

- Thank you. When I first met Charlie Sherrod and Lonnie and Tim, who would come. The crowd was in Europe I think that was. I had never been out of Ohio. I mean my only place I'd ever been from Ohio, outside of Ohio was Orangeburg, South Carolina, and I came here as a freshman. By the time I had gone home for Christmas, I had been arrested like five times. My jaw had been broken and my arm had been busted because it was the first time in this new world of South Carolina having come from Madison, Ohio. It was a strange world and so when I went to Sumter for Christmas, for, I'm sorry, for Thanksgiving, and the only reason I went to Sumter is because they closed the campus down and you had to go somewhere. You gotta get up outta here sort of thing. So I'd went to Sumter and it was the first time I'd been off campus since I'd been placed in South Carolina State and we went to a party and my friends drank and this time I didn't so I was the designated driver after going to this party. As we were driving home the police stopped me. I'd never been confronted by a police officer in my life at that time, 16 years old, Sumter, South Carolina, and we started talking and the officer said, finally said where you from boy? I said Ohio, why? He said they didn't teach you how, (laughing)

not only did I say why, I said I'm from Ohio. You got the license. Can't you read? (audience laughs) It was the beginning. (audience laughs) That's when he said what? They didn't even teach you how to say yes sir and no sir to white men up there? I said you gotta be jiving. (audience laughs) It was an auspicious meeting. That man hit me so hard, but in from the still mills in Ohio I had a few tricks of my own. I was hitting and kicking as I went down and before his fist slapped my face, I had struck him back, and his partner grabbed me and we just got it on down there on the side of the road in Sumter, South Carolina. They got the better of it. Broke my jaw, busted my arm and as they were beating me, I was saying to the guys in the car, I'm gonna get you, (audience laughs)

because where I came from you didn't let your partners be whipped and not help. That of course was long before I'd ever heard of nonviolence and I only knew of direct action. (audience laughs) So by, you know I got my jaw busted, went to jail and when I got out of jail and went to get on the train coming from Sumter back to Orangeburg, the conductor say all right get on back to the baggage car. I said I what? Not for \$7.82 do I ride with a bunch of old cheap suitcases and mangy dogs. There are seats here I'm sitting in them. I look back now at times on say was I naive or just a fool and I think it was a combination. It was a combination but out of that combination of things I had that reputation of that nigger is crazy and so most of the students sort of passed me by, in Orangeburg, say hello and make wide circles around me. (audience laughs) So I finally got home and my father decided this little venture of meeting your brothers and sisters in the confines of a black college just wasn't going to be for you. I can't afford to have you there the way you put it and besides you going to be killed. So my year of penance was to end early with the understanding I'm taking you back to that campus you stay here there until I get there and come back and pick you up. I said fine. Well on February 1st 1960, there were sit-ins in Greensboro. Greensboro, Orangeburg is 80 miles from here and a group of students came to me and we're talking about did you hear what they did up in Greensboro. I say yes of course I did. They said what we want to do that here. I said go ahead and do it. (audience laughs) What's that got to do with me? They said we want you to be the spokesperson. I said y'all crazy. You all are out of your mind if you're going to put up with what those crackers going to do to you, you

do that. It's not my place to interfere. I've got 24 days in this place and I'm gone and I will never see anything south of Cincinnati, (audience laughs)

