

This interview is part of the **Southern Oral History Program** collection at the **University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**. Other interviews from this collection are available online through www.sohp.org and in the **Southern Historical Collection at Wilson Library**.

U.1. The Long Civil Rights Movement: Individual Biographies

Interview U-1120

Julian Bond

19 November 2013

Abstract – p. 2

Field Notes – p. 3

Tape Log – p. 5

ABSTRACT- Julian Bond

Interviewee: Julian Bond

Interviewer: Evan Faulkenbury

Interview Date: November 19, 2013

Location: The Love House and Hutchins Forum, Front Parlor

Length: 47:32

Julian Bond begins the interview by discussing his beliefs concerning pacifism and nonviolence. He connects his earlier civil rights work with his current environmental activism, namely, his arrest protesting the Keystone XL Pipeline with the Sierra Club. Bond next discusses his role with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) during the 1960s when he served as its communications director. He discusses his relationships with various members of the media and how SNCC tried to protect its reputation and be sure it received credit for its local registration projects. While with SNCC, he worked with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). With SNCC, he discusses the importance of voter education and registration work within local communities. During the 1970s, he worked alongside John Lewis and the Voter Education Project traveling to communities across the South promoting voter registration. After his unsuccessful bid for Congress, Bond went to Washington, DC and became the host of *America's Black Forum*. He also began to teach at various institutions, including the University of Virginia and American University. He also discusses his role within the NAACP from 1998-2010 as chairman, especially his fundraising. Offering commentary on the past and present NAACP leadership and mission, he believes the organization remains strong. He also promotes the NAACP's views on gay and lesbian rights concerning same-sex marriage. On North Carolina, he speaks highly of the Moral Mondays protest marches and the Reverend William Barber. He criticizes North Carolina's conservative leadership, particularly its new voter identification laws. He ends the interview by noting the significance of women grassroots organizers during the civil rights movement.

FIELD NOTES – Julian Bond

Interviewee: Julian Bond

Interviewer: Evan Faulkenbury

Interview Date: November 19, 2013

Location: The Love House and Hutchins Forum, Front Parlor

Length: 47:32

THE INTERVIEWEE. Julian Bond is a political activist with a long history of social engagement with civil rights. During the 1960s, he worked for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) as their communications director. After his time with SNCC, he served for a number of years in the Georgia House of Representatives. He ran unsuccessfully for a seat in the United States House of Representatives, and went on to Washington, DC where he became a television host of *America's Black Forum*. He began teaching at various universities within their history departments, most notably at the University of Virginia and American University, where he currently resides. From 1998 to 2010, he served as national chairman for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

THE INTERVIEWER. Evan Faulkenbury is a Field Scholar at the Southern Oral History Program and graduate student in the history department at UNC-Chapel Hill.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW. This interview took place the afternoon before Dr. Bond gave the Charleston Lecture presented by the Center for the Study of the American South at UNC's Stone Center. The interview was conducted in the parlor of the Love House and Hutchins Forum, the home of CSAS and the SOHP. CSAS also hired a videographer to film the interview for its website. Along with Dr. Bond, the videographer, and I, Ayse Erginer, executive director of *Southern Cultures*, was present as well. Within the SOHP archive, multiple oral histories with Julian Bond already exist. The interviewer drew on these past interviews and tried to ask new questions, as well as pose questions about his activism since the 1990s. Throughout the interview, Julian Bond was relaxed and amiable, offering various stories and looking back fondly on his many years of activism. Since he was set to give a lecture later that evening connecting the long history of civil rights to today, he framed much of his discussion against the backdrop of current politics, especially in North Carolina. He is a veteran of countless interviews, so his poise was evident throughout.

NOTE ON RECORDING. Recorded using one of the SOHP's Zoom Recorders.

Interview number U-1099 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

TAPE LOG- Julian Bond

Interviewee: Julian Bond

Interviewer: Evan Faulkenbury

Interview Date: November 19, 2013

Location: The Love House and Hutchins Forum, Front Parlor

Length: 47:32

Comments: Only text in quotation marks is verbatim; all other text is paraphrased, including the interviewer's questions.

Time

Topic

[Digital Recording, Starts at Beginning]

- | | |
|------|--|
| 0:01 | Introduction. |
| 0:20 | On his beliefs regarding pacifism: always a “situational believer in nonviolence”; other colleagues made nonviolence a way of life, but for Bond, it was a tactic; mentions his surprise that nonviolence is not more often used today; for example, in a person’s local town, he believes that one does not often consider nonviolent direct action as a tactic to demonstrate against injustice the way that activists did during the civil rights movement, “But, I’m not sure why that is” |
| 2:36 | Describes his recent nonviolent protest and arrest in Washington, DC against the Keystone XL Pipeline; environmentalist activists lock themselves to White House fence and refuse to leave; wonders why more movements are not using these tactics; organized through the Sierra Club, an organization not known for direct action. |
| 3:55 | Discusses how he became the communications director for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) during the 1960s; present at Raleigh conference when SNCC was created; had experience working in advertising demonstrations in Atlanta; he was interested in journalism and media; still recalls the Associated Press (AP) phone number he constantly called; he knew that being on the AP wire meant people across the country would read the story. |

