

MFDP Chapter 20

MRS. JOHNIE MAE WALKER

Interview

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Mrs. Johnnie Mae Walker

Negro woman in Hattiesburg, Miss.

FDP: (SNCC) field secretary and local leader
often does speaking tours.

A: ...really quite the story, because I really don't know how I did, you know. Let me see. It started with John O'Niell, and the new idea. You see, I wasn't always active, but I was always hanging around places where people were. And John O'Niell and the kids, they came here in sixty-two. And a bunch of kids that I knew from around this community, they began to catch hold of this thing, and began to talk. They going out, "what you doing?" They talking about organizing: "Organizing what and fuck what?" I guess I always had a question. And then a very good friend of mine got involved; named Charles Glen. And they called the first massmeeting in Hattiesburg; which was attended by about four people, and I was one of those people. We were the ones to see what was going on. But the people were harrassed so...they just didn't come. And then they began to study strategy: who can get a crowd of people, and who can speak to people. So after Dr. Henry had ran in the senatorial election, people began to think about Dr. Henry, and Dave Dennis and Bob Moseley brought Dr. Henry into Hattiesburg to the Masonic Temple, and that night, that building was tight. I mean we had the police there with the same type of harrassment, we had the fire department there with the water hose. But at this point I guess don't know what happened. I guess don't know what made it give. People just really went. You see, we had as many people on the outside of that building as was on the inside of that building that night. We had the likes of them at that meeting that night that have never been since. But nevertheless they were there. And I began to think. And then they started talking about the idea of registering to vote. And I began going to citizenship classes. I was really old enough...see, at the time, they were called adult education calsses, see, because people, Mississippi people in general, they fear citizenship. So what we done was we told a few lies: we said this was Adult Education, and people came, people began to understand the vote; people began to understand why that mayor was downtown and why he acted like he act. And guests wpuld sort of drift in with me. When people began to really get to working hard in sixty-three in Greenwood and across the state, getting ready for the summer of sixty-four, I said "Well, a meeting." Bob Moses was speaking. He asked "how many people was going to submit themselves." I said, "Well, I'm going to heap just as much as I can, but I'm not going to get involved. And I just started sorting over the whole thing. And once you start learning and developing, the more you want to learn, and the more time you give to something. And that's the way it came about with me.

Q: Did you ever join a Civil Rights organization? Did you join SNCC, or...

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A: Never have. Never belonged...not one of them organizations, because all them is is staff meetings. Every staff meeting they hold, I go, because I think that if the people in this country, the whole country. And I think that people in the whole country should voice their opinion in those meetings, so I go. I've voiced my opinion with the National Council of Churches; I've voiced it with CORE; I've voiced it with SNCC, and I've voiced it with SCRC. I tell them all that I think; just me. I just tell them.

Q: What about the FDP? What is your condition in the FDP?

A: I'm a member of the FDP, and I said it. And here lately i've began to take ahold of this new image the FDP they've formed, and I have began organizing work in the FDP in counties that had never been taught before, and building people from the precinct level to the county: giving them information. You see, I don't think you need no position. I think you can develop leadership in a place. All you got to do...you got to get out there and give people information. Information is the key to leadership. That's what I think. At least, that is the direction which I worked in. "I know something that I can tell you. Then you can use it and help yourself, not me help you." See when I look at it, I see that too many people been helping too many people, and that's why it's in a mess. Let people think for themselves, that's what I believe about it. And I believe if you push an issue where you are right, or wrong, if you truly believe that at the time you are right, then you got a right to fight it until you find out you are wrong. Because everybody's going to make mistakes, and you don't crucify a man for mistakes, you hope he profits by it.

Q: What do you mean by the new image of the FDP?

A: The new image for the FDP...the FDP developed last summer. It was just a few people, a precious few. The new image: we're re-organizing the whole state. We're getting people in that have never been, and letting people talk, letting people pick their committees, letting people elect everything. See when we first started, you had to go in a funabout way: you take and appoint somebody, because you were going through a learning process. But nevertheless, we're coming out of that, and people are really catching ahold. They're doing great, all over the state, because people now, they're studying the Poverty Program, and they know what it's all about. In Mississippi people didn't used to couldn't relate their everyday life to political life. Now they can. They does it quite well, because they can talke about what happened in Los Angeles, and see the same thing happening in Mississippi, and say that something ought to be done about it. You see, I think that that within itself is telling me something. This society in which we live, it has been caught up in words so long. Lots of words. And they mean nothing.

But we're telling people "no matter how bad your English is or how you talk, say what you say, and say it in the way you know to say it, and you do us a good job, and you says it very well. Don't use somebody else's English to talk what you feel." You see, to me, the same thing happened again, and I'm talking as an individual now, about the Veit Nam and the United States. We're worried to death about a war in Viet Nam, and we've got two wars. We got to cut the war off in the United States before we can even think about killing a war anyplace else. People don't deal with issues. They have learned so long and so well how to get around issues. See, people put the sun on the California route, because people were hot and frustrated; less alive. It wasn't the sun, those people been screaming oppression for so long that it's pitiful, but nobody cared and nobody listened, but they started rioting and people started listening. And they knew those people were there and they knew those people were depressed, but they didn't say that. They said they were frustrated from the sunshine.

Q: That was one thing you were talking about, I remember, back in San Francisco, was that...the relationship of the Civil Rights movement to all the kinds of things that people were protesting about in the country, like Viet Nam. How do you feel about something like the FDP taking an official stand on that?

A: No. As an individual, I think the FDP should have pushed the Viet Nam crisis one hundred per cent. But then again, that's not practical politics, you see, now that we've had a look at it. My friend LeMarley (?) she was everything...the right thing to do, for the simple reason that we screamed that people was voted in the state of Mississippi, and was elected illegally. And I also think that President Johnston making the decisions that he making is illegal, because half the people... two-thirds of the people didn't have anything to say about that war. He said "put your troops in Viet Nam," and a people went. They all say he died for his country, but they don't know that he's just as dead if he didn't have a country. See, what I say, I say why kill anybody, but I don't know who else feel that way.

Q: I think that a lot of people are getting to feel that way more and more. About the FDP, then, would you agree with Mr. Guyot saying that it's the only organization now that's issue oriented?

A: Yes, I do. And I also agree with my concept of it. It's the only thing in this country that's really foing to deal with the people that are effected by the system. And what I mean by that; I mean poor jobs, poor houses, poor living, period. See, because you can take...you

haven't just begun to have Civil Rights movements, you know. You've been having them for a long time. You look at the NAACP, and you look at what they stand for. They all deal with the militant Negro, the more upper class middle class Negro. But you see, the middle class Negro, he's not effected nowadays, because he's living all right. The FDP is about poor people and deprived people, and we have lots more poor and deprived people than we do rich people. And it's time for these people to speak, and people are talking now. They know they living improperly, and don't feel like I'd feel. They haven't got no business living that way. They want to know why. And I thinks they're fair. And you take the poverty program...see, all this stuff, it relates, it come in together if you understand it. You take the poverty program and you take poor people, and you need about twenty times the money you have before you can effect anybody's life properly, than what you got. So what do you do? See, and people looking now for the first time. They saying, especially the Negro in the Mississippi Delta, the poor people. I'm talking about the people really effected by this thing. They saying: "How can Lyndon Johnson talk about a Poverty Program, and doing something for the Negro and the poor people, when we know he's not?" They raising questions about Lyndon Johnston and the position of the whole poverty program, because they sayin "I'm a farmer, and the school-teachers that's working down here starve. I'm a farmer, and the middle class Negroes reckon for the community Center and the Doctor. This don't ring no bell. This don't touch me. How? I mean, what he think we is? What he think we going to do?" See, and I'm naive enough to think, that if people talk and ask those questions long enough, somebody going to listen. They just got to. People say they was stupid for a handful of Negroes that go to Washington, and challenge the Mississippi delegation in the House of Representatives. But see I think people are stupid because right now I see great prospects o' that child's learning. Yeah, I do. Really. See, I sees five guys are gonna be unseated, but I also see they're gonna be seated back. And therefore I would just organize enough people. And then if they hold up, but we can, we know, one thing, we can elect one congressman after five if they unseat all five, because the Black Belt of the delta, of the Mississippi Delta, they outnumber the whites there six to one. And see, you know what they're doin' now? They're takin' a position. They're givin' away with sterilization now in the delta tryin' to curb the Negroe population in the delta. They're doin' all kinds o' things and usin' all kinds o' tactics, and people are talkin' about that. And they want to know why these people do these sort o' things