again in life. Well I was reading the Talmud and you all know all about that part of my life. There's a section of the Talmud that says if I'm not for myself who will be for me. If I'm for myself only what am I? If not now when? And I thought about that and I spent the night thinking about it, the night thinking about my life. I was born the night Joe Louis knocked out Max Schmeling where in Madison, Ohio there was jubilation. I used to thank my father when he got older for several things, not naming me Joe Louis. (audience laughs) And for every one of my birthdays they tried out this old 8mm film of the fight. Within one minute and 28 seconds of the first round Joe Louis the Brown Bomber knocked out Max Schmeling the Great White Hope of the western world and what my father was say is look at the crowd, look at the crowd and it was full of men with Swastikas on. He said these are people you're gonna have to deal with. He used to call him pecker woods all the time. He said these pecker woods are going to make your life hell and I think and I'm four years old. (audience laughs) When we going to cut the cake? When we going to get the Kool-Aid? (audience laughs) And he's talking about you have to do something for the race. You are a race baby and that's the first time I've ever heard anything, a boy or girl, this man talking about you a race baby and I'm talking about when we going to get the Kool-Aid. (audience laughs) But that started very early for me which taught me something later with my own child of those early lessons come back and guide you. That night when I was thinking about these students from Clafin for most of them college who'd asked me to leave them, be the spokesman in these sit-ins, all of those things came back. The pictures of the fight, Yankee Stadium Field with Nazis screaming, discussions of my father about you know they killed three black people killed in Detroit after that fight. Four black people were killed in Cincinnati after that fight and Lord knows how many they killed down site South after that fight and don't you ever forget it. So that night after I thought about where I had come from and what I was supposed to do, I knew the next morning that I was supposed to be involved in this movement. So I went back to these people and apologized for my being flippant and said I will do whatever I can to help and joined the Orangeburg Movement for Civic Improvement and was chairman of the Orangeburg Movement for Civic Improvement and we would sit in by the 6th of February. The first one started on the 1st and on the 6th and I was leading demonstrations not knowing a thing about what was happening except they said if these white folks at you don't hit him back. Well that makes sense to me because the last time I-- (audience laughs) We'll do that until we figure out something else, at least until I get enough of y'all to join me. (audience laughs) And we were having sit-ins and that first sit-in was on March 6th. I went to jail. That next week I was in jail and by March 12th lead a demonstration of 1500 students in Orangeburg which 1200 of them us went to jail. We were put into an outside enclosure and attacked with water hoses and then we got the call and as I think I mentioned this morning. The only thing I knew about Dr. King was what I read in newspapers and magazines but when they mentioned Miss Baker, when I mentioned to our advisors in Orangeburg that Miss Baker, a letter came asking us this meeting Miss Baker sent the letter and I remember Reverend Cullum telling me that Miss Ella Baker said that she wants you to do something. You can put your life in her hands and we talk on the phone after that and we were sort of ready and when I came here there was already a sense that we were like Charlie said, I know the names I knew the Charles Sherrod's, I knew the Diane Nash I knew the Lonnie Kings, I know that Charlie Joneses and what we had shared was I remember and we talked about them. The first thing is what do you remember about it and we talked about the Brown decision and just about everybody had a copy of the Jet with the picture of Emmett Till in it. We had a common sense of remembering what was happening to our people but