Interview number U-1099 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

- 6:00 On relationships with other media people; had relationships with various Atlanta newspapers primarily; *Newsweek* and *Time* also had bureaus in Atlanta; believes the media was interested in SNCC because they were so open unlike other civil rights organizations; SNCC wanted to use the media.
- 8:16 Did not have many relationships with Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and other civil rights groups while working for SNCC; NAACP and SNCC people in local scenes did often work together; sometimes media would credit SCLC with something SNCC did, so his job would be to say, “No, we did that”; Albany Movement was contentious between organizations; his job was to make sure SNCC got credit for their part because “Credit meant money, credit meant attention”; over time, media came to trust SNCC and Bond’s word; the media sometimes “misperceived” what SNCC did; media latched onto Martin Luther King. Jr. and often credited him for something he did not do.
- 12:00 On how the media has shaped the history and memory of the civil rights movement; newer journalists do not know the history of the NAACP and other organizations; personal relationships between journalists and activists were key; today, journalists have to cover too much, and this changes how events are written.
- 14:40 On the Institute for Southern Studies and *Southern Exposure*; remembers he was involved, but cannot recall specifics.
- 15:35 Discusses the importance of voting rights during the movement; “It just seemed obvious to us that if you could register this mass of black people...you create a mighty, mighty force that could only be a force for good”; “main preoccupation” of all civil rights organizations was voting.
- 16:37 On the 1965 Voting Rights Act impact; meant “people who were powerless suddenly had power”; more black office holders as a result, and they could exercise power.
- 17:55 On the Voter Education Project (VEP); with SNCC, no direct ties to founding; VEP originates out of foundations coming together; mentions that VEP gave more money to other organizations than SNCC even though SNCC registered more voters than the others – “frustrating”; later during 1970s, John Lewis became the VEP director and Bond accompanied him on trips throughout the South (primarily Mississippi) going to rallies and churches to promote registration – “a wonderful time for us”; drove all around, many crowds came out; in Belzoni, Mississippi, a

white man comes inside the rally and says, “Welcome, I’m the mayor of Belzoni!” – He did this because “he knows these people are going to be his voters in a year or two” but scared him.

- 20:00 These VEP trips were more light-hearted; recalls other VEP workers Archie Allen, Claude Compton; often traveled with four or five people; rallies set up in advance and rallies were waiting on them.
- 21:01 Recalls a story of one woman traveling with them from one major foundation who had a fascination with fire engines; at every opportunity, Bond had them drive by a fire station in Mississippi and pointed it out to her: “I think it made a big difference, and we got more money from her than we would have ordinarily;” she wanted to see how the money was being spent.
- 21:55 Discusses the impact of these trips on local communities; many had never seen black elected officials before; people were happy to see them and get autographs.
- 21:50 On the VEP during the 1960s; admired VEP during 1960s, but no close involvement until the 1970s.
- 23:15 Believes SNCC had a better connection with grassroots organization than other organizations; SNCC “brought a higher level of engagement.”
- 24:05 On writing political literature for the VEP and being on their board of directors; does not remember specifics; he knew Vernon Jordan and Wiley Branton, but not extremely well.
- 25:00 Bridges his activism with teaching; became host of television show *America’s Black Forum*; American University President was a common guest; the President invited Bond to teach on campus, and he agreed; Patricia Sullivan invited him to teach some at the University of Virginia; discusses other invitations to teach at various universities; Became steadily employed at the University of Virginia; recalls his father was a college president; Bond did not have a PhD, so he felt like he had to work harder to be able to teach; in his civil rights movement classes, he focused on grassroots people.
- 29:00 On teaching young people about the civil rights movement; finds that his students are eager to learn; discusses his love of teaching; discovers on the first day of class that their knowledge of the movement is limited, and he tries to expand it; currently teaching an oral history class on the civil rights movement at American University.

- 31:31 On becoming the chairman of the NAACP in 1999; discusses minor scandals that occurred before him in the NAACP; discusses Myrlie Evers' leadership before him; NAACP was in bad financial shape, but Evers helps; he runs to succeed her and serves as chair for eleven consecutive years; he did not want to change the NAACP much; he raises membership fees, which were low: "you know, the Ku Klux Klan charges more than that" was his argument; raised money; received one \$25 million contribution to register voters in 2000; Heather Booth helps lead the campaign and they spend all the money registering many voters.
- 35:36 On the current NAACP; Benjamin Jealous "wore himself out working for the NAACP" and is set to retire, but has been a great leader; good history of NAACP CEOs.
- 37:00 On how conceptions of "civil rights" has expanded; happy that he was part of NAACP supporting same-sex marriage; he was afraid most members would not support same-sex marriage while he was chairman, but was pleasantly surprised to find that later most were very supportive; Ben Jealous introduces more digital initiatives and expands NAACP; more linkages with other organizations; "The NAACP is not your father's NAACP today;" "part of a movement that is much broader than the movement we were in."
- 39:13 Discusses gay and lesbian rights as civil rights; points to the Dick Cheney family as evidence that attitudes are changing; surprised the movement has taken off so quickly; will keep moving forward.
- 40:56 Discusses his thoughts on Moral Mondays in North Carolina; "now the other forty-nine states are saying, 'Thank God for North Carolina'" pointing to how regressive the state's politics and policies have recently been; "North Carolina is Mississippi with PhDs"; speaks highly of Reverend William Barber who "can see the big picture"; wishes the NAACP had more leaders like Barber.
- 42:29 On voter identification laws; glad to see the Justice Department is fighting back; believes voter ID laws are "just an attempt to return to the old Jim Crow Dixie ideas of limiting the way black people can vote"; he remains optimistic, just "keep some backbone in the Democrats."
- 43:47 Believes the civil rights movement is still ongoing; Moral Mondays are part of the broad movement.
- 44:42 Ayse Erginer asks a question on the role of women in the civil rights movement; he mentions a new book about the experiences of women in SNCC *Hands on the*

Freedom Plow; mentions Ella Baker, but she is still not well known, along with Fannie Lou Hamer; thinks about how the public might learn more about how women were fundamental to the movement; “We need to tell these stories.”

47:32

End of interview