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to them. But you know, you don't ask no question. It's because you told it's right. See, it just like the Chief of Police in Jackson, you know, Thomason, yeah Thomason. He was talking. He said "What do the Negro want?", an' I say "What you got?" That's what we want. We don't want you to give us a thing." See waht I'm sayin'? We talk a lot now, to the judge, the mayor, and anybody else. And see, it's another thing. People are ready to die. Not black people, depressed people. They're ready to die and they don't care 'bout dyin'. Reason they don't care about dyin' is they haven't got nothing anyway. Can't even be a man, you know, then the people gonna degrade him, because o' what he is. But who responsible for him bein' what he is? So these the kind o' questions people's talkin' about now. And they don't stop that jazz just talkin' among theyselves. They talkin' it to everybody, because they sayin' now we want answers, we wanna know. And they gonna know. They say this country's got a democracy, but I say Mississippi gonna show them where they got one and gonna call it what it is. See, what you don't know. Alabama got them a democratic freedom party now. An' see, they're gonna pop up all over this country, and I just don't know waht gonna happen if a third party system come in. But when we organize, we don't organize to be no third party. We organize to be the democrats of Mississippi, 'cause we use their dialogue, their rules, and everything else. The only thing we did different that they didn't do; we accepted them, they didn't accept us. And we finally started on the position that we are the democrats of Mississippi

Q. Don't you think if more F.D.P.'s started springing up around the country that it would result in a third party system?

A. I think so, yes. But see, what I really don't know, I don't know if they're gonna be good or bad. I really don't know. But see, I don't think if I was structuring this country I'd allow that to develop, for the first thing. They just won't have it. And maybe this is the way they start dealing with the problem.

Q. Because they'll have to accept it?

A. Right. See, when you got a split party system, everybody gonna deal with the issues, 'cause everybody's tryin' to swing votes. And that's the only thing. I think it'll be good if it's a split party system was to develop over the whole country. Because, to me, without a whole lot of violence and a lot a' people bein' dead, this the only way we're gonna make it, is with the split party system. Because in a split party system, every vote becomes very important. See, you don't need a million. It only take

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one vote to win an election. You see, that's what we doin'. we educatin' people to fight what could happen. And it's good to think about what could happen, because in the past nothin' has happened, you know. And, see, what gonna be hard for the people to take is the white power structure, I mean when I say that. See these poor white people beginnin' to come to the F.D.P. now. They are.

Q. Yeah, that's what Mrs. Gray said. People come to get clothes and food and things.

A. That's right. These poor white people is comin'. See these poor white people is gettin' information that this man, this rich man never told them before. They knowin' why thing's happening, and why they can say, "I'm better than the Negro, but I can't do any better, you know. I live in property. I live in a shack. My kids have eat and my kids have go to school. But they don't tell me I look better." Now they want to know "Where is it?" And now they understand they fightin' nothing but skin color. They still deprived and depressed. They're talkin' like that. And more and more it's gonna shake this country, 'cause more poor people gonna get involved. See, like, Sheriff downtown asked me, "What do you niggers want?" I said, "You mean, what do us poor folks want?" I said, "Because this is a long way from a Negro home right now." I said, "This movement is becomin' to develop what we tried to develop a long time ago where this all about and where it's at." See, it gets a type of sickness, and I really think we don't really want to destroy or manipulate anybody. I think we want to put people in positions that they can do their job what they were picked to do and know how to do it. And the reason they had do it is the people voicin' their opinion and breathing down the back o' these people. See, when I look at the Mississippi delegation, I don't blame them one bit for what they do. 'Cause they don't owe me nothin'; I didn't give them no job. But maybe once I started votin', you know, and givin' you guys the job, maybe they start doin' something different. I don't know, maybe. You see, you can't ask the man to work for you when you never give him no job to work.

I mean, my feelin' about politics, to me, I relates them to the moral standard of life. See, I don't think it's a privilege for any man to have to do anything, you know, I think his rights, human rights. I shouldn't register to vote for the privilege; I register for the right. That's one of the things I must do because I want to do it, and not because nobody say it. Not like, you know, I got to be grateful. See, 'cause I go all over the state, and I tell these people about gettin' up in the meetings, talkin' about the gratitude to the white people for comin' here. You know, this my country too, and we don't have nothin'. Try to straighten up a mess that he develop. See I don't believe in bein' all gratified to no body, 'cause when you

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do that, you're gonna fall into the same old mess, and you not gonna solve the problem. See, I don't think you here 'cause I'm here, I think you here because you see something very wrong with your country and you want to help straighten it. See, I'm not gonna thank you for that, because that's something one has to determine to do himself. I'm not gonna thank anybody that ever came here for not one thing. Because you do it because it's right for you to do it. I do it because it's right for me to do it. And there's another thing's gonna happen. People talk about thing's gonna get better, but they're gonna get a hell of a lot worse before they get any better. People haven't died yet. Beg your pardon?

Q. What things or in what ways?

A. People haven't died like they're gonna die. Or else, specifically speaking of the South. See, for one reason. The southern white man is threatened, and he's afraid. He'd kill me and my kids, and you just as quick as anything in the world just to try to protect, what? Somethin! but he couldn't even describe to you what it is himself. It gets a type of sickness. The man is ill; he might as well face it. But see, I want to know how. This is my question now. We movin' and we advancin' and we say we don't want to leave nobody out, but how you gonna deal wi' the Ku Klux Klans? How you gonna deal wi' the White Citizen's council? See, the segregation's in the Klan's. Won't be killin' people, they'll be killin' niggers. See, an' they can't afford to take nothin'; they're killin' nothin' but niggers. And you want to know why? The minute they start thinkin' of you as a human being, they can't kill you.

Q. Because they're supposedly Christians.

A. Right. See, that's why they kill niggers. They couldn't say, "I'm gonna kill Johnnie Mae Walker, Negro woman, mother of two children!" they couldn't say that. See, because conscience come in there. So they say, "Will you get that nigger." See, that's how segregationists think, and that's the type they're givin' us. But nevertheless we got to think inside our minds the concept how we deal with these people, 'cause it's gonna come to that. How much are you willin' to give, see? I seen a lot of people say, "This is it, and I'm gonna work," but I also see them retreatin' when the fightin' get hot. See, what I'm sayin', I don't know how much they're really gonna give. I don't know how much they're ready to take, because we're gonna have to give a whole lot. Because the more we mobilize people, the more people we get in the thing, the more lives gonna be in jeopardy. You see, I just don't know. I got a lots o' questions myself.

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Q. Do you think the whole bit is going to get more violent before the trouble is solved?

A. Right! See, you look at the young man got killed in Lawrence county, Alabama last week, you look at the sixteen year old kid that got killed in Woolward last week. You look at a man about thirty-nine years old, a very ill man, he was, you know, he got killed last week over in Jefferson county. And you look at how many people there's really bein' punished for those murders. See, there's somebody behind those people, really. Go see how many of them's ever been punished. See, you look at the Shannel boy who killed the constable, and then you look at Sheriff Raney and Price who pulled the triggers that killed three people, you know. So you see the Shannel boy in jail, and you see the sheriff and the rest of those guys walkin' around. See, I'm sayin', how much do the people think the black folks in this country gonna take? Before they take a stand and say "I may as well get out 'cause I don't have anything anyway?" They not gonna take much of that anyway, 'cause see, Hattiesburg, about a month or so back, when that Shannel case was goin' on, baby, this was one of the most frustratin' places you ever seen. You could feel the tension in the courtroom, you could feel it on the floor. You see they done buried their frustration. And they just keep buryin' it, but after a while you just can't bury no more, you know. And something just gonna have to happen.

