Interview with **Virginia Durr**
August 8th, 1979
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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.

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[camera roll 10]

[sound roll 6]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: SPEED. TAIL SLATE.

INTERVIEWER 1: DO YOU KNOW WILLIE MORRIS?

Durr: You mean the writer?

INTERVIEWER 1: THE WRITER, YEAH.

Durr: No. I've read his books, but I don't know him. I've talked to him on the telephone.

INTERVIEWER 1: HE, HE WRITES ABOUT THE WHITE SOUTH. YOU AGREE WITH MOST OF THAT?

Durr: Well, [laughs] I think that some of the things he's written is extremely good. But I think that, that book, "North Toward Home" was all—he didn't get home at all. In fact, he got thrown out and treated very badly. And I don't think that—you see my husband and I believe that the struggle for southerners lay in the South; white southerners and black southerners too. And so, when you, you know, the book he wrote, the first book "North Toward Home," when he went to New York, but I think Willie has not developed as much as he would if he had stayed south.

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INTERVIEWER 1: I'M TRYING TO THINK IF I'M GONNA—THE WHITE SOUTH OF 1954 RIGHT BEFORE THE BOYCOTT NOT MANY PEOPLE KNOW MUCH ABOUT IT. WHAT—

Durr: Well, you see, the thing that people don't understand is the history of the South. And the fact of the matter is that—and they don't understand the fact that the, the people were fed on myths and that the fact is, is that the black population, the slave population, was in continual revolt. And if you read the *Montgomery Advertiser* you can—Wilcox County, Lowndes County you can—you know, there, there were constant slave revolts. And all of the, the roads were patrolled. They called 'em paterollers [sic] and I had a nurse, black nurse, and used to sing me to sleep at night with a song called, if you don't go to sleep and be good the paterollers will get'cha [sic]. I never knew the paterollers was till I got, you know, grown practically. But is—they were patrols, you see, but the, the—the whole white South lived in terror—

INTERVIEWER 1: WAS, WAS THE BOYCOTT A SURPRISEE?

Durr: To me? No it wasn't a surprise to me at all because, you see, when we came here in 1951, we had been—lived in Washington then for twenty years, Mr. Durr was under the Roosevelt regime. And we came back here because he had to have a—he had a, a fusion, you know, a spinal fusion and we had four children and no money, really. No place to come, but home. And his mother offered us a home. So we came back in. He was in bed for two years. But we didn't—we weren't surprised, because he had a nephew named Nesbitt Elmore who was in the law practice and Nesbitt had already begun taking cases. And he had took, he took rape cases which was very unusual in those days for a white lawyer to be running to take 'em because they immediately got, you know, ostracized. And—but he took a number of rape cases. So when Mr. Durr started his law office he went in with his nephew Nesbitt Elmore. And Nesbitt Elmore was a great friend of Mr. Nixon's. And Mr. Nixon, you see, had been working in this field for twenty-five years. So then through Mr. Nixon I met Miss Parks and she'd been working for ten or fifteen years. See it wasn't a sudden thing. Now I had the greatest admiration in the world for Dr. King. For his leadership, but I don't think that the fact of the long, long struggle that had gone on beforehand has ever been properly given enough emphasis.

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INTERVIEWER 1: WHAT HAPPENED TO WHITES DURING THE BOYCOTT? SOMEBODY WHO—

Durr: You mean like us? Well, [laughs] well, first thing you did you lost business. I mean, you know, people didn't come to you. You got a reputation and so you didn't get much good pay in business. But my brother-in-law, who didn't agree with us, he was—stood by us and Mr. Durr represented the Durr, Drug Company which was a family business. See, the fact that the family stood by us although they didn't agree with us was our salvation. If they had,

you know, disowned us, hadn't stood by us where we could have stayed? And then Aubrey Williams was here then and he had a paper, *Southern Farmer*, and we had that business. And he, you know, he had—he was a great, he was a great friend of Mr. Nixon's and he was a great supporter of the whole civil rights cause. And, you've got, I remember very well Miss—[laughs] goin' over to London, one time, and being asked to give a speech on what the whites suffered during the civil rights fight. And, unfortunately, I came on toward the end of the program and by that time all the black leaders from Africa had gotten up and told about having their eyes gouged out and arms cut off and massacres, you know, and tortures and so forth. [laughs] So, when I got up to speak I was terribly embarrassed because while we had a great deal of, you know, we certainly had financial problems and we certainly had social problems because—I couldn't very well say that we had suffered so terribly because, you know, we never suffered physically.