that thing on it that picture which I have today of Emmett Till lying in his coffin. So we all started at a, sort of ground when we got here. I thought that compared with people like Charlie who it been a world traveler and Lonnie from Atlanta. I'd never been to Atlanta and these people from Nashville. I said great God of Zion I'm up here with all these hot city people, hot shots and the thing, the statement was Jim Lawson because Jim is from my hometown and I knew growing up that he had been in prison and he had been in prison as a pacifist. I knew what a pacifist was and I knew there been hours of discussion about going to jail for ideas, for beliefs because we had an example from our small little colored community of Madison, Ohio of someone who had a scholarship, courage, compassion and commitment and it was Jim who were going to school with my aunts and stuff and so the idea of going to jail for an idea was already acceptable to me and so when we came up here there were people who argued and discussed the whole nonviolent philosophy. Most of these people were from Nashville. Diane and Bernard and Bevel and the whole concept of discussion and a discussion of a beloved community was discussed and I felt that we were already in it because these people I saw already as kindred spirits and brothers as a sort of in a common sort of and sisters in a common sort of struggle. So we cleaved very quickly. We all came together very, very quickly and we talked. I met Tim and there was a feeling that we came from the same backgrounds wherever we came from for the most part. We were the sons and daughters of working class people, working people. I remember and if you had any sense of shame from where you came I remember when Tim claimed told me he was raised in his first crib was the bottom drawer of the bureau in his parents' bedroom and then said and I moved up to the third drawer. I said well, (audience laughs) now if that isn't upward mobility. (audience laughs) And we all had an appreciation, a thirst for knowledge and a commitment to doing something as Sherrod mentioned earlier we didn't know what it was going to be but we knew it was going to be something and you came to trust in each other by spending time talking together, learning together, planning together. I remember with pride when Jim got kicked out of Vanderbilt. He was in graduate school. The School of Theology there, and you know my thing was you see in the Christian School of Theology they done kicked him out. They're not serious about nothing them Christians. And you know I was continuing with my other rebellion. (laughing) But that was, I hadn't seen him since I was a kid but I had this feeling that we were kindred souls and then there were all these others and we started in the early discussions when we talked about the Student Coordinating Committee, the Coordinating Committee, non-violence was kept out of it and it was then in a concession where Lonnie talked about those purists, the nonviolent purists that kept us together, kept us on the road and so it became a thing that after a mantra that we must have this in the spirit of non-violence and love. I never told a man that I loved him in my life. Wasn't too many girls I said more than I liked you. (audience laughs) And here we were talking about love, a word and a concept I use all the time now because it was through the movement that I came to understand the deeper meanings of agape and loving my fellow man, my brothers and my sisters and there came a time that I understood how you can love somebody and an idea so much that you would die for it and that became the case with all of you all. I remember when we first went me, Tim Jenkins, Josh Rod, Charlie Jones, when we decided that we were going to drop out of school and spend full time helping to build the movement at whatever cost that was going to take and we found out about that cause very quickly when Charlie Jones hit a little back dog owned by big white lady driving through Alabama. It became the first ideologically with the ministerial students Jones and Sherrod was saying, the lady came, the mean white lady came out and said oh my God my baby is gone and he got polio and if y'all could just give me a few dollars to make him happy so I can buy a new dog. Jenkins, dog ran in

the street. (audience laughs) We don't have extra money to pay for this woman's dog. Let's get out of here. We're standing out there debating and in the spirit of non-violence we should pay for this dog. Should have had a dog on a leash. (audience laughs) The big white lady got tired of our discussion. (audience laughs) And told us if you don't pay for this dog you will never make it out of Alabama alive. (audience laughs) White folks have a way (audience laughs) of defining issues. So we moved to a different level. It became no longer matter of compassion. It became Sherrod, no let's go we ain't going dog. Let's go. Like how dare she threaten us. The Christian brothers had stopped talking about paying for the woman's dog which Nathan and I said all along we shouldn't do and we prepared, but we wouldn't have left there alive. The woman was right. There was a white man, a man who looked like an old Colonel Sanders. He had a white linen suit. I remember that. Had a white linen suit on and he came out as this crowd was gathering around us in Pell City, Alabama and he told us, he was sort of like the local head white man in town. (audience laughs) And he told these boys didn't do nothing wrong. I saw the whole thing. The dog ran out now in the street and they couldn't help hit him. So y'all just let him alone and told us y'all better get out of town quick and I remember we started driving towards, turned to the highway driving towards Mississippi outrunning because people were getting the cars coming behind us. I never forget this but when we got to Mississippi the border of Mississippi we stopped, scared, running from a mob from Alabama but still scared go to go into Mississippi. (audience laughs) I swear. I know each one of us was in that car remember that day because Sherrod too was trying to use the bathroom along the way. Man said one drop, blow your brains out. It was a terrible time. Speaking of time. (audience laughs) Thank you Martha. They'll be time to continue this later. We're trying to keep a rather close schedule and so and I realize that I had drifted off of it but it was here 40 years ago that I learned the deeper meanings of comradeship and love and trust and a willingness to do anything to help bring about a change and I knew at different points along this journey that we wouldn't all get there together. So I'm happy proud to be able to celebrate with you and those of us who made it on thus far, thanks. (applause)