Q. Seems like, you know, right now with the voting rights and the challenge, these two things, they...

A. See, but people of Mississippi, they not talkin' about their votin' rights, dear. Just because you got the right to vote doesn't mean you can vote. On August 17 they was voting on this referendum, and they closed the polls to people. They closed the door to polls in people's face, and they were registered voters. Half of them were, you know, really dead, going out in the courthouse trying to raise some votes. All this stuff gettin' talked about, and then when you go to vote you get the polls slammed in your face, the door of the poll. See, how much of this is people gonna take before they react. I seen people really hit the street and want to get out there and do something. I seen them want to fight behind their referendum.

Q. Yeah.

A. Okay. Oh, God. What else you want to ask me?

Q. Well, actually we've got a whole lot more questions, so maybe we'd better stop now, and continue it later. About not having to be grateful for outside help because people are helping themselves. What do you think is the roll of white people from the north, from outside, you know, in this movement?

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AZWhat do I think is the role in the movement of the people outside the state?

Q. Yes.

A. I think for the first time, in my mind, they's beginning to matter. They's tryin' to understand that something's badly wrong. And they want to straighten this. But see, you look at the proposition, and what's happening. See, last year Mississippi's what was happening. This was a place where you could start to deal with this problem that exists out through this country. So kids come to Mississippi. See, I have questions too I want to ask them. See, they say it's the poor people are deprived and doin' all the routin' and all that. But nevertheless, I seen what they call this middle-class, upper middle-class society. I seen them kick up too, and I wonder what makes them feel they's 'cause.... According to the structure of this country, they have everything they want, you know. They got money, nice car, plenty clothes, nice home, but what make 'em rebel? What make 'em feel they left out of something? See, an' I think it the thing that gonna continue to exist between the people. Just somethin's there, badly wrong. See, I think that I'm workin' myself half to death to try to make everybody middle-class. I don't hate the middle-class life. I think everybody should have good houses, good food, good automobiles and whatever they want. But the idea of the middle class is what most people don't like, you know, most poor people. It's because when you live in the middle-class life you cut off half of your best life because you cut off communication with too many people. You go lock yourself out to be acceptable. Why you have to be acceptable for anyone? Why'd you have to wear a nice cashmere suit when you want to wear dungarees for anybody to accept you as a nice human being or a lady? Why you do these things, see, that's what I want to know. That's what bothers me, 'cause I don't know.

Q. Do you think the thing that bugs people about middle-class society is something that's found in more exaggerated form in Mississippi, and that's why they come here?

A. Right. See, I think people that come here, at least out of two years I noted and the kids in the state this year, I haven't seen one that was very poor, not a poor kid. But I also seen 'em; they tryin' to deal with the problem. And they're askin' themselves why, why we're not happy. They got so much to offer. See, I see the middle-class kid that's come down here during these two years, they seen more peace and more understanding exists within the poor people's society than they do they's own. And they try to figure how can I have this. Theybeen cut off from people, that's what it is. They always been taught the same things you accept and the same things you don't. And see, ninety per cents of the kids now want to be a part of that very thing they told not to accept.

they told not to accept, and they just don't know how to deal with it. See, I seen 'em come here, they wear these sweatshirts, these bluejeans, these sneakers, and they feel real good, they can really live. But you see 'em at home, their parents, they go to the old sixty-two, you got to do everything distinct. You can't leave a paper lyin' on the floor; you can't put your feet on that table. And the result, we got all their friendship 'cause they could do like they want. They came down, they really began to enjoy their life, you know, I mean you can't really say nothin'. not to those people, "Don't do that." Because they got a privilege, a liberty, and a right they never had before, that they been denied, you see. See, what I'm sayin' people cut their kids off from 'em, really cut 'em off. They don't know if they's sit around with their feet on the table, put their clothes in the middle of the floor, don't pick 'em up, stuff like that. They's a series o' things make these people develop and feel like they feel. And nevertheless people do this to these people and really don't understand, understand what they're doin' to their lives. I think they really got to consider what they're doin' to their lives, of these people. See, I want to know how far's we gonna go before we stop degradin' a man for what he is. See, I think if a guy don't want to do nothin' but fish, don't want to do nothing at all, you know, just lay around, I think he's still a man. Why we got to call him a bum? Because, you know the reason we call him a bum? He don't come up to our own little qualification of being a man. And see, what do it really takes for him to be a man?

Q. Do you feel what you're working or fighting for is this freedom to be whatever one likes?

A. Right. See, I'm not goin' to be that small, 'cause just like I say, I want everybody to be middle-class, I want everybody to have some money; I want everybody to have some clothes; I want everybody to have some food if they want it. But I still say you got to build an atmosphere in which people can relate to people and exist within this. And what I mean about that, because I got it, it don't make me no better than you because you don't have it. See, and that come under the line of re-evaluatin' the system, re-evaluatin' lots o' things. See, just like you can take the American dollar; people say the American dollar isn't powerful but they's crazy, say it's not powerful, that's a lie. The American dollar's powerful as anything in this country. See if you can name me three countries besides Red China and Cuba that ain't pullin' for that American dollar. See, it's a value; everybody wants it.

But see, once we re-evaluate that dollar, it's not goin' to mean nothin' to other people in other countries, and it ain't goin' to mean a third as much to us, and see, I don't know whether we can stand that or not. I just don't know. See, what I'm saying: you not only fighting a political structure, you're fightin' a whole system; to me, I am. You see, because when I look at Mississippi, and see how bad it is, that's to only serve to me as a looking glass for the whole country. You see just how rotten it is. See, I don't think people should, in this country should, say, unseat the Mississippi delegation 'cause it's rotten. I think they should say to these congressmen: "Why do you work with these guys if you not as rotten as they is, see. "Cause if we're running some cats in that House of Representatives, man...you see, I'm talkin' about people's not bein' sensible enough to realize and understand what's goin' on. See, I could not say you are right; and I am workin' with you every day. You see, 'cause if I really thought you were right, I'd try to do something about it. See, that's what we tryin' to get people to see. This country don't think of people, this country think of politics, and that's bad, 'cause it's hurtin' a lot of people, I think. I say it hurt you, me, and everybody else. You can take Roy Wilkins, and then you can take Mrs. Susan Russell (?), a very sensible woman, but a very loyal talkin' woman. Take Roy Wilkin with his smooth talk. And the whole country listen at him, and half the stuff he says is nto worth to be listened at. But you take Mrs. Susan Russell (?), a very loyal talkin' woman, and a woman who will shout to get what she want known and across, but nevertheless she speakin' truth. Nobody listen at her, because the first thing they want to think she is stupid, because she shouts. You see, that's a value we placed on things. We got to revalue this stuff. You see, Mr. Wilkins, last week, taken a position that I knew Susan Rufin (?) wouldn't have taken, and I have known Susan Ruffin (?) that long. He taken the position...he say "Break up that riot in Los Angeles. Kell 'em. Kill 'em, and just do anything, but just break up that riot." See, Susan Ruffin (?) never left. She's a live talkin' person, and she can't speak good English. She wouldn't of said that, and that's the difference. Because she don't value what Mr. Wilkins call "bein' something." See, that's what people get into when they want to become a part of a structure and a society that wasn't even built for 'em. You can't even speak true, you know. See, and that is what I think the Movement is all about. It's the truth and the love and the understanding for each other. See, because the only real love I ever seen exist in ths country exist within the structure of the Movement. That might be bad to say, but it is. See, I seen people. About ten people on a project, and it'ed be one dollar, but everybody got one dime of that dollar. I seen 'em wouldn't eat bread unless the other one eat. Whatever they had,

