

### SRC 33 Conference, Day 1 Tape 3

Brian Ward: This afternoon we have the first of two panel sessions featuring people who have an intimate knowledge and experience within the Southern Regional Council. I'm going to allow them to introduce themselves, but first of all let me introduce the chair for this panel, Paul Gaston, who has served in various capacities within the SRC; he's been president of the SRC. I just want to take a moment here to thank Paul very personally really for someone who has actually encouraged me in my work in various areas, but particularly of late in wanting to learn more about the Southern Regional Council. He was very gracious to me when I was in Charlottesville as a post-doctoral fellow in the **Woodsen Institute**. In very many bizarre ways the comforts that we have here now and the project that we have on the Southern Regional Council at Florida is in no small regard down to Paul's encouragement, so we should thank him. I'm just going to turn it over and let Paul say his piece and introduce his co-panelist.

Paul Gaston: Hey good morning, and I'm glad that resulted in a room with a window and a view of the pool. Thank you so much, with all my pleasure. The previous speakers have said thank you for having this conference; I guess we are the first from the Council itself, so we want to say thank you to all these people, the history department, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the office of research and graduate programs, the Paramount Resort. I guess I should wait a little bit before I thank **Steve's Café Americana**; we don't eat there until tomorrow night. But I'm sure it's as good as **Rick's**, and we'll enjoy it then. Then of course the Ford Foundation, which helped to make this possible. Now you've just come from the last session, a session on counterfactual history. That's always a little iffy; less iffy is a session on artifactual history, and that's what you're going to have today with [the] four artifacts here in front of you. Real artifacts continue to be active so that at some session that you might have ten, twenty—should I go on—twenty-five years from now, we can still be here as artifacts. Of course what you're going to hear today is what you would hear if you started doing research on your books—you would come; Connie, can I have an interview with you? Les, could you speak just a little louder for this interview and let's get this written? John, tell us what it was like when you were in SNICK? What we're going to do, each of us is going to speak about fifteen

minutes, then that will leave approximately an hour for discussion amongst ourselves and for questions from you on any subject. We are all going to focus our comments on our relationship with the SRC, and we have no particular pattern, no thesis; each of us is going to share with you some our own experiences. I'd like to start though with a confession, and I want to thank Jane for coming up to me after the session before last and saying to me, you may want to rethink your description of the SRC as the cockpit of the Civil Rights Movement. You know the person who's in the cockpit is up front flying the plane, and everybody else is behind following. That was the last thing that I meant, and Jane thank you very much, because if I had to describe the SRC of all the years that I know of it, but particularly for our session, which I should of said earlier, it was about the 1950s and 1960s. We're going to talk to you about the SRC in the 1950s and 1960s. I would describe it more as the crossroads, the facilitator; the SRC was way out front of every other existing interracial organization in the South. It then was befriended by and became the partner of the frontline black organizations, SNICK, **SCLC**, and CORE, and the NAACP. It became the organization that sort of told the rest of the world what was happening. I'm going to describe just a few ways in which it facilitated my modest entrance into the Civil Rights Movement, but I want to correct that idea of the SRC as a cockpit, that was a bad

image. [It was] the facilitator, the crossroads; it's where people met, they came together, and it was a trusted organization and played an enormously important role. I came to the University of Virginia as a historian, a youngster—I was still in my twenties, barely, but still—in 1957, and I had come knowing that I wanted to play a role in the Civil Rights Movement. Now we were talking this morning about terms, liberal and conservative and moderate; I never used any of those to describe myself. Growing up in a single tax colony which my grandfather had founded, I sometimes described myself as a **Georgest**, but since that only drew blank stares, I decided there was not much point in doing that. But when Mary and I came to Charlottesville in 1957, we described ourselves very clearly, very appropriately, what had seemed to me exactly the right term to use—we were integrationists. That term sometimes is translated to mean communists, some people say that's a Southern liberal; I never used any of those terms. I just said, we're integrationists, and if we have the opportunity we'll become Civil Rights activists, and those are the terms that I associated with the Southern Regional Council. I had not been in Charlottesville six weeks before I came in contact with the Southern Regional Council—not directly—but there were two organizations in town that one might join to be a participant in what was going to be happening; one was the NAACP, the local branch—we joined that and I fortunately became a

member of the executive committee pretty soon. I want to tell you David, the one thing, the main thing that was on the agenda of the NAACP in 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, all the years that I was a member of the executive committee, was enforcement of the Brown decision in Charlottesville schools, which eventually was successful and it's still working successfully in Charlottesville. That was the core of the Civil Rights Movement that I joined, and that's where my education began. I also joined the Virginia Council on Human Relations. I think all of you know, I believe Jeff mentions it in his paper, but for those of you who don't know, the Fund for the Republic, a spin off or division of the Ford Foundation, gave money to the Southern Regional Council just after 1954 to set up councils on human relations in every Southern state. [It was to create] places where white and black would come together to help to facilitate the integration of schools, or if you want to put it neutrally, the implementation of the Brown decision. When you joined a council on human relations, you also joined Southern Regional Council. I never met George Mitchell; I did meet Harold Fleming and then of course later I met Les, and I did have a long association with the Council afterwards—I was on the staff in 1970-1971, I was elected to membership in 1972 I think, and I was on the executive committee for twenty to twenty-five years, a long time, and did have a stint as president. But most of my rich experience

with the Council was in the later period, the 1970s and 1980s. I'm not going to talk about that; we will discuss that in a panel session tomorrow afternoon. I will say one thing though, and maybe it's the most important thing that I ever did—at least members of this audience will appreciate it—when I was on council staff in 1970-1971, I walked through the corridors and here were these huge file cabinets bulging with incredible papers; reports, letters to and from Dunbar and Fleming and Mitchell and **Guy Johnson**, reports, news clips. It was the most amazing collection of material any historian had ever seen, but it was sort of jumbled. Well I had a research assistant that year, a young woman some of you may have heard of—you may have heard of her connections being the current president of the organization of **Mr. Historians**, just president of the **Southern Historical Association**, the director of the Southern Oral History Project at Chapel Hill; she was a youngster named **Jackie Hall**. She prefers to be **Jaquelyn** now, but Jackie was my research assistant. I said, Jackie, let's organize all these materials. So Jackie spent most of her year in 1970-1971 before she had written her dissertation, the topic of which I did suggest to her, **Jessie Daniel Ames** and the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, the very famous ASWPL. Subsequently—it's a long story—the papers were moved to Atlanta

University with an adequate funding. They were catalogued, arranged, put in acid free folders, and now, as most of you historians know, microfilmed on 225 reels. That maybe is my greatest achievement as a member of SRC. I just want to say a few words about how a young person came into the movement, and how SRC really facilitated it. First I joined the Council on Human Relations, and we were pretty left wing, sometimes commies; we were not the most respectable members of the community, but were listened to and we did make a difference. Then in 1962, I received a letter from somebody that said, how would you like to come down to Nashville and give a talk on how school integration is proceeding in Charlottesville? I said, well that's a good idea but I couldn't write that, so I assembled a group of people, each of whom would write a part of that story, and I wrote it up—it all went through my typewriter—and so in December 1962 I went to a conference in Nashville sponsored by the Fellowship of Southern Churchmen and the Southern Regional Council. One of the many things that the Council did to promote information, understanding, and helped to bring about progressive changes. I learned some interesting things at that meeting; one of the things I learned that was really interesting was that Martin [Luther] King, [Jr.], had a sense of humor. I had always known him as a very serious person, you know? Like that letter **Ms. Dew** read last night, remember, that was

very serious to those kids who were in jail in Tallahassee? I was sitting next to King and **Charlene Hunter** was on the other side. Now this was December 1962, just a few months after **Meredith** had shot his way into Ole Miss, and **Charlene** had just graduated or was just getting ready to graduate from the University of Georgia; I can't remember whether she graduated in 1962 or 1963, maybe a younger historian might remember that. Anyway, Dr. King got up at one point and he said, I would like to announce Charlene's future plans; she has just applied to be admitted to the graduate school of the University of Mississippi. Well, everybody just broke out laughing. That was my next sort of involvement. I meet King that way. The next year I had a sister-in-law come over from England. The English Civil Rights connection goes way back before you youngsters who are giving papers now, and she wanted to be involved in the movement. She wanted to learn about it and she wanted to go to one of these freedom houses. I didn't know how to do that so I wrote to the director of the Southern Regional Council. I have a sister-in-law and she wants to get involved. He wrote back and said, you write such-and-such a place, and so she went to one of the freedom houses in **Warrington, North Carolina**, just on the north side of North Carolina. She was there that summer. Then a year after that the Southern Regional Council was

