The jail in St.
4764		Augustine?
4765		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, the jail in
4766		St. Augustine, right.
4767		INTERVIEWER: Dr. King said that was
4768		one of the most violent places he was
4769		down there and it was not the Klan
4770		because it was mostly Catholic.
4771		That's where Hoss Manucy had like
4772		these posses of--
4773	01:19:21	REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, in fact, that
4774		was their Klan, you know what I mean?
4775		Hoss Manucy was the guy. And he had



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4776		this whole--Hoss Manucy and his what?
4777		They had a term for it--his
4778	01:19:38	followers, right. And they were the
4779		Klan. But a couple of things--
4780		INTERVIEWER: About St. Augustine?
4781		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
4782		INTERVIEWER: They had the old slave
4783		market downtown which was a tourist
4784		attraction.
4785		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right, and
4786		that's what I turned into. This is
4787		before Andy and them really came,
4788	01:19:58	right?
4789		INTERVIEWER: Right.
4790		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's what I
4791		turned into a teaching center. I
4792		would walk a group down there at noon
4793		and then I would be teaching them but
4794		I was really teaching all these
4795		people that came to eat because
4796		people would come to eat and have
4797		sandwiches and so forth and they'd
4798	01:20:18	want to know what was happening, so
4799		then you could see them just leaning
4800		towards it because they wanted to

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4801		hear so it was our way of getting a
4802		message through to them about why we
4803	01:20:33	were there, what we were doing, what
4804		we were about. So it worked in our
4805		favor. Now, but Dorothy--by the way,
4806		Hosea created the midnight march.
4807		INTERVIEWER: Hosea Williams?
4808		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
4809		INTERVIEWER: Right.
4810		REVEREND VIVIAN: Hosea created the
4811		midnight march but we went down on a
4812		midnight march one night, right, and
4813	01:20:59	Dorothy Cotton and I were leading the
4814		group, and we were coming in not
4815		right there in the front. It was
4816		around the side somehow, and the
4817		policeman would not let us in.
4818		INTERVIEWER: Into the slave market
4819		area?
4820		REVEREND VIVIAN: Into the slave
4821		market area--they cut us off and
4822		wouldn't let us into it, right?
4823	01:21:20	Well, they knew something we did not
4824		know--the Klan or Manucy's guys,
4825		right, were there waiting for us, and

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4826		they had chains and steel bars and
4827		all kinds of stuff. So we stopped
4828	01:21:41	there and prayed, but we couldn't
4829		move on and so that was the night
4830		that Dorothy talks about when we were
4831		praying and she said something and
4832		this guy says--or somebody prayed to
4833		God and says, "niggers ain't got no
4834		god," remember, as almost say it like
4835		Dorothy said it, because that stuck
4836		out in her mind. But we were leading
4837		the march down there for one of those
4838	01:22:14	midnight march nights. I was leading
4839		another midnight march one night when
4840		about 40 of us were sent to the
4841		hospital. You have that old Mexican
4842		kind of wall around things, and they
4843		would throw stuff over the walls onto
4844		us as we marched down the sidewalk,
4845		and we'd have to move over to the
4846		middle of the street, and those walls
4847		are so beautiful in the daytime, but
4848	01:22:48	at night they were dangerous, man.
4849		They were dangerous and they would
4850		climb up on the walls and throw stuff

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4851		down on us, right? And we'd have to
4852		go out in the street because we'd be
4853	01:23:01	walking in the sidewalks. I remember
4854		that night was when we went back to a
4855		church to recoup but I knew I
4856		couldn't let them--couldn't stop it
4857		because here again, we won't let
4858		violence stop nonviolence. And so
4859		once it gave people time to get
4860		themselves together, and I gave
4861		another speech and there was another
4862		guy with me from movement, and I gave
4863	01:23:38	him a speech and said whether anybody
4864		goes or not, I'm going, and I stepped
4865		off this little platform and started
4866		down the aisle and I didn't know
4867		whether they were coming or not.
4868		It's one of those nights you don't
4869		really know, but you know the only
4870		way you're going to find out is
4871		you've got to go, and so I started
4872		walking down the aisle, I got about
4873	01:24:03	halfway there and I saw them look
4874		behind me and they were coming out
4875		the aisles and joining in to walk on