they shared. But see, in our society, they just don't do that sort of thing. They just don't do it, because it not important. People not important, they figure "I got, you should have, and if you ain't, it's just your hard luck." But I don't know is we ever goin' to broad the base long enough and wide enough for this to effect the whold country, but it would be beautiful if it would, because once it effected the country and began to happen in the country, it goin' to effect the world. You see, once it effect the country, Rockefeller ain't goin' to want Brazil or...he goin' to let the people use it. That's what it's over there for. Once that effect the whole country'like it should, Googyear Company is not goin' to need Africa. She goin' to let Africa have it. Banks of America not goin' to exist no longer. They goin' to let the resources there take care of the peple that is there. But until that happens, it's not goin' to happen, see. That's the reason what makes me angry. They say, our economic standard is so poor, that it can not feed a third of the population, which is goin' hungry. and everybody... see, they say that, but the Mississippi people, them poor folk, they know they're lyin'. Cause they know that every pie is open in every country, they got a finger in it. And they comin' out of it with money, but sitll we can't even feed the people that really need it here. You know that's bad. What I'm saying is, starving yourself to death, and there are lots more other people. YOU see, this United States is a big country, and everybody proud, but it makes me sick. I'm not proud. See, when I talk to a kid in Fresno, California, from Panama I think she said she were. Said she had always thought about the America, the United States as a great big, beautiful place. Said the most beautiful place. She used to dream of the day that she would come over and see that Statue of Liberty standing there. Said she just used to treasure when she'd get a peice of that American money and see "In God We Trust." Seh said "But since I been here, I found there nobody you can trust." I said "Now you done lived through the process. You can go home and tell them the United States is just a bad deal as you is at home." See, what I'm saying, We call ourselves bein' liberal-minded and good, and we just messin' up a whold world. See, 'cause the Dominican Republican, and every other country, and the surrounding countries of the United States of America watching the United State, and it's nothin' you can really tell 'em, but you got a big bomb. That's all you can tell 'em. You might can frighten 'em in your position, but that's it. And see, I got my ideas about a lots of things. And when I say my ideas, they strictly mine. I mean, like I think it just goin' to be a matter of time before Red China goin' to control the world. I think so. Because China got more people than anybody on the map. See, and China, they cannot... the United States, they cannot win a war with China unless they use a nuclear weapon, and then they goin' to destroy more than China; they goin' to destroy over three&fourths of the world population.

You see, right now if we go to gun to gun fightin', we couldn't whip Red China with a switch, and that's the truth. See, but them playin' it cool. Them's some cool people. And then, you run into all types of procedure in this movement. See, 'cause first thing some good white want to know, "are you a Communist?" You see, it makes me sick for 'em to ask me that, because I ain't ever heard enough about Communism to know what I am. Adn I tell 'em that. I don't know whether I believe in it or not; I got to first know what it is, then I can talk about it. But out of all that, this country goin' to be in a mess, and this world goin' to be in a mess until people start dealing with issues and understanding why they exist. See, people'de a heap rather find out and rationalize why you deal a thing than to face up to say "this is the reason it happened, and we got to deal with this from this and move." They're not goin' to do that. But until they do it, there goin' to be lots more people dead. See, and there goin' to be a lot more white people dead, and I don't know how the population goin' to feel about it. See, 'cause what they don't know; long as this be a Mississippi, from now on, she ain't never goin' to be the same. There goin' to be white people comin' in here to try to work and try to change things. And see, you know you just can't kill 'em all. We'll, what I'm worried about: how long it goin' to be before this country understand that and do something about it.. See, as far as I'm concerned, this is just another Hitler and the Jews process to me. See, Hitler were burning Jews, and them people didn't smell Jews. They say them people goin' to the torture chamber to take baths and everything else. And when they realized that he had killed six million people...See, and this sort of thing...what I am sayin'...you goin' to have nothin' less we stop it. And how we goin' to stop it don't ask me, I don't know. See, I just don't know. For so long, the Negro, he had believed in God. Now he done got off that bag. Don't believe it no more. And you can't blame 'em and question 'em for not believin' as strong as they have, because what has this God done for 'em, really? And what is he goin' to do for 'em? See, people now, they is comin' to the point where they sayin' God is there, probably. They real sceptical about this thing. "But if anything goin' to get done, I'm goin' to have to do it myself." So that what they doin'. They learn by doin'. See, because in January, there wasn't but fifty people in this state what believed in their challenge. They had their rights to that. See, but once they went to Capitol Hill and began to lobby, they were readin' words for the first time; little as they can read, and didn't understand things such as lobby. But we heald workshops. And they ask about them words, and we tell them in the simple terms what those words meant. And when they come off Capitol Hill, they said, "My God, How them people get there? I can run the martians (?) better than they doin'." Because for the first time in their lives, they had a chance to

see, and a chance to do. See, they had a chance to ask these "well-qualified people" so called questions and see 'em squirm, 'cause they couldn't even answer 'em. You know, "Why you here? Why you here, and what you doin' here? And what you doin' about the problem that exists in the United States?" And they stand up and they looked at these people, these people they had called simple two days before they got there, and they looked at 'em their tongues hangin' out their mouths, because they didn't know how to answer 'em. See, that just goes to show you; you don't have to use big words, but you can complicate a fellow in your own language if you talk it right. See, 'cause people had people on January the fourth to tell them: "I'm a Republican." And I seen those poor, black people from Mississippi look at 'em and say: "Man, I don't care who you is and what you is." Say, "You is a human being too, so we got to talk." And they talked. And I think Fitzryan (?), the congressman from New York, summed it up when he say; "Accordin' to school structure, former education in Mississippi; Negroes dumb. But when it come down to understanding the political structure, I don't think anybody in this country understand it any better." See, and that was a man. See, if the Freedom Democratic Party hadn't had something to offer, Fitzryan wouldn't ofwent on a limb Bill Ryan would have been a bit more...(inaudible)...resolution in the House of Representatives if he hadn't of known. See, what I'm sayin', we still got a few people there beleive, but theyse so small to be afraid to fight. But once they know they got fightin' people behind 'em, they goin' to do things. People that wants the same thing they have. See, we got a few people like that in the Government, but it's so few, all they can do is wishful thinkin', and not rely move and try to do anything, because they goin' to be torn to pieces. See, just like it was hard for people frm Mississippi to go to Capitol Hill on January Fourth, to lobby, It was hard for Fitzryan to get up in that capitol and offer up that Challenge (?) Resolution to unseat that Mississippi delegation. Because at that time, he don't know where he goin' to stand. And since them, he has been tryin' to crucify. See, they were goin' to adjourn Congress without releasin' that challenge this year. In which they supponed to have released it in July. But Fitzryan got behind that thing, and he pushed it. And now, with the results of him pushin' it, that challenge goin' to be heard, and I think that's great. But see, he couldn't do it alone. It took people from Mississippi goin' to that hill every day, talkin' and gettin' people to understand. See, the congresswoman, Edith Green, from Oregon, She was about the best woman I ever have seen. See, we had to fight hard to win Edith Green in Atlanta City. You couldn't even talk to her until we started talkin' about the brutality they were usin' among the womens and men in Mississippi. And she couldn't help...like, she wanted to help, because

she had been threatened. See, that's the problem in dealin' with them boys from the top. She had been threatened, but she told us: "Y'all fight, and fight hard for every-thing you want." She say, "because it worth your while." And just like We got Edith Green and Fitzryan, we got other people the asme way. See, we didn't have no money, we didn't have nothing but truth and bodies. And mighty few people in this country willing to deal with any type of truth. They just don't want to hear the truth. That's about all I know to say, right now, anyway.

Q: You mentioned now that in Mississippi, the Negroes feel that Mississippi is just a symptom of the whole country. Why is it that something like the Black Muslim Movement is really popular down there? Can you give any reason?

