Interview with **Rev. Andrew Young**
October 11, 1985
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Note: These transcripts contain material that did not appear in the final program. Only text appearing in ***bold italics*** was used in the final version of *Eyes on the Prize.*

00:00:32:00

[camera roll 501]

[sound roll 1501]

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: ANDREW YOUNG.

[sync tone]

[cut]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: ONE IS UP.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: FIRST MARKER.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: THANK YOU. LET ME GET SETTLED IN HERE. OK. CALLIE, IT'S ALL YOURS.

INTERVIEWER 1: THERE'S A STORY CIRCULATING THAT, THE PLANS FOR SELMA WERE REALLY OUT THERE, BEFORE, ENOUGH FOR WILSON BAKER TO GET COPIES OF THESE PLANS, AND GO AND SEE BURKE MARSHALL, IN LATE

NOVEMBER OF '64, IN AN EFFORT TO GET HIM TO STOP THE CAMPAIGN IN SELMA. WERE YOU AWARE OF THAT?

Young: I'm not aware specifically that [pause]—you gonna let me?

00:01:12:00

INTERVIEWER 1: YOU'VE GOT TO REPEAT THE QUESTION. [laughs] THAT'S ALRIGHT, THOUGH. YOU'RE DOING VERY WELL.

Young: There has been a rumor that, that the plans for Selma, were already out in 1964 and that Wilson Baker took copies of them to Washington, to Burke Marshall, to try to get him to intercede, or to stop the campaign. I don't know that to be a fact, but it's quite, possible—in fact, it's even probable—that that was the case. The, plans for Selma grew out of a lot of the thinking of James and Diane Bevel, and it was part of a strategy that they began to develop, in response to the bombing of the church in Birmingham. When the four little girls were killed in the church in Birmingham, we felt that that was directly a result of the kind of inflammatory political rhetoric that was coming from George Wallace at the time. And we then knew that even though we had a Civil Rights Act that integrated lunch counters, and that, made it possible for us to work in new places, it eliminated the signs on restrooms in, and, public facilities, but that incident convinced us that unless you changed the politics of Alabama, that you couldn't really change the society. You really didn't want to have to go out and demonstrate every time there was a, a grievance, and the only way to avoid that was to elect the public officials yourself. So, Jim and Diane Bevel began to talk in terms of, getting rid of Wallace, and they had all of these little buttons that said GROW, G-R-O-W, Get Rid of Wallace. And they didn't tell anybody what they meant. We just had them made up and we were passing them around. And, a part of the thinking was that in small groups, all across the state, that people would plan simultaneous demonstrations. We felt that to change the political structure, in, Alabama, we couldn't go back to Birmingham—Birmingham had borne about all of the strain that it could bear—and that in the smaller towns, like Selma, and Montgomery, we would probably have to operate in as many as five or ten communities simultaneously. So there was this plan to mobilize the entire state, and it was evolved really, by the grassroots participants. And this was done before it came to, Atlanta, with, the Executive Staff and Dr. King, but it was typical of the way the Southern Christian Leadership Conference operated. We didn't see ourselves as putting, plans into other people's lives. We brought people out of the situation in a citizenship education program, and we gave them a week, off by themselves to discuss their problems. And we discussed them with them and, and they then began to devise, well, they began to come to some of the same conclusion: that they had to vote. And that, when Selma did this, we brought some people from Montgomery, and then some people from Anniston, and some people from over in Marion, Alabama, and Demopolis, and, and Tuscaloosa, and Lowndes County, throughout the Black Belt. So it was, it was a plan in evolution. But I should say that nothing like that ever disturbed us. We operated under the Gandhian notion that we were completely open. During the Selma movement, the John Birch Society and the White Citizens' Council had, people in our meetings, taping our meetings, and making films, and, and we didn't put them out, and we knew who they were. We would take the microphones off of the, from wherever they would

hide them, under the pulpit, and put them out, right out on top. And Reverend Abernathy got quite famous, every night, for preaching to the little “doohickey,” is, which is what he called the bugging device. And he would, say whatever he wanted, either President Johnson, or J. Edgar Hoover, or Governor Wallace, or Wilson Baker, or anybody he felt like preaching to, he preached to through this little, recording device. So that it, it didn't disturb us that everybody knew our plans. We wanted them to know our plans.

00:06:17:00

INTERVIEWER 1: ASIDE FROM THE SPECIFICS THAT YOU'VE MENTIONED HERE, THERE WAS A FOUR-POINT PLAN THAT WE READ ABOUT, MUCH MORE GENERAL. NONVIOLENT MARCHES IN THE STREET, PART ONE, GET THE RACISTS TO RETALIATE, GET THE OUTRAGE OF THE AMERICANS, AND MAKE THAT OUTRAGE, OUTRAGE MATERIALIZE IN LEGISLATION. WHAT ABOUT THAT?

Young: Well, I doubt that we ever spelled it out that way, because we never wanted racists to retaliate. That was probably not an SCLC plan. What we did say was that we would put so many people in jail that we would bring the system to a halt, and that our emphasis was on noncooperation and economic withdrawal, and that that would be the thing that would bring about a change, legislatively. We saw this, we saw the marches as a means of bringing about, economic boycotts, and that the, the pattern that we had developed in Birmingham, which essentially stopped the black community, and white people of good will, from buying anything except food and medicine, for a period of about ninety days, was basically a workable plan in any community. And that you didn't have to completely close down the businesses. The profit margin in most business is ten or fifteen percent, and if you take the black community and the Black Belt out, you could cut the profit by fifty percent. You could stop business in almost any city in America, with an organized effort and daily demonstrations, and that was basically what our strategy was.

00:07:58:00

INTERVIEWER 1: WHEN YOU WENT INTO SELMA, THIS WAS A SOPHISTICATED MOVEMENT. YOU'D BEEN THROUGH THE ALBANY’S, THE BIRMINGHAM’S, YOU’D HAD THE HIGH OF THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON, AND NOW HERE YOU ARE, AND YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT TO DO. CAN YOU DESCRIBE A LITTLE BIT OF WHAT, WHAT THE THINKING WAS OF THE ORGANIZATION AS YOU GO IN WITH LESSONS LEARNED.

Young: [pause] I think our thinking, going into Selma, was that we had a lot of experience in Albany, and in Birmingham, that we would apply in Selma. But I think we knew enough about people, and we knew enough about the political situation, to know that you couldn't pre-package a movement. That a movement had a life of its own, the people had a dynamic of its own, and you had to get in and work with those people. We had never done anything like a march from Selma to Montgomery. That came out in Jimmie Lee Jackson's funeral, and it was a spontaneous thing that came, from, discussions along the, the funeral march.

And most of our tactics—we had never met the kind of sophisticated opposition, in Selma, I mean, in Birmingham, or, or Albany. Well, Albany in some ways was, about as sophisticated, but Wilson Baker, was, a very, skilled person at managing conflict. And, if it had not been for Jim Clark and the, excesses of the Alabama State Troopers at the march, over the Edmund Pettus Bridge, I think Selma would have gone the way we planned it, which was a longer, slower, economic withdrawal campaign, that would have changed the local politics, and, and then changed the national politics. As it was, they escalated it to a national issue, and the Congress responded, to the death of Reverend James Reeb, and to the killing of, Mrs. Viola Liuzzo. I think shortly after that, Stokely Carmichael was shot in Lowndes County, and the Reverend Jonathan Daniels was killed. It was a bloody period, and, none of this was planned, and none of this was expected on our part. It, it just—in fact, none of these incidents occurred in demonstrations that we planned. They occurred on the fringe of demonstrations. Mrs. Liuzzo was killed after a demonstration. Jimmie Lee Jackson was killed in a, you know, in a restaurant after demonstrations were over, by, by the state troopers. The, [pause] Stokely went to get Reverend Jonathan Daniels, no, I think Jonathan Daniels went to get Stokely out of jail, and they were both—

00:11:07:00

—shot. [sic]

[cut]

[wild audio]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: WE HAVE JUST RUN OUT.

INTERVIEWER 1: DID YOU GET THAT—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: WE DID GET THAT LAST SENTENCE.

[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 502]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: TWO HEAD SLATE.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: THAT ONE IS BRIGHT. [pause] OK, CALLIE, WE'RE LOOKING GOOD HERE. IT'S ALL YOURS.

INTERVIEWER 1: CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LOCAL BLACK LEADERSHIP IN SELMA? I'M THINKING OF, MRS. AMELIA BOYNTON

AND FREDERICK REESE.