- I really want to apologize for the time. I just want to make sure that we all get some lunch a little bit later. I think they were hearing in these talks a different sense than the traditional of what leadership can be of something that can be created by people themselves when they decide to act or they can be quiet unassuming kind of thing that really makes pivotal and important decisions that can change the course of history and right now we'll hear from Joyce Ladner. I'll say this when we're doing the program as you know we're doing all of this last minute and everything. So we were trying to put in people before their SNCC accomplishments and their present-day accomplishments and one of the reasons that we just totally gave up on the whole project. We just say we're going to put people's names in is that when we came to Joyce's name there were so many accomplishments on both sides we said it'll take up half a page. So I won't say anything else and let her to come and talk to you about the spirit of Miss Baker and organizing in Mississippi. (applause)

- I was about to say good morning but it's good afternoon. The war stories remind me, that I've heard from the three previous speakers, reminds me of a time back in the sixties when we used to hear people who came out in the 30s movement and we used to say God I'm so sick of the thirties and I could imagine that some of you may well feel like my son and my niece. My sister Dories daughter, when we tell them watch this program. Recently I told my son watch freedom songs. It's coming on (mumbling). He said what is it

about, SNCC? (laughing) I say yes. He said I already know all about SNCC. Mom you taught, I said you don't, you got to see the real SNCC. He said well what is this you been telling me all my life then? That wasn't a real SNCC? But I think that first I want to thank the organizers for bringing us together so that we can tell the war stories because they're deeper meanings hidden within all of them and the second is that in remembering Miss Baker I think she would want us to remember the legacy of doing because she was indeed a doer. She was quite an elegant speaker but you can probably count the number of times that she was the keynote speaker on or she tended to one to shy away from that role. I'm going to make two points one is that to describe what Mississippi was like when Miss Baker's philosophy began to resonate in the state and why did it resonate and then to say a few things about the lessons she taught us. All of us necessarily have to be autobiographical in making our comments and so I was was a high school senior at 16 years old in 1961 on Easter weekend when SNCC was founded. Probably don't remember having read about it in the Hattiesburg Mississippi American Newspaper because it censored everything. I do remember it did carry some information about the sit-ins that were occurring. Nevertheless we were, all of us, not all of us but I was particularly blessed because have a sister Dorie who was coming later today who was only 15 months older than I and I could not remember a time in our lives when race was not the central most important thing that we focused on. I have always been and I've always carried both of burden and the blessing of the strong racial consciousness and perhaps it came from my mother who taught us that you look white people dead in the eye and don't blink. I remember when Dorie and all the salesman and the insurance collector came around our house deferred to her and she always calls it a certain way you carry yourself in order to keep your dignity so that white people don't walk over you. So when Dorie and I were at the grocery store, Hudson's grocery a block from our house and we're looking at magazines, the magazine rack and Dorie had bought some donuts and she, I remember clearly because she probably just gotten her first bra but we were entering puberty and I was the younger and certainly had not yet but mine 28 AAA bra. (audience laughs) That was the size I remember clearly the first one. There's this man. A cashier, white cashier in the store who all four of his fingers on the right hand haven't cut off for some reason and he walked up behind her and try to touch bra and she turned and took the bag of donuts and began beating him on the head and we ran all the way home and we can told Mother. Mother guess what happened? And we told her and she said you should have killed them. (audience laughs) So that we were taught to stand up for our beliefs and another thing she taught us she becomes the plural because we learned this within this all black community called Palmers Crossing outside, 4 miles from Downtown Hattiesburg. We were taught to stand up for my beliefs and if you couldn't stand up for them that Mother used to say that they're not worth very much if you can't stand up for what you believe in. Beliefs can't be worth much to start with but they taught us how to survive with dignity and I was walking a tightrope. They told us that we could indeed stand tall and have the courage of these convictions and carry ourselves in such a way that if a white man makes a pass at you and they did and they were quite plentiful, you stand proudly and don't even respond and just walk away like a lady and it worked. We knew we couldn't turn around and beat too many people over the head with donuts for fear that we could have been killed but we, I remember some things that had an impact on us that became threads throughout the larger, that were threads throughout the larger society but they followed us as well from the time of childhood. The Brown decision I remember very very clear clearly and how the local newspaper covered it. I read the newspaper from the time I was very little. I used to spend a dime a day to buy this paper and know that it was referred to the day the decision was handed down what's was referred to as Black Monday but we didn't get, there was no rush integrate, no attempt at all to desegregate that