asked by the **Carnegie Corporation** whether it was really worthwhile for an organization called the Southern Teaching Program to continue in existence. The Southern Teaching Program had just been started by some youngsters at Yale. What they did was to send bright graduate students from all over the country to southern black colleges in the summer to educate them, to vitalize their experiences. I don't know what all the rationale for it was. The **Carnegie Corporation** had given the money to the Southern Teaching Program at Yale, and they wanted to know whether it was worthwhile. If you wanted to know whether any civil rights activity in the south was worthwhile, what would you do? You'd ask the Southern Regional Council. Now, if the Southern Regional Council didn't have time to answer that question, they'd seek somebody else. So **Les** called me up and said, Paul, do you think you'd have time to do this report? He told me what it was, and I said, I'd love to. I traveled the south and visited seven or eight black colleges, interviewed all the people, and wrote a report at the end of the summer. These are just a few of the ways in which one young person found his entry into the Civil Rights Movement. I was going to teach southern history and civil rights history, but you can't teach southern history and civil rights history if all you do is associate with these white people, and if all you do is associate with scholars.

You just can't learn that way. The Council facilitated my entry into that in these few ways that I have described. Each of us now is going to talk about our experiences, our lives, what we've been involved in, how we're not just artifacts in the past but activists in the present, and we're going to speak in the order in which we're listed on your program. **Brownie Ledbetter**, I'm very sorry to say, is not well and cannot be with us. We turn now to Connie Curry, who's going to tell you who she is and what she was involved in.

Connie Curry: Thank you. I'm going to tell you a little bit about my own work and then connect it to the Southern Regional Council. I came to Atlanta in January, 1960 as director of something called the Southern Student Human Relations Project of the United States National Student Association, which was a national confederation of student governments that was founded actually right after World War II by returning veterans. I was amazed when I was writing the book about **Aaron Henry** from Mississippi to find out when he was in **Zaviar** in the late 1950s, was one of the founders of NSA. As you

know, he went on to become the state director of the then NAACP.

When I got there in January, 1960, this was, by the way, under a grant from the Field Foundation. The money coming from the Field Foundation goes back to 1957 when **Ray Fairaby** from the University of Texas was the first southern president of the National Student Association. Ray and some of the other southern delegates at NSA, I understand, convinced there were white and black southerners in the late 1950s who wanted desperately to bring about change in the legal segregation that went all the way through, as you know, from education to bathrooms to buses to everything, and that there were a group of conscious college students who wanted to change that. Field gave money for two years, 1958 and 1959, to have what they called the Southern Student Human Relations seminars in the mid-west to bring about eighteen or twenty college students from the south up to these mid-west campuses where they would study race relations and human relations in the south and then hopefully go back to their campuses as lonely and isolated but touchstones to at least be educated about what might need to be done. Somehow or other, by 1959, the NSA had convinced the Field Foundation to give a grant for a full-time person to move to Atlanta to be involved as the Southern Student Human Relations project director. I, who had been involved in NSA, came back in January, 1960, as the director of

that project. Then, of course, February 1, 1960, all of a sudden for the first time in U.S. history, students in this country had a chance to become involved in direct action rather than just on the periphery and scholarship, because when the four students sat in at **ANT** College at **Greensburg, North Carolina**, that was four, by June, 1960, it had snowballed to where 70,000 college students, mostly black, but a few white people, were involved in this snowballing movement across the south. That was no organization that was doing that snowballing, believe me. Those were individuals. It wasn't a group who sat down and planned the sit-in movement. My role changed radically. Thank God, Field had a great imagination, because **Julian Bond** and the others people involved in the movement used to come over to my little NSA office and ask to use the mimeograph machine. We lost all sight of what the definition of the Southern Student Human Relations Project was and by the spring of 1960, I was on my way to **Shaw University** for the organizational meeting of **SNIC**, and soon after that, when **SNIC** began to get organized, they invited **Ella Baker** and me, although I wasn't much more older than the **SNIC** students. I was out of college. **Ella** and I became the adult advisors to **SNIC** and I was the first white woman on the executive committee of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. I didn't know that until **Julian**

**Von** told me that. Then I was working with NSA and the southern students from 1960 to 1964. In 1964 I went to work for the American Friend Service Committee. I worked for them for thirteen years as their southern field representative. In 1975 I returned to Atlanta and worked in the administrations of **Maynor Jackson and Andy Young** as Director of Human Services for the city. Then in 1990 I took early retirement and had a fellowship to the **Carter Woodson Institute** in Virginia where I renewed my friendship with Paul and Mary and started writing. I have since written four books, which has been a great pleasure of my life because I'm getting to write about the black activists but who were the grassroots people like **Maybertha Carter** and the people who desegregated the schools and **Winston Hudson and Aaron Henry**. Then the other book is called *Nine White Women and the Freedom Movement* because **Bob Moses**, when we had our thirtieth anniversary of the 1964 Freedom Summer, **Bob Moses** said, you've got to write your own stuff about what happened in the Movement because, pardon the expression, the historians are getting it wrong. Some of them are getting it wrong. That's what precipitated deep in our hearts. In any case, writing has become one of the greatest pleasures, writing about the grassroots people and the Movement. It's just really been a great joy. Now I want to go back and briefly fit in my

contacts with the Southern Regional Council. What I see is their main contributions in the 1960s. First of all, I want to say that part of it was just very helpful in that **Paul Anthony** was one of the first people who was working for SRC at the time and Paul said, let me help you get an office. He told me a grant for \$50,000 from the Field Foundation into the Citizens Trust Bank, he told me where to get the mimeograph machine and all this stuff. That's when I met **Les**, who was research director at SRC. Then, of course, the Southern Regional Council had been active in helping **Ray Faraby** get the money and get established with the Southern Student Human Relations Project. I want to tell you the cast of characters that were on the advisory committee that I stepped into in 1960. It was **Ralph McGill, Ruby Hurly, Harold Flemming, C.H. Parish, Will Campbell, and Benjamin Maize**. Those were the people who were on the advisory committee and SRC was very crucial in the movement to get this human relations project, which then became totally involved in **SNIC** to get that established. **Ella Baker** later joined that committee. The other thing I think about a lot in terms of the Southern Regional Council, and I don't even know, **Les** probably knows this, but I don't even know who was responsible for this thing that SRC used to sponsor called the Southern Interagency Conference. I remember going in there as certainly the

youngest person in the Southern Interagency Conference with all these people from the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-defamation League, the American Friend Service Committee. They met, I think, twice a year. I never will forget my first one because **Jean Fairfax** was there from American Friend Service Committee and she would talk every time we had a meeting, she kept on talking about **Prince Edward County**, Virginia. It was **Paul Rilling** and some other people from SRC who said to **Jean Fairfax**, the American Friend Service Committee needs to go to **Prince Edward County** as a continuing presence and **Jean** established an office there of AFAC and they were the ones who sent the children. You know when they closed the schools in **Prince Edward** it was the AFAC and other supportive groups who got sixty-five children from out of **Prince Edward County** to attend schools in eight states. This was just a drop in the bucket of the 1,500 black children who couldn't get into the schools. It was an effort there to at least start opening the doors. The contacts, I can remember going into the Southern Interagency Conference because by that time, of course, I was very much involved in **SNIC**, and I remember saying, don't forget the students. The group in SRC and the Southern Interagency Conference. I think as Pa pointed out was always very supportive and very open to what we was going on in the student

and the quick-moving events of what was happening with the young people. The other thing that I would consider in terms of the Movement, one of SRC's greatest contributions was the establishment of the Voter Education Project. The schools and voting were two things I felt, and as I moved around the south the years I worked for the Quakers, those were the things that were really on everybody's mind. By 1964, the Public Accommodations Act had come, but in 1965, when **Maybertha Carter** put her children into the white schools in **Drew, Mississippi**, when I first went up there to visit them, they were the first. Another county I was working in, **Isaquina and Sharkey County** in Mississippi, they had sixty-four black parents enroll their children in the white public schools. This is over near Greenville. By the opening day of school there was one, and that young student didn't last very long because people had lost their jobs, they'd been cut off welfare, they'd been threatened, and everybody was gone and the school system remained white. Certainly voting and school desegregation and getting a better education were the two things. Now, when I working on the book about **Winston Hudson** in **Leak County** and her work in **Harmony, Mississippi**, she talks about the \$750 grant that **Vernon Jordan**, from the Voter Education Project, sent. Can you imagine, \$750 and she talks about the 500 voters that were

registered by driving money to get people to the polls in **Leak County**, Mississippi. Aside from the personal support that I always get, we could always go and sit with **Les** and the other directors. I always felt their personal support, which has lasted on down through the years. I just wanted to say that one thing, and I think it may have been Paul that suggested, back in 1961 when I was with the NSA, that what we should do is publish a little newsletter giving the events of what was happening with students across the [states].