Young: Well, the local black leadership in Selma was really responsible for the Selma movement. I mean, Selma was not a place that we picked out. We did not choose them, they chose us. [laughs] I had been to Selma, my wife is from thirty miles from Selma, and we had our first date in Selma. So, I knew Mrs. Boynton. We had trained some of the people, including Mrs. Boynton, in our citizenship education program, some years before. But Mrs. Boynton's background goes all the way back to the early NAACP days, before the NAACP was outlawed in Alabama. And, John Lewis, who is now in the Atlanta City Council, and Bernard Lafayette, who I think is teaching at Tuskegee, were a part of, going down with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, to attempt to register voters. Well, they were beaten up pretty badly, and then the local courts put a total injunction on the city, where it was unlawful for more than three people, no, more than two people to even walk down the street together, where no more than four people could be in a public meeting without permission from the sheriff's office. I mean, it was really, a very repressive kind of South Africa-type situation. And Mrs. Boynton came to the SCLC Board meeting, just after Dr. King won the Nobel Prize, and, she told us about this incident, and this situation, and she asked us if we would come over there to work with her. I think the meeting was scheduled, there was a traditional Emancipation Day service, which was scheduled, normally, for the first of January. This year, since the second of January was on a Sunday, they had scheduled it for the second of January. And, to hold that Emancipation Day service was a violation of this particular injunction. And we decided that that would be the way to come to Selma, that we would come to the Emancipation Day service. We would let everybody know well in advance, that we were going to do it, that we were going to hold it, and we would publicly announce that we were going to defy, defy this injunction, and, and then, from that time on, began to work in, in Selma.

00:14:33:00

INTERVIEWER 1: DESCRIBE THE FEELING THERE, THAT FIRST MEETING.

Young: Well, Martin had a way of making, fun, fun out of, any dangerous situation. And he talked, about going down into Selma. And of course, Coretta is from Marion also, and he had pastored in Montgomery, so we all knew Selma. We all knew Lowndes County, and we knew the kind of people who were, that were there. And he started preaching everybody's funeral, because he was saying, we were lucky in Birmingham, all of us got out alive, but some of us weren't going to make it out of Selma. And he'd go out, around the room, you know, sort of saying, well, Ralph, now if they get you, and then he'd preach Ralph's sermon for about five minutes, you know, and he, he just made a, a fun of saying all of the embarrassing things he could think of saying, and pretending that he was preaching our eulogies, and, our funerals. And, so, that was the way that we dealt with the anxiety, and the fear, and the tension, by, by joking about it and laughing about it.

00:15:47:00

INTERVIEWER 1: IN SELMA, YOU WERE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT THAT

TIME, OF SCLC, YOU HAD JUST TAKEN THE REINS FROM WYATT T. WALKER, IS THAT CORRECT?

Young: That's correct.

INTERVIEWER 1: WHAT IN THAT FUNCTION, WHAT WERE YOU TO DO, TO ASSIST THE MOVEMENT, MOVE IT FORWARD?

Young: Well, as the newly appointed Executive Director, I was sort of the link between the field staff and the executive staff, and, and between what was going on in the field and, and Martin and Ralph, in Atlanta. And most of the field staff, I had worked with and trained, and I had hired most of them, when I was Program Director and working with the, citizenship education program, which, incidentally, was a program that the United Church of Christ Board for Homeland Ministry sponsored. And at that time, I was still not on SCLC's payroll. I was still being paid by the, Board for Homeland Ministries of the United Church of Christ. So it was, well, I, I saw myself in, in Selma, as, kind of keeping things together. You didn't run, SCLC. It was never an organization which gave orders from the top down. I used to say it was like riding herd on a team of wild horses, and I kind of kept them all in the same road. And that was the way—Jim Bevel, and John Lewis, probably were more directly in charge of the day-to-day tactics of Selma, and I was sort of the liaison between them and Martin. We provided the, staff services, and backup; we arranged with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, to supply legal services; I ended up coordinating the media, to some extent, so that—because the media was a very important part of a nonviolent movement. It was the way you got the message across, and made a local issue a national issue.

00:18:12:00

INTERVIEWER 1: NOW, YOU MENTIONED SNCC, THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN 1963 HAVING LAID THE FOUNDATION, THEY'VE BEEN IN SELMA BEFORE, HERE COMES SCLC. WHAT WAS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCLC AND SNCC AT THAT POINT?

Young: Well, it was sort of like me and my younger brother. We loved each other, but we fought all the time. [laughs] And, I think that it sort of depended on who it was with SNCC. With, John Lewis and Ivanhoe Donaldson, we basically functioned as we were one staff. Sometimes with Jim Foreman, and Stokely, there were little tensions. It depended on whether or not the SNCC persons involved resented Martin Luther King's prominence. Some of them did, some of them didn't. But, [pause] I had been involved in Selma training; in fact Mrs. Boynton had come to one of our workshops, as early as 1962. And we had, been training people throughout that region, since, 1961. So that it was—I mean, we didn't see it, and, and I was in charge of the training, but we never asked people whether they were SCLC people, or SNCC people or, or NAACP people. We just brought people together. In fact, the way we tried to identify leaders, was, we said, we wanted the kind of people who had Ph.D. minds who never had an opportunity, to get the formal training that enabled them to have an impact on the society that they ought to have had, because of their intelligence and natural leadership ability. And in going through the community, Mrs. Boynton was clearly one of those that we

identified. And, she became sort of the, leader, and supervisor, of all of our work, work, working through the Dallas County Voters' League, I think.

00:20:30:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: CAN I INTERRUPT FOR ONE—I HAVE TO CHECK SOMETHING.

[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 503]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: WE'VE GOT A FINISHED ROLL.

INTERVIEWER 2: THANK YOU.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: ROLL SOUND.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: THANK YOU, SIR. [pause] OK, CALLIE, IT'S ALL YOURS.

INTERVIEWER 1: SO, A, A FOLLOW-UP WITH SNCC, JUST A QUICK RESPONSE TO YOUR ROLE AS A MEDIATOR BETWEEN SNCC AND SCLC.

Young: Well, I think that, I ended up being a kind of mediator, because there was a certain hostility to preachers, and, I, though I was a preacher, and got along well with the preachers, I was a Congregational preacher that had a lot more free attitude toward life, than, say, most Baptist preachers. And, it, and there was, there was a slight, there was a little less—I mean, Martin and Ralph were about four or five years older, and the difference between twenty and twenty-five is a lot different than the difference between twenty and thirty. And so I was sort of halfway—right now there's no difference. You know, at fifty-five and fifty, there's no difference, but from twenty to thirty, five years could make a big difference. And so, I would still hang out with them a little at night, and most of the student planning was done in late-night bull sessions. And, so, it was mainly a matter of contact, and being available. And I, I was just available, to both sides. But I, really do think that most of the tensions came about on slow news days, when, the press didn't have anything else to write about, so they would, they would write about the difference. And the differences, though, were, were very slight. And, [pause] well, I remember Willie Ricks, who's now still around Atlanta. But Willie Ricks always wanted confrontation, and, confrontation always got a lot of folk hurt. And we, frankly, tried to minimize confrontation. We were much more patient and would count more on the day-by-day marches, even if nothing happened, because it was the day-by-day marches that slowly built up an awareness in people, and you didn't have to provoke a crisis

everyday. The purpose of the marches was to maintain the boycott, and it was the boycott—the boycott would require, you know, at least thirty days before its effect would be felt. It didn't matter, you, you couldn't make a boycott work in quicker than thirty days, and most of the time it took sixty to ninety days, and so we were, we were much more patient, about, social change. I think there was a tendency on the part of a lot of students in SNCC, to make a commitment that they were going to come South for one semester, or for one summer, and they wanted to see all of the changes in the world come that summer. We were almost as naïve. I felt like it would take five years, but it turned out that it's a lifetime struggle, and you move from one phase to the other. And people who couldn't make that adjustment and who couldn't change with the different phases, I think ended up rather frustrated.

00:24:36:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: LET'S JUST STOP GOING. WHY DON'T WE CUT FOR THE SIREN?

[cut]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: [inaudible]

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: IT'S FOUR.

INTERVIEWER 1: YOU WERE COMING TO THE END OF YOUR THOUGHT THERE, AND WE'D LIKE TO GIVE YOU LIKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO FINISH IT.

Young: I forgot it.