Hattiesburg schools or the schools anywhere Mississippi. What we got were new public schools. They built the county built us a new school that we had always needed and that was their way of staving off any attempts to say that we were unequal or that we have unequal facilities. We lived in a very, very closed society but it was possible to get in certain information. I don't even remember maybe I heard national news on the radio but we got a new television, we got a television station WDAM in Hattiesburg in about 19, it was about was the late fifties and they were very, very racist but I do remember seeing, oh wait it was an NBC affiliate so David Brinkley, (mumbles) and David Brinkley. That was the one window of national news that we saw but most important was that we had this friend an older man who came by our house all the time. We called him Cuz for cousin. He really wasn't our cousin but others referred to him as Dr. McLeod and he was a race man. He sold herbal medicine. Today he'd be in vogue. Back then my mother said I wouldn't take anything that Cuz gave you, it might poison you. (audience laughs) She said that those roots that he's boiling I don't know what's in them, but Cuz was a race man. He was a member of the local NAACP. I was 10, 11, 12 maybe a little older. But probably not 10 but 11, 12, 13 and he brought us weekly the Chicago Defender, the Pittsburgh Courier and we got the monthly Ebony and the Jet. It was funny I think Charles referred to it as the Jet. Black people in the south always called Jet magazine the Jet and that is where we got information. He also brought books. I read the first biographies about black people because I don't know where he got the books from but I guess he ordered them but he brought them, he introduced us to literature on black people and he used to tell us you girls are going to have to change things. It'll be your generation that's going to change things when you get older. We, several references were made to the veterans of World War II and I would add World War I. My Uncle Archie went to France and the French asked him if you would pull down his pants according to him and show them his tail because they had been told that black people were kin to monkeys and had tails. He told us this and I remember this as a little girl sitting on his back porch when he talked about how disappointing it was to come back home and see how terrible conditions were but he going to France had given him a perspective that was very different. The veterans of World War II especially were very, very important because they were sent abroad to fight for freedom with the expectation that they were also going to reap some benefits. They came home and saw the white soldiers reaping the benefits but they did not and many of these people were the founders of the then underground NAACP in Mississippi, throughout the state. I cannot emphasize enough how important the role of these men were. They were the ones who, I always felt that my generation was the one that they felt would be, ours was a generation that would change things that the environment was pregnant with possibilities of all kinds of change but it was almost as if they were on the precipice of it but knew it was to come. I refer to ours as the Emmett Till generation because I cannot think of a single thing that had a more profound impact on some of the people who came into SNCC who had seen the cover of the Jet Magazine cover of Emmett Till's body where he, they didn't do any cosmetic surgery or whatever to the face of him and in the 1980s I asked Mrs. Mobley, his mother why did you have him buried open casket without them, they pulled him out the river so he was not, he didn't look like her, anyone's son. It was just an awful picture. And she said I wanted the world to see what they did to my baby and we were his age. We were in terms of psychosocial theory or whatever we identified with him. I felt personally if they killed a 14 year old they could also kill me, they could come my brothers. We knew that men were lynched but we'd never known a child being lynched before and I believe that on a deeply profoundly personal level that had a strong galvanizing effect on all of us. That image is with me still. It became etched in our consciousness. We were also very, very fortunate to have mentors. Eileen Beard a woman was a member of our church. Eileen Beard