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4876		out. And I remember a woman sort of
4877		getting up, unclear whether she
4878	01:24:16	really wanted to go but she had made
4879		up her mind she was going, and she
4880		walked to the center aisle and came
4881		on out, too, and down the street we
4882		went.
4883		INTERVIEWER: This is St. Augustine--
4884		it's a movement that not even a lot
4885		of people even know about because it
4886		was overshadowed by national events--
4887		REVEREND VIVIAN: Precisely.
4888	01:24:35	INTERVIEWER: But it was to keep the
4889		issue of racial discrimination and
4890		violence alive in the country because
4891		even at that point there were some
4892		people saying we don't really need
4893		the civil rights bill because that's
4894		a thing of the past.
4895		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's it.
4896		Precisely, and we were saying that
4897		all of those are southern excuses not
4898	01:24:53	to pass the bill, and we have to show
4899		that the south is wherever you go
4900		like this, like it was in Birmingham,

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4901		right?
4902		INTERVIEWER: Right.
4903	01:25:06	REVEREND VIVIAN: And so when they
4904		could see it, we would march at
4905		midnight with the bell--we'd march
4906		about 15 minutes until midnight, 20
4907		minutes from midnight and then the
4908		bell, the midnight bell would go on
4909		the church tower, and--
4910		INTERVIEWER: Yeah, the Episcopal
4911		church was right there next to the
4912		slave auction.
4913	01:25:27	REVEREND VIVIAN: That's it--boom,
4914		boom, right, as it would go off, and
4915		we would march through it and there
4916		could be all these guys waiting to do
4917		you in because they were trying to
4918		stop you from marching.
4919		INTERVIEWER: And Dr. King went to
4920		jail in St. Augustine, too.
4921		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's exactly--
4922		INTERVIEWER: So did Fred
4923	01:25:46	Shuttlesworth and you, and--
4924		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
4925		INTERVIEWER: And 19 rabbis came down

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4926		and went to jail, so this--
4927		REVEREND VIVIAN: Precisely, and they
4928	01:25:51	put them all in one cell.
4929		INTERVIEWER: Right.
4930		REVEREND VIVIAN: I think it was one
4931		cell. I know they put 13 of them in
4932		one cell.
4933		INTERVIEWER: Yeah, it's a remarkable
4934		time. After St. Augustine, the great
4935		landmark passage of the civil rights
4936		bill which not only desegregates the
4937		south but it also provides for equal
4938	01:26:12	employment, not just for black and
4939		white but also for women--
4940		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's exactly
4941		right.
4942		INTERVIEWER: Freedom's benefits
4943		spread.
4944		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's it.
4945		INTERVIEWER: But anyway, after that
4946		summer, that great landmark, Dr. King
4947		wins the Nobel Prize and says he's
4948	01:26:26	going to Selma. As I understand it
4949		in the records, you were one of the
4950		ones that went to scout--

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4951		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, see, I have
4952		to. See, that was as national
4953	01:26:35	affiliates director--
4954		INTERVIEWER: Right. You were
4955		scouting for a place to have a voting
4956		rights movement in Alabama.
4957		REVEREND VIVIAN: Precisely. Well,
4958		Martin had pretty much made up his
4959		mind already, but I was doing that
4960		because it was necessary, you see
4961		what I mean? But what I really went
4962		in there for is to see how well they
4963	01:26:54	were prepared for it and to get an
4964		invitation from them. See, remember
4965		SNCC was just leaving, you get my
4966		point? SNCC had not pulled it, but I
4967		think it was a difference in
4968		strategies. See, SNCC was not trying
4969		for a bill. What the student
4970		nonviolent coordinating committee
4971		was, you come to a town and you set
4972		up and you prepare those people and
4973	01:27:19	keep them struggling and keep them
4974		fighting until their town was cleaned
4975		up.



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
4976		INTERVIEWER: Right.
4977		REVEREND VIVIAN: Now, truthfully,
4978	01:27:26	when you're dealing with Selma,
4979		you're not just dealing with the
4980		town. You're dealing with all those
4981		surrounding counties, you see what I
4982		mean? And black people were coming
4983		in from those counties into Selma.
4984		Now, for the action--now, there's a
4985		woman that's written a book about
4986		that. Her name is--it starts with an
4987		F. She teaches black studies at the
4988	01:27:55	University of Tennessee--Flemings is
4989		her name, right? She's supposed to
4990		be doing a book on me--she's been
4991		doing it for two years. But the
4992		point is--well I mean, she's had real
4993		reasons for not finishing it, because
4994		there wasn't that much--she writes
4995		small books but they're very good
4996		books. And this last book she's
4997		written is Selma and the surrounding
4998	01:28:20	counties.
4999		INTERVIEWER: Right.
5000		REVEREND VIVIAN: She's got another