INTERVIEWER 1: [laughs] NO PROBLEM. MOVING RIGHT AHEAD. I'M GOING TO THROW OUT A HIT LIST HERE OF CERTAIN PEOPLE, AND I'D LIKE JUST YOUR QUICK RESPONSE TO THESE FOLKS, REMEMBERING TO INCORPORATE THEIR NAMES INTO THE SENTENCE.

Young: You want the truth?

00:25:04:00

INTERVIEWER 1: YES, I WANT THE TRUTH. [laughs] GEORGE WALLACE?

Young: George Wallace, I think, was an opportunist and a charlatan, who I think, frankly, did undergo some level of repentance after his own suffering. But we never felt that George Wallace was as bad as he sounded. It was almost as though he was saying what he thought it, required him to say, you know, to get elected and to stir up, you know, poor white people in Alabama.

00:25:45:00

INTERVIEWER 1: JIM CLARK?

Young: Jim Clark was a near madman. He was what, you know, the Anti-Defamation League would define as "the authoritarian personality." He was probably mean to his wife and children. And, it just infuriated him for anybody to defy his authority, even to the point of wanting to vote. If he said you couldn't vote you were supposed to go away, and just to stand there enraged him. Jim Clark, incidentally, was arrested for running drugs, and in addition to having served time for a civil rights violation, he has served time for being a drug runner.

00:26:27:00

INTERVIEWER 1: FREDERICK REESE?

Young: Frederick Reese was one of those, [pause] really courageous, minister-teachers that lived in small towns and—[pause]

INTERVIEWER 2: FREDERICK REESE?

Young: Frederick Reese was one of those people who lived in small towns who, had no intention of living anywhere else, was just determined to make his town a good place to which to live. He was not hostile to the community, or he was not belligerent, but he was a determined, determined, to challenge the status quo and make things better for himself and his children.

00:27:19:00

INTERVIEWER 1: AL LINGO?

Young: Now, there are two Al Lingos.

INTERVIEWER 1: COLONEL AL LINGO OF THE ALABAMA STATE—?

Young: I never really knew Colonel Al Lingo. By his work, he had to be very close to Jim Clark. I mean there was absolutely no reason for anybody to mob people, you know, on television cameras, on a Sunday afternoon, as he did on that Edmund Pettus Bridge. I mean here were people who were not throwing rocks, they were not—I mean, they were on their knees, for all practical purposes. They were not in any way hostile, not even, not even verbally antagonistic, and yet, he saw fit to teargas them, and ride horses in their midst, and beat them. You've got to be some kind of maniac to do that.

00:28:10:00

INTERVIEWER 1: MAYOR JOSEPH SMITHERMAN?

Young: Joseph Smitherman, [pause] a good ol' boy, a mayor who was, neither hot nor cold, just lukewarm. He couldn't do anything particularly courageous, but neither was he particularly evil or bad. The irony of it is he survived and is still the Mayor of, of Selma, and I bump into him at the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and at the National League of Cities, and we reminisce about old times. But we used to talk then. And he was not the kind of madman that Jim Clark was. He was just a man who was caught in a trap and didn't have the personal strength or courage to, or even the, the wisdom to make any changes. He was sort of swept away, along with the tide.

00:29:13:00

INTERVIEWER 1: WE'RE STILL IN 1965. RESIST THE IMPULSE, I KNOW IT'S GREAT, TO TELL ME ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW. WILSON BAKER?

Young: Wilson Baker was one of the most intelligent and sensitive law enforcement officers I've ever met, and, he understood the civil rights movement, was evidently well-read in it, he had no hesitation to discuss things with you in a very honest and relaxed way. He was very secure, in his own dealings with, both, the problems of racial justice and the problems of law enforcement. I thought he was a very fine police officer.

00:28:51:00

INTERVIEWER 1: WE'VE JUST, PROMPTED YOUR MEMORY ABOUT JIMMY WEBB. JIMMY WEBB?

Young: Jimmy Webb was one of the young kids, that just sort of tagged along with the movement. And he was very bright, very articulate, that, would immediately emerge out of a crowd, to give leadership. In any kind of crisis, it would seem as though we wouldn't have to name the leaders. They would just come up. They would pop up. And they would say what had to be said. And Jimmy Webb was one of those that was like that.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: I THINK WE BETTER—

[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 504]

INTERVIEWER 1: [inaudible]

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: FIVE.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: CALLIE, IT'S ALL YOURS.

INTERVIEWER 1: ONE MORE PERSONAL REMEMBRANCE. DO YOU REMEMBER SHEYANN WEBB?

Young: No.

INTERVIEWER 1: THE EIGHT YEAR-OLD GIRL?

Young: Nnn-hhh.

00:31:01:00

INTERVIEWER 1: MOVING RIGHT ALONG. NOW, I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU A HITLIST OF EVENTS, AND I WANT SOME OF THIS SIMILAR KIND OF RESPONSE, IF YOU CAN. THE NIGHT JIMMIE LEE JACKSON WAS KILLED? CAN YOU DESCRIBE IT? WE'RE YOU THERE?

Young: We'd been in—on the night Jimmie Lee Jackson was killed, we had been to, Marion, and had come back to Selma, and so we didn't really know for sure that he was dead for a few days. We knew that after the demonstration, and after we left, that the State Troopers had gone around intimidating people, and roughing them up, and we had heard that, there was a particular rough, handling of one young Vietnam veteran, but we didn't know who he was and we didn't know what happened till a few days later.

00:31:59:00

INTERVIEWER 1: WHAT WAS THE IMPACT OF HIS DEATH WHEN HE FINALLY DID DIE?

INTERVIEWER 2: WHERE IS THIS VOICE GOING TO—OH, SORRY. BUT I CAN HEAR A VOICE THROUGH THE—

INTERVIEWER 1: NO, WE NEED TO— [inaudible]

INTERVIEWER 2: WELL—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: PARDON?

INTERVIEWER 2: ARE YOU PICKING UP A VOICE BLEEDING THROUGH THE WALL?

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: NO.

INTERVIEWER 2: OH, YOU'RE NOT? OK, I'M SORRY, I JUST HEARD IT. I DON'T KNOW.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: BUT THERE WAS A BUS, SO I THOUGHT THAT'S WHAT YOU WERE GOING TO MOVE. STILL ROLLING.

INTERVIEWER 1: DID IT GALVANIZE THE COMMUNITY? DID IT MAKE PEOPLE, ANGRY? DID THEY, I MEAN I—OR DID IT HAVE—YOU CAN'T RECALL?

Young: The death of Jimmie Lee Jackson is almost like every other death in the movement. It was something we, we became sort of anesthetized against. I mean you expected death, you knew it was going to come, but you couldn't let it slow you down, you couldn't, you couldn't get enthusiastic or pepped up about it. It required a kind of a steeling of one's will to go on, but you didn't let yourself feel about it. And that was true of all of the deaths, I think right on through to Martin's death. And the deaths in the movement is one of the hardest things for me to deal with yet.

00:33:15:00

INTERVIEWER 1: MALCOLM X'S VISIT IN SELMA.

INTERVIEWER 2: COULD YOU STOP FOR A SECOND?

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: I, TOO, [inaudible]

[sync tone]

[cut]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: SIX IS UP.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: OK, CAL.

00:33:30:00

INTERVIEWER 1: MALCOLM X'S VISIT TO SELMA.

Young: Malcolm X's visit to Selma was one that we were rather nervous about, because we didn't know how the press was going to play it. I had known Malcolm, and, Malcolm always visited SCLC's offices when he came to Atlanta, and so there was nothing, that we really feared about Malcolm X's visit. It was just that, for the press to play off violence against nonviolence, at a time when we were struggling to make sure that people remained committed to a kind of disciplined nonviolence, made us a little nervous. But, I think, it provided a good news item that kept a certain amount of, interest in the movement, and made a very positive contribution. You, you saw, though, the difference between the North and the South in Malcolm. I mean, Malcolm was electrifying to Northern audiences. But it was almost as though the people, in Selma, didn't relate very much to what he was saying at all.

And, and there was, I think one of the things that we were aware of, I mean we were sensitive about, was that—in fact we, to protect ourselves against that, we sort of put him up in between, I think—I, I don't remember who introduced him. But we arranged for James Bevel and, Reverend Shuttlesworth to speak after Malcolm, just in case he said anything that was, a problem, that they would have a chance before people went out in the streets to, to correct it. But, Malcolm was not a Southern-style preacher, and he didn't know the language of the rural south. And, and many of the people there, see, didn't really even know who he was. He could have been a Congressman, he could have been a—I mean, Selma was a pretty remote and isolated place in 1965.