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INTERVIEWER 1: BUT IN 1954 IT WAS—IT'S A DIFFERENT WORLD THAN IT WAS [sic] NOW. AND THERE REALLY WASN'T—

Durr: Oh my goodness. It was—you mean now or then?

INTERVIEWER 1: THEN. 1954

Durr: Oh heavens, yes. It's just awful. It was the, really, it, it was the—see I've been used to segregation in Washington and I had fought against it in Washington after I got Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune and all my other friends had given me a few lessons. [laughs] See, they thought I was a hopeless girl, but they, they—you know, southern girl. But they just worked on me hard and, oh baby, they could cure me. And they did do a great deal to tell me the facts of life and, you know, clearing up my misconceptions.

INTERVIEWER 1: STOP JUST FOR A SECOND, PLEASE. CUT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: CUT.

00:06:16:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

INTERVIEWER 1: I, I JUST WANTED—I'M WORKING BACK TOWARD A CERTAIN POINT IN THE SCRIPT THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: OK, OK THAT WAS, THERE WAS NO SLATE ON THAT ONE AS YOU KNOW.

Durr: Segregated as—

00:06:29:00

[cut]

[sync tone]

Durr: —it had ever been. And everything was segregated. I mean the—of course, not only the stores, but the restaurants and the theaters and the buses and the trains and the drinking fountains. I remember Mrs. West, who was a great leader here, telling about how her little granddaughter came down here from Detroit and she went—took her to the, you know, down to a store and she saw a sign, "Colored Water," and Ms. [sic] West would never drink "Colored Water" and her little granddaughter got perfectly furious with her, because she wouldn't let her drink "Colored Water." She thought that must've be a whole lot better than just plain white water. But the thing was that everything was segregated. And I remember one of the things that struck me the most was the fact that they had a book mobile that was parked down in the square. And I saw a young black girl go up to the book mobile and she couldn't even get a book out of the book mobile. It was that segregated. You couldn't play Dominoes together. You couldn't play Chess together. These were all on the books. Laws that were on the books.

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INTERVIEWER 1: HOW 'BOUT FRIENDS? COULD YOU HAVE—

Durr: Well, we had friends, yes, but there were—very difficult, I mean, to have any really social intercourse with people when you were, you know, you didn't know where—you couldn't meet anywhere. They would—and they didn't like to come to our house, because we lived in a white neighborhood and that was against the law too. If they were caught, you know, now, for instance, you see, the Maxwell Air Force base was here and—

INTERVIEWER 1: CAN I HAVE YOU JUMP NOW TO—THE BOYCOTTS—ONCE THE BOYCOTT GOT STARTED DID, DID WHITE'S—

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[cut]

[wild audio]

INTERVIEWER 1: —THINK IT WAS GONNA LAST LONG.

Durr: Well, it was a very curious reaction. Because—[coughs] the, the, the blacks—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: EXCUSE ME. WE, WE JUST RAN OUT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: CUT.

00:08:24:00

[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 11]

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER 1: ABOUT, ABOUT THE SUBTERFUGE AND SOMETIMES YOU WOULD HAVE TO PRACTICE.

Durr: Well, you see, the whole, the whole institution of segregation and slavery made blacks have to lie to live. I mean, other words, you know, to survive at all. So, I—they didn't trust you. And if you'd stop up and, and stop and pick up an old lady up, who was walking along, and, to give her a ride, she'd say, she would say—if you asked her if she had anything to do with the boycott she'd always say, oh, no ma'am I don't have nothing to do with that boycott. It's just the lady I work for, her little boy is sick today and she couldn't take me home. But, you see, they did take 'em home. And—the white women did. And, then, the Mayor issued an edict that if a white woman was caught taking her black maid home that she'd be arrested. And, sure enough, they would arrest you if you would go and, you know, for going six miles in a five mile zone or just any kind of ridiculous things in the world that you could imagine. But that didn't last because the white women got so furious at the Mayor that they kept telling him and writing letters to the paper and saying, if the Mayor wants to do my washing and wants to cook for me and clean up after my children let him come and do it, but as long as he won't do it, then, I'm saying I'm not gonna get rid of this wonderful woman I've had for fifteen years or so long. But, so you see, it was, it was lie—both the white women played a part when they, they would say, well, oh the woman that works for me she never would have anything to do with that boycott. The only reason she doesn't ride the bus is she's scared. They got goons on it. Well, she knew that was a lie. And the black women knew it was a lie, but you see by lying [laughs] to each other they saved each other's face, if you know what I mean.