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5001		name. Now, I keep thinking about--
5002		oh, there are a couple things you
5003	01:28:32	should know in St. Augustine. I
5004		don't know whether you know or not,
5005		but they're very important--we were
5006		going to have a meeting with a state
5007		congressperson who ran a real estate
5008		office downtown. Martin had said
5009		that we should all be talking to each
5010		other. It was a part of trying to
5011		create some real relationships. This
5012		guy said--and everybody was saying
5013	01:29:06	no, and the white people, we didn't
5014		want to talk to them, but this guy
5015		did and he said so in the paper and
5016		that we would have a meeting at 2
5017		o'clock at his office or 3 o'clock at
5018		his office or whatever it was. And
5019		when we got there, his windows were
5020		knocked out, and we went in and you
5021		could tell the guy had been crying.
5022		They had gotten there early, and
5023	01:29:36	intimidated him out of his mind. He
5024		was afraid of everything. I've
5025		always wanted to know--never have

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5026		followed up, but I always wanted to
5027		know if he got reelected, you know
5028	01:29:47	what I mean? It would have been
5029		interesting--
5030		INTERVIEWER: Just for dialogue.
5031		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, that's right,
5032		that would be a thing to know.
5033		INTERVIEWER: So we don't have much
5034		time left. We're going to have to
5035		skip for a couple of things. I
5036		wanted to ask you about two things--
5037		the decision to go north, to have a
5038	01:30:04	Chicago movement was very
5039		controversial within SCLC.
5040		REVEREND VIVIAN: Oh, that's it--
5041		within the whole organization.
5042		INTERVIEWER: And how did you feel
5043		about it within the whole movement?
5044		REVEREND VIVIAN: That was one of
5045		those things that it was so
5046		controversial--I didn't care. I was
5047		going either way. But I was on the
5048	01:30:20	edge of leaving--
5049		INTERVIEWER: Right.
5050		REVEREND VIVIAN: So when we really--

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5051		and this is one of the reasons I
5052		wasn't arguing it, you get my point?
5053	01:30:29	Because I had create upward bound,
5054		right?
5055		INTERVIEWER: Right.
5056		REVEREND VIVIAN: And now I got a
5057		call for Jim Morton, New York, and it
5058		was starting the urban training
5059		center in Chicago and they wanted me
5060		on staff. Well, I had come to the
5061		conclusion that when we won Selma,
5062		and we'd won it at that time, right,
5063	01:30:52	that that was it. I woke up one
5064		morning saying to myself, this is the
5065		end of the line. What we have to do
5066		is to train the guys in the locals--
5067		in other words, we've got the big
5068		picture nationally. Now what we have
5069		to do is to go into the locals and
5070		make certain that this is pinned
5071		down, right? Then I was walking
5072		around for a day or so and thinking
5073	01:31:27	about it, and I had to go make some
5074		speeches across in Indiana, across
5075		the Midwest but mainly Indiana, and

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5076		Jim Morton had called me right before
5077		I left. I guess all this was
5078	01:31:45	happening about a week because I know
5079		that I had woken up thinking about
5080		it, but I was wondering how I was
5081		going to get it done. In other
5082		words, how are we going to make all
5083		these little towns--well, all these
5084		cities, really. There were no little
5085		towns we were in, and so I got this
5086		call from a guy named Jim Morton,
5087		right? Well, I didn't know Jim at
5088	01:32:09	the time. He would later become
5089		dean--Mr. Jim Morton later became
5090		dean of Saint John the Divine in New
5091		York, and stayed there for about 25,
5092		30 years. Now has another kind of
5093		thing going in New York. So he said,
5094		Vivian, we're starting an urban
5095		training center. Well, I knew what
5096		the urban training center was, I knew
5097		why it existed, right? He said we
5098	01:32:34	want you to come and take the Ford
5099		Fellowship program and you can bring
5100		who you want for urban training. I