00:35:59:00

INTERVIEWER 1: BLOODY SUNDAY?

Young: Bloody Sunday was, one of the incidents that made the civil rights movement. It was also one of the things that, not only did we not plan the way it happened, we were trying to call it off right up to the last minute. Dr. King [pause] had decided that we would move the movement from Selma to Montgomery, and that we would march to Selma, from Selma to Montgomery, but, we really didn't set a particular date. And Albert Turner, who was our field secretary in Marion, Alabama, figured the best day to do it was a Sunday. It turned out that that was the Men's Day in Dr. King's church, and he had to be, in, Atlanta, cause he pastored his church and he went back to preach just about every Sunday, wherever he was. And so we were all back in Atlanta when people began showing up in Selma to march from Selma to Montgomery. So they called me about nine o’clock in the morning, and, I jumped on a plane and went to Selma. And when I got to Selma, I saw, driving in from Montgomery, I saw all of the State Troopers on horseback, and I saw them with their teargas masks, but they were all standing around. There must have been a couple hundred of them, and they were all standing around, you know, in a very relaxed sort of manner, not looking menacing at all. And, so when I went, across the bridge going to the church, they didn't bother me and I didn't stop and bother them. But we called Dr. King, and we—he had asked us to call off the march. And we persuaded him that since there were about three hundred people there, maybe they could go ahead and march, that they weren't going to get far anyway, that we had seen the State Troopers and they were going to probably stop them and turn them around, or maybe they would, people would get arrested. So, he said, well, OK, go ahead and march, he said, but don't you all go to jail. And we thought that what was going to happen was that we would march over there and everybody would be arrested. So, John Lewis and Hosea Williams and I, and James Bevel, decided that only two should go. Well, John said, well, I represent SNCC, so I'll go, and one of you, you all decide which one will go. So we played odd man, and we flipped a coin and the odd man got to march, and the odd man was Hosea Williams. And—but nobody anticipated the kind of savagery and brutality that occurred. When the—we heard the shots, the shots of the teargas canisters, I mean, you almost can't tell—from a distance they sound like gunshots, and it sounded like somebody had opened fire on people, and then we saw people coming back screaming. ***We were about two blocks away from the bridge, and we went back to try to help people back, but the police were riding along on horseback beating people, and the teargas was so thick you couldn't get to where people were, were in need of help.*** And people, I mean, really, three hundred people being

teargassed unexpectedly, panicked. Teargas not only burns your eyes, it upsets your stomach, and it was a kind of a combination of teargas and, and the same sort of nausea gases that they were using in Vietnam, and people were just wrenching and, and, and, and totally panicked. ***And so we, we really had to turn the church into a hospital, just to get people back to their senses. And*** it was a, it was ***a horrible two or three hours.*** Fortunately, I don't think there were any bones broken, and not too many, no, not too many perm-, permanent injuries, but there was a tremendous amount of shock. And, it, it panicked the demonstrators, but it also panicked the nation. That happened to occur right, in the afternoon, right after the movie "Judgment at Nuremburg", on the Nuremburg trials, and people saw what happened in Nazi Germany side by side with what was happening in America in Selma, and they made the connection, and it was shortly after that, that Lyndon Johnson made his famous "We shall overcome" speech.

00:41:06:00

INTERVIEWER 1: GREAT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: NOW, LET'S CHECK THE FILM, CAUSE WE'RE ALMOST EIGHT MINUTES.

[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 505]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: MARK.

[sync tone]

Young: Go ahead?

INTERVIEWER 1: IF YOU COULD REALLY NARROW IT DOWN, TELL ME ABOUT THE MARCH AND THE AFTERMATH.

Young: Well, the, the march from Selma to Montgomery, like every other march, was basically made up of women and children. And, for a group of unsuspecting women and children to be suddenly fired upon with teargas, and then a group of big burly Alabama State Troopers start beating them with billy clubs, just produced a sheer mass panic. And then on top of that, they, brought, horses in, once the teargas began to lift, and they followed people and began, and beat them, blocks and blocks away. And it was just a, it was just a savage kind of situation.

00:42:05:00

INTERVIEWER 1: THE NONVIOLENCE BEING ON TRIAL THAT DAY, ACCORDING

TO FREDERICK REESE, AND, AND HOW DO YOU GET PEOPLE TO THE POINT OF NOT WANTING TO RETALIATE IN THE FACE OF THAT KIND OF VIOLENCE?

Young: Well, basically we, we trained people to think rather than react, and, the women and children—see there really weren't many big, burly, able-bodied men. They were mostly young boys, and, and, there was, there was—[pause] well, the, the odds were so out, out of matched? You know, I think if there had been any black man with a machine gun, then he might have done something, but blacks had no available arms, and here were people who were well-armed. And we always trained people that the one thing that the police could not deal with was nonviolence; that they could deal with violence, and that all you had to do was for one person to fire a shot, and that gave them an excuse to mow down hundreds of people. And we were very pragmatic and practical about it, and we explained violence, in the kind of situation in which we lived, as suicidal. And that it required, I think the term that Bevel used to use was, a kind of, revolutionary patience, that, you know, that you just didn't respond. Occasionally people would, would, you know, jump up and want to talk bad. And ***there were people who came back to the church and started talking about going to get their guns. You had to talk them down, and you had to talk them down by simply asking questions. What kind of gun you got? .32, .38?*** You know, ***how's that going to hold up against the automatic rifles and*** the twelve gauge, you know, ***ten gauge shotguns that they've got? And how many have you got? There are at least two hundred, you know, shotguns out there with buckshot in them. You ever see buckshot? You ever see what buckshot does to a deer? You know, and most of them had. And you make people think about the specifics of violence, and then they realize how suicidal and nonsensical it is,*** see? And, you also kind of help them to understand what was really happening to them. See? Dr. King said you had to bring the violence in the system to the surface. Most folk there, in that march, had been abused and brutalized, at some time or other, by the police, verbally if not physically, and the thing was that, you had to help them to see that we did this deliberately. See, it's one thing to be brutalized by yourself on a dark night when nothing can be done about it, but when you're brutalized together, on national television, something in the society is going to change. And you had to help them to think through, the fact that, as Dr. King—"unearned suffering is redemptive," and you had to help them to see this unearned suffering as producing a larger good. And, gradually people began to calm down. And the truth of it is, nobody really wanted to go fight anyway. I mean, there were, in, in other situations, when people would really get bad, and we couldn't turn them, we couldn't physically restrain them, we'd say, alright, go ahead. Help yourself. Go ahead and, and, you know, who are you going to kill first, you know? And what's going to happen when you kill that one? See? Where are you going to go after you've killed two or three white folk? See? You got an escape plan? Say, where are you going to hide? Where are you going to get money to live? You ready to take on an underground terrorism movement? And, you know, once they realized they hadn't thought about even violence, and that what they were really doing was a kind of macho foolishness, they'd calm down. But you, you—you see, we were convinced that violence was weakness, that violence wasn't strength, and that violence was the surest way to get a whole lot of people killed. Violence would not work as a method of social change in America. Violence by almost anybody was counter-productive. Indeed, the violence of the Missi-, of the Alabama State Troopers produced the very gains that we wanted.

00:47:00:00

INTERVIEWER 1: WHAT ABOUT THE DECISION OF A TURN-AROUND TUESDAY? CAN YOU DESCRIBE WHAT WAS BEHIND THE DECISION NOT TO GO THE WHOLE WAY? OR—

Young: Well, ***after the beating on the bridge, we immediately sent out a call for our friends. We, we didn't think we could provide, we could count on, police protection. People said we should send in the National Guard. We didn't think that they would send in the National Guard to protect black people. And so we sent out a call to people of good will,*** and we sent it through the Commission on Religion and Race. We sent it through the Conference of Catholic Bishops. We sent it through the Rabbinical Association, and the Synagogue Councils of America. And we literally ended up with hundreds of people coming down, you know, I think it was the following Tuesday, or soon, shortly afterwards. Well, in the meantime, we had gone into the court, to ask Judge Johnson for a restraining order, to restrain the police from stopping us, and giving us permission to march. And Judge Johnson was a fair judge, but he enjoined us against attempting to march, until he had a time to hear the case and settle it. So, really, for us to march, would have been in violation of a federal court injunction from a judge that had always been fair with us.