was the sister of Vernon Dahmer. Mr. Dahmer and Clyde Kennard, who lived in that same community and Medgar Evers were the three mentors that I had who were killed and I thought about this recently. That is so ironic that these three men who had such a profound influence on my life we're all, died for their beliefs. Mr. Dahmer and Mrs. Dahmer, Brother Beard and Sister Beard as we called them in our church and Clyde Kennard used to take Dorie and me with them to Jackson to the state NAACP meetings in the 50s when we were in high school. I don't know mentors, I think mentors, you seek mentors out as much as they, and this is a message I like to give to the young people here today that is not just a matter of older people saying we want to mentor young people but young people also have to seek out the older people. It's possible that the reason that they took us likely is because they knew we had this interest and race. We talked about it you know and it was then that we saw people like Ruby Hurley who was the first black woman lawyer I ever saw and probably didn't know one existed. She was the southeastern regional director Of the NAACP. So she would come and speak. Then Gloucester Current director of branches spoke. So we saw these outside people coming in to this late and all the meetings we held at the Masonic Temple up the street from Jackson State College. We also organized, the same mentors especially Clyde Kennard and Mr. Dahmer helped us to organize and NAACP youth chapter in the very late 50s and Clyde was a very, how many of you know, have heard of Clyde Kennard? All older people but the younger people don't know him. He came back home after having been in the military, having been a student at the University of Chicago, his father died, came back to Hattiesburg to help his mom run the farm. Wanted to finish, go back to college so he applied to Mississippi Southern College now the University of Southern Mississippi twice, I believe it was two times maybe three. But any at any rate it was in the late 50s and they planted some, they arrested him for having \$3.50 worth of stolen chicken feed in his car. Sent him to the Forrest County Jail. Then sent him to Parchman State Penitentiary. He got cancer and was literally dying by the time Governor Ross Barnett gave him a pardon for something he never, I mean it was awful. I have never cried yet I still feel the tears that one day will come over how terrible they treated him but he got out after the pardon, went to the University of Chicago. It was Billings Hospital and died within I believe it was a month or 6 weeks from cancer. He was a very quiet person who moved easily without you're noticing his presence except there was a profundity to the, I must confess also that I had a crush on him for some reason even though he was an older man. He was early 30s I don't know. But he was an older man. I was maybe 14, 15 and up to 16 but there was also a network of students in the high schools around. I knew Leslie Mclemore who stood up to criticize us, the organizing of this conference from high school because he lived in northern Mississippi and I lived in Southern Mississippi but what facilitated a lot of the people was joining the younger people my age joining the movement or getting active in the movement was that we were also active in certain high school organizations. Like I believe you were state president when I was state president. Tri HAWA, you were state president of HAWA. So we traveled around. A lot of us, I have been out of Mississippi once maybe twice to go up to New Orleans but most of us travel within that close circle. I often wonder how did I high school teachers and especially music teachers teach. Where do they learn opera when they taught Dorie who had a great voice, taught her how to sing opera or where did they get their books from because our librarian had \$150 a year to replenish the, to buy books and we got the hand me down, used textbooks from the white schools after they use them 5 years, we got them and I bristle even today when I walk past the public library that was for a whites-only because as a child I wanted more books to read than there were available and they didn't give them to us. Anyway we went to college to Jackson State in the fall Of 61, the following 60 and this again I began to see some of those same freshman in my class as some older upperclassmen that I've seen it the Masonic Temple

at the state wide NAACP meeting. One of the students an older student was James Meredith. We used to sit before he well he's very strange now but back then he was very, very strange.