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5101		just had to, you know--the dream, I
5102		woke up thinking about it, I wasn't
5103	01:32:50	dreaming it. I woke up saying it to
5104		myself, right? But I was trying to
5105		decide, how are you going to get that
5106		done, right? I'm facing something
5107		like that now, I've got an
5108		educational program I'm working on,
5109		and so Jim called, an urban training
5110		center he was telling me about, and I
5111		was driving across Indiana I made my
5112		mind--hey, what are you waiting for,
5113	01:33:14	Vivian? That's the answer to your
5114		question. So I had a guy stop--a guy
5115		was driving me and had him just stop
5116		on the corner where there was a
5117		filling station and a telephone.
5118		Remember, they used to all be out
5119		there--we hardly have any telephones
5120		around anymore. And so, I called Jim
5121		and Jim--I told him yeah, I'm coming,
5122		and Jim said, "wow."
5123	01:33:41	INTERVIEWER: So you started a new
5124		career--
5125		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5126		INTERVIEWER: Training in the north?
5127		REVEREND VIVIAN: I think if somebody
5128	01:33:47	can let them in so we can keep going,
5129		right? Just--I don't think it's the
5130		front door. Yeah, it's that other
5131		door. No, straight down the aisle
5132		and to your right, and do you know
5133		how to let up the door?
5134		[background noise]
5135		REVEREND VIVIAN: I hope so.
5136		INTERVIEWER: They'll figure it out.
5137		REVEREND VIVIAN: But yeah, they got
5138	01:34:15	the door. Right. And that's when I
5139		started the urban training center.
5140		Well, what we're saying is--but that
5141		was right before he was coming to
5142		Chicago. I was there before he was,
5143		right?
5144		INTERVIEWER: That's good.
5145		REVEREND VIVIAN: And--
5146		INTERVIEWER: So we're going to have
5147		to jump to a couple of things here at
5148	01:34:34	the end because we've only got a few
5149		minutes.
5150		REVEREND VIVIAN: Right; that's

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5151		right.
5152		INTERVIEWER: Did you have anything
5153	01:34:38	to do with the Meredith march?
5154		REVEREND VIVIAN: No, none at all. I
5155		was--all I can say is that I was
5156		there in Birmingham with--who was the
5157		woman that was a great lawyer for
5158		NAACP, a woman and she became mayor
5159		of Manhattan later on? Anyway, she's
5160		quite a--and I was there when the
5161		news came. We were eating breakfast
5162		at what's it called, the motel in
5163	01:35:12	Birmingham--
5164		INTERVIEWER: Gaston?
5165		REVEREND VIVIAN: Gaston, at the
5166		Gaston Motel.
5167		INTERVIEWER: When the news came that
5168		Meredith had been shot?
5169		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right, and
5170		here's the story for you. You know
5171		what she said? No, that he had--that
5172		he was coming, coming through--see,
5173	01:35:34	because it started in Tennessee.
5174		INTERVIEWER: It started in Memphis.
5175		REVEREND VIVIAN: Memphis, right,



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5176		coming through Birmingham, because I
5177		know only because we were at that
5178	01:35:49	motel, and I got the message and she
5179		said--but will he live until
5180		nightfall? Now, that was not for
5181		Meredith--that was for the guy that--
5182		INTERVIEWER: William Moore.
5183		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, William
5184		Moore.
5185		INTERVIEWER: William Moore--that was
5186		in 1963.
5187		REVEREND VIVIAN: So he was dead and
5188	01:36:09	then he takes it up, right?
5189		INTERVIEWER: No, that's all right,
5190		because that was in '63, the final
5191		comments.
5192		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
5193		INTERVIEWER: Because SNCC was always
5194		divided to some degree between--as
5195		you put it, the by any means
5196		necessary, and there was a religious
5197		element within SNCC, too. Diane was
5198	01:36:30	part of it.
5199		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
5200		INTERVIEWER: John Lewis stayed part

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5201		of it until they threw him out.
5202		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right.
5203	01:36:36	INTERVIEWER: But then Black Power
5204		comes about in the summer of '66 by
5205		people who have been nonviolent for
5206		many years. Some of them just got
5207		tired of it, some of them never
5208		believed in it, certainly religiously
5209		and everything. How do you see it in
5210		retrospect, the split between the
5211		people who stayed with nonviolence
5212		and the people who abandoned
5213	01:36:59	nonviolence?
5214		REVEREND VIVIAN: Well, I think it
5215		became very clear that the people who
5216		stayed with nonviolence won. Just
5217		that simple. The people--when you
5218		ask, my way of asking is, who did
5219		what? Finally, in the final
5220		analysis--not who did what in that
5221		moment. Who made what happen? What
5222		did they do? Like anybody says to
5223	01:37:27	me, Malcolm or Martin? And I did
5224		that one thing in a conference,
5225		right? Tell me, what did Malcolm do?