A: See, the Muslim is great in its place. I respect 'em. But see, they're doin' the same thing that the white man are doin' to 'em all the time. They teachin' Supremecyism. And that's the thing that people in Mississippi tryin' to abolish. They tryin' to get people to be people, and not better than nobody else. See, as long as you better than anybody else, can't nobody talk to you. Long as you better than anybody else, you refuse to understand anybody else. So that's why...what the Mississippi people talking about. See, I had a great deal of respect for Malcolm X as a man, but I did not learn anything...you know, I did not understand anything he said until after those few months he left the Muslims. And then, I thought that this guy can be a great statesman, if somebody don't kill him. I made that statement two months before he got killed. Because for the first time, Malcolm X began to reach the people...poor people. He talked about the man on the street. He really began to deal with the people on the street and the poverty-stricken area, and why these things exist. See, people talk about Malcolm X, but I see two things, two different Malcolms: When Malcolm was with the Muslims, he wasn't talkin' nothin', he lived. But the minute he began to understand the movement leaders, and began to cmoe off that Black Supremacy stuff, he died. And I don't think the Muslim's killed him, either. I really don't. See, 'cause Malcolm X is the only Negro that in this... in this twentieth century that I know that could really, that could really lead a mass demonstration of Negroes all over this country. Could really motivate the Negro. See, what I'm sayin', he offered people something. Martin Luther King doin' what he know how to do in his own way, and I don't criticize a man for that, because King is in the posision he in because people like me and everybody else put him there, and now you want to destroy what you made, and that's not fair either. But Malcolm X would moved the massive number of people, and he wouldn't of caught hissself in the bag...of no big, you know. He'd of moved the American teen-agers...led them up from this whole system-structure. Negroes I'm speakin' of now.

See, you can take Selma, Alabama. It was just so different with Malcolm X hating Alabama so, than it was: daylight and dark. 'Cause Malcolm X went right there, stated three words, and put hisself in a position of leadership. And if he had of wanted to, he could have taken the leadership from Dr. King. That's when he told them, he said, "Martin Luther King, he goin' to get what he want one way or tother, it really don't matter." See, and I think the guy was so brilliant, and he's very emotional type person. He really did deep thinkin'. See, when the three boys were killed last year in the Neshoba County, Malcolm X didn't say "I come for the Negro," he say, "How long you people goin' to take it? How long you goin' to let them kill you people off stead of tryin' to work and do something: be something right." He said, "If you want me, me and my crew will come creepin' through Mississippi like Jesus." See, and that's why I don't think of Malcolm X as a man teachin' hate. He was teachin' defend yourself, and I don't think he had to tell anybody that, really, 'cause anybody will defend themselves. See, but you can't talk like this around this country. You just can't talk, that's too much truth, and people not ready for the truth. 'Cause the first thing they want a brand you with is a lyngh mob; the second thing you is a Communist. See, when you speak truth, you get you a name. Because you simply spoke the truth. But until people start dealin' with truth in this country, there ain't anything we do goin' to help really. Not goin' to help you, me, or anybody else. We just got to learn simply to deal with truth, and I don't think we ready for that.

Q: How do you feel about non-violence? Do you think its more of a philosophy, or more of a tactic?

A: See, non-violent is a tactic. And if I use it, is's strictly because a tactic, that's all. See, if I'm in a demonstration with four or five hunderd people in it I know what happen to them depend on me, I'm non-violent. But if you attact me out there, brother, I'm goin' to defend myself. Ain't no use me lyin' about it. And then I can't really say I'm non-violent, cause I've never been attacked. I don't know how I'm goin' to react if somebody hit me, I really don't. I mean it's hard for us to say we non-violent, 'cause you don't know what you goin' to do until you faced with the problem.

Q: You say that perhaps another reason the Balck Muslims have become popular in the South is because they are not a Christian group?

A: Now, from my understanding, it is a Christian group. From what I understand about it. See, you take the Muslims, you take Malcolm X as a minister, as a member of the Muslims...whatever you want to call him, he was a minister.

He was; but you see, some people say the Muslims is non-religious. Other people deal with truth one way, and the Muslims deal with it another way. See what I'm saying, the Muslims is telling you--turning you against what you have been told all down through the years. And the only thing that they do wrong in their teaching is teach this sort of black like supremacy; that's the only thing they teach I don't like. Same thing for the Afro-American organization; see, I think them's some brilliant people. They got things on the ball and thinking about how to do things for other people. Really, they're mighty respected. See, and if you don't respect a man for his belief, you might just as well be a segregationist, as far as I'm concerned. 'Cause that Bill of Rights give you the right to believe anything you want to. We don't have it that way now; we're telling people what to believe. You know, and...it's just that sort of thing that exists. The Muslim got as much right to work hard for what they believe in as I got right to work hard for...to be a member of the Baptist Church. See, in the next couple of years or so, the Black Muslims will be a nonexistent operation. You know why? Because the only man they ever had who know how to do anything is dead now. When the Muslims went into business and started dealing with cooperatives and things, you think about who was leading 'em then. Think about who was making 'em independent. See, that come up under the hand of Malcolm X. They're not going to find that kind of business nowhere else, because nobody....see, I have plenty of respect for the Muslim organization, but I don't have any for Eli Muhammad. I don't believe in a man who'll sit up in a safe little corner and tell other people, "It's right for you to do this," and he do nothing. See, but that's another thing... to me, Elijah Muhammad is just as bad as Jim Clark of Selma, Alabama: 'cause he's holding a stick over those people's heads; he's tellin' 'em that crap 'bout he's God and all this stuff; see, and when he talk that stuff I want to talk to him so bad and ask him to define to me who is God and what he's all about. See, we just got to find a way to respect and care about each other, no matter who we is and where we come from. And I don't know whether we'll ever reach that or not. you see, you live, to me, and hope that this might be accomplished; you work and you die for it. Because when I can hope for it, I can wait towards the destiny, and I can feel life; I can feel alive, because I'm really doin' something I want to do. And I don't know, like we had a meetin' and I asked 'em whether we gonna continue to hope forever, or whether there's going to follow a change...See, such as in your economic structure and stuff like that. The change is coming. But people refuse to budge. People refuse to change, and it's just not ever goin' to be successful until people do change. And when I say change, I mean change; your way of life, your way of

thinking, and all of that. Your ways of valuing things, you're going to have a change in all of that; in order for it to mean very much to anybody. I don't know whether I'm making sense to you; you see, this is what I feel; this is my personal feeling about it. I'm not only fighting a political revolution; and see, that word had really cut people off in the state of Mississippi from the movement: revolution. Because the average Negro hadn't really done enough reading to know when you're talking about revolution, it don't have to be guns all the time. When you talk about revolution, they immediately relate it to guns. And when they relate it to guns, all of 'em make the decision: I don't want to die. See what I'm talking about, we're going to have to define this; and give people a lots more understanding than we have in the past. See, because this ain't the first movement, and it won't be the last one. If we don't watch these type of things that we do, we're going to be the cause of this movement's destroying it. We're really going to destroy it. See, because the way things are going, we don't move too fast for our own good. And it ain't enough changing going on within the structure of the movement. And we beginning now to fight each other. See, we can't be criticizing anybody; see, lots of times in the movement, we could stand up and criticize anybody, sit back down, nobody think anything about it; but now when you criticize, they want to ask you after the meeting why you attacked them. Criticism done become attack. You see, but what you got to understand, I was not talking to a group of people with all of them agreeing with everything I said; because they have to do the bad, something bad or wrong, ain't nobody thinking. See, we got to have rules for criticism. And lots of it is, I guess, people want us to get to know them as right...and if they're wrong, they want us to get to know 'em right anyway. And that creates a problem; see, where once we could criticize and understand where we were being criticized, then maybe, maybe the next time it won't be so bad; but now they done turned criticism into attacks: "Why you done attacked me?" See, and that's not only happening in Mississippi, it's happening all over the States, you know. I was out there in San Francisco, and the kids out there in that SNCC office couldn't get along fifteen minutes; she couldn't criticize Mike Miller; she couldn't criticize Danny Vincent, because he was...well, he was coordinator for the SNCC office; Mike Miller, he was the project director, and these guys came to be criticized, "What the hell you talkin' about?" I talk about 'em all day, because they're making some mistakes, you know. That's just it. You can't criticize someone because they got a certain position, and that's just the kind of thing we're trying to break up. Cause look at us; we've criticized entire Congressmen. Just as strong as ever. But now, we done got so that they're trying to build a Puritanical thing, that you can't be criticized. Behind this structure, no criticism. People in the movement live