00:10:22:00

INTERVIEWER 1: BUT WHAT DID, WHAT DID THE BOYCOTT ACCOMPLISH FOR WHITES?

Durr: Oh my goodness. What it accomplished for whites was taking off some of the terrible load that white southerners live under or lived under so long of guilt. You see, the white southerners have lived for so many generations under such a terrible load of shame and guilt though it's—they won't acknowledge, but it was—you can't do things like that to people and pretend to love 'em too. And, you see, it's created such a terrible schizophrenia, because

when you're a child, particularly if you have blacks in the house and you have, you know, devotion to 'em, when—then you get grown and they tell you that they're not worthy, you know, that they're different not—and then you're torn apart, because here the people that you've loved since, you know, and depended on—it's a, it's a terrible schizophrenia. And that's why I think so much of the literature of the South is full of conflict and madness; schizophrenia. Because you can't do that to people. You can't do that to children. It's—least you see under the Nazis they never even pretended to like the Jews or love the Jews, but in the South there was always that terrible hypocrisy. You know, we love the blacks and, and we understand 'em and they are, you know, we are—they love us. And so, both sides were paying—playing, you know, roles which were pure hypocrisy. Now—

00:11:55:00

INTERVIEWER 1: WAS THAT A HAPPY TIME FOR YOU? THE TIME DURING THE BOYCOTT?

Durr: The what?

INTERVIEWER 1: THE TIME DURING THE BOYCOTT. DO YOU THINK OF THAT AS A—

Durr: Happy time? Oh, yes. I was absolutely thrilled to death. I thought it was absolutely marvelous. And the thing that—one reason I was so thrilled is, you see, I'd been through the labor struggles in Birmingham. I came from Birmingham. And I thought the, the—people in Montgomery acted, the white people, acted a whole lot better in Montgomery then they did in Birmingham in the labor struggles. They didn't call in the National Guard and shoot people down. It's what they did in Birmingham. So I had, really, some feeling—

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[cut]

[wild audio]

Durr: —of pride that the people in Montgomery acted as well as they did. And they, you know, considering the way they acted in Mississippi, considering the way they acted in Birmingham, the people of Montgomery were not nearly so violent. You, you see, that you, you read the—and it's because there was so much interpersonal knowledge, you see. So many people knew each other. And then the leadership here was so good. You see, Mr. Nixon was highly respected. And he showed himself to be a man of great courage and then Dr. King came on and Dr. King [laughs], you know, everybody down here is a Christian, goes to church every Sunday. Well, he made you feel that if you were for segregation you certainly couldn't be a Christian at the same time. And he made that lesson extremely strong. And people had to wrestle, you know, with that, that—dilemma. Where they Christian—

INTERVIEWER 1: CAN I, CAN I HAVE THE PICTURE?

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER 1: ONE QUESTION: VIOLENCE AS A, AS AN ISSUE.

00:13:42:00

[cut]

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER 1: WOULD BE—YOU CAN TALK ABOUT SPECIFICALLY, BUT THAT'S WHAT—THAT SHOULD BE—

Durr: Well, there was very—considering that, you know, the—there was violence in Alabama, certainly, but there—in Montgomery itself there was not such a great deal of violence. There was, in fact, the whole struggle of the civil rights—when you go through it, you know, state by state and year by year you're amazed how few people were actually killed. I know you don't believe that, but, well, I—but you—OK, well you just—

INTERVIEWER 1: DEVELOPED TO THE MAGNITUDE OF THE SOCIAL—

Durr: Exactly. Cause this was really a second, this was a second Reconstruction, if you know what I mean.