00:48:36:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: I'M SORRY, I MISSED THAT. I NEED YOU TO HAVE THAT, THAT ONE LAST SENTENCE OVER AGAIN. "FOR US TO MARCH WOULD HAVE BEEN IN VIOLATION OF THE INJUNCTION."

Young: For, for us to march, we would have been in violation of a federal court order from a judge that had always been fair with us. And so we were in the delicate position of having people who had come down wanting to march, but for them to march would have meant that we would have turned the movement around. And so, we basically worked out a compromise. Since the police, the, troopers, weren't going to let us march anyway, we worked out a compromise that we would go up to the march and have our prayers, and to the place where people were beaten, and then turn around and come back. There were some people who wanted to insist on another confrontation, and I think, probably if it had not been the fact that this was a federal judge—Martin made a deliberate distinction between federal judges and state court judges. He said that from 1954, the only ally we've had has been the federal courts, and we have to respect the federal courts, even when we disagree with them. And so he just refused to violate any federal court order.

00:49:58:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Young: Some of the students wanted to violate a federal court order—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: I'M SORRY.

INTEVIEWER: WHAT? IS IT THE—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: WE HAVE JUST RUN OUT.

[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 506]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: SOUND IS ROLLING.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: IT'S ALL YOURS, CALLIE.

INTERVIEWER 1: OK. NOT VERY MANY PEOPLE KNEW THAT A COMPROMISE HAD BEEN MADE, AND THAT ANGERED SOME PEOPLE WHEN, WHEN YOU ACTUALLY DID TURN AROUND.

Young: Well, I don't think any compromise had been made with the judge. I think it was just our thinking through it ourselves, and deciding that this is what we wanted to do; that this was the only thing that we could legitimately do. And, you, I mean, ***the truth of it was*** that ***there was nothing much else to do.*** To, I mean, here were policemen standing up there. ***We'd been ordered by a judge not to go any further. If we had run into that police line, they would have beaten us up with court approval,*** [laughs] you know? And so we, we, we knew we didn't want that to happen. And I think that, that, again, our problem was the people who came down there wanting to experience some kind of confrontation felt shortchanged. They didn't feel the danger and the excitement that they were looking for, but that was one of the, the illusions that led to the death of the Reverend James Reeb. They didn't realize how hostile that situation really was, because it seemed like such a peaceful town, so that when, when Reverend Reeb—in fact, there were three Unitarian clergy that left the restaurant, and if they had turned left, instead of right, they would have been all right. They turned to the right and they went by a, a bar of—and people just came out and beat them up, and that could have happened anytime, anywhere in Selma, not knowing your way around. But it, it—and I think once that happened, they realized that they had, people realized that they were in danger, and, they were sort of grateful that we didn't force a confrontation.

00:52:27:00

INTERVIEWER 1: I NEED TO GO BACK TO AROUND TUESDAY. WHEN THE MARCHERS OPENED THEIR LINES, WHAT DID YOU THINK? THERE WAS, AT ONE POINT, WHEN—I'M SORRY, NOT THE MARCHERS—THE TROOPERS

OPENED THEIR LINES, AND, AS IF, TO POINT, TO OPEN THE WAY TO MONTGOMERY, THAT WAS, OF COURSE, YOU COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN THAT.

Young: No. In fact, I don't recall them opening their lines. I mean, we had made a decision in advance that we were going to the place where people had been beaten, and we were going to stop, and we were going to turn around. So, whatever they did, that's what we were going to do. We never let our tactics be dictated by the opposition. We'd decided in advance what we were going to do. We told anybody and everybody what we were going to do. I think part of the problem there was we had a lot of people that had flown in, who had no, who didn't have very much briefing. They didn't really know what the movement was all about in detail, and they didn't have any sense of us having a long-range strategy. They had seen an incident. They responded to an immediate crisis, and they wanted to be a part of the excitement of that crisis, and they felt disappointed.

INTERVIEWER 1: WASN'T SNCC, AS WELL? SOME OF THE MEMBERS OF SNCC, WEREN'T THEY UPSET AS WELL, THAT, THE DECISION TO TURN?

Young: Some of the members of SNCC wanted to force a continued confrontation. But that was, that was our basic disagreement all along: that change didn't come through confrontation and violence. Change came through sustained discipline action on the part of the black community.

00:54:02:00

INTERVIEWER 1: NOW GOING BACK TO REVEREND REEB'S DEATH, AND—IT REALLY LEADS US TO ANOTHER PART OF THE SELMA STORY, WHICH WAS, WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN WASHINGTON. WHEN BLOODY SUNDAY OCCURED, WE READ THAT THERE WERE, JUST, ALL KINDS OF RESPONSES MADE FROM CONGRESSMEN WHO WERE SHOCKED BY THAT. I WONDER IF YOU COULD DESCRIBE THOSE RESPONSES, AND IN ADDITION, WHAT KIND OF RESPONSE YOU GOT FROM REVEREND REEB'S SHOOTING, INDIVIDUALLY?

Young: Well, actually we had—

INTERVIEWER 1: OUT OF WASHINGTON.

Young: When Dr. King had been in jail before, there were fifteen congressmen who came down, to march—well, they didn't march with us. They came down to visit Dr. King in prison, and so you had a small group in Congress that was familiar with the Selma situation, and so that made for a big response. The problem was, we were all in Selma, and we didn't read _*The Washington Post*_ and _*The New York Times*_, and the Selma papers didn't carry anything, and so we really didn't know what the national mood was.

00:55:04:00

INTERVIEWER 1: DID YOU HAVE A SENSE OF JOHNSON'S, RESPONSE TO THAT?

REVEREND KING WENT TO MEET WITH JOHNSON, TO PUSH HIM TOWARDS VOTING RIGHTS LEGISLATION. THERE IS SOME SUGGESTION THAT HE WANTED IT, HE JUST DIDN'T FEEL THE TIME WAS RIGHT, AND THERE IS ANOTHER SENSE THAT HE WAS BEING DRAGGED TOWARD IT. WHAT IS YOUR SENSE OF IT?

Young: Well, I think that when we first met with Lyndon Johnson, Lyndon Johnson was under the influence of J. Edgar Hoover, because Martin had just come back from receiving the Nobel Prize, and we were invited to Washington, and instead of being taken to the White House we were taken to the Justice Department, where we met with, Nicholas Katzenbach. And then Vice President Hubert Humphrey came over, and it was only in the middle of that meeting, that, suddenly they jumped up and said, look, the President wants to see you at the White House. And we got the impression that, that Lyndon Johnson, you know, just didn't want to be that much involved, at that point. When we talked to him, he explained to us all of the reasons why there couldn't be another civil rights bill, because he had just gotten through that civil rights bill from '64, in, July 2nd, I think it was. This was early December, and, he didn't see how he could introduce new civil rights legislation. We made the appeal for voting rights legislation. We made the appeal for equal job opportunity, and some kinds of affirmative action. And he said he agreed, but he just didn't see this coming in Congress in this session.

00:56:48:00

INTERVIEWER 1: NOW APPARENTLY REVEREND REEB'S DEATH PUSHED HIM TOWARD REALIZING THAT THIS VOTING RIGHTS LEGISLATION WAS IMPORTANT, AND SHORTLY THEREAFTER HE ASKS FOR THE BILL. WHAT'S YOUR FEELING ABOUT THAT? WAS THERE A GREAT SENSE OF VICTORY IN SELMA WHEN HE GETS TO THAT POINT?

Young: Well, I think President Johnson’s introducing the bill in response to, Reverend Reeb's death was pretty much the way nonviolence works. It works—I mean, change comes through suffering, and we had anticipated that some of that suffering would come from us, and, it, it was, I think the response that we expected. And it, it, [pause] well, it, it, we knew it was going to be a long time before it passed, and, introducing legislation didn't really mean a lot to us. I think the fact that Lyndon Johnson quoted "We shall overcome”, for the first time, I think, put the President of the United States publicly on the side. President Kennedy had been privately on the side, but this was the first speech that was a public declaration of the support of the White House for the Civil Rights Movement, and we really appreciated that. We didn't think it was going to mean a lot, cause we knew the situation in the Congress, as well.

INTERVIEWER 1: WHEN MARTIN LUTHER KING HEARD HIM SAY THAT, WE READ THAT HE CRIED. WERE YOU THERE WITH HIM WHEN THIS HAPPENED? WHEN HE HEARD HIM SAY THOSE WORDS, "WE SHALL OVERCOME"?