the most abnormal lives from anybody I ever known. They really can't enjoy their lives, see, because they set themselves up to be killed like this. But I refuse to let it happen to me; I'm a human being and I got a set of personal rights, of things I think should happen, and I'm going to follow 'em...but the other part of my life is my life, and I'm not going to live it abnormal...I'm going to live it just like I want to. See, what I'm saying, you can't give everybody everything; you owe yourself something. Once you cut yourself off, you're not giving anybody nothing. See, we made these mistakes, and I don't know how we're ever going to right them, but we got to. People in the movement, like "Oh my lord; she drink beer; isn't that terrible?" "Oh, you see that Negro girl walking down that street with that white boy; isn't that awful?" See, I refuse to make myself a freak for anybody...because you don't tear your life up because you believe all people should eat, all people should have good jobs, and all people should wear clothes.. Nevertheless, that's something you want to see done, but you can't deny yourself any of these things, either. Because you need to talk to people, and if you drink beer, you need to drink your beer, and I tell 'em any minute I don't drink beer, I drink liquor. Most people be real shocked about it, because most of the time when I speak, I be in church. They be real shocked, see, because people not being real honest --they lying to themselves, see; they say, "I don't drink beer and so I'm good." But they're lying on people, they're breaking up homes, and doing all this stuff, see; see, what I'm saying, when we really get to be pure, we've got to stop a lot of stuff that we said we're not doing; and by doing this, you cut yourself off from a lot of people, see, because you're not really being honest. See, and that's the only seal of real honesty, I ever seen exist, was in the movement. Sure, people talk of we're wide open about everythin, in the movement, and they get criticized, they get knocked down, but they come back strong because they believe it. And you know, that's that. I really get confused myself, I get my mind confused, because I don't know what people are trying to do. But I see the things that I think we're going to have to do; but how we're ever going to get 'em done, I don't know. See, because we don't have enough people that really do believe. It's done gotten so now when we stands up to sing "We Shall Overcome," I walks out; because we ain't got the energy to overcome a dead mouse. Cause people done stopped believing, and I want to know why they stopped believing...and some of 'em hadn't ever started believing, you know, but...that's the sort of thing I thinks about, and I really want to know why things happen like that.

Q: Think people are becoming discouraged?

A: No; not really. See, when you say people are becoming

discouraged, I have to ask you how much fight can a person give, before he wears out. See, I seen people out there that were really fighters; and I knew they were fighters; now you look at them, and they're really drinkers. And it happened to every person in the movement. I just say that; because up to two years ago, I didn't drink nothing but water or Coke; see, but this is so hard, I don't know if people can't resist it or what; see, I see people having heart failures behind this stuff; the tension gets so high. What makes that? People taking medicine who've never taken medicine before. But still, whatever's there bothering them's still there.

Q: Seems to me it's like you said, the tension of not being able to separate a normal life from the movement, not being able to make a distinction.

A: See, there's a lot of things I disagree with; lots of people like to call people in the movement, the same people they like to call radical; I like to call 'em thinking people. People that are thinking, and people that really do care. Because we're not radical, not to my idea of what a radical should be; I think you should really, if you're going to be really radical, you should get out there and do something like, get yourselves some guns and some ammunition, and just kill all this stuff off and build yourself what you think you want as your goal. That's my idea of being radical. See, just like I was telling some kids this morning--they was talking about Nat Tinah, I told 'em Nat Tinah was stupid; he made one of the most foolish moves have ever been made. See, what I mean stupid and foolish, you don't start ideas you can't follow through with, in the fulfillment of that idea. And when you look at the idea really and truly, there's bound to ...When you're looking at an idea, as far as I'm concerned, you don't see nothing but a destiny which you want to fulfill. And that makes us keep from looking at it. We don't see Coma, we don't see John Barrett Williams, we don't see none of those cats. We see a plan that's taken form in our minds, that really can help other people, and nine times out of ten, it can help these boys when they get finished with it, too...understanding. Negroes done really been in the procedure of a big mess; see, now they want to jump and say, "We love all the white folks; I never hated anybody in my life." That's a lie before they open their mouth. See, before I say I love you or respect you, I want to know why the white man taken the action against the black folks that he has. Without understanding why a certain thing taking place, and while they continue to take place like this, I can't say I respect you, and I can't say I like you. Because you can't love nobody that you distrust all your life, or who cheated you of everything that you

ever had. You just don't love those kind of people over night. And see, now, we done got real good. We've got a Negro movement now--"I love my white brothers; I love my white brothers" and they stand up in the meetings and hurt some of those brothers they say they love so well. See, but that's what you get for fooling yourself in line and not telling the truth. If you spoke the truth nine times out of ten, he'd say "I don't know; but I'm trying--trying to understand." See, I don't think people are going to be so small, they're going to ask us to love them overnight. See, because this 325, nearly 400 years of frustration you're trying to get rid of, to put something in the place of...and see, I don't think people are going to ask you to deal with that right away. And..you know; they understand it's going to take time for people to do these things; really time...for people to really get to love and respect each other as human beings. See, cause some one tells you...but I've got my experiences, and I wouldn't trade them for nothing...not the experiments I've had in the last four years for nothing on earth I know. I seen myself really love some white people, couple of them around; and then I seen myself rebell and hate them. The hate was just there, and it just comes up. That's what I want you to ask her, Mrs. Ruffran, about--ask her about white supremacy. Mrs. Ruffran is a loud-talking woman, but she's got some of the best ideas I heard anybody on. She deal with the thing just like it is; she talk about it, and it's beautiful, it makes you want to understand. But most of you people from Stanford, you don't want to listen to her, because she don't say it like many people want to hear it. But nevertheless, she tells the story. She can tell about the procedure, and the steps that we are now fighting, trying to go through this thing together. And she can talk about what it's doing to the white person, and what it's doing to the Negro. It's tearing up the white person in ways it's not tearing up the Negro. She can talk about why certain white people like certain Negroes and why certain Negroes like certain white people; she can talk about the very soul-frustration of it; and I mean, I love to hear her talk about it. Because these are the things we are all going to have to know and understand before we can do anything. And she got the greatest understanding; she understands better than anyone in the state of Mississippi because she really knows what she's saying and she really knows what she means. See, anybody that can relate politics to the moral issues of life and make it make any sense, they's a proven brilliant person. She can do that. She can let you know why she want John Barrett William out, aside from hating him, some old personal feeling that she has, see, and that's what I call dealing with truth. Real truth. And I guess..I just wish you guys would finally talk to Mrs. Ruffran; she's a bigger talker than me--she could talk to you guys for five hours. She's really got something to say. Mrs. Ruffran is different in a lot of ways; she's an unintelligent woman, but she's got four kids three sons and one daughter, and all of 'em schoolteachers, every one of 'em, and...if she were my mother, I could