Paul Gaston: **Paul Anthony**.

Connie Curry: Yes, **Paul Anthony**. That's when I first knew about **Patricia Stevens**, and then later about **John** because the Tallahassee movement was one of the things on that old newsletter that went out to students all over the country saying, Tallahassee, Florida, so many students, ect, ect, etc. I've known John and Pat for years and years, since the 1960s. As I say, I met Paul and Mary along the way there and have received their support over the years. I also, with a big help from the American Friend Service Committee and from **Hays Maselle** and a few other groups, have recently done a documentary on the Civil Rights, which was my first book, which was the story of **Maybertha Carter** and her desegregation of the schools with her children. It has just come out and I have some

postcards if any colleges here would like to buy the film from the distributor. It's on sale for \$298. I have these if any colleges would like them. **Steve Suits**, we've been friends forever at SRC, and Steve, I'm sure because of our early association, also gave us a contribution to finish this film. Steve has also remained one of my most loyal supporters in my telling of jokes after graduating from comedy school. He's one of my main supporters in that. You all don't know that about either one of us, but it's true. [Laughter]. I think that's all I'm going to say at the moment except that one of my latest parts of work has become my involvement in the Criminal Justice System and in the reform of that because, to me, this is the new cutting edge of the Civil Rights Movement. We have 2,000,000 people in prison. As you all know, there's a fast track from schools to prison. Failing public education is part of the reason. Speaking about **Charlottesville**, Paul, I have a friend there that teaches in the high school who teaches an honors class. There are forty people in the class, thirty-seven white, three blacks, as far as I'm concerned, we're creating another generation of elite, white, better educated people, just by another name called resegregation. I wanted to say that one of the greatest pleasures in working with the Criminal Justice has become reacquainted and working **with John Boone**, who is in the back, who I hope will

speak a little bit before he leaves about the short but meaningful work of the Southern Regional Council in criminal justice. Thank you.

Paul Gaston: I didn't have \$298 with me at the time, so I was privileged to see the film free as Connie showed it, and I urge you to get your libraries to buy it. John is going to speak to us next. John Dorsey Due.

John Dorsey Due: Thank you. It's a great pleasure for me to be here with my old friends and my young old friends, and **Leslie Dunbar**, who when I worked at the **Voile Education Project** as an intern and at my going away party in 1965, which they gave me, we were drinking scotch in those days, I don't drink now, but back in those days I was into my African American bag a little bit and **Leslie Dunbar** says, John, you're not an African. You are an American. I've been dealing with that question ever since, as to what he really meant by that. Afterwards, I'm going to get with him and fuss with him. We have Mr. Boone in the back, who's from **Taraho, Indiana**, like I am.

If you heard Mr. Boone this morning, he made a point about discrimination and racism not just being a southern thing, but it is an American thing and it's bad in the north maybe in a different way. In that way I would describe who I am because I was expelled from Indiana. In 1955 I was at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina when that lady, Rosa Parks decided not to give up her seat and move back as directed by the bus driver. When she refused, when she defied and order of protocol and custom of the south, that seemed to be a signal to the black community in the south. It's unconscious, it didn't make any sense, but it somehow started me ever since. By 1960 the students couldn't stand it anymore and chose to sit in at North Carolina **A&T** as Connie talked about. This was not a plan of the Southern Regional Council, it wasn't in the NAACP, **SNIC** was nonexistent, Dr. King was working on his doctorate. These students couldn't stand it anymore and they sat in and again, something like a grapevine, you remember that blues song, "On the Grapevine," see, you young people don't even know what that's about. It was this spontaneous thing that went through the south. We had black students raising hell all over the south. Now, in Indiana, the work that we were trying to do in desegregation was being resisted in different ways. The kind of the discrimination in Indiana was more like neo colonialism, where we had blacks on the

payroll, the unions were very racist, and when we, on the local level, through the local branch of the NAACP, began to carry on demonstrations and protests, the national office didn't appreciate that. The NAACP was a simply organized organization and did not believe in direct action. As a consequence, I was part of that group of integrated group that was not returned to the executive committee of the NAACP. When the students in the south carried on their demonstrations, **Roy Wilkins**, the executive director, sent a telegram to all branches to support by demonstrations in the north, our branch refused to do that. Not only that, a group of ministers paid for an ad in the *Indianapolis Star* to protest the southern sit-in movement. If you know anything about black ministers, you don't really see black ministers hand money out for a full-page ad. That's just telling you how things were in Indiana. I couldn't stand it anymore. I had to go south. I had to go where there was an opportunity to be part of a movement. If you read the story about Moses, he was struck the same way. Here was a math teacher in the Boston, Massachusetts [area], and he got that same bug. Many northern blacks had that same bug and came to the south. I came to Tallahassee because my mentor, a black attorney in Indianapolis had friends at Florida A&M University, who at that time, had to go to a northern university to get their graduate degrees because the University of Florida and other schools were

segregated. The state of Florida sent them to Indiana, Ohio State, whatever. We knew some people at Florida A&M, and it was arranged that I come to Florida A&M as an in-state student. They wanted me to come. I had that kind of support system. One thing about oppression, unless you have support and unless you are aware of your oppression, you'll never free yourself or liberate yourself from that oppression. I had the awareness and I had the support system here in Florida, and I began my career as an activist here in Tallahassee. The first thing I did is call FSU, the dean of Religion for the name of the Unitarian fellowship. At the time, I was a Unitarian universalist. That Sunday, that's when I met the members of the Unitarian University Fellowship, who had connections with the Tallahassee council on human relations. In those days, the Tallahassee council on human relations was very discreet, they could not do too much because it was war in the south against anybody who was opposing segregation. However, these friends that I developed supported **Core** and my wife and others by raising money for the bonds. In 1963, after I graduated from law school, I had my opportunity to come to Atlanta, Georgia, and become part of the **Boulder Education Project**. The way that happened, being active with **Core** at the time, **Carl Ractin** knew **Riley Branton**, who was the director of the **Boulder Education**