INTERVIEWER 1: THE, THE QUESTION OF, OF THE CONFLICT—CONFRO—CONFRONTATION THAT KING POSED BETWEEN RELIGION AND REALITY. CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THAT JUST AGAIN?

Durr: Well, certainly, I can. You see, in, in the South you are brought up, you know, most people are Christians and Protestants. See, the great, the, the bulk of the white southern people, I would say, the sort of major genes of Irish and Scotch and English. And so, they came over here with their religion, you see. And they brought it down to the South. And they, you know, taught it to the slaves. Of course, they taught 'em, you know, that meekness and mildness—

[sound roll out]

[cut]

00:15:14:00

[slate]

[change to sound roll 7]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: ROLL.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: ROLLING.

INTERVIEWER 1: DO YOU REMEMBER A WOMAN NAMED JULIETTE MORGAN?

Durr: Oh, very well. She's a great friend of mine. I knew her extremely well.

INTERVIEWER 1: WHAT HAPPENED?

Durr: Well, she was the librarian at the, at the, the library and she wrote a series of letters to the papers saying how terribly the blacks were treated on the bus. You know, about—they'd have to put their money in the front and run around the back and it's often slam the door on 'em. And, then, you know, of course, they'd have to get up and give their seats to anybody that—white person that wanted 'em. Which was actually against the law. And she wrote a long series of letters to the paper. Well, the people the Klu Kluxers [sic] and the White Citizens' Council and all the, you know, the organizations that were formed here, they began putting pressure on the Board and—of the library. And she was a very high strung, nervous girl and she had—and she was being treated with shock treatment. She had a manic, well, some sort of depression. And so, the combination of the letters and the—they didn't fire her from the Board, but they gave her a leave of absence. And I went over to see her the night before she committed suicide and I, I was trying to, to get her to, you know, look at things in a more cheerful light and try to tell her how much she'd accomplished and how much she had waked people up. She just was sunk in such a terrible depression and she said all she wanted to do was die and she did. Next day she committed suicide.

00:17:03:00

INTERVIEWER 1: DO YOU THINK SHE WAS A CASUALTIY OF THE BOYCOTT?

Durr: Oh heavens, yes. No doubt about it. If there's any two ways about it. I'm sure she was. She was a very gentle, very sensitive sort of person. And—but the thing that she'd that really got her in so much trouble was that the, the trouble with the South was the cowardly white southern men and that was the thing that really got her into bad trouble. Because, you know, to say in the papers, in the *Montgomery Advertiser*, that, that the white men are—but, you see, the, the—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: CUT.

00:17:48:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Durr: —economically and socially and every other way that—would be ostracized. Now we were lucky in a way—

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[cut]

[sync tone]

Durr: —because Cliff was cli—kin to so many people in Montgomery County that it was very difficult for them to ostracize us, because—they, also they had a strong feeling of kinship. So we always had to go to the funerals and the weddings [laughs] whether, whether they agreed with us or not. But it's—I saw the white South—it, it's very remarkable to me, now, at this late date they don't even wanna [sic] talk about it. They don't wanna to discuss it. They don't—they wanna, wanna act like it never happened. You know, they were always for integration. Why no they never had anything to do with it. Now the people that you see today that are rising up, you now, like the Klu Klux Klan and so forth are the, are the, really, dispossessed, if you know what I mean. The very poorest element in the South who losing their jobs just because of the Depression.

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INTERVIEWER 1: WHY DIDN'T, WHY DIDN'T MORE WHITE SOUTHERNERS DO SOMETHING?

Durr: Scared to death. Just terror—the, the ostracism, the terror. You know, they wouldn't be invited to the [laughs] balls or the parties or, you know, they would—you had to have a great deal of security to be willing to take that kind of ostracism in that being disapproved of so much. And, and—

INTERVIEWER 1: THE, THE—DR. KING, CHRISTIANITY, AND, AND THE MOVEMENT ESSENTIALLY, HOW IMPORTANT WAS CHRISTIANITY THERE?

Durr: Well, I think it was quite important. I think that southern people, by and large—because, now, the first time I met Judy she was talking to a church group. And if you read the story of Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Society Against Lynching [sic] got—they all came out of the churches. So I do think that the churches have done a great deal to the white southerners just as they have to the black southerners. That's been the focus mostly their social life.