Young: Well, I only know of one time that Martin cried, and that was when he saw poor people in Mississippi. Martin was a very steel-willed person who very seldom gave in to, his

emotions.

00:58:37:00

INTERVIEWER 1: THE FINAL MARCH, YOU HAVE, IT, IT'S BEEN APPROVED NOW, YOU'RE ON THE ROAD. DESCRIBE THAT FEELING, THOSE PEOPLE, THOSE, THOSE MOMENTS, WHAT THAT WAS LIKE? AFTER ALL OF THAT?

Young: Well, the march from Selma to Montgomery, from my perspective, you know, was a job. [laughs] We had three hundred people to feed every day, and we had to find a place to pitch tents, and we had to be concerned about security, all along the road. And, it was—I mean, there was, absolutely nothing romantic about it. [laughs] It was anywhere from—I think, the shortest march day was ten miles, and I was running back and forth, mostly with Ivanhoe Donaldson of SNCC, trying to keep the march together, and solving problems from one end to the other. And so I figure, anytime they marched ten miles, I did closer to forty. And so, [pause] you know, some days we did ten, twelve miles, some days we did as many as eighteen miles, and so it was really work. And, it—[pause] and yet it was enjoyable. There was no apparent tension; the fact that we had to cover a certain amount of mileage; the fact that we had to provide food; the fact that we had to find a place to stay and pitch the tents. And also the fact that there was a group of ministers, from this group that had turned around, who stayed, and who basically provided, they were sort of the quartermaster corps—they provided the, the services. They took care of the tents. They arranged to move the blankets from place to place, and—but it was a tremendous logistical operation.

INTERVIEWER 1: AFTER YOU, THE MARCH FINALLY REACHED MONTGOMERY, AND, I'D LIKE YOU TO DESCRIBE THAT MOMENT, WHEN DR. KING WAS SPEAKING ON THE STEPS.

Young: Well, before we got into Montgomery, I think there were, there was a situation in the city of St. Jude, right on the outskirts of Montgomery, where [pause]—

01:01:07:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Young: —we thought we were being—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: SORRY, THAT’S ANOTHER SLATE. WE JUST ROLLED OUT.

[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 507]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: SOUND IS ROLLING. AND MARKER.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER 2: THAT WAS, NUMBER ELEVEN.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: OK, CALLIE.

INTERVIEWER 1: OK. YOU SAID THAT YOU WERE SO BUSY, AND IT WAS REALLY WORK FOR YOU, MAKING YOUR WAY TO MONTGOMERY. IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO, SORT OF, GET INTO THE MOMENT RIGHT THERE THAT OTHER PEOPLE WERE EXPERIENCING, WHEN DID YOU STEP BACK AND REALIZE WHAT HAD HAPPENED, AND HAD YOUR MOMENT, AS IT WERE, ABOUT THE FINAL MARCH TO MONTGOMERY?

Young: I guess, the last day when we got to Montgomery—

01:01:52:00

INTERVIEWER 1: OH, WOULD YOU START THAT AGAIN?

Young: Yeah. The last, when we got to Montgomery, John Doar came to me and said, look, we understand that there's a plot on Martin Luther King's life; and said, we can't search every house in Montgomery. We'd like for you to drive him from the city limits down to the capitol, not let him walk through this entire town. Well, we normally didn't discuss things like that with Martin. And we just told him we thought that he needed to ride, and didn't tell him the reasons. And he said, no, he wanted to walk, he was going to walk on in with everybody else. And so, finally, then, we told him what the situation was, and he said he didn't care, he still wanted to walk, you know. And, so, he had a, I mean, ***Martin always wore the good preacher blue suit. And, I, I figured, since we couldn't stop him from marching, we just had to kind of believe that it was true when white folks said we all look alike. So, everybody that was about Martin's size, and had on a blue suit, I put in the front of the line with him.*** And, and of course I had on my blue suit. ***And we all just lined up. But, there were some very important people who felt as though they were being pushed back. But all of the preachers loved the chance to get up, to get up front, in the front line with Martin Luther King, but I don't think, to this day, most of them know why they were up there.*** But it, I think when we finally got through, I mean that created a kind of tension where you're looking around and you never know where a bullet's coming from, you know, walking all through town for an hour or so. And when you finally got downtown to the state capitol, and passed the Dexter Avenue, Baptist Church, and you could see the capitol and you knew you'd, sort of, made it, I think then I just, I just really then felt, you know, filled with joy at—and, his, his sermon was different, you know, his speech was different from the March on Washington. But I thought, just as good, though he didn't get the kind of publicity. I mean, it wasn't new anymore. In the March on Washington people were shocked that here was such a

great orator. By Selma, they'd come to expect him to say brilliant things, and, and I think he did.

01:04:28:00

INTERVIEWER 2: ALBANY.

INTERVIEWER 1: THAT'S RIGHT. [laughs] I WAS ABOUT TO SAY, WE ARE NOW GOING TO ALBANY. [laughs] WHEN YOU GOT TO ALBANY YOU WERE FAIRLY NEW TO SCLC. HOW DID YOU WORK THERE? WHAT, WHAT WAS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY?

Young: Well, I was in charge of the Citizenship Education Program in Albany, Georgia. And, when I went down there it was because, Martin had been almost trapped into a movement. Dr. Anderson was his, classmate from Morehouse, who was the leader of the movement, and who was down there with the, student movement. And, ***they had asked Martin to come down just to make a speech, and he went only to make a speech.*** But people came from all over the region, and there were two big churches right across the street from each other that were filled, and people were all out in the streets in between. And, ***Dr. Anderson got carried away, and in public asked Martin to demonstrate, to lead the march with him.*** And, [pause] ***and he agreed. And then he got put in jail. And with no plan, no thought of what we were going to do,*** so it was, sort of, an emergency, that I went down with Wyatt Walker, just to, sort of, help any way that I could. And when we realized that this was gonna be something that we were going to have to deal with for a long time, what I did was take the program that I was working with, the Citizenship Education Program, and we began to identify some of the local leadership. And we took them off to Dorchester Center, which was over near Savannah, for a week, to try to train them to come back and put together a real movement. In a sense, my role was to help take a step back from the crisis, and help people to realize that nonviolence wasn't magic, that it was a slow, long, disciplined process that people had to be trained for, they had to understand, and, and so we committed to work with the community. But nothing really very much happened. In fact, it suddenly got very cold, and, the sheriff of Sumter County, which was the County just north of Albany, not only, did he not, turn the heat on, he opened the windows on this cold night and put on the, the fan to pull the cold air in. And it had been hot in the daytime and got suddenly cold at night. And people were really, I mean, I mean, people were in lightweight clothing with no blankets, and, and no sweaters, and, and we had a sudden freeze on our hands, so that, the day after that—and, and, I think Martin felt that he needed to get out of jail and get all of those people out of jail with him, and, come, you know, come back to Albany, and do it right at a later time.

01:07:47:00

INTERVIEWER 1: WHAT WERE THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE MOVEMENT?

Young: In Albany?

INTERVIEWER 1: YES.

Young: The weakness was that it was totally un-

INTERVIEWER 1: START THAT AGAIN?

Young: The weakness of the Albany Movement was that it was totally unplanned, and we were totally unprepared, and, it was a miscalculation on the part of a number of people, that a spontaneous appearance by Martin Luther King could bring change. That it wasn't just a spontaneous appearance by Martin Luther King, it was the planning, the organizing, the strategy that he brought with him, that brought change. And the weakness was not understanding that. The strength was that, I don't know that there were any more powerful and beautiful people. Albany was one of those areas where blacks seemed to be, still intact, culturally. W.E.B. DuBois talks about Albany in "Soul of Black Folk". Ray Charles comes from down in Albany. The singing, the folklore, had a kind of indigenous power to it that meant that you couldn't walk away from Albany, Georgia.

01:08:59:00

INTERVIEWER 1: NOW, SNCC HAD BEEN IN ALBANY BEFORE SCLC GOT THERE. AND YOU ARRIVED, ONCE AGAIN, THERE'S A LITTLE POSITIONING. WHAT ROLES DID YOU PLAY?