(audience laughs) And because this is all on tape I won't say how strange he is. (audience laughs) But he wasn't strange then and we knew absolutely nothing about the fact that he applied to go to Ole Miss, nothing and I was as close to him as the other small group around him. He was an upperclassman, been in the military, was married and but we could recognize who each other was in a way. I don't know if I'm getting through to you. As a freshman every Wednesday afternoon was free time. So you could sign up always to go downtown and that meant to shopping. Dorie are we go up to see Medgar whose office was on the second floor of the Masonic Temple and I remember because of that said we have met him and when we were in high school and one time we went to talk to him and he would always tell us what was going on and the NAACP chapters around the state and one time he told us that there was going to be a sit-in and we said really can we join? We didn't know what they were going to sit in what or where or what and he said well yeah you can. And we said all that's great. Tell us when. And he said I'll let you know letter and each time we went by his office he would say something. It was vague and you do not to ask too many questions because having information could be dangerous to you if you were ever pressured enough to give it up so finally he told us you really can't, he said I would never be able to explain to your parents why you were arrested. That would be important to me because one time he has seen my mother in a grocery store in Palmers Crossing and she'd given him some money and said will you give them give this to Joyce. He just ran into her accidentally. He came on campus and found me and gave me this money Mother sent me but finally he told us that the sit-in was going to be on such a date and it was within a short period of time. My memory is not very good but maybe a week or two or so and he said what you can do is try to organize the students on Jackson State's campus and that was a, talk about being ingenious. So we began to do things like Dorie was present dorm counselor so we had a meeting one night and the dormitory, regularly scheduled meeting. She (mumbling). Everything in Mississippi at the time was opened with a prayer. So I to give, she said you give the prayer and I'm talking about oh dear Lord there are perilous times ahead. Please protect us as we go into this danger and so on. The next morning we were called before the dean of students, Dean Rogers. He asked what did I mean about the prayer and perilous times and Dorie, most of you know Dorie, she's, well she's a hell raiser and the guys in SNCC were scared of her and that's why I say the thesis about men dominating women in SNCC, well they never dominated Dorie. She dominated them if anything (laughs), but anyway that's an aside, but we, I said what do you mean asking me about what I said to my god. You have no right to question me about my relationship with Jesus and Dorie jumped in and said as a man of the cloth how could you because he was also an ordained minister. So we went off on him and walked out of there and he said well you're right, you're right and we walked out of there laughing you know. (audience laughs) but what we began to talk about the, well what we actually did was told, you spread rumors so they could never get back to you but something is gonna happen and we gotta be ready as students to support it when it goes down. At Tougaloo what happened was 8 Tougaloo students or 9 Tougaloo students sat in at the public library, the Jackson Public Library sponsored by the NAACP chapter on the campus and supported by Medgar and he organized it actually and what happened was that because they didn't go to Woolworth's or the Crest store because they wanted to attack a facility that was taxpayers, black people pay taxes too. Tax supported by blacks. What we did was a number of us at that point got together and said start spreading the rumor again that couldn't be traced back to the one person that there was going to be a prayer-meeting in front of the library at 7 that night. So what happened is that the guys got it first because