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5226		And they all backed off, right? The
5227		same thing here--the by any means
5228	01:37:44	necessary folk, in other words, what
5229		did they do? What did they get
5230		accomplished? In fact, SNCC ended up
5231		without having students. They were
5232		not nonviolent, and they were no
5233		longer a committee. But largely
5234		because they didn't have a base, you
5235		see what I mean? SCLC only remains
5236		now because it had the church as a
5237		base. It had a base that was
5238	01:38:16	important, right? In fact, there's
5239		no reason for SCLC to still be alive,
5240		truthfully, but because of the church
5241		they stayed alive in language and
5242		etcetera, right? Now, so that when
5243		you had guys like Foreman [phonetic]
5244		talking about "we'll kick the legs
5245		out from under you," they wanted him
5246		to try it. They just wanted an
5247		excuse to kill him. That was always
5248	01:38:53	the truth with everything, right?
5249		But they didn't even think he was
5250		important enough to kill. You see,

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5251		the real question when people say--
5252		are you worthy to be killed? I mean,
5253	01:39:11	people don't want to kill everybody.
5254		They don't want to kill certain
5255		people. They only kill the ones that
5256		will make the difference, right? The
5257		rest of them are just something to
5258		play with, and that's the way I see
5259		most such movements.
5260		INTERVIEWER: Let's close just our
5261		last few minutes a little bit on your
5262		relationship with Dr. King. What
5263	01:39:38	stands out about your--I mean, he's
5264		going through a lot. He's always
5265		expecting to be killed. Did you have
5266		any personal moments with him, or
5267		what sticks out in your memory about
5268		the course of life or a reflective--I
5269		know you talked once about, you gave
5270		him the news that Vernon Johns had
5271		died, that at one point he told you
5272		that you didn't--he asked you, did
5273	01:40:01	you think he knew what he was talking
5274		about when he was talking about the
5275		Vietnam War. So you had some

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5276		personal conversations--what sticks
5277		out in your mind there?
5278	01:40:10	REVEREND VIVIAN: The first one was
5279		when I did a 24-page piece on him
5280		very early in the movement, right
5281		after he won in Selma, in--
5282		INTERVIEWER: Montgomery.
5283		REVEREND VIVIAN: In Montgomery, when
5284		he won in Montgomery, right--he was
5285		getting an honorary doctorate from
5286		Fisk and I went out to cover him
5287		because I was an editor of the Sun
5288	01:40:35	school publishing part, right? And I
5289		did a 24-page piece on him of which
5290		that was one of the pieces, and the
5291		rest of it was various articles that
5292		he had done and copy under pictures
5293		about Montgomery. That was the first
5294		one that we talked things out right
5295		there following on Fisk campus,
5296		following the Fisk thing. He and I
5297		met on the Fisk campus and had a
5298	01:41:12	conversation. That's when I knew
5299		that he was the man he should be.
5300		That's when I knew, because I'd

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5301		already been in nonviolent direct
5302		action, get my point? And to me, I
5303	01:41:25	was finding out whether he can go
5304		weather the storm beyond Montgomery
5305		and I came to the conclusion that he
5306		not only could but he was the ideal
5307		person for us, just like Obama
5308		suddenly becomes a genius and steps
5309		out from nowhere, right, and becomes
5310		president. Martin was the first of
5311		these and I call him the prophet of
5312		our age--line after line talking and
5313	01:41:56	reading, Martin stands out. Martin
5314		said violence creates more problems
5315		than it solves, right? That was in
5316		that first speech and I thought this
5317		man is, you know, guided, right? And
5318		I was beating out against a
5319		background of nine years before, nine
5320		and ten years before, because there
5321		were those years when he was doing
5322		movement in the north, right? This
5323	01:42:28	is the spiritual insight, the
5324		religious insight. This is the
5325		knowledge that was going to make the

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5326		difference, and when Martin--when I
5327		understood from Martin the kind of
5328	01:42:41	stuff, the line when he was saying
5329		that the change that must happen was
5330		not legal. The change that must
5331		happen was moral and spiritual,
5332		right, and that the basis upon which
5333		we would move was that.
5334		INTERVIEWER: A couple of last
5335		things--do you remember your last
5336		conversation with him?
5337		REVEREND VIVIAN: Oh, no.
5338	01:43:09	INTERVIEWER: You don't?
5339		REVEREND VIVIAN: No.
5340		INTERVIEWER: Do you remember a joke
5341		he told?
5342		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, I do remember
5343		one.
5344		INTERVIEWER: That can be told in an
5345		oral history.
5346		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, yeah, that's
5347		right. No, it's a very simple one
5348	01:43:22	and it always makes a point. He was
5349		making a point. The guy went to buy
5350		a race horse, right? Do you know