**Project** under **Leslie Dunbar**. At that time there was a grant that was given to the National Association of Intergroup Relations of Officials, called NAIRO, who provided internships for those who wanted to do things in human relations. I was able to get one of those internships and come to Atlanta to work in the **Boulder Education Project**. In that experience I learned about the Southern Regional Council. I was just talking to Paul just today at noon. Knowing that we were being monitored by the FBI, knowing full well that things were not all that they seemed to be, I always wondered why Bobby Kennedy, then the United States Attorney General, would try to call upon **SNIC**, which was now in existence, and **Core** to stop their protest in the streets and their sit-ins and their freedom rides and do voter registration, then immediately the Southern Regional Council, through grants, from the Field Foundation and other foundations had moneys to support civil rights groups to do voter registration. Our job through they **Voter Education Project** was to do research to see what was the cause of the problems of voter registration. Of course, **SNIC and Core**, and of course, this was all intentionally, was to do voter registration. You have to understand, that in Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, and even Florida, there were all kinds of waves to restrain voter registration. It varies in different ways. In Mississippi, you had to

interpret the Constitution. In Florida, they didn't have specific laws. However, they had customs like, for example, having the books open only two hours on the weekends in order to control voter registration. My experience with the voter education and the Southern Regional Council did raise certain questions. When I arrived in the spring of 1964, **Riley Branton** had already decided not to give funds to **Colfoe**, that was the organization that **Core** needed all the activities in Mississippi comprised of the NAACP, **Core**, **SNIC**, and the SLC. This is the only place in the south where you have all organizations working together. Most other states they were competing with each other. In Mississippi, because of the personalities of the persons that were representing these organizations, you had the kind of coordination and cooperation. For example, **Metgare Edwards**, that's why I corrected Connie. He was the field director of the NAACP in the state of Mississippi, working with **Aaron Henry**, who was president of the NAACP. They had that personal relationship and loyalty with **Bob Moses**, who then represented **SNIC** and **Babe Dennis** representing **Core**. Through this type of interaction they worked together. Even SCOC was involved through **Onell Ponder**. Do you remember **Onell**? I had an opportunity to come into Mississippi through **Riley Branton** on behalf of **Bob Moses**, although they had made the decision not

to fund **Cofoe**, nevertheless **Riley Branton** was doing all he could to support what had to be done. The reason of what appeared to be duplicity is that the guidelines said that we're supposed to be doing voter registration. This was the intent. Mississippi was a very bad state in trying to support voter registration. You could do more and be more successful in places like Tennessee, which had the network of council of human relations instead of Mississippi. However, it was the intent of **SNIC and Core** that Mississippi had to be made an example. This is where people want to challenge Jim Crow. This is the place to challenge Jim Crow. This was a revelation to me as to what people will do in order to challenge discrimination and Jim Crow when there is no real opportunity of legal success or expectations of success. I was able to observe what were called 'Freedom Days' where people would leave the church in masses of 200 or 300 [people] to march to the courthouse to register to vote.

[End of Tape A, Side 1.]

John Dorsey Due: ...the just department to give protection must not be implemented because all at once Bobby Kennedy didn't want a National Police Force, do you remember that? There was no protection. As the consequence, people gave their lives for us to be where we are

today. I was there. I documented this kind of information on behalf of the **Voter Education Project** to give to the United States Civil Rights Commission and when I end I'm going to read the last paragraph of my report that's in this book and I hope you have it in your library called *Climbing Jacob's Ladder*, a book by **Pat Watters** who used to work for the Southern Regional Council, which discussed the arrival of blacks in southern politics with the introduction by **Leslie Dunbar**. I hope it's in your library. **Reese Claycart** is still with us, right? This is a serious book that you need to read as to the reports written by others besides myself as to what occurred in Mississippi. Then, after my internship was at end, I returned to Tallahassee as the Florida council for **Core**. My wife and I then were married by then and we have a daughter who you saw last night, **Tanareve Due**, who was born in 1966 and she had to resign as a director of the **Voter Education Project**. I was temporarily acting director for one year. During this time, I like to call it the Freedom Movement as opposed to the Civil Rights Movement, divided in relation to black power and the traditionalists like this young man and myself that really believe that integration needs to be the future of America. As a result, a lot of the dynamics that occurred in relation to black power and the reaction to it here, such as in Gainesville, that project was terminated. I

would like, however, to mention one factor that we have not discussed today. On the cover of this book, *Southern Changes*, this is the regular publication of the Southern Regional Council, there's a picture of **Ann Braydon**. There's a review of this book called *Subversive Southerner*. What I'm getting ready to indicate, I hope we discuss this sometime today, that another factor in race relations that we have not discussed, and that is the war on communism. The reason why the Southern Regional Council was perceived to be so timid by **Benjamin Maize**, is that there was fear of retaliation. You must remember the Southern Regional Council was the tax exempt organization, contributions which are tax deductible, and therefore could not carry on political activity. Therefore, you had southerners who were always monitoring what the Southern Regional Council was doing, which could jeopardize the funding of the Southern Regional Council. The Southern Regional Council was very necessary for my wife and the youth that was involved in the Civil Rights Movement, because it provided the environment for them to do what they had to do. They were the support system. They found the funds. They found the sympathetic support. They arranged for **Mrs. Peabody**, the mother of the governor of Massachusetts to come to St. Augustine to those interlocking networks to develop that kind of sympathetic support.

If it wasn't for Connie Curry, see, blacks were already being killed for being involved in civil rights. It was not until we started getting whites involved and they were being killed, then we began to see the cause that changes as far as movements were concerned.

**Mickey Schwerner, Andrew Goodman**, and others. This caused the dynamics for the changes related to the civil rights act and the voting rights act. I would like to end my fifteen minutes with the last part of the report.

**Sheriff Davis** was a sheriff who we believed had killed **Mr. Allen**, who was a witness for the shooting of **Herbert Lee**, who was a **SNIC** worker. Developing this kind of information, I was on my way to **McCone**, when I was stopped by the state police and brought to the sheriff's office with my legal pad. I still carry a legal pad around. Fortunately, **Courtney Siselaud**, who at that time, was working with the Mississippi Advisor Committee for the **Surise Commission**, was able to come and save my butt, really. I was able to get my papers back. Before I left there, I had paid the cash bond to **Sheriff Daniel Jones** and I asked the sheriff whether I could speak to him. I had seen an **Impeach Earl Warren** pamphlet on his desk. He said he always intended to speak freely. I didn't say that I was interested in Mississippi and the rest of the south being a better place for all people, both black and white. The

sheriff rejoined, not in an angry tone of voice. That was his duty, he said. To make his county a safe place for all people. He said he has been surely taxed by outside agitators who are bent to break the law and stir up people. He intends to enforce the law. He mentioned **Bob Moses**, he then produced a well-known picture of Martin Luther King, Jr. sitting with a couple of so-called communists at a **Highlander Polk School** meeting. He said, this is the type of people we are dealing with. He then looked at me and said, I don't know how you're tied up with this, but I think you are just brainwashed. I'd advise you, I'm not ordering you or warning you, I'm just advising you to leave **Aimen County** and not come back. In other words, what I'm trying to say, is that communism is a pretext for the massive resistance in the interposition implication of the civil rights. Thank you.

Paul Gaston: Thank you, John. Keep on, keeping on. Leslie Dunbar please.

Leslie Dunbar: I might note that one of the people in that famous or infamous billboard picture of people at **Highlander** was **Fred Ralph** of the Southern Regional Council. I'm the chaser after the strong drink of Paul and Connie and John. I'll let you down easy, mainly with some data that you, as historians, might want to deal with. I worked the summer of 1958 at the Southern Regional Council on a special project. I came back in January, 1959 full time as director of research, a new position created for me and thus, for me, began a grand experience. When **Earl Flemming**, my mentor and friend, left the council to establish in Washington the Potomac Institute, I succeeded him as executive director at **Pastoh Hill** during the crucial early 1960s until I left in the fall of 1965. Parenthetically I might comment that I had a hard time filling that position of director of research once I gave it up. Over the next four or five years I had four different fellows there as research directors. It didn't say well for me. At least two of them departed for positions that kept them close to the Southern Regional Council, **Stage Blackford**, whose tragic death this past summer hurts us all so badly, left to become a political writer for the **Norfolk Virginia Pilot**. Then later he, with great distinction, edited the *Virginia Quarterly Review*. **Sam Adams**, who we had hired from the *St. Petersburg Times*, went back there. All together I worked at Southern Regional Council, on

the staff, for about six years. I have maintained contact with it ever since. A few days ago I read in the current issue of the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, an article discussing **Ralph McGill and Eugene Patterson** and their editorial leadership of the *Atlanta Constitution*. Both men pursued other interests but I think would be fair to say that their work on race relations in the south during those years was a great defining work of their lives. The late 1950s and early 1960s and early 1970s were, for all of us who were close to them, years of searing experience and ones that really surmount if we wanted to. I thought in my allotted minutes, what I'd talk about was SRC's working relationships with the press. During **Flemming's** and my own time, hardly any program activity held for us a greater weight, accuracy, SRC's established reputation for accuracy, for trustworthiness of what is reported in statements was the rock on which we built our relationship with the press. To return, for just a moment, to **McGill**, he had been one of the four or five original incorporators of the Southern Regional Council back in 1944. A new member of the council after that, he was always a supporter. What **McGill** said, this was my observation, for southern liberals, especially for any of them who lived in Georgia, what **McGill** said was what they understood to be right. You didn't have to go beyond that. **McGill** was a gate keeper. Defining the privileges