they had free range. They didn't have curfews like girls and so on. So we are the women decided to go to the library so by the time we got out there it was seven o'clock. Here's Emmett Burns who was also a minister and a student was in the middle of his prayer, when out of the blue, we heard this noise. Stop it, stop it, shut up and everybody was looking. Where is this coming from and it was Jacob Reddicks the president of the college. He ran through. He was absolutely out of control. He was in a frenzy and like what is this? What's going on? Stop it and his arms was flailing and one of my two roommates, Margaret and Eunice, he took Eunice by the shoulder and pushed her like that on the ground and then we turned on him and the rest, they brought a lot of police on the campus that night and the next day we tried to march down to the courthouse when the Tougaloo students were being arraigned and they shot, all I remember is saying oh lord they're killing us. It was tear gas canisters being shot and it sounded like guns and I hid and we ran into different people's homes. I never forget there was this older black lady and we were just knocking on her front door. I heard the radio I reached I had through the the hole in the screen and unlatched and ran in the house and told her what happened. And she said come on and nobody's coming to my house. At the funeral home some of the kids were hidden in the embalming room. It was bedlam but I never forget this lady kept ironing and it was on the radio and she kept saying it's a low down dirty shame. These white folks are treating these children like dogs and she, I mean she was quiet and soft-spoken. And she was talking to herself you know. Eventually they got back to campus. They closed school early the next day. Sent us home for spring break and when we came back it was quieted down. They expelled the president of student government. Now we kept going to Medgar's office. One day he said I want your girls to meet Tom Gaither. Tom has come to help us get our freedom and we said oh that's good, how are you? You didn't ask any question questions. I didn't ask him what is it going to do. He was core organizer who was had come to organize Mississippi to get ready for the freedom rides. That's what Mississippi was like before Miss Baker's philosophy entered. There were a lot of people who carried on that work underground less than be killed and many were killed even without it. Miss Baker came into a state that was no longer totally closed but a wedge had been put in and it was being pried open because they're were the Vernon Dahmers, Amzie Moores, Sister Steptoe, Clyde Kennard, I could go on and on of the local men and women Miss Haymer, my dear cousin Victoria Gray. These are people who have taken the stands. So by the time the SNCC people came in, direct action couldn't be carried out in Mississippi but we also matured to a point but we realized that eating in lunch counters, eating at a lunch center was not as important as having the right to vote and we thought naively that if you get some political power, then you can change things. We hadn't really progressed yet to the point where we understood that economic power was very, very important. Miss Baker taught of several things. First of all I saw her as a kind of mother figure. She reminded me quite frankly of my momma. I never ever thought of calling her Ella. Even today if she was still alive I mean she would be Miss Baker. Miss Baker was kind of secretive. No one has said that but I remember asking her over and over and when I lived in New York and the 70's when I used to go over and visit her, Miss Baker tell me about your husband. (mumbling) (audience laughs) It was not until I read Joanne's book that I got to know who Miss Baker's husband was and she didn't really talk very much about herself or was she believed personally and it would have been hard, she wasn't a talker about the philosophy of things to me as much as she was a doer. I understand who she was from her actions. I think she felt that we should it was important for all of us to have a very, to be firmly grounded, have a strong sense of identity because it was a source of our strength knowing who we, I think she believed that we needed to know we were because we were going to some turbulent times and whatever strength to you could derive from your roots and that's why I believe in part the kind of circle and

embracing of each other in SNCC as brothers and sisters came out of that. She believed family and a democratic ethos. The concept we saw always say that the people decide was very very much Ella Baker. She also was anti-hierarchical and don't get her talking about black baptist preachers. Now that's one that you would go off on. She also taught me that courage was, and my mother taught the same thing is that courage is not the answer to fear. It is not the absence of fear, but the you keep on even in the face of understanding, recognizing and accept that fear is a natural reaction to dangerous situations but despite it and it goes back again to the strength of your beliefs have to be such that you risk something. A lot of us probably didn't think that we and I heard this more from SNCC guys then from women, that we live to see 30 years old or I didn't even think about the next month not to consider a long term life span. She taught me that she did the others of us that we had to work with what we had, that we had to be resourceful, that whatever was available in the environment you used as prudently as possible and that you don't stop your work because you don't have a lot. I mean the \$10 a week check this SNCC sent out was actually \$9.54 after taxes. People like Sam Block slept for the first several weeks in his car in Greenwood before he found someone who would take him in but that was what was meant by being resourceful. She very, very much taught us that we had to start with where the people are. That you don't go in and tell people that you're to do this your to do that but to get a sense of the lay of the land where the people are and then try to begin to build, help to work with them to build the consensus and she felt that leadership emerged out of the local people, that they already had it there but you had to be able as facilitators to help to bring it about. She also told us that we had to be resilient and I learned this at the feet of my parents that just because you fall down doesn't mean that you don't keep getting up so I think that one of the reasons that the nonviolent philosophy was able to prevail for as long as it did was because we were taught to be tough and to understand that times will get rough, that you'd get beaten up, I was never beaten common ever in the situation but I spent a week in jail and it wasn't easy but we also knew that this was just part of what being involved in this kind of very dangerous social change work meant. She told us we have to think on her own. I can't think of anything more important than her empowering us to be free thinkers and to be critical thinkers and that's why I some of those, you remember that SNCC meeting I believe in the spring of 63 or 64--