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5351		this one? He says do you know this
5352		one? A guy went to buy a race horse
5353	01:43:35	and so the fellow was showing him the
5354		race horse and he said, now, let me
5355		show you this horse. He says boy,
5356		this horse is quite a horse. He says
5357		he used to this and he used to that,
5358		right, so Martin--or the guy in
5359		Martin's story says, well, show me
5360		another one. And he says, well,
5361		here is a horse--look at him, see how
5362		sleek he is, he's going to be a great
5363	01:44:16	horse. And Martin said I don't want
5364		to see a has-been or a will-be; I
5365		want to see a must-is, or a now-is.
5366		See, that's the kind of joke stuff
5367		out of Martin that I always
5368		appreciated. I don't care nothing
5369		about what you were going to do, what
5370		you thought you were about, I mean,
5371		what are you doing right now? And
5372		it's that minute thing in terms of
5373	01:44:56	the scriptures, right? It's in the
5374		now that life is lived.
5375		INTERVIEWER: So anything else about



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5376		him with the various people around
5377		him, are there any outstanding
5378	01:45:07	memories of his relations with people
5379		that you would like to leave, because
5380		we've only got a minute or two.
5381		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, Ab--and I'll
5382		say the quick form because I don't
5383		think you've heard it in any other
5384		form.
5385		INTERVIEWER: Ab meaning Abernathy.
5386		REVEREND VIVIAN: Abernathy, yeah.
5387		INTERVIEWER: You all called him Ab.
5388	01:45:25	REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, that's right-
5389		-Ab could have been the leader. I
5390		don't know whether I mentioned that
5391		today or not. Ab could have been the
5392		leader, and in a time when black
5393		people--as we used to say, the only
5394		board you could serve on if you were
5395		black was the deacon board. Here was
5396		the biggest thing in the nation, Ab
5397		could have been it because he had all
5398	01:45:54	the connections but he refused to do
5399		it and gave it to Martin. The other
5400		thing that stands out like that was

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5401		that everybody--I mean, most of the
5402		people that surrounded him were older
5403	01:46:09	than he. But it didn't get in their
5404		way because they knew how bright he
5405		was, and his leadership abilities
5406		were far beyond anybody else in the
5407		group, and if you notice, when Martin
5408		left, it was all over, because he was
5409		the only one that could hold
5410		everybody together.
5411		INTERVIEWER: He had all those big
5412		egos and personalities and it didn't
5413	01:46:35	bother him.
5414		REVEREND VIVIAN: It didn't bother
5415		him a bit. And it wasn't because
5416		they didn't have any place else to
5417		go--they didn't, but that was not
5418		Martin's reason. Martin knew their
5419		talents, saw them and understood,
5420		with these we can move, and made it
5421		happen anyway. Ab also, when we're
5422		speaking of people surrounding him,
5423	01:47:01	Ab was also his--here's where we get
5424		to some of those words that we don't
5425		mention in public, but he was a guy

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5426		that used to be a very popular word,
5427		but he was Ab settled everything that
5428	01:47:21	Martin, so Martin wouldn't have to
5429		settle anything that he didn't want
5430		and they didn't see that Martin
5431		should settle, they settled. And
5432		it's those--a memory of Martin that
5433		is always with me when I think like
5434		this is that we would have a party
5435		out to his house occasionally and
5436		we'd always end it with singing and I
5437		can see Martin now sort of rocking
5438	01:47:57	back and forth on his heels singing
5439		"There Is a Balm in Gilead." And I
5440		can see him now. I mean, it was just
5441		a wonderful kind of thing, the depth
5442		of this guy, something that should be
5443		known. He started a philosophical
5444		organization when he was a senior--I
5445		think it was when he was a junior at
5446		Boston U. He was always there
5447		thinking. When you saw Martin, you
5448	01:48:37	always know he's thinking. The thing
5449		that stood out for me with Martin
5450		always is that Martin understood