be real proud of her. But her son and them thinks she's nuts. And she made 'em--by herself, cause her husband died when they were young; she made 'em by herself. And yet they don't respect her. See, that's what I'm saying, they found out the things that they could value aside from what she taught them. They value the material things more than they value a woman who really love them and try to understand, and be reasonable with them. So much is so much; Mrs. Ruffran like to have a nervous breakdown last year, and people say she was losing her mind. Mrs. Ruffran, she was just like everybody else--she was under strain and pressure, and how much can a person give and how long can they fight? See, cause me, I give the movement up for about two months, and floated off, and nobody knew where I were. Like Tom Levinson asked me in a meeting of his, that meeting last Sunday, "Johnnie Mae Walker, you know that wasn't right. How come you didn't fight for us?" I said, "How long do you expect one person to fight? How do you know I got anything left to fight with?" What I'm saying, we just got to use a certain amount of energy; you can't just regenerate new energy every day. I mean, I'm tired of being sick and tired; and there's a whole lot of people tired of being sick and tired; see that there Victoria Gray? Everybody look at Vicky and say, "My, what a brilliant woman." They didn't know that woman had to take four or five pills so she could sleep at night. That's how brilliant she is. See, that's what I'm afraid of. This whole thing, this rotten mess, has really destroyed a few people who really knew and understand, on account of putting such a burden on them, and pretty soon we're going to destroy ourselves, and then pretty soon there ain't going to be anybody that cared anymore. It ain't like, you people can come down here, work for 6 to 8 weeks, and go home. We gonna have to work 6 to 8 weeks with you, and we're going to have to work until you come back again, and if you don't come back, we got to still work. You see, that's why we need more people; that's because that's the new concept of FDP--get more people involved in leadership within communities, so if anything happened, you don't have to wander around to see what's going on; you always got somebody that knows, knows what to see and what to do. You see, we had a meeting, ^{Gayot} and we decided there that if someone killed Lawrence Ghat, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Ann Devin, Victoria Gray, Susie Russell, Hazel Palmer, Johnnie Mae Walker, and Robert Mowry, there wouldn't even be an FDP in this state. That's right. And see, that's what bothers us. But now, they can kill anybody they want to, because in the community we have that leadership going. We can go to meetings now, and we don't have to talk; the people talk in the meetings themselves, they ask questions, and they set there and they work it out until they work it out to what they feel. See, people that haven't been active in FDP were at that thing Thursday night; that's the night after our all-county meeting; and they were talking all about how they were going to raise money and how they were going to go to Washington. See, we really got lots of people that submitted themselves to the movement and FDP and everything else for the simple

reason that last year people gave people places to stay, they gave 'em food, and all that stuff, and now all we've got to do is go back and get those people and bring 'em back and build 'em, and let 'em know that they can do things. Let 'em know, because they can't say words and deal with other people, that all the words mean just about the same thing anyway. We tried that Wednesday night for the first time since the summer began, and we had about a hundred to seventy-five people at that county meeting; about a hundred people there; and after being there, they talked. They talked about going to Washington, they talked about using a car, and they talked about raising money to go to Washington. They ain't asking nobody for anything. They talked about it being time for them to stand up and be independent, for them to stop letting other folks do things for them. And with that, that is a beginning. But still, a fairly good job is not done; there's still so much we got to do. So much more. I don't know. See what I'm saying, we got so much more to do, I don't know where to start and where to quit. You just do the first thing that comes up and needs to be done. You just don't know where to start, not really, because you've got a whole political structure, and you got a whole morality society, and you got a whole ...you got to fight 'em all.

Q: When you think about the long range change, do you think that any of the methods you use are more important in the long run? I mean, things like demonstrations, and then there's political education, and there's legal work, or voter registration?

A: Well, political education is certainly going to have a bearing on it; it certainly will. Voter registration--not being any small thinker--I think it should be knocked out, period.

Q: Voter registration?

A: Right.

Q: And replaced by political education?

A: Right. Help people understand; let 'em see what they need, and what they want...Give it to them; why go through a long turmoil procedure for that? Why degrade people for that? You ask a man, can he read or write, and he say "no," and you say "go home," because I can't register you because you can't read or write." You see, that's really terrible.

Because, whose fault is it, in the first place, that he can't read or write, and in the second place, do that affect his intelligence? Do that keep him from thinking? Do that stop him from knowing what's good for him?

Q: What about the new rules--now you don't have to have literacy tests?

A: Oh yes--you have to have it here.

Q: Oh, that's right.

A: See, I don't like the Federalists a bit, either; but it's by law...Mississippi state law, anyway. After five years, though, your name will be stricken from the book anyway. And then there's another thing about those federal listers; I don't like them using their books and not using county and city courthouse books. See, and when them listers get done, they can throw them books in the lake as they leave, and then situations will be as bad as they was at first. You just can't trust; the political structure as it now stands...we're going to have to do something about it, I don't know what, but we're going to have to do something.

Q: I wanted to ask you about Dr. King--when we were talking about Dr. King and Malcolm X, and you were saying Dr. King was the way he was because everybody that put him there--well, I don't know what you meant.

A: The first thing I want to say, Rosa Parks, you know the woman that began this Montgomery boycott? She made Dr. King; and then the rest of the Negroes over this part of the nation made him, because they looked up to him because of his position which he'd taken, and then some very smooth smart men got in there and mobilized this position. And then they got the thing focussed. You see, King is SCLC; and when King dies or gets killed, there ain't going to be no SCLC. Because it was built just about that one man. As far as I'm concerned, SCLC don't think. I know they got one man in there, better than King could ever attempt to be. That's James Beverly; Beverly is a good man. Beverly knows how to go about bucking this society in which we live. I don't think Dr. King do. Cause you look at the Selma march--he made a mess out of that. And I can't say there was no mess, because I went over there and supported it. And there's a lots more people of Mississippi went over and supported it. And now he's taken the position that he is going to support the Congressional challenge..see, SCLC said they wanted to support that...and now we got every major civil rights group on our side but the NAACP. And God knows, whoever got them and wants them, can have it.

Q: How do you feel about the different organizations in the movement? Do you think that they work towards the same goals, just in different ways; that is, are they supplementary, including the NAACP? Or that the NAACP is out of step?

A: The NAACP is way out of step. Now, an organization like SCLC, SNCC and CORE,..Now last year SNCC worked in Mississippi and part of the project were CORE projects; and they all worked beautiful. They all had the same destiny, because you look in the Jackson office, the office we had in the center of the state, they had Dave Dennis, Dave was a member of CORE, and Bob Moses, he was with SNCC, and Mrs. Gray, she's a board member with the SCLC staff. They seemed not to develop no conflict within the organization. You see, we had a meeting to decide to merge everything into one organization on civil rights, and call it COFO; a Mississippi graduate organization. That was from trying to keep from dealing and having conflict with each other, trying to keep the organizations alive and still get the job done. Everybody played a little part in there but the NAACP. You see, the NAACP began to fight COFO last summer. And what COFO stands for.

Q: You were talking earlier about the whites in the movement and the orientation at Gettysburg...could you explain a little more why you don't like to see people come down...and if it's true?

A: It's not...that I don't like to see people come down! I just don't like to see them thinking they're doing something for me, doing something for everybody but themselves. That was the attitude with which a lot of kids came and a lot of kids got messed up--got their mind messed up. See, what they can come and do for this poor old Negro. I've seen 'em get up in meetings before, and like before that orientation, I've had 'em at truelike, about four months before, then, I had 'em at an orientation in Waverly, for a week. And I wish you could have heard--you see, Jim Farmer raised the question as Why are you here? and I really went back, I said, "Who are you talking about?" and he said, this so-called normal student. And I wish you could of heard the tumult of answers we got. We got a tape of that...because during that week, we took about one hundred and fifty tapes. And I just wish you could have listened to that answer; but it wasn't intended that they should all say they'd come to help the Negro, because you people need ed us. See, when you going to knock yourself out to help me so much, I want to know what you're going to do for yourself. When you going to start thinking, while I'm helping somebody else, I am helping myself. See, because I don't believe there's anybody totally and completely honest. We're all selfish; we got to admit that. That's what I mean when I said...Mrs. Devine, she didn't like the expression I made when I got up in Fulight, because I got up and said I ought to go home, because I didn't care. But the reason her attack is wrong, she just didn't know. She didn't know what I meant. See, it's two things I know; when you get so unselfish you're going to do for everybody else but yourself, you're lying. And the

other thing I know is, when you trying to do something for everybody but yourself, you're going to hurt a lot of people. And I'm talking about it from past experience. Past experiment, things that happened to me.