00:19:39:00

INTERVIEWER 1: NON-VIOLENCE?

Durr: Oh, well. The—

INTERVIEWER 1: AS A STRATEGY.

Durr: The, the, the—well that was a very, that was a very good strategy, because, you see, it removed the fear, if you know what I mean. King, by preaching non-violence, removed terror—the fear that, that—a fear of violence by the blacks at any rate. But it didn't, didn't do much, you know, for Wallace and his crowd. But, at least, it—the, the majority of the white people didn't feel afraid.

INTERVIEWER 1: IT RAISED A MORAL ISSUE?

Durr: Oh, I think it raised a great moral issue, I certainly do. I think it rai—raised a tremendous moral issue. And you'd be—if I, if I could—I had, you know, long enough in—at the time and I could tell you of so many white southerners that did support King and did support the whole boycott and did support the end of segregation. And now, you take the Jews—

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[cut]

[wild audio]

Durr: —Mr. Nixon told me one time that the Jews of Montgomery had supported the boycott more than anybody, but they never let him use their names. You see, they're a minority themselves. There only ten thousands Jews in all of Alabama, but they did contribute a great deal of money. And there were a lot of the church women that, that—that's when I met Judy was at a church women's meeting. A lot of the white church women supported it. It was mostly the men who were terrified of business, you know, losing—they couldn't sell a piece of real estate or they would get in bad with the bank or they wouldn't be able to sell an automobile. You see, it's, it's—I say it gets down to economics every time. And it was the men that were so afraid that if they took any position at all that they would be—lose their business. Like my husband lost his law business. He certainly, he certainly did. [laughs] He lost—he got mighty little law business after he took a very decided stand. I mean paying business. He got lots of business—

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[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 12]

[sync tone]

Durr: —cause he felt that he was of some help, you know, in his legal abilities.

INTERVIEWER 1: DID, DID IT COST PEOPLE THAT SUPPORTED YOU. YOU JUST TOLD ME IT COST—

Durr: Well, it cost him just—he lost practically all of his other law business. And when he finally shut up his law office and he got to be sixty-five and began the Social Security he was delighted, because he said he then, by then he had begun [laughs] lending people money instead of getting—collecting any fees he was just lending 'em. But, you see, the thing that you've got to understand is that the blacks went to [coughs]—that when a man took a stand for them they didn't support him by coming to him and giving him that pay, paying business. Because they didn't believe, you see, in the judicial system. They thought that there would be a white jury and a white judge and that they wouldn't get justice. So what they would do is buy justice. They'd go to the worst white supremacist lawyer in Montgomery, you know, to, to represent 'em because they felt he had—you know, we had a judge here named Judge Walter B. Jones and he even segregated the Courtroom after the laws had been passed. He said, the Fifteenth Amendment didn't apply to his Courtroom. And so, you see, the—we didn't get much paying business from the black community. They were very supportive of us and—but they didn't—and the poor ones, who didn't have any money, came to us in great numbers, but the one's that actually had property, you know, and money they would go to the lawyers, that they thought, had the most influence with the judges and the jury.

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INTERVIEWER 1: WHY DON'T YOU THINK THE WHITE MEN SUPPORTED THE BOYCOTT AND GOT INVOLVED?

Durr: Scared of, of losing their business. Now, my brother-in-law, who was a very strict segregationist and who was head of the Durr Drug Company. In—for instance, Selma in the, the drug that he—a wholesale drug, you know, seller—they have a big wholesale drug house. The druggist in Selma saw where one of his drivers said, Mr. Eli Judkins, who was the driver for the Durr Drug Company, took part in the, you know, the boycott. And he was driving people to work. And he just, immediately, got just a whole lot of calls and letters and said, you now, if you have—don't fire that guy we're goin' to stop trading with you. And my brother-in-law said, well, now look—he was brave to this—he didn't take the part of the boycott, but he said, now look if you want to run my business you come over here and run my business, but as long as I'm here I'm gonna run it my own way. And he did not fire the driver. But it was—people that took an open part in it, you know, who—like my husband and Aubrey Williams. And they realized that at that point they were cutting their own throats as far as business was concerned. You see, Aubrey lost all of his advertising. He had the *Southern Farmer* and he just lost every bit of his advertising.