Young: Well, actually SNCC and SCLC had gone in together. There was a Freedom Ride going down to Albany, and there were members of SNCC and members of SCLC on that first Freedom Ride. SNCC took on the organization of the movement, and we tried to stay out of that. We tried to respect turf, but you really couldn't. And, because once something started, everybody got involved. I think the tension there was between Wyatt Walker and Charlie Jones. And, Wyatt was a good, strong Baptist preacher that felt like—in fact, Harry Belafonte was involved in that, because Harry had given Wyatt some money, to come, you know, for us to use together. And Wyatt insisted, as we all did on, in SCLC, that, any monies that anybody received, you brought receipts, you accounted for how it was spent, and, at that point the student movement didn't have those kinds of financial controls. And people operated, basically, individually. They didn't get any money from anywhere, and, they used their own resources. So there was, Wyatt refused to turn over the money unless they agreed, unless Charlie Jones, agreed to account for it. He was head of the, project. And, and it wasn't any problem accounting for the money, it was just that, here was a preacher telling a student what to do, and he was insisting that he was as much a leader, though they were both—again, that was a case of the five to ten years difference. I was in the middle. And, when I first went to Albany, [pause] I guess I was really in the middle, cause I ended up sleeping on a couch, with Cordell Reagon, and Charles Sherrod. And, the couch pulled apart and I ended up falling down in the middle. But, it was, [pause] well, I was always being the mediator, interpreting one group to the other.

01:11:41:00

INTERVIEWER 1: WYATT TEE WALKER—DEMEANOR, WE READ, ADDED TO THAT TENSION. NOT SO MUCH THE SPECIFICS OF YOU KNOW, PREACHER TALKING TO STUDENT, BUT HIS DEMEANOR, IS THAT TRUE?

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: ABOUT A MINUTE LEFT ON THE ROLL.

Young: Well, Wyatt, Wyatt, I think, was, always believed, even in SCLC, with us—I mean, Wyatt was a hard-nosed administrator. He felt that the movement was most vulnerable—this is true—that most black movements have been vulnerable to the charge of financial misappropriation, and that the way the FBI and everybody else sought—

[cut]

[wild audio]

Young: —to undercut the movement—

INTERVIEWER 1: [laughs]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: IT'S LIKE RUNNING THE FILM OUT.

[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 508]

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: CALLIE, IT'S ALL YOURS.

CAMERA CREW MEBER 2: TWELVE HEAD SLATE. [pause] SIR, YOUR TIE IS [inaudible].

INTERVIEWER 1: GO AHEAD?

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: THERE WE GO. YEAH, I'M SORRY. WASN'T THINKING.

01:12:50:00

INTERVIEWER 1: ALRIGHT. I HAVE A HITLIST HERE. CORDELL REAGON.

Young: Cornell is a wonderful singer, a lot of fun, very serious, dedicated Freedom Fighter who started very young and is still at it.

INTERVIEWER 1: CHARLES SHERROD.

Young: Charles Sherrod, also from Albany, I think, decided that he was going to stay there until changes came throughout the society, and has now purchased six thousand acres of land and is trying desperately to maintain control of that land and help people to survive in the rural South.

01:13:26:00

INTERVIEWER 1: DR. WILLIAM ANDERSON.

Young: William Anderson was a dedicated physician, who risked his life and his practice to get the Albany movement started.

INTERVIEWER 1: JAMES GRAY.

Young: James Gray was a Northerner that came South and tried to out-Southern the southerners, and became a very conservative, figure on the side of racism.

INTERVIEWER 1: LAURIE PRITCHETT.

Young: Laurie Pritchett called me into his office one time and, asked me to help him to become a U.S. Marshal, because he felt as though he was in a moral contradiction, his, he was, Roman Catholic convert, who felt like what he was doing was wrong, and he couldn't say it publicly, and, I helped him to get out of Albany and helped recommend him as the Police Chief of High Point, North Carolina.

INTERVIEWER 1: WAS HE REALLY NONVIOLENT IN ALBANY AT THAT TIME?

Young: Yeah, he was. He was a very good man, I think, who realized that he had to, well, he had to keep control of the situation. And I don't think, I know he didn't enjoy doing what he did at all, putting all of us in jail.

01:14:48:00

INTERVIEWER 1: QUESTIONS ABOUT BIRMINGHAM. WHAT WAS KING'S MOOD WHEN HE LEFT ALBANY AND WENT INTO BIRMINGHAM?

Young: Well, it was about a year between the two. When Martin left Albany, he was very depressed.

INTERVIEWER 2: LET'S HOLD UP, JUST A MOMENT. IS [inaudible] THE CARTRIDGE, RIGHT?

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: [inaudible] I'M GONNA CUT.

[cut]

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER 2: OK, WHAT DID YOU USED TO DO AS A VERY YOUNG PERSON?

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: THIRTEEN.

INTERVIEWER 2: YOU HAVE IT?

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: YEAH. CALLIE, IT'S ALL YOURS.

01:15:24:00

INTERVIEWER 1: OK.

Young: Well, when Martin left Albany he was, very depressed. But we went away—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: SIR, I HAVE TO REMIND YOU TO TALK TO CALLIE, AND NOT LOOK AT THE CAMERA. IT'S—

Young: When, when Martin left Albany he was very depressed, but, he knew what had happened. And he really felt that a—again it was a federal judge, that called off that movement. He had a very, you know, emotional exchange with Burke Marshall over that, because he felt that, though the Kennedy Administration had helped to undercut the possibility of continuing in Albany. But when we went to Birmingham, by that time he knew that nonviolence was on trial. That it had not failed, because we had been pulled into an unplanned movement, and that now we had to plan a movement, we had to take on segregation, and he was very optimistic. And though, very serious—I mean, he knew the dangers and knew the difficulties. But, he knew he had to go ahead. I say that Birmingham was the first time that Martin Luther King deliberately and consciously assumed leadership. Every other time he was pushed into it by forces that were beyond his control, but he decided to go to Birmingham, and he decided to go to jail. He wrote the letter from the Birmingham jail in jail. And it was a deliberate act of will on his part, that gave him the leadership of the movement.

01:17:02:00

INTERVIEWER 1: YOU WERE KEY IN THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE CITY, TRYING TO COME TO AN AGREEMENT ABOUT BIRMINGHAM. WHAT WAS GOING ON IN THOSE MEETINGS?

Young: Well, I had worked with the National Council of Churches before going to, SCLC, and I had met a young woman who was the Director of Religious Education for the Alabama Diocese of the Episcopal Church. We always understood that nonviolence required

negotiations, as well as demonstrations, and reconciliation. And, so we always tried to have somebody to talk to. Nobody would talk to us in Birmingham. So, I told Martin that I knew this young woman, and that perhaps she would arrange for him to meet with the Bishop of the Episcopal Church. So, it was through Peggy Horn that, meetings were set up with the, with Bishop, Murray of the Episcopal Church who then brought in the business community. And once a week we basically went down to meet with them. Martin went at first, after that I went on a regular basis. But we wanted to tell them what the movement was about, we wanted to answer their questions, we told them exactly what we were going to do, and why we were going to do it, and we pretty much told them what was going to happen.

01:18:23:00

INTERVIEWER 1: DAVID VANN IN THOSE MEETINGS, DO YOU REMEMBER HIM?

INTERVIEWER 2: NO—

[cut]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: ROLLING.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: MARKER.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: THIRTEEN. LET ME GET—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: THIRTEEN HEAD SLATE.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: OK.

INTERVIEWER 1: DAVID VANN IN THOSE SESSIONS?

Young: David Vann didn't become a part of the sessions until the final negotiations, and he then represented the business community in the detailed negotiations. And, he was a very reasonable and calm man, who tried, then, to find a solution.

01:18:59:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

[missing frames]

Young: But ***by that time, Reverend Shuttlesworth was so worked up, that I can remember Fred cussing and David Vann crying, and it just seemed like when David Vann wanted to***

settle, Fred wasn't ready to settle. And we finally worked that out. But, it was a, it was a difficult kind of negotiation. Went all night long.

INTERVIEWER 1: HENRY'S QUESTION. WHEN DID YOU FIRST FEEL LIKE YOU WERE A PART OF THE MOVEMENT? THAT, THAT YOU HAD TO BE A PART OF IT? THAT THERE WAS MORE THAN YOURSELF INVOLVED?

Young: I felt like I was a part of the movement, almost from the time I got to SCLC. I had been living here in New York, and when we felt, when we went back, we really felt as though it was the movement calling us back. And I didn't know what that meant, or how it would work out, but I knew that's where I was supposed to be, and that's where my family wanted to be.

01:20:05:00

INTERVIEWER 1: AS A YOUNG MAN WERE YOU AWARE OF THE EMMETT TILL CASE IN 1955? DID THAT HAVE ANY IMPACT ON YOUR LIFE AND YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE MOVEMENT?