and limits of southern liberalism for his devoted readers, as the article in the *Virginia Quarterly Review* makes clear, both he and **Patterson** had to work their way intellectually and even possibly emotionally to clear understanding of the Civil Rights Movement, as did, of course, the rest of us. I remember, and this is a revealing example, I remember once in 1963, it might have been 1962, but I think it was 1963, arriving from somewhere at the Atlanta airport, running there into **McGill**, who had deplaned, too, we agreed to take a taxi cab into Atlanta together. The Atlanta airport was not then the gargantuan thing it is now. You could really meet people. We decided to take a taxi and along the way, into the city, the subject of Martin Luther King came up. **McGill** said to me, remarking that he knew Daddy King very well, he had never met the son. This was 1963, maybe 1962, I was astonished. At that time of **Samuel DeBois Cook**, he was a professor of political science at Atlanta University, used to run a lecture series. His custom was to have a few people in to supper to his and **Sylvia's** home before the lecture. King was to be a lecturer on one occasion. I call up **Sam** and I recounted this, to me, amazing experience, that the primary newsman of Atlanta, Georgia, in many people's minds the south, had never met King. I suggested to **Sam**, invite King to supper. He did, and King came. [I said], invite

**McGill** to supper and he did, and **McGill** came. There on the couch in the **Cook's** living room, these two, probably the two most famous person at that time in Atlanta, had their first acquaintance. If **McGill** had been a bit slow in doing what newspaper men and women dutifully do, his reporters were not. What we had a SRC, and I want to stress this, was knowledgeable staff, and contacts throughout the region with whom we could connect reporters. We had another thing of interest to newspaper folks. Those were files. We kept, in my time, two research assistants, reading, clipping, filing, everything that came in the newspapers and magazines and other materials. We had the best files of anywhere around. The files were open to anybody, and I mean anybody. You open the door and said, I want that, and you go. I established that as a rule, that we were open. Reporters took advantage of this. Later on we were able to acquire much of the files the southern \_\_\_\_\_ use and the southern education reporting service. SRC's involvement with the press of course, preceded the 1960s. Probably most of you are familiar with the 1954 pathfinding publication commonly called the **Ashwall Report**, more properly the **Negro in the Schools**. This book was done by SRC folks, not only **Harry Ashmore**, but the Atlanta trio of **Phil Hammer**, **John Griffon**, and **Earl Flemming**, old SRC people, and **Harold** himself

a staffer, had done much of the planning and direction of the report.

One of the very first projects that I undertook in 1999, when I got to the council, was to commission **Walter Spearman**, then a professor of journalism at the University of North Carolina, and **Syrlin Myer**, then editor of the *Gainesville News*, Gainesville, Georgia, that is, and of course, later editor of the *Miami News*, commissioned them to do a pamphlet, which we brought out under the title "Racial Crisis and the Press." Parenthetically, pamphlets seem to have gone out of style. We did a lot of them. Although reporters from the *Constitution*, I think for example, **Jack Nelson**, who became one of this country's outstanding journalists, and **Howell Guliver**, who became later on editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, although these reporters from the *Constitution* were regular "customers" of ours. Not even in Atlanta were they the only ones. A little remembered fact, perhaps, is that Atlanta's own African American newspaper, *The World*, was not really a supporter of the Civil Rights Movement. At very best, and this is an overstatement almost, a lukewarm supporter. Because of that, another arrival press emerged in Atlanta, *The Inquirer*, led by **Carl Holeman**, just about the most underappreciated leader of the Civil Rights Movement. On the *Inquirer* began the public attention upon a person named **Julian Baugh**. Moreover there was *The Atlanta*

*Journal*. This reporter, and I think particularly, for example, **Fred Palage**, the SRC owed a debt to the different kind who worked at *The Atlanta Journal*. It was a rich supplier of talent to us. **Margret Loan**, an excellent columnist, too feisty, strode on too many toes of the managers for the managers of *The Atlanta Journal*, so she was eased out and we hired her. The same thing happened a few months later to another one of their quite good, really best columnist, **Park Watters**. We hired him. Later on in late 1965, **Reese Clergyhorn** was on the slippery slope out of there and we hired him. The Southern Regional Council has a great debt to *The Atlanta Journal*. The persons who came from the press knew how to work with the press. There was also **Benjamin Mewes**, a unique, absolutely irreplaceable man, who was our southern leadership project, which sent **Ben** traveling around the south, drifting here and there and the other place, including meeting with top editors of newspapers all over the south. He made himself a foreman among many, many other things. He once ran for governors. Many other things, he had been a columnist for the *Washington Post* on Virginia affairs for law. We worked at this business of relating to the press, of being part. Not only were we connected to the local press, [but we were also connected to] *Newsweek*, *Time*, *The Wallstreet Journal*, *Business Week*, and

above all, *The New York Times* had landed. The *New York Times* bureau chief being the extraordinary **Claude Sitton**. **Sitton**, if one were to list say ten or twelve persons who were most important in the terms of impact or effect on the Civil Rights Movement of the early 1960s, I guess at the top of your list would be Martin Luther King and **Thurgood Marshall**, and which order you put them is up to you. Someplace on that list of ten or twelve would be the name of **Claude Sitton**. Of course, they worked the reports that he filed, determined what the *New York Times* said. Of course, there were lots and lots of people in New York and Washington that didn't believe anything had happened if they didn't read it in *The Times*. He was also setting the tone for other reporters. Nobody led the public opinion in those years, and it was vital, more clearly than **Claude**. **Claude** is the one former newspaper guy who's never written his memoirs, he's never written his book, and I don't think **Claude** ever will. Some of you have got to do it for him. The SRC reached out to all of them, and they reached out to us. We were the center of a network, also state councils and human relations. Some of them were close to their local press. So were several council members, **Max Secral** to **Sherall**, South Carolina, his little paper there sort of redeemed South Carolina newspapers, most of which were miserable. **P.B. Young**, of Norfolk, a journal guide,

was probably the best of the Negro press in the south at that time. The irrepressible **Harry Golden of Charlotte, Herbert Davidson** of Daytona Beach, Florida, **Hotting Carver, Jr.** of Greenville, Mississippi. All of these people were SRC council members at one time or another. This could go on. SRC was for decades blessed with the friendship of **John Poppin** up at *Chattanooga Times*, before that he was of *The New York Times*. **John Seignhauer** of the *National Tennessean* and **Hazel Brannon Smith** of Lexington, Mississippi, **Bob Baker**, whose son is reports of something critical in the south, **Robert E. Lee, Bob Baker** of *The Washington Post*. **Hugh Patterson** of Little Rock. These were our friends. I have said enough to affirm the SRC regarded the press as a principle leader in what **Sylvanmyer** has called the mind-changing time in the south. For the press delighted itself not with change but with racism as in Richmond or Columbia, Charleston, South Carolina, Birmingham, New Orleans, truly even in Dallas and Houston. Change was very slow. I don't even mention Mississippi because that was a case in itself. The Jefferson newspapers were vile. It's one of the great ironies of today that some heirs of the *Jackson City Ledger* owns *The New York Review*. Some good came out of the \_\_\_\_\_ . I'll just close in saying the Southern Regional Council was proud to assist in the civil ways it could, the

progressive southern press. Thank you very much.

Paul Gaston: Thank you, Leslie. I think what we'll do now, we have plenty of time, is sort of stretch a little bit. I would like you all to ask questions. If we would like to ask questions amongst ourselves, let us do it, but let's start with questions from you about any subject that you have.

David.