00:24:44:00

INTERVIEWER 1: JO ANN ROBINSON?

Durr: Oh, she was a lovely person. Wonderfully bright, smart woman. And she was a great force here and a great—and she was a, a—she gave not only gave people courage, but she gave 'em laughter and hope. And, you know, she was a wonderful sort of spirit of—she never got discouraged. She never got down. She just was a remarkable woman.

00:25:12:00

INTERVIEWER 1: WOULD THE BOYCOTT HAVE SUCCEEDED WITHOUT WOMEN ON EITHER SIDE?

Durr: Oh, I don't think so. I think the woman were there—played a tremendous part in the—the white and black women. And, you know, we had a prayer group here for years. We prayed together every month and that was broken up by some—one of these white Nazi groups called—forget the name of it now. But John Crommelin was the head of it. And that was broken up and they were all threatened, you see. And—

INTERVIEWER 1: CUT.

00:25:48:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Durr: The, the letters that were—they—and the thing that showed you the terror was that the husbands and the uncles and the brothers and the—even the nephews of these women who had been at this integrated meeting, simply praying for peace and for, you know, non-violence, they took out advertisements in the paper. And one man took out advertisements saying that it wasn't his car, but his wife's car. He even repudiated his own wife.

INTERVIEWER 1: [laughs] THAT'S PRETTY, THAT'S PRETTY LOW, RIGHT?

Durr: Well, he was frightened to death. And then they took out an advertisement repudiating their nephews, I mean, nieces or, you know, daughters. One of the men took out an advertisement repudiating his daughter. It's very difficult to understand—I mean, blacks had lived in terror, but the, the—but the, the, the, the terror that the white men have suffered—

[sync tone]

00:26:47:00

[cut]

Durr: —have been of a different kind, you see. It's been a terror of being a total failure, you know, of not making your way in the world, of losing your business. Being a failure. Being, socially, ostracized. Now that's not nearly as bad of terror as being, you know, lynched,

killed or beaten up, but it is a terrible fear. And but—that's the fear that possesses most men today. Don't you think so?

INTERVIEWER 1: WHO ARE WE GOING TO—[laughs]. ALL RIGHT, CUT PLEASE.

00:27:19:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Durr: —if they did, finally. Not at first, but they did finally.

00:27:25:00

[cut]

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER 2: WHY DIDN'T THEY FEEL THAT, THAT, THAT AT LAST THE GIG IS UP?

Durr: Well, they didn't think they were so well organized. You know, the fact that they—the thing was a tremendous organizational effort as you, as you see. To get those cars, you know, to people, to get 'em to their jobs and bring 'em back. And it was a tremendous—took a tremendous amount of organization. And then they didn't realize the whole rest of the country was going to come to their help the way they did, you know, and send down caravans and send down cars. And so, in time what they had thought was just something that'd be squashed immediately was—grew to be so big that there was no way of stopping it in the wide world. It got to be such a national issue. Now, you see, you came down South and—

00:28:16:00

INTERVIEWER 2: LET ME GO THIS WAY. AT WHAT POINT DID, DID THE WHITE COMMUNITY REALIZE THIS WAS SERIOUS?

Durr: Well, I would say about—it started in December and I'd say about that summer they began to realize it was absolutely serious and there was no way to stop it. Because they tried, you see, by every means in their power. And they had—and they arrested Dr. King and they arrested Dr. Abernathy and they had the dogs and the horses had come over from Selma. When they had that prayer meeting on the church—the steps of the Capitol and they hadn't been able to stop 'em.

00:28:51:00

INTERVIEWER 2: WHEN THE BUS COMPANIES BEGAN GOIN' BANKRUPT, CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THAT?