Young: Well, I had grown up in Louisiana, and I'd travelled a lot around Mississippi and I always knew that my life as a black man wasn't worth very much. Fortunately, I had developed enough coping skills, to avoid confrontations, and to talk my way out of most difficulties. But, nobody ever felt safe and secure.

INTERVIEWER 2: CAN WE JUST FINISH UP THIS FILM ROLL BY NOODLING AROUND BIRMINGHAM, THAT SHUTTLESWORTH KIND OF A THING—

INTERVIEWER 1: YES.

INTERVIEWER 2: —OR, DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING THAT YOU'RE BURNING TO JUMP INTO?

INTERVIEWER 1: NO, NO. I WAS GETTING READY TO GO INTO—I'LL TAG ON. BUT I'LL DO THIS, OK?

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: OH. WE CAN GO TO ANOTHER ROLL.

INTERVIEWER 2: NO. HOW MUCH MORE YOU HAVE LEFT ON THERE, YOU HAVE ABOUT—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: I'VE GOT ABOUT EIGHTY FEET. WE'VE GOT ABOUT TWO AND A HALF MINUTES. AND COUNTING.

01:21:02:00

INTERVIEWER 1: OK, WHEN REVEREND, THERE CAME A POINT WHEN DR.

KING SAID THAT WE, WE HAD AGREED THERE WOULD BE NO MORE DEMONSTRATIONS. AND THEN REVEREND SHUTTLESWORTH HAD BEEN IN THE HOSPITAL, CAME OVER AND SAID, NO, WE'RE NOT GOING TO DO IT THAT WAY. CAN YOU DESCRIBE WHAT HAPPENED IN THAT MEETING?

Young: [laughs] Yeah, I think that Fred was the leader of the local movement, but he'd been in the hospital, and we had reached pretty much the conclusions—in fact, Dr. King had talked to Robert Kennedy, and Fred, I think, frankly, was saying that nobody could settle the movement but him. And we had a little confrontation where I had to physically restrain him. And, fortunately, at the very moment that I grabbed him and threw him up against the wall, [pause] Robert Kennedy called him, and, Bobby Kennedy convinced him that the President was sincere, about passing civil rights legislation. And then he told me I could go out and dismiss the kids. But see, we had five thousand kids in jail that we were getting out of jail, and he had another five hundred down there that he was putting in jail, we had no money. It was a potential disaster, and, it was just one of the little, human moments when—well, it worked out.

INTERVIEWER 1: [pause] OK.

INTERVIEWER 2: I HAVE—CAN WE CUT FOR A MOMENT?

INTERVIEWER 1: YES.

01:22:32:00

[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 509]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: TAKE FOURTEEN.

Young: You started talking about the most—

[sync tone]

Young: —memorable moment. Or something.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: LET ME GET, MAKE SURE I'M FOCUSED FOR THE MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT HERE. OK, WE'RE ALL SET.

INTERVIEWER 1: REALLY? WHAT WAS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT?

Young: Now, I think the, the most memorable moment for me, in the movement, was, when everything broke down in Birmingham. Martin had been in jail—I mean, Martin—no,

everything had broken down.

INTERVIEWER 1: WHY DON'T YOU START AGAIN, FROM THE BEGINNING.

Young: In Birmingham, there came a time when we had done everything that we had planned to do, and when we had spent all the money we had spent, we had raised, when we still had about five or six hundred people in jail, and no money to bail them out; the, press and the ministers, white ministers, and many black ministers, were trying to organize an effort to get Martin out of town. And, some of the black business leadership came in to say to him, that, we needed to call off these demonstrations, they had failed, and they would help us raise the money to get the people out of jail, but

01:23:49:00

[sound roll out]

[cut]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: MARK.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: OK, WE'RE BACK.

INTERVIEWER 1: OK. MEMORABLE MOMENT.

Young: When Martin finally decided that, he would have to be involved—let me start over.

01:24:15:00

INTERVIEWER 1: ABSOLUTELY.

Young: When, when, when—the high point of the movement for me was the moment where Martin took the leadership of the movement and, essentially, threw himself into the forefront. We had written out a plan, which he had been a part of, but it wasn't his plan. He'd gone along, done everything we'd suggested doing. We'd raise money. ***We had about five or six hundred people in jail, but all of the money was gone and we couldn't get people out of jail. And the business community, black, the black business community, and some of the white clergy, were pressuring us to call off the demonstrations and just get out of town. And, we didn't know what to do. And he sat there, in Room 30 in the Gaston Motel, and he didn't say anything.*** He'd listened to people talk for about two hours. ***And then, finally, he got up and he went in the bedroom and he came back with his blue jeans on, and his jacket, and he said, look, he said, I don't know what to do. He said, I just know that something has got to change in Birmingham. I don't know whether I can raise money to get people out of jail. I do know that I can go into jail with them. And not knowing how it was going to work out, he walked out of the room and went down to the church and led a***

demonstration and went to jail. Well, ***that was, I think the beginning of his true leadership,*** because that Sunday ***the ministers published in the newspapers a diatribe against Martin, calling him a troublemaker,*** and a communist, ***and saying that he was there stirring up trouble to get publicity. And he sat down and took that newspaper—and he had no paper, and he was in solitary confinement—and he started writing an answer to that one-page ad around the margins of*** **The New York Times.** And, by the time it came out three days later, it was what we now know as the letter to the Birmingham jail [sic] but he put in concise form exactly what the problems, the moral dilemma of segregation and racism. That, I think, led to a new resurgence of the movement nationally. And, in another week we had thousands of people going to jail. And it was those events that, I think, brought on the change in America, through nonviolent action.

01:27:05:00

INTERVIEWER 1: OUR SERIES IS DEALING WITH THE YEARS BETWEEN '54 AND '65. WHEN YOU ASSESS THAT TIMESPAN, WHAT DO YOU THINK? IN TERMS OF WHAT CIVIL RIGHTS, THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, BROUGHT TO THIS COUNTRY?

Young: The changes in America between '54 and '65 were mainly, in the black community itself, and, I think, even more so in black leadership. We did not know what we were doing in 1954. Didn't have the slightest idea. Martin went to Montgomery, to try to find a quiet place to finish his Ph.D. dissertation. And, by 1965, he knew, not only what American racism was all about, but he'd won a Nobel Prize, he was concerned about the war in Vietnam, and he understood the international implications of nonviolence. There was a new consciousness. Black people became a part of the leadership of America. And it's my contention that black people never had to lead, black leaders don't lead black people. Black leaders have to help lead the white community. You have to interpret the feelings, and the focus, and the reality of blacks in a particular predicament, and whites in a particular predicament, to the majority of people who are not involved, in, in any way. And I think Martin could articulate the dilemma, the moral dilemma, of racism and segregation, of violence, and war, and poverty in a nation that really wanted peace and had the potential for plenty.

01:28:48:00

[cut]

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER 1:[laughs] ASK IT AGAIN, IF YOU—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: ALRIGHT, WE’RE ROLLING.

INTERVIEWER 2: THE QUESTION IS—TALK TO CALLIE IF YOU WOULD—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: SEVENTEEN.

INTERVIEWER 2: —IF YOU WERE PART OF A MOVEMENT AND NOT JUST AN INDIVIDUAL?

Young: Yeah, I think that's, I said from the very beginning that we, we'd left New York because we felt we were being called down there by a movement. And, I didn't know what I was going to do, I didn't know what my role would be. I really wanted to write. And I thought that, by writing and recalling this history, I understood that this was something that was going to, to change America. I really thought it would fail. I mean my background is theology, and theological movements have a way of failing, and then people understanding what they're all about ten, fifteen years later. This one was fortunate enough to have succeeded in our lifetime, far beyond our imagination.

01:29:52:00

INTERVIEWER 1: [laughs]

[cut]

[wild audio]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: GIVE ME, GIVE ME ONE LINE THAT WAS, THAT WAS VERY IMPORTANT. WE NEED, MAYOR YOUNG TO SAY, THAT BECAME KNOWN AS "THE LETTER FROM BIRMINGHAM JAIL", BECAUSE HE SAID, TO. CAN WE JUST DO THAT AS WILD SOUND, STILL ROLLING?

Young: That became known as "The Letter from the Birmingham Jail." You do listen. [laughs]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: GREAT. YEAH, WE DO. THAT'S IT.

[cut]

[end interview]

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