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5451		timing. That's a thing that stood
5452		out for me with Martin. He
5453	01:48:50	understood timing. He was never
5454		pushed into anything. He never had
5455		to back up on anything. He always
5456		understood timing, when to move, when
5457		not to move, right? When to say
5458		things and when to later say them.
5459		And that's basic to his leadership.
5460		I was trying to think of some other
5461		kinds of things that would come right
5462		quick, right?
5463	01:49:25	INTERVIEWER: That's good. Last
5464		thing, just on you personally,
5465		looking back on all of this career--
5466		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
5467		INTERVIEWER: --That you've had, with
5468		Dr. King in the movement and since
5469		the movement, you've been involved in
5470		a lot of things.
5471		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
5472		INTERVIEWER: What do you think of
5473	01:49:40	most about your legacy?
5474		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's one of your
5475		questions--

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5476		INTERVIEWER: That you don't want to
5477		get.
5478	01:49:46	REVEREND VIVIAN: When you rise to
5479		greatness--no, I don't see it--only
5480		one thing sticks out for me, that I
5481		want to keep on fighting this
5482		struggle until I am no longer here.
5483		The idea is, and I'm sort of using
5484		this, is that a great movement, a
5485		great people's movement, it's
5486		necessary to have it followed with
5487		the multiplicity of minor but
5488	01:50:23	important issues, okay? So the
5489		movement goes on, and you're moving
5490		but on a multiplicity of fronts, now,
5491		not on one big front, and I think
5492		people's movements make that
5493		necessary, that all of that is
5494		necessary. You've got to put it
5495		together. I'm trying to put together
5496		an organization right now and I'll
5497		give you an idea of why I'm doing it
5498	01:50:54	and I'll say it right quick, right?
5499		I want to see that we create up to a
5500		million black people a year that pass

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5501		the ACT test at a high level. We've
5502		got a method to do it right now,
5503	01:51:18	doing it all right, just sent a girl
5504		to Princeton that is--you can only
5505		get a 36; she's got a 32. She's at
5506		Harvard level. The point is, it's
5507		because given the global world in
5508		which we live, what we have known as
5509		good is not good enough. And I think
5510		that we will be right back as
5511		janitors of the world if we do not
5512		solve this problem. I think it's the
5513	01:51:50	saving problem. I've come to the
5514		conclusion that following freedom
5515		always, it has to have education.
5516		Education must always follow freedom.
5517		Whatever degree of which you gain
5518		freedom, it has to be followed with a
5519		greater degree of education.
5520		INTERVIEWER: I think that's a great
5521		place to leave it.
5522		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, okay.
5523	01:52:15	FEMALE VOICE 1: It is, except I want
5524		to go back to the story that you
5525		didn't tell, you were talking about

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5526		the Sunday morning when the parents
5527		came to sing to the children in the
5528	01:52:24	jail.
5529		REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah.
5530		FEMALE VOICE 1: Can you tell that
5531		story?
5532		REVEREND VIVIAN: Oh, yeah, I know.
5533		He knows it, but let's just tell it
5534		so that you've got it on tape. The
5535		ministers had already decided that
5536		they were going to let out church at
5537		a certain time and that all the
5538	01:52:40	church members were going to march
5539		over to the jail, right? When they
5540		got there, and they did it with all
5541		their--to sing to their children,
5542		right? And when they got there, and
5543		they didn't undress or redress or
5544		anything--just right coming out of
5545		church, and when they got there,
5546		there was a line of hoses, firemen
5547		with hoses there, and what's his
5548	01:53:12	name, the sheriff--
5549		INTERVIEWER: Bull Connor.
5550		REVEREND VIVIAN: Bull Connor was

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5551		there, and when the people came up,
5552		he said "turn on the hoses, turn on
5553	01:53:22	the hoses." And they looked at him,
5554		and his people looked at him--they
5555		were down on his knees with the
5556		hoses, but they looked at him as
5557		though, what are you talking about?
5558		The people prayed and when they got
5559		up is when he said turn on the hoses,
5560		and people of god were there. The
5561		hoses didn't turn on. The firemen
5562		got up and walked away and the people
5563	01:53:50	of god walked forward and they sang
5564		the songs of Zion to their children
5565		in the jail.
5566		INTERVIEWER: That was called the Red
5567		Sea March because it parted--
5568		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right.
5569		INTERVIEWER: Reverend Billups, I
5570		think.
5571		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's what I was
5572		going to say is that Billups was the
5573	01:54:12	leader, all right? Billups was the
5574		one that got down and started the
5575		prayers. Billups was a friend of



## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5576		mine before the movement. A very few
5577		people--
5578	01:54:21	INTERVIEWER: Not many people know
5579		him. Could you just mention a word
5580		about Billups and we'll stop?
5581		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's right.
5582		INTERVIEWER: Charles Billups was his
5583		name.
5584		REVEREND VIVIAN: That's exactly
5585		right. Let me give you Billups--
5586		Billups was a perfectly dressed guy
5587		all the time, very thin kind of guy,
5588	01:54:40	and he was always immaculate, right?
5589		Billups could sell anything, and
5590		Billups loved the movement. He'd
5591		been waiting for something like this.
5592		He'd been in the army. He knew about
5593		explosives and all that sort of
5594		thing, but he was really taken in by
5595		nonviolence and understanding it and
5596		moving with it. He saw it as the
5597		answer. Billups was so good that he
5598	01:55:12	would spend all his time in the
5599		movement until the last couple weeks
5600		when he had to turn in all of his

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5601		sales and stuff--we worked for two
5602		weeks and had more to turn in than
5603	01:55:23	the other guys working for six to
5604		eight weeks. He was that kind of
5605		person. Billups was beaten--one of
5606		these little filling stations, there
5607		were always Klans around them because
5608		they were all part of the same stuff,
5609		and they followed Billups one night
5610		as he was going home out a road. And
5611		they cut him off, they tied him to a
5612		tree and beat him until he just fell,
5613	01:56:01	right? But in the process, after he
5614		laid there for about a half hour or
5615		so, he thought--right, that's the way
5616		he tells it, and Jim Lawson has
5617		written this story up for one of the
5618		magazines, by the way, some time ago.
5619		And Billups lay there and he came to
5620		the conclusion, he said, because we
5621		talked about it--he said he came to
5622		the conclusion that--it was right off
5623	01:56:32	the highway or a road, a two lane
5624		road, and he decided that if he could
5625		get to the road, maybe a car would

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5626		take him to the hospital, and he
5627		crawled out of there until he got
5628	01:56:54	over to the road, saw a car coming,
5629		and he tried to wave it down and it
5630		didn't stop, and the next one he went
5631		right out on--he crawled right out on
5632		the road. He said I'm going to die
5633		anyway. Maybe it will stop them and
5634		maybe they'll take me to the hospital
5635		and he's on a road that didn't
5636		necessary have all that kindness in
5637		it for anybody black, but he did and
5638	01:57:25	the people put him in the car and
5639		took him to the hospital and saved
5640		his life. Billups was that kind of
5641		person. Billups followed the
5642		movement to Chicago, and he worked
5643		for one of the stores for a while.
5644		They gave him a five-year pin and he
5645		hadn't been there but a year.
5646		INTERVIEWER: He's a character.
5647		That's great.
5648	01:57:51	REVEREND VIVIAN: He really was
5649		great--
5650		INTERVIEWER: That march was May 5th

## Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5651		or 6th, 6th or 7th, 1963. Let's stop
5652		there.
5653	01:57:58	REVEREND VIVIAN: Yeah, just one more
5654		line on this--when Martin was shot, I
5655		heard it on the way home on the way
5656		to my house coming from downtown
5657		outer drive in Chicago, and so as I
5658		entered the house, the wife said "Are
5659		you going?" Split level going up to
5660		the side, and she was over there and
5661		while I was packing Billups comes
5662		over and Billups says, "Are you
5663	01:58:30	going?" and I nodded my head, and he
5664		said "Wait for me." Now, the rest of
5665		the Billups part of this story, we
5666		get out to airport and the plane is
5667		coming in with the band, with the bed
5668		basket band, and so we stand there
5669		and talk until we have to go to the
5670		plane, right, and when we get to the
5671		motel we go out and pick out the
5672		casket, really. Guys--they weren't
5673	01:59:07	waiting for us, they just, we
5674		happened to--we were trying to get to
5675		the motel. The guys were leaving and

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
5676		we jumped in the car with him and we
5677		were sitting all up on each other's
5678	01:59:18	laps and stuff because the car was
5679		packed, but when Billups got back to
5680		the hotel and opened his suitcase,
5681		there wasn't anything in it but ties.
5682		INTERVIEWER: He took the wrong
5683		suitcase?
5684		REVEREND VIVIAN: No, he just, he was
5685		so frustrated with them, he just
5686		threw stuff in, but he didn't throw
5687	01:59:42	anything in but ties.
5688		[laughter]
5689		FEMALE VOICE 1: That's a great
5690		story.
5691		INTERVIEWER: Yeah--
5692		[audio ends abruptly]
5693		[END afc2010039_chrp0006_mv4.wmv]