Durr: Well, the bus company going bankrupt was a—certainly it was a part of it. But the, the, the lawyer for the bus company, though, never did give in an inch. He never did—he never came around and gave 'em any kind of a settlement at all. It was only when the judges—and it went through the courts and the judges said it was illegal that they came around. The bus company and the lawyers. See, the thing—Judge Johnson and Judge Reeves who are two names totally unknown, almost, in the black community. I think Judge Johnson is better known, but they are the two men who said, this is against the law. And, you see, you go back and you—no matter how you feel about Lyndon Johnson, the Vietnamese War, he is the one that said it was against the law. And he was a southern man. But it became, you know, it was—it became against the law. And when you got Federal judges upholding it and the people would say, they'd say, well then Mr. So-and-So how did it happen you did this and so—the answer was, well, I don't want to go to Atlanta. Well, that meant they didn't want to go to the penitentiary in Atlanta. See, I'm a great believer that, eventually, if you—the peaceful way to settle things is through, you know, law and order. I mean through the courts. When the courts break down then you have to, you know, fight it out. And—but—so far in this instance the court system did work. See my brother-in-law, Hugo Black, was on the Supreme Court. And so that—and Bill Douglas was on the Supreme Court and, you know, Thurgood Marshall was on the Supreme Court. And so, you had men on the Court that upheld the law. Now, you know, you got a bunch of weaklings on the Court. What they're going to do, you don't know.

00:30:51:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Durr: —also remember the, the miscegenation. I mean the—

00:30:57:00

[cut]

[sync tone]

Durr: —guilt some white southern men felt, you see. And the—it's, it's all so tied up in emotion—

INTERVIEWER 1: LET ME ASK YOU ABOUT ROSA PARKS.

Durr: OK.

INTERVIEWER 1: TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT HER.

Durr: Well, I think Mrs. Parks is one of the really great—when I was a little girl they always said, be a lady. [laughs] You know be—what they meant was do—I think Mrs. Parks is what I'd call a great lady. In, in other words, she's a woman of—she's dignified, she's calm, she's brave, she's strong, and she's an absolutely free of any kind of guile or any sort of manipulation. She's got nothing out of this for herself hardly. And she's stuck by, you know, her mother and her husband who was sick. I think Miss Parks is one of the most wonderful women I ever knew in my life. One of the most wonderful people I ever knew. And I always feel that just the fact that I knew her, you know, has increased my pride so—I know this'll sound funny to you, but it's increased my pride in being a southerner. The fact that a woman like that could come out of the South is to me a great tribute. But, you see, she was trained in this white school which was a school that was—by white missionaries that came down from New England and they had a school for the—

00:32:19:00

INTERVIEWER 1: IF YOU DON'T MIND JUST JUMP AHEAD. THE BOYCOTT WHEN, WHEN, WHEN YOU HEARD THAT THE BOYCOTT HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL, I DON'T KNOW IF IT WAS ONE DAY OR WHAT, DO YOU REMEMBER THE, THE REACTION?

Durr: Oh, I just remember the reaction was just absolute pure, unadulterated joy. It was just like—it's a fountain of joy. Everybody—the, the, of course the blacks felt that way, but the white friends that I had felt the way I did. We just felt, you know, not—we just felt this wonderful feeling of joy and a release. It's like a great burden had fallen off of you. You know, it's—if you, you don't have to be extremely benevolent or kind or, or good or noble to see such injustice around you all the time and not feel that it's wrong. And then, you see, it's this terrible schizophrenia of, of loving, you know, having blacks that you, that you loved and, you know, that loved you. And then having being torn apart.

INTERVIEWER: CAN WE STOP FOR A SECOND?

[cut]

00:33:25:00

INTERVIEWER 1: —MEANING OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT FOR THE '80s. WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Durr: Well, I think that the—you see I think that, that people will nobody—they're not going to fight unless they think they can win. I mean when people are just hopelessly outnumbered or when they're hopelessly, you know, oppressed and degraded, but you see the civil rights movement started—

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[cut]

[wild audio]

Durr: —off the young people on the Vietnamese War which, then, in turn started the Women's Feminist Movement. So, you see, the civil rights movement started a whole chain reaction in this country of people who began to stru—struggle for their rights and what they thought their right. So, now, you have the, you know, the blacks fighting for their rights. You have the women fighting for their rights. You have the young people fighting for their rights. And I think it's—you begun—the whole civil rights struggle was started a whole chain reaction. I think it's going to be the salvation of the country. That's the way I feel about it.

INTERVIEWER 1: YOU'RE SUCH A NICE PERSON.

Durr: Well—

[cut]

[end of interview]

00:34:25:00