David Chalmers: I'd like to make an ad-on. In the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, if you want to be part of changing things, was a pretty lonely business in the south. You belong to a small group in your community. It was lonely. You didn't want to join the Communist Party, you were working class. Most people don't know what a vital movement that black labor movement was in the 1950s before the big bureaus were able to chomp down them in the name of anti-Communism in the 1950s. As Paul showed, and as Connie's career shows, and John, the SRC was a place to which you could go to gather people, to meet people, to become part of something. The south was full, a criss-cross of all kinds of groups of people trying to do things. The SRC was a place through which everyone passed at one time or another. It was tremendously important. I wanted to say something to you about the publication. I'm glad that John did do this. When I was writing at the beginning of the 1960s, researching the Ku-Klux-Klan, the place where I get information about where I get information about what was going on in the south was from

*New South*, which is the SRC's pamphlet publication which preceded publications. If you look at my new book you'll find in the section on bombing, you'll find a chart on what bombing was going on in the south in the 1950s. This all came out of the *New South*, as published by the SRC. This is where you went to get information. If you look at the newest edition of *Southern Changes* we have here, and you're going to find that there are pieces in it by **Robert Neurell**, and by Paul Gaston and by **Ellen Spears** and for years edited it and did such a really neat job, and **Steve Soots** is in this as well. In the beginning of this, **Louis** is going to tell us what we're going to have to do to try and enforce, Let No Child Be Left Behind. Through all the years, both as an organization, a place to gather people together in which people could operate and attempt to do things. **Jean Wenches** has her panel tomorrow, will probably tell you how on one rainy day in downtown Gainesville brought her into the Council of Human Relations. I just want you to underline what's been said of what a vital resource and refuge and way of doing things the SRC is and to particularly call your attention to *Southern Changes*.

Paul Gaston: Thank you very much David. Perhaps the editor would stand and let's give a hand to **Alan Tuttis** back there. Any more comments or testimonials are fine, too, especially if they're fundraisers.

Ann Jones: I'm curious to know if you have any memories any of you have of the North Carolina Volunteer Project, which I believe was sponsored by SRC. It's part of the SRC files. In 1965 a group of college students, both white and black in North Carolina spread out across the state to work against poverty. Oh, sorry, my name is Ann Jones.

Paul Gaston: The North Carolina Volunteers, that was maybe just after you left, Leslie.

Anyone else? Question, John?

John Dorsey: Was it related to the student movement at Chapel Hill and organizing efforts there?

Paul Gaston: Was it related to the student movement of Chapel Hill? I think not, is the answer you're going to say, Ann? I think it was something that George was connected with and it was Ford foundation-related, but I don't remember any other details. I know George came in as executive director and maybe had headed the North Carolina fund, but I'm not certain. Les said he had. .

Keisha Duncon: My name is Keisha Duncon and my question is you eluded to human \_\_\_\_\_. You eluded to feeling a sense of collective consciousness after Rosa Parks' refusal to move to the back of the bus. It's my understanding that this act of civil disobedience had been carried out several times before Ms. Parks' galvanizing incident. I'm just wondering how is it this collective consciousness didn't occur prior to her and why was it that people waited until that particular moment as opposed to

before?

John Dorsey Due: I've been thinking about that question, too, because I still haven't figured out why did I leave, and get involved like I did. I think there's a publication by *New South*, the SRC magazine that talked about there were other acts of disobedience like in New Orleans, but I think the difference is this: Rosa Parks was part, if you read ***Cast and Clash in Southerntown*** you would know that in the south during Jim Crow there were two classes of black people. As you know, she was light skinned, she was part of the black older class, she has certain privileges as being part of the older class. When she defied all that as being part of that other class, I think that was the signal. The other situations, there was always a suspicion that the people who did not give up their seat was part of the low class, that kind of thing. I think that was a primary reason that united the total black community in Montgomery behind that act. That's the most significant reason I can think of.

Leslie Dunbar: Could I just add a word to that, Paul? It'll be a short one. We speak of the Civil Rights Movement. What I think that entails is what happened in the south in the 1960s was not just an act here or an act there. It was a movement that included so much and for so many ranks. That's why I felt justified in talking about the press. We never had the press played the kind of role that it played during the civil rights days in most other cases. Something ignited. They

keep using those words in *Southern Changes*. Something ignited an old movement throughout the American populous so that those individual acts of bravery, they had a permanence to them in an effect.

John Dorsey Due?: You had to remember, December, 1955 was right after the **Emmet Teal** situation. The black community was very angry with America at that time. I think that's the other problem.

Paul Gaston?: I imagine, Ray, that you want to say something about that question, don't you? I thought so. But lets hear David first. He was up first. I know you researched it.

David Chappell: I have a question for Les about this very deliberate relationship with the press. You mentioned the Southern Education Reporting Service and southern school news. I wonder if you could say more about the relationship of SRC to that group. My impression, I don't know if I'm right here or not, but my impression from reading it is even those awful newspapers in Richmond and Charleston and Birmingham and so on had a sort of acting trusting relationship with the Southern Education Reporting Service although not with the Southern Regional Council. It was even my impression that some of the segregationist editors tried to control SERS. I'm just ignorant. I'd like to know more about how that organization operated and how your relations worked with it.

Leslie Dunbar: I can't tell you a whole lot, but the Southern Education Reporting Service was established. David, I don't have the detail, but it was established sometime after the Brown vs. Board of Education. Precisely for that reason, to have an accepted sort of news for the southern press. **C.A. McKnight** of Charlotte chaired the board, as far as I know he chaired the board all the time. They had some good people working out of Nashville. SRC acquired some of that, too. Our good friend, **John Edwardson** was one of them. They put out southern school news, which would come out about once a month. About the time you got the southern school news you'd already read it all. It was a valuable thing to have. I think you're right, that partly because SERS was theirs, the editors themselves had created, it had an acceptance that we didn't necessarily have. We had good relationships with it. **Reed Surap** became director one time and [we had] a close relationship with **Reed**. Toward the end, I think I mentioned this, we were down there in Atlanta clipping all the newspapers, they were up in Nashville clipping all the newspapers. None of us could really afford to do vacations, so we entered into an agreement with southern school news whereby we bought their microfilm and it led to our laying of one of the two research assistants, it's the only time in my life I ever presided over technological unemployment, which I didn't really like to do. It was

a good working relationship.

Ray Arsenault: I'm Ray Arsenault and I'd like to make a comment and ask a question. The question to John about Rosa Parks, I think it's one of those extraordinarily difficult questions about why things ignited then. Something related to that, I've been working for a number of years on a book on freedom rides and am in the final revisions right now. For a couple of years I've been looking for **Irene Morgan**. In the previous session there was a mention of Morgan vs. Virginia, **Thurgood Marshall's** first victory in the court in 1946. I couldn't find her for years. I just found her, actually. She's now eighty-seven years old. She's been living in Long Island. She remarried. I was talking to her granddaughter just this week. This week she's moving back to **Glauster, Virginia**, where she was arrested in 1944 for refusing to move to the back of the bus. I thought it was an amazing symbolic, eighty-seven years old, she's decided to move back to this rural county in Virginia where she was arrested in 1944 and in some ways triggered this whole revolution. I have not met her personally yet, but I'm hoping to be able to. The question I have is to Mr. Dunbar. I was very pleased to see you had mentioned the *Virginia Quarterly Review* article which essentially is

a review of a book that I edited last year on **Gene Patterson**. **Roy Peter Clark**, who's a journalist at the **Poynter Institute** in St. Petersburg, and I gathered together **Gene Patterson's** pieces from the 1960s. He wrote 3,200 pieces, seven days a week, for nine years. There's nothing else quite like that in twentieth century journalism. Not five days a week but seven days a week. We've been appearing with **Gene**, who just celebrated his eightieth birthday last week, in various national press clubs and the *New York Times* and other areas, talking about what it was like to write these pieces in the 1960s. I must say, he's been very humble and almost ashamed, I would say, about going back over those pieces. He was involved in some of the editing process with us in trying to pick out the 120 or so pieces from the 1960s. He refers to them as weak tea, or pale tea I guess he sometimes says. Every time that he speaks he takes great care to distance himself from what he sees as the real heroes of the Movement in the 1960s. He always mentions **John Lewis and Joyan Bond** and many others and talks about his evolution about how he got from this little town, **Adel, Georgia** in south Georgia in the 1940s, a pretty white supremacist place to where he was in the 1960s and to where he is now. I just wonder, Mr. Dunbar, if you could try to reflect a little bit on your sense of that, of the **McGill vs. Patterson**. I know you had a lot of dealings with them, and whether their writings publically, were they

really in their hearts then or were they slowly evolving? I think specifically I've written a bit about your reaction at the Freedom Rides, which in my view, were very positive and not reluctant, and yet there were many other white liberals in the south who couldn't go that far. I was wondering how you remember those *Atlanta Constitution* days.