Q: Do you see a difference between those people who come down to help themselves through changing the system and those who come down just by gaining experience and such to help themselves?

A: Yeah, you can tell the difference. People that come down to buck the system, they don't talk that "I want to help you;" they say, "What can I do, and I want to know how to do it." Then they come and they help themselves, and they get their own public glory, and they come and tell you, "1, 2, 3: let's do it like this." Very professional, and very strict...for them, this is the only way they're going to work, and what do you think? And I say "man, I guess I don't know.

Q: This means that the people who come down with the best motives are those who are most willing to work with the grassroots of a section?

A: Right. See, there's lots of people come in here who don't have time for the grass roots level. They got their idea, and they got it in their head how they going to do it, see, before they even left home. That's what I meant when I told people when I was in California; they wanted to know what they could do for Mississippi, and I told them the first thing was to unlearn all this stuff they already know. The Mississippi Negro don't know nothing about efficiency; the Mississippi Negro don't know nothing about doing things correct; because this has never been a part of his life. And you see, that's where Mrs. Ruffran can talk to you about the white supremacy, she calls it. She can broaden your mind to the understanding of it, of these things. But then again, you don't question everybody's motives. Because a guy, a native Mississippian, a white guy, very young man, came to the Freedom Democratic Party, and he questioned us: "Why? What's your motive? What you trying to do? Because the cat we know as number one used to be a member of the Ku Klux Klan, and we didn't know whether he was still one or not." And this was the first time I heard about William Tuck, he says, "Me? When I first come over to this movement, I came ovr to help some colored people kill some white folks." That's what he said. "Because you don't have the faintest idea of how many Negroes the Klan's killed." "I used to be a member of the KKK;" I said, how come this nat's still a member--is he trying to get something on us? "He said, I come to help you all back;

I come to help you all kill some of these white folks; but I come over here and then I learned something--you people showed me this just ain't the way to go about it." See, what I'm saying, if we had of wanted to get violent, we had the resources to get violent. If we'd wanted to bomb churches, we could have gotten stuff to do it. We could have bombed schools, stuff like that. And Bob William, and William Higgs, Attorney, another native Mississippian, see, that man got run out of Mississippi because he done his job, William Higgs--do you all know him, or have you heard Terry talk about him? He was an attorney at law from Aberdeen, Mississippi, he went to Yale University and graduated and come out and began to set up a law practice in Aberdeen. And here comes the big day--he'd taken a Negro murder case. William Higgs fights blood with blood, he fights, and he won it. And then he had to find him some way of practicing. See, he didn't come to the movement because he wanted to; he came to us because he was forced to it. He had went and forgotten that his honesty couldn't exist in Mississippi, and he just wasn't supposed to fight for a Negro like he was a white man, and from there he was an outsider and an agitator. They run him away, they burned his house in Aberdeen, and he lives in Washington now, he's our attorney, and one of the most brilliant-minded people I ever met. Because through that he began to find out one thing: there's just lots more stuff going on in the United States that he didn't want to be a part of. Because he didn't know the power structure would prosecute him for fighting for that Negro man and doing as good a job as he would have done for a white man. And so they told him in court, "You ain't supposed to fight for no nigger harder than you fight for a white man; what are you? And see, his little honesty got away from him and run him away from his home.

Q: Some of the whites that come down here want to help themselves, but the ones you've talked about seemingly want to change the power structure, and they also seem at times more interested in changing the structure rather than the situations in which the structure is produced.

A: All right.

Q: Is this compatible with what has to be done down here?

A: See, you're not able to say in no specific place where you want people to work, really; if one think the change lies within the power structure and wants to abolish it, let

em do it. Cause just like I said, we got a number of things to do, and can't no one person really nail himself down, and say this is it boy, this is what we got to do, concrete this, step by step. Because I find out working in a civil rights movement, you can began working with one problem, and that one problem develop about fifteen more different issues, and you got to deal with all of it at the same time.

Q: ...something about this...like people who are, people who are what you might call more dogmatic radicals, getting more wound up in changing the structure, that they only have one way to do this, and they don't - they lose sight of the people, you know - that are supposed to be oppressed by this.

A: See, if they lose sight of the people, that's bad - because they doing the same thing that the power structure have done for years - telling them what somebody else want. See, you can't miss the people in this movement, you got to deal with the people --- and if you don't, it's bad business.

Q: Do you feel that some of the more radical people have come down do lose sight of the people? Have you noticed this at all?

A: No, not really. I haven't paid dt any attention, but I do know it's a lot of people who came down with the ideas that dealing with the structure in a way that they think things should go. Well, when they went to the people, really found out for the first time in their lives, they really began an understand and know what the Freedom Democratic Party was all about. And I think that was good.

Q: Do you think that they - the Freedom Democratic Party is going to continue to bring votes into the South?

A: Sure. See, when I was meeting here in Hattiesburg, we had some in there last week - some local whites. See, we had a mi nister, and his brother-in-law, and a deacon of his church. Now this was great. See he didn't come to learn anything, or really help, but he came. And I said, "You people are not communists." Said "my community bugging me, they say you're communists." He said, "I want you all to tell me, are you communists?" That's all. I asked him, I said, "Brother, what do you think?" He said, "Well, nothing of everything I've heard here tonight, this is no communist plot." I said, "Well, what you hear here tonight goes on every Wednesday night." He said, "Well if this is what you people want, I'm with you all the way."

Q: Are a lot of whites, local whites, beginning to join the movement?

A: No.

Q: Mrs. Gray mentioned that some of the poor whites were.

A: Beg your pardon?

Q: Mrs. Gray...

A: That some of the poor whites coming in? Yeah... but it's not from this area. It's from up in the delta area, up in the first and second district, where they began to come in at. But nevertheless, that is a progress. Because last year, we had one or two, but before things really got - you see, those people was just afraid to come. It took more for them to come here than it do us. Because they was a marked person as time went on. They were really up for the kill. They know that.

Q: How bout as far as the Northern whites coming in to work in the movement? Do you feel that their role is decreasing?

A: No, I don't think their role is decreasing. See, it just like I said about our so bad that - - we've got to prepare ourselves and get ready. Lots of people come down here and they working with the Freedom Democratic Party, they began to like Mississippi and they buying homes here, whether you know it or not. and they planning on staying and they not going to go to the white community. Because, you take John Ellis, a Negro, a minister from Nebraska - he bought him a house in Gulfport, he and his family are there. You take a young guy, Tim Coral, he talking about staying in Mississippi. Tim Coral, well you know what the white folks think you know, so where's he going to stay? Right among the black folks. Where you going to work? Right among the black folk. See. And we just got to get use to the idea, and accept things for what they really is, and accept them now, like we said we were to accept them when we lied, hoping there never really did come a time we really had to accept them. You know, we told that lie - we were going to accept all white people in the world cause we didn't have to deal with them. Now they coming, and there's a lot of thought, because they think white people want to come in and take over the power, some people. But I'm glad - we've got lots of people talking up, they can't do it unless you let em. I'm relaaay glad of that.

Q: What should happen if the challenge is unsuccessful? - the Congressmen aren't unseated? Do you think that the people are really going to feel that this is a big setback..?

A: Uh- uh. Cause we got something to sit up and ready for them to go, time the challenge is here. We gonna impeach Judge Cox. That's what we gonna do - we gonna impeach Judge Cox.

Q: Is this a plan of the FDP?

A: Right. It's been in focus ever since right after our challenge, cause we had to keep thinking about things that gonna keep people togheter, see, that's what we come up with.

Q: Is it necessary, do you think, to keep a stream of big issues, like impeachments and the challenge and so forth, going, along with the movement...?