Leslie Dunbar: I think you're undoubtedly right that people like **McGill and Patterson**, and for that matter, other editors around the south, didn't have quite the scope of liberty that maybe you and I had now. They had to keep their readers. They just could not get too far ahead of them.

[End of Tape A, Side 2]

SRC 33

Day 1, Tape B

Conference

Leslie Dunbar: ...get away with saying such and such and that freed editors, too. It freed business structures and I think is one of the crucial developments in the post-1954 South. **Patterson** and I can claim to have known **Gene** intimately. I knew him and worked with him. But I know **Patterson**. If you read all of his things they just clearly changed. They moved up a notch or two every year, that was

remarkable. He was a man of great decency. I know he called me up, this was in 1964, I know this date, he called me up to say the FBI showed me these tapes. They made me listen to this tape about Martin King over in hotels. Well, I said, I don't want to listen to them. But then I didn't. The good thing about **Gene Patterson** is he never mentioned that. I don't think he ever mentioned that he was one of the editors who heard this scandalous FBI tape. He was a decent person. That was of great importance.

Paul Gaston: You used the wrong tense there, past tense. Present tense - is a decent person.

Brian Ward: Is a decent person. (Some laughter)

[Unintelligible]

John Dorsey Due: I was at the 1965 Conference of SNCC and I was not conscious of some revolutionary things that was happening at that meeting. Number one, I was in another room when **Bob Moses** said some of us have been involved too long and we need to leave and he walked out. We haven't seen him until just a few of years ago when he came back to Mississippi in 1994. Also decisions and discussions were made, and I was in another room, that whites no longer be a part of SNCC. White folks need to go out and organize white folks and this was the beginning of black power. Since Ms. Curry was part of **American Friends Service Committee**, I

remember when I was interviewing for a job that you can burn out by being involved in this kind of stress on a continued basis and you need to recognize that and you can change. Connie, since you were so intimately involved with SNCC at the beginning, can you explain from your perspective as to what happened and what this meant? And then Paul I'd like to know what did this mean to the Southern Regional council when blackness became the thing in the movement.

Connie Curry: Well, John, as you know, I had left SNCC and had gone to work for the **American Friends Service Committee** by 1965 so I was not at that meeting. There was sort of two generations of SNCC, the first generation and then the second, and I was in the first one. Those of us who were there in 1960 through Freedom Summer of 1964. In that first group there was **Cacey Hayden**, (we're talking about white people) **Penny Patch, Joan Browning, Sue Thrasher, Bob Zelner**, and a lot of other white people who were involved. For them the decision that white people should go to work in white communities was very painful. It's very interesting now because if you ask **Julian Bond**, and other people they'll say that it was a political more than a racial thing because it was the beginning of the top down, the more hierarchical, business, then the grassroots

up, which is what **Bob Moses** and a lot of other people sort of believed in. It was a political rather than a color decision in many way. **Julian**, and a lot of other people who were in and out of that meeting, say that they didn't believe in it. It was not a black power thing. It was a philosophy of how things should be run. That's when **Bob** changed his name and went to Africa because he was very upset about it. It was complicated because in 1964, which is before all this happened, there was the advent of the thousand people coming from the North. A lot of the women and people that I know from that era, the white women, they came down and worked only in the summer of 1964. It was the beginning of a lot of grassroots people saying we don't like these white Northerners coming down and taking over our agenda and telling us what to do when we've been used to being led by the people in the community. So you had sort of the first and second generation, the beloved community, before the shift to what was called and, I don't think **Stokely** and the people who were talking about it at that moment really saw it as much of a black power thing as I say as they did the political thing. The other crucial thing is the fact that you have to remember in 1964 there were 90-some church burnings in Mississippi. People had been killed by **Moses** probably never got over the fact of feeling responsible for **Herbert Lee's** murder. **Schwener, Chaney,**

**and Goodman**, I mean the murders, the violence. And then there was Atlantic City which was the greatest set-back. Bus-loads going up to Atlantic City with **Fanny Lou Haymer** and everybody singing freedom songs. And what happens? They get to Atlantic City and they're allowed two seats. It was great rejection. It was disillusionment. It was heartbreak. A lot more than it was black power. That's the way I see it. I want to say one thing about the press real quick, about **Claude Sitton**. The other thing a lot of people don't know is a lot of movement people used to say when they were afraid they'd say God if we can only get the **Cluade Sitton's** room.

Paul Gaston: One very quick answer. **John** asked me a question (and then you're question Brian). Blackness did make a difference at the council after **Paul Anthony** resigns about 1971, 1972. The executive committee was determined that it was gonna hire a black executive director. There had always been that kind of, well that was the beginning I think of that kind of that tension. It wasn't black power but the executive committee was divided and they were determined to find a black executive director. **Andy Lewis** said he wouldn't take the job, and **Harvey Gant** said he wouldn't take the job. Then George Esser appeared who, quite white, but with very good contacts with the **Ford Foundation** and they said he'd be good.

(Laughter) So he would be good. One other personal thing. I was in a university in Richmond, Virginia, a black university at about this time and I had gone over to do some consulting. One of the students said would you like to come to a rally? We're having a rally tonight. I went to the rally and they were talking about what things they were going to do: poison the water supply and so on. I said well look I'm getting a little anxious. Yeah don't worry we got bottled water for you. Question Brian?

Brian Ward: Yeah I've got a couple of questions. We've been working Les pretty hard on this press theme and you've given us a long list of very distinguished journalists who worked with or for the SRC quite intimately. Yourself and **David Chalmers** given good testimony about the power of new South and then of Southern changes as SRC publications, but it occurs to me this is all print media. I'm just wondering how much effort the SRC actually made to court radio and television, which, in many ways, were as important for a different constituency during the 1950's and 1960's. You could argue more important than the print media.

Leslie Dunbar: Your question is what did we do with radio and television, and we did darn little, partly because we didn't know how, mainly. Television was just itself coming in and came in in a rush during the later 1960's. I don't think we had on the staff or anybody who really knew how to do radio and certainly nobody who knew how to do television. So we didn't. There used to be a man named **Ed**

**Friendly** who had something called **Friendly World Broadcasting** or something like that and Ed would make these tapes and ship them around to the network radio stations that he had contacts with. They were all race relations, brotherhood, peace kind of things. Details are a little foggy in my head now, but at SRC we did sort of subsidize him once, for a good purpose I hope, but essentially we did not know how to do radio and we did not know how to do television and we didn't do it. I appeared on radio several times. There was one radio station over in Birmingham, Alabama, **which** \_\_\_\_\_ **us**. And our lawyers actually got me equal time. It had never happened before, so I got equal time over at this station over in Birmingham, Alabama. We're not Communists or what not.

Brian Ward: Actually it's just anecdotally, **Pacifica** actually once read out the whole of one of Les's articles in the journal of politics which I'm sure was riveting listening. They certainly gave you good air time there, but it was someone else reading out one of your articles. So **Pacifica** may have been a radio network that you had some success with. The second question is really for all the folks up there and it's sort of something that's been gnawing away at me as I've been listening to many of the papers today and the panel session. By the 1950's and into the 1960's you've got an organization in the Southern Regional Council that is in various ways pushing for

integration. And yet one of the stories that hasn't emerged from what's been said today is what was going on within the Southern Regional Council and the councils for human relations themselves. What was race relations like within the body of the council and within the human relations councils. And then, picking up actually on something Les has said again, what were gender relations like within those organizations during the 1950's and 1960's and was there a discernable change over those decades?

Paul Gaston: Brian has his schedule to end at three thirty and so there's thirty eight

seconds to answer that question. I'll take a part of those to welcome the president of the Southern Regional Council who just walked in. Greetings, Charles. Do you want us to take time to answer that?

Charles: I want your best five minutes, Paul.

Paul Gaston: Well, I'll give it to someone else. John's ready to go.

John Dorsey: I just want to say that, when I got active with the **Unitarian Fellowship** which was kind of a sponsor of the Tallahassee council in human relations, I was the first black who was not part of the academic world at FAMU that wanted to be part and interact with whites. Black folks really didn't want to interact with white folks in Tallahassee. It was only through **the \_\_\_\_\_ movement** we saw white students who reached out from the University of

Florida and FSU to reach out to **Patricia**. **Patricia** was also a different kind of person. You have to realize that you can't just blame the white folks in the council of human relations not reaching out to blacks. A lot of times the blacks didn't want to reach out to whites. It was just that way. It was the mis-education of Negroes **by Woodson** was the reality in the South. And fear. What do they want? They must be Communists, you know, that kind of thing.

Leslie Dunbar: I don't know what I'm supposed to say. We had a wonderful staff at SRC made up of a lot of accomplished and talented people. Accomplished and talented people sometimes find ways to rub each other. So we used to have, now and then, little flair ups of the staff and we'd have to deal with them. We also had them with the councils in human relations. I spent a lot of my time on that. I just remembered one woman who worked running the memiograph machines and, let's call her Jane Doe, for a moment. I can remember in frustration sometimes saying my god I wish we had more Jane Doe's around here. I never have any problems with her. She leaves precisely at five o'clock every night, she's gone. She never works over time. She causes me no trouble. Right after I left she led a black power movement at SRC, so you can't always tell. I don't remember what else to say...

Connie Curry: Like I say, I really never worked at SRC, but my perception of it was

that it was mostly white male led, but there was some women like **Maggie Long** and certainly **Mrs. Tilly** who had been there. There were a lot of women who were deeply involved.

Paul Gaston: My staff experience was only one year from 1970 to 1971 and that may be illustrative of some of the tensions it had. Vernon Jordan had just left the staff. John Lewis had recently left the staff. One other distinguished black leader had just left the staff. Almost over night the staff had changed from being integrated at the top level with project directors and so on. The year I came down as a visitor that as not so. We were all a bunch of white boys. I was the research director; Pat Watters was information director; Reese Cleghorn edited South Today. So it was really illustrative of the problems the council had. Those things came and went and one could find that kind of example at other times and dwell on it a long time. It's a very interesting topic. But there is another side of it and that is for the council membership itself. I thought of this this morning when we were talking about how people change over time and what opportunities were presented to them to change over time. Now one of the cliché's about the Southern Regional Council is that it's a family. We often talk about the Southern Regional Council family and from almost the beginning it was a membership organization, and then it became a hundred men and women of good will. So the

members would come together once a year, the executive committee more often. It was a large family of people who felt a certain kind of kinship because they belonged to this organization. Like many families they had a lot of quarrels, and the quarrels they had from 1944 to 1951 we've already discussed. Those were significant quarrels, and some of the people left the family. We talked about how **Virginia Stabney** couldn't stay in the family. Others were strengthened by family ties and developed good family values 'cause they learned. The point is that over time, and you would meet these people all over the South or you'd meet them, oh you're an SRC person, whether black or white. It was a bond, and I think, for someone who might want to write a book about the Southern Regional Council, I would suggest that he, well she if there is somebody, but if a he was writing this book, I would suggest that he explore that dimension of the council and how it thought of itself as a family and how all over the region you could drop in a town and meet somebody who was a member, black or white, and learn from them and be educated because of that advantage.

Connie Curry: I want to say something real quick. John Boone, I know you have to leave and I was just wondering if you'd like to say a word about the work that you did with SRC on the prison program 'cause I don't think a lot of people know about that.

John Boone: Yes Connie, I'll say a word or two. I think that after I was appointed at \_\_\_\_\_, **Indiana**, and encountering J. Edgar Hoover fighting what me and **Merlin Alexander** director was doing. He said nothing like that would ever happen. I had the authority to implement a **furlow law**. Of course he said you can do that only over my dead body. We did get a chance to do it though, but after he had died (Laughter) in the District of Columbia. In the District of Columbia they had a four hundred long school with only ten men enrolled. I got there and walked and walked and walked. They had had a riot after Martin was assassinated. Every time they had a riot in the District it would spill over into the prison. So we **caught hell** trying to keep that stable. Anyway, to make a long, long story short, I sat day and night telling the guys look, I'm going to invent a new law come hell or high water. If you can assume the responsibility I'm gonna send you in school after you get your GED to get an education. So we did. The other day they inaugurated the **Cleveland in Art College in Atlanta**. Cleveland had his first when he was at D.C. University basketball team, predominately prisoners that went in. What happened, I was courting my wife, and I went to visit her and there was a thunderstorm. My daughter called me and said the superintendent wants you to come out there. There's a riot here; all the lights are out. When I got out there the only lights there were fire trucks and police trucks from all over the jurisdiction, but I didn't see a riot; I didn't feel a riot. I said I'm going in to see what's

back here. **Ken Hardy** was the director back then and he said you better stop that rioting. I walked in and told them to go get **Ken Hardy** to see if the superintendent will give me that bull horn. So he did and I said I'm going to walk in and see what's wrong - alone. That's what I eventually did, but I heard a **prison guard \_\_\_\_\_ in a powerful union** said let the son of a bitch go in there and he'll find out what's wrong when he gets in there. So I slowly walked to that prison guard **afraid under the bed doing everything**. Before I left **Delbert Jackson**, who later on became the director, said John can I go in with you. I said yes **Delbert** you can go in with me, but on the way in I remembered Delbert carried a .38 all the time and I didn't want any firearms in there, so I slowly went in the back door because I knew behind the front door was nothing but state police and everything. So I went slow, went in the back door, **the guy was afraid**. I said look, when I give the signal I want you to come up front, that's where the light is. I went in by myself, but just as I was about to get out of the prison compound seven white guards were coming toward me. There were three guys who called themselves thugs vowed to support me and they saw these white guys coming. They started throwing bricks. A brick hit me in the back. I took it to Massachusetts with me after that, but it didn't hurt. Anyway, after that the prison was revolutionized, but I was too much for them. They had to get rid of me, so they terminated me and I was **sent to \_\_\_\_\_ in Indiana**. In Massachusetts the same thing

happened. They say they had a prison guard riot going on. I went there and I didn't hear a riot, didn't see a riot. So I walked through that prison by myself **and** \_\_\_\_\_ **nothing** wrong. Those so and so and so don't know what they talkin' about. And so sure enough I told them I said look, I don't feel no riot. I selected twenty five guards, I said go over there, get a ball out of the dormitory, go **on recreation field** and stay there until it stops raining and the lights go on. The prison guard union had destroyed the auxiliary system so the prison was completely black, on reservation otherwise. But to make a long story short, that morning the sun was rising bright. One man had escaped. He got a guards union and walked out of prison. He came back the next day though. He went to visit his wife and all of that. He came back and that prison was revolutionized, but they had to get rid of me 'cause they had to keep these jails and prisons. So I went down the drainpipe in the prison guard union, but what we started thanks to Leslie Dunbar, when I went to Massachusetts he gave me a \$250,000 grant I think to help us educate the public. And that's what it is, **Bill Farmer**, who is now dead, was a deputy of the public corrections in Massachusetts. He was a prisoner, I got him out, but I made him my associate in Massachusetts. You know how they made that terrible hard-hitting union system was. **Bill Farmer** died not very long ago. Ninety-five percent of the men went out on furlows and came back so I think the system is gone with the wind now. We do not need to pay all of that

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money on jails and prison cells. And I think the Georgia governor, my governor, realized that the other day. I **was** \_\_\_\_\_ **to** him we gotta shut down some prisons. So the time is right for some organizations to focus on doing that. It's a waste of time. I mean you can do some other things. Prisons eighty percent black. You know what that's **second Sunday** plantation system and all of that. Well that's enough said. I'll have to do it another time. Thank you very much.

Paul Gaston: Thank you, **John**. (Applause) Now we focused all day today

...[unitelligible]....this afternoon on the past of the SRC and we're only up to 1960, or 1970. Tomorrow we're gonna do the 1970's and 1980's. After you get a little refreshment we're gonna hear about the SRC of the future and **Louis Berrarow** is going to tell us about her plans and how you can help her with it. But we're going to serve refreshment now.

Brian Ward: We'll talk half an hour and we'll take **Lou's** after four fifteen. Thank you all so much. Thank the panel. (Applause)

[End of Day 1, Tape 3.]